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ABSTRACT

A study examined sex differences among peer writing tutors concerning the use of discipline-specific terms and the suggestion of revision strategies. Subjects, four male tutors, four female tutors, four male students, and four female students, were tape recorded for 11 minutes during one-on-one same-sex and opposite-sex peer conferences. Recordings were transcribed and analyzed. Results indicated that: (1) male tutors offered more higher-order revision strategies to male students than to female students and more lower-order revision strategies to female students than to male students; (2) female tutors offered more lower-order revision strategies to males and more higher-order revision strategies to female students; (3) female tutors tended to be more balanced between higher and lower revision strategies than male tutors; (4) female tutors offered more revision strategies to students than male tutors; (5) all tutors offered more higher-order revision strategies than lower-order strategies; (6) tutors dominated the conferences, offering more suggestions than eliciting suggestions from the students; (7) female students used more disciple-specific terminology than male students did; (8) female students were less likely to use discipline-specific terms when talking with a female tutor; and (9) tutors tended to offer more discipline-specific terms to students of the same sex, and fewer discipline-specific terms to students of the opposite sex. (Contains two tables, four bar graphs, and several unnumbered charts of data.) (RS)

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Conference on College Composition and Communication

Nashville, 1994

"*Exploring Peer Tutor Differences and Biases*"

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OVERVIEW

This research explored peer tutor differences and biases and is based on the total number of utterances in eleven-minute segments of discourse between tutors and students. Female students received twice as many suggestions for revision as male students. Female students heard discipline-specific terminology much more frequently than male students, and they used this terminology much more frequently themselves than male students. Female and male tutors dominated the conferences, speaking close to 75% of the time. Generally, both male and female students talked more to male tutors. Male tutors offered more higher order revision strategies to male students than to female students and more lower order revision strategies to female students than to male students. Overall, all tutors offered more higher order revision strategies than lower order strategies.

Conference on College Composition and Communication
San Diego, 1993
"Gender and Assessment in Student-Teacher Conferences"

Laurel Black
Miami University
Oxford, OH 45056

Summary

Utterances

	Dyad	Total Utt.	Percent of Total: Teacher	Percent of Total: Student	
mm	Bill/Mike	3439	80.2	19.7	mm
	Bill/Mike	2965	62.1	37.8	
	Carl/Dave	2307	83.8	16.2	
	Eric/Ben	4285	83.4	6.3	
mF	Eric/Dana	6739	71.4	28.4	mF
	Don/Eva	4439	75.2	24.6	
	Don/Lyn	5347	74.3	25.2	
Fm	Erin/Jeff	3586	85.2	14.8	Fm
	Erin/Leach	4070	86.8	13.1	
FF	Mary/Gail	3682	70.6	29.2	FF
	Mary/Rick	3428	59.6	40.2	
Fm	Nina/John	2386	84.6	15.2	Fm
FF	Nina/Kate	2881	89.9	10.0	F
	Nina/L	1922	97.6	2.3	

Average % for female instructors: 82.07
Average % for male instructors: 80.08
Average % for female students: 19.06
Average % for male students: 21.71

Revision Suggestions

Suggestions for revision were coded into two categories: higher order (HO) and lower order (LO).

Higher Order suggestions deal with large portions of the text, above the sentence level. They involve rethinking the logic, topic, organization, audience, or purpose of the text.

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Example: Don: Um but could you could t take that kind of those kind of details of those um (2 sec) those yknow less than pleasant aspects of living with yknow / ? / countless strangers. And (2 sec) give someone a new view instead of the same old (2 sec) yknow happy camper uh routine that they give ya around here.

Lower order suggestions deal with revisions at the sentence or word level. They are frequently "corrections" and often very specific.

Example: Erin: (Reading) "Thus Marx the man once religious only to the armed forces"..How about devoted, would that be better. Better than religious.

Students as well as instructors could offer a revision suggestion or strategy although no student offered any lower order strategies, i.e., corrections.

Out of the possible combinations of data, the following seemed most interesting.

Revision Suggestions

Offered BY	**HO**	**LO**	**Total**	**Offered To**	**HO**	**LO**	**Total**
Male T	64	14	78	Male S	62	15	77
Female T	110	36	146	Female S	112	35	147
Male S	8	0	8				
Female S	24	0	24				

Female instructors were almost twice as likely to offer suggestions for revision than were male instructors, **146** to **78**

Female students offered many more revision strategies than did males and were also more likely to test out strategies in the form of questions than were males: **31** to males' **14** such questions.

Female students received many more revision suggestions than did male students: **147 to 77.**

Discipline-specific Terminology

Discipline specific terminology may be as simple as saying "paragraph" instead of "this part" or as complex as "interrogate the text" or ruptures in the text." Categorizing terms and phrases as discipline-specific was very difficult; I had to imagine how something might be otherwise said, how a phrase might mean something different in another discipline or even context. To offer "proof" or "evidence" in composition is different from offering proof in a court of law, for example.

Use of Discipline-specific Terms by Gender Dyads

	Male T / Male S				Total	Female T / Male S				Total
	Bill	84	Mike	21	105	Erin	95	Jeff	7	102
	Eric	144	Ben	1	145	Mary	66	Rick	22	88
	Carl	66	Dave	1	67	Nina	33	John	7	40
Total		294		23	317		194		36	230

	Male T / Female S				Total	Female T / Female S				Total
	Bill	128	Cari	17	145	Erin	105	Leah	14	119
	Eric	199	Dana	4	243	Mary	56	Gail	13	69
	Don	72	Eva	18	90	Nina	79	Lily	0	79
Total		469		103	572		294		29	329

Male instructors' use of discipline specific language: 763
Female instructors' use of discipline specific language: 488

Male students' use of discipline specific language: 59
Female students' use of discipline specific language: 132

Discipline specific language used WITH female students: 763
Discipline specific language used WITH male students: 488

Male students are much less likely to hear discipline-specific terminology used in their conferences and are less likely to use it themselves that are the female students. Female students use more discipline-specific terminology and hear it used more often.

SUMMARY of DATA

Female students receive twice as many suggestions for revision as male students.

Female students propose revision strategies--as either questions or statements--more frequently than male students.

Female students hear discipline-specific terminology much more frequently than do male students, and they use this terminology much more frequently themselves than do male students.

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Total Utterances

An utterance is any spoken word. Our research is based on the number of total utterances in an eleven-minute segment of a conference.

Conclusions:

Average % of utterances for male tutor: 72.2%
Average % of utterances for male students: 24.7%

Average % of utterances for female tutors: 75.8%
Average % of utterances for female students: 26%

According to our research results, female tutors have more total utterances than do male tutors, and female students have more utterances in conferences than do male students (1455 words for male students with three tutors, and 2005 words for female students with the same three tutors). The male tutor had a total of 3158 words in six conferences, female tutor #1 had 4090 words, and female tutor #2 had 4403 words during their six eleven-minute conferences.

Generally, both male and female students talk more to male tutor (perhaps because he doesn't talk as much as the female tutors?).

Both male and female tutors dominate conferences, speaking close to 75% of the time. This may indicate that we need to train tutors to help "draw out" information from students more.

In this section, we have two students, one male and one female, who both had conferences with the same male and female tutor. Interestingly, the female student spoke 28% of the time with both the male and female tutor while the male student spoke 30% of the time with the male tutor and only 23% of the time with the female tutor.

Total Utterances

Male Tutor	Number	Male Student	Number
Wayne McGraw	***460 (70%)***	**Bill Hay**	**197 (30%)** ✔
Wayne McGraw	481 (55%)	Brian Regan	391 (45%)
Wayne McGraw	657 (92%)	Mike Matthews	58 (8%)
Total:	**1598 (71.2%)**		**646 (28.8%)**

Male Tutor	Number	Female Student	Number
Wayne McGraw	532 (78%)	Melinda Davis	152 (22%)
Wayne McGraw	**608 (72%)**	**Jennifer Smelker**	**232 (28%)** ✔
Wayne McGraw	420 (70%)	Gwen Silver	182 (30%)
Total:	**1560 (73.3%)**		**566 (26.7%)**
Grand Total:	**3158 (72.2%)**		**1212 (27.8%)**

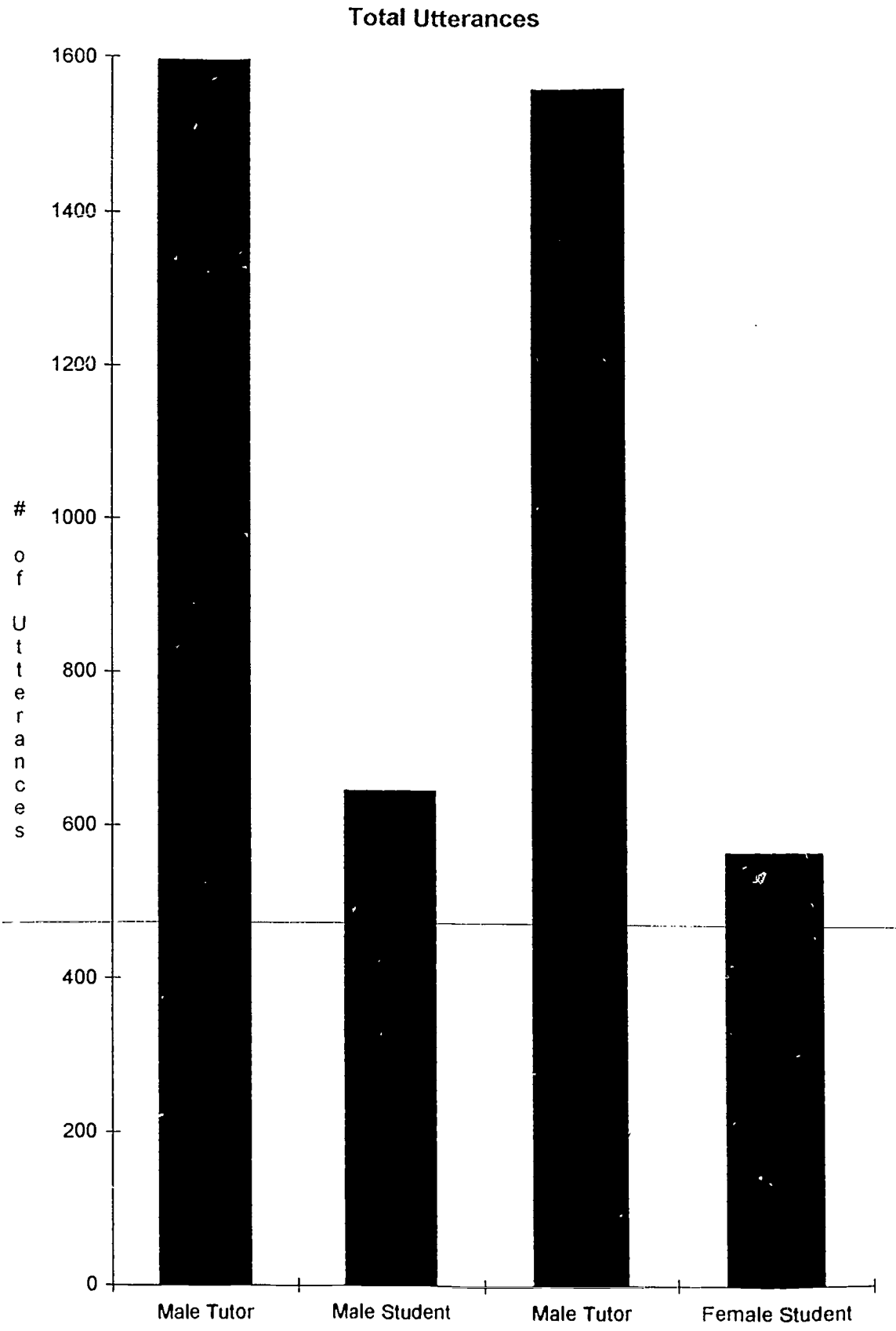
Female Tutor	Number	Male Student	Number
Sharon Daxton	802 (84%)	Brad Whitehouse	153 (16%)
Sharon Daxton	**774 (77%)**	**Bill Hay**	**237 (23%)** ✔
Sharon Daxton	493 (57%)	Scott Olinger	373 (43%)
Total:	**2069 (73%)**		**763 (27%)**

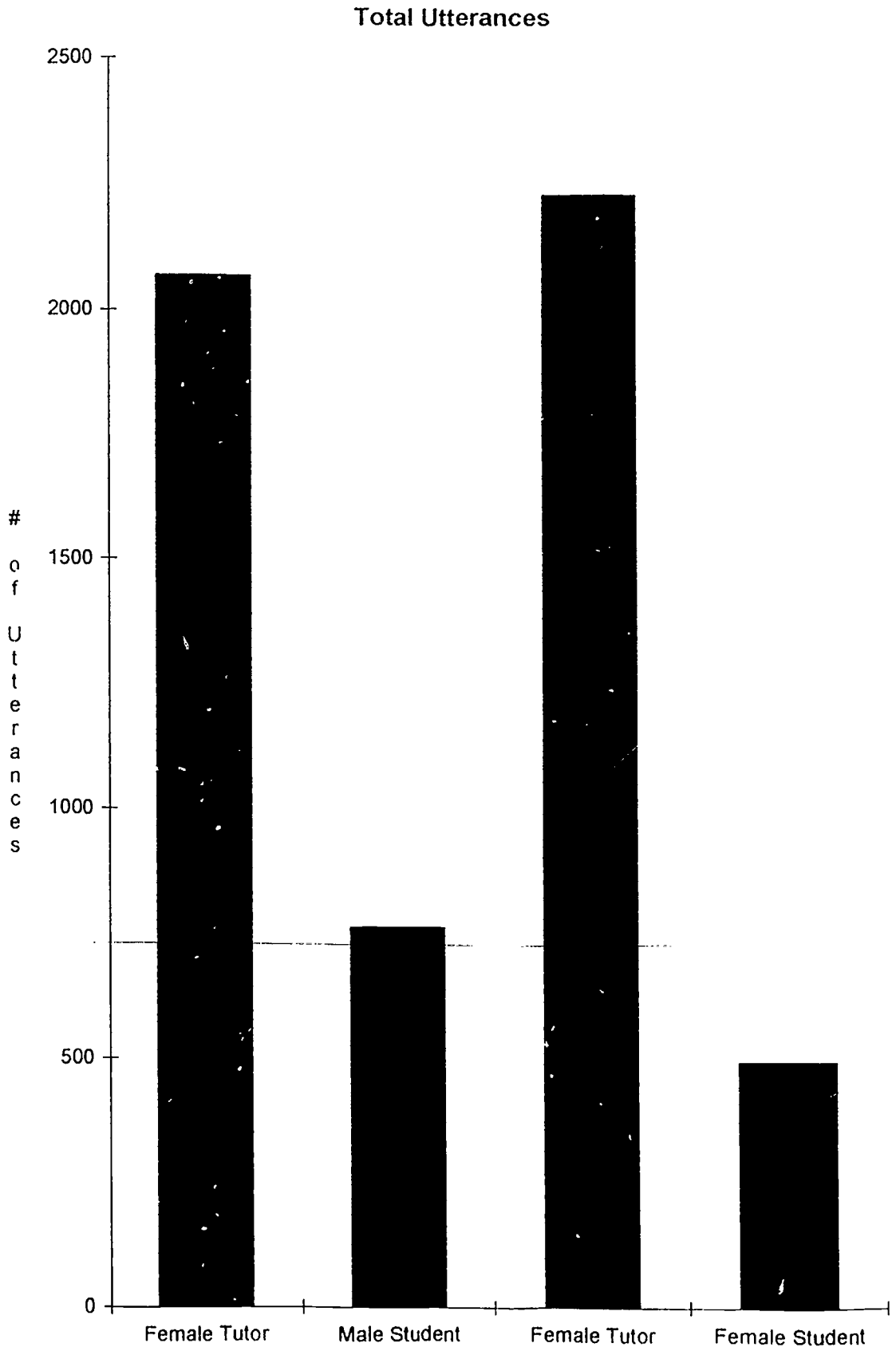
Female Tutor	Number	Female Student	Number
Sharon Daxton	736 (75%)	Alison Delk	245 (25%)
Sharon Daxton	654 (77%)	Allison Sanders	194 (23%)
Sharon Daxton	**631 (72%)**	**Jennifer Smelker**	**246 (28%)** ✔
Total:	**2021 (74.6%)**		**685 (25.4%)**
Grand Total:	**4090 (73.8%)**		**1448 (26.2%)**

Female Tutor	Number	Male Student	Number
J. Harrison	779 (78%)	Male #1	220 (22%)
J. Harrison	777 (83%)	Male #2	157 (17%)
J. Harrison	672 (85%)	Male #3	119 (15%)
Total:	**2228 (81.7%)**		**496 (18.3%)**

Female Tutor	Number	Female Student	Number
J. Harrison	604 (72%)	Female #1	240 (28%)
J. Harrison	850 (73%)	Female #2	312 (27%)
J. Harrison	721 (78%)	Female #3	202 (22%)
Total:	**2175 (74.2%)**		**754 (25.8%)**

Grand Total:	**4403 (77.8%)**	**1250 (22.2%)**


Total Utterances
1600
1400
1200
1000
800
600
400
200
0
# of Utterances
Male Tutor
Male Student
Male Tutor
Female Student


Total Utterances
2500
2000
1500
1000
500
0
# of Utterances
Female Tutor
Male Student
Female Tutor
Female Student

Revision Suggestions

Higher order revision strategies include ones dealing with items above sentence level, whereas lower order revision strategies deal with sentence level or below. Again, research is based on eleven-minute segments of conferences.

Conclusions:

The male tutor tended to offer more higher order revision strategies to male students than to female students and more lower order revision strategies to female students than to male students (28 to males and only 13 to females).

Female tutors tended to offer more lower order revision strategies to males and more higher order revision strategies to female students: 55 (15 and 40) to males and 24 (10 and 14) to females.

Female tutors tended to be more balanced between higher and lower revision strategies than did the male tutor.

Female tutors averaged more revision strategies offered to students overall. Male tutor offered 69 suggestions while female tutors offered an average of 78.

Overall, all tutors offered more higher order revision strategy (35) than lower order strategy (26).

This section of the research differed most from the earlier research. We found that male students (not females) offered more revision strategies : 37 to 8 overall.

We also found that males (not females) were offered more revision strategies overall: 124 to 100.

Again, tutors dominated the conferences - offering more suggestions than eliciting suggestions from the students.

Revision Suggestions

- **Number:** Higher/Lower Order suggestions recorded in 11 minute conferences.

Male Tutor	Number (Higher/Lower)	Male Student	Number (Higher/Order)
Wayne McGraw	7/3	Bill Hay	0/0 ✔
Wayne McGraw	11/0	Brian Regan	7/0
Wayne McGraw	10/7	Mike Matthews	1/1
Total:	**28/10**		**8/1**

Male Tutor	Number	Female Student	Number
Wayne McGraw	5/7	Melinda Davis	3/0
Wayne McGraw	6/6	Jennifer Smelker	0/0 ✔
Wayne McGraw	2/5	Gwen Silver	0/2
Total:	**13/18**		**3/2**

Grand Total:	**41/28**	**11/3**
Percent:	**(78.8%,90.3)**	**(21.2%,9.7%)**

Female Tutor	Number	Male Student	Number
Sharon Daxton	7/3	Brad Whitehouse	4/1
Sharon Daxton	0/4	Bill Hay	0/1 ✔
Sharon Daxton	7/7	Scott Olinger	3/6
Total:	**14/15**		**7/6**

Female Tutor	Number	Female Student	Number
Sharon Daxton	5/1	Alison Delk	0/1
Sharon Daxton	1/5	Allison Sanders	0/1
Sharon Daxton	3/4	Jennifer Smelker	0/0 ✔
Total:	**9/10**		**0/2**

Grand Total:	**23/25**	**7/8**
Percent:	**(76.6%,75.7%)**	**(23.4%,24.3%)**

Female Tutor	Number	Male Student	Number
J. Harrison	0/22	Male #1	0/5
J. Harrison	3/15	Male #2	0/4
J. Harrison	13/3	Male #3	1/3
Total:	**17/40**		**1/12**

Female Tutor	Number	Female Student	Number
J. Harrison	20/0	Female #1	10/0
J. Harrison	3/12	Female #2	0/3
J. Harrison	14/2	Female #3	6/0
Total:	**37/14**		**16/3**

Grand Total:	**54/54**	**17/15**
Percent:	**(76%,78.2%)**	**(24%,21.8%)**

Discipline-Specific Terms

In writing classes, students are exposed to certain writing language used by their instructors. Terms specifically related to writing such as thesis, paragraph or topic sentence are taken to be discipline-specific while comments such as "this line," this funny sounding sentence," or "that part" are taken as general and not discipline-specific language.

Conclusions:

According to our research on discipline-specific terms, female students use more discipline-specific terminology than do male students. For example, in the males' conferences with the male tutor, three male students used a total of eleven specific terms, whereas the female students, with the same male tutor, used a total of 27 specific terms.

Even with a female tutor, female student use more discipline-specific language than do the male students. For example, when three male students conferenced with female tutor #1, they accumulated only 12 specific words versus three female students who accumulated a total of 19 specific terms with the same female tutor.

According to the research by Black, female students "use more discipline-specific terminology and hear it used more often." Both her research and ours draws the same conclusion.

However, according to our research, female students are less likely to use discipline-specific terms when talking with a female tutor. For example, one female student conferenced with the same male and female tutor on separate occasions. With the male tutor, she uses ten specific terms but with female tutor #1, that number drops to only four. Overall, female students, when conferencing with the male tutor, speak 42.9 % of the specific terms used in the conference. On the other hand, female students only speak 26.1 % of the specific terms when conferencing with the female tutor.

The female tutors also offered more discipline-specific terms to females: 54 to 36 for the male tutor. The male tutor offered more specific language to male students: 52 to 28. This differs from Black's research showing that male instructors offered more discipline-specific language than did female instructors.

Use of Discipline-Specific Terms

- Number: number of discipline-specific terms counted in an 11 minute conference.

Male Tutor	Number	Male Student	Number
Wayne McGraw	**15**	**Bill Hay**	**2 ✔**
Wayne McGraw	23	Brian Regan	4
Wayne McGraw	14	Mike Matthews	5
Total:	**52 (82.5%)**		**11 (17.5%)**

Male Tutor	Number	Female Student	Number
Wayne McGraw	12	Melinda Davis	5
Wayne McGraw	**15**	**Jennifer Smelker**	**10 ✔**
Wayne McGraw	9	Gwen Silver	12
Total:	**36 (57.1%)**		**27 (42.9%)**

Grand Total:	**88 (69.8%)**		**38 (30.2%)**

Female Tutor	Number	Male Student	Number
Sharon Daxton	10	Brad Whitehouse	7
Sharon Daxton	**11**	**Bill Hay**	**3 ✔**
Sharon Daxton	7	Scott Olinger	2
Total:	**28 (70%)**		**12 (30%)**

Female Tutor	Number	Female Student	Number
Sharon Daxton	14	Alison Delk	7
Sharon Daxton	23	Allison Sanders	8
Sharon Daxton	**17**	**Jennifer Smelker**	**4 ✔**
Total:	**54 (73.9)**		**19 (26.1%)**

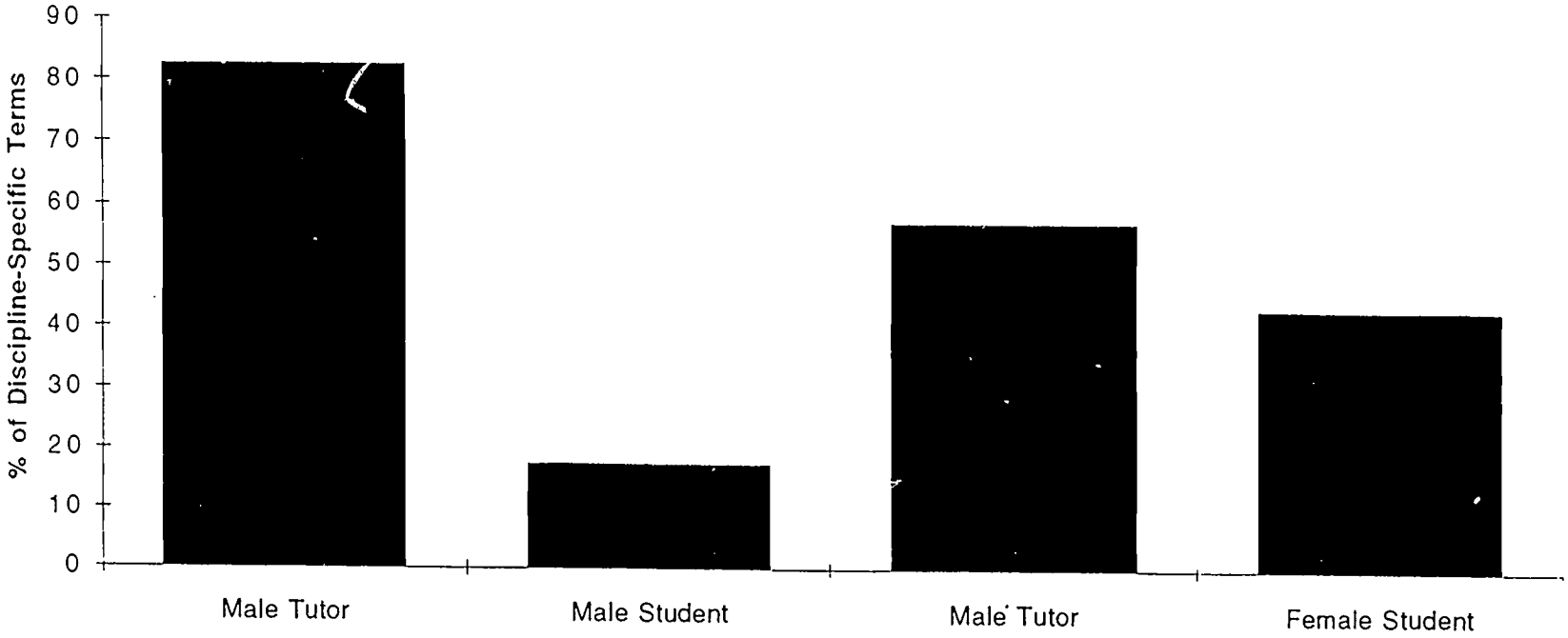
Grand Total:	**82 (72.6)**		**31 (27.4%)**

Female Tutor	Number	Male Student	Number
J. Harrison	16	Male #1	4
J. Harrison	11	Male #2	2
J. Harrison	15	Male #3	5
Total:	**42 (79.2%)**		**11 (20.8%)**

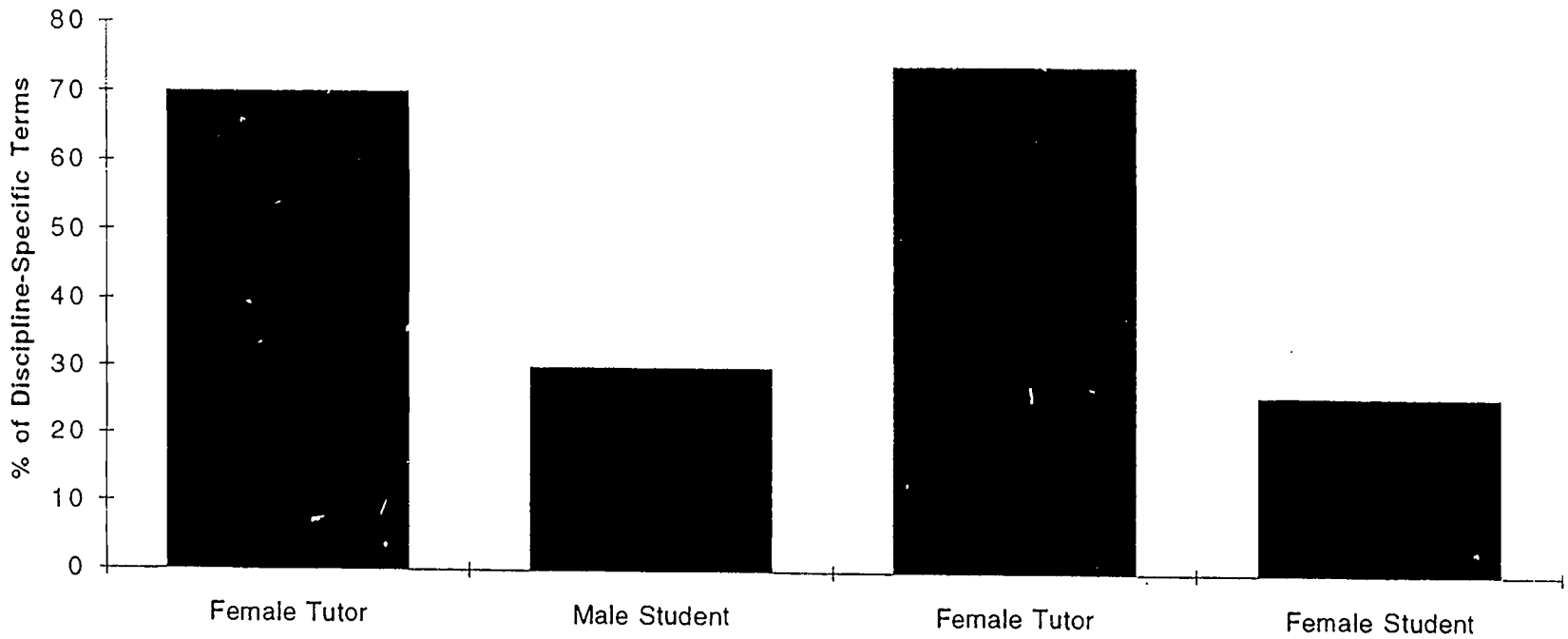
Female Tutor	Number	Female Student	Number
J. Harrison	24	Female #1	6
J. Harrison	20	Female #2	5
J. Harrison	18	Female #3	7
Total:	**62 (77.5)**		**18 (22.5%)**

Grand Total:	**104 (78.1)**	**29 (21.9%)**

Male Tutor Chart



Female Tutor Chart



Female Tutor #2 Chart