Who am I, who should I be? – Three perspectives on peer tutoring in writing: Student, teaching assistant, teacher

Sarah Lapacz, Inken Mays, Stefanie Pohle
INTRODUCTION
Who we are

Sarah: 'The student' (S)
Inken: 'The teaching assistant' (TA)
Stefanie: 'The teacher' (T)
Peer writing tutoring

• Three different but interrelated perspectives:
  Our primary socio-institutional roles

• Setting
  – In the classroom (outside the institution writing centre)
  – Within one discipline: English Linguistics
  – "Peer writing tutor" ≠ insitutionalised role / job title
Aims

• Describe the different roles and roles within roles
• Share our experiences with (potential) role conflicts
• Present our ideas of possible solutions
Guiding questions

• How can we...
  – act appropriately and professionally in the peer tutoring context?
  – feel comfortable in our roles, i.e. be authentic?
  – make sure that everyone involved is aware of their own and the others' role(s)?
  – reconcile our different role perceptions and role expectations?
Method

• Reflection on and comparison of our experiences in these socio-institutional roles
• Analysis of this particular structure of relationships

⇒ Field report
OUR ROLES IN FOCUS
– The student –
My roles

Student
Friend
Student representative

Teacher

TUTOR
TUTEE

Teaching assistant

Student

Teacher
– The Teaching Assistant –
My roles

Student

TUTOR

TUTEE

Teacher

Teaching assistant

Student representative

Friend

Mentor

Colleague

Student

Friend
– The Teacher –
My roles

Student → TUTOR ← TUTEE → Teaching assistant

Student representative → Friend

Student → Teacher

Colleague → Friend/Wife

Teacher → Student/Learner

Friend → Writing consultant/trainer

Mentor → Colleague
THE COMPLEXITY OF ROLE RELATIONSHIPS
Complexity of role relationships

S

Student representative

Motivator
Learner
'Dictator'
Leader
Commentator
Coach
Expert
Listener
Advisor
Counselor
Critic
Editor
Mediator
Guide

TUTOR

T

TUTEE

Overly confident
Demander
Procrastinator
Unmotivated
Learner
Overly motivated
Help Seeker

Resistant to advice
Patient
Perfectionist

Wiseacre

Friend

Denier

Colleague

Assessor

Student/Learner

Writing consultant/trainer

TA

Student

Friend

Mentor

Colleague

Friend
ROLE CONFLICTS
Three possible role conflicts

- **Conflict 1**: Being in between two conflicting socio-institutional roles
- **Conflict 2**: Different conflicting aspects within one role
- **Conflict 3**: Tutee's expectations of tutor's role incompatible with tutor's view of his or her role

(cf. Grieshammer et al. 2013: 265)
Role conflict 1

Being in between two conflicting socio-institutional roles
Example: Role conflict 1

S
Student representative

TUTOR
Motivator
Leader
Commentator
Coach
Expert
Collaborator
Listener
Advisor
Counselor
Critic
Editor
Mediator
Guide

TUTEE
Overly confident
Demander
Procrastinator
Unmotivated
Learner
Overly motivated
Help
Seeker
Resistant to advice
Patient
Perfectionist
Wiseacre
Friend
Denier

T
Colleague
Assessor
Friend/Wife
Student/Learner
Writing consultant/trainer

Student
Friend

Student/Learner
Mentor
Colleague

TA
Friend

Instructor (teacher) role
Example: E-Mail

• Conflict:
  – Fellow student and
  – Peer 'instructor' in the classroom at the same time

• Indicator:
  – Students unclear about TA's role and unsure about expected behaviour towards him or her
Example: E-Mail

Tutorium Gruppe 4
An: Inken Mays

Lieber Frau Mays,

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

Language&Communication Tutorium
An: Inken Mays

Guten Abend,
ich konnte letzten Donnerstag krankheitsbedingt leider nicht teilnehmen. Ich wollte deshalb auf diesem Weg mal nachfragen, ob andere wichtige Sachen besprochen wurden?
Vielen Dank schonmal für die Antwort.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

(Kein Betreff)
An: Inken Mays

Sehr geehrte Frau Mays,

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

Morphology Tutorium Hausaufgabe
An: Inken Mays

Liebe Inken,
Machen Sie die Hausaufgabe für das Tutorium am nächsten Montag und senden Sie mir die Lösungen per E-Mail. Ich freue mich darauf, dass Sie Erfolg haben.

Liebe Grüße und ein schönes Wochenende!
Example: Role conflict 2

Different conflicting role aspects within one role ‡ Difference in directivity and/or proximity
Example:
Role conflict 2

Student representative

Colleague/Friend

Commentator
Leader

Motivator
Learner
'Dictator'

Coach
Expert

Collaborator
Advisor
Counselor

Critic
Editor
Mediator

TUTOR

TUTEE

Overly confident
Demander
Procrastinator

Overly motivated
Help Seeker

Unmotivated
Learner

Resistant to advice
Patient

Perfectionist
Wiseacre

Friend
Denier

Student/Learner

Writing consultant/trainer

Colleague/Friend/Wife

TA

Mentor

Friend

Student/Colleague

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Example: Feedback (oral and written)

- LaMa blog project last semester: Peer feedback
- Conflict:
  - Motivator, friend, collaborator vs. (Neutral) commentator, critic
  - Difference in directivity and/or proximity
Example: Feedback sheet

- Is the text coherent on a global, paragraph, sentence level? +++
- Are the underlying linguistic concepts, theories, methods translated into a language understandable by 15-18 year olds (B1 level)? Overall yes ++

- Is the post length appropriate? +++
- Grammar (in particular sentence structure): some mistakes, which we discussed and you wrote down, but nothing major ++
- Word choice “utter” might be a problem
- Spelling see grammar
- Punctuation +++
Role conflict 3

Tutee's expectations of tutor's role incompatible with tutor's view of his or her role
Example:
Role conflict 3

S

Motivator
Learner
'Dictator'

Commentator
Leader

Collaborator

TUTOR

Tuttee's expectation

Coach
Expert

Editor

Mediator

Guide

T

Tutor's expectation

TUTEE

Overly confident
Demander

Procrastinator

Unmotivated
Learner

Overly motivated

Help Seeker

Resistant to advice
Patient

Perfectionist

Wiseacre

Friend
Denier

Colleague
Friend/Wife

Assessor
Student/Learner

Writing consultant/trainer

Student representative

Student

Friend
Example: Feedback comments

• Teacher feedback in LaMa blog project

• Conflict:
  – My initial expectation (ideal):
    • Tutoring / coaching
    • Principles of peer tutoring: Act on a level playing field, be non-directive
  – What (I assume) my students expected:
    • Correcting / editing (directive)
    • Assessing and grading (evaluative)
Example: Feedback comments

Kommentar [S11]: Why bullet points for these two paragraphs?

Kommentar [S12]: Can you reformulate this? I assume you mean “Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund”?
(bear in mind that sometimes these people were born in Germany and may have a German passport, and that is was their parents or grandparents that immigrated to Germany)

Kommentar [S7]: Now it sounds as if „first language acquisition“ is acquired easily...

Kommentar [S20]: Introduce the example to your readers; provide some context (who? What? When? why?)

Before nervous before taking the stage to deliver the talk, but afterwards, they stated that they could hardly believe that they did it.

Apart from Beside the talks, some of the MA fellow students were also presenting their posters on those two days. A poster is.... You can see one example by XX below.

His/Her research project was about...

The conference reaped lots of interest and compliments from all attendees, applied linguists and future applied linguists alike. Upon recalling the statement made by Jo Angouri before we headed our way to the dinner, she said that this was a very good and interesting...
THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF PEER TUTORING IN THE CLASSROOM?!
Peer tutoring in the classroom

• The role conflicts...
  – cannot be denied and
  – cannot be avoided
if we want to foster the idea of peer tutoring in the classroom...

...BUT...
...Of course it's possible!

• The role conflicts...
  – can be unravelled and
  – can be resolved!
Peer tutoring in the classroom

• Back to guiding questions: How can we...
  – act appropriately and professionally in the peer tutoring context?
  – feel comfortable in our roles, i.e. be authentic?
  – make sure that everyone involved is aware of their own and the others' role(s)?
  – reconcile our different role perceptions and role expectations?
WAYS OUT OF THE DILEMMA
What makes a good peer writing tutor?

Openness

Empathy

Friendliness

(Self-) reflection

Respect
How? – Inner process and personal action

1. Adopt a role unconsciously
   - Observe oneself and the others
   - Reflect ➔ Become aware

4. Control the adoption of roles consciously
   - Learn about possible methods and courses of actions (theory)
   - Try them out in a safe space (training)
   - Get out in the real world (practice)
How? – Institutional support: A wish list

Opportunities
Facilitation
Mission statement (principles)
Cooperation among peers

Change in learning & teaching culture

Contact person (expert)
Trainings ⇒ Professionalisation
Inter-institutional cooperation
AND WHAT ABOUT YOU?
Our questions

Do these role descriptions and conflicts sound familiar to you?

What do you personally do to prevent or resolve such conflicts?

What should other people and institutions do to prevent such conflicts?
References


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