A Disciplinary Divide

Does Discipline-Specific Coaching Make a Difference?

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General Notes from the Interview

"Tutor did not have much knowledge of topic"

"Tutors should know the text - use wikipedia"

"Problems with a peer who doesn't have authority/knowledge, as opposed to professional tutors. Different levels of expectation"

"[Tutor's major was] sociology - she understood where she needed to go"

"A tutor assigned to you who can tell about [your] progress, who knows about course or field"

"Someone from my field so can help me on content + organization"

What do you think the tutors in the C4W should continue doing?

"Specializing of tutors"

What do you think tutors could do differently?

"Tutors [could] know the subject."

"Tutor in Phys. Ed," "hire Master's + PhD tutors"

Questions of Interest:

What are the benefits, if any, of discipline-specific tutoring?

Should discipline-specific tutoring relate to assignments, or majors/discourse communities?
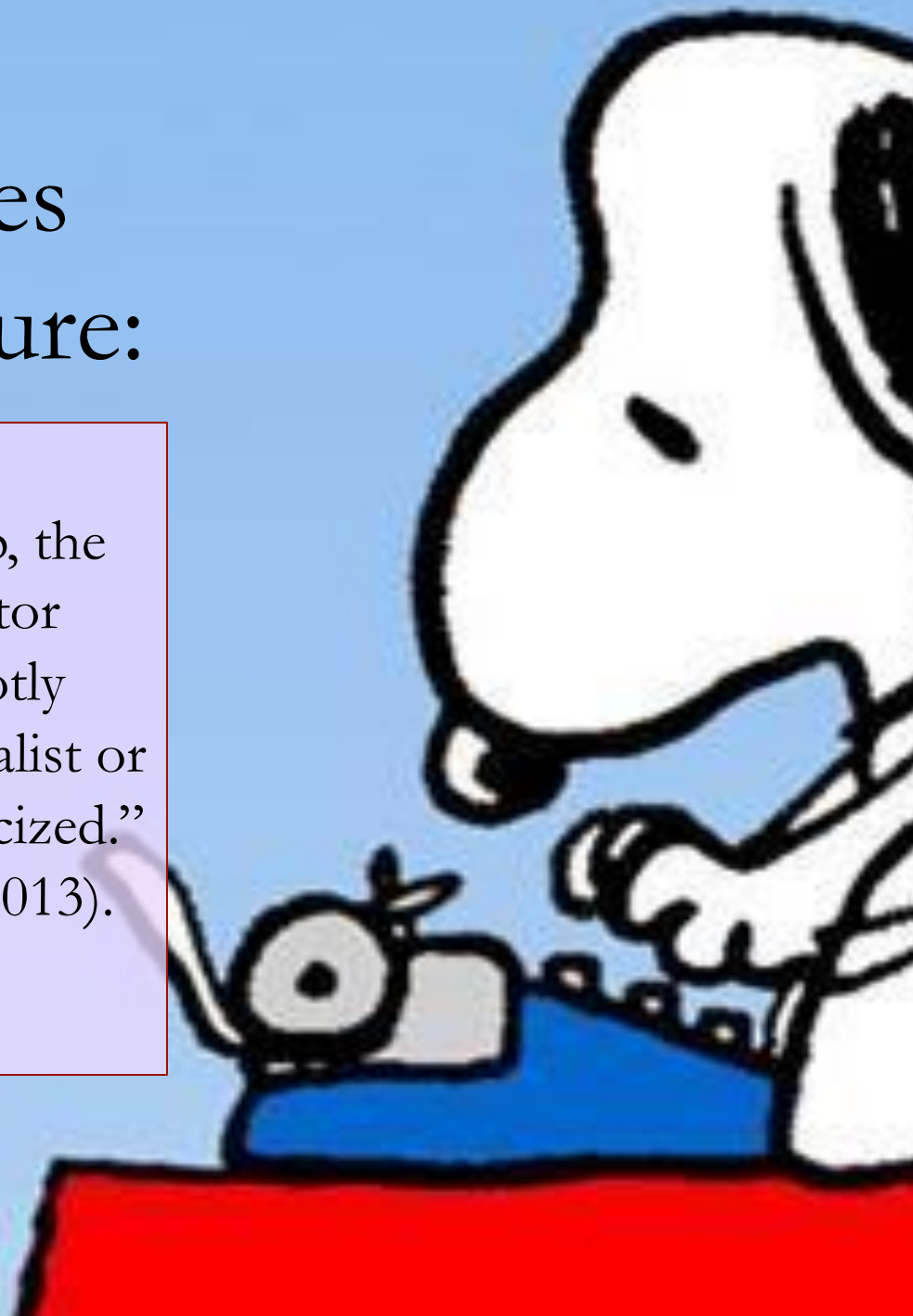
Is discipline-specific tutoring feasible?

Should discipline-specific tutoring be centrally organized?

Some Responses From the Literature:

"In writing centre scholarship, the question of the value of tutor expertise has produced a hotly debated dichotomy, with generalist or specialist tutors praised or criticized." Dinitz, S., & Harrington, S. (2013).

Appropriation in the Writing Centre: Practical Experiences

Discourse Communities: In the Literature

The program described by Boughey views "'literacy' as ways of knowing, valuing, believing, and talking … [where] literacy then becomes a social issue, not just linguistic. … new literacy studies suggest that students are best inducted into discourse communities by modelling themselves as 'insiders' (p.870) who are part of the discourse community. Viewed from this perspective first year students who have gained access to the university need now to gain 'epistemological' access (Morrow 1993) to their chosen discipline. Gaining epistemological access involves learning how the discourse works."
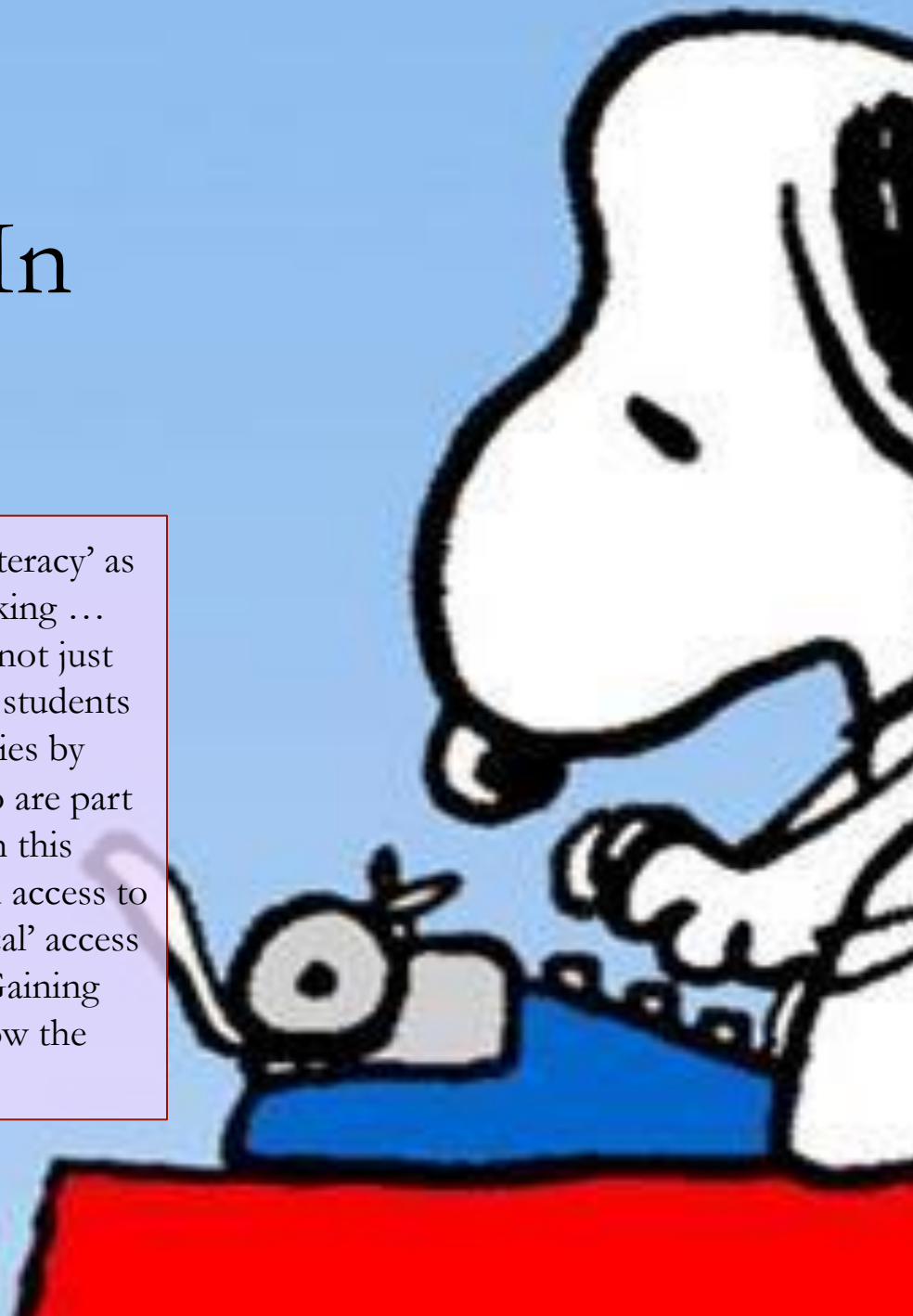
Discourse Communities: In the Literature

"The role of interest connected with shared experiences and comfort suggests the importance of common backgrounds among writers and tutors. Based on this one case study, we might ask in writing centers, how do we work toward a diverse tutoring staff so that all writers are ensured of finding a tutoring partner with genuine interest in not only their writing (their research and ongoing projects) but also their experiences in the university and in navigating the complex writing situations we find ourselves in?" (DeCheck, 2012)
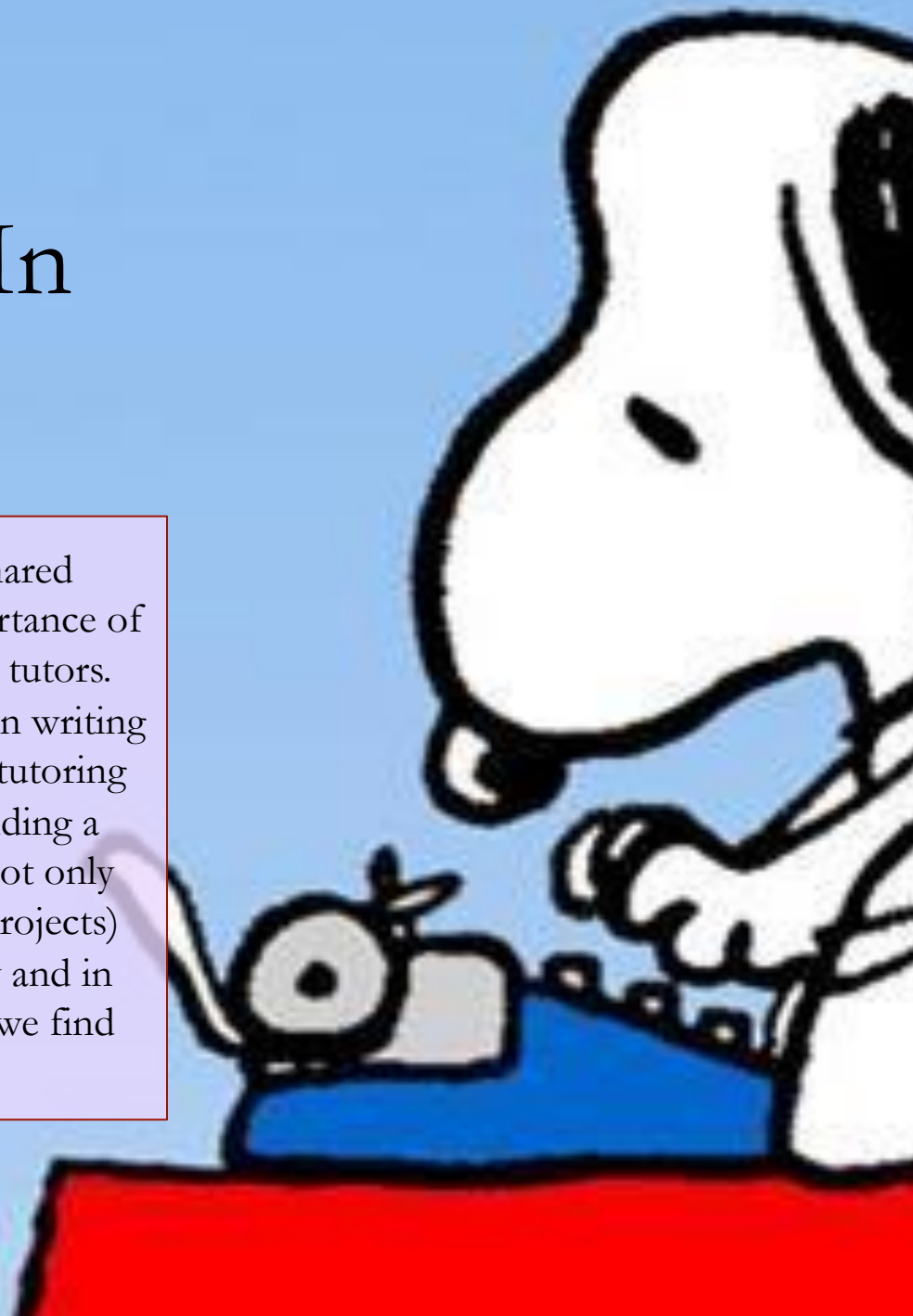
Discourse Communities: Responses From Canadian Writing Centres

There are general skills that are important, but that is not the whole story. Each discipline has its own "culture" that can really only be learned by writing within that subject area.
Joan Garbutt, Brandon University
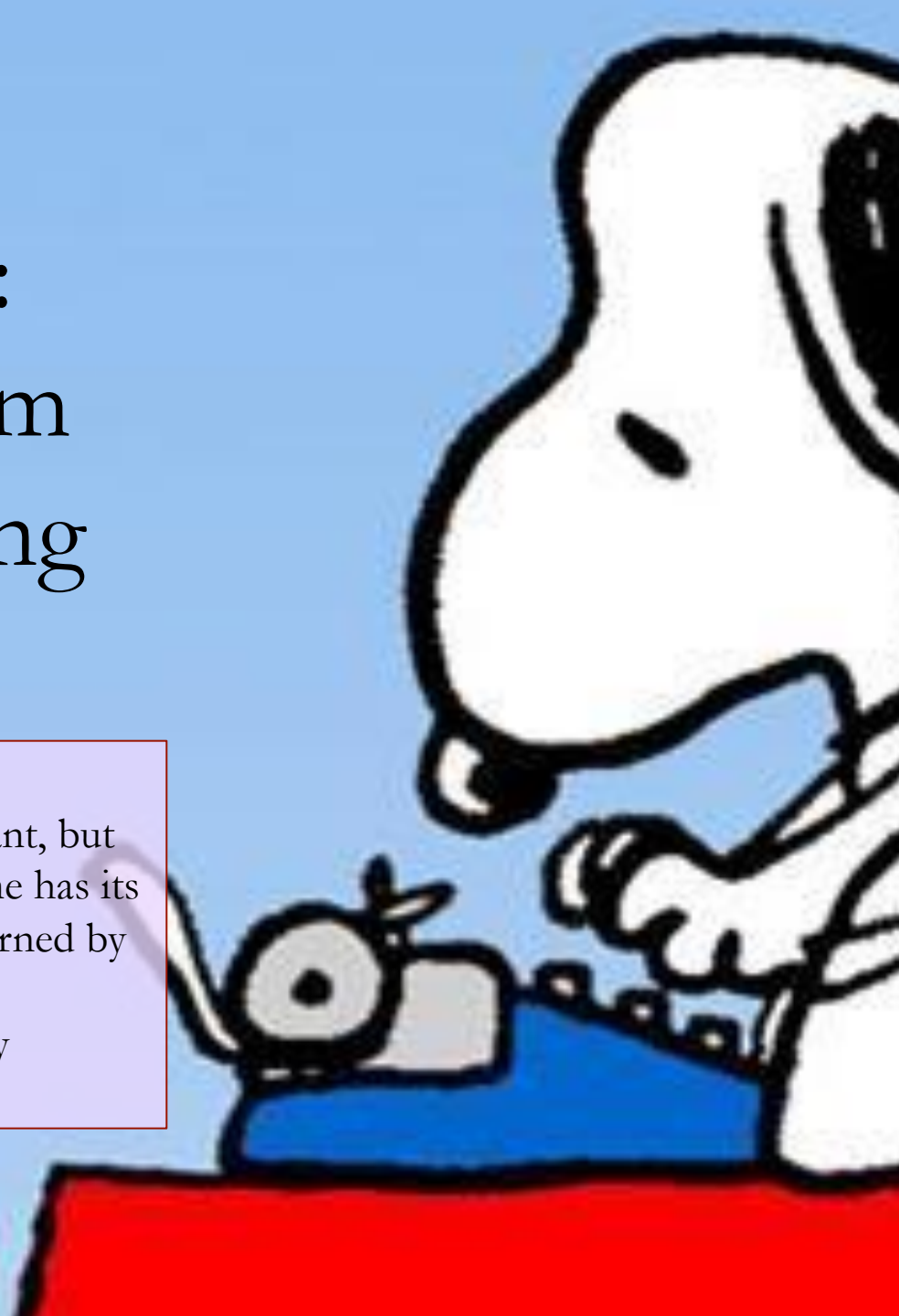
Concluding Thoughts For Discussion:

Discourse Communities: Largely Unaddressed in Canadian Writing Centres?

Benefits, Drawbacks, and Feasibility of Centrally Organized Discipline Specific Tutoring

Theme of Authority: Something to Encourage or

Disencourage in Peer Tutoring?

Course-Linked Tutors

Tutor Bios and Student Selection

Comments and Questions