

Sample Proposal C

Tutor Perspectives through Think-Aloud Protocol Applications

How can writing center professionals measure the degree of awareness that peer tutors bring to the process of facilitating student learning? Do the methods and strategies of tutor training manuals and programs follow through to the perceptual level? Writing Center administrators might respond, "Absolutely. We see it happen on a daily basis." But without measurable data, their claims of fact are dubious at best. Think-aloud protocols present a viable methodology for collecting thick, rich descriptive data from which to assess tutor perceptions. In this paper and presentation, participants will be introduced to a doctoral research project which examines tutor perceptions of their own tutorial processes through application of reflective think-aloud protocol methodology. A Midwest community college writing center serves as the setting for this study. Videotaped tutorial sessions are followed by reflective think-aloud protocol sessions. Transcripts from both the tutorials and the protocols are transcribed and analyzed for thematic threads of meaning. Following the data collection process, participating tutors reflect on think-aloud protocol methodology and its potential applications for tutor research and training. As competition for resources at all levels of education demands increasing methods of accountability, the need for research into the types of knowledge-making that occur in writing center tutorials also increases. In addition to providing a convenient service for students, writing centers must find ways to demonstrate academic rigor and student learning. While writing center faculty may observe the benefits of strong peer tutoring programs on a daily basis, this way of knowing does not guarantee administrative or academic accountability. Reflective analysis of individual tutoring practice, examined through reflective think-aloud protocols, can provide measurable data from which to examine this system of learning

Comment [M1]: Opening with questions immediately involves the reader, as does the imagined dialog. This provides a vivid, engaging start.

Comment [M2]: Here's the problem that the presentation will address: How can we provide substantive empirical evidence of what's happening in sessions?

Comment [M3]: The presentation's argument is clearly stated.

Comment [M4]: The section in yellow highlight provides context. It tells the reader what need this study addresses.

Comment [M5]: Again, a return to the main argument. The abstract works by establishing the importance of the project. It indicates that there is a real need here that the presenters intend to fulfill. The proposal then explains how the presenters will fulfill it.

Comments:

This proposal is strong because it captures the reader's attention and establishes the importance of its topic right away. Because the topic is part of a doctoral dissertation, and therefore complex, the writer of this proposal explains very clearly and concisely how he/she conducted the research. It also indicates what people who attend the session will come away with: A means of providing measureable data about the learning that happens in writing centers.