

# Establishing a Tutor Training Program in the Absence of Region-Specific Literature

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Peer tutors teach us how to teach them!

Kail, Harvey. (1983). Collaborative learning in context: The problem of peer tutoring.  
*College English*, 45(6), 594-599.

# American University of Sharjah

- 4700 students from 80+ nationalities
- 52% educated in English medium systems
  - British
  - American
  - Indian / Pakistani
- 48% from non-English education systems
  - Arabic
  - Iranian
- Top 10 nationalities
  - Emirati, Jordanian, Palestinian, Iranian, Saudi Arabian,
  - Syrian, Pakistani, Egyptian, Indian, Lebanese



## Fall 2007 Peer Tutor Training Class

(left to right) Elias, Bilal, Sarah, Farhaana, Erini, Nadeen,  
Sana, Reem, Dana, Raghad, Arifa, Hina, Laura

# Course Objectives

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This course is designed to help WRI 221 students. . .

- understand themselves and their peers as multicultural and multilingual writers.
- develop a deeper understanding of the writing process.
- become familiar with and think critically about writing and peer-tutoring issues and theories.
- consider how such issues and theories may or may not apply in the AUS context.
- learn strategies that will help peers understand the conventions of academic discourse.
- develop a philosophy and practical approach to peer-tutoring in writing.

## A learner-centered approach!

- active inquiry,
- reflection,
- collaboration,
- experiential learning

## LEARNING FRAMEWORK

- Who is my writing self?
- How does culture affect writing?
- How do writers write?
- Why talk about writing?
- How do we talk about writing?

# Semester Assignments

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Class participation

Dialogue journals

Short paper (Who am I as a Writer in English?)

Grammar presentation

Writing tutor practicum and reflection

Research paper proposal / paper / presentation

## From the syllabus on “Class Participation” ....

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As multilingual tutors supporting multilingual peers in writing at an English-medium university in an Arab country, you hold a unique position in the realm of peer tutoring in writing. As most of our course readings will treat a North American context, WRI 221 students will need to contribute their experiences and insights as multilingual students at AUS to fill the information gap, to help the class consider how the addressed concepts resonate with their reality, and to forge an understanding of how writing tutoring can best be practiced at AUS.

# Who am I as a writer in English?

I never even realised how deeply this foreign language [English] inhabits my being, making all the others seem like guests who merely pass by every now and then. And sometimes it so happens that the resident and the guests get together for supper, in which event the outcome sounds something like this- “*Jee* (Urdu), the *khana* (Hindi) is very *laziz* (Arabic)!” However, if it actually came down to writing this hotchpotch, it would undoubtedly be delivered as “Yes, the food is very tasty!”

## EXCERPT FROM A DIALOGUE JOURNAL

These readings inspired many questions. As I walked from building to building between classes I found myself wondering whether American universities were a form of cultural hegemony? Have I, as a non-native speaker changed my writing and consequently my rhetoric unconsciously? I thought about all the students I saw at the writing center. How many will feel alienated from their family and cultural ideologies if their education is successful? How much of effort and frustration do they have to put in to write an academic paper? Is an American education worth it? If it is, what are the political implications of an American university education? What are the implications for oriental scholarly culture if there is a significant shift in the choice of universities?

Theme One: Who is my writing self?

Theme Two: How does culture effect writing?

identity

ARABIZI

Contrastive rhetoric

L1

prestige

CODE SWITCHING

L2

resistance

**World Englishes**

nationality

POWER

**Mother tongue**

SUBTRACTIVE BILINGUALISM

*Flingsh*

LANGUAGE OWNERSHIP

hegemony

## OBSERVATION REFLECTION EXCERPT

The observation [described above] made me think about my research paper topic. Due to the tutee's low English proficiency, the tutor and the tutee (an Arabic speaker) had difficulty communicating several times in the session. As both the tutee and tutor were highly motivated, the tutor eventually figured out what the tutee was trying to say after the tutee explained several times. Nonetheless, the session would have been less time consuming if the tutor and tutee had shared a language other than English. **I think it would be interesting to research whether a peer tutoring session is more successful if the tutor and tutee share a language other than English. More specifically, can this scenario harm or enhance the tutee's experience in learning a new language?**

# AUS-Centered Research Paper Topics

- Are peer tutoring sessions more successful if the tutor and tutee share a language?
- How do students from an Indian education system adjust to the highly writing intensive curriculum of an American system?
- What problems do dyslexic students encounter at AUS and what measures can be taken to assist them?
- Should the use of World Englishes be permitted at AUS?
- How do a tutee's and tutor's cultural biases affect their tutorial?

## Quote from a student research paper on the advantages of bilingualism in peer tutoring:

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In peer tutoring, tutors are often faced with situations wherein they need to relate the rhetorical conventions of English to the tutee. Being bilingual, the tutor has greater meta-linguistic awareness and a better understanding of language operations which in turn allow him/her to communicate the rhetorical demands of the English language.

# Peer tutors teach us how to teach them!

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When training is truly collaborative, novice tutors should continue to shape the training. . . . For those of us who have proceeded on this principle, our syllabi, even though tentative, just gets better and better each time (Muriel Harris, 2006, 307).

Harris, Muriel. "Using Tutorial Principles To Train Tutors: Practicing Our Praxis." *The Writing Center Director's Resource Book*. Ed. Christina Murphy And Byron L. Stay. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006. 301-310.