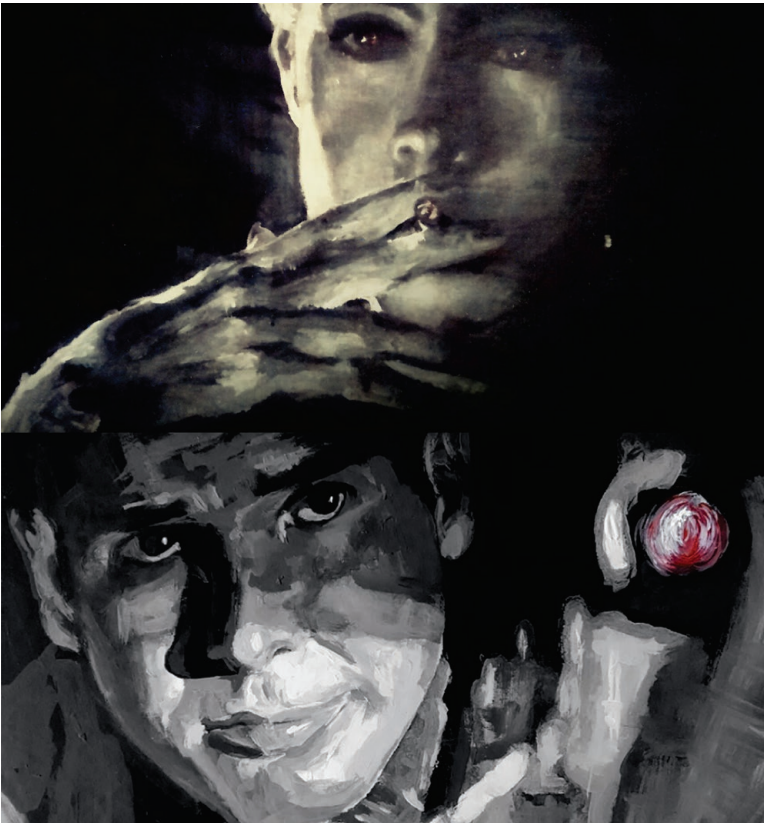


CHAPTER 13

“DID YOU EVER TAKE THAT TEST
YOURSELF?” FAILED KNOWLEDGE
TRANSFER, PEER-TO-PEER
PEDAGOGIES, AND THE *FRAMEWORK*
HABITS OF MIND AS TWO-WAY STREET

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Deckard tests Rachel. (Original acrylic on canvas by Jeremy Kunkel [2016])

There's a scene from one of my favorite films, *Blade Runner* (1982), where Deckard (played by Harrison Ford) administers a test to Rachel (played by Sean Young) to measure and assess if she is a replicant (android) or a human being. Rachel, though performing quite well for much of the test, ultimately "fails" to prove human. Later, while confronting Deckard at his home, Rachel asks, "You know that Voight-Kampff test of yours? Did you ever take that test yourself?"

I believe Rachel asks a crucial question that we as teachers and tutors of writing should be asking ourselves at least every so often, if not every day. Are we holding ourselves up to the same rigorous standards as our students? Are we practicing what we preach enough? In a November 2011 exchange on the WPA listserv, prominent figures in the field debated the slippery question of whether the habits of mind called for in the Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English, and National Writing Project's (2011) *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*—curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, flexibility, responsibility, and metacognition—can or should be measured or assessed. Several respondents replied with dismay at the idea of such motivational terms being put under the scrutiny and micro-management of assessment. In a passionate reply, Chris Anson (2011) wrote,

If we're going to assess anything, maybe we should start by looking at the conditions in which students are supposed to learn. A student can bring all the curiosity and creativity in the world into a classroom, but it won't help much if what she encounters there is an uninspired, poorly designed course taught by an ill-informed, unreflective dolt who dislikes students as much as the job of teaching (or just spends every hour lecturing "facts" to students in the manner of Gradgrind). (para.13)

Anson pinpoints an important consideration for all writing teachers/coaches: the fact that these habits of mind should apply just as much to instructors as they do to students. If we ask students to exercise curiosity, then it is only fair to ask: are we curious as instructors and how do we express that curiosity? Same for openness, engagement, creativity, and all the other terms. Identification in teaching and learning demands a two-way street in attitudes, habits, and actions. And if we fail to identify with our students in ways that motivate—and model ways for—them to perform optimally, we've failed them . . . and ourselves, whether in the classroom or during one-to-one conferences.

Kenneth Burke often drew on George Herbert Mead's concept of "attitude as incipient action" (especially as discussed in Mead's 1934 *Mind, Self and Society*) in writing about human motivation (see, for example, 1973/1941, pp. 1, 10-11, 168-169, 379-382; 1945, pp. 235-247, 294; 1969/1950, pp. 50, 90-95). The habits of

mind (Figure 13.1), while undergirding student incipient actions toward writing, should just as importantly be habits that inform our goals, attitudes, and actions as instructors of writing, especially if we want any of those habits of mind to facilitate knowledge transfer. This chapter will explore how and why both student and instructor attitudes toward writing need accounting for in any conversation about the theory, practice, or assessment of teaching and learning performances. I’ll begin with a discussion of current writing research in knowledge transfer—particularly discussions of discourse communities and individual dispositions in moments of failed transfer in academic writing performances (e.g., Beaufort, 2012; Donahue, 2012; Driscoll & Wells, 2012; Wardle, 2012; Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014; and, also in relation to threshold concepts, Anson, 2015, pp. 210-212; Downs and Robertson, 2015, pp. 112-113). I’ll move on to focus on how experimenting with and studying peer-to-peer pedagogies, especially studies of successful and failed tutorial performances in both discipline-specific and developmental general-education writing courses (e.g., Corbett, 2015a; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015), can aid writing teachers and tutors in our attempts to model and scaffold salutary habits of mind for the benefit of our students and ourselves. I’ll conclude with implications for one-to-one, small-group, and classroom teaching. This essay will highlight why looking in the mirror, and recognizing any inevitably human blemishes, must be the first step of a transfer-friendly pedagogical praxis.



Figure 13.1. Framework habits of mind.

FRAMEWORKING FAILED KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER: DISCOURSE COMMUNITIES, INDIVIDUAL DISPOSITIONS, AND PERFORMANCES OF SELF

If we seek to account for ways to synthesize theories of failed knowledge transfer with theories of identity performance, we can realize a more robust lens with which to analyze the vagaries of applying the *Framework* habits of mind to our instructional practices and research. A discussion of negative and positive transfer provides a useful place to start. Athletes, dancers, actors, cooks, etc., spend countless hours watching, considering, and critiquing their own and their peers' performances—good and bad. In a notably cogent article, Christiane Donahue (2012) offers a review of the literature on writing and transfer drawn from education, psychology, sociology, and composition studies. Although much has been made about the power of metacognition in the successful transfer of learning from one situation to another (Donahue, 2012, pp. 154-156), we know relatively little, especially in composition studies, about what phenomenon might contribute to failed moments of knowledge transfer. Learning procedures without an understanding of the accompanying underlying concepts, a-contextualized learning, and the learner's pre-existing conceptions can all interfere with and prevent successful transfer.

The frequently used, somewhat problematic, concept of “discourse communities” is just one variable to consider in relation to failed/negative knowledge transfer. Donahue claims that the very notion of a discourse community in itself can lead to failed transfer because the idea of “the university as a discourse community into which students must enter, and then disciplines as more specialized versions of that community, seem now to be reductive and overly linear understandings of the negotiation students take on” (2012, p. 157). Donahue goes on to discuss studies and texts that offer “boundary-crossing” scenarios as productive exercises in experimenting with what might work in this situation versus another. Kathleen Blake Yancey, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak (2014)—with their notion of “critical incidents”—offer further unpacking of negative transfer in the negotiation of discourse communities. The authors define a critical incident as “a situation where efforts either do not succeed at all or succeed only minimally” (2014, p. 120). They illustrate this concept through the extended study of Rick, a first-year physics and astrophysics major, who struggled to write about science for a general audience in his writing course, then failed to write an acceptable lab report for his chemistry professor based on what he learned from writing about science for a more general audience. In short, Rick's struggles between two discourse communities involved complicated trial-and-error negotiations between genre, audience, prior knowledge, and

his own developing self-efficacy and motivation (cf. Anson, 2015). Ultimately, Rick learned—through persistence and accepting responsibility for his own learning—to make moments of failure opportunities for growth and improvement. In a parallel example, Anne Beaufort describes some of the issues she failed to fully account for, in terms of positive knowledge transfer, in the sample curriculum and pedagogy suggestions of her 2007 longitudinal study *College Writing and Beyond*. Like Yancey et al., Beaufort reported on a student Tim, who much like Rick, left his freshman writing course believing he had learned strategies for writing applicable to the other discourse communities he would subsequently encounter. Yet, as Beaufort describes, Tim failed to come to terms with the multifarious communicative situations he faced, and apparently took much longer in his realization of the complex nature of discourse communities. Beaufort relays what finally had to occur for Tim to begin to realize some sense of how all the communicative pieces might come together for him to experience success, his first professional job with an engineering firm. Clearly, learning from failure can work for some people better (and faster) than others (as Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014 also report, p. 135; cf. Brooke & Carr, 2015; Anson 2016; Downs & Robertson, 2015).

While the concept of discourse communities can account for a lot of the socio-rhetorical reasons why we might experience a critical incident, we also need to consider more personalistic and individualistic variables. Dana Driscoll and Jennifer Wells (2012) argue that individual dispositions—like motivation, values, self-efficacy, and self-regulation—need to be accounted for much more in transfer research. Importantly, this attention would bring the *Framework* habits of mind to center stage. For example, in considering the value of a more individually focused lens for Beaufort’s student Tim discussed above, the authors observe:

While Beaufort’s study focuses on Tim’s perceptions of his discourse communities, she does not focus on the dispositional aspects Tim has that may be causing those perceptions (such as locus of control, motivation, etc.). Beaufort also does not discuss anything about Tim as a person outside of the educational setting. (Driscoll & Wells, 2012, para. 14)

Turning our lens toward the personal and individual might nudge us to ask different types of questions regarding Tim’s critical incidents. Could there have been personal reasons that caused some of the trouble Tim had in negotiating in and between the discourse communities of first-year composition, history, and engineering? Too many commitments like a job, family, or illness might have played a part. Simple lack of motivation and effort may have been a culprit. Neglect of any of the *Framework’s* habits of mind—lack of curiosity, openness, engagement,

persistence, creativity, flexibility, responsibility, and/or metacognition—may have contributed just as much to Tim’s critical incidents as forces outside his individual dispositions. Perhaps by the time Tim finally saw the “end” of his education, when he finally succeeded in landing a professional engineering job, all the dispositional pieces came together (or started to come together) more synergistically with that particular discourse community. A concept Driscoll and Wells build into their disposition theorizing is the theory of attribution, which can help us begin to make connections between individual agency and motivation and the outside force of discourse communities. Simply put, attribution theory deals with how much control a person believes they have over a situation, how much the cause of success or failure is a result of their own actions or circumstances beyond their control (Turner, 2007; also see Babb & Corbett, 2016). Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “*habitus*,” Elizabeth Wardle (2012) speculates that perhaps fields themselves warrant attribution consideration for frequently inculcating students with problem-solving attitudes and dispositions at the expense of problem-exploring dispositions. The author believes that this dichotomy forces students into a “psychological double-bind” that can result in confusion and failure. In many ways, then, the students we discussed above with Yancey et al. (2014), Beaufort (2012), and Driscoll and Wells (2012) are understandably facing both immense socio-rhetorical as well as psycho-rhetorical forces they are doing their best to negotiate in the quest to survive the critical incidents, and the accompanying chance of a failed performance, we all must inevitably face.

Finally, and to further complicate this analytical frame, we would do well to remember the eminently quotable Erving Goffman’s (1959) words from *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*: “We must be prepared to see that the impression of reality fostered by a performance is a delicate, fragile thing that can be shattered by a very minor mishap” (p. 56). Goffman suggests the ways in which socio-rhetorical actors, rather than simply “attempting to achieve certain ends by acceptable means,” also “can attempt to achieve the impression that they are achieving certain ends by acceptable means” (1959, p. 250). Elsewhere, in the later work *Forms of Talk* (1981), Goffman analyzes the consequences of failure to execute a successful performance. He explains how the very awareness and prospect of social control is a powerful means of social control, causing social actors to make preemptive moves (right or wrong) to avoid the stigma of failure at all costs (cf. Clark, this volume, on the role of neuropsychology and genre in the performance, choice, and development of students’ cultural identities). The plurality, often ambiguity, of control lends itself to the drama of human communication—including failed communicative performances—and adds yet another layer to the many variables (Figure 13.2) that can help us make sense of the vagaries of successful and failed knowledge transfer.

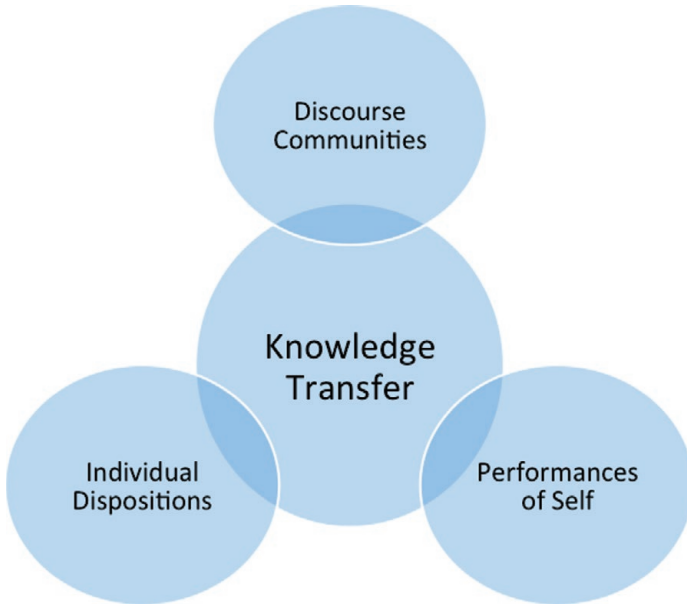


Figure 13.2. Overlapping socio-cognitive elements of knowledge transfer.

Writing center theory and practice offers a rich site for the discussion of successful pedagogical performances and knowledge transfer (e.g., Bromley, Northway, & Schonberg, 2016; Devet, 2015; Driscoll, 2015; Nowacek, 2011). Yet, looking back over the course of the past few decades, one can also trace a pattern of reporting failed (or, at least, problematic and unsatisfying) tutorial performances (e.g., Corbett, 2015a; DiPardo, 1992; Nicolas, 2005; Severino, 1992; Sherwood, 1996). Jo Mackiewicz and Isabelle Thompson (2015) (echoing arguments made in the past in the works of Kenneth Bruffee and Muriel Harris) have recently suggested the value of studying tutoring strategies for all teachers of writing: one-to-one tutoring offers students abundant opportunities to experience more individualized feedback on their writing performances, greater interactivity and agency in their own learning, and more opportunities to express their thoughts and concerns about writing. Granted, studies like Bradley Hughes, Paula Gilliespie, and Harvey Kail's (2010) analyses of the reflections of 126 former tutors from three institutions touts the salutary skills and habits of mind students immersed in peer-to-peer learning can take with them from those experiences—including stronger listening and analytical abilities; values, skills, and abilities vital to family and professional relationships; and increased confidence in their writing and communication abilities—these studies can make it seem like peer tutors experience nothing but success. But teachers of writing can also learn a lot about what possible teaching strategies might cultivate and in-

stantiate good teaching habits of mind by studying both successful and less-successful examples of peer tutors in action, especially when tutors are positioned in the immensely complex problem-exploring situation that arises when they are connected more closely with writing courses and curriculum.

Several writing fellows practitioners report on compelling conflicts during the vagaries of authority and method negotiation peer tutors must face when connected directly with a disciplinary writing course (e.g., Lutes, 2002; *Across the Disciplines*, 2008). Jean Marie Lutes offers an example of the tricky liminal space writing fellows must perform within, arguing that in their role as writing fellows, tutors are often concerned with living up to the role of “ideal tutor.” She reports how a writing fellow, Helen, resorted to a more directive style of tutoring when she noticed students getting closer to the professor’s expectations. Helen concluded that this more intimate knowledge of the professor’s expectations, once she “knew the answer” (2002, p. 250, n. 18) made her job harder rather than easier to negotiate. It places peer tutors in the sort of dichotomous psychological double-bind Wardle (2012) spoke of above. This double-bind can affect tutors working more closely with students in developmental general education writing courses as well.

Barbara Liu and Holly Mandes (2005) and Melissa Nicolas (2005) describe how certain adjustments had to be made to methodological direction and control when tutors were moved into the developmental writing classroom—a location where the *habitus*’ of the students they found themselves working more closely with may not have adequately equipped them with the dispositions and performance-savvy needed for mainstream academic success. Liu and Mandes would soon come to realize that when tutors are circulating in the classroom, in their zeal to help, they can all too easily “invade the writer’s comfort zone” treading “a thin line between help and invasion” (2005, p. 91). Nicolas (2005) also points to the fact that this arrangement requires students to meet with tutors, rather than the typically optional writing center meeting. In her “Cautionary Tale” we see the difficulty in tutors moving from a more writing center-like setting to an instructional setting that demands that they experience closer communicative contact and negotiation with teachers and students in the classroom. This new arrangement puts tutors in situation where they may be struggling to apply what they have been taught about helping students take greater agency and interactivity in their own learning to this new and different instructional context. Nicolas reports how this caused authority and role confusion in the tutors. One tutor explained how, even though she tried to downplay her authority while working with students, still “they just always seem to look at me or toward me. . . . They like to be told what to do. . . . It’s kind of confusing. It’s sort of like a balancing act where you try not to be in it too much but try to be there, but

it’s like you’re not there. It’s hard” (Nicolas, 2005, p. 120). And just as classroom teachers either learn to balance levels of control and directiveness, questioning and listening, or just letting students run with ideas, tutors and students develop a heightened sense of these instructional moves. The tutor’s willingness either to oblige the student or not is not always an easy choice to make. It is the psychological double-bind that underscores each move the tutor makes whether tutoring one-to-one or collaborating in the classroom. But studying how tutors approach these problem-situations, how they dance the habits of mind and attitude necessary to realize success (or suffer failure), can offer much to any writing teacher’s ongoing learning and development.

ALL-TOO-HUMAN NARRATIVES OF PEER-TO-PEER SUCCESS AND FAILURE: T9 VS. JULIAN

Two recent, book-length studies of tutoring strategies respectively offer an illuminating narrative of success and a cautionary tale of tutors interacting more closely with students and instructors ripe for comparative scrutiny: Mackiewicz and Thompson’s (2015) study *Talk about Writing: The Tutoring Strategies of Experienced Writing Center Tutors* and Steven Corbett’s (2015a) *Beyond Dichotomy: Synergizing Writing Center and Classroom Pedagogies*.

IMPRESSIONS OF REALITY FOSTERED BY A FAILED PERFORMANCE: JULIAN

Corbett (2015a), following related research threads on peer-to-peer teaching and learning, including peer tutoring (e.g., Corbett, 2011a; 2013; 2015b) and peer review and response (e.g., Corbett, 2015c; Corbett, LaFrance, & Decker, 2014) offers case studies of one-to-one tutorials in the writing center and small-group peer response workshops in the classroom in developmental first-year courses at two universities. Corbett comparatively analyzes the interactions of participants through multi-method, RAD research methods that include discourse analysis of tutorial transcripts, field observations, interviews and follow-up interviews, and participant journals. Attempting to build a frame for the comparative analyses of one-to-one tutorials and peer-response-group interactions, the author provides a macro- and micro-analytical frame (Figure 13.3). The macro-frame, drawn from Muriel Harris’ (1995) “Why Writers Need Writing Tutors,” offers an overarching rhetorical framework for how tutors can help writers. Tutors can: (1) encourage student independence in collaborative talk, (2) assist students with metacognitive acquisition of strategic knowledge, (3) assist with knowledge of how to interpret, translate, and apply assignments and teacher comments, and (4) assist with affective concerns. The micro-frame focuses on the linguistic

features and cues of collaborative talk including: types of questions, discourse markers, fillers, overlaps, pauses and silences, forms of address, modal auxiliary verbs, and qualifiers. For the sake of comparative relevance, I will focus my analyses on the unsuccessful one-to-one tutorial performances, highlighted in the study, of one experienced, senior peer tutor—Julian.

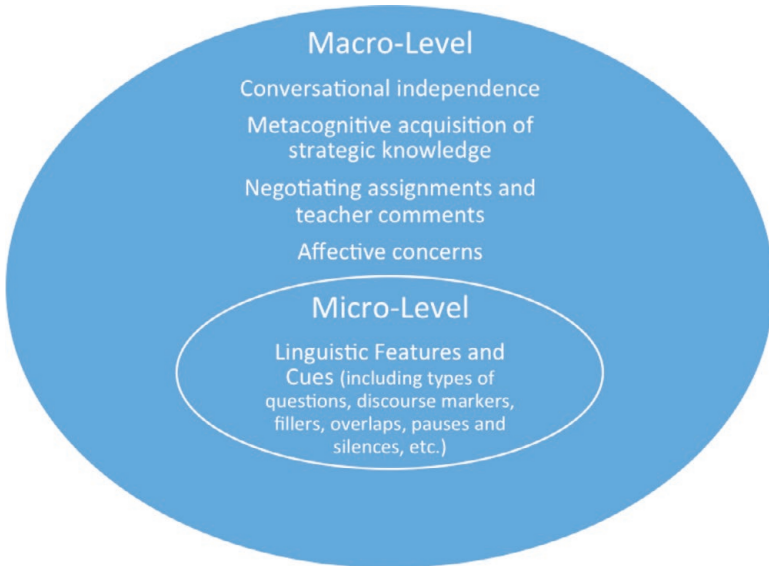


Figure 13.3. Corbett’s (2015) Frame for analyzing one-to-one tutorials and peer-response-group interactions.

Julian’s six tutorials all took place in the eighth week of the term. They all revolved around a major paper in which students were asked to analyze and make an argument about the rhetoric, ideology, usefulness, and feasibility of one of the topics from George W. Bush’s 2006 State of the Union Address, topics including the No Child Left Behind Act; the war in Iraq; and immigration, especially the U.S./Mexican border. His six sessions averaged 36 minutes, with the longest lasting 53 minutes and the shortest 22 minutes. Careful analysis helps illustrate Julian’s most salient negative tutorial pattern—the fact that he talks too much while allowing relatively much less student talk-time (or, concurrently, tutor listening-time). Couple this with the fact that he often talks a lot before he has heard the entire student’s paper, and we are often left wondering why he is talking so much, often in the abstract, about the student’s ideas and writing.

In session four, Julian works with a highly reticent student who is having obvious trouble negotiating the assignment. I quote this excerpt at some length because it illustrates the extreme that Julian can go to in his verbosity, in his domination of the session:

Julian: Yeah okay just get specific with it. Do you think we need to follow President Bush’s plan because it affects everybody? How does it affect everybody? Like what’s at stake? Like security? Like what else? What are the issues at play?

Student: I don’t know.

Julian: That’s cool. Just make a note for yourself or something. I just think about it because that’s the kind of stuff I read. That idea makes sense right? Just kick it around. One thing to do is if you’re totally like it’s not coming to you forget about it for a while because it looks like you’ve got a good structure of your body paragraphs right? And this last sentence suggested like talking a little about there are many clear facts like what are you talking about? See where you can end up in your conclusion like ultimately we’ll only need to listen to Bush and be ready to do this because these things are like why do we need to? What is President Bush saying that we need to do these things for right? So he says that we need to do this because ABC right? Do we need to do for AB and C if he’s right if he’s correct right? Where Bush says what we need is for AB and C and you look at that and he is right we do need to do it for these reasons one of those can be your stakes because that’s what you’re talking about right? You just need to introduce them in a general way. I know I’m rambling but I’m trying to say that the topics are the central ideas of your body paragraphs. You can sort of like generalize about them; just sort of go back and connect them to claim.

Student: Yeah. [5 Second Pause]

Julian: That’s got to actually do a lot. When I get stuck on opening paragraphs like I’ll just because I don’t know I don’t know how the writing process goes for you but you my intro paragraph takes me and my claim takes me about as much time as writing half of my body paragraphs, so sometimes I’ll write by pulling my quotes and I’ll write the central paragraphs and then in writing them I’ll be like oh I do have something to say in like my conclusion. I’ll, I’ll go back and generalize to make a claim.

Student: All right.

Julian: I’m talking a lot, like let me ask you a question. You

guys have talked about rhetorical analysis right? So what do you think about the rhetorical analysis you have so far on Bush in this first and second paragraph?

Student: I don't know what rhetorical means. (Corbett, 2015a, pp. 61-62)

In this striking example, Julian, granted, is faced with an incommunicative student whose inability to grasp the assignment makes Julian's job tough. But when Julian's first barrage of questions is met with "I don't know," it only spins him on more rambling. And he knows he is rambling, which causes him to actually slow down and ask a question that leads him to figure out the student does not understand the idea of rhetorical analysis. This seems promising. Yet rather than ask some questions that might get the student thinking, allow time for a response, and maybe even write some notes, notice how Julian will ask a question, then answer it himself (ironically, almost like a "rhetorical" question). Repeatedly, as evidenced in the above passage, and continuing throughout this session, Julian asks "does that make sense?" The student invariably responds curtly with "yes," "yeah," and "I think so." Julian also uses the tag question "right?" ubiquitously. Examples like this appear repeatedly in Julian's tutorial transcripts. We hear repeated instances of Julian asking a question, not waiting or allowing enough pause for student response, then moving on to offer extended stretches where he tries hard to offer useful suggestions.

In his sixth tutorial, Julian's actions suggest that though he is metacognitively aware of his rather "inauthentic" listening habit, the problem is indeed a deep one. At the very beginning of the session, the student says "she [Anne] gave us this peer review thingy." As if she hadn't said a word, Julian responds: "How is your week going?" They never return back to the student's initial utterance.

A WRITING FELLOW GETS IT RIGHT: T9

Mackiewicz and Thompson (2015), following related research threads by Thompson and colleagues (e.g., Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2013; Thompson, 2009; Thompson et al., 2009), offer detailed empirical methods and analyses of one-to-one tutor talk. In contrast to Corbett's study (2015a) discussed above, Mackiewicz and Thompson set out with the express goal of detailing the strategies of highly successful tutorials: conferences evaluated by the students and tutors as "highly satisfactory (five or six on a six-point scale)" (2015, p. 2). Their analytical frame also approaches one-to-one tutorials from both the macro- and micro-level (Figure 13.4). They analyze 10 video-recorded one-to-one tutorials at three macro-levels: opening, teaching, and closing. At

the micro-level they analyze these same tutorials in great depth via three categories of tutoring strategies: instruction, cognitive scaffolding, and motivational scaffolding. For the sake of comparative analyses, I will focus especially on the tutoring strategies of a student who started out as a tutor in the writing center as an undergraduate and later became a writing fellow as a graduate student—Tutor 9 (T9).

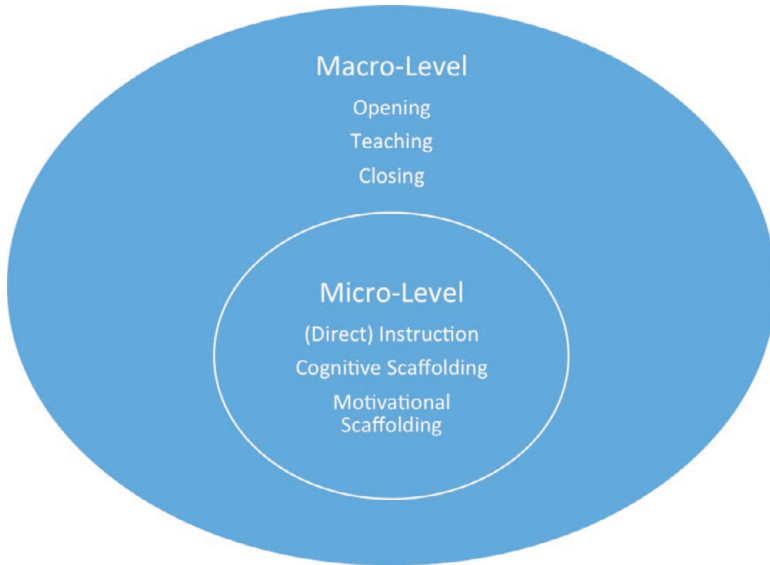


Figure 13.4. Mackiewicz and Thompson's (2015) frame for analyzing one-to-one tutorials.

Mackiewicz and Thompson compare four tutorials from T9, two with undergraduates while T9 herself was an undergraduate tutor in the writing center, and two tutorials with an undergraduate student years later when T9 was a graduate writing fellow attached to a business writing course. In terms of direct instruction (strategies like telling, suggesting, and explaining) the authors found that T9 was much more likely to use the explaining strategy in her tutorials as a writing fellow than during her tutorials at the writing center: about 45% in her fellow tutorials vs. 20% in writing center tutorials. The authors attribute the high level of direct instruction to the fact that T9, in her writing fellow role, was a much more direct intermediary between the students and the instructor and thus more obligated to explain aspects of genre and assignment negotiation. In terms of cognitive scaffolding (strategies like demonstrating, hinting, and prompting) the authors found that T9 was much more likely to use the strategy of “responding-as-a-reader-or-a-listener” in her writing center tutorials than in her writing fellow tutorials: about 23% in her writing center tutorials

vs. about 7% in her writing fellow tutorials. The authors attribute the high level of this strategy in the writing center tutorials to the fact that, even though T9 was familiar with the genres those students were writing in, she understood the assignments and the instructor's intentions for the assignments as much as possible. And in terms of motivational scaffolding (strategies like showing concern, praising, and using humor), rather than the major factor in the tutorial strategy of showing concern being influenced by T9's role as a writing center tutor or writing fellow, the major factor ended up being how familiar she was with the student. T9 was much more likely to show concern for students she was unfamiliar with than students she had worked with before: about 35% for unfamiliar students vs. about 10% for familiar students. The authors attribute this finding to T9's sense of her responsibility for helping students persevere in meeting the responsibilities of the assignment.

And yet, despite the fact that T9 experienced success on all fronts, Mackiewicz and Thompson offer a word of caution on just how easily the pedagogical problem of asserting perhaps too much control during an instructional moment can manifest. In the following brief excerpt of T9 working with Student 1

2 (S12), T9 exhibits a moment of appropriating the student's paper with directive instruction blended almost seamlessly with cognitive scaffolding and motivational scaffolding:

T9: [Reading.] "Coca-Cola offer a variety of distribution channels, including, colon, vending machines, various supermarkets, and department stores." I don't know if I would say "various."

S12: O.K.

T9: But "supermarkets and department stores."

S12: O.K.

T9: And then you would start like a regular sentence. O.K. And I like this a lot. I like that you've expanded here. I think that's very good. (Mackiewicz and Thompson, 2015, p. 164)

While this may seem a very minor offense, the authors claim this moment may have crossed over the fine line of tutor-control by potentially neglecting S12's input into the reason she used the word "various." Yet, we have to acknowledge the fact that this session with S12 involved a revised draft of this paper, which had already undergone a conference with T9. So T9 was responding to a work that was much closer to a final draft. It would thus make more sense that T9 might feel more compelled and pedagogically freer to offer such a fine-grained and directive suggestion.

DISCUSSION

Comparing these two tutorial performances—trying to determine factors that contributed to the success of one and the failure of the other—is without a doubt a very complex undertaking. Thinking more about the overlapping contexts of these situations will help. T9 had much more of an understanding of the course and the expectations of the instructor, as well as much more thorough training and experience that prepared her for success in that particular discourse-community role. Mackiewicz and Thompson (2015) detail the elements of that training including: acting as a mentor for inexperienced tutors, receiving extensive training in the genres often discussed in business writing (p. 53; cf. Clark, this volume; Gorzelsky et al., this volume), and staying in close communication and collaboration (even to the point of collaborating on assignment design and evaluating document drafts) with the instructor of the course (p. 157; cf., Corbett, 2015a, especially pp. 99-129; Robinson & Hall, 2013; Soliday, 2011). In stark contrast, Corbett reports that Julian did not develop either salutary rapport with students nor have much of an understanding of what was going on in the course. While T9 was performing the role of almost a co-instructor, Julian’s sense of himself as “reserved advisor” and the gross lack of communication between him and the instructor of the course (Anne) combined to co-construct this cautionary tale of failed knowledge transfer. Julian did not stay in regular communication, enough to know the nuances of Anne’s expectations very well. Yet in all his interactions with students, he still tried hard to stay within what he felt were her expectations (primarily via assignment prompts and what students were *telling* him they thought Anne wanted). Anne felt that the lack of communication was all her fault and repeatedly, during the interviews Corbett reports on, expressed regret for not interacting more closely with Julian. But she also intimated that she felt students and Julian did not get to know each other well enough on an individual basis to enable Julian to move past his nondirective “reserved advisor”—that he had learned during his peer tutor training—approach toward a method that might take into account the more individualistic needs and dispositions of each student. Students never saw the habits of mind like responsibility or flexibility exhibited by Julian nearly to the extent they experienced it with T9 (or several of the other tutors from Corbett’s study as well).

Still, I find great value in Julian’s cautionary tale, value that points to the growth and development of writing center studies as a (sub)field that can make important contributions to the study of knowledge transfer and habits of mind. Like Lauren Fitzgerald and Melissa Ianetta (2012), I “take it as a sign of writing center studies’ increasing sense of its own identity, as well as its increasing security as a field of

study, that we can admit such ‘failures’ and then move on to create productive, important knowledge from these events” (p. 9). Julian’s lack of pedagogical flexibility in his method was not even helped by his metacognitive awareness of his unhelpful habit of talking to the point of ranting with students. This fact suggests just how tricky it can be not only to advocate for a “non-directive conferencing style” (Hall & Hughes, 2011, p. 32) when preparing faculty and peer tutors to transfer what they know when they work more closely together with student writers in disciplinary writing courses or developmental gen-ed writing courses, but also how the vaulted notion of metacognition can sometimes prove hard to socio-cognitively corral in order to aid in transfer (cf. Anson, 2016; Driscoll, 2015).

MORE (OR LESS) HUMAN THAN HUMAN: CONCLUSION

Memories . . . You’re talking about memories.

— Deckard, *Blade Runner*

One of the greatest lessons I continue to try and stay as metacognitively alert and flexible about as a teacher-and-learner of writing is the importance of balancing direct instruction and cognitive scaffolding—while staying attuned to the motivational scaffolding that can enhance identification, motivation, and knowledge transfer. While I know I have not always been successful in every attempt, I believe continuing to develop and hone this balancing act is perhaps my deepest responsibility, as well as the single most important pedagogical concept transferable between and among my instructional methods like classroom, small-group, and one-to-one instruction.

As I mentioned above, Hughes et al.’s (2010) analyses of the reflections of 126 former tutors from three institutions suggests some promising skills and habits of mind students immersed in peer-to-peer learning can transfer from those experiences, including: stronger listening and analytical abilities; values, skills, and abilities vital to family and professional relationships; and increased confidence in their writing and communication abilities. If *all* students were to experience systematic, iterated peer-to-peer pedagogical (including peer response groups and instructor-facilitated small-group conferences) activities in all of their writing-intensive courses, vertically in their curriculum from the time they were freshman to their senior year, and then on to those continuing in graduate and professional schools and programs, they could get their share of transferable communicative skills and values. Research and practice involving peer tutors, like T9 and Julian, more closely attached to writing courses offers insights into how peer tutors act when they are more or less expected to possess some sort of authority, some kind of hybrid teacher-student aptitude and responsibility.

This closer alignment with students’ zone of proximal development offers intimate gazes into how students a bit closer to true “peer” status negotiate feedback strategies. An understanding of the strategies that can encourage students to negotiate when and how to do more talking, questioning, or listening can add much to any writing teacher’s—no matter what level of experience—own ongoing negotiation and performance between discourse communities, individual dispositions, and habits of mind (like the kind of longitudinal faculty development reported in Condon et al., 2016). When we (as a discourse community or as individuals) choose to actively and thoughtfully gaze at our reflection in the mirror, what we see and how we feel about it can be scrutinized, compared to what others see, and gradually revised. Then, as the image of ourselves grows older, perhaps we can reflect back and remember from a wiser point of view. I sometimes wonder if Julian learned anything valuable from his experience, anything useful for his communicative habits of mind. I believe I, and perhaps others who have read his cautionary tale (or similar ones), have.

People have varying degrees of communication styles—some appear introverted and reticent, others outgoing and verbose. But it seems that all people like to feel that their interlocutors, especially during pedagogical moments, are listening to and valuing what they have to say. Staying open and curious about studies of writing tutors attempting to navigate the vagaries of interpersonal communication, like the ones we touched-on above with T9 and Julian, can aid in teacher’s attempts to metacognitively and persistently develop flexibility and balance while interacting with students of various personality types and communicative styles and manners. The one thing all writing center and peer tutoring philosophies have in common is the belief in the primacy of the affective/motivational scaffolding aspect of peer-to-peer pedagogies. The most transferable pedagogical concept I’ve ever heard (attributed to various people, including Maya Angelou) is that people will not always remember what you said or did, but they will never forget how you made them feel. I recently had a student with a learning disability tell me she had to perform a writing sample given to her by her psychologist. She said the feedback was very negative and made her feel like a bad writer. In contrast, she said the experiences in our course, including the bonding with her group-mates, made her feel like a good writer. As fellow instructors of writing, I know you’ve heard and experienced similar stories. . . . Providing a pedagogical environment wherein students feel comfortable and confident enough to take some agency in their own (and to some degree their peers’) learning *experiences* becomes the crucial first step (e.g., Corbett & LaFrance, 2013) in order for everyone to perform the teaching and learning of the types of cognitively demanding writing tasks I assign (e.g., my [2011b] contribution to the “Framework Representative Curricular Resources”).

Let's return for a moment to the set of *Blade Runner*, where we started this chapter. Having failed the test, and subsequently learning that she was not human, Rachel experienced a life-jolting realization. When she asks Deckard, "Did you ever take that test yourself?" he does not reply because he has fallen asleep. When students—almost always implied—ask us the same question, I hope we are wide awake, listening carefully, and keep trying to remember the importance of offering a human-as-possible reply.



Closing Image. Deckard Falls Asleep. (Original acrylic on canvas by Jeremy Kunkel [2016])

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