Final Report for BSI Funded Project:
English98SL Dedicated Tutor (Pilot)
[Supplemental Instruction for Eng98SL Spring Term 2011]

Submitted by:
Blaze Woodlief and Cheo Massion
College Skills Dept.
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Key Findings

• With the dedicated tutor available to the class, students in this English98SL writing class did better throughout the term with their writing and made better progress – and probably gained better retention of key ideas in the writing process – than we have observed in previous English98SL sections that we have individually taught. Most of these students would have probably have ‘passed’ the class without the tutor aid, but it appears that the students as a group progressed faster and further with this supplemental in-class aid.

• Having the dedicated tutor freed up Blaze’s office hours to work more closely with weaker students who needed extra/even more attention.

• This class is structured so that for the first three assignments (of five total for the semester) students are required to see a tutor at least once during the writing process for a tutoring session and to get sign-off on a draft of their writing. Having the dedicated tutor in-class put much less pressure on the ESL Lab instructors in particular. Several of these instructors made positive comments about how on certain due dates fewer students were in need of immediate attention and tutoring. This then allows the lab instructors to focus on and support ESL students at the lower levels.

• There were tutoring sessions, especially after the class, where 5-6 students were waiting to speak with Cheo individually. Even though students had to wait their turn, many indicated that while they were waiting, they were listening to the comments being made for another student and learned something as well. This finding may point to the value of group tutoring sessions for a class right after it ends to re-enforce/practice concepts discussed in class by the instructor.

• Students in this class reported that when they go to the Writing Center, on occasion, tutors would tell the student that their work was “fine” when in fact the student’s paper was in need of substantial structural or mechanical revision.

• Based on a mid-term student survey and project assessment, the majority of students (88%) reported that the dedicated tutor was ‘very important to their success,’ and several students
reported that having the tutor available helped them improve their grades (self-perception of success).

- Between the two of us, we were able to track fairly closely what each student needed in order to improve their writing. This individualized feedback came during sessions (and session to session once getting to know the student and his/her writing), and from Blaze’s rubric for each assignment and final grading. (See appendix)

- Some students chose to work with Blaze more than the tutor, and visa-versa. Some students feel more relaxed or comfortable working with a tutor, perhaps because the tutor doesn’t doing the grading. Certainly having both the instructor and the tutor available provided many more hours of direct help to individual students over the course of the semester.

- It was helpful in building rapport at the beginning that Cheo had already worked with many of these students in the ESL Lab during the Fall 2010 semester, and students had had a positive experience.

**Project Rationale**

Basic skills students in Eng92, Eng98SL and Eng120SL don’t always get the continued, in-class support in these classes (ESL classes are not assigned IS support)—even though some other class requirements have been put into place to aid them (such as a required ESL Lab/WC tutor signature for some assignments). For some of these students, this lack of support is the difference between passing the class and failing it. In presenting this project to the committee, Cheo shared comments from her teaching experience in Eng98SL (Spring 2010) to illustrate this situation, especially with respect to students who need more than a signature from a lab tutor, but rather, consistent weekly supplemental instruction sessions to improve their writing skills and understand the entire course assignment structure. These basic skills classes are part of the required sequence in English for students to reach, and successfully pass, English 150 – a transferable college credit class.
Objectives

- Provide supplemental instruction sessions to 98SL students who may be ‘at risk’ of failing the class if they continue to practice underdeveloped skills of writing and time management.
- Develop and test a ‘system’ of supplemental instruction for Eng98 students that could be refined and replicated in other sections; develop ideas/refinements/strategies for migrating this ‘system’ to Eng92 where there may be a greater need.

Method

- Blaze and Cheo met and discussed prior to the first class which dates Cheo should be in the class for tutoring before or after the class. (This was based on Blaze’s syllabus for the term and all writing assignment dates.)
- Cheo was introduced to the class within the first week as the dedicated class tutor who would not be in every class, but available to students on the days prior to major assignment due dates (such as in-class peer review days, outline due dates, and a week before final drafts for an assignment were due). This timing seemed to work well for students based on the number of students wishing to meet with Cheo before/after class. The list, at times, was five to seven students and ran 60 to 90 minutes of tutoring after the class. In addition, Blaze had some of her office hours just after the class which students also utilized for tutoring.
- The total number of dedicated tutoring hours was 25 hours over 15 weeks. This is a 1.6 hour per week average; however, the hours were not evenly divided over the weeks of the semester. [Note: in addition, Cheo attended some of the full lecture/classes and was not paid for this time.]
- ‘At-risk’ students were encouraged to meet with Cheo or Blaze during the first two weeks, but getting students involved was not a problem. Within two weeks, all students (‘at-risk’ and all others) were requesting and receiving tutoring.
• There were several classes that Cheo attended and because she heard the lecture, her comments made to the students during the tutoring session (just after that class) underlined and re-enforced what Blaze had discussed/presented. This is to say that the tutor knew exactly what had been addressed in class, and it appeared beneficial that the student could hear this information for a second or third time.

• Also to help students grasp concepts, Cheo did pieces of the first two assignments herself to show as a model to students during a tutoring session, if it was needed. Because Cheo had also taught this class in Spring 2010, she was able to provide a few additional handouts on other assignments that were used in class. It was a positive additive effect that the tutor knew the course content well.

• During the semester, Cheo and Blaze were in on-going communication (emails, hall chats and around class time) about individual student progress and areas of weakness. Our discussions helped to focus on/strengthen certain areas in the next class discussion and/or during individual tutoring (i.e., there was much behind the scenes discussion about the class and students).

• A student survey was conducted mid-term to get feedback from students on how the project was working, or not, for them.

Results

Of the seventeen students enrolled in this class, all students passed the class. Twelve students passed with an A or B grade (71%); two students passed with a C; and another 3 passed with a “PASS” grade (P/NP grading).

Results from the student survey

A survey was given to the students on April 4, 2011 (Week 11 of the 16 week semester) and after three writing assignments had been completed. A copy of the survey is attached. Sixteen students took the survey and here are the summarized results:

<p>| Number of students who had tutoring session with Blaze (Instructor) | 14 | (88%) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>and/or Cheo (Tutor)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who only met with Blaze</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who only met with Cheo</td>
<td>1 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who worked with a tutor in the ESL Lab and/or Writing Center in addition to the in-class tutor/instructor’s office hrs</td>
<td>14 (88%)</td>
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Students reported getting help on:
- All 3 assignments (to-date when survey was given) | 13 (82%) |
- 2 assignments (of the 3) | 3 (19%) |

Students reported getting help on outlining and the first draft | 15 (94%) |

Students indicated the best time to meet with a dedicated tutor/instructor as:
- Right before class starts | 5 (32%) |
- Right after class ends | 6 (38%) |
- Right before or after class | 2 (13%) |
- Other time | 3 (19%) |

(This class met M+W 12:40pm-1:55pm. We were able to have the tutoring session in the same classroom and didn’t need to relocate.)

Students rated their level of satisfaction with the tutoring received so far:
- High | 11 (69%) |
- Average | 5 (31%) |

Students indicated that a dedicated tutor in their next level of writing class was:
- Very important to their success | 14 (88%) |
- Nice to have | 2 (12%) |
- Not necessary | 0 --- |

Qualitative comments students wrote at the end of the survey:

Positive reactions
- *It has been really nice having a tutor in class because that tutor knows how the class has been developing and what we need to improve. It has also been helpful for my writing assignments. Cheo is a good teacher and finds the way to explain the things for me to understand! Very good job.*
• In my opinion, the tutor in class has been a great help and it will be a huge help in Eng120.

• Having a tutor in class is very good. She knows what we learn from a class and she knows how to help us.

• I have been helped with my grammar and my writing and that really helps me (as) a writer.

• Going to see a tutor to give me feedback about my essays (has) improved my grades.

• It is very helpful to have a dedicated tutor because our learning is easier and more efficient. Thank you for doing extra work. I hope you can be able to (continue) working with ESL students in the way that you are teaching now.

• I have a very good experience from them. They help me a lot to write better and help me a lot on my grammar.

• It has been great working with you guys.

• I have had valuable help from the dedicated tutor, so I have had good process in writing progress so far. I would like to have a dedicated tutor for sure!!!

• It was so helpful to have someone as a tutor because we could get so much feedback from her, and it helped me get a better grade.

• I think it is a good combination because they work (well) together.

Needs improvement

• Please use email to ‘correct’ your student’s writings; it would be better for busy students’ lives. [Note: email interaction was initially offered, but we did not remind students of it as the semester ‘got busy.’]
Recommendations – going forward

• We recommend that a dedicated tutor be assigned to English98SL, English120SL or English62/92 classes, and that the tutor should be able to attend at least one class meeting per week. It may not matter that it is the same day each week, but having the tutor available in-class (face-to-face) allows the students to get to know and feel comfortable with the tutor.

• The tutor’s schedule and availability must be open for at least one class session per week (for a class that meets twice a week).

• Assignment of a dedicated tutor should be done with some thought as to the tutor’s background in tutoring, and/or ESL teaching experience, and/or experience working in the English Skills Lab or the Writing Center. We feel that if there is a good match between the tutor’s experience and the class level/its needs, the outcome for the students will be positive and enriching in terms of successfully developing their writing skills.

• Ideally the tutor should be available for tutoring 30 minutes before the class time and/or one hour after the class, on ‘assignment-critical’ days. Blaze and Cheo figured out which days/dates were most important depending on the assignment schedule and which ‘piece’ of writing was coming due. For most students the day when their first draft was due was a critical point in the process, and extra tutoring then could help them a lot.

• If a class starts at 9:40am, for example, and ends so that most students go off to another class, this timing for a dedicated tutor would have to be carefully considered as to when the majority of students and the tutor could meet conveniently and consistently. There was an advantage to our class in that it ended at 1:55pm and almost all students did not need to go to another class or to work/jobs immediately (on most days).

• Ideally the tutoring should take place in the same classroom, or very near to the classroom so students don’t get distracted/loose focus going from the classroom to the tutoring location.

• The tutor should be available through email for short questions.

• Although it was recommended (strongly) by the BSISC committee that the tutor be called a “Supplemental Instructor [SI]” to differentiate the position from the current ISs, students really
don’t perceive any difference. We recommend that the tutor be labeled and referred to as a “Dedicated Tutor” which students got very used to calling the in-class tutor. It also appears that students took some ‘ownership’ of their tutor – who was dedicated to their individual and collective progress and success.

- Based on this experience, Cheo would recommend a sign-up sheet for tutoring prior to the next tutoring session. As demand grew, it got confusing who was signed-up and in which order. It made a difference if the student was #5 on the ‘wait list.’

- Group tutoring just after a class (if the schedule allows) could be very valuable in providing supplemental instruction. Students could get a ‘re-run’ of key points from the class and group tutoring on an aspect of writing – such as writing a good outline, or how to provide vivid details for a supporting paragraph.
Appendices

A. A copy of the student survey given on April 4, 2011.

B. Tutor Feedback Form – used for sign-off of a tutoring session and also as a way to help the tutor-student focus on one aspect of the writing for that session

C. Examples of the writing assignment rubric – filled out for students after the first assignment with Blaze’s comments about what was done well and what needs improvement. [Student Tracking Log]
Blaze and Cheo have been working together on a special project to provide dedicated tutoring for this English class. We would very much like to know what you think so far of this project, and our efforts to assist you in your writing assignments.

Please take a moment to answer these questions honestly. You do not need to put your name on the handout.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I have had tutoring sessions with the Eng98 dedicated tutor.</td>
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<td>2. I have had tutoring sessions with Blaze, the instructor.</td>
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<td>3. I have <strong>not</strong> gotten tutoring from the dedicated tutor because I feel I haven’t needed the extra help.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>4. I have gotten tutoring for:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- All writing assignments so far</td>
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<td>- 2 writing assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 1 writing assignment</td>
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<td>5. I have gotten tutoring for these steps in the writing process (check all that apply):</td>
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<tr>
<td>- brainstorming</td>
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<tr>
<td>- outlining</td>
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<td>- the first draft</td>
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<td>- the final draft</td>
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<td>- grammar and editing</td>
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<td>6. The best time for me to receive this dedicated tutoring is:</td>
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<td>- Right before our class</td>
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<td>- Right after our class</td>
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<td>- Other (when?) ________________</td>
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<td>7. My level of satisfaction from the dedicated tutoring is:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Average</td>
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<tr>
<td>- High</td>
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<td>8. In the future, I would like to have available a dedicated tutor in my English SL classes at COM (Eng120SL).</td>
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<td>- Yes, it’s very important to my success</td>
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<td>- It would be nice</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Not necessary</td>
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<td>9. I have <strong>in addition</strong> to Cheo or Blaze gotten tutoring from the ESL Lab and/or the Writing Center instructors/tutors.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I have gotten tutoring help <strong>only</strong> from the ESL Lab instructors OR the Writing Center instructors/tutors.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Please share any other comments (positive or negative) about your experience.</td>
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</table>
Tutor Feedback Form    Woodlief

**WRITER:**
What area do you want the tutor to focus on when responding to your draft? (circle ONE AREA)

1. Thesis statement: Does it cover the main ideas of the paper adequately?
2. Organization: Does the order of the material make sense?
3. Development: Is there enough development/details/explanation in the body paragraphs?
4. Paragraph unity: Do the body paragraphs each make one point?
5. Connections: Are the logical connections between ideas clear (between body paragraphs and thesis, especially)?
6. Other:______

**TUTOR:** Summarize the advice and feedback you gave the student below:
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