

“THIS FEELING DID NOT PASS”: THE EMOTIONAL LABOR OF MULTILINGUAL UNDERGRADUATE PEER TUTORS

Nurzhan Asanov | Nazarbayev University

Writing center tutors constantly engage in emotional labor by listening to students' concerns and providing reassurance and motivation while managing their own emotions. Nevertheless, this aspect of tutors' work has been long overlooked and only recently began receiving more attention in writing center scholarship. This qualitative project, the first study on this topic conducted outside the Anglophone world, aims to add to this growing body of research by examining the emotional labor of multilingual writing fellows—course-embedded peer tutors—and undergraduate writing center tutors at an English-Medium Instruction institution in a Central Asian country. The results of 14 semi-structured interviews reveal how external stressors constitute tutors' emotional labor before consultations even begin, how consulting passive or resistant students induces feelings of guilt and demotivation during sessions, and how these negative feelings can linger, affecting tutors even after the consultations are over. The results suggest that recognizing and integrating the concept of emotional labor into tutor training programs will allow tutors to provide care for their tutees without exhausting their own emotional resources.

INTRODUCTION

As an undergraduate writing center tutor, my role involves supporting my peers in developing their writing skills. I not only give direct instructions but also employ cognitive and motivational scaffolding, in accordance with our writing center's philosophy. While cognitive scaffolding includes asking tutees questions, motivational scaffolding requires a rather emotional engagement from the tutor, since through it, as Jo Mackiewicz and Isabelle Thompson urge, “tutors focus their full and caring attention on students” (67). It involves

building rapport with the tutee by showing concern, praising, and empathizing (66). Thus, tutors are expected to do not only cognitive work but also emotional work in taking care of the tutee. When I first learned about this during my training, I could not help but wonder: Isn't it exhausting?

To answer this question, I looked into the writing center literature, which, to my surprise, had very few sources on the concept of emotional labor. From these sources, it became very clear that emotional labor, although central to tutors' work, is rarely discussed explicitly and

is often taken for granted. It is only recently, perhaps as a result of feminist pedagogies and the growing concern for mental well-being and health in general, that the emotional dimension of the writing center work has started getting acknowledged.

With this qualitative study, I aim to contribute to the growing body of empirical research on emotional labor in the writing center by exploring the emotional labor performed by multilingual undergraduate peer-tutors-in-training (writing fellows) and undergraduate tutors in one writing center in an Expanding-Circle country¹ in Central Asia. As such, this is the first empirical study on this topic done in a country outside North America where English is used for educational purposes across higher and lower institutions. The research site is an English-medium university where all subjects are taught in English, except for Kazakh language courses, and most students are locals, using Kazakh and Russian as primary languages. With this study, I aim to fill several gaps in this emerging literature. First, as the literature review section below will show, all existing empirical studies on this issue to date have been conducted in a North American context. There is no empirical evidence about the emotional labor of multilingual tutors outside of English-speaking countries. And given that the engagement in and consequences of emotional labor (Allen et al. 31), as well as the expression and perception

1. The Expanding-Circle includes countries where English is spoken and learned, despite not having a colonial history or official status as the primary language.

of emotions in general (Engelmann and Pogoyan 4), vary across cultures, it is important to broaden our understanding beyond North American writing centers. Second, the existing literature does not differentiate between undergraduate, graduate, or faculty tutors in the writing center. Moreover, one category in particular that is not represented in the existing literature is that of tutors-in-training, or writing fellows, who are embedded as peer tutors in subject courses where they consult students on their writing assignments. Finally, there is no writing center study that explicitly explores code-switching in the context of multilingual tutors' emotional labor. My study aims to add to our knowledge in these three areas and contribute to the visibility of emotional labor in the global writing center.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotions have always been central to writing center work, with a particular focus on the long-standing debate: how to help students who openly express their emotions? Believing that emotions can be disruptive to writing center work, Corinne Agostinelli and colleagues suggest that tutors not act like therapists and keep a firm focus on the writing (35). Leigh Ryan and Lisa Zimmerelli suggest tutors be patient with emotional students but still try to focus on the writing (101). Dana Driscoll and Jennifer Wells, and Alison Perry, on the other hand, insist that emotions are as important as writing; thus, tutors should address the students' emotional needs. Stephanie Yoon and Erin Stutelberg also encourage tutors to engage with the students' emotions because it builds

trust between them (24). Yet Lauren Bisson believes that tutors should ask the students directly whether they need emotional support (15). As such, there was always a long conversation about how to support tutees during emotionally charged sessions; however, until recently, nobody discussed the cost of this support, i.e., the tutors' emotional labor.

In other fields, particularly in education and pedagogy, the concept of emotional labor has long been established. It commonly refers to the labor performed by teachers to manage or even repress their negative emotions and express only emotions appropriate for the situation (Isenbarger and Zembylas 123). In writing center studies, tutors' and directors' emotional labor similarly includes regulating their emotions as well as putting effort into relationship building (Caswell et al. 26), though such an explicit definition has only recently emerged. However, this does not mean that emotional labor did not exist; rather, it was mentioned implicitly. For example, after analyzing five tutor training textbooks published between 2006 and 2015, Bethany Mannon concluded that the tutors' emotional labor was disguised under terms like "interpersonal skills" or "establishing an atmosphere of trust" (155). Although not mentioned in these textbooks, the negative emotions tutors may experience were also touched upon in writing center scholarship. Susan Blau and colleagues briefly discuss how tutors feel guilty for being directive while consulting non-native English-speaking students (23), while Jennifer Nicklay broadens this claim by stating that tutors feel guilty about being directive in general (21). However,

in both cases, the discussions on how to help non-native English-speaking students or the directive vs. non-directive tutoring debate overshadowed the emotional aspect of tutoring, and the emotional labor performed by tutors was yet to be fully acknowledged.

Perhaps the first mention of emotional labor in the writing center was in the context of the work of writing center directors. In 2016, Nicole Caswell and colleagues, doing a case study of nine new writing center directors, classified their labor into three categories, one of which was emotional labor (27). This aspect of the writing center directors' job included "nurturing, encouraging and building relationships, and resolving conflicts" as well as emotional management, i.e., "deliberately displaying particular emotions for the sake of people around them" (26). Thus began the "emotional turn" in writing center studies (McKinney et al. 3).

While tutors' emotional labor was yet to be fully investigated, practitioner-focused studies began exploring mindfulness and wellness techniques as coping mechanisms for tutoring-related stress. In 2017, Elizabeth Mack and Katie Hupp introduced the idea of mindfulness into writing center studies, explaining that mindfulness techniques can help tutors become calm, focused, and patient, thereby reducing their stress and anxiety (13). Following this, Nicole Emmelhainz adopted meditation in the tutor training program at Christopher Newport University and reported that, as a result, tutors were able to manage overwhelming stress from many responsibilities, calming them down (8). Kelly Concannon and colleagues integrated mindfulness and self-care

into their program at Nova Southeastern University with similar positive outcomes for faculty mentors (p. 13). While mindfulness seemed to be in harmony with the writing center ethos, Genie Giaimo more recently warned that it helps to extend the existing resources to last longer without solving the root of the problem—a lack of fair wages and basic benefits for writing center staff (275). As we can see, writing center practitioners acknowledged the emotional labor tutors perform and, even without robust empirical data on it, discussed ways to cope with the stress it might cause. Thankfully, the empirical evidence was soon to be published.

One of the earliest empirical studies on tutors' emotional labor was published by Hohjin Im and colleagues in 2020. By qualitatively surveying writing center tutors, Im and colleagues found three primary sources of emotionally laborious sessions: regularly occurring discrepancies between tutor and student expectations, conflicting tutor-writer communication, and the act of suppressing emotions (211). The tutors, the study also found, cope with stressful consultations using various methods: talking to friends, meditating, or avoiding any thought about such sessions (216). As the tutors did not specify the effectiveness of their coping strategy, the authors could only speculate on their success based on the inherent merits of each strategy (220).

Countering Im and colleagues' qualitative findings, which clearly underlined the negative aspect of emotional labor, other recent empirical studies argue that emotional labor might not be the source of tutors' stress. Erik

Simmons and colleagues, comparing writing center tutors' cortisol levels, the stress hormone, before and after tutoring sessions, found that it dropped after the consultation (20). By improving on Simmons and colleagues' methodology, Matthew Nelson and colleagues arrived at a different, more nuanced conclusion. They found that tutors who were more stressed before the consultation remained more stressed after the consultation, while those who were less stressed before were less stressed after (30). This means that the main stressor is not necessarily the emotional labor tutors perform during consultations but rather outside factors preceding them. Unfortunately, the authors do not speculate on the reasons behind this finding.

Following the momentum generated by the growing practitioner and scholarly interest in emotional labor, in 2022, Janine Morris and Kelly Concannon published their edited volume on *Emotions and Affect in Writing Centers*. Collecting different narratives from writing center administrators, tutors, and scholars, the book not only discusses how to study, understand, and reflect on emotions but also emphasizes the role of emotions in supporting, problematizing, and expanding existing writing center scholarship (xi). In the book, an empirical study by Luke Iantorno deepens our understanding of tutors' emotional labor by distinguishing between two modes of emotional regulation: surface acting and deep acting. While surface acting includes suppressing negative emotions to express positive emotions, deep acting is characterized by consciously striving to actually feel these fake positive

emotions (201). Therefore, *Emotions and Affect in Writing Centers* marks a rather momentous occasion for the visibility of emotions and emotional labor in the writing center.

Although the existing empirical studies began to provide rich data on tutors' emotional labor, they are all limited to the North American context. They also fail to clearly distinguish between undergraduate, graduate, and faculty tutors. Furthermore, these works, as well as writing center literature in general, do not discuss the emotional labor of course-embedded peer tutors or tutors outside the North American context. To fill this gap, this study aims to investigate the emotional labor of course-embedded peer tutors in an expanding circle country in Central Asia.

METHODOLOGY

My study was conducted at an autonomous research-intensive Central Asian university, which accommodates mainly domestic students (only about 3 percent of the student population are international students). Almost all domestic students are multilingual, speaking Kazakh, Russian, and English, while the instruction at this university is in English.

The university has an undergraduate writing fellows program consisting of a sequence of three credit-bearing courses dedicated to training undergraduate writing center tutors. Over the course of three semesters, talented undergraduate writers learn about contemporary writing center theory and pedagogy. In the second and third courses, writing fellows are embedded in an undergraduate writing-intensive

subject course at the university, where they hold individual consultations twice per semester with the students taking this course. At the same time, they design and conduct an original research project (usually empirical) on an issue of interest in writing center scholarship. Writing fellows who complete the whole sequence are then eligible for an internship in the writing center as undergraduate tutors.

At the time of this study, there were nine writing fellows (tutors in training) and six undergraduate tutors interning in the writing center, all of whom were invited to participate in the research. Only one writing fellow declined the invitation. Thus, upon receiving approval from the ethical review board, I conducted 14 semi-structured qualitative interviews between weeks 12 and 16 of the academic semester, asking participants to reflect on their emotional labor in the context of their tutoring work. The interviews were chosen to gain a deeper understanding of tutors' awareness of the emotional aspect of their work, how they talk about it, and how they cope with it in their lives and practice. The interviews were transcribed, anonymized, coded manually (using two rounds of inductive coding), and thematically analyzed. The interview guide (see Appendix) was designed in English because it was assumed all tutors were comfortable speaking the language. But, there were instances when my interviewees switched to Kazakh or Russian at various points during our conversations, which is quite common among multilingual students at this institution. During the transcription, these instances were translated into English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the following sections, the major results are presented and discussed in the following sequence: emotional labor before, during, and after consultations. Although the questions in the interview guide did not aim to capture this time differentiation, tutors themselves noted it in their responses; thus, this sequence emerged from the coding process. Following this chronological order, I discuss how work and studies constitute the tutors' emotional labor, how passive and resistant students evoke feelings of guilt and demotivation, and how these feelings might have a lingering effect on tutors past the consultations. Lastly, the coping strategies that tutors employ to deal with the emotional labor are presented. This way, I hope to emphasize that emotional labor not only relates to what happens during the consultations but also extends beyond them.

BEFORE CONSULTATIONS

Work and Studies

One notable result of this study is that emotionally taxing consultations can be due to factors preceding the consultations themselves. Three tutors mentioned how outside pressures, such as work and study, increased their emotional labor during the consultation. Two of them were overwhelmed with an upcoming midterm exam or sad about a failed quiz, which they spent additional effort trying to conceal during the consultations. While a quiz or a midterm are localized factors that affect consultations, a part-time job can bear a rather constant burden, as in the case of the third

respondent: "I tried to juggle with consultations, studies, and work... I could not really listen to the tutee because I was so absorbed with all of my thoughts. Whenever this happened, I felt not really good about myself as a writing tutor." So, the tutors' preoccupation with such external pressures not only increased their emotional labor as they struggled to fake involvement but also undermined their ability to attend to the tutee's needs, which led to further feelings of guilt.

Although such cases and the feelings they evoke are rarely discussed in the literature, many tutors are probably familiar with the challenge of managing their own emotions despite having a bad day. Thus, it is unsurprising that the respondents felt additional emotional labor, given that they are students with heavy workloads, including studies, part-time jobs, graduate applications, and consultations. Moreover, the consultations of the writing fellows participating in this study happened during midterm weeks, contributing to additional pressure on them and their tutees.

In the literature, this type of emotional labor is commonly referred to as emotional regulation or emotional management (Im et al. 213; McKinney et al. 5). Tutors engage in this type of emotional labor to hide their frustration and remain professional and calm by either displaying a fake emotion (surface acting) or striving to feel this fake emotion (deep acting) (Im et al. 214; Iantorno 201). They do so in response to issues arising during the consultation; the studies just cited focus on tutors' emotional management in the context of particularly emotionally laborious sessions. But

tutors also do so in response to outside factors that may contribute to a taxing consultation. This is something that Nelson and colleagues acknowledged in their study, noting that tutors who are more stressed before the consultation feel more stressed after the session ends while simultaneously overlooking the students' emotional state (31). My study provides further—qualitative—support for their observations and shows that tutors, being more stressed before the consultation due to their work and studies, engage in both deep and surface acting to appear professional. This preoccupation with striving to feel positive and professional might distract and prevent them from actively listening and ultimately assisting student writers. As a result, the tutors perceive this distraction with their own problems as a failure to help the students, feel guilty for that, and ultimately cause more stress for themselves.

Neglecting Outside Factors

An extrapolation from the previous finding leads to a potentially more intriguing result: most tutors did not mention external factors affecting their work during consultations. 11 out of 14 respondents did not reference any outside factors contributing to their emotional labor, despite all being undergraduate students with studies, some applying to graduate programs, and others working part-time. Thus, this raises an important question: why did such external stressors not register for them as factors leading to an increase in their emotional labor during consultations?

One explanation is that tutors might perceive managing their work and studies as routine tasks that should not affect their tutoring.

In fact, they may see it as an expectation or responsibility of their role as peer tutors. Furthermore, peer tutors are not only expected to manage their workload but implicitly manage associated emotions, too. In their handbook on peer tutoring, Ryan and Zimmerelli actually advise tutors to “greet each writer cheerfully and indicate that you are ready to begin work, even if you are tired or under stress from school or job responsibilities” (1). This shows that writing center scholarship has a history of prioritizing the student writers' needs over the tutors' emotionally available resources. More importantly, emotional labor is often overlooked in the literature altogether. Iantorno explains that this oversight might be because university administrators do not regard writing center staff labor as important as faculty labor (200). Mannon suggests that it is because intellectual work is more celebrated than emotional work in writing centers (144). Since tutors' emotional labor has traditionally been taken for granted in writing center scholarship, which focuses more on meeting the needs of the tutees (including their emotional needs), it is perhaps not a surprise that most of my respondents, having internalized the values and assumptions of their field, failed to comment on outside stressors contributing to emotionally laborious consultations.

DURING CONSULTATIONS

In addition to factors outside the consultations, what happens during the consultations, unsurprisingly, also contributes to the tutor's emotional labor. Most respondents (n=12) reported feeling more stressed consulting resistant,

passive, or disrespectful students, which mainly translated into guilt and lack of motivation.

Guilt

While, as we saw in the previous subsection, tutors' guilt can be induced by external stressors, it can more often perhaps arise from interactions during consultations. Five tutors mentioned that some consultations were emotionally taxing for them because of the mismatch between the tutees' expectations and their own tutoring training and personal preference for non-directive approaches. In the words of one of the respondents: "Even if I tried to be non-directive or talk about general writing skills, [some students] were like, 'Yeah, but did professor say anything to you about this? How should I write this?' ... And it didn't meet my expectations, so I did feel a little bit guilty because I felt like an editor or a grade-booster rather than a peer tutor." Even though the writing fellows are continually reminded during training that perfect consultations do not happen and that the key is to reflect on what went wrong and well in the consultations to improve or adjust their tutoring style, this particular writing fellow still felt guilty giving tutees direct suggestions, preferring a non-directive tutoring style.

Tutors feeling guilty over being directive is not a new subject of discussion in writing center scholarship. Blau and colleagues recognize how frustrating and guilt-inducing it is to consult non-native-English-speaking students because tutors reluctantly become directive with them (23), while Nicklay claims that tutors feel guilty being directive in general if and when non-directiveness is taken as writing center

dogma (24). These remarks go to the heart of the long-standing debate about directive and non-directive tutoring approaches in writing center studies. Writing fellows like my respondents learn about this debate during their training and often embrace nondirectiveness as key to their tutoring philosophy. Having to be more directive—explaining, suggesting, and correcting—can make them feel guilty about going against their training or failing to uphold their commitments.

Another source of guilt during consultations could be the mismatch between the tutor's expectation that they would have to go to some lengths to engage their tutees and the reality that some tutees cannot stop talking, which may make the interaction one-sided again. One tutor describes feeling guilty about asking a student to talk less: "The student was talking and talking. And at some point, I was in a trance. I couldn't get the information because it was too much information... I told the student to talk less. I felt the guilt and responsibility for that. We should not behave in that way with the student." In this case, the tutor had a hard time because of the student's over-talking; however, the emotional labor is not because of that, but rather due to the tutor requesting the student talk less and feeling guilty for it.

Unlike the guilt over being overly directive, the guilt over requesting a student to talk less is a rather unusual case and is barely discussed in the literature. It is more typical to consult resistant or passive students; thus, the scholarship usually focuses on equipping tutors with techniques to boost student engagement. Often,

student talk is interpreted as a sign of engagement; however, in this case, it was instead a hurdle for a productive consultation, as noted by my respondent. Katelyn Parsons shares how she feels guilty declining some of her students' requests to stay overtime, for example (27). There is a similarity between Parsons' and my respondent's cases in that they both perceive that their responses might potentially damage the relationship with the tutees. In my respondent's case, perhaps, this is because tutors are always encouraged to ask Socratic questions and let tutees talk. The tutor might have felt guilty going against what is commonly perceived as a good practice. The emotional aspect of this, therefore, goes beyond the management of the tutors' feelings of guilt. It is a subtle relational labor that tutors perform during consultations. Relational labor, the second type of emotional labor, is often explained as the work that tutors do to build a rapport with the tutee by showing empathy or compassion (McKinney et al. 5). Admittedly, the respondent in this case showed neither empathy nor compassion, and the feeling of guilt stemmed from recognizing that her request could potentially ruin the existing rapport with the tutee. However, the tutor's emotional labor increased because of her perceived need to intervene, redirect, and ask the tutee to focus their answers at the risk of potentially ruining their relationship. What this case shows is that relational labor involves not only building a relationship but also maintaining or at least not ruining it, which becomes very palpable when boundaries need to be (re)negotiated.

Demotivation

In addition to inducing guilt, consulting passive or resistant students made respondents

(n=5) feel demotivated. A writing fellow shared her experience consulting a passive student: "I had a student who throughout the whole session just agreed with everything... I did not feel satisfied. She might as well just not show up to the consultation because that was basically just me going through my comments... When someone agrees with everything you say, sometimes you think, 'Do they even care?'" One possible explanation for this passive behavior is the tutee's lack of confidence in their own writing skills, which may have led them to defer entirely to the writing fellow's expertise. However, it is important to note that writing fellows' consultations at this university are sometimes mandatory in the courses in which they are embedded, meaning that students who miss them lose points for the assignment. Thus, students can feel 'forced' to attend the consultations and, therefore, can behave more passively than if the consultations were completely voluntary (as in the Writing Center). This contextual explanation behind the student's behavior is further confirmed by the undergraduate writing center tutors I interviewed, all of whom (N=6), reflecting on their experience as writing fellows, noted that they encountered more passive students during their consultations as writing fellows and that they were demotivated less frequently during consultations in the writing center. As one undergraduate writing center tutor explained:

When I was a writing fellow, students were very often resistant. As if they were forced to come to the consultation... But when you're a [undergraduate] writing center tutor, everyone who comes to you, they come on their own will,

because it is them who sign up. It is not the professor who said, “You have to visit a writing fellow because it will be part of your grade.” It is people who are genuinely interested in enhancing their work. And they’re very engaged, and because of this, consultation is different in this emotional aspect.

Feelings of demotivation return us to the emotional management discussed in the earlier section. My respondents had to manage the lack of motivation caused by the students’ passive behaviors, and they probably employed surface acting to do so (Iantorno 201). That is, despite feeling demotivated, the tutors had to manage their emotions and fake attentiveness to continue and finish the consultation. In fact, according to Im and colleagues, disappointment is the most frequently felt emotion during emotionally laborious sessions (215). Another explanation of this finding lies in the context of the consultations, as mentioned by this tutor. Since writing fellows are embedded as peer tutors in particular courses where consultations may be mandatory, student writers may show more resistance, resulting in more emotionally taxing consultations. There might also be a developmental effect that adds to the tutors’ emotional labor. That is, writing fellows are still in their training as tutors, and some conducted their first consultations right before I interviewed them, which can add to the emotional labor. Meanwhile, undergraduate writing center tutors, being more experienced, might be more adept at managing both their own emotions and the relational labor that comes with their role. They may be more accepting of the fact that some students are bound to be resis-

tant or passive and, thus, feel less demotivated by such behaviors.

Code-Switching

Another piece of important context is that all the tutors in this study, as well as their tutees, are multilingual writers studying in an English medium university; thus, they sometimes code-switch to their native language during consultations. Six tutors reported that code-switching was used as a resource to decrease their relational labor and build a positive atmosphere. One of the tutors observed, “When I’m switching to Russian, our conversations are very informal, very friendly... And the vibe is really good during these kinds of consultations.” In this case, switching to Russian – the second language most students are proficient in at this institution, after Kazakh – allows the tutor to build rapport with their tutees more easily. Nevertheless, two other tutors reported that code-switching increased their cognitive work because it was difficult for them to speak Russian or Kazakh while the writing was in English. The rest of the tutors (n=6) reported that code-switching did not affect consultations in any way, or they simply did not practice code-switching at all.

In the literature, code-switching is used as a tool to establish common ground. Lisa Bell notes that multilingual tutors and students seek a connection through a common language, which facilitates relationship-building (132). Ben Rafoth mentions that multilingual tutors and tutees have another common ground to share: the experience of learning a language (20). From the perspective of inclusivity, Sarah Blazer also criticizes the simplistic idea that students cannot use their native

language in the writing center (22). My respondents similarly, used code-switching for small talk or to help out students who struggled to express themselves in English. Thus, tutors were able to effectively establish a common ground and further build a relationship by speaking a common language. Interestingly, not all of my respondents practiced code-switching. This might be because they serve as peer tutors in an English-Medium Instruction institution, which they may interpret to mean that they have an obligation to stick with English in professional settings such as a writing consultation. The fact that the assignments they consult on are also in English may reinforce this belief.

AFTER CONSULTATIONS

Immediate Effect of Demotivation

Perhaps the most important finding from my study is that the emotional labor performed during consultations can have both immediate and lingering effects on tutors. Two respondents mentioned that feelings of demotivation further affected their work as tutors. One writing fellow, having two back-to-back consultations, felt that demotivation from the first consultation might have “affected [her] next consultation because [she] was feeling down.” Another writing fellow commented that emotional labor performed while consulting a resistant student made her question her academic career as a writing center tutor: “After the consultation, I didn’t show any willingness to conduct other consultations. This negative experience even made me question the mean-

ing of writing consultations.” This shows that the emotional labor extends beyond the consultations, further affecting the writing fellow’s work.

This finding refers back to the emotional management tutors perform as a result of demotivation. While the previous section emphasized how tutors control their emotions during consultations, this section highlights the effect of performing such emotional work. The first respondent’s case shows us that emotional labor might stack up, especially with back-to-back consultations. Since the respondent had to manage her emotions from the first consultation during her second consultation, the tutor’s emotional labor increased even more. The second respondent’s case, meanwhile, is an illustration of how an extremely emotionally taxing session might affect tutors’ attitudes toward their work. Granted, this emotional labor might be due to the writing fellow’s inexperience or the increased resistance of the course-enrolled students, as discussed in the previous subsection. Nevertheless, the effects of emotional labor are rather substantial.

Lasting Effect of Consultations

So far, I have only discussed how the emotional labor extends beyond the consultations in terms of tutors’ careers; however, it might also extend to tutors’ everyday lives. One undergraduate writing center tutor shares how a consultation took an emotional toll on her to the extent that she still remembers it, even though the consultation happened a long time ago:

The student came and was crying in my consultation. The student had this

psychological problem, and she just cried, telling about her problems. And I felt a little bit bad. I tried to help, tried to say some words, but in the end, I was worrying about her health, her studies... I did not consider it as a kind of suicidal something... I am still worried about this student, actually. This feeling did not pass. I still didn't forget this mistake. And these negative things will still be in your memories, will still be in your mind, and you sometimes blame yourself non-stop.

In the literature, there are many mentions of consulting emotionally distressed students. Scholars give various suggestions: focusing on the writing (Agostinelli et al. 36), directly asking the student whether they want emotional support (Bisson 15), or taking an affective approach. Yoon and Stutelberg suggest honoring and responding to affective opportunities by acknowledging and engaging with the student's emotions even if those emotions are not relevant to the task at hand or the consultation (24), while Steven Corbett and Katherine Villarreal advocate for feminist listening: listening for the student's state of emotion and mind to further build a relationship with the student and co-create knowledge (221). When it comes to responding to crying students, Lauren Brentnell and colleagues urge tutors to see it as an opportunity to build an empathetic relationship and validate their experience as a part of the writing process (178). Intuitively, my respondent was indeed following the affective approach during her consultation. She listened to the tutee, acknowledged their

emotions, and tried to be empathetic. However, this practice came at a cost, its effects lingering long after the consultation ended. Thus, while the writing center literature is quick to give suggestions on how to best support and acknowledge students' emotions, it often fails to discuss the emotional cost of this support. Emotionally charged sessions might leave a deep imprint on tutors, who, therefore, need to be fully equipped to respond to and cope with such cases of heightened emotions.

Coping Strategies

To deal with the immediate or lingering effects of emotionally laborious sessions, most of my respondents employ some coping strategy. Half of the tutors (n=7) reflect on the reasons why the consultation was emotionally laborious for them. For instance, one tutor reflected on why students were passive in the consultation to motivate and console herself: "Well, I had to think about this like, 'Don't worry, it's okay. It's just they're forced to. Do not consider this to be too personal.'" Four other tutors talked about their bad consultations with professors, friends, or family. One of them simply said, "I talked to the professor [teaching the writing fellows course] about that experience, and I think I felt much better after that." And given that the writing fellows program at this university has a robust reflective practice embedded in it, with multiple assignments requiring writing fellows to reflect on their consultations using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle,² it is perhaps un-

2. Gibbs' Reflective Cycle is a structured framework for reflecting on experiences. It consists of six stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan.

surprising that most tutors engage in such reflective practices to manage the stress caused by consultations. While most tutors seemed well-equipped to deal with the emotionally laborious consultations, three of my respondents tried to simply distract themselves from thinking any more about such sessions. In the words of one of the tutors: “In those kinds of situations, my approach is just to forget. Try not to think about it too much because a lot of energy has been already spent on being in that situation, working with that person. And you don’t wanna spend even more energy thinking about it or overthinking about it.” This comment shows that some consultations might be so taxing that tutors would rather avoid thinking or talking about them further because the emotional burden is too heavy to bear.

This finding supports the existing literature. Im and colleagues discuss three strategies tutors use to cope with the stress of consultations: active, internal, and avoidant, with active and internal being the most practiced (216). Active coping involves talking to someone about a bad consultation or altering a tutoring practice, internal coping involves relaxing or reflecting on the consultation, and avoidant coping involves getting distracted from thinking about the consultations (217). Iantorno also reports that active communication is a common way to deal with negative emotions after consultations (208). On par with the existing research, my finding also suggests that most tutors, who have been extensively exposed to reflective practices during the writing fellows program, employ internal and active coping strategies by reflecting on and talking

about the emotionally laborious sessions, and only a few practice the avoidant strategy.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the emotional labor of multilingual writing fellows (course-embedded peer tutors) and undergraduate writing center tutors, expanding the frame of reference of emotional labor beyond the consultations themselves. External pressures before the consultation, such as tutors’ work and studies, increase tutors’ emotional labor because they tend to distract tutors, who, therefore, have to engage in surface and/or deep acting to stay present and fake engagement with tutees. During consultations, working with resistant and passive students makes tutors feel guilty or demotivated, emotions that writing fellows, due to the nature of consultations in the courses they are embedded in, may experience more of. Finally, performing emotional labor has an effect after consultations end. In fact, emotionally charged consultations may take a toll and have a lasting effect on tutors, who have to carry this emotional burden with them for a long time.

The main contribution of this study lies not only in allowing us to better understand the intricate mechanism of emotional labor of multilingual undergraduate writing center tutors but also in highlighting, more generally, the need to address the topic of emotional labor head-on throughout the training of peer tutors and beyond. The goal of such explicit instruction and ongoing conversations would be to achieve a balance between the care work tutors perform for the benefit of their tutees

and their own self-care. At our institution, following the series of conversations this study initiated, emotional labor even became a topic of instruction. This could and should be a first step in other writing fellows programs as well, whatever linguistic space they find themselves in. Learning early on about the twin aspects of emotional labor – relational labor and emotional management – and some coping strategies they can employ to lighten their emotional workload will equip tutors with the necessary tools to respond well to emotionally fraught sessions and avoid burnout and other negative aftereffects. As this study has shown, code-switching can ease multilingual tutors' relational aspects of emotional labor. Since talking the same language with the tutee is a unique opportunity to build common ground, it should not be wasted, and tutors should be more confident in using it.

The main limitations of this study are the small sample size and a potentially single-minded focus on negative aspects of emotional labor. The entire population of writing fellows and undergraduate writing center tutors at the time of data collection was N=15 tutors, excluding myself. All tutors were invited to participate in the study, and fourteen agreed to be interviewed. Moreover, the interview questions were phrased in a way that required tutors to reflect on emotionally taxing or difficult consultations. This might have caused the participants and the interviewer to focus more on the negative aspects of emotional labor and disregard how positive emotions

and tutor-tutee interactions might have eased it. Finally, the respondents' answers may have been influenced by the timing of the interviews, which were conducted during particularly stressful weeks for students—weeks 12 to 16, which precede and include finals. The sensitive nature of the interview questions, which required tutors to share their feelings about taxing consultations, may have prevented them from being as expressive as they might have wanted.

Future research can address this study's limitations and focus on the lasting aftereffects of emotional labor. Due to the topic's inherent sensitivity, tutors may not be comfortable sharing the negative feelings they might have been wrestling with long after taxing consultations ended. Nevertheless, it is important to understand how prevalent such struggles are, how well tutors cope, and what additional support they might need to cope.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. One-on-one consultations are a part of your duties as a course-embedded Writing Fellow/ Writing Center Tutor. How do you generally feel about them?
 - Do you find them taxing in any way?
 - Can you recall one consultation that was particularly taxing emotionally?
 - How did you feel during it and why?
 - How did you manage it?
 - Did you expect to perform such emotional labor?
 - What kind of attention or support would you have liked to receive as a part of your writing fellow training?
2. (For Writing Center Tutors) You have been a writing fellow, and you are now a writing tutor. What is different about being a writing center tutor and a writing fellow?
 - Comparing the two experiences, what is more taxing for you? Why?
 - Compared with your experience as a writing fellow, do you manage your emotions differently now as a tutor in the writing center?

- As a writing tutor you have an established schedule for consultations every week. How did you come up with your schedule?
 - Unlike tutors, writing fellows have to work with their tutees to find a good schedule to hold consultations. Which one do you prefer? Why?
3. Were all of your consultations in English or were there instances of code-switching to Russian or Kazakh?
- How did you feel speaking (or when the student spoke) Russian/Kazakh? How did you handle the situation and your own emotions (if any)?
 - (For Writing Center Tutors) Did you have more of this code-switching as a writing fellow or as a tutor?
4. If you could go back, knowing what you know now, would you still become a writing fellow? Why (not)?