Exploring the Interactions Between Writing Pedagogy and Technological Knowledge in Online Writing Consultation

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Exploring the Interactions Between Writing Pedagogy and Technological Knowledge in Online Writing Consultation

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A Dissertation Submitted to The Graduate School at the University of Missouri-St. Louis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education with an emphasis in Teaching and Learning Processes

December 2016

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Abstract

Online writing consultation continues to advance from mere asynchronous email systems to more technologically rich synchronous venues. Technologies, such as chat rooms and video conferencing software, to even more immersive and interactive virtual environments, have created complex and rewarding spaces for writing consultations to take place. However, most professional conversation, training, and research for online writing consultation focuses on two aspects of online writing consultation—technological knowledge, often fixated on learning to use a technology to teach, and pedagogical knowledge, knowledge about writing and tutoring practices, which are often based in traditional face-to-face tutoring processes. This study looks at how writing tutors come to understand the interactions between pedagogy and technology by considering their talk both in reflection of their development as writing tutors in addition to their online consultation sessions. Following a small staff of 7 writing tutors from their training onto their tutoring session and in their reflection of their practices, this study utilized both multimodal discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis to learn more about how they shaped their practices when working online. By analyzing tutors’ ways of talking about their practices, how writing consultants come to recognize and understand their pedagogical approaches through the lens of a tutoring technology, and how they interact with and utilize a technology meaningfully based on their pedagogical methods, assists in developing more comprehensive training for online writing consultants.
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Terms and Definitions

**Discourse**: The use of language as it is embedded within social practice (Fairclough, 1992).

**Training**: The initial and ongoing professional development of writing tutors that prepares them to theoretically understand writing consultation and gives them the practical skills to carry out day-to-day writing center tasks.

**Tutor**: See *Writing Consultant*.

**Tutoring**: See *Writing Consultation*.

**Writing Center**: An online or physical space where writers can receive assistance with a variety of writing tasks from qualified writing experts.

**Writing Consultant**: A professionally prepared writing expert that helps writers with pre-writing, composing, research, or revision tasks. This term, in this study, is synonymous with *Tutor*.

**Writing Consultation**: A conversation between a writer and a writing consultant focused on providing writing assistance. This term, in this study, is synonymous with *Tutoring*. 

CHAPTER ONE

“So what do you think happens online that is different from face-to-face?”

“It’s harder to work with the writing because we don’t know what the student is thinking sometimes. We take on more responsibility and that can be dangerous.”

“Can’t we just make the conscious choice to keep responsibility in the hands of the student?”

“Ideally, yes. But we’re working with a screen, not a person.”

...we’re working with a screen, not a person. A year before this study, in a conversation about online tutoring, I did not expect that response from Jane, an experienced writing consultant with over 1,200 hours of working with students. However, her insights offer a revealing glimpse at how even an experienced writing tutor might come to understand the nature of online writing consultation. In the Writing Center, Jane is an experienced and impressive writing consultant. She understands clearly what it means to tutor writing well—she is patient with her students, makes sure they are comfortable when discussing writing, and is skilled at fostering a sense of agency, even within the most hesitant students. Jane’s tutoring knowledge and approach to consultation is exactly why I found her comments both interesting and concerning. There are two important constructs bound within her words: 1) It is widely understood within the writing center community that face-to-face writing consultation happens differently than online writing consultation (Breuch & Racine, 2000; Bell, 2006; Buck, 2008; CCCC, 2013; Hewett, 2010; Rickly, 1998), and 2) Jane, as her insights reveal, felt less immersed as a writing tutor in her online tutoring sessions. In fact, in the exchange that starts this chapter, she presents herself as feeling disconnected from the student when working online. Jane felt more as if she was tutoring the document itself and less as if she was assisting an actual person.
These concerns provide the foundation for this study and react against what I refer to in the next section as the *culture of writing consultation*. Understandably, this culture was born out of ideas developed and fostered in face-to-face tutoring and one-to-one writing instruction, but has often, without much consideration to the differences in tutoring venue, been applied to online writing consultation as well. With further exploration, the places where online writing consultation fails to align with face-to-face consultation can be identified, leading to better research for online tutor training.

As someone who prepares writing consultants to do writing center work, I want to stress my concern with the term *training* when speaking about the professional development of writing consultants. For this study, I will continue to use the word training, as in writing center literature it is ubiquitous to describe the preparation and ongoing education of writing consultants. However, I must note that the term training carries with it reductive qualities about working closely with students and their writing. The word itself attempts to streamline the complexity of learning how to teach students writing, and it may be seen as defining writing consultation as a product rather than a personal process of learning and growth. Likewise on professional listservs, such as WCenter, an online writing center community forum, there has been much talk about alternatives to the term *tutor*, as it inserts a remedial-like quality into the culture of writing consultation. Accordingly, it may also be time for writing centers to also reconsider the term *training* when referring to staff development.
The Culture of Writing Consultation

Historically, writing centers have a well-established reputation for existing within liminal spaces. They spend a lot of time positioning themselves within academia and, sometimes against their will, getting positioned by others in terms of what they are and the kinds of work they do. Understanding how writing centers are located, or get situated on their behalf by other institutional forces and politics, can help explain the importance of the kinds of work writing centers carry out. As many scholars have recognized, the culture of writing consultation\(^1\) is one of carefulness, respect, and pragmatism, allowing writing centers to enact a flexibility not seen in most other academic resources often constrained by institutional bureaucracy (Murphy, 1989; North, 1984; Boquet, 1999; Brooks, 1991; Harris, 1986). The unique relationship between tutors and students in the writing center setting has become the foundation for most research in the field. Murphy (1989) states “the fact that students come to the writing center wanting help and assuming they will receive it places those students in a different type of relationship with the tutor than with the instructor in a traditional classroom setting” (p. 13). Writing tutors are not the student and not the teacher; instead, the writing tutor adopts a different kind of position, occupying a malleable space within a specialized academic context. Ideally, the constant shifting and sometimes ambiguous identity of writing centers and writing consultants can serve as an advantage when working with students and their writing, allowing students’ needs to be recognized and addressed with more pedagogical freedom.

\(^1\) In this dissertation, the terms writing consultation and tutoring are often used interchangeably, as are writing consultant and tutor.
Noting that this identity is sometimes difficult to identify, North (1984) strategically defines writing centers and tutors using a *via negativa* approach, claiming, “…we are not the teacher. We did not assign the writing, and we will not grade it” (p. 442). Often in institutions, the writing center has gained the privilege to appropriate its practices, policies, and identities in many useful ways. It is this plasticity that permits tutors to adopt specialized pedagogical stances within tutoring sessions, offering the most appropriate help when it is contextually relevant. This understanding of writing consultation may appear to be untidy at times, but tutoring approaches must still be carefully considered when working with students, even down to the smallest communicative moments that make up any session.

Those working in writing centers understand that the act of writing, even academic writing, is often a personal task. A student may work on an essay for hours, days, weeks, even months, and when they bring their work into a writing center, in order to fully empathize with the writing effort, writing consultants must learn to respect the amount of time and effort invested. Furthermore, because writing consultations are commonly based in one-to-one conversations, which are often personal in nature, students may feel reluctant to discuss their writing at length, if at all. The perception in composition and rhetoric research is that these hesitations are rooted in socially constructed fears about writing being tied to intelligence (Baker, 2006; Chandler, 2007). For some, this makes writing consultation a seemingly cathartic experience. When describing an interaction with a graduate student working on her comprehensive exams, Fox (2002) details the complicated and sometimes therapeutic nature of how tutors and students might interact during a tutoring session.
After I assured her—no, guaranteed her—that she would not fail her comprehensive exams if she came regularly, we started through her papers. I would be the interested listener and she would translate, sentence by sentence, from her tangled phrases into no-nonsense prose, with frequent asides to fill me in on details she had left out. “Write that down!” I would say. “That’s interesting. Why didn’t you put that in?” (p. 57)

Within Fox’s description of what can happen between a writing tutor and a student, various pedagogical knowledge, which assist in driving the session forward, reveal themselves from the writing consultant. Fox relies on her teaching strengths, enacting her role as an “interested listener” (p. 57). However, embedded in her description here, she also becomes a writing expert, a verifier of conventional academic writing technique, and, perhaps most importantly for her student, a system of support. These are teaching strategies that help Fox deliver assistance in the most meaningful ways possible.

Skilled tutors, over time, develop the ability to shift between roles that help deliver their teaching, such as the authority figure (recognized as a writing expert), and a peer (someone with less authority who is simply along for the journey).

Berkenkotter (1984) mentions “peers can offer the writer additional perspectives, support, and, generally, less threatening feedback than a teacher-evaluator” (p. 318). As seen in action with the example above from Fox (2002), it is understandable the presentation and negotiation of roles writing consultants enact can help determine the success of a face-to-face tutoring session. However, in an online setting, I assert these pedagogical roles and strategies may be of particular importance as the
communicative signals that exist in face-to-face conversation may be less apparent or, in some cases, nonexistent.

Harris (1980) recognized writing tutors find themselves wearing numerous hats, sometimes within a single tutoring session. Over the course of a conversation about writing, tutors can serve as the voice of the academic institution, obligated to reinforce institutional policy; they might act as a confidant, helping students vent their frustrations before moving onto more productive work; they may listen empathetically, picking out moments of conversation to help the student solve writing concerns; as well as many others at any given point in a tutoring session. Additionally, like tutors, students can also adopt many roles within a single tutoring session that aids in stressing their needs, including, but not limited to: The confident writer, certain and proud of their writing abilities; an eager participant, ready to be an agent in their learning; a victim of academic injustice, feeling, perhaps, betrayed by their professor or school; a confused writer, unsure of where to go next; a resistant learner, unwilling to participate in their learning; or an eager complainer, eager to vent their frustrations, as well as countless others. For writing consultants, recognizing and reacting to these roles is of great importance when providing the best help to students. In online tutoring, where writing consultants and students are mediated by a digital technology, I believe that learning to tactically enact writing pedagogy and react appropriately to students is more difficult, but just as vital to help students. Accordingly, pedagogy should be understood as having a profound effect upon the use of educational technologies. Writing consultant training taking into
account the recursivity between pedagogy and technology may lead to more well-rounded and student-centered consultants.

The Problem

Online writing consultation continues to advance from asynchronous email systems to more technologically rich synchronous venues. Technologies, such as chat rooms and video conferencing software, to even more immersive and interactive virtual environments, have created more complex and opportunistic spaces for writing consultation. However, most professional conversation, training, and research for online writing consultation focuses on two aspects of online tutoring—technological knowledge, often focused on learning to use or identify the benefits of a tutoring technology, and pedagogical knowledge, knowledge about writing and tutoring processes often based in traditional face-to-face tutoring. Many times, when writing tutors are trained to work online, these approaches become understood as mutually exclusive, resulting in a fragmented online tutoring experience.

Technological Knowledge. Training for online writing consultation often focuses on what technology does—how it can make for more efficient and effective distance learning opportunities, an understanding that can be interpreted as framing writing consultation within a neoliberal context. For example, when discussing the development of an online writing center to support a writing across a curriculum (WAC) initiative, Palmquist, Rodrigues, Kiefer, and Zimmer (1995) center on the online writing center as a solution to problems with time and space in distance learning. To Palmquist, et. al (1995), the online writing center’s technologies act
primarily as a way to expand services. While this is a noble effort, it leaves unanswered questions about how online tutors interact with and use technologies in meaningful ways with students, an area not considered in their research.

One major consequence of a technologically focused approach is the development of tutor training emphasizing exclusive attention to a written document and not the student writer who composed it. Buck (2008), when studying how writing tutors interacted with Microsoft Word as a tutoring technology, found that writing consultants focused on fixing grammar and mechanics in student writing instead of assisting with macrolevel composition concerns, such as development and organization. These more direct and mechanical approaches to writing consultation carry with them the consequence of turning the writing consultant into a mere editor of text instead of helping students learn and grow as writers. Furthermore, these approaches, especially when not considering the interactions between technology and pedagogy, potentially describe writing center work as businesslike—creating an environment that focuses on tutoring as a product to be consumed rather than part of a learning experience.

The intent to train tutors about how to work technology is easy to justify from an pragmatic perspective, especially as new tutoring technologies continuously emerge and get adopted by writing centers. Studying a technology and how to navigate it in a practical sense (i.e. learning the interface, how it works, what buttons to push) is an important first step to learn how to use it as a pedagogical tool. Without this baseline understanding, it is difficult to move onto more advanced concerns, such as teaching writing to meet students’ personal needs through a digital interface.
Student-centered concerns require more complex understandings of teaching. However, without understanding the pedagogical influence on technology usage, tutor attention may be predominantly directed toward the technical characteristics of tutoring online and may even create more shallow and less engaging tutoring experiences for students (Buck, 2008). This can distract from the intended purpose of writing consultation—creating better writers—and instead allow tutors to perceive a student’s document as the primary focus. Sometimes, especially in asynchronous environments, tutors working online do not see writers at all. As a by-product of this distance, interactions potentially feel less directed at the student and more toward a seemingly faceless document (as was Jane’s concern earlier in this chapter). For tutors who understand the culture of writing consultation, tutoring a document online, with no target student in mind, is an aimless task.

**Pedagogical Knowledge.** Another common approach when training writing consultants to work online is to focus on pedagogical aspects of tutoring, particularly without accounting for how those pedagogical approaches may need to be shifted when working online. Bell (2006) discusses ways to preserve the “rhetorical nature of tutoring” (p. 326) in online environments. As a foundation, this is a reasonable pursuit when trying to develop sound approaches for tutoring writing online. However, it is simply not realistic, particularly as Bell (2006) concedes to acknowledging an educational world where “new hardware and software are continually emerging” (p. 333). Bell does not acknowledge how particular technologies, despite resistance from teachers, might bend and re-shape writing pedagogy. Her analysis concludes that educators should find ways to retain face-to-face values when working within digital
environments. It simply is not enough to consider preserving the rhetorical nature of tutoring when working online, but instead to reflect upon how online settings influence and help reshape the rhetorical nature of tutoring.

The concern with a pedagogically exclusive approach to training is that while tutors learn to apply sound pedagogical approaches recognized as meaningful in face-to-face settings, there remains an assumption these approaches will shift neatly into online consultations. Without being reflexive about how online tutoring technologies impact the tutoring process, and the pedagogical methods applied during tutoring, there is a higher possibility for less productive sessions.

Breuch and Racine (2000) note, “face-to-face and online environments are different in that online tutoring requires procedures that differ from face-to-face tutoring” (p. 254). Writing consultants not only need to adjust to a procedural understanding of tutoring online (i.e. how to operate a tutoring technology), but also need to adjust the ways in which they communicate and work with students on an individual level. Accordingly, if pedagogical knowledge and technological knowledge can be envisioned as modifying each other, writing tutors will have better opportunities to develop reflexivity between online tutoring technologies and writing consultation pedagogy.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to discover and analyze how tutors come to recognize the interactions between pedagogy and technology in order to productively carry out online writing consultations. The study attends to two different online
tutoring methods utilized by the Writing Center at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL). By analyzing the talk of tutors, both in reflection of online tutoring and during tutoring sessions, an understanding how tutors are recognizing and utilizing their technological and pedagogical knowledge in concert can be applied to develop more meaningful and structured training for online writing consultation.

In addition to insights gained from reflections by writing consultants, closely studying tutors’ language in online tutoring sessions will help reveal moments of technological pedagogical content knowledge in action. Looking at the talk tutors enact during tutoring sessions, and how they blend their technological and pedagogical knowledge, might help in developing more useful training methods.

**Research Questions**

The study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do writing consultants represent their understanding of the interactions between pedagogy and technology?
2. How do writing consultants represent, in practice, their understanding of the interactions between pedagogy and technology?
3. How are writing consultants transformed when they understand the interactions between pedagogy and technology?

**Hypotheses**

It was hypothesized that writing consultants who are trained to be aware of the interactions between technology and pedagogy would be more successful in how they tutor online. These tutors would be able to operate technologies meaningfully based
on their pedagogical knowledge, and would be able to enact their pedagogical knowledge in more meaningfully situated ways based on their technological knowledge. As this study unfolded, and as the ways tutors taught writing became unpacked from their digital spaces, I expected to gain insight on tutors’ perceptions of working online in various online spaces, understanding better how they perceive the interactions between the technologies they use to tutor and their pedagogical approaches. Additionally, I anticipated that as tutors adjusted to working online with students, and as they learned to apply writing center pedagogy online, they would facilitate more meaningful online consultations.

Conceptual Framework

Mishra and Koehler (2006) state that a well-established framework for research “offers new ways of looking at and perceiving phenomena and offers information on which to base sound, pragmatic decision making” (p. 1019). When considering a framework for this study, I came to the conclusion that a conceptual framework looking at how teaching and technology overlap, and a way to understand that overlap as it is represented in online writing consultation settings, is central when understanding how writing consultants work with students in digital spaces. Therefore, two components make up the conceptual framework for this research: Mishra and Koehler’s (2006) concept of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge, and Critical Discourse Analysis. The following sections explain these two pieces and how they help inform and give shape to this study.
Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge. The primary lens through which this study was developed is Mishra and Koehler’s (2006) Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK). Mishra and Koehler (2006) claim that careful attention to how technologies are used, and how they impact teaching practices, makes for better implementation of educational technologies. The purpose of creating a framework that addresses the overlap between teaching and technology usage, according to Self (1990), is to also create a holistic understanding.

Until we examine the impact of computer technology…from a theoretical perspective, we will continue, myopically and unsystematically, to define the isolated pieces of the puzzle in our separate classrooms and discrete research studies. Until we share some theoretical vision of this topic, we will never glimpse the larger picture that could give our everyday classroom efforts direction and meaning. (p. 119)

Mishra and Koehler (2006) suggest that a “conceptually based theoretical framework about the interactions between technology and teaching can transform the conceptualization and the practice of teacher education, teacher training, and teachers’ professional development” (p. 1019). In this study, TPCK is utilized to explore the affiliation between tutoring pedagogy and technology in order to help writing consultants build an understanding of this relationship.

The activity of teaching involves a complex set of cognitive skills (Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986; Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich, & Anderson, 1988; Spiro, Feltovich, Jacobson, & Coulson, 1991) and its success is dependent upon access to organized systems of knowledge (Glaser, 1984; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Shulman, 1986, 1987).
Noting the complexities of teaching, Mishra and Koehler (2006) reveal that, historically, teaching has been understood as being focused on content, or what a teacher knows about a subject. However, this focus has shifted primarily to, as Ball and McDiarmid (1990) emphasize, pedagogical practices that are not connected to subject matter or content knowledge, but instead the methods and processes of how and why content is delivered. Much like how some writing center researchers have separated the ideas of writing pedagogy and technology, Mishra and Koehler (2006) state that content and pedagogical knowledge is often recognized by scholars as independent of each other in the field of teacher education, where training has historically focused on one or the other (Shulman, 1987; Veal & MaKinster, 1999).

![Figure 1. Two Circles Representing Content and Pedagogical Knowledge.](image)

*Content Knowledge*, as Mishra and Koehler (2006) describe, is knowledge about subject matter taught or learned, including facts, concepts, and theories. This knowledge is linked to specific disciplines and even levels of expertise. For example, a grade school mathematics course is extremely different than a college graduate level mathematics course, which requires a more advanced expertise. Meanwhile, *Pedagogical Knowledge* refers to the methods and processes of teaching and learning, including understanding the target audience, evaluating understanding, and connecting these processes to larger educational values and goals (Mishra & Koehler,
Writing Pedagogy and Technological Knowledge

2006). While Content Knowledge might be understood as the foundation of learning, the actual product, Pedagogical Knowledge, can be understood as the meta-factors in teaching that help with successfully learning the content.

Despite historically being recognized as mutually exclusive by educational researchers, it is clear to most current educators that these two concepts overlap in many ways. Shulman (1986) introduced the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which includes “the most regularly taught topics in one’s subject area, the most useful forms of representation of ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations…the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others” (p. 9). The figure below distinguishes what Mishra and Koehler (2006) see as the movement toward PCK in teacher education.

![Figure 2. The Circles of Pedagogical Knowledge and Content Knowledge Become Combined to Show Pedagogical Content Knowledge.](image)

PCK encompasses which teaching approaches are suitable for the content being taught. Additionally, it involves understanding the organization of content for the most meaningful and rich learning experiences. PCK is concerned with how
concepts, pedagogies, theories of epistemology, knowledge of conceptual difficulty, and students’ prior knowledge are represented and formulated. In writing consultations, PCK becomes a useful framework when understanding how tutors thoughtfully and strategically interact with students. When technology enters into this relationship, teaching becomes more complex.

Educational technologies are not explicitly included in Shulman’s PCK framework. However, as digital technologies, which were rare in education during Shulman’s research, become more integrated into every day teaching and learning, their visibility and impact on learning are more apparent than ever before. These technologies are now at the forefront of educational research as they are become increasingly common in classroom settings, as well as within writing centers looking to migrate their services online. Educational technologies are being actively promoted by publishers and tech companies, and have a multitude of applications, which have the potential to create abundant learning and teaching possibilities. Mishra and Koehler (2006) recognized the need integrate technology carefully into Shulman’s model, as figure three represents below.
Technological knowledge, according to Mishra and Koehler (2006), includes knowledge about standard classroom technologies (e.g. books and chalkboards) but also advanced learning technologies (e.g. the Internet and digital devices). This knowledge also includes installing and removing software programs, creating and archiving documents, interacting with digital interfaces, and being able to, with little trouble, navigate and utilize technologies in seamless and meaningful ways (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Introducing technological knowledge into Shulman’s framework
Writing Pedagogy and Technological Knowledge

provides more complexity, revealing three new relationships, as seen in Figure 3 above.

*Technological Content Knowledge* describes that “teachers need to know not just the subject matter they teach but also the manner in which the subject matter can be changed by the application of technology” (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p. 1028). For example, in asynchronous online tutoring sessions, because online communication with students is often considered by tutors as more direct and less dialogic than face-to-face tutoring sessions, the technologies driving discourse potentially create communicative situations that create less robust writing help. In other words, tutors might find themselves giving advice and offering content knowledge that is more succinct when working online. Since the conversation is not live, the spontaneity of real-time communication is lost, resulting in more content-focused tutoring.

*Technological Pedagogical Knowledge* describes “knowledge of the existence, components, and capabilities of various technologies as they are used in teaching and learning settings, and conversely, knowing how teaching might change as the result of using particular technologies” (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p. 1028). In online writing consultation, the types of feedback that would often be given in face-to-face consultation would change based on the kind of technology used. For example, feedback given through synchronous technologies, where communication and document revisions might happen live, might be fluid than when using asynchronous technologies, where communication happens statically. Tutors, in order to carefully and accurately communicate their advice, must rely upon a technology’s functionality and features to shape their pedagogical approaches.
Finally, *Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge*, the result of all overlapping components seen in Figure 3, refers to a number of details concerning technology usage and teaching. Mishra and Koehler (2006) explain the complexity of the category.

TPCK is the basis of good teaching with technology and requires an understanding of the representation of concepts using technologies; pedagogical techniques that use technologies in constructive ways to teach content; knowledge of what makes concepts difficult or easy to learn and how technology can help redress some of the problems that students face; knowledge of students’ prior knowledge and theories of epistemology; and knowledge of how technologies can be used to build on existing knowledge and to develop new epistemologies or strengthen old ones. (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p. 1029)

For example, in online writing consultation, TPCK could be seen in the way a tutor teaches usage of a common mechanical feature in writing—the oxford comma (sometimes called a serial comma). The consultant may use an online whiteboard technology to emphasize a grammatical error, bolding or highlighting text, for example, in order to isolate all usage instances away from other sentences. The tutor may also understand, through chat log cues, this particular student is intimidated by grammar and stylistics, and may choose to pull up a humorous comic about oxford comma usage from the Internet. This instance would fall in line with the culture of writing consultation—but it also utilizes technology in meaningful ways that align with the student’s needs and aesthetics.
Critical Discourse Analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a helpful theoretical, as well as methodological approach for looking at how language unfolds within social situations, often concerning issues of power and relationships. One of the co-founders of CDA, Fairclough (1992), asserts that discourse is more than language use; more layered, discourse is language use embedded within social practice. van Dijk (2003) aligns with this view, revealing CDA, rather than merely describing the structure of discourse, “tries to explain them in terms of properties of social interaction and especially social structure” (p. 353). In writing consultation, the relationship between tutors and students presents itself as incredibly complex. At times, the university writing tutor is an authority—a representative of quality writing practices or even as someone who is representing the writing standards of higher education. For example, when projecting a role that identifies as the voice of the university, a writing consultant may assert the following to a student struggling with writing for a specific audience: Given your audience of this essay, and that you’re writing this paper for a business course, your professor will most likely appreciate a more formal tone. However, other times, the tutor may show more reflexivity in their role and become more aligned with the student’s perspective. For example, the tutor may position themselves as a fellow student writer with the same struggles, perhaps showing more empathy: I hate citing sources, too—it always gets in the way of my thinking! All of these choices by a tutor, made either consciously or unconsciously, act as an exertion of power and relationship building—a toolkit containing various strategies to help students become better writers.
Furthermore, Huckin, Andrus, and Clary-Lemon (2012) note that CDA offers a useful framework for understanding pedagogy within the field of composition and rhetoric (and by extension, writing center studies). As a framework, Huckin, Andrus, and Clary-Lemon (2012) note CDA offers “a powerful new methodology for rhetoric and composition, leading to unusually rich and versatile research” (p. 110). Furthermore, while these authors speak about CDA as informing a deconstructive view of pedagogy in higher education, it’s significant to mention that CDA has the ability to help with reconstructive (i.e. more positive) views of writing center pedagogy, particularly, as in this study, in the development of online writing consultants.

CDA becomes a useful framework in which to formulate this research because it offers a way in which to consider how relationships formulate via writing feedback and conversation between writing consultants and students. It also offers insight into how tutors enact TPCK when tutoring students online. Much like face-to-face writing consultation, online tutoring, whether synchronous or asynchronous, is made of up conversation and talk that allows tutors to enact writing pedagogy.

**Delimitations**

This study will take place at one university writing center in operation at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL), a mid-size university of about 15,000 students in the Midwestern United States. All writing consultants working at UMSL’s Writing Center are graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) in the Department of English, including both M.A. students (focusing on either literature or composition studies).
and M.F.A. students (focusing on fiction or poetry writing). A more detailed
description of the study participants is given in chapter’s three and four. Training for
tutors occurs at two levels. First, every academic year, the week before each fall
semester, writing consultants participate in one week of training seminars that prepare
them for both face-to-face and online writing center work. This is an intensive
seminar where writing consultants spend approximately eight hours per day in
training learning about the university’s writing program, first-year composition
courses (which some GTAs go on to teach), and tutoring theories and practices. It is
during this initial training period they also learn how to navigate and utilize writing
center software and carry out online tutoring services. Second, over the course of
their graduate assistantships, staff trainings, observations, and informal discussion act
as supplemental training, focusing on individual tutor growth and staff cohesion.

For this study, data was gathered and analyzed over the course of one
academic year (the fall 2015 semester and the spring 2016 semester). UMSL’s
Writing Center utilizes the widely accepted third party appointment software
WCOnline, which allows students to set writing consultation appointments and meet
online. This software is vital to the operations of the Writing Center because, apart
from serving as a data collection system, it houses two online tutoring venues.
WCOnline acts as a central hub not just for online tutoring, but all organizational
tutoring needs for the UMSL Writing Center.

Sites for research. This study attended to the two online venues, E-tutoring
and Live Chat, because they are the default online venues included with WCOnline’s
standard services and are commonly used by numerous writing centers that also utilize the appointment software.

_E-tutoring_. E-tutoring, the first of the two online venues included in this study, is an asynchronous system where students upload a text file (e.g. Microsoft Word, RTF) to WCOnline. Once a file is uploaded, a writing consultant downloads the document, opens it in Microsoft Word, and assists the student using Microsoft Word’s comment feature. In order to retain student agency in the revision process, the writing consultant primarily only works in the margins of the document and is trained to never proofread, directly revise, edit, or manipulate the student’s text. After the writing consultant completes the session, they re-upload the document to WCOnline where the student can download the new document, complete with revision suggestions and feedback.

Asynchronous writing help is largely understood by both students and writing centers as a venue for writing consultation that promotes convenience. Students are not required to meet with anyone in real time, meaning students with busy schedules can still get the help they need without stepping foot into the physical writing center or even meeting live to chat with a writing consultant online, which also requires being somewhere at a certain time. However, empirical studies have shown that advanced levels of knowledge construction for students rarely occur during asynchronous online communication (Kanuka & Anderson, 1998; Kanuka, Rourke, & Laflamme, 2007; Meyer, 2003). Logistically, concerns with this venue are that the lack of live interactions, as well as the absence of spontaneity between the tutor and the student, might create a more rigid and prescriptive environment for giving writing
advice. However, I believe that if writing consultants are properly trained to react to asynchronous tutoring in more personable and pedagogically effective ways, especially when considering the interactions between pedagogy and technology usage, tutoring in this venue can be a viable and meaningful way for students to get assistance with writing.

**Live chat.** Live chat, the second venue included in this study, is a synchronous option housed within WCOnline. After a student makes an appointment, they log into a chat room where they meet their tutor to discuss their writing in real time. With this venue, the robust interface of the tutoring session is important to understand. While tutors and students can chat live (through text, and even video and audio) in a designated window, there exists also a function for students to compose or paste writing into a collaborative whiteboard space.

![Figure 4. Screenshot from a live chat session, showing the interface design](image)
Both the tutor and student have the ability to interact with the writing, collaborate, and make revisions, making this type of tutoring explicitly more interactive and multimodal. Student writing can also be imported into and exported from the system, text and chat can be color-coded to distinguish who is writing and revising content, and writing can be easily edited, moved, and organized. In this venue, despite more interactivity, tutors are trained to refrain from directly changing text, instead keeping their feedback in the chat or distinctly separate from student writing in the whiteboard.

Because of the multimodal characteristics of this venue, there are more opportunities for interactivity between writing consultants and students. Furthermore, the level of formality of interactions possible, as Herring (1999) notes, can depend upon the pedagogical and social framings of communication. In her study of different synchronous environments, students in formally structured conversations followed more ordered and rigid communication conventions. However, students in a more socially oriented synchronous conversation found that the conversation was more spontaneous and free-flowing (Herring, 1999). Contextually, even synchronous interactions cannot be considered as replicative of face-to-face writing consultation. However, the live chat venue does offer prospects for the kind of spontaneous interactions that writing centers often value in their work with students.

**Methodology**

In order to help answer the above research questions, this study will use qualitative research methods. The methods for research in this study focus on Critical
Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) of online tutoring sessions.

There are numerous reasons why CDA and MDA are valuable approaches to research online writing consultation. First, as identified by Huckin, Andrus, and Clary-Lemon (2012), CDA accounts for textual silences, ambiguities in communication, and other covert aspects of discourse that may not be evident on the surface. With online communication already being mediated through a screen, the chances for these ambiguities and silences are even higher. Furthermore, CDA attempts to reach a broad audience with its approach, making what is sometimes inaccessible, accessible to those who need tools to understand how discourse is operating. With writing center researchers needing a tool to understand the building blocks of communication in online tutoring, CDA and MDA (by extension, as a methodology that looks at modes of communicating beyond language, which particularly valuable when working online), are appropriate for doing online writing consultation research.

Furthermore, CDA looks at the social nature of language, it is useful for looking at discourse between tutors and students, particularly in how writing consultants are representing TPCK in their tutoring. Later in chapter three, a discussion of how CDA and MDA analysis will be informed by a critical social theory, Bourdieau’s (1972) Reflexive Sociology is included. Essentially, when writing consultants are able to utilize technology in ways that allows for the best tutoring results, they allow students to acquire knowledge about writing that can be put to future use.
Furthermore, Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), which considers the interactions of various modes of communication (particularly beyond spoken or written language), will reveal how tutors interact with their students through technology in order to consult writing. MDA is particularly useful when combining multiple modes of communication. Technology offers more possibilities for tutors and students to communicate, as well as tools to make meaning. Using CDA and MDA, primarily through the approaches of Fairclough (1992), Rogers and Wetzel (2014), and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), textual, verbal, and visual communication will be analyzed to determine how writing consultants are navigating their content, pedagogy, and technology expertise.

Finally, this study relies on analysis of student satisfaction surveys, analysis of training materials, interviews, and written reflections from writing consultants as they contextualize and describe their development as online tutors. These materials will also be analyzed using CDA and MDA. A more in-depth explanation of how these methodologies are incorporated and carried-out in this study appears in chapter three.

**Significance of the Study**

There are three main benefits of this study that I see as contributing to the field of writing center and educational technology research:

1. *To understand what struggles online tutors have and how they can be managed and solved.*
Because tutors often need to adapt to tutoring online, being able to track the online tutoring pitfalls of the participants in this study, both pedagogically and on a technological level, will help identify these concerns so they can be addressed in future training and research. Furthermore, just as face-to-face and online tutoring environments are different from each other, individual online tutoring environments differ from each other. By looking at a typical asynchronous e-tutoring environment, and a synchronous chat room environment, tutoring venues can be explored for both overlapping qualities and differences.

2. This study will strengthen training methods for online writing consultation.

   Current training methods for online writing consultation largely focus on working with tutoring technologies, or with writing center pedagogy and theory, but rarely both or, more importantly, how they shape each other. This study will refocus the online tutoring experience by creating a sense of awareness to understand how tutors’ knowledge about writing, pedagogical strategies, and technology usage help contribute to good online tutoring.

3. To create more meaningful and rich online writing consultation experiences for both tutors and students.

   The nature of writing consultation is often viewed as being fast-paced. Often, students stop by writing centers in moments of immediate need, many times, in the middle of busy class days, all while juggling lots of writing/homework from multiple courses, personal obligations, jobs, family, and more. Many times, this demanding
schedule can be reflected in online writing consultations; busy students frequently make online appointments because of convenience (e.g. their distance from campus, available time). Writing consultants often need to be able to work quickly and purposefully in online environments much in the same way they need to work in face-to-face environments. A better understanding how TPCK operates in online tutoring can make working online a smoother and more meaningful experience for both tutors and students.
CHAPTER TWO

At the heart of the theoretical interests and assumptions that generated this study lie my own experiences as a writing center coordinator and consultant. I have been working in a writing consultation setting since 2009 when I started volunteering at my university’s writing center while working on my master’s degree. Shaped by my experiences, I have become intrigued by the relationships that writing tutors develop with technology. Often, in writing center discussions and training literature, technology is treated like an obligation, something that stands in the way of meaningful writing consultation. Or, technology is treated an entity often wrapped in mystery—somehow disconnected from the tutoring process. I believe this attitude is not only limiting, but can constrain the potential to understand how technology might serve as a tool to facilitate writing instruction for students who have been immersed in a digitally oriented world their entire lives (Prensky, 2001). Every educator should be critical of what technology can offer; doing so creates more careful technology integration into teaching practices. However, this criticism should not stop at mere skepticism, but instead become the foundation for developing innovative and progressive technology usage.

My interest in online writing consultation stems from when I was a new writing consultant working online with students, often with backgrounds and academic paths very different from my own. Back then, for my fellow tutors and I, there was no formal training from our writing center supervisor; we simply learned about the functions of the tutoring software, often through our own trial and error, and
got to work. Despite a shallow understanding, I found myself attempting to bend my pedagogical approach as well as my own tutoring identity—the kind of writing consultant I was in a particular tutoring moment—to fit students’ needs as they learned. It was a natural urge to shift my tutoring approaches as I worked online. Just as in face-to-face sessions, I realized that online sessions are dynamic and depend on the numerous variables in play: the student, the genre of writing, the student’s course and field of study, levels of skill, and many other factors. I continuously attempted to locate myself pedagogically and attempted to communicate ideas differently through the lens of a particular technology, a particular student, their learning needs, and my own teaching identity. Of course, this is easier said than done; with no formal training in place I found this to be a difficult and time-consuming process. Later, as I adopted and grew into new roles—a writing center coordinator and a doctoral student studying educational technology—I became more adjusted to working with students online.

My know-how, however, has had years to develop; for new writing consultants, or even writing consultants with some teaching experience, these concepts are harder to grasp and put into action.

For the graduate assistants at UMSL, who only get to tutor writing for a total of one to two years during their graduate assistantships, this need to blend pedagogy and technology is often rushed and ultimately stunted. In order to find footing, and to demonstrate how this study adds to educational technology and writing center research, the following literature review accounts for informative research involving writing center history, writing center pedagogy and theory, tutor training, and the interactions between technology and writing instruction, all to help bridge the gap for
new writing consultants learning what it means not just to be a writing tutor, but a writing tutor working online.

**Writing Centers**

The field of writing center studies is broad, covering anything from tutoring theory and practice, training, student concerns, the impact of tutoring environments on learning, and countless other research directions and subcategories. To narrow in on topics that are relevant to this research, this section focuses on writing center history, pedagogy and theory, consultation strategies, and tutor training. The research discussed in this section will help contextualize the circumstances that help refine the scope of this study.

**Writing center history.** As I noted in the previous chapter, much of what is written about and understood in online writing consultation is based in face-to-face tutoring approaches. Furthermore, these face-to-face approaches are rooted in the history of how writing centers came into existence—a history that is not without debate.

Generally, as Boquet (1999) notes, the emergence of writing centers can be framed via two understandings of the development of one-to-one writing instruction. First, coming from early composition teaching methods from the late 1800s, particularly the writing conference (Learner, 1996), writing centers can be thought of as existing as institutional methods of obtaining literacy. In this approach, the writing center, as Boquet (1999) states, was not considered an actual setting for learning, but instead an instructional method, allowing teachers, as Horner (1929) notes, “to eliminate errors or other weaknesses at their source and not allow their use at all, thus
precluding the possibility of their becoming habitual through thoughtless repetition” (p. 218). Second, writing centers can be framed as an extracurricular activity beyond the traditional classroom (Gere, 1994). Per the culture of writing consultation, discussed in the previous chapter, this option is generally more appealing because it takes determining the worth of the writing center out of the hands of the institution and gives it to students. Whereas Horner’s (1929) description reveals educators at the center of literacy development, these days, writing centers typically aim for giving students agency in the production of their literacies.

However, for the early part of writing center history, particularly through the 1940s, writing centers were not typically seen as spaces for learning but instead methods of instruction (Boquet, 1999). During this time writing centers were often tied to curriculum; students would spend an amount of time each week working one-to-one with teachers on their writing and, pedagogically, instructors began to notice the benefits of an independent space for students to learn outside the formal structure of the classroom (Stanley, 1943; Grandy, 1936). This structure can still be seen in numerous composition courses in the form of the individual writing conference. This autonomous functionality of writing centers did come with a limiting drawback—educators frequently defined the space as a way to assist writers labeled, in some fashion, as remedial. While writing centers have always assisted struggling writers, the perception that the writing center was exclusively a place for bad writers, and only helped in goals pertaining to remediation, found its way into the oxygen of higher learning institutions.
Particularly in the 1940s, a field of psychology influenced educators’ views of writing centers by offering ideas about regulating behavior (Davidson & Sorenson, 1946). Referred to as Rogerian nondirective counseling, David and Sorenson (1946) speak of the significance of asking questions to help identify clients’ issues, helping them to recognize knowledge they perhaps didn’t know they had. This method served as a way to help clients develop a sense of ownership, much like how writing consultants intend to do with students as they develop as writers. Boquet (1999) recognizes this method as important as it leads to the writing center being classified as distinctly separate from the larger institution, creating an environment for students that fosters and privileges security, secrecy, and safety. Consequently, it was also during this time, and through this adoption of Rogerian nondirective counseling ideals, that writing centers further see institutions linking remediation, and preparing perceptually underprepared students, to the writing center space (Boquet, 1999). The misconceptions of the clinical environment, which normally treat what outsiders consider to be fragile or damaged individuals, was starting to harm how students and faculty viewed the functionality of the writing center setting. What helped push this misconception even further was the open admissions movement.

Along with the open admissions movement of the 1960s and 1970s came questions and panic about how prepared students were to write academically. Boquet (1999) indicates that, during this time, writing centers were created primarily to assist with problems that university officials had trouble identifying—increasing enrollment, larger minority populations, and a misguided perception of declining literacy skills. While this was good for the mere business of writing centers, as it
presented a need for the space and services, it also promoted a harmful reputation, as seen from Rothman (1977), who notes a college faculty’s declaration regarding a decline in the quality of student writing. “One occasionally hears…the older faculty reminisce about students who had mastered the rudiments of academic prose. But almost everyone has acknowledged…that our students have changed; they cannot write very well” (p. 484). In the now infamous *Newsweek* article, “Why Johnny Can’t Write,” Sheils (1975) writes of supposed declining literacy skills in students attending college. “If your children are attending college, the chances are that when they graduate they will be unable to write ordinary, expository English with any real degree of structure and lucidity” (p. 58). The role of writing centers, at least from those outside of the world of writing instruction, was rather prescriptive—a learning facility to address a dire literacy crisis.

Understandably, in the 1960s and 1970s, along with the increased traffic in writing centers came a need for more standardized methods of consultation, often in the form of auto-tutorials—writing consultations done by machine. Students, instead of working with tutors (actual people), would work with headsets, audiotapes, and workbooks. Bruffee (1984) speaks about how students were not interested in taking advantage of these resources:

[These writing center approaches] seemed to [students] merely an extension of the work, the expectations and above all the social structure of traditional classroom learning. And it was traditional classroom learning that seemed to have left these students unprepared in the first place. What they needed was
help of a sort that was not an extension but an alternative to the traditional classroom. (p. 4)

As early an example of technology being inserted into writing center settings, it’s interesting to see the need for human interaction during the actual tutorial. It’s not surprising then that much of the scholarship published at the time involves the concepts of staff selection and training (Lunsford, 1978; Gebhardt, 1977; Hamilton, 1977; Shaugnessy, 1973; Higgins, 1973; Burkett, 1971). Writing center scholars were leaning toward preserving the significance of face-to-face interaction, as they believed dialogue about writing to be the most dynamic way to work with students.

By the 1980s, what Boquet (1999) calls the “post-open admissions” era (p. 475), scholarship in writing consultation literature becomes more theoretical and pedagogically oriented. The idea of how writing centers should define and position themselves becomes a large focus, as seen in the work of North (1984), for example. North’s (1984) seminal “The Idea of a Writing Center,” written “out of frustration” (p. 433) about misconceptions of how writing centers should be understood, became a significant voice in the composition field for writing centers. Combating against the widely accepted notion that writing centers primarily exist as mere fix-it shops for remedial students’ papers, North (1984) proclaimed “the object is to make sure that writers, and not necessarily their texts, are what get changed by instruction. In axiom form it goes like this: Our job is to produce better writers, not better writing” (p. 438).

Turning further toward the pedagogical, Harris (1980) discusses the roles of writing consultants, and how they should interact with students based on the rhetorical context of a moment. Kail (1983) notes a need for a shift to more nontraditional
understandings of how writing centers should operate, particularly when speaking about the significance of peer tutoring (moving from a hierarchal to a non-linear model of learning). This post-open admissions scholarly work represents a shift from writing centers being understood as solving problems identified by institutions and moving instead to developing autonomy and agency by helping tutors and writing centers become stronger pedagogically.

The trend that can be seen in this condensed history is there are many reasons why writing centers are not easily located within the realm of academia. This, quite simply, is because they’ve been placed and re-placed many times already. How they help writers, which writers they help, for what reasons, and through what methods and approaches are most suitable for tutoring, have been under constant scrutiny and have been continuously redefined. Kinkead & Harris (1993) emphasize this complexity and the significance for understanding the various contexts writing centers embody, suggesting that “in fact, it is their environment, academic and otherwise, that most directly shapes them, giving them form and substance and the impetus to define themselves in certain ways” (p. xv). However, most writing centers are still housed within institutions, and while complete autonomy is a grand idea, it is still not entirely realistic. The literature tracks a shift from the construction of ideals that attempt to, through theory and exploration, rise above misconceptions about writing centers (North, 1984; Harris, 1986) and towards investigations into making sense of writing centers and their roles within larger, and sometimes more controlling, academic settings (Grimm, 1996; Grimm, 1999; Neuleib & Scharton, 1994; Yahner & Murdick, 1991). Still unclear is how pedagogical and institutional shifts relate to how
writing consultations are carried out online—something to which this study contributes. Based on existing literature regarding writing instruction and technology (discussed later in this chapter) and the history of how and why writing centers found themselves emerging in academic settings, how technology might impact how writing consultation happens has not been addressed explicitly enough in existing studies. This research assists in bridging that gap.

**Writing center theory and pedagogy.** The beginning of a section about writing center pedagogy and theory must start with how writing centers have been self-defining their work. Based on existing literature, those who represent writing centers continuously define who they are and what they do (and do not do) both to themselves and, more often, for others. Because writing centers normally serve the learning community they are located within, it is well-established that other stakeholders in that community (e.g. students, faculty, or administrators), and their beliefs of what a writing center does, have a powerful impact on writing consultation practices (North, 1984; Pemberton, 1992; Ede, 1996). This brings about some interesting ideas concerning how writing centers operate, particularly in how scholars see them functioning on their respective campuses and communities. Beck, Hawkins, and Silver (1978) speak of the writing center as a casual learning environment for both tutors and students. “In essence this is what the [writing center] really is—a place to talk informally about writing. Frequently it is also a place to do some writing as well” (p. 434). Other scholars speak about writing centers as more formal places for writing instruction, claiming, “tutors do the same thing teachers do, and have similar powers. They are surrogate teachers who give individualized instruction”
(Bruffee, 1980, p. 76). The variance in perspective between Hawkins and Silver (1978) and Bruffee (1980) demonstrates the spectrum of perspective regarding the kinds of work writing centers accomplish.

Apart from writing centers as educational entities, it is also worthwhile to examine the role of writing tutors, especially as they do not assign grades to written academic work. In some ways, this gives the tutor a more complex position in relation to the student. Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) note that teachers often “view themselves as the authorities, intellectually maturer, rhetorically more experienced, technically more expert than their apprentice writers” (p. 158). However, the writing tutor, as Harris (1995) notes, “inhabits a world somewhere between student and teacher. Because the tutor sits below the teacher on the academic ladder, the tutor can work effectively with students in ways that teachers can not” (p 28). Writing tutors have the ability to position themselves in ways that may eliminate the pressure of having writing evaluated in any kind of uncomfortably formal or assessment-based fashion.

When it comes to the act tutoring students, writing consultants can be recognized as adopting numerous approaches. However, most scholars have boiled down all approaches to two general categories: directive and nondirective interactions and feedback. For example, Brooks (1991) has established a theme of minimalistic tutoring, an approach that ensures a hands-off strategy for the writing consultant, a nondirective way of interacting. With this approach, the student does the work, makes corrections, takes notes, and enacts any revisions to the paper during the session. The tutor then facilitates the session, providing guidance, but no direct contact with the
text itself. With this pedagogical approach, Brooks (1991) notes, “the student should be the only active agent in improving the paper. The tutor’s activity should focus on the student” (p. 4). More directive approaches, for example, where a tutor writes directly on a student’s paper, or demonstrates how to craft academic prose, is sometimes considered suspect as it might lead to instances of plagiarism (i.e. the student simply adopts the tutor’s words to compose writing). This worry, as Clark and Healy (1996) claim, has been mostly the concern of academics working outside of writing center environments. However, the minimalist approach is preferred by many writing centers because it allows the consultant to develop, with students, opportunities for learning and revision. Still, some scholars believe that a more direct approach may be useful during moments that call for closer attention to detail. Harris (1983), when speaking about the importance of modeling writing for students, finds that student writers are sometimes at a loss on how to get started, how to word an idea, how to organize, or set up a concept in a piece of academic writing. It is during these moments, as Harris (1983) believes, that modeling can be very useful pedagogical tool, particularly with students who are learning and trying to write in a nonnative language. Still, other scholars, like Leahy (1990), claim that successful pedagogical approaches depend not on any particular level of directness, but instead upon the individual tutor and student—as consultants must take the most straightforward approach when working with particular students on particular writing. This kind of variation, Leahy (1990) claims, allows for the most productive tutoring sessions.
Whether the approach is directive or nondirective, writing center consultants mostly strive for the same goals—enacting student agency. Still, as Boquet (2000) states, this is not an easy role for tutors to manage with students when there is a gap in writing knowledge.

I don’t want students to perceive me as having all the answers, yet very often I do have the answers they are looking for, and the students themselves know it…What sort of message are we sending to the students we tutor if they perceive us as withholding information vital to their academic success? (p. 27)

In order to gain the trust of students, and to ensure writing consultants are offering the best help, tutor training becomes increasingly important.

**Writing consultant training.** Because of the various perspectives on writing center pedagogy, writing consultant training is essential to recognize because it offers more context into how writing centers operate. Beck, Hawkins, and Silver (1978) discuss a variety of training methods that range from courses being taken by writing consultants on the processes of tutoring as well as learning on the job, giving the chance for tutors to “learn by doing, but that while they are tutoring they need support, encouragement, and resources” (p. 441). North (1982) takes a more explanatory approach to the benefits of learning to tutor well:

“All prospective tutors learn…to deal with the social situation of tutoring: how to behave in this very distinctive face-to-face interaction. At the same time, they learn about the composing process through introspection at first, and then from the theoretical and practical accounts of other writers, teachers, and researchers” (p. 436).
When North (1982) speaks about learning to “behave” (p. 436), he refers to the complicated nature of the roles tutors learn to employ during their tutoring sessions. It is this set of roles that other scholars also speak about more explicitly in their research, particularly under the umbrella of training. Harris (1986) speaks of multiple roles writing consultants must adopt when tutoring by proposing “tutors have a whole wardrobe of hats to put on, and that they may need to change hats every few minutes” (p. 35). While Harris (1980) speaks about more traditionally understood tutoring roles (e.g. the coach, the counselor, the commentator) Staben (2005) extends this idea, naming these roles to include “editor, voice of the institution, peer, and co-conspirator” (p. 20). For writing consultants, because the identity of writing consultation can often be ambiguous, the concept of roles must be understood as extensive and learn to adapt and shape pedagogy and practices from session to session.

Bell (2001) writes about the importance of ongoing reflection during the training of writing consultants, particularly as semesters move forward. The tutors involved in Bell’s study said that being able to reflect on their practices in a formal way (written reflections) allowed for them to put into practice sound tutoring approaches and correct pedagogical missteps in future sessions. Still, other ways of training involve more consideration into pre-planning what might happen during tutoring sessions. Training involving role-playing (Larson, 1986) and script writing (Clark, 1982) were common training techniques when tutors worked strictly face-to-face with students. Larson (1986) speaks about training tutors to respond to a variety of what she considers common student personalities and attitudes (e.g. the angry
student, the apathetic student) by having tutors role play different scenarios in training seminars. Clark (1982) speaks to the value of composing hypothetical dialogue in order to predict how to best respond to students.

Apart from broader tutoring training, there is also training literature that focuses on particular writing consultation problems. Cobb (1982) offers training that allows tutors to proactively help students that are putting up defensive blocks, keeping them from getting help with their writing skills. The two trends spoken about so far in this section point toward two methods of training—pre-planning how to respond to students and learning how to improvise responses based on a quick reading of the rhetorical situation of a tutoring session. It’s appropriate that these training approaches mirror what students often must do when writing academic papers—react to an audience that is in need of a particular response. However, as these training techniques seem valuable in helping tutors respond to situations and enact pedagogy, it is interesting these training methods cannot be found in online writing consultation literature.

**Training for online writing consultation.** After an exhaustive search for writing center literature focused on how to train writing consultants to work online, it is clear the field is in need of more empirical and theoretical research on the topic. One of the few scholars tackling how writing consultants should be trained to do online tutoring is Beth Hewett, who has published extensively on online writing instruction. Hewett (2015) says that digital tools have completely changed the way writing must be thought of as a teachable activity. Offering the most practical information in terms of helping writing consultants learn to tutor online, Hewett
(2015) offers advice that, she claims, allows for the most powerful online tutoring sessions. She notes that, perhaps even more so online than in face-to-face feedback, online feedback “becomes a significant, individualized part of the teaching” (p. 190). Because of the lack of in-person interactions, offering accessible and comprehensible responses to writing that connects with an individual’s needs becomes a difficult responsibility to fulfill. Hewett (2015) gives explicit advice when training educators how to respond to writing online, including providing a personal greeting, praise for effort, summarizing what the student wrote, offering feedback on both macro and micro level writing concerns, providing sentence level help, revision suggestions, and creating an action plan for the student. She also goes into detail about the differences between talking to students and teaching to students online, saying that it’s easy to slip into mere talk because of the conversational nature of online communication mediums. Instead, Hewett (2015) says that teaching writing online can look like:

- asking genuine *[wh- and how]* questions,
- demonstrating
- illustrating
- modeling
- providing doable tasks with instructions to try them out and
- explaining. (p. 209)

What Hewett (2015) does a great job of explaining is personalize responses to online students, especially when the veil of technology may keep such personalization from being imaginable.
While Hewett (2015) has the ability to speak on a much smaller scale, particularly regarding one-to-one writing instruction, on a broader level, the CCCC Committee for Effective Practices in Online Writing Instruction (CCCC) (2013) offers a great deal of advice on how to best provide online feedback. First, CCCC is one of the few sources in the literature that explicitly links pedagogy and technological usage, saying “teachers should determine their uses of modality and media based not only on their pedagogical goals but also on their students’ likely strengths and access” (p. 9). This is an interesting insight considering the students represented in this study actively chose their method of online interaction (asynchronous or synchronous). Something for online writing instructors to consider is learning how to bend teaching practices when the learning environment is chosen for them. Another principle that CCCC (2013) imparts is that online writing instruction “should focus on writing and not on technology orientation or teaching students how to use learning and other technologies” (p. 11). This principle is in place because it diminishes the perception that teachers and students needs to be complete technology experts in order to be successful educators and learners. While this is a significant idea, it also inadvertently diminishes the idea that technology might have an impact on pedagogy, which is crucial for educators to understand if they are to utilize technology in the most meaningful and educational ways.

The Relationship Between Technology and Writing Instruction

When considering how people interact with technology, McLuhan (1964) claims, “it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action” (p. 9). Because this study focuses on writing consultation in
digital spaces, it is valuable to consider information about how technology shifts the understanding of writing instruction. Therefore, this section will look closely at how writing instruction is impacted by the use of digital tutoring technologies, and vice versa.

Bernhardt (1993) notes an obvious, but important difference when interacting with print and digital text-based materials:

Readers of on-screen text interact physically with the text. Through the mouse, the cursor, the touch screen, or voice activation, the text becomes a dynamic object, capable of being physically manipulated and transformed. The presence of the text is heightened through the virtual reality of the screen world: readers become participants, control outcomes, and shape the text itself. (p. 154)

While writing tutors can interact with print materials as well, although perhaps not as dynamically, there comes a special set of affordances that accompany working with writing through a digital technology. For students in a consultation session, it can be a different kind of learning experience, as well as gratifying, to see their writing transform before their eyes. For writing consultants, it gives them a different kind of experience to see their teaching have, in some instances, more immediate and visible impact. Tutors must become aware of their roles as tutors when tutoring online.

However, researchers have noted the differences between face-to-face and online tutoring (Breuch & Racine, 2000; Rickly, 1998). Breuch and Racine (2000) recognize that while the ways in which tutoring unfolds differs between online and face-to-face, and the same pedagogical goals remain, the methods of tutoring are shifted. “The
very nature of online communication forces tutors to articulate clearly the content of their [revision] suggestions, as well as pay attention to the style and delivery of such information” (Breuch & Racine, 2000, p. 249).

Researchers have also recognized individual technologies as impacting the act of writing (or writing instruction). Bray (2013), when exploring the recently developed and innovative word processing software Scrivener, mentions that Microsoft is becoming an antiquated design and model for how people write through computer technologies. Newer software, such as Scrivener, have developed into powerful word processing tools that offer more control for users in how they organize not just their writing, but their thoughts as well. For example, with Scrivener, writers are encouraged to create fragments of ideas because they can, on the screen, be kept in a box to the left of the main composing area and then recalled later for integration into the larger document. As Bray (2013) notes, older systems, such as Word, only allow the writer to see things vertically and linearly. When it comes to writing instruction, the vertical aesthetic of Word, which keeps the majority of ideas out of sight of the writer, might be a deficit to some writing students who would benefit from more diverse visual aesthetics. Scrivener, while demonstrating some interesting benefits to the writing process for students and teachers, is still a rarely used technology in educational settings. Most educators and students, including the participants in this study, still use the popular Microsoft Word software for all writing tasks.

Buck (2008) conducted research with Microsoft Word and theorized about best practices for writing centers when using this software in their daily writing
consultations. Carrying out a case study of a writing center using Microsoft Word to tutor students online, Buck (2008) performed conversation analysis, text analysis, and a user interface analysis to triangulate data. She found that orientation to software was often common, especially with new software users, and that most attention for revisions was given to micro level concerns (e.g. grammar and mechanics) instead more global writing concerns (e.g. organization and development of ideas). Buck’s (2008) major finding is that more research is needed to better implement technology usage into pedagogical approaches.

Self (1999), before many writing centers were widely adopting digital technologies into the daily online practices, stated that before integrating computers and technology into writing instruction, much attention needs to be paid the changes that technologies create to learning situations. This is precisely what I am hoping to accomplish over the course of this study, particularly as the research I found on the topic thus far has not considered the close interactions between teaching and technology.
CHAPTER THREE

This study relies on qualitative methods to answer the proposed research questions (restated below). Because this study aims to understand how tutors consider the interactions between pedagogy and technology, I am eager to comprehend how tutors perceive technology in educational settings, and how they recognize it as fusing with their tutoring. In conducting a qualitative study, Spradley (1979) encompasses the need for researchers to closely appreciate their participants’ views, saying, “I want to understand the world from your point of view…I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them” (p. 34). Therefore, as a Coordinator of a writing center, I feel appropriately situated as I am deeply invested in how writing consultants learn and grow as tutors. This chapter explains the research design and methods, sampling procedures and population, collection and management of data, and data analysis processes that make up this study to accomplish these tasks.

This study intends to discover and analyze the relationships between content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and technological knowledge as writing tutors work along side students in online writing tutorials. To do this, my research will attend to written reflections from tutors, the training procedures utilized to prepare tutors to work online, interviews with tutors as they reflect upon their development as writing consultants, and analyses of online writing consultation sessions from two different online tutoring venues. Because tutoring and conversations about tutoring are based in talk and conversation, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) are the primary research methodologies; both
of these methods, and how they are used, are explained in more detail later in this chapter. By considering the talk of writing consultants, particularly when they are using language online to teach writing, how tutors come to recognize and understand their own pedagogical approaches through the lens of a tutoring technology, and how they interact with and utilize a technology based on their pedagogical methods, may help develop more sound training for online writing consultation. Accordingly, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do writing consultants represent their understanding of the interactions between pedagogy and technology?
2. How do writing consultants represent, in practice, their understanding of the interactions between pedagogy and technology?
3. How are writing consultants transformed when they understand the interactions between pedagogy and technology?

Research Design

Following seven tutors (new and experienced) who began and continued their graduate assistantships at UMSL’s Writing Center in the fall of 2015, the study lasted one academic year, with data collection ending near the close of the spring 2016 semester. Through reflections, interviews, as well as observations of professional development and online tutoring sessions, the discursive practices of tutors tell the story of their development into pedagogically and technologically aware writing consultants teaching online.
Data sources. The data sources included in this study aim to capture different angles of tutors’ talk about becoming online writing consultants and also their practices as they work with students online. The following sections describe each data source for this study and why it is meaningful to help answer the research questions.

Training presentations. During pre-semester fall training seminars, two visual presentations serve as entry points for tutors to become acquainted with the Writing Center’s services as well help consultants learn how to tutor writing at UMSL. As artifacts that represent the early stages of training writing consultants, these Prezi presentations are substantial data sources that contextualize how tutors are introduced to and begin learning the concepts of tutoring online.

The first presentation is an introduction to the UMSL Writing Center; it’s the same presentation shown to all First-Year Composition students during the semester, introducing them to the Writing Center’s services. For writing consultants in training, this short presentation (approximately 20 minutes) is given for two reasons. First, it allows them to see how the Writing Center is situated within UMSL’s learning culture as well as how it is presented to students. Viewers of the presentation learn that the Writing Center is not an intimidating place that is merely for struggling writers, but instead a welcoming and friendly resource that can assist any writer with any kind writing. In other words, this initial presentation inserts the kind of rhetoric and energy that the UMSL Writing Center likes to promote to create a welcoming culture of writing on campus. Secondly, the presentation gives the tutors an overview of the services in a way that students also come to know and understand. By doing this, tutors learn not just about the face-to-face and online services offered to writers,
but also how this information is presented to students, so they can represent the same values when acting as staff members of the Writing Center.

This presentation of the Writing Center and its services is delivered just as it is given to First-Year Composition students. Tutors were asked to write down any questions and insights and keep them until the end of the presentation. This was to ensure that all information is given in a methodical manner and most accurately represents the kind of presentation the Writing Center gives to students. Once the presentation is over, tutors were able ask questions and offer insights about what they learned.

The second Prezi presentation helps guide a more intensive training seminar covering a variety of tutoring topics and writing center concepts. Everything from writing center theory, various tested and researched tutoring approaches, analyses of realistic student scenarios, differences between face-to-face and online tutoring, overviews and demonstrations of the online tutoring options, practical information about the writing center appointment software, as well as pragmatic information about day-to-day center operations, is covered. This presentation and training seminar is quite involved and lasts a significant amount of time—approximately five hours, including a scheduled lunch break.

This presentation is also different than the first in that it requires active participation from the writing consultants throughout the training. Instead of lecture, the seminar is driven by conversation and incorporates games, group work, and a remarkable amount of interaction between writing consultants as they discuss how they are coming to understand consultation concepts. The goal is beyond working
and learning as a team, but also to have them become comfortable with each other while co-creating an understanding of writing center knowledge.

*Written reflections.* Over the course of the study, writing consultants reflected in numerous ways on their growth as online tutors. These reflections represent different moments of growth throughout their experiences. Before the fall semester began, and before many of the writing consultants worked online, two pieces of writing helped build context and understanding of consultants’ pre-existing knowledge and expertise. First, all writing consultants composed a *teaching statement* (see Appendix A for the writing prompt). This teaching statement, which is required as part of their GTA application materials, includes tutors’ self-described teaching identities, previous experiences, and approaches to teaching writing. As an initial document containing their individual thinking and abilities, this is an important piece of data for this study. However, it does not properly or thoroughly document the participants’ technological expertise. Therefore, before the first week of training, tutors also composed a short response to a writing prompt that asked them to consider and write about their technological expertise, experiences, and how they might impact their teaching philosophies and approaches. The *technology statement* (see Appendix B for the writing prompt) was gathered from consultants, discussed during the pre-semester training, and helped offer a more complete picture of the participants as they moved forward and developed as online writing consultants.

*Observational data.* Because I am a very closely embedded researcher-participant, the observational data in this study needs to be carefully attended to. Observational data collected during the study consisted of field notes from all stages
of the study, including training, professional development meetings, as well as informal conversations and insights about online tutoring. Together, this information captures how writing consultants demonstrated a connection between pedagogy and technology.

*Student surveys.* How students are reacting to their online tutoring sessions serve as an indicator of their satisfaction and learning. Furthermore, this information was of great help when contextualizing how tutors are putting into practice their understanding of the interactions between technology and pedagogy and transforming into successful online consultants. Accordingly, it's worthwhile to capture students' reactions to online sessions through a survey (Appendix D) that aims to capture their online tutoring experiences, satisfaction, and learning.

When students finished an online tutoring session, they were sent the option to complete a survey regarding their experiences. This survey addresses their satisfaction with their session, and their own (self-reported) perceptions of their learning from the session. Students took the survey and then, at the end of the survey form, were asked if it could be used for this research. Because I am not interested in tracking specific tutors' students or sessions with these surveys, I did not retain any names or other identifying information. Any identifying and private information was eliminated.

*Interviews.* Informal and documented conversations occurred throughout the academic year with writing consultants while structured interviews occurred at the end of each semester. Informal conversations were taken from field notes while a more formal approach for the structured interviews was utilized for data analysis. At
the end of the fall semester, halfway through this study, a formal, structured interview helped capture more culminating thoughts about online writing consultation from tutors after working one semester (see Appendix C). Finally, at the end of the spring semester, writing consultants had the opportunity to reflect on their growth for the entire academic year. Due to busy schedules and a lack of time for individual interviews, the consultants responded to a writing prompt, considered an asynchronous interview, where they answered a question asking them to characterize and reflect upon their growth as an online writing consultant (Appendix E).

Ultimately, the study was carried out in three phases: pre-semester training, semester observations and reflections, and post-semester reflections. The following sections describe each stage in more detail.

**Stage One: Pre-Semester Reflections and Writing Center Training**

(***August 17 – August 21, 2015***). Before the writing consultants began their fall semester in the writing center they took part in a one-week long training colloquium. This colloquium is held every August at UMSL, the week before the fall semester begins, and helps English graduate assistants transition into graduate school as well as teaching and tutoring. During the training, consultants learned about writing center history, tutoring pedagogy, and how to operate WCONline, the writing center’s appointment and online tutoring software. This week of training offers tutors experience with writing center processes and, accordingly, documenting their knowledge of teaching and technology is crucial at this point to understand how and why they develop as the study continued.
Perhaps the most important aspect of this stage of the study is that, during training, writing consultants discussed what they recognized, early in their thinking, as the interactions between technology and writing pedagogy. However, to me, the question was clear: What is the best approach to train writing consultants to understand the complex relationships between pedagogy and technology? At this point in the study, as the person in charge of the training, I wasn’t entirely sure—no existing research addresses it. Historically, in both the writing center and educational fields, the answer has been simply to train tutors and teachers how to functionally use technology. The apprehension with this approach is that it views technology use as a universal skill—that knowing how to best utilize and teach with technology is achieved by knowing the basic hardware and software packages (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). The concern with this kind of thinking can be seen in how educators are commonly trained to use technology. General software courses are regularly meant to be applicable across general educational contexts. Lankshear (1997) explains this phenomenon as an understanding of technology that is oversimplified—that unlocking the potential of a technology simply requires learning basic skills. The realities, as noted by Mishra and Koehler (2006), are that technology is constantly and rapidly evolving, software is often inappropriately designed for educational use, learning a technology is often focused on the what and not the how or why, and, perhaps most importantly, learning is a context-oriented activity, and cannot be considered context-neutral when learning a technology.

To help combat these common pitfalls, the following precautions for this study were taken in this pre-semester training phase of the study:
• Writing consultants were trained in how the tutoring technologies both have affordances and constraints to the tutoring process. They were asked to consider how the design of the software might impact how they work with students.

• Beyond training on how to navigate and utilize the technical aspects of the tutoring technologies, writing consultants were trained in how and why the ways in which they use the technology will result in more successful tutoring. They were asked to consider how their technology usage reflects their teaching philosophies and approaches.

• Writing consultants were asked to consider the numerous contextual factors that may exist during an online tutoring session, including, but not limited to: who the student is, what kind of writing they are working on, what writing issues the student identifies as needing help with, what issues go undocumented by the student, and if the student is an English Language Learner (ELL).

During the training, written reflections and observations will help capture preliminary thoughts, insights, and understandings of the interactions between pedagogy and technology.

Stage Two: Online Writing Consultations (August 24, 2015 – May 1, 2016). The two research sites in this stage of the study consist of the online tutoring spaces writing consultants utilize when working with students; both are housed within and accessed through WCOnline, UMSL’s Writing Center appointment software (described in Chapter One). From these two venues, data from online tutoring
sessions were collected. For the asynchronous Microsoft Word sessions, copies of student documents\(^2\), which include all comments and feedback from the tutor, were gathered for analysis. It was significant to see what kinds of advice tutors were offering and how they were offering this advice through the word processing program, Microsoft Word. For the synchronous tutoring sessions, data from the sessions is more diverse not just because it represents what’s happening in real-time between students and writing consultants, but because interface of the program is richer and offers more opportunity for a variety of pedagogical strategies. For example, text chat was certainly important, but how student writing is physically manipulated (e.g. moved, highlighted, bolded, isolated) during the session was also significant. Text can be manipulated in various ways, creating a richer environment for writing consultation. Therefore, while both of these tutoring venues can be considered multimodal in nature, the synchronous venue may offer more complex multimodal data.

The data from this phase of the research is important, as it shows the development of online writing consultation after the initial training.

**Stage Three: Post-Semester Interviews and Reflections (December, 2015 & May, 2016).** As each semester came to a close, I conducted a structured interview (fall 2015) with study participants and, due to scheduling concerns, asked them to respond to a writing prompt (spring 2016) asking them to explain and reflect upon their growth as online writing consultants. Additionally, I asked the tutors to revisit their pre-semester teaching and technology statements, as well as, during the

\(^2\) In this study, identifying information from all student documents will be erased, as to protect the identity of all student writers.
structured interviews (see Appendix C for the interview protocol), discuss the successes and challenges they faced over the course of the semester/year when tutoring online. The consultants also reflected on how any personal biases regarding online education may have shaped their pedagogical strategies.

**Methodologies**

To look at tutors’ talk and teaching in each online tutoring venue, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1992, Rogers and Wetzel, 2014) and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Rogers and Wetzel, 2014) was adapted and applied to look at how tutors are integrating technology into their pedagogical and content knowledge. This section outlines the specifics of how both CDA and MDA were utilized in this study.

To help shape how CDA fits into this research, it must be situated into this study via a social theory. Bourdieu’s (1972) Reflexive Sociology provides a lens in which to understand how tutors are situated within the context of the writing center. Reflexive Sociology argues for the complexity of human activity as simultaneously shaping and being shaped by the social world. For Bourdieu, a social world is shaped by *objectivism*, or a structured context. For example, a structured context would be an educational setting, where there exist rules of the environment, which help in shaping its actors. In this study, the writing center acts as a structured context within a larger structured context (e.g. a university). Another component that helps shape the social world, according to Bourdieu, is *constructivism*, or actors’ experiences of those structures (e.g. the personal histories of writing consultants, their educational experiences, their teaching experiences, their personal lives). Bourdieu combined
both structuralism and constructivism to form his concept of *habitus*—the numerous dispositions, tastes, biases, expectations, and worldviews that are present in the mind of a person.

The habitus helps to describe how the structured context can be internalized and turned into a subjective disposition, particularly shaped by personal experiences. Within the context of a writing center, tutors come into the space with relevant experiences and dispositions that help shape their habitus regarding the kinds of work they do with students. For example, when considering my own path as a writing consultant, I know that I often thought back to my time as a musician, looking at the activity of tutoring as a performance for the student as I helped them feel good about their writing and helped them revise their papers. Developing this approach not only made me feel comfortable in my own skin as a tutor, but it also allowed me best help students. Ultimately, as Bourdieu (1990) states, actors play out their strategies in these social structures by having a “feel for the game” (p. 66). In other words, habitus helps writing tutors situate and develop pedagogical strategies for tutoring sessions.

The social world of the writing center is encapsulated within the larger social framework of the university. These complex relationships, according to Bourdieu (1972), result in an understanding that individuals do not create new worlds in which to exercise agency in their actions, but instead exercise action within existing social conventions, making behavior, in addition to being built upon personal experience, also socially constrained. This brings into focus another important concept from Bourdieu (1972) — *fields*. For Bourdieu, a field is a positional context that can be
distinguished by its objective relations, agents and institutions, and a specific logic where actors jostle for position, express their views, interests, and their representation of the world. The writing center fits this description well as tutors must account for their numerous roles, as discussed in chapter one. It is within tutoring moments, particularly when working online, that the interactions between pedagogy and technology becomes increasingly intricate. The negotiation of a writing consultant’s habitus might be more nuanced, complex, and represent a struggle to do meaningful work with students.

Furthermore, Reflexive Sociology also asks the researcher to be situated closely into the study as a participant observer, noting how contextual factors may influence how the study is carried out and how data is interpreted. Bourdieu (1972) rejected the idea of a separation between the researcher and the researched, claiming the researcher is part of the social world and must adopt a critical attitude to their own practice. To further exemplify this idea, Garfinkel (1967) likened the researcher to a goldfish, noting that social researchers are much like goldfish in a fish bowl, assertively examining the other goldfish, but never stopping to notice the bowl and the water they share with the other fish they study. My positions as the Writing Center Coordinator and researcher speak perfectly to this perspective and were something I was constantly aware of during this study.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) speak about Bourdieu’s theory as being potentially meaningful alongside CDA because it can anchor the order of discourse in the order of social practice. An order of discourse is the sum of all genres and discourses that are used within a social domain. For example, when writing
consultants use institutional language to explain the concept of plagiarism to a student, they are not just drawing upon that system of discourse, but also become a representative of it. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) couple the concept of order of discourse alongside Bourdieu’s (1972) concept of field. In short, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) believe that CDA can help supplement Bourdieu’s theory, which they criticize for overlooking the importance of discourse in social action.

**Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).** CDA is both a framework and methodology for understanding and analyzing how talk and ideas operate within different modes of communication, particularly in relation to social practices and issues (van Dijk, 1993). Fairclough (1992) validates the use of CDA by declaring it involves an “interest in properties of texts, the production, distribution, and consumption of texts, sociocognitive processes of producing and interpreting texts, social practice in various institutions, the relationship of social practice to power relations, and hegemonic projects at the societal level” (p. 226). As already noted, the tutoring process in itself is a social process involving exertions of power at various points by both writing consultants and students, making CDA a fitting method for this research.

Wodak and Meyer (2009) write that CDA “has become an established discipline, institutionalized across the globe in many departments and curricula” (p. 4). While CDA has not been prominently featured in writing center studies, it is a methodology that has value to the field. Teaching and tutoring is often framed as a power relationship (North, 1982). Educators inform and co-create knowledge along with students, and students can choose to accept and appropriate the knowledge or
not. van Dijk (1995) notes that CDA focuses on group relations of power, dominance, and inequality and “the ways these are reproduced or resisted by social group members” (p. 18). These descriptions fit the context of any educational environment, particularly when considering CDA’s various features, which Wodak and Meyer (2009) emphasize. To them, CDA reveals:

- An interest in the properties of real language by users in natural settings;
- A focus on texts, discourses, conversations, speech acts, or communicative events;
- A study of action and interaction;
- An interest in the nonverbal aspects of communication;
- A focus on the social and cognitive aspect of interaction;
- An investigation of the context of language use; and
- An analysis of the range of semantic-pragmatic-textual language use.

(p. 2)

It can be argued that online communication does not represent, as Wodak and Meyer (2009) note, a “natural setting” (p. 2). However, with the prevalence of online education growing, and with more educational and professional communication happening in digital settings, it may not be long before scholars start to recognize digital venues as natural environments for communication.

In order to begin practically researching tutors’ talk using CDA, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) describe ways of interacting (genre), ways of representing (discourse), and ways of being (style)—these become entry points into discourse data.
and allow researchers to categorize, prioritize, and make sense of how communication is unfolding. This research relies on a combination of the CDA approaches of Fairclough (2003) and Rogers and Wetzel’s (2014) emulations of Fairclough’s method. As a systematic way of coding, interpreting, and analyzing data, further explanation of each category, and how they may fit into this study, is worthwhile.

Genre. Referred to as ways of interacting, Rogers and Mosley (2014) state that genre refers to the types of texts, or modes of language, that people create and call upon in communication. Genre is a category that allows researchers to make sense of data through interactions. Fairclough (2003) states that, when looking at genre, researchers question how it is situated within and contributes to social action and interaction in social events. To assist with this, please refer to Table 1 below, adapted from Rogers and Mosley (2014) to fit the scope of this study, which outlines options for researchers choosing to look at various aspects of interaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Genre: Ways of interacting</th>
<th>descriptions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Turn-taking structure</strong></td>
<td>Describes the structure and sequence of an interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What is the sequence of the turns?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Who is speaking and how often?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How many turns are taken?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How long are the turns?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Re-voicing</strong></td>
<td>Repeats and possibly recontextualizes the voice of a person or a text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What motivations are there for repeating?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How does repeating drive forward the discourse?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Does the repeating appropriate the information in some way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parallel Structure</strong></td>
<td>Similar textual structures within text; at the level of semantics or syntax; across semiotic modes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What features of this text function to create flow and rhythm?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How does parallel structure create opportunities for understanding?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repetition</strong></td>
<td>More than one mention of lexical items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Pedagogy and Technological Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How is repetition functioning in the discursive moment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does repetition offer an opportunity for clarity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Intertextuality**

Drawing on other voices, texts, and genres

- **Manifest**
  - Intertextual features such as: quotes speech, irony, parody, negation, presupposition and scarce quotes

- **Constitutive**
  - Relationship of discursive features in a text/between texts such as: form, structure and genre.

**Politeness Conventions**

Strategies used to a certain end (please, thank you, excuse me, can I, would you, etc.)

- In what ways, if any, does the convention allow for progress in discourse?
- Who is being polite and what are their motivations?

For this study, while data revealed, in varying levels, most categories in the Genre table, one category—turn-taking structures—was less relevant and present in the data. In asynchronous sessions, the tutor was the only active participant in the talk generated during the sessions; therefore, they were the only ones speaking. In synchronous sessions, there were turns in the live chat logs, which, at times, became relevant, especially when a chat participant dominated or was silenced in the conversation.

**Discourse.** Often referred to as *ways of representing*, discourse gives CDA researchers the opportunity to look at communicative chains of production, consumption, and distribution of texts and talk. Rogers and Mosley (2014) state that ways of representing refers to types of identity work that communicators enact as they use language. These moments are often looked upon by researchers as representative of communication that embodies tensions, or reveals embedded power
structures in language. Below, Table 2, adapted from Rogers and Mosley (2014), outlines the possible approaches that researchers can take when considering ways of representing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Discourse: Ways of representing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information Focus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The location of the focus of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <strong>Themes</strong> represented in first part of clause (known info). What information is foregrounded by being in the theme position?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- <strong>Rhemes</strong> include new info in end of clause. What ideas are represented in the rheme position?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Statements/Questions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different types of statements and questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Imperatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interrogative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Declarative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Rhetorical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Expository</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pronoun Use</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impacts the degree of contact/distance with the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1st/2nd/3rd person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Intensive/exclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sexist/non-sexist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Which pronouns are used and where?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formality of Vocab</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of formality in discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What does the level of formality reveal about the discourse environment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What does it reveal about the communicators?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lexicalization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The selection of wordings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How are ideas represented through word choice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Re-lexicalizations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renaming/re-voicing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What is the level of formality?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What words or phrases show up again and again in the transcript?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Silence/Exclusion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberate or inadvertent suppression of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Topical silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lexical silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Presuppositional silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What information is being excluded?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As with genre, most categories in Table 2 were represented on varying levels. However, some categories were far more prevalent than others, something I attribute to the nature of feedback that the tutors gave when working online. For example, lexicalization—how tutors framed ideas via particular word choices—was very important in analysis. However, data revealed far less examples of silencing/exclusion because, I assert, of the nature of the online venue. Silencing simply happens more organically when the conversation is in person—or bound by a different set of power constructs.

**Style.** Referred to as “ways of being,” style allows CDA researchers to analyze characteristics of communication that demonstrate positioning, or personal representation in a communicative situation. For example, during a tutoring session, a writing consultant may position himself or herself to be an authority on creative writing when working with a student in a course on fiction writing. In order to demonstrate and assert a position, communicators may utilize certain aspects of language, such as active/passive voice, modality (e.g., tense and affinity), transitivity (e.g., action, affective, state, ability, cognitive statements), and pronoun use. I believe the ways in which participants represent themselves and others in talk can reveal a great deal about their interactivity with pedagogy, content, and technology. Table 3 below, adapted from Rogers and Mosley (2014), outlines further possible examples of ways of being.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Style: Ways of Being</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verb Transitivity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Verbs of doing (material, behavioral) actions, events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Verbs of sensing/saying (mental) experiencer, experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Verbs of being (relational) existence, state, relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Existential verbs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what degree does an action affect its object?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is obligation expressed in this text?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tense</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When is this process occurring?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Voice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the agent represented?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passivization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mood</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicative (I am here)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjunctive (If I was here)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical (Am I here?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nominalization</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are verb processes turned into nouns in this text? Ex. Writing consultants helped four students. There were four students that got writing help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appraisal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kinds of attitudes are negotiated in the text?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are values scored and positions aligned?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Naming the Self</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex. “As the teacher, I am.....”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does this positioning impact others?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Just like genre and discourse, some characteristics of style were more prevalent than others and were relevant to the data in the study. For example, while verb transitivity revealed itself to be important when understanding how tutors were classifying their advice to students, other components, such as tense, became less relevant within the framework of tutoring online.

These three categories allow me, in this study, to consider both macro and micro levels of discourse in online tutoring sessions. The macro level of understanding considers how the culture or writing consultation and writing pedagogy is represented in language. The micro level of understanding speaks more to how the mechanical structure of language—for example, what nouns, verb, and pronouns are being used to formulate ideas and concepts.

**Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA).** All discourse is multimodal. LeVine and Scollon (2004) recognize that “language in use, whether this is in the form of spoken language or text, is always and inevitably constructed across multiple modes of communication” (p. 1). These include human features such as gestures and body language, document-based features such as the design of documents and typography, even across other modes such as sound and images. However, MDA, as O’Halloran, K. L. E, Podlasov and Tan (2013) claim, is still connected to language and is, “the study of language in combination with other resources” (p. 230). MDA is always connected and reliant upon language, even when focusing on other modes beyond it. However, it is the decentralization of language that makes MDA significant, particularly for this research as it is connected to how tutors interact with digital technologies. For this study, how training materials were constructed, and how
writing consultants manipulate and utilize technology, were the focus of multimodal discourse analysis. As tutors were introduced to tutoring, and how taught how to do it online, and how consultants were using tutoring technologies to help communicate writing concepts, the modes of communication beyond language became significant for analysis.

It has been noted that research methodologies and analytical procedures are rarely documented in MDA studies. In a recent review of CDA research in education, Rogers et al. (2016) identified 42 studies in the field of education that utilized MDA in some capacity, but noted that even though “20% of studies that integrated global technologies and/or relied on digital data sources,” there was little attention given to “how the layout, time, space, proximity all contribute to meaning-making” (p. 44). In order to better capture these aspects, I rely on the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), to create an understanding of the grammar of visual design. Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) use of the term grammar implies an attempt to investigate how what is depicted in images is gathered holistically, similarly to how CDA researchers look at language on a micro-level (e.g. clauses, verbs, pronouns, etc.). Therefore, this study looks at MDA much in the same way as CDA, by looking at the categories of genre, discourse, and style. However, these categories, represented below in Table 4, are analyzed through a multimodal lens, as per Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) approach.

| Table 4: Multimodal Discourse Analysis Categories |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| **Genre (Ways of Interacting)** | • What is the medium of the message? (which online tutoring venue) |
|                            | • What modes make the image/text cohesive? (color, icons, repetition of lexical items or symbols, parallel structure, # of entry points, gestures) |
|                            | • Design and typography: layout, hierarchy |
Just as in the CDA component of this study, categories in the MDA were all considered, but some characteristic were more relevant and prevalent in the data than others. For example, because the multimodal data in this study all came from information that presented digitally on a screen, the design of information became very important to consider during analysis. However, construction of stance (listed under Style in the table), became less important because it was always obvious who was constructing the information and for what purpose. However, for the sake of thorough analysis, all categories and characteristics were accounted for in the transcripts (see Appendix F).

CDA and MDA offer two critical components of this research. CDA allows for an analysis of spoken or written language—what tutors are communicating with students and how they are utilizing technology to do so. MDA is equally crucial
because it allows for the modes of communication beyond language—how writing consultants are navigating and using technology to best consult with students. Together, the two methods offer a more rounded understanding of how tutors are combining their technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge.

**Analytic procedures.** The following sections describe how data analysis for each kind of data set were carried out for this study.

**Training Presentations.** The training presentations were viewed as multimodal artifacts that represent how tutors were introduced to the Writing Center at UMSL, online writing consultation, and the technologies they used during online consultations. With tutors’ reflections and data from online tutoring sessions, these presentations helped evaluate the successes (and sometimes, the gaps in preparedness) in getting tutors ready to do online work.

The visual presentations underwent Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA). Multimodal transcripts were created to effectively analyze each slide of the two presentations. Modally dense moments in each slide were identified and coded for further analysis. Characteristics about each slide that fit into the questions and categories for analysis seen in table 4 (above) were identified in how they help create meaning in modes beyond language. Consider this excerpt from the MDA transcripts looking at a slide from one of the presentations.
How this slide is designed, how it calls up on other voices/genres to help build meaning, and how it teaches and helps drive conversation during training reveals strategies that attempt to help with training particular writing center concepts and pedagogical theory. Each slide from both Prezi presentations were put through MDA—full transcripts from these presentations can be found in Appendix F.

**Reflections.** Written reflections were collected from tutors, coded for salient themes (across reflections, shared by all tutors), and compiled into a single transcript. CDA was then applied to them. For example, when discussing technology usage in education, most tutors wrote about technological benefits in education, but most also expressed some level of skepticism as well. Once themes like these were established, a transcript was created and then a combination of the CDA approaches from Fairclough (2003) and Rogers and Wetzel’s (2014) emulations of Fairclough’s method were applied to excerpts from the reflections.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Excerpt</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>As a middle school and high school social studies and English teacher, I integrated multiple forms of digital technology into my classrooms to augment lessons and allow students to express themselves in different ways.</td>
<td>Intertext: references teaching experiences in middle/high school setting</td>
<td>Lexicalization: augment, express themselves, different ways</td>
<td>Verb of doing: integrated, express</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theme: in the middle/high school setting</td>
<td>Naming self: As a middle school and high school social studies and English teacher...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relevant components from Fairclough’s categories of genre, discourse, and style were identified both in their frequency and in their relevance of the interactions between pedagogy and technology. For example, in the written reflections, tutors demonstrated heavy use of *intertextuality* in their writing, calling upon other voices or texts to align with their understanding of teaching and tutoring online. They also expressed many moments of modality, using unassertive language to demonstrate hesitancy in their feelings about technology and writing consultation. These data helped conceptualize the kinds of talk and thinking tutors employ when discussing their thinking before working as online tutors.

**Interviews.** Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using the transcription software F5 Transcription. Interviews were then coded using the Jefferson Transcription System. Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) remark that discourse researchers need to choose a transcription system that reveals interview data as social interaction. The Jefferson system, which is frequently utilized in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) research, offers a way to frame interviewee responses, in part, as a result of the interviewer’s questions and interactions. After the transcribing interviews, universal themes were identified and a master transcript containing all interviews and themes (Appendix F) was created. From there, CDA was applied via an adaptation of Rogers and Wetzel’s (2014) emulations of Fairclough’s method in order to discover how tutors are describing their growth as online writing consultants.
From this analytical process, numerous points emerged. For example, tutors demonstrated re-voicing from their online tutoring experiences, the students they’ve worked with, or other components of their online work. The moments found in the interview data serve as direct and dense demonstrations of the interactions between pedagogy and technology.

**Online tutoring sessions.** Because there are two online writing consultation venues in this study, attention was given to how the data between to the venues differ. However, because both the asynchronous and synchronous sessions include textual language as well as multimodal communication, both CDA and MDA, using the same methods as the previous data sets, were applied to data from each online tutoring venue. Analysis focused on different characteristics of talk as communication unfolded differently based on each space’s functionality and interactivity with tutors and students. Six tutoring sessions from each writing consultant, three synchronous and three asynchronous\(^3\), were chosen for their particular qualities and representations of individual consultant expertise and skill.

\(^3\) In some exceptions, some tutors had less synchronous sessions than other tutors—a factor out of the control of the tutors or researcher in this study.
Asynchronous session data. This data consists of tutor interactions with students via Microsoft Word documents submitted for E-tutoring writing consultations. Both CDA and MDA were applied to these tutoring sessions.

CDA was applied to tutor comments made in the margins to assist students with revisions. In a tutoring session, these comments are inserted via the Microsoft Word comment function—tutors are trained to never edit or work directly with the student’s writing in order to keep opportunities for revision and writer agency in the hands of the student.

For each writing consultant, a transcript consisting of three asynchronous sessions was constructed. Salient moments were extracted into the transcript and CDA—using the adaptation of Rogers and Wetzel’s (2014) emulations of Fairclough’s method—was applied.

For Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), multimodal transcripts including screenshots of the asynchronous sessions were created. Characteristics for analysis included screenshots included comment placement, formatting of language within the comment, and other modally dense moments. These moments include such attributes of teaching as how student writing concepts are emphasized by the tutor for the student via the technology interface, the design of comments in Microsoft Word, and intertextuality, such as inserting links or resource material within the framework of the tutoring technology.

Synchronous sessions data. For synchronous sessions, which are more modally complex, CDA and MDA were once again utilized, but in slightly different ways. CDA focused on live chat between tutors and students, and not just tutor
comments, as in the asynchronous sessions. This more dialogic nature of the tutoring session yielded different kinds of data from tutors, who reacted more spontaneously (as opposed to asynchronous communication, which is often more self-edited).

In these sessions, for example, the CDA features prominent in chat logs focused on levels of formality, as it became evident that synchronous chat often resulted more colloquial language being used by consultants. Additionally, tutors were also seen using many varieties of politeness conventions, revealing a more conversational tone when communicating in real-time. Transcripts of the chat logs, much like the e-tutoring transcripts, were generated in order to conduct CDA.

For MDA, the modally dense environment of the synchronous sessions, which includes not just text chat, but also and the collaborative whiteboard in which tutors and students can work, offered an opportunity to focus on how the interactions between pedagogy and technology is being enacted visually. Much like for the asynchronous sessions, MDA transcripts for each tutor consisted of screenshots of modally dense moments that emphasized the interactions between pedagogy and technology. Characteristics for analysis included how tutors are foregrounded and backgrounded writing concepts based on their interactions with the interface of the synchronous technology. Additionally, results revealed that writing consultants constructed their position in ways beyond language, such as visual choices or manipulation of the technology in some way.

*Student surveys.* Data from student surveys (Appendix D) were gathered into a spreadsheet for further analysis. First, using a five-point likert scale, student satisfaction was identified. Next, answers from open-ended questions were open-
coded to determine the concepts or categories from students. From there, axial coding was used to confirm existing concepts and categories in the data and to seek out any connections between them. After coding, findings from surveys were triangulated with data from online tutoring sessions and interviews to assess how tutors are completing online work as represented in students’ reactions.

**Observational data.** The observational data collected during the study consisted of field notes from all stages of the study, including training, professional development meetings, as well as informal conversations and insights about online tutoring. This information aims to capture how writing consultants represented a connection between pedagogy and technology in broader ways. These observations were continuously shared and discussed with tutors and are important because they allow the tutor to see how their thoughts about online tutoring changed and matured over the academic year. Furthermore, these data points also helped me contextualize my own role in this study, not just as a researcher, but as someone who was constantly assessing and helping tutors become stronger online consultants. Ultimately, these observations were used to triangulate information gathered from all stages of the study.

**Population and Sample**

This study utilized total population sampling, or purposeful sampling (Marshall, 1996), which regards particular characteristics of a population that are of interest for research, and will be able to help answer the research questions. Accordingly, because the staff at UMSL’s Writing Center is small, this study relied on total population sampling in order to gather enough relevant data. Out of the eight
writing consultants on staff, seven of them agreed to be in the study, as one was unable to participate due to time commitments. Therefore, this study focused on seven writing consultants, including both experienced and newly hired tutors.

Of the writing consultants included in this study, there are many variations in their individual backgrounds, previous teaching experiences, technological expertise, and other aspects that speak to their abilities as writing consultants. Also, because this study centers with writing consultants that may or may not have previous teaching experience, their levels of writing center expertise and online tutoring experience differ. Going into the study, I was aware that these facts alone might have a significant impact on the kinds of data gathered.

**Writing consultants.** While the writing consultants who took part in this study share many characteristics, and carried out the same online tutoring tasks, they were different in terms of their experiences and tutoring approaches. All writing consultants in this study are graduate students in English at the University of Missouri-St. Louis (UMSL) and were awarded a two-year graduate teaching assistantship during their graduate studies. There are two subsets of graduate teaching assistants—teaching assistants and full-time writing consultants; while both subsets work in the Writing Center for the first year of their assistantships, teaching assistants eventually leave the Writing Center and go on to teach First Year Composition during their second year. Full-time consultants spend their entire assistantship in the Writing Center. With both subsets, the assistantship requires writing consultants to work a set amount of hours per week in the Writing Center, 20 hours per week for full-time tutors and seven hours per week for teaching assistants, as well as perform other
duties (e.g. offer writing workshops, attend professional development training and staff meetings). Writing consultants, even within the English Department, come from a variety of disciplines. Tutors earning their M.A. degree in English may be studying either literature or composition and rhetoric. Tutors earning their M.F.A degrees may be studying either fiction or poetry. All tutors are required to attend an intensive training seminar on writing consultation before beginning their assistantships, as well as take a graduate-level course, Teaching College Writing, which further prepares them to work with college level writers on a variety of composition issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Age, Degree, Focus</th>
<th>Comfort Level with Technology*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>22, MFA, Fiction</td>
<td>Somewhat comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>24, MA, Literature</td>
<td>Somewhat comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>22, MFA, Poetry</td>
<td>Not comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lola</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>23, MA, Composition &amp; Rhetoric</td>
<td>Comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>23, MFA, Poetry</td>
<td>Very comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>28, MA, Literature</td>
<td>Somewhat comfortable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Returning</td>
<td>34, MFA, Fiction</td>
<td>Very comfortable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Comfort level is inferred from self-reporting in the Technology Statements

Data Management

In order to better triangulate data that best represents the entire process of writing consultation at UMSL, I gathered data that represents what happens as tutors get trained, develop as online writing consultants over the course of an academic year, and how they reflect upon their development.

I carefully kept track of my own observations and notes during the entire data collection process. Because I am very much embedded in the study as the Coordinator of the Writing Center, my personal reflections regarding how I impact the research
environment were important to recognize and follow. In essence, as a the Coordinator of the Writing Center, and the trainer of writing consultants, I had just as much to gain from this study as perhaps future tutors in the Writing Center.

To keep data secure, all files for this study were kept in a password-protected external hard drive that only I had access to. No files were removed from the hard drive while the study was being conducted nor after the study had concluded.

**Ethical Considerations**

In order to create and maintain an ethical study, this research adheres to the guidelines of the University of Missouri-St. Louis regarding the protection of human participants. A request for review was submitted to the UMSL Institutional Review Board and approved. After receiving IRB approval, participant recruitment and data collection began.

**Validity.** The goal of qualitative research is to obtain an understanding of participants’ experiences and the meanings they construct. The use of interviews and observations to help triangulate the data gathered from tutoring sessions helped to increase the internal validity of this study. Creswell (2014) offers eight strategies to solidify validity in research. One of these methods is “spending prolonged time in the field” (p. 202), something I was bound to as I worked closely with writing consultants and students every day in the Writing Center for the duration of the study. By spending ample time with the participants in the Writing Center and by constantly observing their online tutoring sessions, I was able to provide rich description of both the participants and the online settings, which lends more credibility to this research.
In this study, multiple sources of data were collected, allowing for triangulation, further increasing internal validity. Another way to increase a study’s internal validity is through participant inclusion (a member-check). Accordingly, through a bi-weekly email, and through informal conversations with all the participants, I shared findings and themes discovered with the writing consultants consistently as the study unfolded. Their input as this study progressed was vital, something for which I am incredibly grateful. Furthermore, the use of researcher reflexivity increases this study’s validity. Rogers et al. (2005), particularly when speaking about CDA research, claim that reflexivity includes three aspects: “participatory construction of the research design, reciprocity, and turning the analytic frame back on the researcher” (p. 381), creating a sense of researcher awareness throughout the entirety of a study. This was something I was incessantly aware of, and employed, throughout the study.

Lastly, detailed documentation of the research process helped ensure validity. Merriam (2009) speaks to the importance of creating an audit trail, ”a running record of your interaction with the data as you engage in analysis and interpretation” (p. 223). At each phase of this study, I kept a detailed account of the data collection and analysis as well as reflections related to any problems or decisions made in the process. This log acts as a buffer between my analysis and any personal biases. It also helped me, often in retrospect, make sense of fragmented ideas I had about data, interactions with tutors, and peripheral concepts revealing themselves in the data.

**Limitations.** As with any research, there are limitations to this study. In the following section, the limitations to this research are outlined and explained.
Research site and tutoring technologies. This study only looks at data gathered from one university writing center. While one research site may limit the generalizability of the study, the results are still useful to other writing center settings, especially as many writing centers currently use WCOnline for their online consultation needs. However, not all writing centers offer the same kind of online writing consultation. While this study focuses on one kind of asynchronous and one kind of synchronous online tutoring, there are other online tutoring methods that would, most likely, yield different findings (e.g. Skype, Google Hangout, MUVEs).

Sample size and tutoring culture. UMSL’s Writing Center staff is relatively small at eight tutors (seven consultants participated in this study); the culture of the Writing Center at UMSL may be more intimate than larger writing centers employing a larger staff. While a smaller staff may have some benefits (i.e. training can be more focused), training and tutoring are much different than when working with a larger staff. With such a small sample of writing tutors, it is possible that findings will be contingent upon the context of the study. This, in turn, could impact the perceived generalizability and application of the study to other research contexts.

Role of the researcher. Finally, my own position as the UMSL Writing Center Coordinator impacts this study in significant ways. As the Coordinator, I am responsible for training the writing consultants, making sure day-to-day tasks of the Writing Center are carried out, scheduling the tutors for work, and any other administrative duties involved in making sure the Center is running smoothly. Apart from these duties, I also work as a writing consultant, working with students in the same ways and with the same technologies utilized by the participants. Because of my
role as the Coordinator, I have become a known figure in the university community—someone who, in some ways, represents the writing standards of UMSL. I have become, as one student addressed me as I walked across campus recently, “that writing guy.” My status on campus and in my position needs to be taken seriously within the context of this study as it impacts the ways in which I interact with and understand the data. Throughout this study, I was wholly aware of these limitations and acted as transparent as possible in how they impact data analysis.

**Summary**

This study considers how writing consultants come learn, enact, and reflect upon the interactions between writing pedagogy and the use of consultation technologies. I served as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis as I helped train and assess the new and experienced writing consultants at UMSL’s Writing Center. I employed both Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1999; Rogers & Mosley, 2014) and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) in order to interpret the discourses of tutor developing into online writing consultants.
CHAPTER FOUR

The goal for this chapter is to tell the story of the research, revealing the findings of the study in a way that is accessible to those who work in and with writing centers. Therefore, the following sections contain narratives surrounding the three stages of the study. Despite the distinct nature of these three stages, all of these findings will be encompassed by the observational data, including insights from the writing consultants and my own observations as a researcher closely embedded into the research environment. This chapter will reveal all of these findings and frame the story of how the writing consultants came to understand the interactions between pedagogy and technology in writing consultation.

Stage One: Pre-Semester Reflections and Writing Center Training

On August 18th, 2015, I found myself running a little behind schedule. I had promised, to a group of people I had not yet met, bagels for breakfast. The night before I was up later than usual, putting the final touches on the training agenda. That evening I sent a quick email to the training participants—I said I was excited to meet them and that they could expect some bagels from me as a welcome to the UMSL Writing Center. The next morning, after uncharacteristically over sleeping, I got halfway to work, realized I had forgotten said bagels, turned around to get them, and finally made it to the training, barely arriving on time. Stumbling into the room, I found the new staff and some returning tutors sitting and chatting excitedly at a conference table in the Writing Center.

The pre-fall semester training is vital to all incoming writing consultants. It’s not only a week to learn how to work with students in the UMSL Writing Center, it’s
also a time to start collaborating as educators, and perhaps most importantly, develop a graduate student cohort that will last for the next two years (the length of a GTA assistantship). As I passed out bagels, I finally got to meet the new Writing Center staff.

**The writing consultants.** Bill, a younger MFA student (22 years old) studying fiction, was very motivated to learn about composition theory and writing pedagogy during the training. He quickly became known in the group for his incredibly long and well-maintained hair, which he had been growing since a young child. Despite his youth, which in my past experience as a Writing Center Coordinator reveals a steeper learning curve for developing a work ethic as a teacher, Bill’s attitude toward learning to teach impressed me—he was determined and enthusiastic about his new position as a teaching assistant and writing consultant.

Emma, an MA student studying literature, is in her mid-twenties and talked about returning to graduate school for a master’s degree in English after earning her bachelor’s in Psychology. In the previous semester, Emma worked briefly with the Writing Center when she was hired by the English department to tutor students in a section of First-Year Composition (FYC) designed to work with apprehensive writers. Part of her work with the Writing Center involved working with those students one-on-one, helping them not only develop their writing skills, but also develop confidence in themselves as writers. Because of her great work in FYC, she was hired as a full-time writing consultant on a graduate assistantship. Coming into her new position, I already knew of Emma’s capabilities as a tutor, and I was excited to have her on the staff.
Lola, studying for an MA in composition and rhetoric, was originally hired as a full-time writing consultant. However, after a previous teaching assistant wasn’t able to keep their position, Lola was offered the chance to teach FYC in addition to working in the Writing Center. Early in the training sessions, Lola mentioned that being able to work as a writing tutor, in addition to learning to teach, would hopefully make her a more rounded educator.

Hannah, an MFA student studying poetry, was hired as a writing consultant after she specifically requested a position in the Writing Center in her teaching assistant application materials. Hannah came into her graduate work after studying theater and dance for her undergraduate degree. Early in meeting with the group, she seemed shy and reserved, but very attentive and eager to learn about writing pedagogy. From my past experiences, sometimes, quiet writing tutors can be the most beneficial for students; they choose their points of entry into a conversation more carefully and thoughtfully. From the first day, Hannah’s demeanor revealed her as a meticulous teacher.

Erin, another MFA student studying poetry, mentioned right away that she was excited to find innovative ways to work with students, particularly as she recognized them as being “a different kind of learner” than when she was earning her undergraduate degree (despite being young herself). Erin, a creative writer interested in sound poetry, brought to the Writing Center what I recognized as unique style and insight to the staff, someone who, potentially, might bring new understandings to working with students online.
Apart from the five new staff members, the training also included two existing writing consultants. John and Sean were entering the second year of their teaching assistantships, and were attending the meeting to help further contextualize idea about tutoring for new writing tutors, take part in the training as a refresher, and perhaps learn a few new things about online consultation (I had revamped the training a bit).

John, an MFA student studying fiction, was already an experienced teacher by the time he found his way to the UMSL Writing Center. For eight years, before going back to school for his MFA, John taught English and Social Studies at a middle school in Austin, Texas. His charisma in the classroom carried over nicely to writing consultation; he was already a very popular and often sought-out writing tutor by students at UMSL.

Sean, an MA student studying literature, mentioned early in meeting the new staff that one thing he loved most about tutoring was connecting with students and helping them do their best work. He also mentioned, when first bringing up the idea of tutoring online with the new consultants, he did not particularly enjoy the online tutoring sessions, understanding their usefulness and practicality, but finding them to be difficult spaces in which to identify with and work meaningfully with students. Sean’s plans after earning his MA included teaching high school. Accordingly, as working with technology and younger students might certainly be in Sean’s future, I was hopeful that he would find a way to change his perspective about working in digital spaces.
With breakfast digesting, the Writing Center staff and I started our training. In order to start our conversations about tutoring and (later) working online, we started a conversation about the two reflective pieces I had them write prior to the training.

The teaching statements. At UMSL, when graduate students want to apply for a graduate teaching assistantship (GTA), they are required to write a teaching statement, which is to be included in their application materials. The prompt for this teaching statement (Appendix A) asks prospective GTAs to look back into their previous teaching and learning experiences, drawing from them to explain how they envision themselves as potential educators. For the majority of the consultants, the statements served as representations of their thinking about teaching writing months before they ever stepped foot in the UMSL Writing Center. For one writing consultant, Emma, who was awarded her assistantship after tutoring one semester in the Writing Center (explained above), her teaching statement took into account her previous teaching experiences as a writing tutor, since they spoke directly about her development as an educator.

When discussing their teaching statements in the training, many of the new consultants conceded that, without much formal teaching experience, they believed their words were more representative of idealized teaching personas they would like to adopt as developing teachers—something to strive toward. Bill mentioned that, in his teaching statement, he tried to “capture both what I thought the GTA hiring committee wanted to read, but also what kind of teacher I want to be.” The other consultants in the training agreed with his sentiment. Accordingly, all of the
consultants, as evidenced by their teaching statements, wrote about their idealized teaching identities.

Looking broadly at the CDA features represented in the teaching statements, many characteristics stand out as significant when tutors explored past teaching experiences and expressed ideas about becoming a writing instructor. For example, all consultants leaned heavily on *intertextuality*—calling upon other texts, voices, and genres to frame their own educational experiences and principles. Lola, for example, referred broadly to her previous experiences with wonderful teachers. “Fundamentally, I believe teaching figures, such as professors, exert a great impact upon their students. This has typically been the case throughout my academic career, and I would very much like to ‘pay it forward.’” Lola calls upon her previous experiences with influential teachers, wanting to emulate their practices and behaviors, and therefore linking their teaching values to her own. In this way, calling upon the voices and ideas of others is way to justify and build a respectable teaching identity. This same kind of intertextuality can be seen with Erin, who also called upon previous experiences with instrumental teachers. “I have had the privilege of interacting with truly great literary scholars and writing instructors, and I would consider it an equal privilege to further disseminate the enthusiasm that they instilled in me.” This in instance, Erin, like Lola, is referring to previous teachers, and their educational approaches, in order to frame her own educational beliefs and goals. Erin also speaks about passing down positive feelings about English studies, in addition to skills, giving her projected teaching identity more depth.
Another prominent feature across teaching statements is the use of verbs that describe actions or behaviors—verbs of *doing*. It makes sense that the teaching statements, as they revolve around describing talents and skills, would rely heavily on these kinds of verbs to carry tutors’ descriptions. John, when speaking about his middle school teaching experience (he taught multiple subjects), used a variety of verbs when speaking about the kinds of work his students completed in his class. When talking about his students’ learning across various subjects and lessons, John said his students *reflected, challenged, subverted, constructed, analyzed, evaluated, found, researched, debated, engaged, conversed, spoke, grappled, and developed.*

While John situates all these verbs within the context of his students’ learning, the verbs, as they reveal a variety of teachable skills and learning, also acknowledge him as a diverse and pedagogically rich teacher. In short, John presented himself as an educator that can teach a variety of skillsets to students.

While John used verbs to demonstrate his multifaceted teaching skills, Bill, who had never taught a class, used verbs in a way to demonstrate how his identity as a creative writer might be reflected in his identity as a writing teacher. “As much as I am excited to *share* my knowledge with students, I want this to be an opportunity for personal development. I will *hone* my own craft by *observing* my students’ styles.” Bill’s verbs (bolded for emphasis) are less direct than John’s, are more self-reflective, and reminiscent of language used in creative writing courses where writing workshop activities are common. Lexically, Bill also frames his teaching within language that speaks to values held important in the field of creative writing (“*hone* my own *craft*”). I find this to be a very effective way to talk about a teaching identity, as Bill
is relying on his existing knowledge base in a way that shows what he brings to the classroom or writing center.

Within the teaching statements, distinct themes emerged that further defined how consultants framed their educational experiences and teaching identities. These themes were: *Individual Instruction, Dismantling the Teacher/Student Hierarchy, Learning as a Communal Experience, Respecting and Emulating Great Teachers, Previous Teaching Experiences, Student Agency, Importance of Writing,* and *Pedagogical Perspectives*. Three of these themes, as they reveal the most significant data for this study, are explored in more detail in the following sections to get a more nuanced and microlevel understanding of ideas discussed in the teaching statements.

To see which discourse features appeared in the remaining themes, please refer to the transcript in Appendix F.

**Individual instruction.** To help appraise why individual instruction is important for learning, the consultants pulled from a variety of previous academic and professional experiences (*intertextuality*). Bill, when talking about training employees at an ice cream shop, mentioned recognizing variances in learning styles, particularly when trying to “teach new employees certain cleaning, preparation, and customer service routines. What worked for me did not necessarily make sense to some of my trainees.” Emma also spoke about her understanding of how people learn when explaining her previous semester of tutoring experience. “Talking to [students] one-on-one allowed us to collaboratively address their specific needs. Additionally, it allowed me to learn from them.” Emma, while noting the benefits of individual

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4 To see how all of these themes were represented by consultants, please refer to Appendix F, which contains all of the CDA and MDA transcripts from the study.
instruction, also speaks to the benefit of learning from the experience and student, something Bill also alludes to when recognizing that people learn differently than him, therefore requiring him to bend his teaching practices. By calling upon previous experiences, the importance of being malleable as an educator becomes more evident. This malleability is a very important characteristic to have when tutoring online.

In the training, this became a key theme and lesson that I wanted to instill in the consultants. Using Bill and Emma as examples, the tutors discussed being *rhetorically flexible* in their meetings with students, and that both letting the learning circumstances shape their teaching, as well as their teaching shaping the learning circumstances, is important when teaching.

*Previous teaching experiences.* When talking about previous teaching experiences, the use of *declarative statements* was most common. However, numerous times, *declarative statements* were followed up with *expository statements* to further explain or contextualize the original idea. Lola speaks to an academic paper she recently had accepted for publication. “Furthermore, a paper I have written has been accepted for publication and should be seen in a few months, and as a result I feel capable of assisting students as they navigate academic discourse.” Lola’s accomplishment here is being framed and justified as proof that she would be qualified to help students write in a college environment. Emma demonstrates a similar approach to reveal her teaching qualities when presenting this declarative/expository statement.

*My first teaching experience occurred in high school when I was given the opportunity to edit the yearbook.* As co-editor in charge of production and design, it was my responsibility to teach the staff how to use the software and how to employ the principles of yearbook design.
While Emma’s declarative statement (in bold) simply states what she did, her following expository statements provides why her teaching experience is meaningful when presenting her as a potential educator. Her explanation demonstrates her as someone who can successfully multitask, as well as someone who can facilitate a staff and help them learn. Ultimately, when consultants wanted to assert experience as being significant enough to include in their teaching statements, they also felt the need to justify their experience as relevant to their identities as teachers.

When speaking about his previous classroom experience, John relied on re-voicing—recontextualizing a voice or experience on someone’s behalf—to describe the skills his students gained from his teaching. When describing specific kinds of learning his students experienced in writing lessons, John noted, “They have found their voice in poetry and short fiction.” Furthermore, when talking about students in his classes, he proclaims “the students speak in their own voice and reflect on the choices they have made, providing them with the tools to grapple with important issues, both personal and global, throughout their lives.” John is framing his students’ experiences for them, proclaiming these are the lessons they learned and the experiences and feelings they had. However, more importantly in his teaching statement, these moves John’s descriptions allows him to frame himself as a very skilled and talented teacher.

**Pedagogical Perspectives.** The writing consultants, when speaking to pedagogies they found themselves drawn to or ideologically aligned with, used a great deal of intertextuality to do so. Bill called upon the voice of composition scholar Donald Murray to help clarify, in his opinion, how writing should be taught.
Questions of grammar and syntax have their place in this discussion, but should be coupled with attention to the underlying ideas in an essay or story. I will dig into my students’ writing to understand what they are expressing before attending to grammatical errors. Reading Don Murray’s essays on writing has stressed this point for me.

Bill’s pedagogical linking to Donald Murray allows him to refine his teaching identity—one that values higher order concerns in writing (clarity and expression) over lower order concerns (grammar and mechanics). Becoming allies with other scholarly voices and genres is also what Lola did when promoting her pedagogical perspective. She framed her teaching identity within the framework of Feminism and Gender Studies, particularly when working with diverse student populations.

“Regarding my operations in the classroom, I feel myself drawn most powerfully to feminist pedagogies emphasizing cooperative learning and diversity. I believe my status as a Gender Studies student helps me bring much to the table in this regard.” Interestingly, Lola framed her identity as a tutor a bit differently, attaching a different set of academic discipline to the role of writing consultant. “As far as the writing center is concerned, I have experience writing in multiple disciplines, thanks to the coursework in which I engaged while working toward both my English and psychology degrees.” The difference between classroom teacher, which Lola aligns with Gender Studies, and writing consultant, which Lola aligns with English and Psychology, shows how Lola sees her roles operating in different ways in different educational contexts. In the classroom, she can bend her pedagogy appropriately to meet the diverse needs of learners. In the writing center, she is able to shift between academic disciplines, making her more valuable to more students.
Repetition and parallel structure are seen in Hannah’s presentation of her pedagogical perspective. When speaking about the various teaching settings she has worked in, she presents her teaching approaches in a very strategic way.

When someone could not learn a dance number in a musical, I was not mean. I was patient and encouraging. I slowed them down and helped them at their pace, one on one. I did not shout at them to “just work harder” because that would not yield results. When a math client got frustrated and said they could never pass their algebra tests, let alone the class, I told them I believed in them. I listened to her questions, figured out how she learned, and helped her until she finished the class with an “A”. When someone wrote a very incoherent essay, I did not laugh and tell them to start over. I helped them work through it, section by section, talking them through how to write clearer, more concise ideas.

Hannah’s repetition in this excerpt provides a structure that serves as ways to self-affirm a stance or belief. Using a rhetorical device called anaphora—repeating a phrase or word at the beginning of a sentence—Hannah is able to create an emotional effect on readers that hear these words repeatedly, making them more memorable and therefore important. Additionally, situating first person and verb combination (I slowed, I listened, I helped, I told) throughout many sentences also places her as the agent of change when teaching, crafting for her an impressive and commanding teaching identity.

The technology statements. Because the teaching statements did not offer consultants’ perspectives about technology and its role in educational settings, in addition to writing a teaching statement, the tutors were required to compose a technology statement (Appendix B) that asked them to consider their opinions and ideas about technology’s role in learning and how it might play a role in their writing consultations. In order to get a macrolevel understanding, especially before narrowing
in on specifics, a count of particular discourse features revealed some trends in how writing consultants were idealizing their thinking about technology\(^5\).

Like in the teaching statements, tutors relied heavily on intertextuality to communicate their own feelings about technology. Erin, when speaking about educational technologies she finds interesting and worthwhile, mentioned the language-learning software Duolingo, claiming, “…it is amazingly well put-together. Do I think it's an equal experience to language immersion in a foreign country? Probably not. Do I consider it a useful tool and a wonderful supplement to other methods of learning? Absolutely!” Erin’s enthusiasm about Duolingo, while juxtaposed with a hesitation regarding a comparison to what she feels is more valuable real-world experience, demonstrates enthusiasm, but not without some minor skepticism. She is careful not to champion a powerful technology too much, but does concede to seeing benefits for learning. Not all writing consultants were as animated in their statements. Emma, when talking about the technologies she has integrated into her own writing practices, revealed a more tactful perspective, saying “I have come to rely on programs like Evernote and Zotero to organize research, and I am still learning how to be more efficient and organized within these programs.”

Lexically, while Erin cites the technologies she uses as a “wonderful supplement,” Emma has merely “come to rely” on the programs she uses. Additionally, Emma reveals some more pragmatic objectives with her technology usage, wanting to be more “efficient and organized,” while Erin speaks more to experiential benefits.

\(^5\) Please refer to Appendix G for a full list of tables demonstrating CDA category counts.
Consultants also employed a great deal of *information focusing* in their technology statements—foregrounding known/more obvious information near the beginning of a clause or sentence (called a *theme* in CDA) while placing new or novel information in the background of a clause or sentence (referred to as a *rheme*). For example, Emma demonstrates hesitation when using spell check in word processing software. While she foregrounds information that it is widely known “these checks aren’t always right”, she links this issue with the idea of putting blind trust into technologies when teaching writing, claiming, “I think it can be difficult to teach writing principles when we all put such faith into our computers and word processors.” When writing specifically about their views on technology, this kind of information focus, particularly juxtaposing ideas, became a powerful tool to demonstrate and expand upon feelings and attitudes toward technology usage.

However, when focusing on how tutors’ descriptions operated within certain revealed themes in the technology statements, even more was discovered.

From organizing excerpts and coding the technology statements, three primary themes were discovered: *Positive Perspectives and Experiences with Technology*, *Skepticism and Negative Experiences with Technology*, and *How Technology Can Benefit Student Learning*. Each theme, including what was discovered during CDA within that theme, particularly on the microlevel of language use, is explored to help further investigate tutors’ about technology before starting their jobs as online writing consultants.

**Positive Perspectives and Experiences with Technology.** Erin was the keenest on the idea of working online with students, revealing through her lexicalization
(word choice), feelings and insights about the exciting potential of tutoring online. Consider the following excerpt from her technology statement; I have bolded some words and phrases to emphasize how her word choice creates a mood of excitement and inquisitiveness.

I am **excited** to see that the writing center offers online tutoring and am **very curious** to understand the particulars. I can **imagine** that if a student found themselves needing writing advice remotely, it would be **very comforting** to know that **help is only a laptop screen away**.

Erin’s word choices, specifically her use of verbs and adjectives, demonstrate **sensing**, as opposed **doing**, things. This kind of optimism about technology, as it is framed in possibility, and not what a technology can or cannot do, shows a tutoring perspective that can be considered more open to doing meaningful work online. In the training seminars, this was also evident in Erin’s contributions to the conversation. She, perhaps more than the other writing consultants, seemed eager to see how the tutoring technologies work and how they could be used to teach.

Lexicalization played a role for the other writing consultants, too; however, other perspectives were present in the findings that brought other kinds of insights about technology. Emma mentioned the benefits of efficiency when using technology to write, saying that “gathering information is **faster and easier** on a computer,” and focusing on physical actions with text, such as having the ability to “**move sentences around**, **delete** entire paragraphs, and **line edit** with the **touch of a few keys**.” As opposed to Erin, Emma’s word choices here speak to what someone can **do** with technology, as opposed to how someone **feels** about it.

Hannah wrote that emailing professors and colleagues is “an **instantaneous** means for communication that allows me to take the time to **carefully articulate** my
thoughts.” Hannah speaks to a frequently unnoticed benefit of asynchronous technology—the absent pressure of real-time communication can act as a way to more thoughtfully craft ideas before presenting them.

Skepticism and negative experiences with technology. When expressing apprehensions about technology, Emma had the most to say. Intertextuality significantly came into play again in Emma’s statement, as she cited a study she read claiming, “Students are less in touch with chronology when reading on an e-reader or tablet.” Aligning her own perspective with that of published academic research helps her craft and assert her own academic identity and skepticism about technology.

Emma also noted a difficulty she recognizes in focusing on content-related ideas in writing. Again, Emma leaned upon intertextuality to express this idea, recalling an online course she took, where “feedback was briefer than it might have been in a face-to-face class because when both the instructor and the student are present, it is easier to communicate ideas and clarify statements.” The disengagement between teacher and student also shows up for Lola when she talks about her own experiences as an online student. “I have always sensed an insurmountable disconnect between me, the students, and the instructor.” Connecting these negative feelings to other voices and experiences is a commanding strategy the consultants used to describe their perspectives.

Sean, who, at the time of writing his technology statement had one year of online tutoring experience, took his insights about disconnect further with his word choice, insinuating the online tutoring process is a synthetic experience.

Artificiality also persists in the e-tutoring sessions and the chat sessions. For this reason, I now enjoy the face-to-face appointments more because you can
often feel things in the air organically click into place, the student’s eyes light up, the dialogue bends and weaves, and there is no time to carefully edit one’s responses like a text message.

Lexicalization from Sean highlights a self-described binary between online and face-to-face tutoring. For Sean, online work with students seems simulated, whereas face-to-face tutoring is organic and a writing consultant can experience firsthand a student’s learning (seeing their “eye’s light up”). Sean even gives the dialogue of a tutoring session more life when it’s face-to-face, animating it within his words as it “bends and weaves.” Finally, whereas Hannah mentioned recognized being able to edit thoughts and text online before communicating an idea as a benefit, Sean sees the very same thing as a hindrance to what he sees as true communication, something he further reinforces later in his technology statement when he mentions “the tension of the face-to-face encounter is what is missing [online]…Being put on the spot often helps jag our unconscious mind into pushing a thought to the surface so that our consciousness can grab ahold of it.” The variances between how tutors recognized the same features of online work demonstrate differences in personality and perspective about technology’s purpose in educational settings.

How technology can benefit student learning. One of my favorite maxims from technology theorist Melvin Kranzberg (1985) is that “technology is neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral” (p. 550). One major takeaway from this idea is it is the users and how they apply technology that determines its worth. Accordingly, this theme was essential in the data because it revealed not just championing or criticizing technology, but expressing the complexity of applying technology to help students
learn. Lola and John were the most vocal in their technology statements about how technology can directly impact learning.

Lola mentioned the power of collaborative technologies, stating they help students by moving “the writing process out of the isolation inherent in the student’s writing of the solitary document that will be read only by the instructor of any given course.” She goes on to further link this idea to her own (future) work with students. “To me, this has always felt like writing in a vacuum, and I do not wish my own students to feel this way.” Lola mentions also that more modern technologies, such as Google Docs and Prezi, have been designed to be “inherently collaborative from their onset; they facilitate community learning and discussion, the decentering of a single authority.” As in previous themes, intertextuality plays an important role in helping Lola describe her feelings about technology and education. However, Lola also builds a binary between the benefits of collaborative learning and the hierarchal nature of Freire’s banking model learning structure, where the teacher merely informs students of what they should be learning. Lola’s insights are aligned to the values and goals of writing center work.

Sean and Emma both mentioned the ability for online writing consultation to help students who either prefer getting help online, or find it a necessity due to distance or a busy schedule. Emma noted the former, asserting, “I think giving students an opportunity to receive online help is wonderful,” and that if “students are nervous about meeting face-to-face or have schedules that are difficult to coordinate with the Writing Center’s hours, they can still receive help.” Sean spoke to the convenience of receiving help online. “Students can’t always be present for writing
consultations, and our online options are great in fulfilling that need.” Within both Emma and Sean’s words during these moments, they rely on verbs that show doing—how online education can benefit students by servicing a writing need. While this is a very pragmatic, objective-driven way to perceive online help, it still frames it as positive for students. At the start of this study, I was hoping to see more verbs of sensing or being, as I anticipated this kind of discourse would shift online consultations out of the realm of the practical and more into the experiential.

Finally, Bill recognized technology as a way for writers to engage with their ideas as they are represented in writing. “Using technology as simple as PowerPoint or as engaging as an active discussion board can be highly beneficial in encouraging students to interact with their own ideas.” Bill’s use of word choices (bolded) reveals communication that speaks to placing the student at the center of the work with technology. In this instance, Bill is not placing himself, as a writing consultant, into the relationship between the technology and the student—his language reveals a distance between his role as a tutor and the learning happening in the tutoring session. He does however envision himself as a facilitator of information, declaring that he wants to “encourage writers to see their ideas in as many frames as possible.”

After learning about tutors’ insights and thoughts about teaching and technology, the next two days of the training were largely centered around two presentations and training sessions. The first presentation, an introduction to the Writing Center at UMSL, helped orient the tutors to the kinds of services the Writing Center offers as well as build an understanding of the culture of writing the Writing Center embodies. It’s the same presentation given to incoming freshmen students
during the semester to introduce them to the Center’s services. The second
presentation helps guide an intense, day-long training seminar, covering an array of
topics—writing center theory, tutoring pedagogy, composition theory, and practical
functions of the Writing Center’s appointment software and online technologies
(housed within WCONline).

The multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) of these two presentations is
largely reflective upon my own training practices and assesses the quality of the
training materials themselves. This analysis, along with the field notes taken during
the training that captures tutors’ reactions and insights to the material, help gives
shape to the quality and effectiveness of the training materials.

**Training presentation one: Introduction to the Writing Center.**

Introducing the Writing Center to a group of incoming freshmen students is different
than introducing it to a group of GTAs who are going to be consulting writing. As I
pulled up the Prezi website, which houses all of the presentation materials online, I
was encouraged by John, who had seen and given the presentation before, as he
turned to the new staff members and said “this presentation shows students the
Writing Center is a friendly place.” Lola quickly jumped in and asked what kind of
presentation software I was using.

Prezi is a free, web-based presentation platform that offers a unique way of
constructing and displaying ideas on a screen. Where PowerPoint gives its users the
ability to create stack-able, linear slide, Prezi gives content creators the ability to
present ideas with more fluidity and connectivity. For example, instead of presenting
ideas in PowerPoint that are seemingly disconnected because they appear on isolated
slides, Prezi allows ideas to remain connected through a zooming in and out function. When creating the presentation, it was my hope that concepts about the Writing Center would not only be more connected and relatable, but also enjoyable to learn about.

The analysis for this presentation had to come from screenshots that contained modally dense moments. To do this, I employed an appropriated version of Rogers and Wetzel’s (2014) approach to MDA. This approach focuses on the same categories and their features in CDA (genre, discourse, and style), and draws upon some of its features, but aims attention more on modes of communication beyond textual or spoken language.

For example, the use of font type became a crucial component for the introduction to the Writing Center presentation, as it helped balance the tone of information presented from whimsical to more formal and serious in nature. Consider the title slide of the presentation.

![Title Slide](image)

This slide is simple in its design and purpose, but it also attempts, through its use of nonstandard and less formal/standard typography, to ease any possible anxieties or
hesitations going into the presentation. As the first thing that viewers of the presentation see, the font type is meant to break down any misconceptions about the Writing Center as an intimidating space. It’s also worth noting that the welcoming language (Hi. Welcome to the Writing Center) is in a whimsical font. This font type is used throughout the presentation during moments where potential tension may be present in the viewer.

**What you can expect from us...**

We can help with just about any writing concern:

- Development
- Research
- Audience/Purpose
- Grammar
- Citation
- Organization
- Thesis
- Other Stuff

*we do not proofread papers.*

We will happily show you how to proofread your own writing—a valuable skill!

This slide demonstrates what the Writing Center can and cannot help students with during consultations. While instilling this information is the most important goal of the slide, the font type and design of language is meant to do so in a nontthreatening way. Additionally, the red and bolded text (“We do not proofread papers.”) draws attention, but may be reacting against the original intention of eliminating hesitation, as the whimsical font is further formatted in an assertive fashion.

Another way hesitation about the Writing Center is dismantled is through the use of multimodal intertextuality. In order to help viewers of the presentation situate themselves and become comfortable talking about writing, the second slide of the
presentation calls upon a popular meme comic that frames a common problem with writing.

Referencing a common and popular text (the Computer Guy meme), allows not just for viewers of the presentation to relax and understand the Writing Center as a friendly environment, but also find an entry point to a conversation about writing in an enjoyable and humorous manner. In this way, there is also a relationship signified that the staff of the Writing Center is not an authoritative figure within the university setting. Instead, they offer an expert, but non-hierarchal, position for students to rely upon.

How information was designed on slides became the most significant factor in this initial presentation to consultants. This study brought to light that how information is presented through its design to viewers said a great deal about the intentions of the message as well as how the information is being decoded and understood. For example, the use of bulleted and numbered lists offered a way to explicitly present information to viewers, but emphasized the significance of
information in differently. Consider the following slide, which features a numbered list to present the different ways students can receive writing consultation.

You can get help with writing in four different ways:
1. SSB 222, our on-campus location
2. Online, via e-tutoring (through WCOnline)
3. Online, live via video/audio/chat (through WCOnline)
4. NetTutor (accessed through MyGateway Course site)

A numbered list indicates a preferred order of importance, or reveals a way to foreground or background information on a slide. In the slide above, four kinds of writing consultation offered at UMSL are presented. In this case, visiting the Writing Center in person, at the on-campus location, is listed first, framing it as the most beneficial option for getting writing help. The two online options are listed next (E-tutoring and live) as two and three. However, one critique of this order and design is that the live chat, which is synchronous and therefore more reflective of face-to-face tutoring and representative of the culture of writing consultation, is listed after e-tutoring, classifying it as a less preferred option—at least according to the slide. In this way, tutors, who are learning about the online services for the first time, may see the live chat sessions as less effective and pedagogically viable as E-tutoring. This was the case when Bill mentioned that he might steer his students looking for online options to do E-tutoring over the live chat, as it seemed preferable to the other options.
available. Meanwhile, bulleted lists in the presentation operate a bit differently, as seen in the following slide.

On this slide, while there are four points of important information, for the viewer, they all occupy the same level of significance. To add to their equal status, matching or similar verbs are used to frame the information evenly within the slide. The design of this slide indicates that all of this information is important, and not one particular part is more important than other. However, this wasn’t always the case in slides with bulleted lists, especially when other aspects of design interrupt the lists functionality. Another example of a bulleted list indicates that, while the intention was not to emphasize or de-emphasize information, that was exactly the result.
The first two pieces of information listed in this slide reveal an instance of foregrounding information. The bolded text indicates not only a preference regarding the importance of the information, but it also links the two points together, creating cohesion in its design. It is also thematically linked in theme—getting writing help early in the writing process—which gives the overall idea even more emphasis and attention.

The analysis of this presentation revealed choices in intertextuality, design, and foregrounding/background-ing information for a primary audience (students) and how they helped train a secondary audience (writing consultants). However, when the presentation was specifically conceived and created for the writing consultants, there were some slight shifts in how concepts were communicated.

**Training presentation two: A guide to tutoring writing at UMSL.** I showed up early for the second day of training, this time with breakfast ready to go, carefully arranged on the table. The tutors were just coming from a talk given by the
university Center of Teaching and Learning, welcoming them to the university and explaining some about how graduate studies worked at UMSL. The conversation from the tutors seemed to indicate that the talk was valuable, but I could sense some stress in their voices and words. “I can already tell that I will be super busy,” Hannah said, laughing through her worry. From my own graduate career, I know this stress all too well; the struggle is real. I offered them all a bagel, assured them that all will be okay, and began the day’s training and presentation.

This day’s training session lasted approximately six hours (with a scheduled lunch break). Knowing this presentation and training session would be much longer and more intense than the previous day’s session, I took into account how crafting the presentation might help ease the intense and overwhelming amount of information.

The opening slide of the presentation reveals my attempt to immediately ease tension and create an inviting mood.

The light blue background, which is consistent throughout the presentation, is easy on viewers’ vision and helps construct a welcoming tone to the presentation. In contrast, a harsher color, such as black or red, would potentially create a more anxious mood.
Writing Pedagogy and Technological Knowledge
during the presentation. More practically, the light blue background also allows text
to be easily visible and read, as it provides a nice contrast. Furthermore, the playful
font used in the primary sequence of the title (Consulting writing at UMSL), offers
another way to ease tension. Just as in the previous presentation, where typography
played a role in lowering unease in viewers, the font here attempts to accomplish the
same task. The smaller subtitle, “A brief, condensed, and insubstantial guide to
tutoring,” also inserts a bit of humor into the presentation, as it is discussed that there
is a lot to learn in one day, which can be stressful, but that these worries shouldn’t
overshadow the concepts being discussed and the enjoyment of learning together at
the training.

However, not all slides were successful in easing this tension. In the following
slide, which helps further describe why the training is “insubstantial,” viewers see the
following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why is this insubstantial?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The best consultants are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the ones that can bend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their practices to fit the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>situation they find</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>themselves in. Teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yourself to be flexible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

That said, often times, tutors' goals are the same—to help
someone develop a text by helping them develop as writers.

Within this slide, there are various messages competing for space and
attention from viewers. First, it emphasizes that a single day isn’t enough for
adequately learning about all of the concepts and topics discussed. However, the slide
also tells viewers that tutoring writing involves numerous contexts and components that make it a complex process. The repeating punctuation may insert a feeling of anxiety, as if the large amount of information may not be thoroughly covered in a way that is beneficial for the writing consultants. There are some design choices within the slide that help create moments of focus for the writing consultants, such as the columns of information. The left column, which consists of the list answering the heading (Why is this insubstantial?) gets filtered into the first real lesson of writing consultation, represented in the right column: That flexibility as a writing consultant is vital for success. However, within this slide’s design, there is simply too much information—writing consultants are unsure where to focus, how to organize their thinking, and what information is most valuable within the context of the single slide. This was evident when Bill raised his hand, asking, “Do you think we’ll learn most of what we should know on the job?” As someone with a great deal of tutoring experience, I know this to be a reality, as it is with most kinds of work, but I was left with the uneasy feeling that, at the start of this presentation, I was already overwhelming the writing consultants.

Intertextuality also played a role in communicating writing center concepts to tutors. In order to start a discussion around the different roles tutors play within the context of the writing center, the following slide was presented:
This slide relies on a commonly taught concept in composition and rhetoric studies, the Rhetorical Situation Triangle, to show how a communicator, an audience, and a text make up a series of relationships between each other in order to carry out communication. In retrospect, I did not take into account that not all new writing consultants may be familiar with or understand the triangle. This turned out to be exactly the case. While this wasn’t a major setback, it did take time away from the training because I had to teach the concept. Also, I feared that the coming slides (seen below), which all use the triangle to describe how relationships are understood within the context of a writing center, would be lost on the new tutors.
Another theme revealed within the construction of slides was a constant shifting in the formality of tone. While tone can be communicated primarily through language use, it was the design of some slides that exposed a tone that was varying in its formality, depending upon the content being displayed. This be seen in the construction of slides/scenarios in which consultants were asked to respond.

#2: “OMG, my paper is due in 30 minutes. Can you fix it for me? Better yet, can I just drop it off and come back in 30 minutes? I want to get some lunch.”
This slide offers a hypothetical (but realistic) scenario, but is framed in a very informal fashion to the tutors. My intentions with this slide were to present the information in a way that is fun and approachable, making the game both more creative for the consultants and lowering the tone during the learning. However, the unintended consequence was that I was also presenting the hypothetical students in the game as being potentially rude, or even disrespectful of the Writing Center’s goals. While the scenario seen above is certainly realistic, perhaps it was an inappropriate way to introduce the idea to new writing consultants. Accordingly, the design of the slide (even the wording—“OMG”) was misunderstood by some consultants as judging students’ behaviors. Hannah, when seeing the scenario, mentioned that she “would try to instill some respect” in the student, which missed the point of the slide’s intended message. In the following slide, the tone is shifted to be more formal, communicating the hypothetical response I was looking for from the consultants.

Simple rule: We do not proofread.

"Sorry, we don’t do that here. We consult with you about your paper, so it’s important that you’re in the room to tell us about the assignment, the course, what you’re writing, etc. Also, you need to make sure you’re visiting us with plenty of time to spare before your assignment is due. I recommend at least a day or two or even longer. Good writing takes time."
The whimsical typography is absent, the formatting of information is more explicit, and the use of red text indicates a more serious tone in the message. In retrospect, I am being critical about my design and presentation of information. It’s possible to confuse what meaning is intended from the reading of slides, but it’s also evident that writing consultants were being led astray by the varying levels of formality in the presentation.

Over the course of the presentation, there was a clear foregrounding of about how to work the online technologies. For example, the following slide, which sets an agenda at the beginning of the training materials about online tutoring, sets a tone that focuses on what technologies does, as opposed to how tutors can teach through it.

![Image](image.jpg)

**We need to learn how to...**

- Make, move, cancel appointments
- Registering students
- Attaching files to appointments
- Wait list feature
- Client Report Forms
- Breaks, Placeholders

This list, which introduces the objectives of following slides, doesn’t include any concepts that help tutors build technological pedagogical knowledge, instead staying with the realm of building technological understanding only—how to work the technology. Interestingly, the following slide doesn’t follow this list. Instead, it prompts a discussion on recognizing differences between face-to-face tutoring and online tutoring by showcasing a quote from media theorist Marshall McLuhan.
From the previous slide, this is rather abrupt turn into more theoretical territory. Instead of discussing the how the tutoring technologies work, a conversation about how technology impacts pedagogy is inserted. This is a very worthwhile conversation to have during the training—it also aligns with introducing the tutors, although indirectly, to TPCK. However, without proper orientation and even some disorganization within the presentation itself, during the training, this conversation was not as fruitful as I had hoped. Furthermore, relying on intertextuality—in this case, the work of McLuhan—wasn’t effective because many of the tutors had not heard of his work or clearly understood the idea of the maxim, “the medium is the message.” In this way, the reference fell flat.

While I wanted the training about the interactions between technology and pedagogy to be more organic and discussion-based to be productive, I also wanted it to be highly discussion-based. Alongside preparing the tutors to work online, gathering and understanding their insights was also important. Accordingly, I designed slides that were simple, clean, and minimum. While the purpose of this
minimal design was to let conversation be free flowing and generated by the consultants (and facilitated by me), the lack of direction was, in retrospect, problematic. Another slide, attempting to prompt discussion on how technology and pedagogy can impact each other, reveals how minimalism detracted from the training.

The conversation from consultants that surrounded this slide was thin, but productive. I prompted a question for discussion. “How do you guys anticipate your teaching being impacted by the limitations and affordances of Microsoft Word?” The tutors looked at me in silence, either still considering the question, or lost completely. Bill finally chimed in, saying, “Well, I don’t get to speak directly to the student…in real time…so I guess I get to craft my comments more carefully.” Erin added to Bill’s comment, “But at the same time, how do I know if what I’ll be saying is helpful?”

By the end of the training, the consultants said they did feel satisfied by what they learned and did feel prepared to go into the Writing Center to help students. At the time, as the Coordinator of the Writing Center, this was satisfying to hear. However, in retrospect, I feel as if the training, especially the second presentation,
could have more clearly communicated its messages, as well as carefully considered how the materials were helping to create a culture of writing consultation. How the tutors were enacting what they learned, as well as developing as online tutors, would mark, in some ways, the success of this training.

**Stage Two: Online Writing Consultations**

After the training and learning more about the existing talents and capabilities of the writing consultants, I was confident they would be doing meaningful work with students. I started to think carefully about what I had gained from reading their teaching and technology statements. From the teaching statements, I learned the tutors were aware of the power of individualized instruction when teaching writing, but also that communal learning has benefits as well. The tutors also demonstrated respect and a desire to emulate great teachers, showed a desire, as educators, to dismantle the hierarchy between teacher and student, as well as shared their insights and current knowledge on writing pedagogy.

From the technology statements, the consultants shared perspectives on technology, including their positive views and experience with technology in education, their skepticism, and how technology can benefit student learning. Looking back at the training presentations that guided the building of writing center and tutoring knowledge for the consultants, I learned that the construction of information in the presentation might assist in foregrounding and background-ing information in ways that either help or hinder tutors’ understanding or tutoring concepts. With these lessons and understandings in place, the next stage of this study
was to see what pedagogical practices tutors were employing during their online writing consultations.

In the online sessions, CDA and MDA were performed on both the asynchronous tutoring sessions (E-tutoring), as well as the chat logs from the synchronous tutoring sessions (Live Chat). In order to get a complete picture of how the consultants were enacting their pedagogy through technology, I have considered both what tutors’ discourse is revealing as well as how it is designed beyond language, particularly within the technological constraints and affordances of the online tutoring venues. While I conducted these analyses independently, I juxtapose the results here in order to tell the entire story of how tutors are considering how pedagogy and technology impact each other. In the following sections, I pulled examples of these characteristics in action. For a full look at how discourse operated in the E-tutoring sessions, please refer to the full transcripts for all consultants (Appendix F).

Asynchronous: E-tutoring Sessions. When working asynchronously with students online, the tutors relied on many approaches to help students understand how to best revise and compose writing. The subsequent sections present the findings from each of these approaches.

Intertextuality. By far, consultants relied most upon intertextuality in order to link their advice to other voices or texts, sometimes to clarify advice, or to frame it within another expert voice, thereby building validity and trust into their feedback.

Bill relied on intertextuality often during his sessions. For example, when pointing a student to an online writing resource, and to help clarify an issue with
referencing sources in APA, Bill stated “I think, according to the purdue owl website, you only need the last name and first initial, not the whole first name.” Referencing the popular online writer’s handbook, The Purdue OWL, allows Bill to introduce his advice alongside the voice of a trusted academic resource. Bill also designed intertextuality into his comments to students, as seen here in this screenshot from one E-tutoring session:

Bill’s formatting of his final comment (#13) explicitly foregrounds the web link to the Purdue OWL, allowing the student’s attention to be drawn to it. His explanation after the web link, serving as a supplement, merely justifies the link as useful to the student as they continue to work in APA.

Bill used intertextuality in other ways, too. In a summarizing comment for a student’s paper, he makes reference to the appointment form the student filled out before the session took place. “Hi Stephanie, I went through and gave some comments focused on grammar and sentence structure, since that’s what you mentioned being concerned about in your appointment form.” Here, by referencing the appointment form, filled out by the student prior to the session, Bill is certifying the help he gave during the session, confirming that it aligns with the help the student
requested. In this way, Bill is identifying that he is helping the student accomplish his or her own goals. Interestingly, later in the same comment, Bill mentions that he helps the student with goals they didn’t exactly identify in their appointment form, too. “I also marked other things I saw, about clarity issues or citation, when I noticed them.” These comments show that Bill is serving the student’s needs, foregrounding their requests first, while still enacting his own teaching expertise and pedagogy in the session. Bill’s placement of this comment—at the beginning of the paper, the first comment the student sees—is also a strategic move.

Bill’s opening statement forces shared attention on specific content and feedback between the tutor and student to the concerns listed in the comment. This gives the student a framework with which to understand and contextualize the rest of Bill’s feedback. It also provides expectations for what to expect during the tutoring session.

Consultants composed and formatted their opening comments in similar ways, but with nuances that are worth exploring further. These subtle differences reveal how seemingly minor shifts in communication and comment design might impact a student differently. Consider two opening comments from Emma and John:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emma</th>
<th>John</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hi Joe! Per your comments, I will focus on structure, process description, clarity,</td>
<td>Hi Todd,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and grammar. Please note that while I will comment on general patterns, I will not comment on every instance of a particular concern. I look forward to reading your paper!

It’s nice to work with you again; I hope that Grad School is treating you well. Per your instructions, I will focus on grammar and clarity; however, I will note any other questions or concerns I have. Thanks for making an appointment with us at the Writing Center!

-John

Both Emma and John are employing intertextuality (referring to the appointment form) and providing a very polite and thoughtful opening comment. The differences begin in the listed objectives and design.

Emma is anticipating what she will work on during the session. This is common among tutors, but at this point in her session, Emma isn’t exactly sure where the session may go. She may begin reading the paper and realize that the concerns the student listed are not the most significant issues in the writing. John also calls upon the appointment form document to frame what issues he will offer advice. However, he also makes it clear that he will also go beyond these guidelines and into other potential concerns with the writing. While Emma addresses very well the student’s self-identified concerns, she does not, like John, venture outside of those guidelines, perhaps keeping her from enacting her full potential as a writing expert.

The design of John’s comment is also significant, as it mirrors the format of a personal letter, complete with a greeting and signature. This design not only makes John’s comment more intertextual in a multimodal sense (calling upon the genre of personal letters), it offers a different strategy for inserting a welcoming tone into the session. For this study, students’ reactions to tutor feedback was not gathered. However, John’s attempt to design his comment this way says that he is mindful of
how he’s projecting his tutor identity. Both Emma and John are very nice and polite in their opening comment. However, perhaps it’s these subtle differences in design that make John, at least perceptually, more inviting and friendly.

Another very prominent use of intertextuality with consultants was the direct quoting of student text and ideas within comments. For example, Hannah often quoted student text to emphasize grammatical or mechanical concerns in the writing. “Comma after ‘weight’ so we know that ‘control their weight; and ‘manage their diabetes disorders’ are two different things”. Successful here in Hannah’s comment is the supplemental explanation. Consultants, when quoting or referring to student text directly, frequently padded their intertextuality with useful explanations. Another way this was done was through interrogative statements to indicate how phrasing or word choice may be unclear. Erin demonstrated this well throughout her sessions. “It’s a little unclear to just say “a certain degree” – how big of a degree was it? Was this a huge problem or a minor problem?” Erin, by showing the ambiguity of the student’s phrasing through questions, reveals how a reader of the paper might also be confused or unsure of the text’s meaning. Again, the intertextuality works here because of the supplemental work by Erin and her guiding questions.

Re-voicing. Another prominent approach in the asynchronous sessions was re-voicing—recontextualizing a voice or text, often to appropriate or repeat an idea. Many times, consultants would re-voice student writing in order to model what they believe may be a better way to compose an idea. This is precisely what Emma does to demonstrate the lack of clarity in a student’s phrasing. “This phrasing is a bit confusing. Perhaps ‘the more power the vehicle has to take off and increase speed’
would work better. Otherwise, I’m not sure what in the sentence is powerful (the take off, the vehicle, or both).” Emma is offering a personally idealized model for how the student’s idea can be presented in the writing. The danger here, something Emma talks about later in an interview, is that students may simply adopt her wording without giving much thought about why it is better, or even if it is better at all. The student may put blind faith into the tutor’s advice. What does work well here for Emma is the supplemental explaining that can either help the student understand why Emma’s phrasing is more ideal, or in fact why she is still misunderstanding the original intention of the sentence. Emma’s re-voicing here is beneficial to the student for these reasons.

The consultants also designed re-voicing into their comments in some creative ways. Hannah, re-voiced a student’s idea not just to offer more ideal phrasing, but to also demonstrate uncertainty in the original wording and meaning.

Hannah’s design in this comment explicitly formats different readings of the text. The student can then look over the options, see the multiple understandings of the original phrasing, and then potentially choose one of Hannah’s options as being more representative. By placing “Or” on its own line, between each of the options, an
emphasis is placed on multiple readings of the student’s idea. The spacing of the comment allows for more attention to be placed on the re-voiced options Hannah provides. Beyond providing an in-depth reading and interaction with the student text, Hannah design and formatting of this comment allow the student to see that writing can be decoded by readers in multiple ways, and that precise phrasing is necessary to limit misunderstanding. However, not all instances of re-voicing by consultants were successful.

John offered very little explanation or context when employing re-voicing in his E-tutoring sessions. In many cases (but not all), John simply re-voiced a student’s text with little to no supplemental engagement with the idea or language. Instead, he would merely offer better/accurate wording or phrasing.

On the surface, this kind of comment doesn’t seem like such a problem. After all, it efficiently helps the student correct their phrasing to be more accurate. However, because of there is no face-to-face interaction in this moment between John and the student, John is assuming that his new phrasing is more accurate, when he doesn’t know this to be entirely true. In these moments, supplemental talk describing why this
phrasing might be better, or why the original phrasing is not working, would be more beneficial for the student to make an informed revision choice.

**Politeness Conventions.** Consultants consistently enacted politeness conventions in their feedback as ways to maintain a friendly tone in their sessions, as well as retain the culture of writing consultation, where consultants are mindful of the potential hesitations and fears students might have about working with a tutor. Emma was quick to impart a cheerful mood in her opening comments to students, telling all of them “I look forward to reading your paper!”. Frequently, Emma also padded a lot of her advice with compliments, telling the student they are doing *some* things right, but *some* things could be better.

**This is a nice timeline,** but you do not do a lot of explanation in your own words. Why did you include these specific developments/examples? Why are they important to understanding Agile? Perhaps explain why these specific instances are important for understanding the history of Agile.

The politeness in this excerpt is brief, but it’s enough to begin helping the student make sense of what’s not working, in this case, that the student’s voice is not thoroughly represented in the writing. Emma’s politeness praises the work done, but also gives her an opportunity to push the student’s ideas even further.

When formatting and designing politeness into comments, Emma does so by separating it apart from other comments that offer more content-specific advice. This is to ensure her politeness doesn’t get surrounded and swallowed up by other kinds of talk.
Beyond written language, consultants were regularly finding ways to be polite to their students. Hannah, in her opening comments to students, often punctuated her greetings with emoticons.

Hey Layla. It’s nice to work with you again 😊 Per your appointment form, I will be focusing on order, structure, clarity, development, thesis, and grammar. Please note that I will point out patterns of error but will not mark every time those errors occur, so be on the lookout for them as you revise and proofread. Thanks for continuing to use the UMSL Writing Center!

The use of an emoticon here does insert a friendly tone to the comment (which perhaps extends further into the session), but the talk afterwards increases the level formality with the student (see the bolded words).

Statements/Questions. Tutors enacted a variety of statements and questions in their sessions. With a count of 116, most statements from tutors were declarative in nature—telling students directly what to revise or what focus on. However, many times, declarative statements were juxtaposed with expository statements (statements that intend to explain) or interrogatives (questions asking for further information or clarification). For example, in the following excerpt, Lola offers a direct comment about a student’s underdeveloped idea, but follows that observation with more insight, even addressing the student directly to ask their opinion. “This is an
incomplete thought here. Perhaps you could fix it by saying “discrimination against age, race, and sex” or something like that. What do you think?” In this way, Lola is using various kinds of statements as they operate differently within the pedagogical moment. The declarative statement asserts Lola’s authority as a tutor; the expository statement (which also re-voices the student’s writing) helps explain Lola’s uncertainty in the original sentence. The short question at the end gives the agency back to the student.

One very welcomed finding is that, after declarative statements, interrogative sentences were the most utilized by tutors (104). Bill, in an informal conversation about one of his online sessions, mentioned that he asks questions because he believes it’s the “online equivalent getting someone to rephrase.” When consultants are asking questions of students, instead of simply telling them what to do or how to revise an idea, they are crafting student agency as well as opportunities for revision and learning. Here, after re-voicing a student’s idea, John goes onto ask questions to clarify what kind of revision would be most appropriate. “…report instances of illegal and unethical behavior…Do you mean a social worker is legally obligated to report when a client does it or when a co-worker does it? Or both?” This less direct way of consulting writing keeps the student responsible for revising. Additionally, asking the right questions, at the right time, can be a powerful learning tool. This can be seen in a comment from Erin, which positions her role as a tutor into one that represents reader understanding as well as formulating questions to guide the student into clarifying and developing ideas further and more carefully.

Okay, so I still just need to feel a little more clear on what Yeager is arguing and whether you the author are arguing that Yeager is correct. So, is
Yeager’s point that the professional organization could make up for the lack of laws or does he mean that they are doing a poor job of making up for it? Or is the poor job that they’re doing something that you are pointing out to counter Yeager’s claim?

Erin’s comment here is working in various ways. First, Erin uses a declarative statement, indicating that she is uncertain of the student’s intentions at this part in the writing. This declaration frames the justification for the questions that follow. These questions represent in a binary of potential meaning, at least in Erin’s understanding. In this way, interrogation allows Erin to present a more open-ended revision process for the student. Where re-voicing does a great job of modeling possible revisions text and ideas, asking questions becomes ideal in an online tutoring session for modeling how and why a reader might be confused by the original text, as well as providing a path for finding the most beneficial revision. In these ways, Erin’s feedback here is diverse in ways that are highly productive for the student.

**Modality.** In online tutoring sessions, it was found that the line between direct and indirect tutoring was often thinly separated by modal language—language that inserts a softer, more cautious method of delivering advice. Throughout the sessions, the consultants heavily used modality when giving direct advice to students, leaning upon words like *perhaps, maybe, possibly, seems,* and others. Emma used modality the most in her online sessions. This is an interesting finding as she also was the consultant that used the most declarative statements as well. Revisiting a previous excerpt from Emma shows her offering direct advice via a declarative statement, but then also relies upon modality to present it in a softer, more welcoming fashion.

This is a nice timeline, but you do not do a lot of explanation in your own words. Why did you include these specific developments/examples? Why are
they important to understanding Agile? **Perhaps explain** why these specific instances are important for understanding the history of Agile.

In this statement, Emma is multitasking in order to guide the student into a revision choice. First, her politeness convention pads her critique, which is a declarative statement (that the student’s voice is not fully represented). Then, during two interrogative statements, Emma asks two questions to prompt the student’s thinking as they might consider how best to insert their voice into the writing. From there, Emma enacts modal language as she guides the student, more directly, into a possible direction for revision. In the realm of writing consultation, Emma’s thought process and execution are impressive and represent a wonderful tapestry of strategies when working online.

**Modality revealed itself in other ways in tutors’ talk.** Lola, at times, used modal language when demonstrating a moment of uncertainty in a student’s writing.

Are these part of the same time period? The term “eras” **seems** to connote different time periods, and the prompt wants you to focus on one, right? But **maybe** you are tying these together in such a way that they constitute the same period. Just something to think about. (And **maybe** I’m totally off base here, as I’m not familiar with your class.)

Throughout this comment, Lola sounds unsure if her reading of the text is accurate and if her advice will be useful to the student. The modal language appearing throughout the excerpt doesn’t just present Lola as being less confident in her tutoring, it also adds to an already informal tone to the communication.

**Naming the self.** From the previous information on tutor roles and identities, I really thought that tutors naming their positions in their language would be a prevalent occurrence and theme. However, over the course of all of the tutoring
sessions gathered for this study, it only tutors only did this five times. Naming the self—asserting an identity for the purposes of establishing or defining a relationship—can be a meaningful way for tutors enact the many roles that they might assume as any time during a tutoring session. Emma named herself the most, despite it only being three times. Each time, Emma named herself as a reader of the student text. “…I also wouldn’t want you to go out of order in the process, so keep in mind I am a reader who doesn’t know much of anything about cars.” Emma makes clear that she is a reading audience that has little knowledge about cars, thereby communicating to the reader the need for more careful explanation and attention to organization and detail. Interestingly, when another tutor, Lola, names herself as a reader to a student writing fiction, the effect is has a different effect. Here, when discussing a character’s development, Lola describes how her role as a reader helps offer a perspective that might not be clear to the author of the story. “At this point in your story, it almost feels tiresome to have other people forcing her to say sorry for these things. As a reader, I accept Jessica for who she is, and I find myself feeling frustrated.”

These characteristics tell us a lot about how consultants enacted their pedagogy in the E-tutoring sessions. From these sessions, tutors called upon other voices, texts, and genres in order to strengthen their own writing advice and writing expertise. They re-voiced students’ texts and ideas in order to model better writing. They relied upon politeness conventions and modal language in order to place some humility and humanity into their language. The consultants relied upon various statements and questions to help guide students as they revise their writing. Finally,
while only a few consultants utilized naming, the power of the approach was seen as meaningful when tutoring online. Moving onto synchronous tutoring sessions, how communication changes and shifts based upon the technologies being used became very interesting.

**Synchronous: Live Chat Sessions.** While many of the same discourse features in the E-tutoring sessions are also present in the live chat sessions, how they are enacted and how they function differ. The data in this section shows that these variances were due to the change in the online venue. The differences in functionality led to different methods of interaction between tutors and students as well as adaptations in pedagogy.

Because there are multiple points of interaction within the WCOnline’s live chat, two components of the sessions were considered for analysis—the chat logs, which focused on interactions between tutors and students as they discussed writing, and interactions within the collaborative whiteboard, which often housed student writing that was interacted with by both students and tutors. However, because both of these components are utilized simultaneously during tutoring sessions, I intertwine, when relevant, both the CDA (for the chat logs) and MDA (for use of the whiteboard) for the following sections to help create a cohesive understanding of the synchronous tutoring experience.

**Intertextuality.** Once again, calling upon others’ voices and texts appeared often in tutors’ talk. However, in the live chat logs, tutors primarily made reference to student writing, as opposed to directly quoting student text. Tutors utilized intertextuality in these moments for the purposes of isolating it from the rest of the
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paper (posted on the left side of the screen) and into the chat (situated on the right side of the screen). The screenshot below shows the layout and design of the live chat interface.

Figure 7. Screenshot from a live chat session, showing the interface design

In this way, each side of the screen becomes understood, by the tutor, as being mutually exclusive—its own text/genre—each side serving a different purpose.

However, as the live chat and the whiteboard screen are juxtaposed, this allowed tutors to link the two through intertextuality, making the interface and tutoring experience seemingly more cohesive. Additionally, referencing the text in the chat then becomes a way to draw emphasis to a textual moment while retaining responsibility in the student as the agent of revision. Referring to a specific moment in the student’s text, Emma refers to a particular section of writing before moving onto giving her advice.
James: 17:42 Can you let me know which ones are unclear?
Emma: 17:43 well with number 5, it asks you if you feel the author was talking down to you. you state that you feel there were some scientific terms, but did you think they were presented in a neutral way or did you feel the author was trying to sound smart?

Merely referencing the student text in this way allows Emma to spend more time on asking questions that reveal a place where the student could be more thorough in their writing. Emma also did by directly quoting the student’s text from the whiteboard in the chat log, allow her to draw emphasis to a problematic citation issue. Emma’s contribution to the chat, in purple, includes her real name, which has been blocked out for anonymity in the study.

Beyond drawing attention, Emma’s use of intertextuality becomes a way to connect ideas and draw emotion to other academic genres, in this case, APA and Chicago style and citation. With the student’s familiarity, Emma’s referencing to these materials gives her the ability to draw upon these other academic voices to enhance her own.

**Formality.** The nature of some conversations in live chat sessions was less formal and more colloquial in the synchronous tutoring sessions. Accordingly, levels
of formality were lower than in asynchronous sessions. This can be seen in a number of ways, including the word choices of tutors during their chat sessions with students. Sean was far more informal in his live dialogues with students than when working asynchronously, particularly when opening a session.

Sean: 11:03 Hey how's it going?
Alexis: 11:03 hi. its going good.
Sean: 11:03 Cool so how can i help today?
Sean: 11:04 Just want me to read over the document and make comments/ask questions?
Alexis: 11:05 yes. thats perfect.
Sean: 11:08 Maybe you can tell me briefly about your research here: how it went, what you did, that sort of thing.

Sean’s colloquial style of communication in this brief exchange shows a more informal tone in his communication, but it also shows an attempt to guide the purpose of the session, something that consultants found difficult when working synchronously. This is something that Erin experienced as well—students generated more informal chat at the start of the session, creating a less stressful mood throughout the conversation.

shelby: 11:33 Hi my names shelby and I put my paper on the board already and would just like to go over Grammer and stuff like that my teacher is a Grammerfreak lol
Erin: 11:33 Haha okay. What was the assignment / prompt?

The student in this session, Shelby, has done a nice job of not just setting the tone for the session, but also guiding the kind of work they want completed—help with grammar. Erin responds well to the “Grammerfreak” joke and immediately attempts to learn more about the assignment in order more carefully offer writing advice.

However, over the course of this session, the interactions between Shelby and Erin
become few. Erin, by far, takes the most turns speaking in the chat (112 turns), while Shelby only speaks 36 times.

The lack of interaction from the student in the chat was a shared experience among almost all of the consultants. Emma, in a conversation about one of her live sessions, mentioned that she struggles to find “shared attention” in the synchronous sessions, and orienting students becomes the primary goal before moving onto writing issues. “It’s hard because you want to work with the writing, and getting them engaged with the technology is something I’m not particularly good at.” I found this to be an interesting finding. While the live chat more closely replicated face-to-face communication, and because a lack of communication was something tutors yearned for in the asynchronous sessions, I would think that the chat sessions would be a welcomed addition by tutors to the online tutoring experience. However, across all tutors, this was not the case. The consultants found it increasingly difficult to manage both the chat sessions and tutor the writing. Bill, in one conversation, mentioned that he “couldn’t find a focus” when trying to chat and help the student with their writing concerns. The tutors saw these two pieces—chatting about writing and tutoring writing—as exclusive components of their online sessions.

**Re-voicing.** In the chat sessions, tutors often re-voiced students’ writing and other texts to offer a model of revision or to re-explain ideas. In one exchange, Hannah re-voiced a student’s text to both offer a model revision showing how an idea could be clearer but also to show how different wording could impact reader understanding.

**Hannah:** 15:41 okay, then maybe "The panda in my avatar is blushing." would be a little more clear for your reader.
**Hannah**: 15:42 maybe you could have the blushing/cheerful/bubbly part at the end?

**Hannah**: 15:43 of that paragraph as a further explanation of why the panda looks the way it does?

The re-voicing here happens on two levels and appears differently than it does in the E-tutoring sessions. First, Hannah frames her re-voice in quotation marks, much like she (and others) do when E-tutoring. However, she follows up with another re-voicing, this time by revealing alternate wording options ("blushing/cheerful/bubbly"), framing it as a question, as opposed to an expository explanation. These questions, I assume, are the result of the venue being more dialogic. In the context of the chat session, Hannah has found a way for re-voicing to be more robust.

Hannah also re-voiced student text within the collaborative whiteboard, breaking the barrier between it and the chat log. Her text appears in yellow highlight in the screenshot below.

Re-voicing in this instance is an interesting choice as Hannah, in addition to providing feedback in the chat log, also does so within the student’s paper. While asynchronous sessions are primarily taking place in the margins, the functionality and social aspect of the synchronous sessions give permission for Hannah to be more fluid in the placement of feedback. She does provide textual barriers between her text and the student’s, such as placing comments with parentheses. She also bolds text to foreground it, giving it distance from the student’s writing. In this way, Hannah is
interacting with the synchronous technology is more fruitful and interesting ways. However, it does place into question if there are problematic levels of interaction with the student text in the synchronous tutoring sessions. She is utilizing the technology as it was designed; but does a lack of boundaries create a more chaotic experience for the student?

**Foreground/background.** Whether through the default functionality of the synchronous technology, or through explicit formatting choices, the writing consultants found many ways to emphasize textual moments for students to take notice of and revise. However, doing this and remaining visually organized during the session was accomplished better by only a handful of consultants. For example, Erin underlined student text to draw attention to a writing concern, but then discussed the concern in the chat log, keeping more control over her interactions.

This kind of foregrounding, combined with the compartmentalization of explanation in the chat, allows Erin and the student to remain organized during the session.
The variances in how tutors organized and created emphasis about writing concerns speak to the complexity of the synchronous technology—there are many ways to interact with and manipulate text. In this way, perhaps having too much choice as a tutor is harmful to their pedagogy.

**Student Surveys.** During the fall 2015 and spring 2016 semester, I sent students who received tutoring online an invitation to take a survey about their experiences. Some students frequently (and in some cases, solely) used online consultation—they were only sent the survey once. Overall, while the survey did not get as many responses as I was hoping for, 87 responses were collected over the course of the study. Seeing all of the work and effort that consultants put into their
online tutoring sessions, it’s no surprise that students generally felt satisfied with their experiences when working online. On a five-point likert scale, ranging from very dissatisfied to very satisfied, when asked, “How satisfied are you with your online writing consultation session,” 79 respondents (91%) answered very satisfied. To expand upon their experiences, I asked a few expository questions asking respondents to explain what they learned. One student explained the importance of the session to their learning, particularly as English was not their first language.

My mother language is Spanish, so my English grammar and vocabulary are really hard to me. My online writing consultation is focused in grammar and punctuation. Their job is amazing, and my essays have some problems, but they explain really well where the mistakes are. They make me to think. They don't do my job, but they show how to do it, or they give useful links to find a very valuable information.

Based on the student’s satisfaction, it’s easy to see why so many students found their assistance to be beneficial to their writing. Additionally, important to note here is that the student found tutors’ communication and ideas useful when helping them push their thinking forward. They also note pedagogy that is more indirect (“They don't do my job, but they show how to do it”) and that intertextuality is a valuable tool in their learning (“they give useful links to find a very valuable information”). Ultimately, students seemed pleased with their sessions, nothing that tutors gave “good advice,” “explained my problems,” and even praised one tutor’s thoroughness: “She offered some really solid advice and it really seemed like she took the time to give comments.” While there were a few critiques of the pedagogical strategies employed by tutors, by and large, the students presented themselves as satisfied with the online tutoring sessions.
Stage Three: Post-Semester Interviews and Reflections.

The consultants reflected formally at two points in the study on their tutoring work, experiences, and attitudes about working online. The first reflection, a formal interview toward the end of the fall 2015 semester, allowed consultants to share their feelings and insights about how they’ve grown as online tutors up to that point. The second reflection, a written reflection at the end of the spring 2016 semester, gave the consultants a venue to summarize their growth, reflect upon the entirety of their experiences, and share any advice for future consultants working online.

Fall 2015 interviews. After the training, and after watching the consultants work online for one semester, I was eager to sit down with them to get their insights so far. Each consultant sat down for a formal interview lasting approximately thirty minutes. After thematically coding and performing CDA on the interviews, numerous themes and insights emerged from the tutors, which are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Adjustment Period. When talking about beginning their work online, some consultants mentioned taking some time to become adjusted to working in digital spaces with students. In tutors’ lexicalization about the adjustment, tutors revealed shared feelings of hesitation. Sean mentioned “I was apprehensive about what my role really was,” before going onto describe his navigation with working with students, saying, “I felt like I had to like to perfect their--whatever paper was in front of me.” Hannah reinforced Sean’s sentiments, noting, “It took me a little while to figure out what I was doing.” Wrapped up in both Hannah and Sean’s words are a sort of trial-by-error approach to learning to tutor online. From my perspective, this
speaks back to a lack of training that covers more pragmatic approaches to working online. While the consultants learned a lot about theoretical approaches to working with writing online, less time was spent on exactly what to do in particular situations, which may have led to Sean and Hannah’s feelings.

**Understanding Professor Expectations.** Tutors also spoke a great deal about understanding and helping students meet professor expectations, particularly when they aren’t clear or even known during the tutoring sessions. Erin noted that, in these situations, it was difficult to develop and understand her role as a tutor.

It's hard to balance that with what I think is important with what I suspect or wonder what the professor thinks is important… finding that balance was, I don't know if it's something I learned, but it's something I had to start trying to navigate.

Interestingly, Erin speaks to not just best helping the students meet the requirements of a writing assignment, but finding the appropriate place, as a writing consultant and expert, to give the most beneficial writing advice. She is willingly adopting some agency and responsibility in the session, representing well the give and take between tutor and student. Bill shared Erin’s struggle with identity in the same way, saying “if the teacher cares so much about grammar and usage and stuff like that and I am only focused on their argument then am I gonna help their grade at all?” Going back to the concept of roles discussed in chapter one, tutors were rightfully finding it difficult to navigate their positions during these moments.

The prominent discourse feature when tutors spoke about professor expectations was re-voicing; tutors consistently framed what they understood to the concern through the voices of others. In a hypothetical, yet common, exchange,
Emma speaks to how she contextualizes her role when speaking with students about how professors vary in writing assessment.

I try to let the students know, you know, ‘I’m okay with this thing here,’ but, for example, for a simple one, like, the use of “they” or their as a singular, neutral pronoun. **Some professors will be like, ‘oh, wow, it can’t be. It can’t be singular because that’s a plural thing, you have a uh a number issues there.’**…I’m like, ‘I understand why you use it and I’m okay with it. But just be aware of this thing.’

Emma re-voices an idealized professor who views writing differently than her. Within this re-voicing, and along with Emma’s representation of her own responses to the student, she creates a piece of her own writing teacher persona, one that is less descriptivist when it comes to grammar, but still encourages the student to be aware of different perspectives about writing.

**Student-Centered Instruction.** Speaking of their experiences so far in the Writing Center, the consultants spoke heavily about the importance of student-centered instruction. Realizing the power of not just one-to-one dialogues about writing, but dialogues that suited an individual’s learning needs and aesthetic, the consultants shared their insights about what they learned over the semester. Embodying these ideas allowed the tutors to discuss how carefully they consider their work with students. John said, “I don’t want to be overbearing as I tutor. I want to sort of invite the students to change or to learn and develop their writing.” In his word choice, John uses the term “overbearing,” revealing a possible consequence of doing too much for the student. Instead, he wants to “invite” them to be agents in their own learning. This kind of lexicalization was also seen in Emma’s talk, when she asserts “I think giving the individualized attention is really—it is an important
feature because it allows you to **slow things down**, which is very necessary in writing.” An important concept wrapped inside Emma’s word choice here is that individual attention creates a slower pace for learning. I found this to be a very insightful comment, particularly in the world of writing consultation, where, often, efficiency is looked at as a positive attribute of tutoring.

The most impressive comment regarding student-centered instruction came from Lola, who spoke about the idea when working online with students.

**You can see the student through their writing** and you can kind of get a sense of how they are approaching the material and then once you…I mean read enough papers, **you can sort of learn about a student** based on what kind of moves they are making, what mistakes they might be making, even if we don't want to say something is a mistake per say.

Lola’s words here say a lot about her work with students as well as her work online. When working online, it can be difficult to understand a student’s identity as a writer; sometimes, consultants have trouble identifying the writing with a person at all. The distance of the technology can create disconnect between the tutor and student. However, Lola demonstrates an attempt to make her online tutoring sessions not just individualized, but also humanized when working through a screen. This dissertation started out with a conversation excerpt that spoke to de-humanizing the online tutoring session. If anything, Lola’s insights above show the exact opposite.

**Online Pedagogy.** Consultants shared a variety of insights and observations both about what it means to teach online and how they enacted writing pedagogy when working with students online. At this point in the study, halfway through, most of the new consultants were still formulating informed opinions about teaching
online, as well as developing strategies to do so. However, even experienced writing consultants shared some difficulties with teaching online.

Even John, who at the time of the study had one year of online tutoring experience, revealed struggles—a testament how difficult the work can be.

I try not to let [online tutoring] change [pedagogy]. I really do. Because there is a, sort of, default—if you’re just going through the motions in an E-tutoring, you would tend to edit and say ‘oh we gotta pick up every mistake and—’ and it’s much easier not to get into an edit mode when you’re with another person.

Interestingly, even with his past experiences, when working online, John understands a change in pedagogy as enacting more prescriptive tutoring practices (i.e. becoming an editor, entering a “default” mode). His insights are not wrong here—other tutors, as we’ll see later, also expressed a resistance to become an editor when working online, but John doesn’t clearly see that pedagogy might shift when working online, but not in negative ways.

The consultants described a variety of techniques that are worth exploring further. Additionally, the ways in which these techniques were discussed and described say a lot about tutors’ feelings about and motivations to enact them in sessions. Lola indicated that asking questions drives her teaching online.

One thing I've noticed that I do a lot is ask questions. Like, if a student says something that I as a reader don't understand, or I think…I think they are saying one thing, but I think they are saying another…I ask them a question that they could use to sort of generate new ideas…

Lola frames her pedagogical ideas here around modality, using language that both hesitantly asserts her position and also questions her expertise. Her choice of phrasing, “One thing I noticed that I do…” also makes it appear as if she is surprised
by her approach, as if it is something she does through teaching instinct as opposed to a planned strategy. She also names herself in this excerpt, “as a reader,” finding that giving herself a role while reading a paper—a reader who needs to clearly understand the text—justifies to the student the use of questions in the tutoring session.

Both Erin and John spoke about the importance of an end comment in online sessions—parting advice to the student as they go back and begin revising their writing. John merely mentioned using the comment, saying he uses it to “reinforce and expand” upon the advice he has given throughout the paper. However, Erin’s explanation can tell us a bit more about her use.

I think figuring out good ways to, even if I do mark a lot of different things, to parse it down into something digestible with my end comments, to be able to say, 'I marked a bunch stuff, here's what I want you to think about--like really focus on this thing, if you're going to focus on anything,' you know?

Like Lola, Erin’s word choices and use of modality reveal an uncertainty in her own pedagogy. Furthermore, in explaining her strategy regarding end comments, Erin revoices herself, a common tactic tutors used to explain their pedagogy in action. Emma used re-voicing when talking about the differences in questioning students when working online, mentioning that simply asking questions sometimes isn’t enough.

You’d still say ‘why did you choose to say this?’ But then you might make a few guesses—‘as a reader, here’s what I’m seeing you do.’ But I don’t really do that in person because I just like to let them respond without my assumptions on them.

Erin makes a clear distinction here between something she would be online but not in a face-to-face tutoring session. To her, more active engagement during an in-person
session would reveal more opportunities for the student to take an active role in making revision choices. However, making “a few guesses” allows Erin to craft agency in a different way with the student, as it still places the accountability of making revision choices in their hands.

Hannah used re-voicing to demonstrate the kinds of feedback she has stored into a catalogue that she can call upon to give advice to students.

I’ve kind of gotten this repertoire of um, of examples and ways that I can word things more quickly to explain the kind of the patterns of error that students are doing… I can articulate it more quickly than before, like, "Oh this makes me think this, this set us up an expectation as a reader I don't think that's what you mean." Things like that I can do it more quickly now and in a way that I think that could make them better editors and revisers and proofreaders.

Speaking to making the process of online tutoring more efficient for her, this stockpile of responses gives her various templates for responding to students who need particular kinds of help.

When speaking to physically interacting with technology, the consultants spoke to a number of ways to manipulate text or emphasis moments in student writing, primarily to draw attention or isolate text to more clearly see the need for revision. Hannah mentioned this working well in her synchronous sessions, saying, “…in the chat room I started bolding words that are working together incorrectly.” Throughout intertextuality, Hannah justifies this as a useful technique in online tutoring as she recalled learning French, where physically manipulating text to draw would help with learning to correct mistakes. “I remember when I was learning French it was hard for me to identify a problem grammatically unless it was highlighted because I could see…what was being changed and what was being
worked with.” Erin talked about creating lists, as well as drawing attention to parts of text, helping to itemize and organize students’ thinking moving forward with their papers.

I tried to, like, make numbered points and, just say, well, here--here are the three things I think you should look for--and I would try to highlight the places--like “here's where you need more information,” “here's where, you know, you just dropped one idea and ran into another one.”

Again, Erin relies on re-voicing to help idealize the kind of advice she offers to students. This advice helps to supplement the listing and highlighting that Erin offers the student.

Moving from how they taught online, the tutors also spoke to great lengths about what they recognized as the benefits to getting online writing consultation.

**Benefits of working online.** When working online, many consultants spoke to the benefits of having more time to think and respond to student writing. Erin spoke to the calmer, more relaxed nature of online tutoring. “I think I enjoyed it maybe selfishly, just having, you know, not having to be quite so animated, or um, maybe not having to think on my feet quite so quickly.” Erin’s word choices here reveal that she might feel a bit guilty about it, but her performance level is different when working online as opposed to meeting face-to-face with a student. John shared her sentiment in his interview. “I would say that it’s, uh, in some ways it’s easier energy-wise. Because there is that level of, um, being on in front or a student or sometimes students.” These choices of description from Erin and John, “animated,” “think of my feet,” “being on,” all speak to a level of pressure felt during in-person tutoring. John reinforced this idea.
It’s a performance where like, um, you know, I…I’m, uh, I’m projecting my best self in a way. Like in terms of customer relations, like I have to be more, uh, polite as I can be. Uh, as maybe, um, subservient.

Within his description here, John refers to customer service, where is bound by a different set of social relationships and customary behaviors. Accordingly, when working online, John feels these pressures disappear when he’s working.

…it’s a little bit, I suppose, a little bit lazier of a tutoring process. Not in a sense that we don’t put our effort into it. But it’s you don’t have the same amount of energy that you’re projecting into the E-tutoring as you do into the person.

This kind of pressure relief is nice, but tutors also spoke about having the time to think more carefully due to the absent pressure of being on the spot. Hannah, who refers to the sometimes of uncomfortable nature of reading a paper with a student, shared her feelings. “I can like read the whole thing if I need to—to get a better grasp but while they are just sitting there waiting. You know it's kind of awkward and I don't read extremely quickly…” Referring to an extra layer of tension in face-to-face sessions, Hannah’s sentiments were also shared by Bill, who framed the concept of working online as one that can be more efficient, saying “…in an e-tutoring its really easy to just get it going right away. You know you just open up the document and kind of get to work…” These insights about some online work being more pragmatic are true. The lack of live social interaction, pleasantries, and collaborative problem solving, create a more efficient work environment, as John notes, “I can get through a much longer assignment in an E-tutoring than I could in a sit down.” For Hannah, these characteristics also translate to simply tutoring better.

I feel like I have more control in the online sessions than face-to-face because um, like I don't know, I can just go back to things faster, I can just look
through the whole think again, I can get a **better overall feel** for the entire paper and what it means for improvement.

The idea of control, for Hannah, leads to better workflow. In a sense, the danger in Hannah’s ideas here are that this leads to a more prescriptive kind of tutoring.

However, based on the analysis of her online sessions in the previous section, Hannah avoids that pitfall, often coming off very personable and humble in her talk.

Finally, in terms of job satisfaction, while working online, the lack of interaction was revealed by tutors as being beneficial to their mental and emotional well-being. Many of the writing consultants worked long days in the Writing Center—with some shifts as long as seven hours. While this may sound like a normal workday, tutoring can be an exhausting activity, with long conversations and mental energy spent, hectic schedules, and a variety of student personalities and writing styles to work with. In the normal day-to-day, the writing consultant’s job is a busy and taxing one. Therefore, when speaking to the benefits of working online, and the lack of social interaction, John justified his feelings nicely. “[Tutoring online] gives me a little of a breather if it’s a really really hectic day. It gives you that sense that you’re not being overwhelmed.”

Emma told a story about a student she referred to work online instead of making face-to-face appointments in the Writing Center. This was unique because consultants frequently mentioned to students that in-person sessions were often more beneficial due to their more dialogic nature. However, with this particular student, Emma saw an opportunity where E-tutoring may be more useful and meaningful.

I actually had a student who had an on-campus appointment and the whole time I felt we just weren't communicating and she was ESL, and um, I just wasn't sure she was getting anything I was saying. And finally, at the end of
the appointment, she goes, 'I really read better than I listen.' Like in English…so I told her about E-tutoring and she said she was going to that next time.

In this way, Emma was able to direct a student who, in her assessment, would benefit more from reading comments from tutors, instead of participating in a synchronous session.

Despite talking about pedagogical approaches, benefits, and the importance of student-centered instruction, the consultants spoke to even great lengths about concerns and complaints about working online

**Resisting becoming an editor.** When working online, the consultants referred to potentially falling into the role of an editor. Lexicalization by tutors when talking about this role revealed their feelings about this concern. Sean referred to feeling as if he had too much power, saying, he would feel as if he’s “imposing my will on their document a little more than I should.” John makes a clear distinction between the role of an editor and how he views himself, nothing, “my primary job is as a facilitator…Like, I mean, if I was an editor that might be my job. But I’m not an editor.” As more experienced tutors, John and Sean have had more time to develop these ideal roles. However, the newer staff members had a bit more trouble early in their tutoring experiences. Erin spoke to this bluntly. “I still do my absolute best, but I think, you know, I do fall into that trap of marking everything. I mark everything, when I have enough time.” While Erin frames the role of an editor as falling into a trap—recognizing it’s not the proper way to help students, but finding she adopted the role sometimes anyway.
John explicitly pointed toward technology as being part of the problem. When speaking about word processing software’s functionality, he noted, “Microsoft Word allows for [going into editing mode] very easily to do little editing things.” With these examples, it’s clear that John and Erin, as well as other tutors, considered technology as negatively impacting their abilities as tutors, as if they did not have control over their pedagogy due to technological interference.

**No feedback from students.** Another major concern from consultants was the lack of interaction and feedback from students about their online sessions. Especially if the online session is asynchronous, tutors are left with no feedback from students about the usefulness of their writing help. Lola listed it as her most prominent concern, saying “the biggest challenge is that I don't have any sense as to how students are actually interpreting my comments.” In this way, in the tutoring session, Lola feels as if her comments are monologic instead of dialogic, a sentiment that Erin shared and expanded upon. “It feels a little like maybe too much power in my hands because I can just say whatever I want and never see it again.”

Emma talked about a lack of feedback and interaction from students potentially resulting in less learning happening. Her questioning of how students use her comments reveals her low confidence level.

You kind of send it into cyberspace and then you don't really know—are they just going to change all the grammar stuff you put, and not even looking at the, like more complex comments, or the comments you tried to make that would push their ideas, or ask them to develop a particular section?

These concerns from the tutors demonstrate the recognized importance of dialogue during a tutoring session. Dialogue, as John points out, allows for a cycle of communication that can be refined and improved upon as each person speaks and
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inserts more information and understanding into the conversation. However, when this component is absent from online consultations, the tutor is left with fewer options to amend their pedagogy.

There are many times [during a face-to-face session] I’ll ask a question and go, ‘Oh, I get where you’re going—okay, so we’re gonna just’— or if a strategy isn't working, perhaps, I know, okay, I have a sense of what maybe should be done. But the strategy is not working so I gotta make the adjustment, maybe it doesn’t work twice so I gotta make another one. And the E-tutoring doesn’t quite allow for that.

The constant re-shaping of pedagogy is something John relies upon heavily during his face-to-face consultations. The nature of the E-tutoring, in John’s eyes, doesn’t allow him the same kinds of malleability in his skillsets as a teacher.

Sean spoke to a lack of feedback in the live chat sessions as well, comparing it to a more lively and fruitful conversation that might happen face-to-face. “They just get to make a statement like 'okay' or 'I didn't think of it that way,' which maybe is not as powerful in making me as a tutor feel I have made a connection.” Sean is working hard to promote his insights. In his lexicalization, he equates to the power of interaction to the venue of communication. He also minimizes how students responding, re-voicing what he sees as common responses, and stating “they just get to” make certain statements, indicating a lack of engagement on the part of the student. Finally, Sean names himself as the tutor to show that connections with students are something highly values in his sessions. However, Sean’s issues with the live chat and feedback were only the beginning. The consultants shared a great amount of complaints and hesitations about the synchronous sessions.
Live Chat Problems. With the stated problems about the E-tutoring sessions, particularly with a lack of student feedback and interaction, I assumed the synchronous session, because they included live chat, would be more popular with the consultants. This was not true. Most of the concerns about the synchronous sessions had to do with the functionality of the technology and how both tutors and students interacted with it. Tutors found that the interface as well as the way the technology operated sometimes made it difficult to carry out a tutoring session smoothly.

One way WCOnline’s chat function operates is that a tutor and student can see what each other is typing in real-time. The words themselves will appear in the chat log as they are being written. As Emma noted, this can lead to people self-editing in ways that disrupts the flow of the tutoring session.

It’s like they’re worrying about their grammar as they’re typing. I’m like, ‘just pretend we’re on AIM.’ Like, you know, you have to—this is just us talking, you don’t have to be perfect. But I see them editing their response and it’s taking them so long to hit enter to ask me question—it can take them five minutes, and this is a half hour appointment.

Though this option can be turned off, by default, this function is turned left on by WCOnline, and students often don’t understand the benefits or will not turn it off. One way that Emma frames her preferences for chat interaction to students it by using intertextuality, equating the live chat sessions to a conversation on AOL Instant Messenger (AIM). However, at this point in the study, this wasn’t particularly successful. Ultimately, Emma noted, “I just wish there was a way to—I dunno—to make it more—quick—efficient, that’s what I’m looking for.” While in E-tutoring, where feedback and interaction with students was greatly valued, these attributes
were still not being satisfied for tutors, as they found them now tedious and bound by technological design flaws and functional limitations.

Some tutors also felt the flow of a session could be awkward at times. John, when talking about delegating tasks when working synchronously online, mentioned that getting the student to take on a more hands-on role in the session is difficult.

And it’s sort of like, you have the document and **they’re sort of standing by**—um, there’s not that ability to—like, in [face-to-face] tutoring you can change position, you can say, ‘hey, why don’t you work on this and I’ll do this other thing,’

In this way, collaboration becomes, in some ways, more difficult when working synchronously online. John is eager to have the same kinds of experiences online he has in-person with students, but students are, at least in John’s eyes, adopting a more passive role.

Tutors also felt the workflow of a synchronous session was too chaotic at times. Bill talked having trouble focusing on particular writing issues with students because there were too many elements (the student, the chat, the text) on which to focus.

Um, It felt, it felt a little bit too **all over the place** for me because with e-tutoring it’s easy to just stay focused on the text and then with the face to face its easier to stay focused on the bigger picture because you’re conversing directly with the person. Um, but then with the chat you have the text and you also have the person.

This complication wasn’t just an issue with tutor focus, but also with student focus, as Hannah recognized as a concern with her sessions.

…[students] usually want to start trying to **fix it** right at that point. They kind of **hyper focus** on areas and then, it’s a little difficult to um…just because you
are both working at the same time but on different things and you have to **shift your attention** and its kind of difficult.

Hannah’s complaints revolve around multitasking during a session, something that is all but required when working synchronously with the numerous tools available in WCOnline’s live chat option. Emma also noted this trend in her sessions, saying “it’s hard to get **shared attention**. To be looking at the same part of the paper at the same time and know that you both are looking at the same part.” Erin clarified that more preparation in how to use the technology to engage with student writing would have helped her. “I probably could have used more training with the live chat. I don't really know how to engage with the text on the screen.” Based on other findings in this section, I would say, in addition to training on engaging with text, engaging with students is also a need during training.

**Spring 2016 reflections.** After the end of the fall 2015 semester, data from these interviews revealed that tutors understood the value and need for online writing consultation, but shared far more grievances with the process, technological functionality, and how to enact pedagogy in the digital venues. After another semester, in the spring of 2016, I was eager to learn if the consultants’ views would shift or be refined in any way. While I wanted to sit down again for another round of interviews with the tutors, hectic end-of-the-year schedules (i.e. some tutors were graduating and leaving UMSL) did not allow me to do so. Instead, I asked the consultants to respond to a writing prompt (Appendix E), letting them know I had learned a great deal about their tutoring styles and perspective about online tutoring, and asked them what, if anything, had changed. I also asked them to speculate what
kind of advice they would give new and incoming tutors who will be working online after them.

**Benefits of online writing help.** The consultants, as many did before, recognize the benefits and, in some case, necessity for online writing consultation. John recognized the need for online tutoring, framing it as a natural progression during an ever-evolving world where more communication is happening digitally. “We've entered the era where digital natives are attending college, and the population of such students will only increase; writing tutors will need to be able to work with them in their preferential medium.” John’s use of “digital natives” calls upon the work done by educational technologist, Marc Prensky, who coined the term in 2001. Erin also recognized how digital natives may prefer a different kind of learning experience, especially if they are hesitant to get assistance in person.

Though I myself tend to thrive on being able to bounce off of other people's energy and questions, I also appreciate that not everyone thinks this way and that not everyone feels comfortable meeting with a stranger in person to discuss their work.

Both Erin and John define themselves as being fundamentally different than the students they mention in their responses. It is within this recognition that they both create a distance between themselves and the students, but also an appreciation of, perhaps as a product of their distance, their learning styles and preferences.

Erin also discussed benefits for her own teaching; she is able to tutor more carefully and with more attention to detail when she doesn’t have to interaction with the student face-to-face.
Something I do love about online appointments that is unique to them is the ability to sit and think a moment before I comment or respond. (This reminds me of how it can be more comfortable to text than talk on the phone.)

Re-calling back to Erin’s thoughts in the fall interviews about tutoring as performance, her explanation here further frames the benefit of working online. Beyond not having the pressure to perform, having the extra time to think and generate responses gives Erin more confidence in her abilities when working online, some later she calls the “luxury of taking a few minutes.” Regardless of these views, there were still negative and/or hesitant views about online tutoring as well.

**Hesitations about online tutoring.** Near the end of the academic year, tutors shared even harsher insights about online tutoring than they did in the fall interviews. For example, John criticized not just the nature of the online experience, but also the impact the technologies can have on tutors’ pedagogy.

Online consultations **depersonalize** the relationship between tutors and students, and tutors can be ** lulled into** interacting with the document rather than the student, especially after completing multiple online consultation/e-tutoring appointments in succession.

John’s insights here speak mostly to what he sees as technology’s impact on the connection that tutors and consultants should have in order to do productive work. Furthermore, this disconnect has a further consequence, as John see it—that it’s easier to fall into seeing the document as a material object not connected to a person. Finally, it’s important to emphasize John’s last point; working solely online, John recognizes, particularly for long periods of time, leads to less impactful work. Simply put, John sees this as a detriment to tutors, who may need human interaction in order to be at their best.
However, John takes this even further, insinuating that students may select an online option in order to get less invasive writing assistance. He asserted “some students submit papers online or join online consultations expecting the tutor to fix the paper, preferring tutors talk about grammar and sentence structure. Those students tend to be resistant to talking about the ideas in the paper.” This was also a concern of Emma, who noted that she worries “many students primarily use the online option as a proofreading service.” In their phrasing, John and Emma idealize a student that prefers help merely with microlevel writing issues instead of macrolevel concerns.

As they did in the fall interviews, tutors again emphasized the need for students to be clear about what they want out of their sessions as well as the need for getting feedback from students after sessions. Lola mentioned this lack of interaction greatly impacted her certainty when tutoring online. “I haven’t yet experienced what I might call a successful session where I felt like I really helped the student and the student left the session confident in their work.” Erin also demonstrates a lack of confidence as she contextualizes this insight more carefully. “One frustration for me is that I will probably never know if any given comment I made on any given appointment was actually helpful or understandable for that individual student.” Erin’s phrasing here, as well as the repetition she employs to emphasize her point (“any given”), reveals that the breakdown in direct communication with her students leaves a yearning for a more connective experience with students. This connectivity, as Erin frames it, allows her to assess her success as a consultant.

Benefits of E-tutoring. However, two tutors, Bill and Hannah, spoke about the benefits of the E-tutoring venue. Hannah, in broader terms, mentioned the benefits
of the venue for students who require particular kinds of help with their writing, or who learn better in nontraditional venues.

I know many consultants prefer and urge face-to-face, but I think many students, especially my ESL students, prefer online appointments for its familiarity, predictability, and the distance of interaction that a screen provides.

In Hannah’s evaluation, some students benefit from distance when learning. The veil that some students enjoy when learning online, can serve as a motivator to ask for the help they need, but are hesitant to get in person. However, Bill was the most vocal about how E-tutoring has helped both his students as well as his own pedagogy as a writing teacher. When talking about E-tutoring, Bills attributes the online venue to making him better at giving advice he thinks would actually help students. “One strength I have worked on in E-tutoring appointments is the ability to provide suggestions for revision without knowing for certain what a writer meant to say.”

While this sounds like a kind of magic trick, Bill explains his approach more carefully.

With E-tutoring, if something is unclear, I can add a comment asking what the writer meant, but I cannot receive a direct answer. Instead, I am identifying the moments where the writing is unclear.

What other consultants see as a hindrance in their abilities to give meaningful writing advice, Bill seemingly turns into an opportunity. Since he knows he will not receive feedback from the student, Bill knows he must formulate comments that reveal what he does know—that the writing is unclear. With this understanding, Bill can then craft feedback to the student that addresses the lack of clarity, not just what the content is trying to say. In a sense, the content, for Bill, is the writing, not necessarily just what the writing is about. Bill further clarifies this idea nicely.
In the case of an involved research paper in nursing, accounting, or business administration, no amount of explanation will make the idea wholly clear to me. But if I can identify an inconsistency or area of confusion in the writing, and tell the writer what it sounds like the sentence is saying, then the writer can be made aware that this area needs revision.

Bill’s approach here is a nice shift from being frustrated about a lack of direct communication and identifies a more positive and productive mindset when working online in the E-tutoring sessions. However, when it came to the synchronous appointments, the tutors remained largely unchanged from their previous negative perspectives.

**Synchronous tutoring session complaints.** Bill, like the other tutors, was not as positive when it came to the live chat sessions. Whereas in E-tutoring Bill could focus directly on the text and how to communicate his advice to the student through comments, his word choices and phrasing show focusing his attention in the synchronous sessions remained difficult.

The confusion for me is that the writer can communicate through the chat bar, and I can directly modify the text in the text box. Shifting my attention from the text to the chat is somewhat distracting, and I have found that a number of my online chat sessions involve a lot of explaining back and forth why I’ve highlighted a certain part or what the writer means in one sentence.

Lola added that the amount of orienting that it takes to get a synchronous session going served as a major hindrance to be productive and using time wisely in a tutoring session. Simply put, in Lola’s opinion, the learning curve of the technology and the session’s functionality is too high for students and possibly for tutors who are not properly prepared to work in the online venue.

Generally, the first five to ten minutes were spent trying to figure out what the student needed from me (as communication is often slow via typing), and the
remainder of the appointment time was often a clunky discussion of certain pieces of the writing in question.

There is some added pressure for Lola and other tutors as time with students is all based on scheduled appointments. As all appointments in the Writing Center are either 30 minutes or one hour, in order to get the most work completed, time with students should start productively and quickly. The orientation and confusion that Lola describes is very well justified and understandable.

Finally, Emma noted that perhaps the synchronous sessions might be best aimed if it incorporates certain kinds of writing activities, such as planning and pre-writing. “I think it can be helpful if the student is brainstorming or outlining an assignment, but it is difficult to work with a completed paper.” In Emma’s opinion, the kind of discourse that unfolds in a chat session online might be easier to manage if the writing is in its early stages. This way, attention might be more easily focused and more productive work can occur.

Approaches to working and teaching online. Finally, tutors were asked to consider conceptualizing advice that they might give to new or incoming tutors working online—what are the best ways to work online? From theoretical to pragmatic advice, the tutors had a lot to say. Hannah mentioned that “making fewer comments, but longer and more detailed and direction-orientated comments” is a useful way to start. Much in the same way that filling a paper with red ink might make a student nervous about getting writing feedback, making more comments, with less detail, may have the same effect. In the same regard, Bill offered advice about doing more with less.
By identifying patterns of error and giving the writer the tools to improve the rest of their own work, the consultant is truly helping the writer become stronger and more informed about writing as a whole. Even if the student is expecting someone to do more “proofreading” work, consultants who adopt a mindset of guiding their writers are more likely to produce beneficial outcomes.

Bill’s lexicalization reveals a tutor who has grown comfortable in tutoring more indirectly. His choice of verbs in this excerpt (identifying, giving, guiding, helping) reveals that he is not interested in telling students directly what to do, but instead leading them to making decisions that will be their own. This kind of facilitator role is one that can be meaningful to future tutors.

Emma also discussed being more attentive to certain parts of a student’s text, instead of trying to do too much. “Generally, though, I think it is important to try to conduct [an online session] like an in person appointment in the sense that it is often most helpful to only comment on the three (or so) most important/prevalent concerns.” Emma knows well that online venues are fundamentally different than when working face-to-face, but her advice heeds that limiting what writing concerns to give feedback on will result in more quality feedback to the student.

Lola spoke to the importance of remaining patient in online sessions. “I think the most productive mindset for tutors is extreme patience. Try to figure out what the students need (even if they can’t fully articulate that) and make due with what the situation allows.” Given Lola’s insights about the clunky nature she recognized about the live chat sessions, her ideas here about patience are important, particularly with making due. In order for tutors to have the most positive and productive mindset, patience, in Lola’s eyes, is absolutely vital.
Along the same lines, Emma stressed the importance of being and remaining polite throughout an online session. “With online, I have to remind myself to do this more often, but even a simple "I agree 😊" comment can go a long way in keeping a positive/friendly tone.”

Finding ways to utilize the technology in a tutoring session is also something that tutors spoke about. Lola mentioned the users shape and decide the tutoring technologies’ usefulness. “I also recognize that tools are only as good as the hands they’re in, which is a mindset that I would recommend to future consultants.” This, again, recalls the idea that technology is neither inherently good nor bad, but only develops a worth when it applied by people using it. Erin also spoke about the importance of using a technology well, particularly when writing comments. Even more importantly, she juxtaposes her advice with the perception that in-person dialogue is often understood as more fruitful than online discourse. “Yes, having a face-to-face dialogue can be very fruitful, but so can asking the right questions in the right places on uploaded documents.”

One final last piece of advice, given by Hannah, who not only gives great insight regarding patience and working thoughtfully with students, but also about modeling the kind of writing expertise and habits that she wishes to see in her students.

For at least me personally, my quality of feedback is so much better when I can take the time to write out my thoughts. (I mean, we are all about the process of discovery and how we develop our thoughts in the brain while actually doing the writing, so why wouldn’t we practice that ourselves?)

Hannah’s notion that consultants should practice what they preach, that they should mirror the kind of writing they want to see their students developing, is a wonderful
way to end this chapter. It speaks to the culture of writing consultation and fits into the realm of online tutoring perfectly. The next chapter takes all of the lessons and ideas and situates them to answer the research questions as well as contextualize how to best prepare tutors to work online.
CHAPTER FIVE

The final chapter of this study discusses the conclusions of this research—what was learned from analyzing the talk and communication of tutors as they developed into online writing consultants. I learned a great deal by looking at how tutors offered feedback through different online tutoring venues; and the findings are indicative of most kinds of writing center work—perhaps a bit chaotic, but worth the time. To help make sense of these findings, the research questions and hypothesis will be revisited and examined. Additionally, a discussion will be included for how the lessons of this research can potentially help prepare writing centers to train their tutors to work online. Finally, because this study only begins to touch upon the potential of how tutors can best understand the interactions between technology and pedagogy, new questions revealed by this study will be presented at potential areas for future research.

Conclusions

This study yielded numerous findings. First, tutors shared a variety of positive and negative experiences and insights about their teaching identities and online learning that helped shape their online tutoring practices. Second, the writing consultants, during their online consultations, employed numerous strategies when working online, revealing a mindfulness about working with particular technologies during online writing consultations. Third, despite any negative or skeptical opinions about tutoring online, all tutors did wonderful work online, and while some tutors fully demonstrated a sense of TPCK in their discourse and practices, none of them explicitly stated having an understanding of the interactions between pedagogy and
technology. Finally, this leads to the conclusion that developing a sense of TPCK is important, and needs to be more carefully integrated into training materials.

Revisiting the research questions and hypothesis, and providing some answers and insights, helps give these conclusions more clarity.

How do writing consultants represent their understanding of the interactions between pedagogy and technology? Going into their work online, even with limited previous experiences, the consultants often linked their ideologies and understandings about technology and teaching to other voices, technologies, and texts. As a way to make sense of what they already knew, and to speculate what practices might work best for them as online educators, tutors referred to technologies that promoted social interaction and collaboration (e.g. Google Docs, Prezi), as well as technologies that promote high levels of engagement from the user (e.g. Duolingo). Additionally, tutors also linked their understandings to negative experiences, such as online courses they participated in as students that didn’t go well. These links to previous experiences with technology are important. As the consultants found themselves working with new technologies, or using existing technologies to do new kinds of work, their experiences with previous technologies they found impactful (whether positive or negative) have a direct impact on their tutoring work. Emerging from these previous technology experiences is how new technologies are adopted, appropriated, and put into use. Furthermore, while a new technology might require new skills, it also draws on existing knowledge and skills.

The consultants also spoke about technology and teaching in various ways, both positively and when showing skepticism and criticism. Word choices and verb
usage described everything from \textit{sensing} and \textit{experiencing} to more pragmatic uses of technology, describing how it functions or how it can be used when teaching (i.e. what a technology can \textit{do}). When speaking optimistically, tutors’ phrasing and word choices described more experiential benefits of technology, or how technologies made them feel about learning possibilities. Tutors who were more skeptical tended to focus more on how technology could \textit{do} things, remarking on how, for example, word processing technologies make physically interacting with and manipulation text easier (e.g. bolding, moving, changing text efficiently). The major difference between positive and skeptical perspectives from the tutors is that positive experiences were often framed around language that embodied a progressive sense of exploration and opportunity. However, language that revolved around skeptical perspectives embodied more talk about how technology makes work with writing more efficient and effective, turning the act of tutoring online into something calculated and, perhaps, neoliberal.

\textbf{How do writing consultants represent, in practice, their understanding of the interactions between pedagogy and technology?} Despite varying opinions and insights about technology, the consultants all did good work online. In fact, many of the strategies and pedagogical approaches used by the writing consultants mirrored the practices noted as useful by Hewitt (2015). These practices were embedded in the feedback given by the tutors. Much like Hewett’s observations about teaching writing online, tutors often asked questions, demonstrated understanding, illustrated points, provided models for good writing techniques, provided doable tasks, and explained
concepts and interpretations. Accordingly, these teaching strategies are composed of discourse features that contribute directly to the meaningfulness of feedback online.

Intertextuality became one of the most frequently used and significant strategies for consultants. Leaning upon the voices and texts or other, whether it is through referencing an outside expert voice, or directly quoting a student text, allow tutors to support their feedback. Multimodally, tutors relied upon intertextuality to evoke emotion from students who might identify with particular genre or layout, such as John’s letter format in his feedback to students. Intertextuality revealed itself as a very important and successful teaching approach for tutors. In essence, intertextuality is a tutoring currency for consultants—a way to trigger a response in the student—getting them to understand or see a writing concept in a certain way. When a tutor links a piece of advice to a web resource, or perhaps a scene from a film, the student is able to juxtapose what they see and know about the given source to their writing concerns. The danger for tutors is leaning on this method without other supplemental and contextually relevant talk, using it to completely substitute a tutor’s own voice and pedagogy. When intertextuality alone is left to create understanding for a student, the learning opportunity might feel empty or aimless. When intertextuality is working best, often combined other supplemental feedback and interactions, it allows for more context, giving students multiple angles from which to learn.

Another prominent strategy in the discourse was re-voicing, which often allowed tutors to model to students how to frame, present, and write about ideas in clearer ways. In writing center scholarship, this kind of approach is often referred to as *modeling*; however, I believe that *re-voicing* is a more accurate and useful term.
When tutors offer new phrasing or frame an idea for a student in a new way, they are adopting the voice the student in order to do so. Essentially, the term re-voicing accounts for the appropriation of the student’s voice.

Modality also played a large role in sessions, not as an explicit teaching strategy, but as a way to preserve the culture of writing consultation online. Because mood during online communication can be easily misinterpreted, modality situates advice as being less assertive, more welcoming, and even has the ability to keep the responsibility of revising in the hands of the student. For example, a tutor might comment: *Perhaps this idea would be better off as a new sentence; as a continuous thought, it might be going on too long.* In this case, modality is leaving the decision up to the student, but still allows the tutor to offer their experience as a reader, giving potential advice. In the context of a tutoring session, this kind of language has the ability to break any perceived hierarchy of authority the student might have going into the session. Through modal language, the tutor can break this perception.

Other characteristics are also important in tutors’ talk, as they reveal how tutors were enacting their teaching online. Combining different kinds of statements (e.g. declarative, expository, interrogative) helped create more contextually rich feedback for students. As discussed in chapter four, different kinds of statements operate differently, and tutors used them to limit the ways in which students can understand feedback. Attention to detail, particularly in how it needs to be interpreted by students online, is important—combining these statements reveals tutors’ understanding of the potential for misunderstanding online.
Tutors also, though not frequently, used a strategy of explicitly naming their roles in sessions. For example, when tutors directly tell a student, “as a reader, I am not fully understanding your meaning,” they are situating both their role in the session and showing the student what kind of objectives they should be aiming; in this case, making sure their audience can fully grasp the writing.

Within online sessions, how consultants formatted their feedback was also important. In both asynchronous and synchronous sessions, tutors interacted with technology and student text to draw attention to ideas. In synchronous sessions, the consultants bolded, underlined, and bracketed text, used characters, such as carets, to point to ideas, and juxtaposed feedback directly next to problem sentences to emphasize moments of concern. Apart from the feedback itself, it became clear the design of feedback was important for tutors when teaching online.

How are writing consultants transformed when they understand the interactions between pedagogy and technology? This question turned out to be very difficult to answer. On one hand, the consultants, despite conversations and training directly aimed at getting them to consider how technology and pedagogy impact each other, still failed to explicitly express an understanding of recursivity between the two. However, despite a lack of expressing an understanding, I do think the tutors, through their teaching practices and communication, showed that they could appropriate technology to meet their pedagogical needs in online consultation sessions.

Interestingly, while the tutors never really explicitly demonstrated in their interviews and reflections having a sense of TPCK, they still revealed it in their
tutoring sessions and pedagogical practices. Mishra and Koehler (2006) state that, to have a sense of TPCK, educators must exhibit a series of complicated relationships. TPCK is the basis of good teaching with technology and requires an understanding of the representation of concepts using technologies; pedagogical techniques that use technologies in constructive ways to teach content; knowledge of what makes concepts difficult or easy to learn and how technology can help redress some of the problems that students face; knowledge of students’ prior knowledge and theories of epistemology; and knowledge of how technologies can be used to build on existing knowledge and to develop new epistemologies or strengthen old ones. (p. 1029)

Consultants certainly did employ pedagogical techniques that use technology in constructive ways; this was seen in how they designed feedback into their sessions and crafted moments of shared attention through formatting. Tutors also demonstrated insights about how learning writing concepts can be difficult and how technology might assist in teaching them; tutors mentioned this when noting that online consultations can benefit students who have anxiety about getting writing help in person. Lola mentioned that by reading a student’s paper, she has the ability to see them in the writing, thereby getting to know them and their needs through their writing. She could then apply pedagogy to best fit the learning concerns she recognized. And finally, consultants demonstrated that prior knowledge and experiences with technology have an impact on how they view a technology’s worth in certain teaching situations. All of these characteristics of TPCK were embedded into tutors’ practices; however, not one tutor in the study explicitly stated they recognized
and understood these concepts. I was left wondering—is having a conscious awareness of TPCK needed? And if so, how would it help make the tutors better?

The hypothesis for this study stated that writing consultants who are trained to be aware of the interactions between technology and pedagogy would be more successful in how they tutor online. While I can safely say that the writing consultants in this study were doing a wonderful job with their online consultations, I cannot say that the training given to the consultants had as a significant role as I wanted in that development. Tutors, in their interviews and reflections, did not point to training as being vital in their development and after an analysis of the training materials, more time and thought needs to be put into how training can help tutors understand the concept of TPCK and how having that understanding might play out in online writing center work. Instead, in this study, I believe that tutors’ past experiences and feelings about technology, whether positive or skeptical in nature, along with their skills as developing writing teachers learning composition pedagogy and theory in their graduate work, helped them to develop into effective writing consultants online. In order to strengthen an understanding of TPCK, situating it into their development as educators, a more explicit approach is needed.

**Implications for Writing Center Studies**

Based on the findings and conclusions for this study, I believe that I was lucky. I had a wonderful staff that did great work online, despite some shortcomings in how they were trained. I still firmly believe that no matter how talented a staff might be, writing centers need a way to better prepare tutors to work online and be aware of the interactions between technology and pedagogy. Mishra and Koehler
(2006) assert understanding these interactions go beyond “acquiring the individual technology skills,” and is more about understanding “the subtleties and relationships between and among tools, actors, and contexts” (p. 1037). I assert that one very useful way to help build this understanding is to train tutors to carefully craft their teaching when working online, paying attention to how their language, as well as the design of their language, is operating in a digital format. Therefore, I think that CDA, beyond acting as a methodology for this study, can also serve as a useful framework for training tutors.

As discussed in the previous section and as presented in the previous chapter, tutors enacted language a variety of interesting and effective ways. If writing centers were to harness and make explicit how discourse can operate in online tutoring sessions, tutors could learn to enact pedagogy more meaningfully for students in online environments as opposed to merely attempting to mirror what they do face to face. Additionally, they might also be able to better craft feedback using particular tutoring technologies. I believe that Critical Discourse Analysis, as well as Multimodal Discourse Analysis, can help writing consultants become not just better online tutors, but better tutors overall. CDA and MDA can help tutors develop explicit tools and strategies, which are often lacking in writing center research and training, to directly interact with and help students.

**Future Research**

As I have proposed that discourse analysis is useful in the training of writing consultants, particularly when working online, more questions emerge as future research considers this a possibility. First, writing center researchers will need to do
more work on how discourse operates in both face-to-face and online sessions, recognizing the differences and how they are operating based on their distinct venue. As there hasn’t been any CDA or MDA studies in writing centers so far, this would be a wonderful first step.

Researchers would also benefit from more research about different kinds of online venue. In this study, I have covered two commonly used online consultation spaces—Microsoft Word and WCOnline’s synchronous venue. However, writing centers use a variety of online spaces to do work with students, and these spaces will have their own nuances that must be understood if they are to be used to the full potential.

**Final Thoughts**

To conclude this dissertation, I want to offer some insights about the importance of this study and how technology should be considered in online writing consultation. This study aimed to look at how technology and pedagogy informed each other when tutors were working online with students. It aimed to fill a gap in writing center research between those who studied how technology works in writing consultation, and those who believed that face-to-face tutoring sessions can be replicated in online venues. I wanted to show how these two sides should be considered as overlapping—a recursivity between technology and pedagogy.

However, apart from the recursivity between technology and pedagogy, there is also a recursive nature between online tutoring and face-to-face tutoring. Researchers believing that face-to-face tutoring can help inform online tutoring are correct. However, online practices can also inform how we work in person. How we
frame an idea online, how we carefully craft our language to explain someone, through a technology, to a learner with particular learning needs, can teach us a lot about how we should be doing our work face-to-face. Instead of the educational nature to either champion or demonize technology, we need to understand a more complex reality: Technologies do not make people good or bad at their jobs; they only give people new ways to behave. It's up to us to choose what those behaviors are.
Appendices

Appendix A

Teaching Statement Prompt

Most graduate students who apply for assistantships in English have no prior teaching experience, and yet all who apply have spent many years in classrooms as students, have observed good teachers (in and/or out of school), and have made observations about themselves as learners. Many have informal teaching/tutoring experience, for example, helping siblings with writing tasks, teaching guitar to a friend, or working with youth groups on scout badges, church endeavors, or sports teams. In these ways, all applicants have a storehouse of experience that informs how they think about teaching and learning.

Please draw on these experiences and any other pertinent background as you explain how you see teaching and/or tutoring fitting into your career as a graduate student and beyond. Your response should help us understand you as a student of English studies and a potential teacher/tutor of college students.

A rough guideline for length is one to two pages, but what you have to say will determine the length of your response. (In other words, longer is not necessarily better, nor is shorter.)

Those who will read your response are English Department faculty who sit on the Graduate Committee.
Appendix B

Technology Statement

When you applied for the graduate assistantship, you were asked to compose a teaching statement in which you explored your teaching experiences (both informal and formal), your observations about learning, and your projections of how teaching and learning might impact your future in graduate school and beyond. You will now expand these ideas to include how you see technology playing a role in your teaching and writing consultations.

While everyone may have different experiences with technology, we have all witnessed a world that has rapidly evolved because of it. In the educational world this is evident in the kinds of online courses that are offered, the methods in which students are learning, and the ways writing gets done. You probably have your own experiences to pull from, both in your education and personal life. There are many kind of experiences to consider as significant—getting your first computer, using the Internet for the first time, teaching someone to use a computer program or device, discovering a new use for an existing technology, and many more. In these ways, most people have a surplus of experiences that might inform how they think technology impacts teaching and learning.

Please draw on these experiences and any other information as you explain how you understand technology as impacting writing instruction. Consider your ideas about the possible benefits and limitations when working online with students. Your response should help me understand you as not only a writing teacher and tutor, but as a user of technology (on any level).

While no particular length is required for this writing, one to two pages would be appropriate. Please have this statement completed and emailed to me (cschott@umsl.edu) by August 17th. We will discuss them during our training colloquium on August 20th and 21st.
Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Pre-interview script (spoken to participants):

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Please know that you have the right to not answer any questions that make you uncomfortable or that you simply do not wish to answer. Please let me know if you would like to skip to the next question at any time during this interview.

Before beginning the interview questions, I will have copies of the participant’s teaching and technology statements written at the beginning of the academic year (August 2015). The participant and I will discuss what was written in these statements as a reminder of their insights and ideas during that point in their development.

1. You have now worked for [one semester/an entire year] as a writing consultant. What have you’ve learned about tutoring so far? What are the benefits and constraints of working one-to-one with students?


3. Do you feel you have grown as an online educator? [If yes] In what ways have you grown? [If no] What kept you from developing?

4. Looking over your teaching statement from last August, do you feel as if this statement has changed at all? [If yes] What has changed and why do you think it has changed? [If no] Can you elaborate on why you feel there has been no change?

5. What successes, if any, have you had as an online writing consultant? What challenges, if any, have you experienced as an online writing consultant?

6. Do you feel as if the training that you went through last August helped you as you started working online with students in the Writing Center? [If yes] Do you think this training and your experiences working online will help you in other ways? [If no] Now that you have more experience working online, what would you change about that training?

7. Is there anything you’d like to add about your experiences with tutoring students online?
Appendix D

Post-Online Appointment Student Survey

1. Please describe your level of satisfaction with your online consultation. How satisfied are you with your session and why?
   [TEXT BOX]

2. Do you feel the technologies you used to work online with the Writing Center were easy to use and useful?
   [TEXT BOX]

3. Was it easy to follow your writing consultant’s advice? Please explain why or why not.
   [TEXT BOX]

4. What, if anything, do you feel you learned about writing from your writing consultation?
   [TEXT BOX]

   [CHECK BOX] Please check if you agree to allow the information from this survey to be included in a research study about how writing consultants work online with students. There is no risk for participating, no names will be retained, and any private information will be kept confidential.

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6 The questions and information here will be formatted and entered in Qualtrics. The surveys were sent to online students after they have completed their online writing consultation.
I've spent a great deal of time analyzing the interview data from last semester and numerous online tutoring sessions. One major conclusion that I've come to is that there are a variety of mindsets about online writing consultations. Some of you were very positive about it, some were very cautious, and some were critical, perhaps even demonstrating negative feelings. With that said, despite perspectives, everyone has been doing good work online with students.

Think about where you were last semester (positive, cautious, negative), and then consider the spring 2016 semester. Has your perspective changed at all (if so, how and why do you think so)? Have you remained unchanged? And finally, what would you imagine is the most productive mindset for writing consultants to have when working online with students and their writing?
Appendix F

CDA and MDA Transcripts

To view the transcripts for this study, in their entirety, please visit:

http://tinyurl.com/cdamdatranscripts
Appendix G

CDA Counts

To see frequencies of all CDA categories for this study, please visit:

http://tinyurl.com/cdacounts
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