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## Working One-on-One with Students who have Learning Differences

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# Tutoring English Learners

Findings and implications from a survey given to CSB/SJU Writing Center Tutors,  
Spring Semester 2017.

Maria Frie



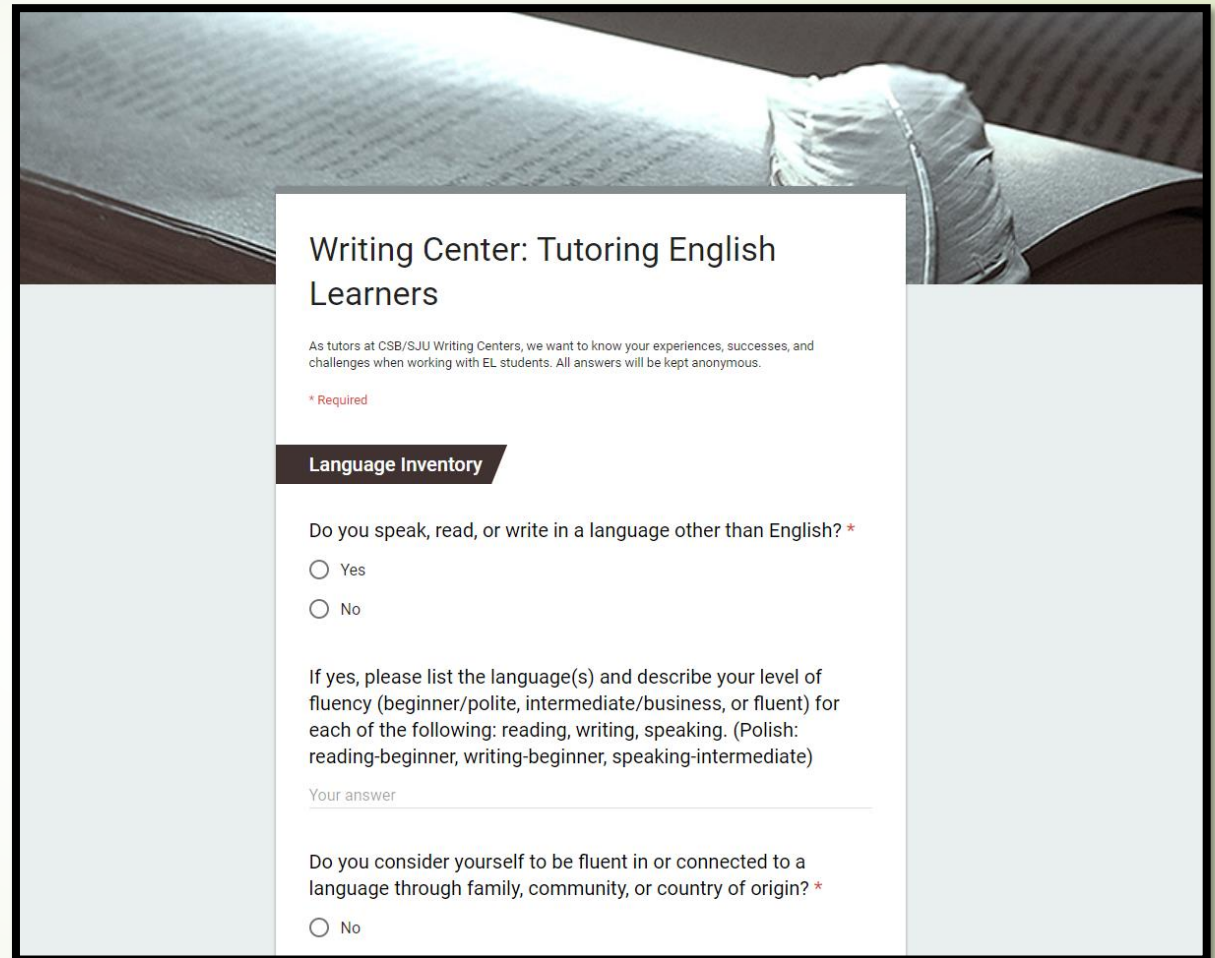
# Predicament

- ▶ ELs value Writing Centers (Gallagher et al., 2016)!
- ▶ Yet tutors are often “apprehensive” (Bell & Elledge, 2008).
  
- ▶ Relevancy:
  - ▶ Clients self-identifying as EL: 13%
  - ▶ Appointments with self-identified ELs: 20%





# SURVEY



## Writing Center: Tutoring English Learners

As tutors at CSB/SJU Writing Centers, we want to know your experiences, successes, and challenges when working with EL students. All answers will be kept anonymous.

\* Required

### Language Inventory

Do you speak, read, or write in a language other than English? \*

Yes

No

If yes, please list the language(s) and describe your level of fluency (beginner/polite, intermediate/business, or fluent) for each of the following: reading, writing, speaking. (Polish: reading-beginner, writing-beginner, speaking-intermediate)

Your answer

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Do you consider yourself to be fluent in or connected to a language through family, community, or country of origin? \*

No



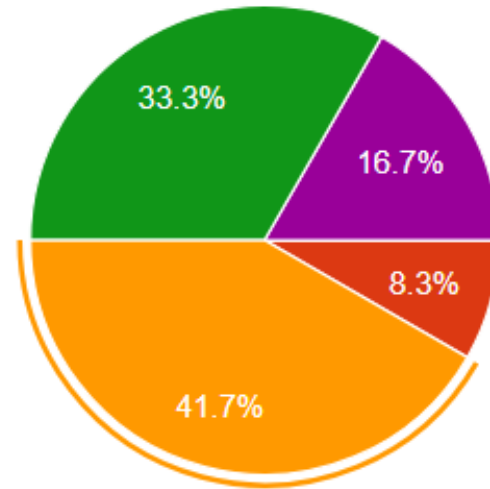
# Purpose

- ▶ This survey was conducted to investigate
  - ▶ Investigate the comfort level of tutors
  - ▶ Identify ineffective and effective practices
  - ▶ Gauge interest in professional development

# Appointments

What percentage of your appointments are with English Learner (EL) students?

12 responses



- 0% (never)
- 10% (every 9 appointments)
- 15% (every 6 appointments)
- 25% (every 3 appointments)
- 50% (every other appointment)
- 75% (majority of appointments)

# Language Inventory

Spanish	Beginner	Intermediate	Fluent
Reading	2	4	2
Speaking	5	2	1
Writing	2	4	2

“ESL writers cannot use their ears to edit; they do not hear the language ‘correctly’ as a native speaker does” (Powers, 1993a)



# Fluency of Tutors & EL Visitors

- Correlation between no/little language learning and fewer EL appointments. Most said 15% of their appointments are EL
- 2 tutors who listed 50% are learning two languages.

“...the literacy tutor needs to have a basic understanding of linguistics and second language acquisition.” (Bookman, 2002)





# Elements of Writing

## ➤ **Easiest**

- Brainstorming
- Drafting/Outlining
- Citations
- Thesis Statements
- Style
- **Hardest**

➤ Areas with greatest discrepancy:

- **Mechanics**
- **Grammar**
- **Organization**



# Strategies

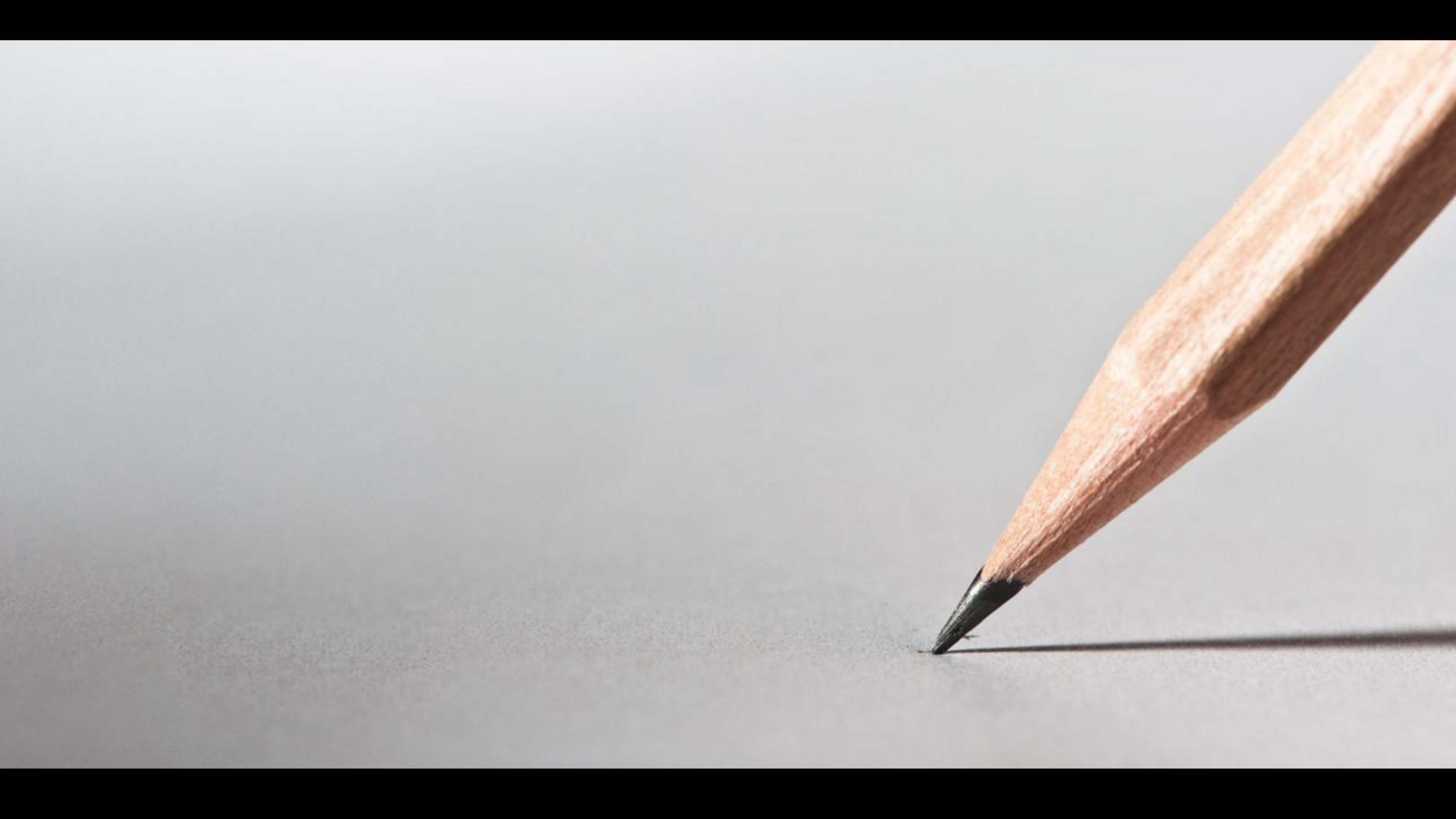


## ➤ Seek:

- Communication & Listening
- Student accommodation
- Encouragement & positive behavior
- Trends
- Simplicity

## ➤ Avoid:

- Tuning out or giving up
- Approaching all appointments in the same way
- Exclusion
- Editing
- Addressing too many issues at once





# We know...

- **Speaking** a new language is difficult
- Tutors who are language learners are **more effective/popular**
- Some **elements of writing** are harder than others
- Some **strategies** are more effective than others
- Tutors feel **relatively prepared** for EL appointments
- Tutors are **interested** in learning how to better serve the EL population



# Implications

Suggestions for professional development





# As we teach...



Linguistic  
Awareness

Cultural  
Competence

Pedagogy

“All tutors should be trained in three most important areas:  
grammar, teaching methods, and culture.” (Bookman, 2002)



# Linguistic Awareness

"If literacy tutors had a sufficient background in linguistics and second language acquisition, they would be better equipped to handle non-native speakers' requests for assistance" (Bookman, 2002).

- Phonology, Syntax, Tone Systems, Morphological Typology...
- Elements of Writing
  - Grammar (especially subject/verb agreement, articles, prepositions)
  - Mechanics (punctuation, appropriate capitalization)
- **English is not the quintessential language**

# Types of Languages

- ▶ Analytic/Isolating: no plural affixes on nouns or agreement affixes on verbs
- ▶ Synthetic: more than one unit of meaning per word
  - ▶ Agglutinative = root + multiple affixes (can be easily separated)
  - ▶ Fusional= root + multiple affixes (cannot be easily separated)
- ▶ Polysynthetic: ten or more affixes, usually contains the meaning of a whole sentence.
  - ▶ Cherokee: *datsigowhtisgv'i* "I was seeing something facing me."

Isolating	English
One boy, many boy	One boy, many boys
I sing, he sing	I sing, he sings
I see you yesterday	I <u>saw</u> you yesterday

# Cultural Competence

## ➤ Recognize Bias

“Like teachers, tutors must be aware that their (mis)informed assumptions about a writer’s ability may influence how the conference is run” (Nan, 2012).

## ➤ Listen

- Ask about their perspectives of and experiences with English
- Explore cultural expectations for teacher/student relationships

## ➤ Elements of Writing

- Style (personal writing, research writing, analytical writing...)
- Thesis Statements (state your purpose, then support)
- Organization (structure of arguments, explicit flow of ideas)





# Pedagogy

## ➤ Re-define Roles

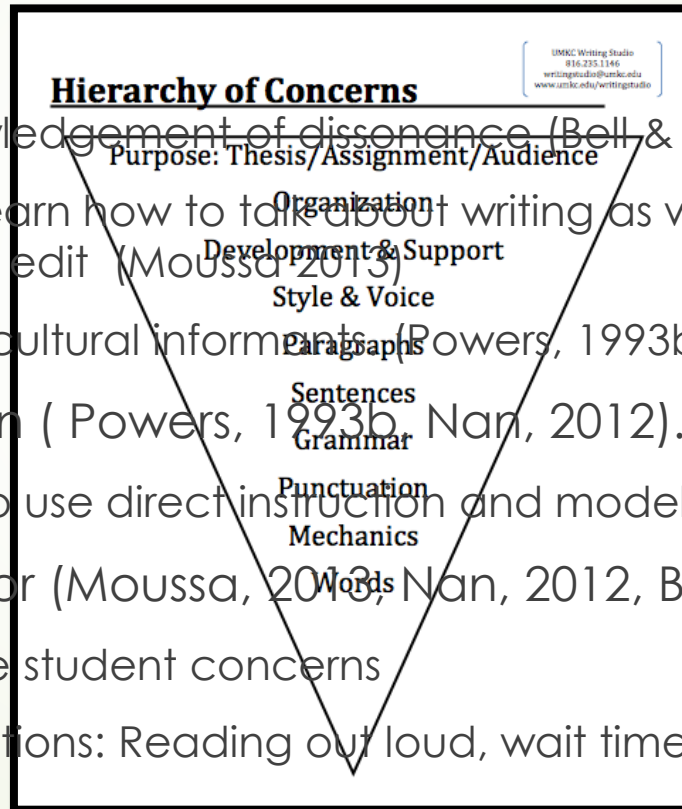
- Offer acknowledgement of dissonance (Bell & Elledge, 2008)
- ELs need to learn how to talk about writing as well as the underlying reasons so they can self-edit (Moussa 2013)
- Tutors act as cultural informants (Powers, 1993b).

## ➤ Direct Instruction ( Powers, 1993b, Nan, 2012).

- Tutors need to use direct instruction and modeling

## ➤ Honor the Author (Moussa, 2013, Nan, 2012, Bell & Elledge, 2008)

- Acknowledge student concerns
- Accommodations: Reading out loud, wait time, writing while speaking, etc.





# Strategies



## ➤ Seek:

- Communication & Listening
- Student accommodation
- Encouragement & positive behavior
- Trends
- Simplicity

## ➤ Avoid:

- Tuning out or giving up
- Approaching all appointments in the same way
- Exclusion
- Editing
- Addressing too many issues at once

# Conclusion



The desert heat filled his lungs with a wave of bitter, acrid dust. His wrists brought themselves to the metal surface of the desk. He clenched his fists one last time before the single joint of his hand decided to start, make the first move, push the first key, type bar to the left and mark the page he got in the car. The chorus of rain on the Other Side poured through the window. He would have to press the

"You could have made a single move, you could have sufficed but you went on to go further and leave me in silence."

What sentence, what word, what letter?

The song kept blaring.



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thank you

tusind tak  
謝謝 dakujem vám  
ありがとう

ngiyabonga  
dziękuję  
merci  
baie dankie  
धन्यवाद molte grazie

suksema  
danke  
gracias  
obrigada  
obrigado  
takk  
you  
gràcies  
tänan

teşekkür ederim  
شكرا  
tack så mycket

dank u  
teşekkür edire  
mahalo