Report of the Center for English as a Lingua Franca Tutor Service

ELFセンターでの学修支援制度 (Tutor Service) に関する報告

Travis Cote, コーテ・トラヴィス
College of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Tamagawa University, Japan
travis@bus.tamagawa.ac.jp

Blagoja Dimoski, ディモスキ・ブラゴヤ
Center for English as a Lingua Franca, Tamagawa University, Japan
bdimoski@lit.tamagawa.ac.jp

Andrew Leichsenring, レイクセンリング・アンドリュー
Center for English as a Lingua Franca, Tamagawa University, Japan
andrew@lit.tamagawa.ac.jp

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Center for English as a lingua franca (CELF) tutor service was launched in April 2013 in conjunction with the new ELF curriculum. The tutor service was conceived as a valuable resource for Tamagawa ELF students to access English and receive support for their language studies. The tutor service was originally staffed by both full-time and part-time instructors[1] who came from a wide range of cultural backgrounds allowing the students an opportunity to engage with a variety of English speakers, both native and non-native. During the 2016-2017 academic year, there were 22 part-time instructors serving as tutors. Since its inception, the tutor service has been managed by a subcommittee of full-time associate and assistant professors who oversee scheduling, bookings and data collection on how the service is used. Tutor services are available from 9:00 to 17:00 on weekdays. Each tutor is responsible for two, 50-minute tutorial periods each week. There are three 'appointments' during one tutor period, and in the 2016 fall semester, there were 141 appointment slots available per week. Students can reserve appointments by signing up directly, or be referred to the tutor service by their teachers. The tutor service is promoted to students as an opportunity to receive support for: review of exams/quizzes, presentation practice, TOEIC preparation, textbook support, extensive reading support, Blackboard®

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1   As of 2014, the tutor service has been staffed by part-time instructors only.

instruction, grammar study, listening and speaking practice, and e-learning support.

2. CELF TUTOR SERVICE DATA

The CELF employs two methods of primary data collection to maintain and refine the tutor service; 1) a tutor service log and 2) an end-of-semester student questionnaire. The tutor service log, which is an online form used to record basic information about the student and the purpose of each tutor session, is completed by tutors each day. The end-of-term student questionnaire is a larger, more comprehensive and detailed survey about the entire ELF program. The questionnaire contains items related to the tutor service, enabling students to provide feedback, and leave comments and/or suggestions concerning the tutor service.

2.1 Tutor Service Log

Using a simple, 10-item form on Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com), the tutors are responsible for recording basic information about individual students who use the tutor service. The information includes the day and time of the tutor visit, year of the student, department the student belongs to, and the student's concern. Table 1 (below) summarizes the 2016-2017 use of the tutor service by department.

Table 1

Summary of tutor visits by ELF students in the 2016-2017 academic year.

College	Total Number of Students Spring	Total Number of Students Fall	% of ELF Population	Tutor Visits Spring	Tutor Visits Fall
Humanities	377	284	16%	113	146
Liberal Arts	344	195	13%	195	35
Business Adm.	283	281	13%	152	90
Tourism	232	136	8%	84	25
College of Arts	225	210	10%	130	46
Education	371	139	12%	195	131
Engineering	54	262	8%	13	30
Agriculture	344	490	20%	141	110
Total	2230	1997	100%	1023	613

The role of the tutor is to provide extra academic support and language practice. As mentioned above, some of the reasons students might reserve a tutor appointment include review of exams, presentation practice, TOEIC preparation, extensive reading support, listening and speaking practice, or help with process writing. Table 2 (below) provides a summary of the reasons ELF students sought tutor support, given as a percentage of the total number of visits concerning that particular area or concern. The number one reason students visited the tutors, during both the spring and fall semesters, was to engage in listening and speaking practice (57.3% and 53.4%, respectively). The second most popular reason, again during both semesters, was process writing support (22% and 27.7%, respectively).

Table 2
Reasons for tutor assistance and percentage of visits concerning those reasons.

Reason for Tutor Visit	Spring 2016-2017	Fall 2016-2017
Presentation Practice	1.9%	2.5%
Writing/Process Writing	22%	27.7%
TOEIC Study	6.3%	0.78%
Listening & Speaking Practice	57.3%	53.4%
Extensive Reading Support	1.3%	0.63%
Textbook Support	0.47%	0.47%
Grammar Review	0.57%	0.63%
Review of Exams/Quizzes	0.47%	0.16%
Pronunciation Practice	1.42%	0.47%
Other	8.05%	13.15%

2.2 End-of-Semester Student Questionnaires: 2016-2017
The Student Questionnaire for the 2016-2017 academic year provided the tutor coordinators with information about frequency of use, to what extent the students perceived the service to be beneficial to their learning, and level of satisfaction with the tutor schedule. Combining spring and fall semester questionnaire data, a total of 3,420 responses were collected and Table 3 (below) summarizes the frequency of use based on that yearly total. Approximately one-third (33.98%) of the students who completed the CELF Student Questionnaire used the tutor service one or more times during the year. However, of great concern to the tutor service coordinators, and for reasons that require further investigation, two-thirds (66.02%) of the above mentioned students did not use the tutor service during that academic year.

Table 3

How many times did you use the tutor service during the academic year?

	Spring (n=1,816)	Fall (n=1,604)	Yearly Total (n=3,420)	Yearly Average (%)
7 times or more	31 (1.71%)	39 (2.43%)	70	2.07%
4-6	112 (6.17%)	75 (4.67%)	187	5.42%
1-3	447 (24.61%)	455 (28.37%)	902	26.49%
0	1,226 (67.51%)	1,035 (64.53%)	2,261	66.02%

In response to a different item on the questionnaire, whether students felt the tutor service was useful for learning, over 80% (spring and fall semesters combined) either agreed or strongly agreed (see Table 4) with that statement, while approximately fifteen percent (14.88%) were neutral. A little over three percent (3.37%) of students did not believe the tutor service was useful for learning.

Table 4

The tutor service was useful for my learning.

	Spring (n=590)	Fall (n=569)	Yearly Total (n=1,159)	Yearly Average (%)
Strongly agree	187 (31.69%)	163 (28.65%)	350	30.17%
Agree	306 (51.86%)	292 (51.32%)	598	51.59%
Neutral	77 (13.05%)	95 (16.7%)	172	14.88%
Disagree	17 (2.88%)	17 (2.99%)	34	2.94%
Strongly disagree	3 (0.51%)	2 (0.35%)	5	0.43%

As for the tutor schedule, Table 5 (below) shows that more than sixty percent (61.78%) of the students who used the tutor service in the 2016-2017 academic year believed the schedule was convenient. For almost a quarter of the students (24.31%), the tutor schedule was neither convenient nor inconvenient and unfortunately, almost fourteen percent (13.94%) of the students indicated that the schedule was inconvenient for them.

Table 5

The tutor service schedule was convenient for me.

	Spring (n=590)	Fall (n=569)	Yearly Total (n=1,159)	Yearly Average (%)
Strongly agree	107 (18.14%)	133 (23.37%)	240	20.78%
Agree	235 (39.83%)	240 (42.18%)	475	41%
Neutral	150 (25.42%)	132 (23.2%)	282	24.31%
Disagree	78 (13.22%)	54 (9.49%)	132	11.36%
Strongly disagree	20 (3.39%)	10 (1.76%)	30	2.58%

3. CONCLUSION

The CELF Tutor Service at Tamagawa University has been serving the various academic and language-learning needs of Tamagawa ELF students since 2013. Staffed by a diverse mix of language instructors who claim a variety of different cultural backgrounds, Tamagawa ELF students have a unique opportunity to engage and interact with English language users, both native and non-native, in a shared environment. As noted in Table 1, there is a broad cross-section of users of the tutor service from the various colleges and departments which is a positive development as the ELF program extends campus-wide. It is important to recognize that the number of tutor service users who are attending ELF classes can be grown substantially and this should be a future objective for the Center to consider.

Looking ahead, the CELF and the Tutor Service coordinators need to ensure that the ELF students continue accessing the service by promoting it as a valuable learner resource outside of the classroom and reconsider the tutor service schedule and operating times. As was observed during the 2016-2017 academic year, many students are using the tutor service to obtain assistance and guidance with process writing (see Table 2). To that end, the tutor coordinators are exploring the creation of a Writing Center within the Tutor Service to assist students with the process of essay and other forms of academic or informal writing, which it is hoped will also make the tutor schedule more accessible to students.