

IDENTIFYING TUTOR TEACHING STRATEGIES: A CASE STUDY OF  
QUESTIONING, SCAFFOLDING AND INSTRUCTION  
IN THE ENGLISH CENTER

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IN THE ENGLISH CENTER

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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The field of cognitive science has provided us with a large quantity of research concerning one-to-one teaching strategies used by tutors in multiple fields. However, writing centers have been slow to research these teaching strategies in writing conferences. This study examines the teaching strategies of instruction, cognitive scaffolding, motivational scaffolding, and question asking, as defined by Cromley and Azevedo and Chi et al., to determine if one tutor in Auburn University's English Center uses these strategies in a peer writing conference. This research shows that one writing center tutor does use all four teaching strategies and provides examples and explanations for each strategy used. Additionally, this work considers implications for further study regarding teaching strategies in writing center research.

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Style manual or journal used: MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6<sup>th</sup> ed.

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Identifying Tutor Teaching Strategies: A Case Study of Questioning, Scaffolding and  
Instruction in the English Center

In an address to the Third Annual Meeting of the Writing Centers Association in 1981, Muriel Harris discussed the coming of age of writing centers. The ten or so years preceding Harris' address saw a large increase in interest in writing centers; several collections of essays were published which contained articles concerning writing center models, administrative advice, peer tutors, the one-to-one tutoring process and writing problem diagnosis. Subscriptions to *The Writing Lab Newsletter* increased, and *The Writing Center Journal* was established. Additionally, writing centers received more recognition from traditional literature and composition conferences, such as MLA and the 4Cs. And yet despite this increase in writing center interest, Harris asked, "But what about other vital aspects of teaching writing in a tutorial setting? What is individualized instruction in writing? Theoretically and practically, how does it differ from classroom instruction? How effective is it? What is best left to one-on-one teaching?" (3).

Researchers have answered Harris' call with an abundance of research on multiple aspects of writing center conferences. Specifically, empirical research concerning writing center conferences has expanded to analyze numerous topics, particularly the tutor's role in the conference, tutor expertise, and directiveness.

In John Trimbur's article "Peer-Tutoring: A Contradiction in Terms?" Trimbur discussed the apparent contradiction of the role of a "peer" and the role of a "tutor." This

contradiction places tutors in the unusual position of determining whether they should value their role as collaborator with a student writer or their expertise as an experienced writer. Trimbur suggested that writing center directors have a responsibility to help student tutors negotiate their roles to become effective and productive tutors (23). Two empirical research studies have examined the ongoing struggle between a tutor's role as peer and a tutor's role as an authority. Kevin Davis et al. applied Reigstad's three types of conferences—teacher-centered, collaborative, and student-centered—to writing center conferences and then compared their findings with a study of classroom writing groups in the article "The Function of Talk in the Writing Conference: A Study of Tutorial Conversation." They examined and coded four writing center conferences according to Fanselow's four types of conversational moves and found that writing center tutors used both teaching and non-teaching talk during conferences. They also concluded that tutor role is not always clearly delineated. In a more recent study, Terese Thonus's qualitative research used triangulated inquiry to examine perceptions held by tutors, students, and teachers of the role of a writing center tutor. Thonus's article, "Triangulation in the Writing Center: Tutor, Tutee, and Instructor Perceptions of the Tutor's Role," published in 2001, found that all three groups were aware of the struggle for tutor identity during the conference, and yet none agreed on what the tutor's role should be.

A second area of writing center research has focused on tutor expertise. Advocates of non-directive tutoring argue that tutors do not need to be an expert in the field to effectively help students. Several recent studies have examined this proposal to see if it holds true. In "Look Back and Say 'So What': The Limitations of the



Generalist Tutor,” Jean Keidaisch and Sue Dinitz performed an empirical study on twelve tutor-student writing conferences discussing literature papers. Some tutors were experts in the field, while others were not. While all conferences were rated successful by the students and the tutors, literature faculty found that the tutoring sessions with expert tutors were more successful because the tutors focused on global issues rather than surface corrections. Additionally Jo Mackiewicz’s fine-grained study looked at four technical writing conferences with engineering students; three of the four tutors were not experts in the field of technical writing. Mackiewicz’s article, “The Effects of Tutor Expertise in Engineering Writing: A Linguistic Analysis of Writing Tutors’ Comments,” found that the non-expert tutors approached the technical writing documents as academic assignments, while the fourth tutor, who was a former technical writer, viewed the student’s document as a potential piece of communication. Therefore, the three non-expert tutors focused on surface errors and formal tone, while the expert tutor was more personable with the student and encouraged changes that would lead to a successful piece of communication, such as using a more conversational tone in text boxes and promoting an awareness of audience expectation regarding the text’s graphics.

Several empirical studies have also investigated writing center conferences regarding tutor directiveness. Blau, Hall, and Strauss, in their article titled “Exploring the Tutor/Client Conversation: A Linguistic Analysis,” analyzed linguistic elements in thirty writing center tutorials to determine the nature of tutors’ relationships with writing center students. The researchers examined the language of the tutorials for power or collaboration from the tutor. While a linguistic analysis of tutorial transcripts revealed

beneficial information, Blau, Hall and Strauss were concerned because many collaborative tutorial sessions lacked focus and accomplished less than more directive conferences. In another project, “Dominance in Academic Writing Tutorials: Gender, Language Proficiency, and the Offering of Suggestions,” Terese Thonus studied sixteen writing center tutorials through the frame of academic discourse to find dominant dialogue moves related to gender, language proficiency and the interaction between the tutor and the student. She coded her transcripts to identify the number and frequency of tutor suggestions and mitigation strategies. Thonus determined the tutor’s role as an authority in an institutional setting was more likely to account for tutor dominance in writing center conferences than the tutor’s gender.

Despite the multiplicity of research on writing center conferences, research has been slow to explore teaching strategies used by writing center tutors. While these strategies have been studied in other fields, such as cognitive science (Chi et al.; Merrill et al.; Lepper et al; McArthur, Stasz, and Zmuidzinas; Person et al.) writing center researchers have spent considerably less time identifying and describing these strategies. One clear exception is Jessica Williams, whose article “Tutoring and Revision: Second Language Writers in the Writing Center” examines tutoring strategies, specifically scaffolding, used by tutors working with second language writers who come to the writing center for help with the revision stage of their writing process.

When writing center coordinators consider training tutors, they might turn to one of the many guidebooks for writing tutors. However, these guidebooks often focus on how to conduct a tutoring session in terms of setting an agenda, encouraging student

participation, responding as a reader, and recapping what has been discussed during the conference. Furthermore, the information found in these manuals is not based on empirical research, but instead provides anecdotes to discuss tutoring concepts. In one such guidebook, *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors*, authors Leigh Ryan and Lisa Zimmerelli include a chapter titled “Inside the Tutoring Session.” This chapter discusses getting started, making the student feel comfortable, setting an agenda, becoming an active listener, responding as a reader and allowing the student time to respond and write (18-27). Specifically, the section on responding as a reader encourages tutors to facilitate student participation in the discussion through requesting information or clarification, refocusing and prompting. Several of these strategies are defined as scaffolding moves in other fields, and yet a discussion of these strategies occupies a very small portion of Ryan’s and Zimmerelli’s work (26). Additionally, in *The St. Martin’s Sourcebook for Writing Tutors*, Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood articulate and define the paradigms which have shaped writing centers. Most of these paradigms emerge from composition theory and therefore Murphy and Sherwood stress the importance of informed tutors who achieve an understanding of these theories and paradigms (2-8). They also include a section on the role of the tutor with a list of characteristics tutors should bring to conferences. Murphy and Sherwood write:

Among the many traits effective tutors share are good intentions, strong writing and editing skills, flexibility, an eagerness to help, an analytical yet creative mind, a dedication to excellence, good listening skills, an ability to be supportive yet honest, a willingness to work hard, a sense of

humor, sensitivity to others, careful judgment, patience, and a dedication to collaborative learning. (8)

While this list certainly promotes an inviting atmosphere and a caring tutor, teaching strategies are conspicuously absent from this list.

Tutors, like teachers, want the students they work with to gain knowledge and understanding of their writing processes to take with them when they leave a conference. Tutors want to teach students about developing a strong thesis statement, so that when a student begins working on his next paper, he will remember how to develop a strong thesis statement. If a tutor teaches a student the rules for semicolons, the tutor wants the student to recognize improper usage and to be able to employ proper usage in the future. Muriel Harris commented on the importance of writing centers in academic communities because writing centers allow instantaneous and current feedback on such strategies. She wrote, “When a tutorial teaching strategy doesn’t work, the student sitting next to us knows it pretty quickly” (5). And yet, as we have seen, these teaching strategies have not been thoroughly researched and are not readily apparent in tutor training guides.

### **Key Tutoring Strategies**

Research in cognitive psychology has revealed a corpus of tutoring strategies: instruction, cognitive scaffolding, motivational scaffolding and questioning. Two studies have examined and defined these tutoring strategies through research in the fields of reading and biology. In “What Do Reading Tutors Do? A Naturalistic Study of More and Less Experienced Tutors in Reading,” Jennifer Cromley and Roger Azevedo performed a naturalistic study of adult basic literacy tutoring sessions. One of Cromley and

Azevedo's research questions examined the proportions of each of the four tutoring strategies used by more and less experienced tutors. Michelene Chi et al. conducted a similar study regarding tutoring and presented their results in the article "Learning from Human Tutoring." Their study sought to determine which type of one-on-one tutoring is more effective: tutor-centered, student-centered or interactive. Additionally, they continued their study by limiting the tutoring strategies available to tutors in an interactive one-on-one tutoring episode to establish which teaching methods are most conducive to promoting student learning. Their research examined the effectiveness of these moves and of the students' responses. The following definitions of key teaching strategies are taken from Cromley and Azevedo's and Chi et al.'s research.

### ***Instruction***

Chi et al. report that tutors generally control the conversation of a conference. Tutor dominance occurs because tutors set the agenda and select which problem to solve and how the tutor and student will solve it. This dominance often leads tutors to instruct their students. Instruction "convey[s] information to students during tutoring sessions" (Cromley and Azevedo 87). Instruction occurs when a tutor directly tells the student what to do. For example, "Put a comma after 'magazine.'" Instruction also can occur when a tutor provides an answer or explains an answer. For example, the tutor mentioned in the previous example might continue by explaining why the student needed a comma after the word "magazine" because it concludes a long introductory phrase. Instruction may also include summarizing or using analogies. Tutors employ the teaching strategy of instruction when they desire to provide information to students.

## *Scaffolding*

Chi et al. showed how the strategy of scaffolding grew out of Lev Vygotsky's study of development. They pointed out:

Since tutoring is similar to adult-child interaction, scaffolding may be the pivotal step in tutoring as well. Translating this to the tutoring context, 'guidance' means that in structuring the task, a tutor might decompose a complex task into smaller ones, so part of the task, initiate a task and let the student to the rest, remind the student of some aspect of the task, and so forth. (473)

The concepts behind the teaching technique of scaffolding emerged from Vygotsky's studies of learning and development. Vygotsky wanted to understand the relationship between learning and development. He viewed the previously developed theories of learning and development as inadequate, and began his research by breaking down his investigation into two parts: the general relationship between the two and the specific relationship that emerges when children reach school age. Vygotsky asserted that children's learning begins before school. He said, "Learning and development are interrelated from the child's very first day of life" (Vygotsky 84). Vygotsky described children's development as consisting of two parts. The first, actual developmental level defined what a child already knows and can comprehend in his mental processes. While two children might have the same actual development level, their potential development levels may be very different. Vygotsky called these differences his second level or the "zones of proximal development" (86). He defined the zone of proximal development as, "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent

problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (86). Thus Vygotsky asserted that judging children’s development strictly on their independent skill sets limited our understanding of their learning ability (86).

Vygotsky’s zones of proximal development allow us to look at the potential development of children by understanding what they are attempting to master at the present time. A child’s inability to solve a problem independently today does not indicate that he will not be able to solve it independently tomorrow. Vygotsky continued his discussion by saying, “The actual development level characterizes mental development retrospectively, while the zone of proximal development characterizes mental development prospectively” (86-87). Vygotsky argued that this method of observing learning and development allows psychologists, educators and researchers to examine not only the skills and mental abilities a child has mastered, but also the independent problem solving that is maturing inside the child. Vygotsky provided evidence for his theory by citing a research project initiated by Dorothea McCarthy. McCarthy examined the functions of children from the age of three to five. She looked at the functions the children could perform independently and the functions they could perform with the assistance or guidance of an adult or in collaboration. McCarthy found that the functions these children could perform with guidance were actually mastered independently by the students between the ages of five and seven (87).

Vygotsky argued that understanding the zone of proximal development requires us to reevaluate imitation. He acknowledged that classical psychology does not recognize

imitation as indicative of independent mental activity or development. However, Vygotsky claimed newer psychological studies found the children can only imitate what is within their range of development. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development enforces the idea that "good learning" focuses on development levels children have not yet reached (89). Vygotsky's zone of proximal development requires learning. He wrote, "[L]earning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers. Once these processes are internalized, they become part of the child's independent developmental achievement" (90). Thus Vygotsky concluded that learning is not the same as development, nor does it occur parallel to development. However, learning does result in the development of independent mental processes and skill sets that would not exist without this learning (90). Chi et al. explained that according to Vygotskian theory, scaffolding is a significant step in children's development because scaffolding calls for an adult to "guide" a child to his fullest intellectual potential. Tutoring mimics adult-child interaction because a student is working with a more knowledgeable, more experienced individual who can help the student achieve a greater potential.

In 1976, two years before Vygotsky's work was published, David Wood, Jerome S. Bruner and Gail Ross used principles similar to those advocated by Vygotsky to construct a model of learning called scaffolding. Their article, "The Role of Tutoring in Problem Solving," was written to examine the tutoring process, the ways an expert guides a less expert individual. The authors argued that children's skill set are hierarchical. They



master individual skills and then combine them to accomplish a more complex task. However, learning these skill sets and tasks is not simply an individual process. Wood, Bruner, and Ross argued, “More often than not, it [skill acquisition] involves a kind of ‘scaffolding’ process that enables a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts” (90). They continued by explaining that the tutor controls the task so the learner can focus only on what is necessary to solve the problem. The authors’ research project studied thirty three-, four-, and five-year-olds as they attempted to piece together a wooden puzzle with the aid of a tutor. Based on their observations and using a scoring system, Wood, Bruner, and Ross concluded that the scaffolding process consists of six facets: recruitment of student interests, “reduction in degrees of freedom,” guiding the students in a particular direction, “marking critical features,” controlling the student’s frustration, and modeling (98). These six moves, along with Vygotsky’s extensive research, form the basis for the current teaching strategies of cognitive and motivational scaffolding.

Chi et al. also commented on the connection between Vygotsky’s concept of guidance and the teaching strategies of scaffolding when they wrote, “Translating this to the tutoring context, ‘guidance’ means that in structuring the task, a tutor might decompose a complex task into simpler ones, do part of the task initiate a task and let the student do the rest, remind student of some aspect of the task and so forth” (473). Thus, scaffolding occurs when a tutor guides the student in order that the student can find the

solution or finish the task on his own.<sup>1</sup> Cromley and Azevedo provided further insight on scaffolding in their article. Cromley and Azevedo break scaffolding into two types—cognitive and motivational—which are defined below.

### ***Cognitive Scaffolding***

Researchers have identified instances of scaffolding in tutorial session in many different fields. The most basic definition of scaffolding is explained by Cromley and Azevedo as “support[ing] students in figuring out problems for themselves” (Cromley and Azevedo 88). Cognitive scaffolding can occur in several different ways. A tutor can hint or prompt a student to lead him towards the correct answer. This could occur when a tutor begins a sentence and allows the student to fill-in-the-blank with an answer.

Cognitive scaffolding also occurs when a tutor breaks a large problem into subtasks so the student can answer the problem one step at a time. Additionally, a tutor may ask a student an open-ended question, allowing the student to devise an answer on his own. The tutor may also ask a question which forces the student to choose an answer among alternatives. Finally cognitive scaffolding moves focus a student’s attention on a specific piece of information that is crucial in solving the problem.

### ***Motivational Scaffolding***

Motivational scaffolding “provide[s] students with various types of positive and negative feedback” in order to guide the students to make choices on their own (Cromley and Azevedo 89). Tutors use motivational scaffolding to respond to student decisions with both positive and negative replies. Motivational scaffolding may be explicit positive

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<sup>1</sup> Recent research on scaffolding has been used to build computer-based tutoring programs (Graesser, Person, and Magliano; Chi et al.; Lepper et al.), yet most studies conclude computer-based tutoring cannot mimic one-on-one tutoring sessions (Puntambekar and Hübscher).

or negative responses or elaborated feedback. Motivational scaffolding occurs when a tutor asks a student to check his work or to try again. Motivational scaffolding acknowledges the difficulty of the current task and also occurs when tutors attribute student performance to a particular move. Motivational scaffolding can be either positive or negative and helps students understand the success or failure of their choices.

### ***Question Asking***

Question asking can be a part of any of the previous three techniques: instruction, cognitive scaffolding, or motivational scaffolding (Cromley and Azevedo 90). As we have seen from previous definitions, a tutor might use an open-ended question to scaffold student learning. Question asking may also be used to solicit information from the student regarding the assignment or the student's knowledge about the present topic. The strategy behind question asking is not always clear.

It is important to note that all of these teaching strategies are directive to some extent. A tutor may use instruction to explain a solution to a student by using an analogy; the instruction may help the student more clearly understand the solution so that he can figure out the next answer. Additionally, using scaffolding or question asking may not indicate that the tutor is leading a student-centered conference. Scaffolding moves guide students toward a better understanding or toward a correct answer. Therefore, instruction and scaffolding, as well as question asking, can be very directive while still allowing the student to discover the answer on his own.

## **Previous Findings in Teaching Strategy Research in Other Fields**

Cromley and Azevedo's review of research prior to their study indicated that more experienced tutors provided specific rules or facts and also created general examples to inform students, while novice tutors occasionally gave answers and did not wait for the student to come to a conclusion on his own (88). However both novice and experienced tutors broke problems down into smaller steps or processes to help scaffold student learning. They also tended to ask open ended questions, which allowed the students to create their own responses (89). Cromley and Azevedo also reported that tutors use motivational scaffolding to assist with student learning. When students provided the wrong answer, both novice and expert tutors encouraged students to try again, rather than giving direct, negative responses. Additionally Cromley and Azevedo pointed out that expert tutors gave indirect positive feedback more often than novice tutors (89). Their research found that "Many tutor moves seemed to combine instruction and motivation" (88). This combination of instruction and scaffolding guided the student while allowing them to make some decisions for themselves.

Cromley and Azevedo's study found similar results to the research they did prior to their study. They concluded that more experienced tutors cognitively scaffold their students 66% of the time, while novice tutors only used cognitive scaffolding 44%. They also found that expert tutors used less instruction and less motivational scaffolding than novice tutors. Additionally, their studies showed that expert tutors not only use more cognitive scaffolding, but also use a wider variety of cognitive scaffolding techniques (99-100). Cromley and Azevedo found their results consistent with previous studies of

instruction and scaffolding with tutors who teach in a wide variety of disciplines (McArthur et al.; Lepper et al.; Graesser, Person, and Huber; Chi et al.). They mentioned the continuing debate in the field of education regarding the balance between teacher-centered and student-centered learning. They concluded that the positive effects of one-on-one tutoring may show us the proper balance between instruction and cognitive scaffolding (103).

In “Learning from Human Tutoring,” Chi et al. looked at one-on-one tutoring episodes. An important note for my current study is that Chi et al. found “that tutors often do not have formal training in the skills of tutoring. Tutoring skills refer to the pedagogical skills of knowing when to give feedback, scaffoldings, and explanations, when to hold back error corrections and allow students to infer that an error has been made, and so forth” (472). Chi et al. discovered that tutors frequently are not trained in tutoring strategies, but they are familiar with the content they are tutoring. Chi et al. argued that tutor training is difficult since we still have so much to learn regarding tutoring strategies and effectiveness (472).

### **Research Question**

Other fields have closely investigated tutoring strategies used by tutors in one-to-one tutoring sessions. However, writing center research is just beginning to explore these strategies in writing center conferences. This study looks at one writing center conference to determine if the teaching strategies of instruction, cognitive scaffolding, motivational scaffolding, and question asking, which have been identified in other fields,

are used by one writing center tutor. A complete transcript of the conference is included in Appendix A.

### **Methodology**

This research is part of a larger project currently being conducted by Auburn University's English Center coordinator Dr. Isabelle Thompson. This project examines English Center Conference #17543. The conference was held at Auburn University's English Center, a writing center available to students in core English courses. The conference involves a male consultant and a female student who are meeting for the third time. The tutor is an experienced PhD student who taught high school English for 6 years and tutored for three semesters. The student, Jackie, is an undergraduate who was enrolled in her first semester of English Composition at the time of the conferences. The conference was rated highly satisfactory by both the tutor and the student according to a survey each completed at the end of the conference.

This data was IRB approved by the Human Subjects Review Board in August of 2007 for Dr. Isabelle Thompson's research. The data was retroactively approved for this study in April of 2008. This data was collected with the permission of both the tutor and the student. The tutor asked the student if she would be willing to participate in the project, and she agreed. Their conference was videotaped and transcribed. Later, the English Center coordinator videotaped an interview with the tutor regarding this conference and his pedagogical decisions. Additionally, I have obtained a copy of the conference information from the English Center database, which explains the reason for the student's visit and the tutor's response. This conference information is e-mailed to

the teacher. Additionally, Jackie's teacher provided me with a copy of the assignment sheet for the essay Jackie is working on in this conference.

I analyzed this conference according to the descriptions of teaching strategies outlined by Cromley and Azevedo and Chi et al. I created a coding scheme to identify instruction, cognitive scaffolding, motivational scaffolding, and question asking. Since question asking may be used to instruct or scaffold, I coded for instruction, cognitive scaffolding and motivational scaffolding over question asking if the tutor's goal seemed to be teaching the student rather than simply gathering information. I identified instances of each of these teaching strategies using the following codes:

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Instruction</b>              | Telling<br>Providing the answer<br>Explaining the answer  |
| <b>Cognitive Scaffolding</b>    | Hinting<br>Prompting<br>Forcing a choice<br>Breaking a problem into subtasks<br>Asking open-ended questions<br>Focusing student attention |
| <b>Motivational Scaffolding</b> | Positive or negative feedback<br>Reinforcement<br>Acknowledgement of difficulty   |
| <b>Question Asking</b>          | Requesting information  |

I did not code the conference transcript for tutor comments such as “mm-hmm” or “Okay.” Additionally, I did not code places in the transcript where the tutor asks the student for specific information regarding her assignment.<sup>2</sup>

### **Conference Information**

On the conference form the student fills out for the English Center consultant, she writes that she comes to the English Center “To help me come up with an outline and thesis statement for my new paper. Come up with certain topics to discuss in the paper.” The student is beginning work on her third paper, the critical analysis. She comes to the English Center with her assignment sheet and some paper on which to take notes. The student’s assignment sheet asks for a three- to four-page paper. The assignment reads, “We have been using our analysis skills to read the surface and subsurface of objects, written texts, images, and advertisements to determine the implicit cultural myths. . .now you must put those skills to work. For this essay, choose a magazine about which you will form a focused, analytical, and organized argument.” The assignment continues by asking students to note several different aspects of the magazine’s “packaging,” “philosophy,” and “audience.” The teacher writes, “Determine how each of these factors affects you as a consumer. Ask yourself how these elements work together to influence your decision when purchasing a magazine.” The teacher also includes a list of questions the students should consider. These include, “What cultural myths or stereotypes are

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<sup>2</sup> The tutor indicates his continued involvement in the conversation by responding with “Uh-huh” and “Okay.” Graesser, Person, and Magliano define these responses as backchannel feedback, which “acknowledges that the listener is following what the speaker is saying” (503-504). See also Victor Yngve’s “On Getting a Word in Edgewise” (1970) and John J. Gumperz’s *Discourse Strategies* (1982).



implicit—what is the worldview that you observe?” and “What beliefs and value systems are and are not promoted?” The student brings this assignment sheet to the tutor and tells him that she has come to the English Center to request help brainstorming ideas for her third paper.

Throughout the conference the tutor and the student work together to generate ideas regarding what the audience of *Cosmo Girl* expects from the magazine and how the magazine responds to those expectations. They also spend some time discussing ways the student can organize her paper to fulfill the assignment.

### **Data Analysis**

The following section identifies and examines examples of each of the teaching strategies used by the tutor in this conference.

#### ***Instruction***

The teaching strategy of instruction occurs when a tutor gives information to a student during the conference through direct instruction or telling, providing an answer, or explaining an answer.

The following tutoring move occurs several minutes into the conference. The student admits she is overwhelmed with the assignment and is not sure where to begin. The tutor and student first discuss things the typical *Cosmo Girl* reader might be interested in, and then proceed to analyze what the cover promises to the reader. At this point the tutor provides direct instruction to the student.

Tutor: Okay. So now you can kind of start to see, based on your list of kind of

the average *Cosmo* reader, not necessarily you, but just the average *Cosmo* reader, what their kind of interests are and how the magazine. . . I mean they kind of work hand in hand, right? You know, so the reader is fashion conscious and maybe money conscious and, you know, the magazine can go ahead and promote that.

This example of direct instruction occurs when the tutor shows the student how their different conversations about what type of people read *Cosmo Girl* connects with their discussion of what the cover of the magazine promises the reader. In this section of the conference, the tutor gives the student the answer and continues by summarizing what they have discussed. He says, “So the reader is fashion conscious and maybe money conscious, and, you know, the magazine can go ahead and promote that.” First, the tutor makes the connection for the student. He does not ask her to figure out how the two conversations work together, but instead provides the solution for her. Cromley and Azevedo point out that experienced tutors often set up a certain problem for the student to accomplish a certain pedagogical purpose (88). In this case, the student had indicated the overwhelming nature of her assignment. The tutor breaks down the problem into two smaller problems for her to solve. After she has solved them, he uses direct instruction and summary to show her how they connect to each other to solve the original question posed by the assignment.

The tutor’s longest instance of instruction occurs later in the conference. The student and tutor have discussed several different aspects of the magazine at length. They return to the assignment sheet to decide which prompt the student should answer

based on the information they have discussed. The tutor reads a series of prompts from the student's assignment sheet. After one of the prompts, "What self are the creators (of the magazine) trying to promote," he comments "Right, that might be interesting there." The student does not respond to this hint from the tutor, so he begins a series of instructional moves.

Tutor: Okay. Yeah. Okay. Well, I like this (points at prompt on assignment sheet which asks "What self are the creators trying to promote?") because you had mentioned, you know, that it doesn't talk about self-esteem, but it kind of talks about these outward, you know, issues. So, you know, which self are these creators trying to promote? So if you, you know, what kind of person. . .Umm, you know, if you want to think about these, you know, if you think about yourself, as you know, you have kind of these multiple selves, right?

Jackie: Yeah.

Tutor: Where, you know, you kind of have this, kind of, outward self. You have, you know, this kind of inward self that deals with, you know, emotions. You know, you've got another inward self that deals with intellectual issues, you know. And so if you want to think about it, different magazines kind of target different aspects of that. Like *Oprah* magazine draws real heavily on emotions. Where, like umm, *Popular Mechanics* or, umm, *Discover* magazine deals with, kind of, intellect and science, right?

After the student fails to recognize or acknowledge the tutor's hint, he takes a more direct approach and tells the student why he believes considering the question "What self are the creators trying to promote?" is beneficial for her as a writer. Although he is providing the student with instruction, he does point out that the student mentioned that *Cosmo Girl* did not talk about self-esteem. Although he does ask the student "Which self are these creators trying to promote?" instead of allowing the student time to answer, the tutor continues with another instructional move when he begins explaining to Jackie the idea of multiple selves. The tutor continues instructing the student as he explains to her that people have inner and outer selves and that different magazines target different selves.

### ***Cognitive Scaffolding***

Cognitive scaffolding occurs when a tutor guides a student to discover an answer or figure out a problem on his own. Cognitive scaffolding moves include hinting, prompting, forcing a choice, breaking a problem into subtasks, asking open-ended questions, and focusing student attention.

One of the tutor's first teaching moves in the conference is a cognitive scaffolding move. Jackie tells the tutor, "I just wasn't really sure how I was going to like, if I was just going to introduce the magazine or what the magazine holds, or, like, when you're talking about like the people that would be most likely to read it, or. . .I just wasn't sure how to get. . ." Early in the conference the tutor is aware that Jackie is unsure about how to begin her paper, so he scaffolds her by breaking the assignment into subtasks.

Tutor: Well, why don't we finish this (making a list of topics *Cosmo Girl* readers

are interested in). We'll kind of do people and then also do the magazine . . . and then we'll compare them.

The tutor scaffolds the student by breaking down the student's assignment into smaller pieces. The tutor says "We'll kind of do people and then also do the magazine." The tutor simply shows the student that she can break the overwhelming task down into smaller pieces and tackle them one by one. Rather than trying to address all three points at one time, the tutor suggests that the student start out by talking about people, the readership of the magazine, before moving on to look at different aspects of the magazine itself. During an interview with the English Center coordinator he says, "Yeah, we talked about the cover, the articles, the advertisements. I really tried to break those things down." This comment during his interview reinforces his teaching move as an instance of cognitive scaffolding. During the conference, the tutor continues by showing her that after they discuss both of these things, they can "compare them" to see how surface and subsurface elements of the magazine attract a particular type of reader.

The tutor continues the tutoring session by asking the student to consider the readers of *Cosmo Girl* magazine (which he refers to as *Cosmo* for most of the tutoring session).

Tutor: What kind of things are *Cosmo* readers interested in or interested in reading about? I mean, basically if they're going to go buy the magazine off the shelf, what's in it. . .

In this excerpt, the tutor uses two cognitive scaffolding techniques to assist the student in the tutoring session. He begins by asking her an open-ended question, "What kinds of

things are *Cosmo* readers interested in or interested in reading about?” He asks this question to allow the student to determine the answer for herself, in contrast to directly telling her what he believes interests *Cosmo* readers. This open-ended question is an example of cognitive scaffolding because the tutor asks the student a question in order for her to answer the question on her own. Tutors often use questions in cognitive scaffolding moves when the tutor knows that the student knows the answer. At the beginning of this session, the student informs the tutor that she subscribes to this magazine, and that is why she chose to evaluate it. The tutor knows the student is aware of what the magazine’s readers are interested in because she is a reader herself. Additionally, in his interview with the English Center coordinator, the tutor says, “This (brainstorming) worked out well, too, because I drew a lot on her personal knowledge. She’s writing about *Cosmo Girl* magazine, and she subscribes to it.” He continues in his interview by demonstrating the type of questions he might ask her: “You know, what kind of person reads this? And she’ll say, you know, ‘I’m the type of person. . .’ which worked out well until you get to the analysis part.” By asking her this open-ended question, the tutor guides the student to determine the answer for herself. The tutor does not stop with this question but continues his thought by giving the student a phrase to indicate the type of answer she might provide. The tutor asks her a leading question, “. . . if they’re going to go buy the magazine off the shelf, what’s in it. . . ?” The tutor trails off before answering what is in the magazine. This move prompts the student to fill-in-the-blank. Again, the tutor is aware that the student knows the answer to the question and expects her to take an active role in the tutoring session by filling in the missing

information. He knows that she is aware of what attracts *Cosmo Girl* readers to the magazine, and his leading question provides her with an example of how she might begin answering the question.

Another example of cognitive scaffolding occurs when the tutor and student move on to discuss the magazine itself. The tutor had previously broken the student's assignment into two parts: examining the readership of *Cosmo Girl* and then looking at the magazine. He begins addressing the second subtask by asking Jackie an open-ended question regarding the cover of the magazine.

Tutor: What's the cover going to promise to the reader?

The student comments that she should have brought the magazine with her, and the tutor encourages her to bring it to their next conference. Then he prompts the student to respond by asking a more simple question.

Tutor: So, what's on the cover?

The tutor employs two cognitive scaffolding moves. He redirects Jackie's attention to the second subtask, a discussion of the magazine when he asks her, "What's the cover going to promise to the reader?" Then he further breaks down the subtask by prompting the student to consider the cover of the magazine. The tutor scaffolds the student by breaking down the problem into subtasks and then asking an open-ended question: "What's the cover going to promise to the reader?" which allows her to determine the answer for herself. After brief off-task talk where the student mentions that she should probably have brought the magazine and the tutor encourages her to bring it to their next conference, the tutor reiterates his question, simplifying it this time from "What's the

cover going to promise the reader?" to "What's on the cover?" This cognitive scaffolding move allows the tutor to prompt the reader to answer a less complex question. In his interview with the English Center director, the tutor mentions that although Jackie is very intelligent, he did not think she understood the concept of what the magazine cover might "promise" to the reader, so he tried to question her in a different way. In other words, before Jackie can determine what the cover "promise[s] the reader," she must consider what is on the cover.

The tutor also uses cognitive scaffolding to focus the student's attention on a particular part of the problem. In a section of the conference that was mentioned earlier in regards to instruction, the tutor reads off a list of prompts from the assignment sheet and attempt to focus the student's attention on the one he believes is most appropriate for the ideas they have discussed.

Tutor: Okay (read assignment sheet again) Okay, so some of these things, umm, some of these things could make good, good prompts. I'm not sure which would make better prompts for your, you know, for *Cosmo Girl*. Umm. (The tutor reads the following questions or portions of questions off the assignment sheet) "cultural myths or stereotypes are implicit" "What is the world view that you observe?" Umm. "How do you fit into this world view?" "Who created these products?" "What self are the creators trying to promote?" Right, that might be, that might be interesting there.

As the tutor reads through the list of assignment prompts, he comes across one that seems to fit the student's discussion of *Cosmo Girl* and its readership. After he reads the



prompt he says, “Right, that might be, that might be interesting there.” This comment focuses the student’s attention on one specific prompt out of the list of five provided by her teacher on the assignment sheet. By suggesting that the question, “What self are the creators trying to promote?” is interesting, the tutor draws the student’s attention to the idea of “self” which they discussed earlier in the conference.

### ***Motivational Scaffolding***

Motivational scaffolding occurs when a tutor provides a student with explicit or elaborated positive or negative feedback. Motivational scaffolding can also reinforce student response and acknowledge the difficulty of the problem.

In several instances, the tutor simply uses “Okay,” “Good,” “No,” and “Yeah” to respond to the student. These instances often occur after Jackie has given a response to the tutor’s question and she looks to him for feedback. Rather than elaborating or making additional comments, the tutor responds with a simple answer to alert Jackie that she has answered correctly or incorrectly.

At the beginning of the conference, the tutor and student discuss the readership of *Cosmo Girl* magazine. The tutor uses a series of questions to prompt the student to think about what type of people read the magazine and what types of concepts or ideas are interesting to those readers. After the student provides the reader with an extensive list of responses, he uses motivational scaffolding to provide the student with positive feedback.

Tutor: Okay. Well, I mean, I think that’s a great list that we can get started with.

This comment from the tutor is more than a simple, “Correct.” He uses elaborated positive feedback to show the student the answers she has provided are a “great list” which they can use to continue their discussion of the magazine.

Later in the conference, the tutor asks the student what kind of “self” *Cosmo Girl* magazine is targeting. The student responds with a question, and the tutor provides elaborated feedback and reinforces her answer.

Jackie: What’s a good word for “outward appearance”?

Tutor: Umm. I mean, if you want to stick with outward appearance that’s, that’s fine for right now.

In this move, the tutor accomplishes two different types of motivational scaffolding. First, the tutor gives the student positive feedback by saying “That’s fine.” But additionally, by restating the student’s response, “outward appearance,” he reinforces that the response she provided is correct. The tutor commented on Jackie’s confidence in his interview with the English Center coordinator. He says, “With her in particular, she is very self-conscious about her writing. . .So I’ll try to play an authority.” He continues by discussing the previous brainstorming session he and Jackie had. He said Jackie appears confident when they discuss concepts out loud, but she appears nervous to put them down on paper and convert them into an essay. This feedback shows Jackie that the terminology she has selected is fine for now, because her concept is correct and she can change the word choice later.

In this conference, I did not find an example of the tutor using motivational scaffolding to acknowledge difficulty. This may be because the tutor stated in his

interview with Dr. Thompson that he tried to establish himself as an authority to show that he “know[s] what [he’s] talking about” and to help the students build confidence when they do something well.

### ***Question Asking***

The tutor asks multiple questions throughout this writing center conference. This may be due in part to the nature of the conference. This conference is a brainstorming session, and Jackie came to the English Center to generate ideas for her essay. The tutor uses questions to perform all three teaching strategies previously mentioned. He also asks questions to gain information from the student.

Early in the conference, after the student has made a list of interests of *Cosmo Girl* readers, the tutor uses a question for the purpose of instructing the student.

Tutor: So let’s set that aside and talk about the magazine, just in general. I mean it has a lot of, a lot of these (points to the student’s list), right?

Here the tutor asks the student if the qualities of the magazine mimic the interests of the readership. However, even though this comment is phrased as a question, the tutor instructs the student with this move. He provides her with the answer; the magazine has a lot of the qualities from the student’s list.

Additionally, the tutor frequently uses questions to cognitively scaffold the student. Often these questions are open-ended, but occasionally the question forced the student to make a choice.

Tutor: Umm, okay. So what can you, based on all of that and based on

everything we've talked about so far, umm, what are, what are some things you could argue about?

Here, the tutor, who has just recapped with Jackie the ideas they have discussed, asks "What are some things you could argue about?" This open-ended question allows Jackie to decide what argument she wants to make concerning *Cosmo Girl* and its readership. The tutor does not tell the student which argument she should make nor does he provide her with examples of possible arguments. This open-ended question allows the tutor to scaffold Jackie's learning so that she develops an argument herself.

The following cognitive scaffolding question forces Jackie to make a choice.

Tutor: So, you know, *Cosmo Girl*, if you were to kind of pick a particular kind of self, for lack of a better word, you know, you know, what part of "you" are they, kind of, targeting?

Before this question, the tutor has instructed the student about the different types of selves magazines might target. He asks the student this question to force her to determine which type of self *Cosmo Girl* targets. Again, this question is a cognitive scaffolding move because the tutor guides the student to make a decision on her own.

This tutor also asks questions to provide the student with positive and negative feedback. Early in the conference he asks Jackie what is one the cover of *Cosmo Girl* magazine. She replies the current issue features the start of a popular television show. The tutors responds to Jackie's answer with motivational feedback in the form of a question.

Tutor: So it uses celebrities from popular television shows, right?

This question reinforces Jackie's response to the tutor's question regarding the cover of the magazine. By restating her point, the tutor confirms that Jackie's answer is correct, although posing his response as a question allows Jackie to contradict him if he has an incorrect understanding. This is particularly important at this point in the conference, because the tutor is still relying on Jackie's knowledge of the magazine to control the conference, as he mentions in his interview.

Finally, the tutor uses questions to request information from the student. Early in the conference the student says she wants to discuss *Cosmo Girl* for her essay.

Tutor: Now you're going to have to help me with this. I'm pretty familiar with *Cosmo*. Is it pretty much the same?

This question for Jackie is not intended to teach her anything or to guide her to a better understanding of the magazine or of her writing. Instead, the question simply allows the tutor to gain understanding from the student. In this case, he is requesting information about the magazine itself.

The tutor also uses questions to gather information regarding the student's assignment. Over the course of several minutes of the conference, the tutor asks Jackie multiple questions regarding the assignment. He asks: "Is this like the last assignment?;" "So, we've got to get three of four pages then?;" and "Did the instructor give you, like, a prompt?" Again, these questions are not intended to scaffold the student's learning or to instruct her in any way. The tutor uses these questions to gain information from the student that will help him determine how to continue with their conference.

## Discussion

This study finds that one writing center tutor, like tutors in other fields, uses instruction, cognitive scaffolding, motivational scaffolding, and question asking during the course of a conference session. The tutor uses all of these teaching techniques to help guide the student through the process of brainstorming ideas for her essay. The tutor does not appear to follow any particular pattern,<sup>3</sup> although he does use motivational scaffolding to inform Jackie of correct and incorrect responses. The tutor uses cognitive scaffolding more frequently than direct instruction to guide the student through this conference. The tutor's use of cognitive scaffolding may be attributed to the type of conference he was holding, a brainstorming session; the tutor's use of scaffolding may also be due to his experience as an educator and tutor. Conducting a brainstorming session requires a different type of participation from the student. Because the tutor does not have a text to look at, the tutor must engage the student in conversation about the topic. For this particular conference, cognitive scaffolding appears to be an effective teaching strategy for the tutor because he is able to use open-ended and leading questions to gain the student's responses to the assignment prompt. The tutor often replies to Jackie's responses with motivational feedback.

Instruction is used in this conference only when the student seems unaware of where the tutor is leading her. When the tutor asks Jackie a question and she looks unsure or even asks him what he means, the tutor responds with an instructional move, frequently using an example, to ensure the student's understanding. The frequency of

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<sup>3</sup> Some studies indicate that experienced tutors sometimes follow a mini-script, a series of short instructions. See Cromley and Azevedo, 88.

instructional moves increases towards the end of the conference. The tutor uses cognitive scaffolding to break the student's task into smaller pieces—discussing the audience, the cover, the advertisements—and to question her about the assignment prompts. However, once they have covered those ideas, the tutor uses instruction to explain the connection between the subtasks. In his interview, he says, “I’m trying to explain those things, those promises of the magazine, but also how the expectations (create those promises).” He also mentions that the student's familiarity with the magazine was beneficial until they began discussing the promises. He believes Jackie had trouble stepping away from the situation since she reads the magazine regularly. These comments may explain why the tutor use instructional moves more frequently near the end of the conference than he did at the beginning.

### **Implications**

While these findings certainly cannot be generalized to apply to every tutor in every writing center, the paucity of research on teaching strategies in writing centers should be addressed. Future research can look at one tutor's teaching strategies in a variety of conferences, including conferences which address different types of writing problems: brainstorming, organizing, making global changes, and revising surface errors. Researchers can look at multiple tutors to determine if only a few or if most writing center tutors use these strategies. Additionally, researchers can examine tutor and student satisfaction with these teaching strategies; do tutors or students prefer one type of strategy over another? The effectiveness of tutoring the writing process is difficult to

quantify, however, research concerning the effectiveness of these strategies could be beneficial to the future of writing centers as well.

Research can also consider if writing center coordinators should train tutors in the teaching strategies of instruction, cognitive scaffolding and motivational scaffolding. While it seems that tutors should be aware not only of how to conduct a conference in terms of setting an agenda and being a good listener, but also in how to employ teaching strategies to help students learn more about their writing and their writing processes, writing center research has not addressed this issue. While these strategies may emerge as the tutor gains experience in the writing center, the earlier we equip our tutors with methods to assist students, the more effective they will become.

Training tutors in the teaching strategies of cognitive and motivational scaffolding also shows tutors how they can be directive without simply providing answers to students. When a tutor uses a cognitive scaffolding movement to guide a student to a response, the tutor has not given the student the correct answer, but he has helped lead the student to a solution. Additionally, writing is individual. If we, as tutors, want students to find their own voices and write for themselves, we must allow them to discover answers on their own, even if they are not the answers we might have chosen.



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## Appendix A

### Conference Transcript

Tutor: Okay, so we are brainstorming today, right?

Jackie: Yes, here is the assignment. Umm.

Tutor: Okay. So you're analyzing an entire magazine?

Jackie: Basically, umm, I don't know. I probably should just use *Cosmo Girl*.

Tutor: Okay.

Jackie: As my magazine that I'm going to use. And basically you can use one of the three (references assignment sheet) and I found audience to be probably the easiest one to talk about.

Tutor: Okay.

Jackie: And I just haven't even started it, obviously. And I just don't know how to bring it, you know, like having this sort of outline and trying to come up with a thesis statement for it.

Tutor: Okay, now here it says (reading from assignment sheet), "Ask yourself how all of these elements work together to influence your decision" (when purchasing a magazine). So are you supposed to talk about all of these?

Jackie: No, just one.

Tutor: Okay, just one. Okay, so you're thinking about audience, right? And we're . . .  
*Cosmo Girl?*

Jackie: Yeah, sure.

Tutor: Right, okay. Alright. Now you're going to have to help me with this. I'm pretty

familiar with *Cosmo*. Is it pretty much the same?

Jackie: Yeah, just not as mature.

Tutor: Okay. Okay. So let's start off. Have you answered these questions yet (refers to a list of prompts on the assignment sheet)?

Jackie: No, but I mean, I know them.

Tutor: Okay, alright. So who reads the magazine?

Jackie: Of course teen readers.

Tutor: Teenagers, okay.

Jackie: So like teenagers. And then probably just like females. So it's not really for adults or anything. It has to do with, like, celebrity gossip.

Tutor: Okay. Okay. So maybe we could even make a list of everything we know about their target audience.

Jackie: Umm, so teenagers.

Tutor: Yeah. You said female.

Jackie: Discuss gossip. . . celebrities.

Tutor: What else? I mean what kind of traits or whatever does the average *Cosmo Girl* reader have? I mean, what would they all have in common?

Jackie: Umm, I guess popularity. . . probably money.

Tutor: Okay, so it's upper class?

Jackie: I would think so, just because it's like. . . I mean you have to have a subscription.

Tutor: Okay.

Jackie: I mean. . . right?

Tutor: Yeah, well, yeah. And a subscription is even a cheaper way to go cause, I mean, if you bought it off the shelf it would be more.

Jackie: Yeah, okay. Umm.

Tutor: And what are their, what are their interests?

Jackie: I would say really girly.

Tutor: Okay.

Jackie: Like probably like a cheerleader.

Jackie: I just wasn't really sure how I was going to like, if I was just going to introduce the magazine or what the magazine holds, or, like, when you're talking about like the people that would be most likely to read it, or. . . I just wasn't sure how to get. . .

Tutor: Well, why don't we finish this. We'll kind of do people and then also do the magazine. . . and then we'll compare them.

Tutor: So what else, I mean. . . What kind of things are *Cosmo* readers interested in or interested in reading about? I mean, basically if they're going to go buy the magazine off the shelf, what's in it. . .

Jackie: Probably like the latest fashions. . .

Tutor: Okay. Alright, so they're probably fashion conscious, right.

Jackie: Let's see. Fashions and trends. Umm. They usually have, like, a lot of tips on exercising. How to dress for less. Celebrity fashion looks, I guess.

Tutor: Okay.

Jackie: I don't know. True or rumor.

Tutor: Say that again?

Jackie: True or rumor thing.

Tutor: Oh, true or rumor. Okay.

Jackie: Embarrassing moments. CDs.

Tutor: Okay, music trends.

Jackie: I'm not sure what else.

Tutor: Okay. Well, I mean, I think that's a great list that we can get started with. Okay.

So, let's set that aside and talk about the magazine, just in general. I mean, it has a lot of, a lot of these (points to her list), right? Okay, so, uh based on that, you know, what kind of. . . Well, let's start with the cover.

Jackie: Okay.

Tutor: What's the cover going to promise to the reader?

Jackie: I should have brought the magazine.

Tutor: Yeah, well maybe next time you can. Why don't you do that next time?

Jackie: I'm coming in for a different issue next time.

Tutor: Oh, okay.

Jackie: I can bring it the next next time. I can do that.

Tutor: So, what's on the cover?

Jackie: Well, in this issue. . . Do you watch *The Hills*?

Tutor: Uh-uh

Jackie: Well, it's basically one of the stars of the show who everyone hates is on this cover.

Tutor: Okay.

Jackie: Of the particular magazine I actually have. Umm.

Tutor: So, it uses celebrities from popular television shows, right?

Jackie: Mm-hmm.

Tutor: Okay, Alright, and then when I'm thinking of *Cosmo* they always have these different texts (makes hand motion to outline magazine).

Jackie: Normally it's like some type of interview with the celebrity. Kind of like, "What's up with this celebrity? I guess, like, you know, like, "100 pairs of pants to buy"

Tutor: Okay, yeah. So fashion tips, which I think you wrote down. I mean, you can write it down again. Trends and tips, yeah.

Jackie: Yeah, basically "100 places to vacation for less than \$1000"

Tutor: Okay, so it seems very fashion conscious, right?

Jackie: Oh, and it's kind of seasonal.

Tutor: Seasonal, okay, seasonal.

Jackie: Yeah, I remember seeing little crafts that they'd have in it that you could like do for your friends. It's basically a middle school magazine.

Tutor: Okay.

Jackie: So probably for ages 13 to 16 would probably read it.

Tutor: Okay. So now you can kind of start to see, based on your list of kind of the average *Cosmo* reader, not necessarily you, but just the average *Cosmo* reader, what their kind of interests are and how the magazine. . . I mean they kind of



work hand in hand, right? You know, so the reader is fashion conscious and maybe money conscious and, you know, the magazine can go ahead and promote that.

Jackie: Yeah. And also with these, too. (pointing to list)

Tutor: Okay. Yeah. Alright. Good. So they're very, kind of, hip to culture, very hip to what's going on, kind of in those scenes.

Jackie: Culture. That's a good word.

Tutor: Umm, what about the advertisements. Tell me about the advertisements.

Jackie: They have like perfumes.

Tutor: Okay.

Jackie: Let me put that (on my list). Fashion lines.

Tutor: Does it have makeup? *Cosmo Girl*?

Jackie: Yeah, makeup! I didn't even think about that. Makeup and products. Umm, what else if girly?

Tutor: OK, so if we were to talk about those in our advertisement and things like that, what you have is. . . with exercising, it's very body-conscious, very fashion-conscious, very money-conscious. Umm, those things seem to be very, the magazine, again not you, but the magazine kind of promotes this outward focus on outward appearance. Would you agree?

Jackie: I would. It's not very, yeah. Like, when you mention that, it's not really like "How to Boost Your Self-Esteem." It's like

Tutor: Yeah.

Jackie: “How to Look Like a Celebrity.” Umm. “Macy’s Bag 20% Off.”

Tutor: Okay.

Jackie: That kind of stuff.

Tutor: Alright. And then so coming back to this question, now I realize we’re focused on this, but some of these kind of go hand in hand, you know like what kind of lifestyle does that. . .

Jackie: I would go with preppy.

Tutor: Okay.

Jackie: Very preppy, hip, trendy.

Tutor: Okay and here it (refers to assignment sheet) asks you what is visible, what is invisible. And you can talk about self-esteem issues that are invisible, right?

Jackie: Mm-hmm. I guess like up here (refers to assignment sheet) it talks about the language, you know, umm, slang.

Tutor: Yeah, but, yeah. I think it’s a certain kind of slang, too. It’s not, you know, inner city slang; it’s this preppy, up-to-date, I’m trendy slang. So then if you start to put these things, kind of, together, we see how (referencing the assignment sheet) they determine how they shape the expectation of the consumer and how these all work together. Do you see how they, I mean, it kind of goes hand in hand. Obviously if you’re a magazine, you want to appeal to your target audience, right? And, you know, your target audience you have to, kind of, reflect, right, otherwise you lose your audience.

Jackie: Yeah.

Tutor: You know. But it, but it can appeal. . . I'm sorry; I was letting you write.

Jackie: Oh, no. That's fine.

Tutor: It appeals to people who have this lifestyle, right? At the same time it kind of encourages that lifestyle, too. Does that make sense?

Jackie: Yeah.

Tutor: Okay. Umm, so then the question, you know, the next question would be, how does it go about that?

Jackie: Wait. How does it go about what?

Tutor: How does it go about reflecting this lifestyle, but then also encouraging that lifestyle?

Jackie: I'm not really sure. I think it, I think you honestly need to have like a lot of time on your hands.

Tutor: (laughs) Okay.

Jackie: I think. . . Let's say you're in that popular crowd where, like, all of your friends are like cheerleading and sports and then you're just like "Hmm, I guess I'll watch E News tonight."

Tutor: Okay

Jackie: I guess.

Tutor: No, that makes sense. Yeah. Okay, does this help you kind of get started?

Jackie: Yeah, I just wasn't sure, like, how to , how to, you know, like, to, you know, start mentioning it, like, in my paper. Should I. . .

Tutor: Okay.

Jackie: Should I, I mean, I don't know really what to start out talking about first, like, do . . . I introduce what the magazine is and then move on to what it looks like and then what it has contained in it or . . .

Tutor: Well, first tell me, kind of, about this assignment. Is this like the last assignment? Where you only had to write, like, a page on the one issue and then your longer paper was. . .

Jackie: No, this is just one paper.

Tutor: This is, okay. So we've got to get three to four pages then? Okay. Umm. Okay, so you'll, you'll (reading from assignment sheet) "form a focused, analytical and organized argument about this magazine." Okay, so what do we know? What can you tell us? Ok, what can you tell the reader about this magazine?

Jackie: Umm, let's see. I basically can tell my reader a lot about current, current celebrities and what they're doing, current fashions and what, what designer to wear.

Tutor: Okay.

Jackie: Umm, latest gossip. Who's pregnant, who's not pregnant. Who got a DUI last weekend. Paris Hilton.

Tutor: Again. (laughs). Umm, okay. So what can you, based on all of that and based on everything we've talked about so far, umm, what are, what are some things you could argue about?

Jackie: I'm not sure.

Tutor: Okay. No, and that's fine. I'm trying to think. . . I'm trying to look to see if. . .

Jackie: I just don't know what, I'm not really sure what my argument would be. You know, if I'm arguing that the audience is going to be a certain age, or if I'm going to argue that, what would bring someone to want to look at this magazine, or. . .

Tutor: Okay, umm. (reads assignment sheet) I was just reading here to see if, like, they kind of give you. . . Did the instructor give you, like, a prompt? You know or some kind of direction or is it just kind of. . .

Jackie: (points at assignment sheet)

Tutor: Okay. This is. . . okay. I just wasn't sure if there was another handout or anything on the board in class.

Jackie: No.

Tutor: Okay (read assignment sheet again) Okay, so some of these things, umm, some of these things could make good, good prompts. I'm not sure which would make better prompts for your, you know, for *Cosmo Girl*. Umm. (reads the following phrases and questions off the assignment sheet) "cultural myths or stereotypes are implicit" "What is the world view that you observe?" Umm. "How do you fit into this world view?" "Who created these products?" "What self are the creators trying to promote?" Right, that might be, that might be interesting there. Umm. "Are the creators successful who created these products?" Umm.

Jackie: I'd imagine. Because it says "Girl."

Tutor: Okay. Yeah. Okay. Well, I like this (points at assignment sheet prompt, "What self are the creators trying to promote?") because you had mentioned, you know, that it doesn't talk about self-esteem, but it kind of talks about these outward, you

know, issues. So, you know, you know, which self are these creators trying to promote? So if you, you know, what kind of person. . . Umm, you know, if you want to think about these, you know, if you think about yourself, as you know, you have kind of these multiple selves, right?

Jackie: Yeah.

Tutor: Where, you know, you kind of have this, kind of, outward self. You have, you know, this kind of inward self that deals with, you know, emotions. You know, you've got another inward self that deals with intellectual issues, you know. And so if you want to think about it, different magazines kind of target different aspects of that. Like Oprah magazine draws real heavily on emotions. Where, like umm, *Popular Mechanics* or, umm, *Discover* magazine deals with, kind of, intellect and science, right? So, you know, *Cosmo Girl*, if you were to kind of pick a particular kind of self, for lack of a better word, you know, you know, what part of "you" are they, kind of, targeting?

Jackie: What's a good word for "outward appearance"?

Tutor: Umm. I mean, if you want to stick with outward appearance that's, that's fine for right now. One word that, that comes to mind for me is "superficial," which literally means "on the surface," but it kind of has a negative connotation to it, too.

Jackie: That's what I would. . . just cause, I mean, girls at that age are, you know, going

through that hormonal phase and, you know, “I need to be in the ‘in’ crowd.” “I need to look my best at all times.” “I need to have the hottest purse.” To get the social attention.

Tutor: Okay, yeah. Umm, that’s good. Why don’t we start on a separate piece of paper, and you can start to think in those directions. So if you were to, you know, if you were to say “*Cosmo Girl* targets. . .” what?

Jackie: So, targets the superficial young teenager?

Tutor: Sure, yeah.

Jackie: Superficial young teenager. I need to argue that. . . targets the superficial young teenager because the magazine focuses on how to be pretty on the inside but not on the inside, I mean, be pretty on the outside.

Tutor; On the outside, right. Okay.

Jackie: Should it be. . . I guess that would work. “To be pretty”? Is that?

Tutor: I mean, for right now, yeah. I mean you can. . .

Jackie: To be pretty

Tutor: Right now as far as a working thesis goes.

Jackie: On the outside but not on the inside. Cause beauty is only skin deep.

Tutor: Okay, so by, by doing that, what are they leaving out again? You’ve said, we’ve said the same things before. It leaves out what kind of things? (points to her notes) The inside. It’s inside beauty issues, right? Okay, so according to the magazine, what’s more important?

Jackie: Umm, being trendy?

Tutor: Right. yeah, you know, or even, yeah, I mean, being pretty and fashionable and, does that make sense?

Jackie: Mm-hmm.

Tutor: Okay, so if we were to keep that in mind, you know, and that, kind of, as our, as our working thesis, umm, do you, do you have to. . . okay. I see the rough draft is due Tuesday, October 30th. Umm, do you turn in, like, your thesis ahead of time? Do you talk to your professor about it?

Jackie: No, but I'm going to try to go by her office.

Tutor: Okay.

Jackie: And talk with her.

Tutor: Yeah.

Jackie: I'll probably, when I go home this weekend I'll probably just, just start typing and then just go from there.

Tutor: Okay. So if you want to think about, umm, organization in the future, you know, what you can do is, I mean, (points at her notes) how do they target, you know, what, what do they include? You know, how do they, do they target these areas? And what do they exclude?

Jackie: Okay.

Tutor: You know, these things like this. What's there and what's not there on the page. And that might be a good way to, to organize.

Jackie: Okay.

Tutor: And then after that, you can even think about, you know, what does that do to the



reader? Does that make sense?

Jackie: Mm-hmm.

Tutor: Okay. Well, what do you think? Is that enough to get you started?

Jackie: I think so, yeah.

Tutor: Okay. Any other concerns?

Jackie: Umm. Yes and no. Next Wednesday I, umm, well actually this Friday I have a conference with her, like. You know I told you I got a D on my first paper?

Tutor: Mm-hmm.

Jackie: Well like, like if you have a conference with her and then retype it, you know, revisionalize it and all that, and turn it in, she'll grade that one and average the two. So next Wednesday I wanted to come in and talk to you about that. See if, like, I'm on the right track with what she was wanting to do. And then I guess you can just like read over what I attempted to write.

Tutor: Yeah.

Jackie: If that'll be okay.

Tutor: Yeah, and then maybe between now and then you might want to run that thesis, run that thesis by her also.

Jackie: Okay.

Tutor: Sounds like a good plan.