Helen Tasho

I felt like the orientation and the readings did a good job preparing me for tutoring by addressing issues that commonly arise. I received a lot of information from both that I've applied directly to my sessions. During the orientation and in the reading, I learned that people that come to the Literacy Center usually come for a deeper purpose than just learning English; English is the tool that they need to achieve a larger goal, so it's important to tailor tutoring to that specific goal. This was referenced in chapter one of Colvin's *I speak English;* tutoring for specific fields that the learners want to work in has helped me help the tutors more. For example, I have a learner that wants to learn more about U.S. history and take the U.S. Citizenship Test, so he brought a book about the history of the U.S. We go over each unit in this book and stop after he reads each paragraph to discuss what happened, as well as to go over new vocabulary. This will help him learn more, and slowly chips away at his goal of taking the Citizenship Test.

Another topic that was introduced at the orientation, as well as chapter four of Colvin's book, is the fact that motivation and confidence are important when learning a new language. Something that stuck with me during the orientation was that tutors shouldn't correct the pronunciation of every word as the learner is reading. People have a tendency to correct immediately, but this can be very stressful for the learner and can be a big blow to their confidence and motivation. What I tend to do is have the learner read one paragraph, and I circle words that weren't pronounced correctly on my copy of the reading. After the paragraph is read, we summarize what happened and what the learner got out of the reading, and then we go over the mispronounced words. I usually have them reread the sentence where the mispronunciation is found, and then I correct their pronunciation and have them practice it a few times. Thereafter, I define the word for them and ensure that they comprehend its meaning. One instance that I did

this was when I was reading The Hunchback of Notre Dame with a learner, and they didn't

pronounce half-heartedly correctly; we went back and reread the sentence, and I asked him what

he thought it meant, and then defined it for him and gave some examples. Additionally, in some

instances where it's just not clicking, we usually refer to a dictionary in their native tongue and

they usually understand the meaning from then on. I think technology here is useful, but caution

should be taken because technology could easily take over and hinder the learner's progress in

learning English. The use of technology is something that Colvin touches on in her book, as well.

Another topic that Colvin discusses in chapter five of her book (as well as in our

orientation) is that tutoring is all about the learner and what they need to focus on, and how it's

the tutors responsibility to uncover where progress needs to be made. Although this can connect

with the aforementioned tailoring of the lesson to the student's goals, I think this is more broad.

For instance, I have a learner who expressed that he wants to get better at conversations because

his writing was fine. Although he didn't want to work on writing because he thought he needed

more help in conversation, I found the opposite to be true. After looking at his sign up sheet and

seeing his grammar and comprehension of the questions to be incorrect, I knew that writing

should be a focus. I remembered during orientation when we were told that sometimes learners

want to focus on one skill because they're good at that and don't want to work on something

they're bad at because of embarrassment. What I usually do in this situation is I have the learner

warm up with conversation, but then give him writing prompts. After responding to the prompt,

we both go over the writing and work together to correct any grammar, spelling, or sentence

structure mistakes that he may have made. I've found that this method helps the learner catch his

own mistakes, and is a friendlier way to approach and improve a skill that he's struggling in.

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I think that the issues that have emerged during my tutoring sessions aren't major, especially since I know how to deal with them because of the orientation and the readings. I believe that the most important thing is to always be on the lookout for little clues on what can be improved with each learner, and to make sure that they are making progress in their learning. I also think that it's important to be open to their suggestions and feedback on what they feel about a certain approach you're taking to a skill. For example, if you're making them read an entire chapter, and then going over comprehension, and the learner says that they feel like they're missing certain parts of the reading and the story, maybe take minute to assess your approach. Just slow the pace and work through little parts of each chapter. The goal of this whole process is to have the learner improve where they need improvement. Being open to feedback and being flexible in your teaching is critical here.