

To the Graduate Council

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Karen Judy Head entitled "I Don't Know How To Explain Things' Expectations of New Writing Center Tutors Working with Non-Native English Speakers." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

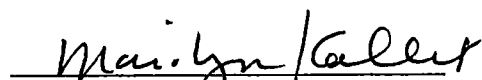


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Dean of The Graduate School

**"I DON'T KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN THINGS": EXPECTATIONS OF
NEW WRITING CENTER TUTORS WORKING WITH NON-NATIVE
ENGLISH SPEAKERS.**

**A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Karen Judy Head
August, 2000**

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late friend

Steve Lewis

who never finished

and

my grandfather

Clifton A. Croy

who, during his life, always encouraged and inspired me.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people to whom I am grateful for making my time at the University of Tennessee so rewarding. I have benefited greatly from knowing the faculty, staff, and graduate students in the Department of English over the last two years. I am particularly grateful to my Thesis Committee, Ilona Lekı, Allison Ensor and Marilyn Kallet for their unending support and guidance.

There are a number of other people who should be recognized for their loving support of my efforts. Among them are my parents, Frank and Judy Head; my brother and sister-in-law, Mickel and Maureen Head; my dear friend, Caroline Noyes; and my cat, Emma, who was my constant companion during many long days and nights.

Additionally, I wish to thank my family and friends, especially, Barbara Clark, Rees Smith, Lamar York, Bill Brockwell, Alan Jackson, Vienna Volante, Bert Deppe, Scott Gavorsky, Sandy Capps, Susan North, Allen Wier, Art Smith, Linda Bensel-Myers, Devon Fisher, Nancy Schurr and Emily Dzibuan.

Finally, I want to thank my colleagues who volunteered to participate in my study and Kirsten Benson, the Director of the University of Tennessee Writing Center, for all her help and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

This study is an investigation of new writing center tutors' reservations about working with non-native-English-speakers. Specifically, what causes tutors to feel comfortable or uncomfortable in working with non-native-English-speakers and what can be done to increase tutor self-confidence and comfort for working with non-native-English-speakers? Overall, the research explores strategies for increasing new-tutor confidence and comfort for working with NNEs.

This was a qualitative research study using the concepts analytic induction to guide the research process. Data was collected through two surveys and a pair of intensive interviews.

This study maintains that the needs of the tutors must^{be} addressed equally with those of the tutees. It further maintains that if tutors are made to feel comfortable they will be more confident and more effective in helping non-native-English-speakers. Information regarding the problems associated with tutors working with non-native-English-speakers is presented along with suggestions for alleviating such problems.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
II REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	3
III METHODOLOGY.....	7
Participants.....	7
Data Collection.....	8
Data Analysis.....	11
IV RESULTS.....	13
Survey I.....	13
Interviews.....	16
Qualification Perceptions.....	17
Grammar Knowledge.....	20
Training Perceptions.....	21
Familiarity with Students Who Are Tutored.....	26
Pre- and Post-Tutoring Expectations.....	28
Communication Problems.....	31
Survey II.....	32
V DISCUSSION.....	36
VI CONCLUSION.....	43
REFERENCES.....	45
APPENDICES.....	49
A General Survey I.....	49
B Memorandum.....	50
C Interview I Questions.....	51
D Interview II Questions.....	52
E General Survey II.....	53
F Overall Results of Survey I.....	54
G Survey I—Question #21 Open-Ended Answers.....	55
H Survey II—Answers to Questions 1 – 8.....	56
I Survey II—Answers to Question 9.....	57
J Author's Note.....	58
VITA.....	64

I. INTRODUCTION

For some people involved in higher education, the idea of an increasing population of non-native-English-speaking students in colleges and universities seems remote and insignificant. However, writing center directors in these institutions may be frustratingly aware of the increase of non-native-English-speakers (NNES) because they are responsible for helping these students succeed, and have limited resources for doing so. Robin Scarcella (1990) explains that “the number of students who lack English proficiency (aged 4 to 18), estimated to be 3.6 million in 1978, will rise to 5.2 million by the year 2000.” Even if one focuses only on the 1978 figures, many of those students are now college age and may still be struggling with English proficiency. Add to these numbers the influx of international students studying in American colleges and universities and the scope of the problem begins to take shape.

↓ NNESs frequently need extra help with their writing and accordingly they turn to writing centers (see Arkin, 1982; Brooks, 1981; Harris & Silva, 1993 & Powers, 1993). Unfortunately, many writing center tutors have no experience working with NNESs and consequently may be apprehensive (sometimes even feeling antagonistic) about working with NNESs; therefore, writing center directors may be faced with the challenge of specialized training for these reluctant tutors.

Although there is a substantial amount of literature addressing the basics of tutor training for working with NNEs, most of it focuses on practical suggestions for tutoring sessions, cultural considerations, or means of making the NNE more comfortable (e.g., Cai, 1994; Friedlander, 1984; Harris, 1982, 1986, 1990; Kennedy, 1993; Meyer & Smith, 1987; Powers, 1993; Ridpath, 1992; Thonus, 1993 & Wong, 1994). Additionally, much of this literature appears in newsletters rather than serious research publications. Very little scholarship addresses how tutors' self-perception and self-confidence affects the NNE tutoring dynamic. Instead, the scholarship centers around the needs of the NNEs rather than focusing on the tutors. An example of this overarching tutee-focused sentiment is expressed by Arkin (1982), who explains, "by understanding [NNEs] unique problems you can help them gain confidence... [and] you must learn strategies for dealing with them" (p. 7). The question Arkin addresses, as do many others, is how to make NNEs gain confidence. Yet, even if the NNEs gain confidence this will not alleviate tutoring session problems caused by a lack of tutor confidence. Since the ultimate goal is to have the most productive and successful tutoring sessions possible, the needs of both the tutors and the tutees should be examined. Therefore, before tutors can be effective in sessions with NNEs, it is necessary to investigate tutors' reservations for working with this special population.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While most of the existing literature addresses issues which focus on the tutee rather than the tutor, there is some literature, albeit quite limited, that more directly concerns itself with the tutor. Still, this literature is primarily pedagogical—how can tutors be better tutors—rather than being sensitive to the perceived needs of the tutor. For example, Muriel Harris and Tony Silva (1993) find that many tutors are frightened by the prospect of working with NNEs, but their solution is to set-up clear parameters about what should be dealt with in a given tutoring session. More specifically, Harris and Silva are concerned with creating a situation where “ESL writers [are not] separated out as different or unlike other students” (p. 526). Here again there is a shift toward tutee issues rather than tutor issues. The primary focus of Harris and Silva becomes a pedagogical commentary on *how to tutor*, and while this information is valuable to new tutors, it does not speak to the initial problem of apprehension.

The one aspect of tutors’ feelings that the existing literature does address is the idea that tutors often suffer from feelings of inadequacy. Several articles do mention this, at least in passing. Still these mentions are limited, most lasting only a sentence, a few a whole paragraph (e.g., Brooks, 1981; David, et. al., 1988; Hoffman, 1982; Leitzel, 1995 & Noonan, 1982). It should be noted that many of these sources are in the form of tutor reflections, which is interesting because one

might expect more information about the personal feelings of the tutor, since these articles are presented as a forum for personal experiences. However, like other sources, these mention the tutor's feelings in passing, quickly redirecting the discussion to the needs of the NNEs, reflecting the general trend where the needs of the tutee are always central. ◊

To be fair, it is difficult to ignore discussions that focus on the tutee, as the considerations presented *become* issues for the tutor. However, none of the existing literature focuses on the tutor as a separate entity in the tutoring process; in other words, the tutor's needs are never isolated from those of the tutee. Certainly, the tutor and tutee are inextricably connected through the tutoring process. Interestingly, the current literature has no problem isolating the needs of the tutee as separate from the tutor. Perhaps, this is a natural result of the perception that by sheer definition it is the tutee who needs help, while it is the tutor who is expected to be the help provider. (Webster, 1990)

Despite the general lack of attention to tutors' needs, there are three sources that make a fair attempt at addressing this issue. Fink (1990) reports the results of a questionnaire she administered asking tutors to identify the major problems associated with tutoring international students. Her research demonstrated that the tutors suffered from feelings of inadequacy when working with NNEs. Specifically, they felt that there was a language barrier and that they

were unqualified to explain language rules. The majority of the respondents felt that tutoring NNEs was different from tutoring native speakers and that, consequently, some avoided working with NNEs. Ultimately, Fink found that training provided greater self-confidence, which resulted in a less frustrating tutoring experience.

Amato (1992) discusses antagonism on the part of tutors. She reports on the reactions of three tutors who “were visibly and vocally unhappy about working so many hours with non-native speakers” (p. 2). She discounts much of the reaction of two of the tutors saying that they were generally discontented, but is still concerned with the unhappiness of the other tutor. However, at this point in her argument, Amato shifts away from the specific feelings of the tutors, focusing instead on what she believes is their general lack of tutoring skills. Amato argues that writing tutors do not really think about the writing process, and that tutors need to be better trained in the concepts of basic writing and error analysis as presented in Mina Shaughnessy’s book *Errors and Expectations*. Amato equates working with NESs and NNEs, saying, “writing as a second language accounts for much of what we already do” (p. 5). In other words, she integrates basic writing problems of NESs with the problems faced by NNEs. In this scenario, any student who can not write well in English is considered a kind of second language student. Although her research may have originated with complaints

from tutors, her focus becomes one of how to apply a certain theory to the tutoring of all students without ever addressing the specific feelings of the tutors.

In another survey, inspired by Fink's earlier research, Devet et al., (1997) again explore the problems tutors face in working with NNEs. Although the beginning focus is on the tutor respondents, as with other discussions, there is a quick mention of tutor anxiety followed by a shift to how tutors can better assist NNEs.

Ultimately, the overarching aim of the literature available is to design tutoring programs that are more successful in meeting the special needs of NNEs. Obviously, there must be a focus on technique and strategies, but the lack of attention given to such a major component—the tutors themselves—may undermine the potential success of a tutoring center's effort to serve NNEs. This study seeks to address this lack of attention through an examination of those who are currently struggling with their roles as tutors of NNEs. Specifically, what causes tutors to feel comfortable or uncomfortable in working with NNEs and what can be done to increase tutor self-confidence and comfort for working with NNEs?

III. METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants for this study were selected from among newly enrolled graduate students (first-year Masters level) in the English department at a large state university. As part of their assistantship/stipend agreement, these students worked as tutors in the university's writing center. This agreement required four and one-half hours of tutoring per week plus a one-hour bimonthly training session. The participant pool was composed of 21 people out of a total of 38 tutors working in the writing center in 1999/2000.¹ The basic parameters for selection were that the participants must be in the first year of graduate study and working in the writing center. The participant pool was informed about the general purpose of the research and no attempt was made to deceive or misrepresent the purpose of the research.

The participant pool began working in the writing center the last week of August. Most of this beginning work was administrative, helping new tutees (mostly NESs) familiarize themselves with the center's policies and procedures. Few of the new tutors worked with NNEs during their first couple of weeks,

¹ The participant pool was composed of 11 females and 10 males, who ranged in age from 21 to 42, all of whom are Caucasian. As undergraduates, all participants attended colleges in the U.S. Demographics were not considered when choosing participants for the various phases of the study.

instead spending time with more experienced tutors in “modeling sessions” with NESs. However, a few of the new tutors who had past experience working with NNEs did work with NNEs during this time.

Data Collection

Sources of data collection included two surveys and a pair of intensive interviews. The first survey was administered at the beginning of the school year to all new writing center tutors and potential interview participants were then selected on the basis of their survey responses. The second survey at the end of the school year was again administered to all the new writing center tutors.

With help from the writing center director, all new tutors in fall 1999 were solicited to fill out Survey I, a simple, mostly demographic survey (see Appendix A) at one of their bi-monthly training sessions at the beginning of fall term 1999. It was explained to the participant pool that the survey was both anonymous and optional. All 21 potential participants responded to the survey.

In addition to requesting basic demographic information, one question (# 21) of the survey was designed to identify respondents who described themselves as feeling uncomfortable working with NNEs. The responses to question 21 helped to cull a reduced pool of potential interviewees. Of the 21 participants surveyed, 14 respondents said they were comfortable working with NNEs and two said they might be comfortable working with NNEs depending

on the situation. Four respondents said they did not feel comfortable working with NNEs. These four were solicited for the interview stage. In addition, those who answered “maybe” or “yes” with qualifications were also included, bringing the number of potential interviewees to six. Finally, a few tutors who said they were comfortable working with NNEs were also selected for a comparison group, although potential participants for the comparison group were excluded if they had extensive past experience working with NNEs. (Since tutor confidence was central to the research question, it was deemed unnecessary to interview participants with extensive backgrounds in either teaching or tutoring NNEs because they would presumably not have problems with self-confidence.) The comparison group was constructed from those survey respondents who answered “yes” to question #21 but did not explain their answers in the open-ended format.

Finally, the entire participant pool was contacted² via a memo (see Appendix B). The memo solicited the selected participants by identification number. Of the nine chosen candidates, eight agreed to continue on to the first interview phase.³

A set of two interviews constituted the second phase of the study. The goal

² Because the surveys were answered anonymously except for an identification number, all 21 respondents had to be contacted by memo because there was no way to know which of the 21 had been selected as potential interviewees

³ One of the participants who answered “no” did not volunteer for the interview stage. For the second interview, one of the eight volunteers declined to be interviewed again.

of the interviews was to investigate why some tutors are apprehensive about working with NNEs. The intensive interview method was chosen because the research question was one relating to what Taylor and Bogdan refer to as “subjective human experience” (1984). The interviews were conducted in two stages. The function of the first interview (see Appendix C for interview guide) was to isolate recurring themes. The function of the second interview (see Appendix D) was to follow-up with more specific questions to clarify the themes. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes and was conducted in various locations to accommodate the participants. These accommodations were an attempt to “[get] to know people well enough to understand what they mean [while] creating an atmosphere in which they [were] likely to talk freely” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). All the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Finally, a second survey (see Appendix E) was administered to the original participant pool⁴ for follow-up on a broader scale. To ensure triangulation of the information, in addition to the survey and interviews, every attempt was made to review existing literature available on tutors’ self-perception when working with NNEs, or literature generally addressing the tutoring of NNEs.⁵

⁴ The original participant pool had dropped to 20 because one of the participants had withdrawn from the university

⁵ Observation of actual tutoring sessions was problematic because the tutors do not work by appointment.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was done by analytic induction (see Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985 & Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Specifically, as elaborated by Goetz and LeCompte in discussing ethnographies,

Rather than relegating analysis to a period following data collection, ethnographers analyze data throughout the study....Data collection and analysis are inextricably linked in ethnography because the ethnographer may not know what questions to ask until initial impressions and perceptions have been analyzed and tentative conclusions have been formulated. (p. 165)

Therefore, the research design called for an ongoing process of analysis where the results from each set of data helped construct the following phases of inquiry.

During each stage of data collection (and transcription in the case of interviews), the information obtained was reviewed multiple times. This process was valuable because each time the data was reviewed it was a retracing of the data collection.

Goetz and LeCompte (1984) advocate this type of retracing, explaining that it allows the researcher "to check the data for completeness, [and it] reacquaint[s them] with territory previously covered, this time with the wisdom of hindsight" (p. 191).

The goal of the data collection analysis was to identify emergent themes.

The survey forms and transcriptions were read and reread several times, looking for patterns, categories or themes. Six themes emerged linking tutor self-perception and an apprehension and/or unwillingness to work with NNEs:

1. Qualification perceptions
2. Grammar knowledge
3. Training perceptions
4. Familiarity with students who are tutored
5. Pre- and Post-Tutoring expectations
6. Communication problems

Each of these themes is discussed in detail in the "Results" section.

This study did not lend itself to any kind of quantification because of the limited number of potential participants. However, the themes were consistently mentioned by all of the participants interviewed, indicating that these issues may be indicative of general views held by many new tutors.

IV. RESULTS

Survey I

As stated earlier, the main purpose of the first survey was to acquire basic demographic information about the participants to determine previous experiences with NNEs. The first twenty questions were designed to be answered quickly and were close-ended. While the demographic information helped contextualize the other responses, no evident patterns or anomalies emerged from the basic demographic information (see Appendix F for a general overview). The final question (#21) was a more open-ended question. The purpose of this question was to determine which participants, if any, were uncomfortable working with NNEs, see Table 1 for specific demographic information about the eight interview participants and their answers to question #21.

In examining the information in Table 1, there appears to be one clear correlation. The tutors who had previous experience as tutors, all of whom had tutored NNEs in the past (Questions 8 & 15), also said that they were comfortable with the idea of tutoring NNEs (Question 21). Only the tutors who had no prior tutoring experience answered that they were uncomfortable working with NNEs. This correlation links experience with comfort.

Table 1: Answers to Survey #1 questions by the eight interview participants

	Name	Katherine	Elizabeth	Mike	Joe	Barbara	Todd	Doug	Scott
	Age	22	22	22	23	38	23	22	22
5	Size of undergraduate institution	1000-2500	1000-2500	Over 10000	Over 10000	7500-10000	7500-10000	Over 10000	1000-2500
6	How would you describe the location of your undergraduate institution?	Urban	Rural	Urban	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Urban	Suburban
7	Did your undergraduate institution have a Writing Center?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8	Have you ever worked as a Writing Center tutor?	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
9	Is English your native language	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10	Are you related to a non-native English speaker?	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
11	Was a language other than English spoken in your home?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
12	Do you have friends who are non-native English speakers?	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
13	Have you ever had classes with a non-native English speaker?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
14	Have you ever had a non-native English speaker as a teacher?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
15	Have you ever tutored a non-native English speaker?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
16	Have you lived in a foreign country?	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
17	Have you visited a foreign country?	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
18	Have you studied abroad? If so, where?	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
19	Have you taken a foreign language class?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
20	Are you fluent in a foreign language?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
21	Are you comfortable with the idea of tutoring a non-native English speaker?	Maybe	Maybe	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

Interestingly, two of the three tutors who said they were not comfortable working with NNEs also said that they had friends who are NNEs (Question 12). When asked informally about this incongruity, both tutors explained that casual relationships are different from tutoring relationships, creating a distinction between personal and professional situations. Although these two tutors agreed that they would be more inclined to help (tutor) their NNEs friends, they were still uncomfortable with the idea and said they would encourage their NNEs friends to seek specialized help.

Additionally, two of the tutors had lived and studied abroad, but in both cases, the country was England; therefore, they did not themselves have the experience of being a non-native speaker. As a result, none of the tutors could really empathize with what it is like to be a NNEs. Still, all eight of the tutors did have some background in studying a foreign language, yet none considered themselves fluent. Nevertheless, in his elaboration to question 21, one of the tutors responded that fluency for the tutor in the language spoken by a NNEs was important to the tutoring dynamic (see Appendix G).

Participants were invited to elaborate their answers to question 21 by providing two to three reasons why they were, or were not, comfortable working with NNEs (see Appendix G). Most of these responses were brief but did help in directing the design of the interview questions.

In considering the answers given by the eight participants who agreed to be interviewed, several basic ideas began to emerge. Of the eight, the five who answered “no” and “maybe” to whether they felt comfortable working with NNEs frequently expressed that they did not think they could adequately explain “things” to a NNE. However, they were not particularly clear in the survey about what these “things” were. These five participants seemed concerned about an inability to communicate, and felt this inhibited their ability to help NNEs. Of the three participants who answered “yes” to question #21, none explained why they were comfortable. Two of the three who answered “yes” did elaborate, but instead of explaining why they were comfortable, they added comments that focused on NNEs needing and wanting help.

Because the participants were unclear about what “things” they needed to be able to explain, and about how communication was a problem, these themes became the basis for the first interview questions.

Interviews

The purpose of the first interview was to clarify the issues surrounding question 21 on the first survey. The interview began with a general demographic question about the participant’s undergraduate institution. The information about the undergraduate experience served as a foundation for a series of questions designed to elaborate the participant’s past experience and interest (if any) in

tutoring. As a segue to talking about the new tutoring work in the writing center, the participants were questioned about when they had become aware that they would be tutoring. The next questions centered on the general tutoring experience at UT. These questions addressed general expectations, self-evaluation, and experiences. Before specifically addressing the issue of tutoring NNEs, the participants were asked if they always felt qualified to help students in the writing center. The final three formal questions focused specifically on tutoring NNEs. Here the questions narrowed in order to gain more information about why the participants responded (on the survey) negatively, or with reserve, about working with NNEs. Finally, the participants were given an opportunity to add any information or ask questions about the interview. As a result of the data gained from the first interview, six major themes emerged. Additionally, the second interview questions were designed to further clarify these six themes. Combined, the two interviews gave a clearer impression of why tutors were uncomfortable working with NNEs.

Qualification perceptions

Several of the participants felt that they were unqualified to tutor NNEs and that “special ESL tutors” could better serve this special population. Two typical responses came from Elizabeth and Joe. According to Elizabeth,

there are times that people come in that I feel like somebody else could help them better...if there is somebody in [the writing center] that I know is a specific ESL tutor, and they're available, I just feel like they're more qualified.

Like Elizabeth, Joe also felt that other more experienced tutors were better qualified to help NNEs. Joe commented,

I feel like I'm not qualified because I don't know the technical terms to tell them [NNEs]...It's not like I feel uncomfortable for personal reasons, or anything like that, it's just that I feel like there's someone more qualified than me to help them.

Like Joe, none of the tutors expressed any personal reasons, or cultural reservations, about working with NNEs. In all cases, the comfort level was connected with tutors' self-perception: Were they the best tutor for the NNEs?

In the second interview, each tutor was specifically asked if he/she thought special ESL tutors were more qualified, and if so, why. All of the tutors agreed that special ESL tutors were a good idea. The tutors interviewed pointed to "experience" as the primary difference between new and special ESL tutors. All the tutors felt that special ESL tutors could better communicate about errors with NNEs. Specifically, tutors felt that special ESL tutors understood the jargon necessary to explain formal grammar issues. Apparently, this was a topic of

concern because it was discussed among the tutors at one of their bi-monthly meetings. According to Katherine,

We were talking in our writing center meeting the other day about how we know the fundamentals of grammar, but we don't know how to explain them to someone else ... I think that's one of the biggest things that separate the ESL tutors, they know how to explain things, they know the names for everything, and they know the explanations for everything.

All of the tutors continually made reference to their assumption that special ESL tutors had advanced grammar knowledge, but none of the tutors could confirm that this was the case. When asked directly if she thought they had special training, Katherine responded,

I'm sure—I mean I guess that they have some sort of outside training. I assume they've taken some sort of ESL class, but I wouldn't know that for a fact.

Seemingly, the assumption among the new tutors was that the special ESL tutors had special training beyond what was offered in the regular writing center training. In fact, although it was not uncommon for the ESL tutors to have additional training, it was not always the case. Sometimes, certain tutors wanted to work with NNEs and had no additional training at all. Nonetheless, the

assumption that additional tutoring was paramount to success negatively affected the new tutors' confidence.

Grammar Knowledge

The idea that an advanced knowledge of grammar is necessary for working with NNEs was the most common reason cited for the lack of confidence experienced by tutors. In addition to the idea that special ESL tutors have such knowledge, all the tutors felt that NNEs knew the "grammar rules" better than most NES, including the tutors themselves. When asked if he always felt qualified to help, Todd answered,

No. I don't know enough about the English language structurally, formally, terms. I'm just not familiar with them and never had to study them. [For me,] they're implicit.

Even more "grammar confident" tutors had some reservations, like Katherine, who expressed her confidence saying, "grammatically I feel like I'm almost always prepared." Still, she contradicted herself on this point when she explained that she was not always sure that she was the most capable tutor for NNEs. Specifically, she said,

I can point out [a grammar] instance in the paper, but I don't know how to help [NNEs]. I guess it's because I don't know the rules.

Like several of the tutors, Katherine believed that her grammar knowledge was acceptable for working with NESs because, like her, they were unfamiliar with the formal rules, relying instead on their sense of how things should sound/be written. However, when working with the NNEs she felt obligated to be able to cite very specific grammar rules. Perhaps the tutors were overly sensitive to their knowledge, or lack thereof, of grammar rules because they were all new graduate students in English. Throughout the interviews, it seemed that there was an expectation that they should know more about formal grammar. However, they were perfectly comfortable with their knowledge when working with NES, and it was only when discussing NNEs that they lacked confidence in this area. This preoccupation with grammar is particularly interesting considering that grammar is not the focus of general writing center training. Instead, students are encouraged to focus on global issues (i.e., organization, audience awareness, logic, etc.) and only to address local issues (i.e., grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.) if there are no global issues, which is rarely the case. Still, the new tutors believed that they had an obligation to address local issues first with NNEs, often never addressing global issues because of session time constraints.

Training perceptions

The new tutors were somewhat “isolated” at the beginning of the year. All of the tutors had just arrived on campus, and were new to the university.

Additionally, they were trying to acclimate themselves both as new graduate students and as new tutors. Just before the beginning of the term, a week of workshop sessions led by the English department staff introduced the new tutors/graduate students to the various new roles they would have. Although these sessions lasted all day for a full week, only one meeting, approximately one hour long, addressed the new tutors'/graduate students' tutoring responsibilities, and this meeting was primarily administrative. Students were given the writing center handbook, which was a guide to writing center policies and procedures, and were informed that they would be expected to attend bi-monthly meetings that would focus on tutor training after the beginning of the semester.

It has already been established that the tutors believed that working with NNEs requires special skills, and that extra training is necessary for tutoring such students. All of the tutors said that they would have been more comfortable if they had had some special training before they encountered NNEs in the writing center, perhaps as part of the pre-semester workshops. Several of the tutors felt that they were not prepared to cope with the special needs of NNEs when they began tutoring. Instead, they felt that they were forced to learn in a "trial by fire" method. Several of the new tutors were able to observe a session with an NES; therefore, they felt more prepared to help NESs. However, this

modeling experience did not happen with NNEs, leaving tutors with the impression that their early training was incomplete. As Mike explained,

We were supposed to be trained for both [NEs and NNEs], I think, was the intention originally. However, time did not permit, students came in immediately on their first papers and it's hard to accommodate all the students without just being thrown in, you know. It's like, "Here's a student come in and needs help with this paper, so help him."

All of the tutors felt that they began working with NNEs without any real sense of what was involved. Additionally, the tutors were often confused by what they felt were mixed messages concerning their role. The tutors were very clear about their roles with NEs, particularly that they were not to function as proofreaders or editors. In the case of NEs, they were to focus on global rather than local errors. However, with NNEs they felt they were supposed to do just the opposite. For example, several tutors referred to the fact that they were instructed to avoid writing on papers with NEs, but that the same practice was acceptable, even encouraged for NNEs. Katherine explained,

I was under the impression that when we worked with an ESL student it was completely different from working with an American student—that we would write down answers for them. It was basically that we were editing their papers, not tutoring them. That was the impression I got just

from hearing other people talk. They said, “You know it’s so much different when you’re doing ESL students. A lot of times you can’t explain things to them, a lot of times they just have problems with articles, and it’s just things that you just have to tell them because that’s just the way it is.”

In fact, the tutors believed that everything concerning the tutoring of NNEs was different. Barbara elaborated,

One training session would have made me a little more comfortable—to know that [tutoring NNEs] wasn’t really that much different. It’s just that when [other writing center staff members] talked about ESL having their own book [to sign up for tutoring appointments] and having their own tutors it just sounded like a whole separate area. I just felt like if it’s so separate that they have their own book, and their own appointments, and their own tutors, I felt like it was something that I really didn’t know enough about.

All of the tutors felt they were prepared to work with NESs, but that the strategies for tutoring NESs were not sufficient for helping NNEs. Significantly, as a result of writing center administrative changes, the writing center director had instituted new procedures concerning NNEs the year this study took place which were meant to alleviate the stress of new tutors having to work with NNEs. Ironically,

in trying to separate the NNEs from the NESs, to serve both populations effectively and efficiently, this administrative change inadvertently appears to have created a sub-conscious segregation for the new tutors which made them feel less qualified and less confident. As Harris and Silva (1993) suggested, it is important to establish clear parameters for tutors working with NNEs that avoid separating ESL tutees from NES tutees (p. 526). Although Harris and Silva advocated this action in an attempt to make the tutee more comfortable, it appears to also positively affect the comfort-level of the tutors.

As mentioned previously, grammar was one area where several tutors felt they needed more extensive training. According to Elizabeth, a lack of training was a problem from the beginning of the semester. Elizabeth commented that she was relieved to have had previous tutoring experience as an undergraduate because

it was sort of like, if you can write you can tutor. I feel like we were just handed the [writing center policies] handbook and told, "here, read this" and then we were expected to know how to handle everything.

However, as Elizabeth noted "everything" did not include any tangible information about working with NNEs. When asked whether anything could have been done early to make tutoring NNEs a more comfortable experience,

Elizabeth responded that training on how to work with NNESs should have happened earlier in the semester. Doug elaborated,

We really weren't instructed, I think, so much as to how to "handle" ESL students...in the middle of the [fall] semester, Carol [an ESL instructor at the university] came and talked to us about ESL...but initially there was no instruction. So, it was kind of like coming into a new situation with tutoring and then being hit with, you know, the problem of language as well.

All of the tutors were eager to make suggestions regarding training. Several suggested that they would have benefited from a special workshop before the beginning of the fall semester. All of the tutors felt that if they had had even one day of special ESL training prior to working in the writing center, they would have been much more confident and comfortable working with NNESs.

Familiarity with students who are tutored

During the first set of interviews, this theme (familiarity leads to comfort) emerged from discussions about positive tutoring experiences in general, and primarily concerned NESs. In the second set of interviews, the tutors were asked specifically if working with NNESs on a repeated basis would have made them more comfortable. All of the tutors felt that given the opportunity to work with NNESs over time they would have felt more confident. Because NNESs were

able to make appointments with special ESL tutors, they usually did not work on a repeated basis with any of the new tutors. Instead, the new tutors worked with NNEs who were only occasional visitors to the center, usually those who did not have appointments and came in during times when the special ESL tutors were already booked. In other words, the new tutors only worked with NNEs when there was no special ESL tutor available. Only Barbara and Katherine had ongoing relationships with NNEs, and in both cases it was only with one student. Barbara worked with an NNE from Russia, who began requesting Barbara as a tutor after their first session. This repeated interaction gave Barbara more confidence as a tutor, thereby making her feel more comfortable. According to Barbara,

Once you work with somebody and you build a connection with them, and then they come back, then it made me feel like I was actually making a difference in their writing, their learning. So that made me feel like I could actually—like I was qualified.

Likewise, Katherine felt more comfortable after her ongoing relationship with a Japanese student. She described her situation, saying,

If I see her come in, I always, you know, if I'm not with anybody, try to work with her just because I'm used to working with her, and we seem to have established a good rapport. I mean she feels comfortable asking me

questions and questioning what I'm doing, and why I'm doing it. We just have a nice working relationship.

Perhaps these two examples best demonstrate the idea that experience tutoring NNESs leads to self-confidence.

Pre- and Post-Tutoring expectations

During the second interview, the tutors were asked if their feelings about working with NNESs had changed over the course of the school year. This question seemed very important because several of the tutors noted in the first interview that they avoided working with NNESs. This avoidance was the result of their expectation that the experience of working with NNESs would not be positive. None of the tutors expressed concern about cultural differences, rather that they did not expect to be able to adequately help NNESs. When asked whether his expectations had changed, Todd focused on his own self-perception, saying,

Expectations of myself, more than anything, would keep me from tutoring ESL students...I still don't feel like I know enough.

Again, Todd's comments are consistent with the belief that tutors need special skills for working with NNESs. Because he hasn't developed certain skills, he continues to lack self-confidence even though he has had experience working with NNESs.

In the second interview (after almost a year of tutoring experience), most of the tutors expressed at least some positive change in their attitude regarding NNEs. The tutors who had more experience were more comfortable than those who had avoided, or not had much opportunity for, working with NNEs. When asked whether his attitude had changed, Joe (who aside from Todd had the least amount of experience with NNEs) said,

I don't know if it has [changed] that much. I mean, I feel more comfortable with it now obviously, just because I've tutored so many [referring to NESs and NNEs combined] people, and so I'm not nearly as afraid

Joe contradicts himself here saying that nothing has changed; yet, he does feel more comfortable. Like Todd, Joe is still concerned with his lack of knowledge in certain areas (i.e., formal grammar). This contradiction marks an internal conflict—the expectation of what it will be like to tutor NNEs (especially regarding self-perception) versus the tutors' actualized experiences tutoring NNEs

Some new tutors, like Barbara, experienced significant attitude changes. In recalling her pre-tutoring attitude, Barbara explained that she expected to be frustrated. She went on to describe how her expectations manifested in her first NNEs tutoring session:

I got into the paper and it felt overwhelming—the changes that would have to be made. It was hard for me to know where do I start with this person, because it was just—their structures were different than what I was used to seeing...I actually went to cursing because I said I don't think I'm going to be able to help this person.

After a few more NNEs tutoring experiences, Barbara's attitude began to change. When asked to explain exactly what had changed, she said,

I've changed in the fact that I can talk to [an NNEs]. I can talk to them about general organizational problems in the paper structures and not feel like I have to send them out of [the writing center] with a perfect paper, that I'm taking them through steps. I'm not necessarily taking them to perfection.

Interestingly, the tutors did not seem to be concerned with "perfection" in dealing with NNEs. Perhaps this is a reflection of the focus on global rather than local issues. The idea of "perfection" seems to be associated with local issues. In other words, a writer can easily correct local errors; therefore, he or she should produce a "locally" perfect paper. However, since the issues addressed with NNEs are global, there is an acceptance by the tutors that the paper will not be perfect after a single tutoring session. Conversely, the tutors seemed predisposed to the idea that the goal for NNEs was to produce a "locally" perfect paper. In this way, the

new tutors' expectations seem to demonstrate the same kind of "segregation" discussed earlier in the section on training.

Communication problems

Finally, all of the tutors mentioned the problems with miscommunication associated with working with NNEs, or what they called "the language barrier." Interestingly, none of the tutors could describe a situation where this barrier prevented them from helping a NNE. At worst, it was simply a case of rewording instructions, or asking another tutor for assistance. For example, Doug commented,

There are individual points that you're trying to make that you can't get through, of course, but as far as it just breaking down a tutoring session, or not being able to help a person at all, I've not had that experience. I don't think it's that much of a barrier, because obviously if it were I don't think that student would be studying in an American college. But, I think that was the mis-thinking I had going in, thinking that I wasn't going to be able to communicate with these students, and I shied away. It's a thing you worry about sometimes, and you kind of feel inadequate sometimes, but it's not a barrier to communication as such.

All of the tutors stated that they anticipated a “language barrier” that was much greater than anything they actually encountered. Like Doug, they all found ways to overcome any miscommunication problems.

Survey II

After the interviews, a second survey was designed to see if the comments made by the interview participants were indicative of the entire group of new tutors (see Appendix E for specific questions). The second survey was distributed in early April, at which time all the tutors had been working in the writing center for nearly one full school year, with 13 of the 20 possible participants responding (see Appendix H for a summary of results). Of the 13 participants who responded, seven had also been interview participants. As a result, only six participants added “new” information to the research. All of the six “new” participants had expressed, in Survey I, that they were comfortable working with NNESs. Interestingly, when asked if they had always felt qualified to help NNESs (question 3), only one answered “yes” (two answered “no,” two answered “maybe,” and one did not answer the question).

While two of the six “new” participants said that their attitudes toward tutoring NNES had not changed during the year (question 8), the other four said their attitudes had changed. Despite their previously stated comfort in working with NNESs, their reasons for a change in attitude do correlate with some of the

themes that emerged from the interviews. Specifically, their answers correlate with the themes of Qualification perceptions, Grammar perceptions, and Pre- and post-tutoring expectations (see Table 2).

Table 2. General comments about changes in attitude

Why Have Attitudes Changed?
1) In the sense that [the writing center director] reminded us not to correct everything, which I had been doing for a while.
2) I've never felt uncomfortable or reluctant to work with NNEs, but I've become more confident about helping them. The more I tutor, the more I know what to expect
3) I was very intimidated at the idea of tutoring NNEs I'm better at understanding them than I thought, but I have an occasional problem. They are so VERY intelligent and responsive to grammar criticism.
4) I have an even greater respect for what [NNEs] are trying to do.

Not unlike the interview participants, these four tutors expressed increased comfort-levels based on experience and they were concerned with issues surrounding how they should approach working with NNEs, and what they

should focus on during such sessions. Clearly, there is a progression, in this case from being comfortable to being more comfortable, after working with NNEs.

As for the interview participants, their responses only served to reiterate their interview responses. However, like the other respondents in Survey II, seven of the interview participants expressed an attitude change and a clear progression in their comfort-level (see Table 3).

Generally, Survey II confirms that new tutors are concerned with their qualifications, especially their knowledge of formal grammar, and had certain expectations prior to tutoring NNEs that changed positively with experience.

Table 3. Interviewees' comments about changes in attitude

Why Have Attitudes Changed?
Barbara: I now have at least two NNES students that request me personally when they come in
Doug: I have become more willing to tutor [NNESs], as I have learned how to do so.
Elizabeth: I am more comfortable with it.
Joe: I am less intimidated now than before.
Katherine: I'm no longer hesitant to tutor them or particularly worried about my qualifications to do so.
Scott: I have learned that most NNES students are just as patient towards the tutors as the tutors are with them. Further, I've learned not to take personality/language conflicts personally.

V. DISCUSSION

Overall, as connected with the themes and problems emerging from the research, several aspects of this study are encouraging.

- 1) The qualification perceptions of the new tutors appear to be misguided and therefore can be modified;
- 2) The grammar knowledge new tutors feel is necessary for working with NNEs is obtainable;
- 3) Training can be easily changed to accommodate the tutors' needs and boost their confidence;
- 4) The interactions with NNEs can be increased to provide new tutors with the experience they need to feel comfortable;
- 5) Negative expectations can be addressed before tutors begin working in the writing center;
- 6) A communication "barrier" between new tutors and NNEs is a preconceived assumption that does not materialize as a substantial problem.

A perceived lack of qualifications was a principal concern of new tutors. As noted in the "Results" section, the special ESL tutors do not always have special training. Nevertheless, the new tutors held the belief that these special

tutors were more qualified than they were. One of the first steps in making new tutors feel more comfortable may be a clarification of this seeming distinction. It seems important for new tutors to realize that the goals for tutoring NNEs are the same as those for NESs. As tutors begin to see that the overarching expectation for working with NESs and NNEs is the same (that they should help the tutee become a better writer not only a better editor) they may become more confident in their role. Even if the special ESL tutors are more qualified, and it has not been established that they always are, the new tutors can gain the same qualifications. Therefore, even though all of the new tutors felt less qualified than special ESL tutors, clearly they can develop the skills they need to feel more confident.

Although the new tutors thought that special training was necessary, it seems that experience was a primary component to a positive self-assessment. If new tutors could gain some self-confidence in early training sessions, perhaps they would feel more confident, and therefore more comfortable, working with NNEs earlier. Consequently, the sooner the new tutors begin working with NNEs, the sooner they can gain the experience that will increase their self-confidence.

This same early experience may also boost tutors' confidence regarding grammar knowledge since new tutors can gain the grammar knowledge that they feel is necessary for working with NNEs. Many new tutors are actually

intimidated by the NNEs they are attempting to help because the NNEs are more familiar with formal grammar rules. A limited amount of training in this area could easily alleviate tutors' fears and encourage tutors to trust their intuitive sense of how the language functions. However, what may be more important to relay to tutors is a clearer understanding of the differences between global and local issues in a paper. If the focus can be shifted away from the local to the global, as it is for NESs' papers, then knowledge of grammar jargon may not seem so important. Still, grammar is an important issue for NNEs. A brief training session addressing common grammar errors and the jargon for explaining such errors would not be difficult to facilitate.

On a larger scale, an expanded training program could be planned as part of the pre-term orientation for new students, focusing on practical as well as administrative issues. Since new graduate students must be on campus prior to the beginning of the term, it seems reasonable that a substantial writing center session could be part of the workshop schedule. This pre-term training would remedy the sense of being "throw into" the process of tutoring. Many of the participants were eager to provide constructive comments regarding the content and format of such a training session. Following is an amalgamation of their suggestions for a pre-term workshop, as they pertain to working with NNEs:

- 1) An explanation of policies and procedures concerning NNEs,
- 2) A discussion explaining the special needs of NNEs,
- 3) A mock NNE tutoring session,
- 4) A review of sample papers by NNEs,
- 5) A review of grammar rules,
- 6) Roundtable discussions with ESL tutors,
- 7) A panel discussion with NNEs who have used the writing center.

By implementing an expanding training session, the writing center staff can prevent any confusion about what new tutors should expect while providing practical and tangible strategies for working with NNEs.

As the data showed, the sooner new tutors began working with NNEs the quicker they began to feel comfortable. Additionally, this earlier contact could facilitate the opportunity for new tutors to develop ongoing relationships with certain NNEs, creating a more positive dynamic for both the tutor and the tutee. Perhaps one resolution to the perception of segregation, created by having special ESL tutors who work by appointment, would be to have the special ESL tutors function more as mentors. During less busy times in the writing center, the special ESL tutors could invite new tutors to sit-in on sessions, or they could encourage new tutors to begin a session with a NNE and then step-in if help is needed.

What seems most critical, in terms of boosting new tutors' confidence, is to establish, as early as possible, that all writing center tutors can help NNEs. Again, this is easily achieved by encouraging new tutors in pre-term training sessions.

Another benefit of earlier training would be the opportunity for open discussion of new tutors' pre-tutoring expectations. By discussing these expectations before the tutors actually work with NNEs, many of the apprehensions might be averted and new tutors might be less likely to avoid working with NNEs. In other words, before tutors succumb to their fears, or the "mythology and legend" surrounding how to best work with NNEs (comments they might hear from other staff members), tutors could be reassured about what their new roles will be like and what exactly will be expected of them. For example, during the interviews one of the tutors discussed how she heard other writing center staff members saying that NNEs are entirely different from NESs. Although she later found this to be somewhat incorrect, it did contribute to her apprehensions about working with NNEs. Certainly, one important change may be a frank discussion with returning staff members about how their comments affect new tutors.

Although none of the tutors who took part in this research expressed concerns about cultural differences, it might be good to include such a discussion

in the pre-term training. Just because this (very small) group did not experience any problems resulting from cultural differences, it still does not eliminate the possibility that such differences could cause frustration for some new tutors.⁶

Finally, in a more expanded training situation, new tutors could be reassured about the language competency of the NNEs with whom they will be working. Many of the study participants believed that the language competency of NNEs would be lower than it actually was. As a result, the “language barrier” they anticipated was not the hurdle they expected. Still, this was a paramount concern of new tutors prior to working with NNEs; therefore, a discussion about NNE language competencies could calm new tutors’ fears about not being able to communicate with tutees.

Although the results of this study were positive, there are factors connected with the comfort-level of the tutors that may be out of the realm of what increased training and encouragement may accomplish. For example, there is no accounting for attitudes that may be universally negative. In other words, it may be characteristic of a particular person, or a particular group of new tutors, to be unconcerned or unwilling to make the best of their experiences in the writing

⁶ In fact, I became interested in this research as the result of a situation that occurred when I was a new tutor. I was attempting to help a male, Arabic student who was openly antagonistic about working with a tutor who was both younger than he and female. When this situation was discussed by the tutoring staff on our on-line listserv, the reactions ranged from “send him back to where he came from” to “just try to forget about it.” Although I was not personally offended by the tutee, the situation was frustrating. This is what led to my interest in cross-cultural conflict.

center (see Appendix I for an explanation of how such negative attitudes affected this study). In this case, the expanded training will probably separate those tutors who are merely misguided in their expectations from those who simply do not care, allowing writing center staff to focus mentoring efforts on those who are interested in improving their tutoring skills.

VI. CONCLUSION

As demonstrated by the respondents in this study, if writing centers wish to serve their NNES populations in the most effective and efficient ways possible, then attention must be given to accommodating both tutors' and tutees' needs. With writing centers increasingly becoming a part of many baccalaureate institutions across the U. S., and with NNES student populations rising, it is my argument that we can not ignore what amounts to fully one-half of the population involved in a tutoring session: the tutors themselves. The research here explores strategies for increasing new-tutor confidence and comfort for working with NNEs, with the end goal being the creation of the best possible tutoring dynamic; a dynamic where everyone involved learns something. While it is acknowledged that this was an isolated study, and no far-reaching generalizations are assumed, the results do point to the necessity of more research in this area. Additionally, because of the lack of scholarship in this area, one goal of this study was to increase awareness, with a further goal of encouraging more extensive research. At the most basic level, the information here is meant to provide information about potential problems and offer suggestions for alleviating such problems.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
General Survey # 1

49

The purpose of this survey is to gather demographic information about the first year tutors in the UTK Writing Center for a study, about tutors who work with non-native English speakers, taking place this semester. Filling out this survey indicates informed consent on the part of the participant. All information will be strictly confidential, and the survey forms will be destroyed once the data has been recorded. The identities of participants will never be revealed (verbally or in writing). You may be asked to participate further, once this information has been transcribed. If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Karen Head. Thank you for your participation!

1	Date			
2	Last five digits of your SSN			
3	Gender	Male	Female	
4	Age			
5	Size of undergraduate institution	Under 1000	1000-2500	
		2500-5000	5000-7500	
		7500-10000	Over 10000	
6	How would you describe the location of your undergraduate institution?	Urban	Suburban	
		Rural	Geographically isolated	
7	Did your undergraduate institution have a Writing Center?	Yes	No	Not sure
8	Have you ever worked as a Writing Center tutor?	Yes	No	
9	Is English your native language? If not, what language is native?	Yes	No	
10	Are you related to a non-native English speaker? If so, what is the relationship?	Yes	No	
11	Was a language other than English spoken in your home? If so, which language(s)?	Yes	No	
12	Do you have friends who are non-native English speakers?	Yes	No	
13	Have you ever had classes with a non-native English speaker?	Yes	No	
14	Have you ever had a non-native English speaker as a teacher?	Yes	No	
15	Have you ever tutored a non-native English speaker?	Yes	No	
16	Have you lived in a foreign country? If so, which one(s)?	Yes	No	
17	Have you visited a foreign country? If so, which one(s)?	Yes	No	
18	Have you studied abroad? If so, where?	Yes	No	
19	Have you taken a foreign language class? If so, in what language(s)?	Yes	No	
20	Are you fluent in a foreign language? If so, which one(s)?	Yes	No	
21	Are you comfortable with the idea of tutoring a non-native English speaker? Please list 2-3 reasons for your answer on the back of this form.	Yes	No	

Appendix B
Memorandum

TO: «FirstName» «LastName»
FROM: KAREN HEAD
SUBJECT: THESIS RESEARCH
DATE: 9/20/99

I hope all is going well for you during your first semester at UTK. The purpose of this memo is to thank each of you for participating in my recent writing center survey and to solicit your help again. I'm reliant on your kindness and participation for my research, so I can't begin to express how grateful I am for your responses.

The main purpose of my study is to gather information that will help future Writing Center Tutors in their conferences with non-native English speaking tutees. As I stated on the initial survey, I'd like to gather some additional information from certain respondents. Following is a list of the identification numbers (the last 4 or 5 digits of your Social Security Number) which correspond to the individuals I would like to speak to further.

27849	73068	38296
0591	9348	59982
68068	58789	3607

Of course, you'll want to know what's involved before you commit. I'm providing the details now, so that you may retain your anonymity before making a decision. Here's what I have in mind: I would like to interview each of the people listed here. I'm hoping to conduct three interviews over the remainder of the semester, each lasting approximately 15 minutes. The interviews will be informal (in fact, I'll be happy to buy the coffee!), and at a time convenient for you. I will need to tape the interviews for transcription, but I guarantee that the tapes will be secure at all times, and erased immediately after transcription. Your identity will NEVER be revealed to anyone, and you can choose your own pseudonym for my transcription and write-up. If you agree to participate, you may withdraw at any time. Even if your ID is not listed, but you are interested in contributing to my research, I encourage you to contact me.

If you are willing to help me with this project, please identify yourself by email (kevans3@utk.edu), phone (946-8594), or place a note in my mailbox with information on how to contact you. If you prefer not to help, please place an anonymous note in my mailbox. It would be helpful for my records if you include your ID and a short message saying you do not wish to participate. Please give my request serious consideration. As I stated earlier, I can't do this research without you.

Once again, thanks so much for your help, and best wishes for a successful semester!

Appendix C
Interview #1 Questions

1. Can you tell me a little about your undergraduate institution?
2. Had you ever worked as a tutor before coming to UTK?
 - If yes. .For what courses did you tutor?
 - Did you have any particularly memorable sessions?
 - How would you characterize your overall experience?
 - If no .Did you ever have an opportunity to tutor?
 - If yes Why did you choose not to tutor?
 - If no Was tutoring something you think you would have been interested in if you had had the opportunity?
3. When did you become aware that you would be tutoring as part of your assistantship at UTK?
4. What were your expectations about working in the Writing Center?
 - If tutored before Do you think your previous experience as a tutor has made your experience at UTK any different?
 - If no prior tutoring Do you think previous tutoring experience would have made your experience at UTK any different?
5. What do you think is your strongest tutoring skill?
6. What has been your most positive tutoring experience at UTK?
7. What has been your most negative tutoring experience at UTK?
8. As a tutor, have you always felt qualified to help?
9. On the survey, I asked if you felt comfortable working with non-native-English speakers You answered _____ Would you mind elaborating?
10. Have you worked with any non-native-English speakers this year?
 - If yes . Has this work changed your previous views?
 - If no. What are the reasons you have not worked with any non-native-English speakers?
11. In the beginning, would anything have made you feel more comfortable about working with non-native-English-speakers?
12. Do you have any comments or questions you would like to add?

Appendix D

Interview #2 Questions

1 Qualifications

What about special ESL tutors makes them more qualified to help NNEs?
What particular skills do you think they have that you don't?

2 Grammar

What kind of training in grammar do you think you need to help NNEs?

Describe a situation where someone had a grammar problem that you couldn't help with. What was it like for you? What did you do? How did you know you weren't explaining whatever needed to be explained?

What kinds of grammar problems have you run into that you couldn't help with? Are you sure or did you just assume that you couldn't help?

Have you ever felt successful in helping someone with a grammar issue? Describe that situation. What resources did you draw on?

3 Training

How soon would you have liked to have ESL training? How extensive should this training have been? Should this training have been instruction oriented or hands-on? What specific issues would you have liked your training to address?

4 Familiarity

Would you have felt more comfortable if you could have worked with the same NNE over time?

Have you ever had repeated interactions with the same NNE? Try to remember the first time and then the following times. At what point did it start to feel comfortable? Describe one of these comfortable situations.

5 Avoidance/Expectations

What specific difficulties did you anticipate in working with NNEs?
How did your attitude change after working with NNEs?
Describe a situation that actually did turn out to be difficult.
Describe any situation where you tutored an NNE student.
What was difficult and what wasn't?

6 Communication

Describe a situation where you perceived there to be a language barrier. What was it like? Where were the hang-ups? How did that make you feel? How did you resolve the barrier problem? How did you know there was a problem?

Appendix E General Survey # 2

The purpose of this survey is to follow-up on data obtained during my research this semester. Again, the focus of this study is tutors who work with non-native English speakers. Filling out this survey indicates informed consent on the part of the participant. All information will be strictly confidential, and the survey forms will be destroyed once the data has been recorded. The identities of participants will never be revealed (verbally or in writing). If you have any questions about this survey, please contact Karen Head. If you need additional room for your answers, please use the back of the sheet.

Date _____ Last five digits of your social security number _____

- 1) How many non-native-English speakers (NNEs) have you tutored since August 1999? _____ (an estimate)
- 2) How many hours did you spend tutoring NNEs since August 1999? _____ (an estimate)
- 3) Have you always felt that you were qualified to help a NNE? YES NO. Please explain why or why not.
- 4) Did any problems arise during your tutoring sessions with NNEs? YES NO If so, please describe 1 or 2 of these sessions.

How were you able to resolve the problem(s)?

- 5) Did you ever feel frustrated during a tutoring session with a NNE? YES NO If so, please describe what happened.
- 6) Did any of the NNEs that you tutored ever appear to be frustrated during a tutoring session? YES NO If so, please describe the situation.
- 7) If you had any negative or frustrating experiences over the last year tutoring NNEs, do you think you would have felt more comfortable if you could have worked with the same NNE repeatedly? YES NO
- 8) Have your attitudes towards tutoring NNEs changed during the year? YES NO If so, please describe.
- 9) If you had to do this year over again in relation to tutoring NNEs, what would you do differently?

Appendix F
Overall Results of Survey I

54

Males	10
Females	11
Average Age	26
Size of undergraduate institution	
Under 1000	2
1000-2500	4
2500-5000	1
5000-7500	1
7500-10000	5
Over 10000	8
How would you describe the location of your undergraduate institution?	
Urban	5
Suburban	9
Rural	5
Geographically isolated	2
Did your undergraduate institution have a Writing Center?	
Yes	15
No	6
Not sure	0
Have you ever worked as a Writing Center tutor?	
Yes	7
No	14
Is English your native language	
Yes	21
No	0
Are you related to a non-native English speaker?	
Yes	2 (one mother, one sister-in-law)
No	19
Was a language other than English spoken in your home?	
Yes	1 (German)
No	20
Do you have friends who are non-native English speakers?	
Yes	13
No	8
Have you ever had classes with a non-native English speaker?	
Yes	19
No	2
Have you ever had a non-native English speaker as a teacher?	
Yes	14
No	7
Have you ever tutored a non-native English speaker?	
Yes	14
No	7
Have you lived in a foreign country?	
Yes	7 (Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, England, France, Guam, Korea,)
No	14
Have you visited a foreign country?	
Yes	14 (Honduras, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Russia, Western Europe)
No	7
Have you studied abroad? If so, where?	
Yes	8 (England, Korea, Russia)
No	13
Have you taken a foreign language class?	
Yes	20 (Chinese, French, German, Latin, Korean, Russian, Spanish)
No	1
Are you fluent in a foreign language?	
Yes	2 (French)
No	19

Appendix G
Survey I - Question #21 Open-Ended Answers

Respondent	Answer
Katherine	With more training, I would be comfortable At the present, I don't mind doing it, but I don't think I'm particularly helpful
Elizabeth	I'm not as comfortable as with a native speaker! Reasons for tutoring 1 Person needs help! 2 At UT, the ESL students I've encountered usually speak pretty good English and therefore language is not too much of a barrier
Mike	None provided
Joe	I'm not fluent in Chinese. I don't feel I could answer all their questions I mumble
Barbara	I'd feel like I had to have training. There are so many "versions" of non-native speakers, I'd wonder about what approach for what student.
Todd	They [NNEs] really want to <u>receive</u> help
Doug	I can not express myself well enough to such a person. I do not generally understand that person
Scott	All students seeking help should get it.

Appendix H
Survey II – Questions 1-8

1	How many NNEs have you tutored since August 1999?	
	Average Number	16
2	How many hours did you spend tutoring NNEs since August 1999?	
	Average Number	11
3	Have you always felt qualified to help a NNE?	
	Yes	2
	No	7
	Maybe	3
	Unanswered	1
4	Did any problems arise during your tutoring sessions with NNEs?	
	Yes	5
	No	8
5	Did you ever feel frustrated during a tutoring with a NNE?	
	Yes	8
	No	5
6	Did any of the NNEs that you tutored ever appear to be frustrated during a tutoring session?	
	Yes	7
	No	6
7	If you had any negative or frustrating experiences over the last year tutoring NNEs, do you think you would have felt more comfortable if you could have worked with the same NNE repeatedly?	
	Yes	8
	No	4
	Unanswered	1
8	Have your attitudes toward tutoring NNEs changed during the year?	
	Yes	10
	No	3

Appendix I
Survey II - Question #9

Respondent	Answer
Barbara	I wouldn't be so worried, but all the reassurance in the world doesn't help when facing the unknown
Doug	Ask to be instructed earlier on how to handle NNES students
Elizabeth	Volunteer to tutor NNESs more actively
Joe	Nothing that I can think of
Katherine	<u>Learn grammar rules</u> , be more relaxed and confident in myself because they don't expect perfection, remember from the outset that it's okay to ask other tutors (especially ESL tutors) for help with NNES sessions
Todd	<i>none given</i>
Scott	I would learn to identify what the student wants me to check over <u>before</u> I read the paper
Anonymous	Remind myself that, to some extent, you have to change modes when tutoring NNESs. What is "understood" to a native English speaker, you may have to articulate to a NNES. It is easy to forget that something I might think of as very simple might be very difficult for someone who is still learning English.
Anonymous	Just that the [writing center director] reminded us not to correct <u>everything</u> , which I had been doing for a while
Anonymous	No. I really enjoy them and sometimes regret having to alter their writing.
Anonymous	Take some of [name withheld-a professor who teaches ESL] classes
Anonymous	I wish that we received more information on grammar, so that explaining it to NNESs would be easier.
Anonymous	Tutor more of them, but I jumped at the chance every time one came into the writing center.

Appendix J

Author's Note

Background

Perhaps it was my early experiences, growing up in a military family, living in Germany as a non-native German speaker and being exposed to a large population of NNEs, that attracted me to the field of ESL. When I began graduate studies in English, I knew that I would be working as a tutor in the writing center at my university. However, I had no idea that there would be frequent opportunities to work with NNE students. Although I was excited by this prospect, many of my colleagues did not share my enthusiasm. I quickly volunteered to be an assigned ESL tutor. Whereas NES students were tutored on a first-come, first-served basis, NNE students could make appointments with an assigned ESL tutor. I quickly noticed a decided apprehension on the part of some of my colleagues for working with the NNE students who came in without having appointments with the special ESL tutors. Sometimes this apprehension manifested itself as a sigh, while other times it was more pronounced, like a rush to take a bathroom break to avoid working with a NNE student. I discounted such behavior as a lack of experience or a cultural apprehension on the part of the tutors. Still, I wasn't sure about the cause of the apprehensions, so I decided to pursue a research project to investigate the question.

Problems with my research

In August 1999, during the pre-term, introductory workshops sponsored by the English department, I began to associate with the incoming first year graduate students. This association was both professional and social. The week of workshops was designed to provide an opportunity for new and returning students to spend time learning about the program and socializing. Although the on-campus time provided me with necessary information about which new students would be working in the writing center, it was the after-hours cocktail and dinner receptions where I really had an opportunity to get to know these new students. I made an effort to attend every possible outing. My goal in attending these functions was to create a sense of comfort and familiarity with the new tutors.

Having been a first year graduate student myself, just the year before, I understood how quickly the students would become involved with their new responsibilities. I wanted to stake a claim for some small measure of their time as soon as possible. After the first few outings, I began to mention that I might need some help with my thesis later in the semester. This approach had mixed results. Some of the more outgoing and eager students seemed very interested, while I, in effect, alienated others by coming on too strong. This was a problem, because, as

I would discover, the alienated students would comprise much of the study group I wanted to interview.

As predicted, the semester began and many students quickly became overwhelmed by their new roles as graduate students. Time became a commodity, and I found it difficult to stay in contact with many of the new students. I began designing a survey that would help me narrow the 21 available students into a smaller group that I could interview.

In mid-September I made arrangements with the director of the writing center to distribute the survey during one of the bi-monthly tutoring meetings. These meetings occurred on Wednesdays and Fridays in an effort to accommodate the varying schedules of the tutors. Therefore, half of the tutors meet each day. I was able to attend the Wednesday meeting, spend a few minutes reacquainting myself with the tutors and introducing my research. After explaining that the surveys were both anonymous and optional, I distributed the survey and left the room. One of the tutors volunteered to return a sealed envelope with the completed surveys to the writing center director. Later that day, I retrieved the surveys and was happy to see that everyone had participated. I was not able to replicate this scenario on Friday. Because of a class conflict, the writing center director administered the surveys for me. In retrospect, I believe this further alienated me from half of the subject group. Although all the

participants at the Friday meeting did complete the survey, I believe that I forfeited a valuable “bonding” opportunity.

Up until this point in the research, I had little problem getting subjects to volunteer their time. My next step was to send a personalized memo to each of the survey participants. As before, I tried to keep the tone of the memo friendly. However, despite my efforts to sound casual and inviting, I received no replies. I waited several days, then followed with an email plea for help. I received one reply. I went to a local bar, where I knew several of the participants would be, and after a few drinks, asked if anyone knew why I wasn't getting any volunteers. One of the students replied, “Why should I take the time? There's nothing in it for me.” I was stunned. I considered several options for trying to “make it worth the participants' time” to volunteer for my study. I had various ideas of how to do this. The most obvious option was to pay the participants, but I didn't really have the economic means to do so. My advisor offered to send an email, and suggested that perhaps an email from the graduate director might motivate students. I was resistant to this idea because I was convinced that either action would further alienate participants. After discussing the situation with my advisor, the writing center director, and several student colleagues (not the participants), I decided to send another email offering to have the interviews in a local restaurant. In exchange for the interview, I would buy the drink of their choice—the subtext

here meant alcohol. This action netted three more volunteers. Interestingly, I was still having to contact all the survey participants because I had no idea which people corresponded with the identification numbers I had chosen as prospective interviewees. Several of the participants whose identification numbers were not listed did offer to be interviewed. After reviewing the original data, I decided that one of these volunteers did fit my initial profile. Five volunteers were still not a fair sampling—I had hoped for nine, but was willing to settle for six. I approached the student who had commented that there was no personal incentive and asked him directly to participate. He agreed. After the semester break, I sent another email to all the survey participants asking for help one final time. Additionally, I conceded to ask the writing center director to mention the situation in the next tutor meeting. After the meeting, I got two more volunteers. I did not pursue the situation further, deciding that eight participants would have to do. Because of the time lost trying to get volunteers, I decided to cut the number of interviews from three to two.

During the first interview, the eight volunteers cooperated. As for the second interview, one of the volunteers declined to be interviewed a second time. Otherwise, the interview process went well, with no real problems or conflicts.

When I administered the second survey, I had many of the same problems I experienced trying to get interview volunteers. Only 13 of the 20 possible

participants answered the survey, and this was after a memo, three email reminders, and an email from the writing center director.

While this pattern of uncooperative behavior was problematic from a research standpoint, it may be emblematic of the general attitudes of the participant pool. In other words, if the participants are generally uncooperative, then this may affect their reactions concerning such a challenging situation as tutoring NNEs. If they were unwilling to answer a survey, then perhaps they might also be reticent about working in an unfamiliar situation. Since the participants were so uncooperative, it is difficult to know whether their attitude of “unwillingness” affected their roles as tutors. However, it does not seem unrealistic that such may be the case.

VITA

Karen Head was born in Atlanta, Georgia on July 24, 1967. She attended schools in the United States and Germany, many of which were Department of Defense Schools. She graduated from Milton High School in Alpharetta, Georgia in May of 1985. For the next twelve years, she worked as an executive assistant. During the same period, she entered DeKalb College in June of 1993 where in August, 1996 she received the Associate of Arts degree with High Honors. Within only days of receiving her Associate's Degree, she entered Oglethorpe University where she graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in May of 1998. Resigning her corporate position, she then entered the Master's program in English at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in August of 1998. The Master's degree was received in August of 2000.

Presently, she is pursuing her doctoral degree at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln.