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English Language Learners at the University of Illinois at Chicago Writing Center

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1. Literature Review
2. 1:1 Interviews with ELL Writers in the UIC Writing Center
3. 1:1 Interviews with Multilingual Tutors in the UIC Writing Center
4. Two Focus Group Interviews with 5 Tutors in the UIC Writing Center
5. 1:1 Interviews with TESOL Teacher/Scholar
6. Survey

Advantages

- Shared experiences from language learning and overcoming language obstacles.
- Similar cultural insight resultant from the sharing of the sense of being new to the academic culture in the United States.
- Establishment of a sense of commonality between tutor and writer.
- Common Ground allows for a connection to develop between tutor and writer.
- Establishment of a sense of understanding during a tutoring session.

Disadvantages

- I had hypothesized that there would be some disadvantages such as accent differences that could impede comprehension, however, the ELL writer expressed that, “acents make people unique and are what makes one appreciate other cultures” (ELL Writer, 2017). A tutor expressed that, “although it may be hard to understand someone with an accent at first, it is definitely manageable.”
- The ELL writer also expressed that, “working with a tutor with an accent made me feel not so self-conscious about my own accent” (ELL Writer, 2017) which suggests that an ELL writer working with a multilingual tutor who is a non-native English speaker could help them in terms of feeling that they are in a comfortable, non-stigmatizing environment.

Research Question

What are the possible advantages and disadvantages of a multilingual tutor working with an ELL writer in a peer tutoring session at the UIC Writing Center?

“Multilingual Tutors are kind of intuitive, they are able to determine what someone may or may not know, they can make do with what they have” (TESOL Teacher/Scholar, 2019).

“I felt accepted, comfortable and safe subsequent to working with a Multilingual Tutor” (ELL Writer, 2017).

“Working with a tutor with an accent made me feel not as self-conscious about my own accent” (ELL Writer, 2017).

“Multilingual Tutors are patient, thorough, and understanding” (TESOL Teacher/Scholar, 2019).

“While ELL writers are as intelligent as any other writer, they are limited in their expression of this intelligence by their unfamiliarity with Standard American English” (Separa, 1994).

“For the benefit of ELL students, it would be nice to have tutors with skills for languages besides English in order to accommodate others” (ELL Writer, 2017).

References


San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.


Gloria Anzaldua (2012, n.p.) said, “as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate.” Her words resonated immensely with my role as a tutor in the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Writing Center.

My experience tutoring at the UIC Writing Center has opened my eyes to the various obstacles that we all face, but in particular that ELL Writers face.

ELL Writers not only face challenges in learning grammar and culturally specific writing conventions that writers face, in particular writers who are English Language Learners (ELL). This inspired my experience tutoring at the UIC Writing Center has opened my eyes to the various obstacles that we all face, but in particular that ELL Writers face.

One day whilst at the UIC Writing Center, I had the opportunity to work with a writer who came in to discuss a paper for her English 160 Course – Academic Writing 1: Writing in Academic and Public Contexts. A few minutes into our conversation, I discovered that my writer spoke Polish, a language that I also speak.

In the moment, I got the idea to ask my writer if she would prefer we discuss the conservation, I discovered that my writer spoke Polish, a language that I also speak.

“While ELL writers are as intelligent as any other writer, they are limited in their expression of this intelligence by their unfamiliarity with Standard American English” (Separa, 1994).

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