Representation Review

Over the past few months, consultants at the writing center have focused on how to represent multiple audiences to clients during consultations. The article “Representing Audiences in Writing Center Consultations: A Discourse Analysis” by Robert Brown outlines the different personas a consultant may adopt when working with clients. Brown creates four categories, called “footings,” each with explanation and real-world application based on transcribed consultations discussing medical school applications.

The first footing is First Person Qualified in which the consultant’s perspective is one of the reader, rather than one that is personal. The difference between this footing and the second, First Person Expanded, is the use of the pronoun “we” and, “its scope of reference extends beyond the tutor to include others.” The third footing, Third Person Hypothesized, removes the consultant’s opinion from the comments by using “they” or “your audience” while in the last footing, Third Person Identified, the audience is someone who has already read the work before the consultant, say a professor or an advisor. Brown says, “This audience lies at the other extreme of the axis of referential orientation and is the footing farthest from the tutor’s self.”

The importance of these distinctions is that they allow the consultants’ personal opinions to remain separate from our opinions as writers. By adopting multiple perspectives, the client can receive diverse feedback that they may not receive if the consultant reads the essay as a peer.

LeAnn thinks this article will definitely help her in consultations. She said, “I try to use the phrase ‘as a reader, I found this confusing or wordy’ to help the writer put themselves in their audiences shoes. The disconnect between reader and writer is often confusing, so making yourself the reader helps focus their writing.”

Lora says, “this was a great article that I hope will be helpful for all our consultants in their future consultations.” She created quizzes and discussion posts on Canvas to help us understand the information and then apply them to daily consultations, so consultants can better assist a variety of clients with multiple assignments.

Consultant Research Spotlight

Many of our consultants are interested in various aspects of the writing center as an institution and the practices of writing center consultants. This has sparked an array of research projects for our consultants. Glenn, former consultant turned graduate assistant, is interested in finding out if there are differences in consulting techniques in our center when working with ESL clients versus clients for whom English is a native language, and if those differences in consulting are pedagogically sound.

Some questions Glenn (along with fellow researchers Lynn, Assistant Director of the Writing Center and Dr. Janet Zepernick, Co-Director of the Writing Center) has developed to fuel his research include:

- Do we focus more on lower-level concerns in L2 papers compared to native-speaking students?
- If we focus on grammar more in L2 papers, do we correct all the errors to the standard, or do we allow the native voice come through the writing?
- Should we alter how we consult based on a student’s limitations in knowledge of the language?

One interesting thing that Glenn has come across in his research is that writing center consultants play an important role in their interactions with international students. Besides helping to develop writing skills, consultants act as “cultural informants” in that they help pass along knowledge of your culture and country, as well as learning about a new culture themselves.

Glenn and Lynn have submitted a proposal for their presentation, “Cultural Self-Determination in the Writing Center: Fostering an Accommodationist Consulting Practice” to the Northeast Writing Center Association Conference (NEWCA) at Centenary College in Hackettstown, NJ.

Glenn says, “We feel that our research is beneficial to university writing centers that have a large international student base. How we identify and then handle differences in language and writing skills across cultural borders is crucial to the success of our consultations with students from visiting countries.” If the proposal is accepted, Glenn and Lynn will present their research at the national conference on April 18 and 19 of this year.
LeAnn is a senior who will be graduating in May with a degree in technical and professional writing; she has minors in music and women’s studies. She plans to study law with an emphasis in family and child law and advocacy. LeAnn loves to read and has never not finished a book. She has two dogs, Oliver Wood and Lily Evans, and one cat named Severus Snape. As a clear and proud member of Potterdom, LeAnn loves everything Harry Potter. She can be frequently found jamming to Taylor Swift while working out, cleaning, cooking, driving, and doing homework. During the spring and summer, LeAnn plans and runs a summer camp for kids in 5th through 9th grades in southwest Missouri, she also trains and manages the high school and college staff for the camp.

Alivia is a sophomore majoring in communication with an emphasis in advertising and a minor in marketing. Currently her long-term plans are not set in stone, but she hopes to become a useful asset to any company she works for. Alivia’s hobbies include reading, walking, dancing, listening to music, and obsessing over cute animals. Drinking hot chocolate is her go to stress-reliever. Summer is her favorite time of the year because she loves being outdoors. She has a passion for helping others and putting smiles on everyone’s faces.

Laura is a junior in the English Education program and hopes to become an English teacher in a nearby school district. She loves reading and all things that relate to Disney, The Chronicles of Narnia, and The Lord of the Rings. She also enjoys singing wherever she goes. She is also an avid lover of coffee and usually carries a cup with her everywhere to keep her caffeinated. She is a perpetually joyful person and loves to brighten other people’s days in any way possible.

Farewell Fellow Consultants

Several consultants finished their last consultations, hung up their transcription headphones, and put away their nametags in order to go out into the real world. The Writing Center had to say goodbye to Taylor, Cearrah, Glenn, Bart, Mary, and Kevin in December 2014.

Glenn received a graduate assistant position with PSU and is teaching ENGL 299 while Taylor has taken over the city planner position for the city of Joplin. Cearrah began her student teaching semester at Baxter Springs High School teaching tenth graders. Bart is doing freelance editing and copy write work. He is also in the process of creating an independent publishing company. Both Kevin and Mary graduated, and Mary is planning to teach English as a second language in Asia.

Although we will miss their presence and expertise, we are happy and excited to see what they accomplish with their experience and talent.

SNAPS! Here is what clients are saying about our consultants!

**Lynn** is the most experienced and professional tutor! I have only one word for her, “AWESOME!”

**Olivia** did wonderful helping me with my assignment. She was friendly, as well as very knowledgeable.

**Tisha** was very encouraging and walked me through the process of writing a more complete paper. I was very very impressed by her professionalism.

**Brad** taught me more in our one hour session than I learned my whole college career, and I am a fourth year student.

**LeAnn** was great to work with and I would highly recommend her for helping others. She did not just correct the paper for me, but took the time to point out the areas that I could make better. Thanks for your help.

**Anna** was very exceptional!!! I’ve had her two times now. She knows what she’s doing and helps me boost my score on papers every time.

**Jake** helped me a lot, he is really caring and attention giving. He has surely helped me with my essay and I would definitely recommend him to any of my friends. Keep up the good work, Jake!

**Jess** actually works on what I want to work on. She provided websites with me to help me understand topics. She is great at catching mistakes, otherwise missed on a quick glance.

**Lora** was very knowledgeable and helped me to make my paper more readable and expansive.