1-1-2017

Student Interactions with a Native Speaker Tutor and a Nonnative Speaker Tutor at an American Writing Center

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Recommended Citation
Zhao, Yelin (2017) "Student Interactions with a Native Speaker Tutor and a Nonnative Speaker Tutor at an American Writing Center," Writing Center Journal: Vol. 36 : Iss. 2, Article 5.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2832-9414.1826

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Abstract

Although research on tutoring nonnative speaker (NNS) students has grown in the past two decades, many of these studies have either predominantly focused on native speaker (NS) tutors or have been written with the assumption that all tutors are NSs. Thus, NNS tutors have been largely neglected. The purpose of this study is to examine how one NNS student interacts with one NNS tutor and one NS tutor in a writing center at the college level. These two sessions were video-taped, transcribed, and then analyzed in detail using the methodology of conversation analysis. After each session was analyzed, a retrospective interview with the NNS student was conducted to explore her opinions of these tutorials. Interview data shows that the NNS student preferred the NS tutor over the NNS tutor by virtue of their NNS/NS status. The conversation analysis of the actual tutorials, however, reveals that the NNS student preference is likely due to the fact that the NS tutor’s
frequent use of recasts immediately after she identifies an error in the student paper is more aligned with the student's ends to have her paper proofread. Findings of this study provide an empirical basis for enhancing training and research on NNS tutors.

Introduction

In the past two decades, as the population of nonnative speaker (NNS) students grows in US academic institutions, the number of NNS students who come to the writing center (WC) for individualized assistance increases. Thankfully, research on tutoring NNS students is growing exponentially, with articles (e.g., Harris & Silva, 1993; Blau & Hall, 2002; Thonus, 2002, 2004; Severino & Prim, 2015), dissertations (e.g., Ritter, 2002; Chang, 2011), and training guides (e.g., Bruce & Rafoth, 2009, 2016; Rafoth, 2015). Although these works shed light on how to better serve NNS students, the majority of them have either predominately addressed native speaker (NS) tutors or have been written with the assumption that all tutors are NSs. Thus, NNS tutors have been largely neglected. The purpose of this paper is to help fill the gap, exploring in detail the natural interaction between a NNS tutor and a NNS student in one WC tutorial at the university level. After this NNS tutor–NNS student tutorial was analyzed, I also examined how the same NNS student interacted with a NS tutor for comparison purposes.

Literature Review

Previous work on serving NNS students has reported that NS tutors who are able to effectively interact with NS students often have difficulty working with NNS students (e.g., Harris & Silva, 1993; Thonus, 2004; Chang, 2011). Muriel Harris & Tony Silva (1993) identified several primary reasons for this difficulty. First, unprepared/not-adequately-trained NS tutors are unfamiliar with rhetorical conventions of languages other than English. Therefore, when NS tutors read student

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1 Throughout the paper, I use the terms "Native Speaker (NS)" and "Nonnative Speaker (NNS)" to refer to students' and tutors' linguistic identity without implying any negative connotations. I chose this term rather than other terms such as Multilingual Writers, Multilingual Tutors, ESL Writers, and ESL Tutors for two reasons. First, the NNS student, who participated in the study, stated in the interview that she preferred the NS tutor over the NNS tutor due to their NNS/NS status. Second, studies on teachers in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), an important foundation for this study, have adopted "NS" and "NNS."
papers that include rhetorical patterns different from those of English writing (e.g., stating a thesis statement at the end of the paper), they often have difficulty understanding the reasons why students would do so. Second, unprepared NS tutors may not be familiar with NNS students’ grammatical errors, aggravating their degree of anxiety working with NNS students.

NS tutors’ difficulty/uncertainty serving NNS students is also evidenced in Terese Thonus’s (2004) work, in which she compared tutor interactions with NS students and NNS students. By analyzing 25 tutorials with NS students and 19 tutorials with NNS students, coupled with retrospective interviews with both students and tutors, Thonus (2004) finds that when working with NNS students, NS tutors exhibited less laughter and greater volubility. Additionally, when serving NNS students, NS tutors were less consistent in their interactional behaviors; while they offered more explicit directives, they also tried not to provide authoritative advice (e.g., “I think that your instructor could answer a lot of these questions”), indicating that they were unsure of their roles with NNS students.

Harris & Silva (1993) also discuss the challenges that tutors face when serving NNS students:

. . . typically, tutors, who bring to their work a background of experience and knowledge in interacting effectively with native speakers of English, are not adequately equipped to deal with some additional concerns of non-native speakers of English—the unfamiliar grammatical errors, the sometimes bewilderingly different rhetorical patterns and conventions of other languages, and the expectations that accompany ESL writers when they come to the writing center. (p. 525)

The above-mentioned difficulties that NS tutors encounter may be less of an issue or a non-issue for NNS tutors. NNS tutors often share similar learning experiences with NNS students, so they might be more aware of NNS students’ grammatical errors, rhetorical patterns, and expectations. However, an examination of WC studies showed that researchers have given scant attention to NNS tutors. Compared to the body of research devoted to the NS tutors’ practice when working with NNS students, studies on NNS tutor–NNS student tutorials have been few. In fact, many tutoring guides and studies were written without mentioning the NNS/NS status of tutors, assuming that all tutors are NSs. For example, Thonus (2002) provides detailed participant information such as student sex and NNS/NS status. However, when it

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2 In that study, the NNS/NS status of tutors was not mentioned.
comes to tutors, no information is given regarding whether they were NNSs or NSs.

To date, to the best of my knowledge, only one dissertation (Chang, 2011) has focused on WC NNS tutors. By conducting pre- and post-session interviews with both NNS and NS tutors and NNS and NS students, Tzu-Shan Chang (2011) reports that both tutors and students were largely affected by tutors' NNS/NS status, as opposed to the competency that tutors possessed. Additionally, the author uncovered that although both NNS and NS students admired the NNS tutors' capability to explain grammatical errors accurately, they still preferred NS tutors over NNS tutors, under the influence of the "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson, 1992). This misassumption refers to the belief that NSs are better qualified instructors/tutors by virtue of their NS status. On the other hand, NNS instructors/tutors who carry accents or images that are not perceived as being NS-like are categorized as unqualified.

The "native speaker fallacy" has been widely discussed in the literature on NNS/NS teachers in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Research shows that this prejudice occurs in recruitment practices for English instructors (e.g., Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman, & Hartford, 2004; Ruecker & Ives, 2015) and exists among students (e.g. Rubin, 1992,; Butler, 2007; Braine, 2010).

In sum, the above-mentioned existing research in the field of WC studies, second language acquisition, and TESOL provides an important point of reference for my initial exploration of an NNS tutor-NNS student tutorial; i.e., an inspection of how one NNS tutor and one NNS student interact with each other in a WC tutorial. As the study progressed, I found that it would be interesting to explore how the same NNS student interacts with a NS tutor, so my research questions are as follows:

1. What linguistic, paralinguistic, and nonlinguistic features appear in conversations in one NNS tutor-NNS student tutorial and one NS tutor-NNS student tutorial at a large research-oriented southwestern university in the U.S.?

2. What are the differences and/or similarities, if any, between one NNS student's interactions with a NNS tutor and a NS tutor?

3. What are the possible reasons that account for the differences/similarities, based on analyses of the moment-by-moment interactions in these two tutorials?
4. What factors, if any, were reported to affect the NNS student’s perceptions of the success of these two tutorials?

Methodology

Setting. This IRB-approved study (IRB application no: AS 1467) was conducted in a writing center at a large southwestern university in the U.S. The center provides services to both undergraduate and graduate writers across disciplines. At the time of this research, all tutors, including the participants of this study, worked at the center as part of their graduate assistantship offered by the English department. Both tutors who participated in this study took a WC theory and pedagogy course during their first semester working as WC tutors. They also attended weekly training meetings to discuss their concerns with other tutors and the WC director.

Data collection. The data set includes two tutorials: Tutorial 1 and Tutorial 2. Tutorial 1 is between a Chinese tutor named Yun and a Thai student named Mali. Tutorial 2 is between an American tutor named Emma and the same student, Mali.

Tutorial 1 was videotaped in November 2014, as part of the researcher-collected corpus of natural interactions of WC tutorials. Tutorial 1 was chosen as the focus of this study because both Yun and I are Chinese. I think my identity as a compatriot of Yun, along with my past experience working as a NNS tutor, could help add more valuable insights when analyzing her interaction with the student. One month after Tutorial 1 was recorded, with the aim to learn about Mali’s perspectives on Tutorial 1, I conducted a retrospective interview with Mali, which is titled Interview 1 (see Appendix A for interview questions). In Interview 1, although Mali acknowledged that Yun “knows what she does,” when asked about if she would like to work with Yun again, Mali stated that she would prefer to work with a NS tutor. This finding from Interview 1 motivated me to examine how Mali would interact with a NS tutor.

In April 2015, after noticing that Mali made an appointment with a NS tutor (Emma), I video recorded their tutorial (with permissions),

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All of the participant names are pseudonyms.

It is worth noting that Emma’s tutoring approach is very different from Yun’s approach (see section titled “Different Tutoring Approaches Adopted in Tutorial 1 & 2.”) A reviewer for this manuscript suggested that it might be better to choose a NS tutor whose tutoring approach is similar to that of Yun. I did not attempt to do so out of two concerns. First, one of the important goals of this study is to explore the natural interaction between tutors and students. Due to this reason,
which is named Tutorial 2. In May 2015, Interview 2 was conducted with Mali to explore her perspectives on the success of Tutorial 2. The questions for Interviews 1 and 2 were intentionally kept the same to reduce the potential confounding factors that might affect Mali’s evaluations of these two tutorials.

Data analysis. From January to July of 2015, the videos of Tutorials 1 and 2 were analyzed three times. First, I transcribed in detail the entire session of Tutorial 1 (58 mins) and Tutorial 2 (44 mins), using the transcription conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (2004) for conversation analysis (CA), with some slight modifications to describe more accurately my data set (see Appendix B). Second, I focused on describing in detail the opening and the first several subsequent segments in the directive phases of Tutorials 1 and 2. The opening phase is the stage where the tutor and the student typically set an agenda for what they will be working on in the rest of the tutorial. In the directive phase, the tutor and the student often discuss what the student has or has not done in their paper. Segments were demarcated by the number of topics that were discussed in the tutorial. I chose to analyze these two phases in detail because the opening phase sets the stage of the WC frame for both tutors and students. For example, if tutors and students agree on working solely on grammar in the opening stages, they might be more likely to only focus on this particular aspect of writing in the subsequent directive phases.

During the second-round analysis of these two tutorials, I employed two central CA concepts: adjacency pair and preference. An “adjacency pair” is defined as two utterances produced by different speakers and ordered as first pair part (FPP) and second pair part (SPP). Typical examples of adjacency pairs are question-answer, offer-acceptance, or offer-refusal. Preference, within the realm of CA, means the “natural” or “expected” actions that are typically packaged without marked formats (i.e., without delay, mitigation, or explanations). Dispreferred actions, on the other hand, are often accompanied with marked formats such as delays or mitigations (Schegloff, 2007).

it is important to analyze the session between Mali and a NS tutor that she chose to work with. I believed that asking Mali to work with a NS tutor that she did not choose/want to work with instead would change the authenticity of the interaction. Second, before the tutorial between Emma and Mali was recorded, I was unable to predict that tutoring style (as opposed to other factors) would be a determining aspect that leads to Mali’s different behaviors. This finding in fact emerged from the detailed conversation analysis of Tutorials 1 and 2.

5 See Emanuel A. Schegloff (2007) for a detailed account of the concept.
The second-round analysis revealed that Yun tended to ask graduated questions to guide Mali to propose solutions while Emma frequently provided Mali with the solution by using recasts. To examine to what extent these two approaches occurred in the rest of the directive phases that were not described in detail during the second-round analysis, I coded the entire directive phases of both tutorials and mapped out the structure and the frequency of both approaches. This coding procedure is named as the third-round analysis.

In July 2015, Interviews 1 and 2 were also transcribed using CA conventions (see Appendix B) and analyzed in detail for emergent themes.

Participants.

Mali: A NNS student. The NNS student Mali is a female in her mid- to late twenties from Thailand. She earned her BS in Thailand before she came to the southwestern university to pursue her MA in Nutritional Sciences in 2010. In 2012, she was admitted as a doctoral student at the same university, and at the time of this research, she was a third-year PhD student. She has been a frequent WC client. According to Mali, throughout her MA studies, she visited the center twice a week on a regular basis.

Yun: A NNS tutor. The NNS tutor Yun is a Chinese female. At the time of data collection, she was 27 years old. She earned her BA in English at a top-tier university in China, prior to her arrival in the U.S. in 2010 to pursue her MA in Bilingual Education. In November 2014, she was a second-year PhD student in TESL/Linguistics in the English department at the southwestern university, and Fall 2014 was her first time working as a WC tutor. At the time of this study, though Yun had been teaching her native language, i.e., Mandarin, to American-born Chinese children for two semesters, she did not have experience teaching and/or tutoring English to speakers of other languages.

Emma: A NS tutor. Emma, the tutor in Tutorial 2, is a white NS of English. At the time of this study, Emma was 24 years old. She was a first-year MFA student in Poetry, and Fall 2014 was also her first time working as a WC tutor in the same university at the research site. Before

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6 The term of “recasts” is adopted from Roy Lyster and Leila Ranta’s (1997) study on corrective feedback and learner uptake (i.e., students’ immediate response to feedback). In their terms, “recasts involve the teacher’s [in the writing center context, the tutor’s] reformulation of all or part of a student’s utterance, [in the WC context, a student’s paper], minus the error” (p. 46). An example of recast is, when addressing the following sentence in a student’s writing “I go to Walmart yesterday,” the tutor says “you went to Walmart yesterday.”
she was admitted as an MFA student at the southwestern university, she taught English to children during her undergraduate studies in English at a university in the U.S.

**Tutoring sessions.**

**Tutorial 1.** Though Mali has been a frequent client of the WC and Yun had experience working with NNS students before the recorded tutorial, Tutorial 1 was the first meeting between Yun and Mali. During the tutorial, Yun and Mali worked on a program evaluation research report, which was in draft form.

**Tutorial 2.** This session was Mali's third tutorial with Emma. In the prior tutorials, they worked on a research report in each visit. During Tutorial 2, they worked on a different research report. See Table 1 for a summary of important information of Tutorials 1 and 2:

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7 It is worth noting that I did not intentionally choose to record Mali's third tutorial, rather than her first or second tutorial with Emma. As mentioned above, my interest in exploring how Mali would interact with a NS tutor was motivated by the finding from Interview 1. By the time I analyzed Interview 1 and used the WCOnline scheduler to identify the NS tutor that Mali worked with, Mali had already worked with Emma twice.
Table 1. Key Information of Tutorials 1 and 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tutorial</th>
<th>Total time</th>
<th>Tutor status, sex, age, &amp; L1</th>
<th>Tutor major</th>
<th>Student status, sex, &amp; L1</th>
<th>Student major</th>
<th>Student paper</th>
<th>1st time visit</th>
<th>Repeat visit w/ the same tutor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yun-Mali</td>
<td>58 mins</td>
<td>NNSF (27) Chinese</td>
<td>2nd year PhD TESL</td>
<td>NNSF (27) Thai</td>
<td>PhD Nutrition Sciences</td>
<td>Research Report 1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma-Mali</td>
<td>44 mins</td>
<td>NSF (24) English</td>
<td>1st year MFA Poetry</td>
<td>NNSF (27) Thai</td>
<td>PhD Nutrition Sciences</td>
<td>Research Report 2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April. 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Patterns of Tutorials 1 and 2

Mali’s behaviors in Tutorials 1 and 2: Directive vs. receptive. Detailed descriptions of what happened in the opening phase and the first several subsequent segments in the directive phases of Tutorials 1 and 2 show that Mali is directive in Tutorial 1 but receptive in Tutorial 2. To be more specific, in Tutorial 1, Mali controls the session and attempts to direct Yun to follow Mali’s agenda, as evidenced in her repetitive mentions of her expectations of the tutorial and her frequent use of overlaps to interrupt Yun when Yun tries to clarify her intended meaning or offer explanations of why she points out certain errors. In contrast, in Tutorial 2, Mali is very receptive to Emma’s suggestions. In particular, she follows Emma’s instruction and agrees with all the suggestions that Emma offers, as evidenced by her immediate responses to Emma’s suggestions, such as her frequent use of acknowledgment and her immediate action to revise the errors that are reformulated by Emma.

In what follows, I present the detailed analyses from which the above-mentioned patterns emerged. For each tutorial, the order of analysis starts with profiling the structures of the two phases of the tutorials and moves on to detailing how Mali interacts with her tutor.

Tutorial 1: Profile of the opening phase and the first several subsequent segments in the directive phase. As presented in Table 2, in the opening phase, Yun asks Mali about what Mali would like to work on and whether it is her first time visiting the WC before proceeding to discuss the read-aloud strategy. In the first several subsequent segments of directive phases, Yun and Mali spend much time exploring two major issues, represented as Segments 4 and 5. Note that each segment
is lengthy, with the first one consisting of 40 lines and the second, 20 lines in transcription.

Table 2. Profile of the Opening Phase and Its Subsequent Segments in the Directive Phase of Tutorial 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile of the Three Segments in the Opening Phase of Tutorial 1&lt;sup&gt;8&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Segment 1 (T1–17): Y and M discussed what aspect(s) of writing Mali wanted to focus on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment 2 (T18–20): Y asked M whether it was her first time visiting the WC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment 3 (T21–44): Y and M discussed who would be reading the paper aloud.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Profile of the First Several Segments of the Directive Phase of Tutorial 1

| Segment 4 (T45–85): Y’s feedback was interrupted by M to focus on a singular/plural issue. |
| Segment 5 (T86–106): Y and M discussed the repetitive use of a word in Mali’s writing. |

**Tutorial 1: Mali’s directiveness.** Mali tends to control the direction of Tutorial 1. To be more specific, Mali explicitly states her expectations of the tutorial in the opening phase and attempts to direct Yun to follow Mali’s agenda in the directive phase. For example, in response to the typical WC question “What are we going to work on today?” Mali not only describes the paper she brought to the center, but overtly states what she expects Yun to do during the session:

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<sup>8</sup> T: Turns; Y: Yun; M: Mali.
Tutorial 1, Segment 1

1 Yun: Okay.
2 ((looks at the researcher who indicates that the tutor can start the tutorial))
3 So what are we going to work on today.
4 ((moves her right hand towards the student paper while saying "work on"))
5 Mali: So: this is a um I am taking a program evaluation class?
6 ((looks at the tutor while tapping her pen on her paper with the right hand and pointing to the paper with her left hand))
7 and this is like a report of an evaluation like what I found
8 ((points to her paper while saying "report"))
9 So it's a lot
10 ((flips through her paper while saying "a lot"))
11 but () I mean I have () another appointment as well
12 so you don't () we don't () I mean just finish as much as we can today.
13 ((points to her paper while saying "we can today"))
14 It's fine.
15 Yeah.

Note that Mali's answer to the question "So what are we going to work on today?" is long: excluding the description of Mali's gestures, her answer takes up seven lines (lines 6, 9, 11, 13–14, and 16–17) and constitutes seven turn-construction units (TCUs). Lines 6–10 could be considered a proper SPP to Yun's question at line 3, which is the FPP, because Mali has already provided a brief answer to Yun's question at line 3. However, after describing her class and paper, Mali goes on to talk about her expectations of the tutorial (see lines 11–17). In fact, Mali states her expectations of the tutorial quite explicitly. For example, at line 14, Mali first says "you don't" and after a slight delay, she switches from using the singular second-person pronoun "you" to the plural first-person pronoun "we" (see "we don't" at line 14) without completing the sentence. Instead, she clarifies her intended meaning by using an imperative sentence "I mean just finish as much as we can today." At line 16, Mali starts another TCU with "It's fine," which once again explicates her expectations.

Mali's tendency to assert her expectations of what she wants Yun to do is also evidenced in the following segment, in which she interrupts Yun's talk on the "read-aloud" strategy to express her expectation to only work on grammar:
In the above segment, just as Mali does at lines 11–17, towards the end of the opening phase of Tutorial 1 at line 42, Mali explicates her expectation again; i.e., “my only concern is the grammar” with the rising high pitch on the word “only.” It is important to note that Mali explicates her expectations by holding the floor at lines 11–17 and by interrupting Yun’s talk at line 42. Note that after Mali asserts her own agenda to only work on grammar, Yun expressed her acknowledgement by saying “okay” in soft speech at line 44.

Mali’s interruptive behavior at line 42 is relatively “mild” compared to her later interactions with Yun in the several subsequent directive phases of Tutorial 1. For example, in the following directive phases, Mali interrupts Yun many times when Yun tries to offer feedback:
Tutorial 1, Selected Segment 4

(lines 45–57 omitted)

58 Yun: Okay. Uh-huh (.) Um::: (1.3) >Let me see.<

59 (2.3)

60 So (.) so (.) you you changed this part, right?

61 [((points to a specific word/phrase/sentence on the student paper
62 with her left index finger))]

63 Mali: [((lowers her head and tries to read the sentence))]

64 Yun: Ah. I saw a=

65 [((points to the word/phrase/sentence again))]

66 Mali: =Oh (.)

67 Yun: in >()<

68 Mali: It shoul-. Yeah. It should be no "s." I haven't changed that (. ) Rig[ht.]

69 Yun: [Ao] (.) [um:::

70 Mali: [To be (. ) <REC

71 Within (. ) the fiscal year REC>

72 Yun: [fiscal years

73 (1.3)

74 Mali: Actually (.) I mentioned about like (.) within one (.) year like July to June and (.) ((sniff))

After Mali reads the first two paragraphs aloud (lines 45–57 which are omitted considering the limitation of the space), Yun asks whether Mali “changed this part” (line 60). Acknowledging Mali might be confused about which part Yun is referring to, Yun tries to offer more explanation of what she means by “it” (see line 64), which is interrupted by Mali’s “Oh” at line 66. At line 67, Yun tries to locate whatever “this part” is, which is once again interrupted by Mali’s own asserted understanding of Yun’s meaning. Due to Mali’s repeated interruptions, it is not entirely clear if Mali’s understanding is aligned with Yun’s intended meaning, but Yun’s use of the lengthened filler “um:::” seems to provide evidence that Mali misunderstands Yun. At line 70, once again, Mali overlaps Yun’s “um:::,” and then at line 71, Mali orally revises her own writing from “fiscal years” to “fiscal year.” Mali’s response to Yun’s suggestion of “fiscal years,” especially her stress on the discourse marker “actually” at line 74, shows an orientation to resist Yun’s advice.

Mali’s interruption is also instantiated in the following segment when Yun points out the repetitiveness of her writing:
Tutorial 1, Selected Segment 5

86 Yun: =so do you think it's a little bit repetitive? Rece[\-
87 Mali: [Oh the tense, right?

At line 87, before Yun finishes her utterance, Mali not only interrupts Yun but also raises a question that has no relevance to Yun's question. To be more specific, "do you think it's a little bit repetitive?" (line 86) is a yes/no question. A reasonable response (i.e., the SPP of the adjacency pair to Yun's yes/no question) should indicate her agreement or disagreement. However, Mali's utterance at line 87 is in question form. Moreover, Mali's utterance ("the tense") has no relevance to Yun's question that focuses on whether the use of a word is repetitive or not. However, it is consistent with Mali's focus on grammar over other concerns.

Tutorial 2: Profile of the opening phase and the first several subsequent segments in the directive phase. As seen in Table 3, compared to the opening and the first several directive phases in Tutorial 1, those in Tutorial 2 are significantly shorter. The reduced opening phase might be due to the fact that this particular tutorial is Mali's third tutorial with Emma. Note that each segment in the directive phase of Tutorial 2 is also much more reduced than the counterpart in Tutorial 1. Excluding Segment 4, in which Emma praises Mali's writing, the turns in the rest of the segments (i.e., Segments 5–9) range from 2 turns to 10 turns.

Table 3. Profile of the Opening Phase and Its Subsequent Segments in the Directive Phase of Tutorial 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile of the Three Segments in the Opening Phase of Tutorial 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Segment 1 (T1–9): E and M discussed what the paper is about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment 2 (T10–20): E and M discussed they wanted to work on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammar and clarity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment 3 (T21–36): Although M did not understand E's question, M still said &quot;Yeah.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Profile of the First Several Segments of the Directive Phase of Tutorial 2

Segment 4 (T27–53): E complimented on M’s writing.

Segment 5 (T54–56): E identified an omission of a comma and asked M to add a comma.

Segment 6 (T57–62): E orally reformulated “the” to “this.”

Segment 7 (T63–73): E orally added a phrase to improve the clarity of M’s writing.

Segment 8 (T74–77): E asked M to add a comma.

Segment 9 (T78–80): E orally added “the” for M.

Tutorial 2: Mali’s receptiveness. In contrast to her behavior in Tutorial 1, in Tutorial 2, Mali follows Emma’s directions to set up agendas in the opening phase and accepts each of Emma’s suggestions in the directive phase. The following segment shows how Mali follows Emma’s steps in the opening phase:

Tutorial 2, Segment 1

1 Mali: Okay so this this um:: paper will be abou- it’s similar to the last one?
2 Em: Okay.
3 Mali: But this will be (.) about the muscularity dissatisfaction.
4 Em: Okay. Just about the muscularity body [type?]
5 Mali: [Yeah.
6 Mali: [Uh-huh.] It’s just the male participant in this study?
7 But every (1.5) I mean most of the (.) variable that we ( ) is the same.
8 Em: Okay I got you.
9 Mali: Uh-huh.

In the above segment, Mali agrees with Emma on what the paper is about, as evidenced in her use of backchannels such as “Yeah” at line 5 and “Uh-huh” at lines 6 and 9. Even when Mali seems unable to understand Emma, she still says “Yeah,” as shown in the segment below:
Tutorial 2, Segment 3

21 Em: >Okafy< (.) U:::m (.) >Any like< (.) >consistent thing you keep running into< (1.1) um that you
22 want to be aware (.) as we read through it? (.) Or just kinda wanna wait and see.
23 ()
24 Mali: ((looks at the tutor and shows a slight frown)) Yeah.
25 Em: Just wait and see (.). Okafy (1.3) All right we will start <RE purpose RE>

Note that immediately after Emma asks the question at lines 21–22, Mali does not provide any response, not even a back channel. Instead, Mali shows a slight frown. It is interesting that in contrast to her reaction in Tutorial 1 (being disruptive and asserting her own agenda), even when Mali may not fully understand Emma’s question, Mali still says “Yeah” (line 25).

As stated above, in the directive phase, Mali accepts each suggestion that Emma offers, evidenced by her frequent use of “uh-huh” and her immediate action to revise her writing based on Emma’s advice throughout Segments 5–9. Due to space limitations, three segments are analyzed in detail to show Mali’s receptiveness.

Tutorial 2, Segment 6

57 Em: Um <REC from 7 schools in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region (.) participated in (.) this study
58 REC>
59 Mali: In this?
60 Em: Uh-huh.
61 Mali: (2.9)
62 ((changes "the" to "this"))

In Mali’s paper, she wrote, “1056 male students from seven schools in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region participated in the study.” In lines 57–58, while Emma is reading this sentence out loud, she verbally changes Mali’s use of “the” to “this.” After confirming that Emma intended to suggest “this,” Mali changes “the” to “this.”

In the following segment, at line 68, Emma reads part of the sentence included in Mali’s paper: “The participants were classified into no dissatisfaction (ND), wanted to increase muscularity (IM) and decrease muscularity (DM).” While she was reading aloud, Emma suggests that Mali add “wanted to” before “decrease muscularity.” At line 73, Mali adds “wanted to.”
Mali’s receptiveness to Emma’s suggestions is further evidenced in the following segment when Emma suggests that Mali add “the” before her sentence “Current BMI of the IM group was significantly lower than ND and DM groups.” Once again, after Emma offers the suggestion at line 78, Mali makes an immediate correction on her paper at line 80.

Different tutoring approaches adopted in Tutorials 1 and 2. The detailed conversation analysis of Tutorials 1 and 2 reveals the stark contrast between Mali’s behaviors in response to Yun and Emma. As interactions must happen between more than one interlocutor, examining how tutors provide feedback seems to be a reasonable step to look at possible accounts for Mali’s different behaviors. The ensuing analysis of the entire directive phases of both tutorials reveals that Mali’s different behaviors can be accounted for by Yun and Emma’s different approaches to providing corrective feedback. To be more specific, in Tutorial 2, immediately after Emma identifies an error while reading an excerpt of Mali’s paper aloud, Emma uses recasts to provide solutions for Mali. This approach might be more aligned with Mali’s ends to have her paper proofread. By contrast, although Yun’s approach of guiding Mali to propose solutions on her own is more aligned with WC frame and Vygotskian theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and is more likely to lead to Mali’s acquisition, this approach is not preferred by Mali.

9 ZPD refers to the gap between one’s actual developmental level and the potential level of development with others’ assistance.
Yun's approach in Tutorial 1: Provision of graduated, contingent assistance in Mali's ZPD. The third-round coding of the entire directive phase of Tutorial 1 yielded 33 segments. Based on the analysis of these 33 segments, I generated an outline of schemata of a prototypical way in which Yun offered corrective feedback. All of the segments start with either Yun or Mali reading an excerpt of Mali's paper aloud. After Yun identifies an error, the reading halts and the provision of corrective feedback starts. As opposed to offering solutions for Mali, which is the frequently used approach in Tutorial 2, Yun often starts the correction process by directing Mali's attention to a sentence that contains an error. The two most frequent approaches to direct Mali’s attention are asking a general problem-implicative question (e.g., “Is there anything you would like to change in this sentence?”) (n=25) and repeating the problematic sentence/phrase with the use of rising intonation (n=8). If such questions fail to lead to appropriate responses, Yun narrows the question to a specific line or phrase that includes the error (e.g., “Do you notice anything wrong with this phrase?”). If this narrowing strategy prompts a proper response, then Yun and Mali proceed to discuss a different error/topic. If it still fails to elicit a response, Yun provides Mali with a more explicit clue (e.g., “remember we talked about the past tense”). If there is still no responsiveness toward the error, Yun then provides the answer, sometimes accompanied by an explanation of why a particular revision is needed.

It is important to note that throughout the directive phase of Tutorial 1, Yun offers graduated assistance. She uses recasts only if problem-implicative questions fail to elicit a correct response from Mali. The following segment represents how Yun offers contingent assistance with Mali’s ZPD to guide her to propose a correct solution step by step:

**Tutorial 1, Directive phase**

432 Yun: There is something here. <RE is designed to RE>
433 (2s)
434 Mali: Uh-huh.
435 Yun: Do you feel like something is missing?
436 (3s)
437 Mali: ((looks at the paper but did not say anything))
438 Yun: Um. <RE is designed to RE>
439 Mali: Design with ed?
440 Yun: Yes. ((smiles))
441 Mali: ((Smiles while adding “ed” on her paper)).

At line 432, Yun tries to address a passive voice issue associated with the sentence Mali produced in her paper: “The OSU Insect Adventure program is design to correct the low literacy about arthropods, relieve
fear, and misconceptions of these insects.” Note that Yun first alludes to the problem by doing a focused reading of the part that contains the error, with a lengthened read on “design.” Then she leaves two seconds as a potential interactional space for Mali to respond (line 433). After noting no immediate response besides an “Uh-huh” (line 434), Yun advances her implication by indicating there might be something wrong, which incurs no uptake again. This time, at line 439, Yun narrows the location of the error by dropping “to,” indicating the error occurs between “is design” with a lengthened voice on the word “design,” which leads to Mali’s successful proposed solution of “designed.”

It is worth pointing out that, as presented in the segment above, Yun and Mali work together to solve a grammatical problem. Note that although Yun knows the correct answer, she leaves enough interactional space for Mali to propose a solution, and Mali does pick up the clue and propose the correct solution with the guidance that Yun offered. It is important to note that Yun’s approach is aligned with the theory of ZPD and the idea of minimalist tutoring (Brooks, 1991).

Emma’s approach in Tutorial 2: Provision of solutions at the outset. Transcription of the directive phase of Tutorial 2 contains 49 segments in which Emma offers corrective feedback. Since each segment is identified by one topic, 49 segments indicate that Emma and Mali address 49 different topics in 41 minutes, in which 31 of them are grammar focused.

A notable feature that emerges from the analysis is Emma’s strong preference to provide a solution for Mali once she identifies an error, and Emma often does so by using recasts. During the entire session, 40 of 49 segments (82%) are devoted to this particular strategy, in which Emma not only informs Mali what to fix but also how to fix the errors and stylistic issues. Out of these 40 segments, two most frequently occurring types are: 1. those in which errors are reformulated while Emma was reading part of Mali’s paper out loud, and 2. those that begin with questions that are proposed by Emma to make sure Emma’s following correction is aligned with Mali’s intended meanings. The first type occurs 24 times while the frequency of the second type is 12.

The first type is evidenced in the above-presented Tutorial 2, Segment 6 (at line 57) and Tutorial 2, Segment 9 (at line 78). In such cases, while Emma reads part of Mali’s paper aloud, she orally formulates Mali’s writing without the errors. For example, at line 78 in Tutorial 2, Segment 9, Emma first reads a part of Mali’s sentence, which is “Current BMI of the IM group was.” After a very quick “um,” she reformulates Mali’s writing by suggesting that Mali add “the” before the sentence. Note that before Emma recasts, unlike Yun’s strategy, neither
interactional space nor a problem-implicative question is given to Mali. After the recast, as lines 79–80 indicate, Emma does not explain why she suggested that Mali add “the” in this case. Mali does not ask about the reason either: she simply adds “the” to her paper. Note that in the research report genre, it is unnecessary to add “the” in this case.

In the second type, Emma does ask questions before she recasts; however, these questions are not problem-implicative questions. The purpose of proposing such questions is for Emma to verify that her following recast matches what Mali intends to say. An example of such type can be found in Tutorial 2, Selected Segment 7. At line 68, Emma reads part of the following sentence in the student’s paper: “The participants were classified into no dissatisfaction (ND), wanted to increase muscularity (IM) and decrease muscularity (DM).” In lines 68–69, after Emma reads out loud, she asks the question “do they want to decrease muscularity?” to make sure her correction at line 71 is aligned with Mali’s intended ideas. Again, after Emma recasts, Mali does not show any verbal uptake: she simply adds “wanted to” on her paper as Emma suggests.

In both types, unlike what Yun does in Tutorial 1, no interactional space is given before Emma uses recasts to reformulate Mali’s sentences that may contain errors, and no explanation is given as to why certain corrections are needed. Note that throughout the directive phase of this tutorial, Mali seldom verbalizes anything besides the use of minimal responses such as “uh-huh,” “okay,” and “yeah.”

As shown in the analysis above, Mali’s directive and receptive behaviors in Tutorials 1 and 2 might be mostly attributable to Yun’s and Emma’s different tutoring approaches. Analysis provides evidence that Mali is receptive to Emma’s approach of using recasts because it is more aligned with Mali’s ends to have her grammatical errors corrected. By contrast, Mali dislikes Yun’s approach of providing guidance to encourage Mali to propose solutions on her own, although this approach is more aligned with WC frame and the theory of ZPD and it is more likely to facilitate long-term acquisition.

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10 A reviewer for this manuscript pointed out that in addition to the tutors’ different approaches, the fact that Mali worked with Emma twice before Tutorial 2 might have positively influenced Mali’s reception of Emma and Tutorial 2. While I agree that this might be a factor, it is not empirically clear whether the number of Mali’s visits to Emma is positively correlated with her preference for Emma over Yun.
Themes of Interviews 1 and 2

Analysis of Interviews 1 and 2 reveals that Mali indeed prefers Emma over Yun. However, without commenting on the different approaches that Yun and Emma used in tutorials, Mali stated in the interview that it is Yun’s NNS status that contributes mostly to her choice for Emma over Yun. Her preference is evidenced below.

Mali’s comments on Tutorial 1 and Yun: “I can make another session with her but she is not gonna be my first choice.”

In Interview 1, Mali reported that she initially doubted Yun’s tutoring ability when she first saw Yun and heard her nonnativelike accent, but as the session progressed, Mali felt that Yun “knows a lot of grammar” and “knows what she does.” However, the fact that Yun “knows what she does” was not convincing enough for Mali to choose her as a tutor again due to Mali’s preference for a NS tutor over Yun. When asked about whether Tutorial 1 was a successful tutorial or not, Mali responded:

1 Okay. $$$ So::: I would say::: (.) I (.) admire her like (.) because sh- (.) we we
2 I know we are not a native speaker. To have that skill, like (.) I think she knows a
3 lot of grammar. She is really great at the grammar stuff (.)…That that I mean (.)
4 like to be honest $ Yeah. So:: I mean but after::: like (.) when the session goes, I
5 feels like (.) okay () she (3s) I mean she knows () >that better than me<, and she
6 gives me the right suggestion:: (.) but (.) it’s not feels like if you have the ()
7 native speaker () >to correct your sentence< Yeah. (Interview I, Excerpt I)

Note that although the question aimed to orient Mali toward assessment of the tutorial instead of the tutor (see Question 1 on Appendix A), Mali’s entire response was focused on evaluating Yun, specifically Yun’s NNS status. Mali first praised that Yun was knowledgeable about grammar (lines 2–3). She then proceeded to acknowledge Yun’s tutoring ability (lines 5–6) before comparing Yun to NSs who correct her sentences (lines 6–7). It is worth pointing out that at first glance, Mali’s comment that Yun “knows better than her” and “gives her the right suggestion” seems to be a compliment. However, an in-depth analysis of the sentence, especially the time clause “after::: like (.) when the session goes” (line 4), implies that before the session, Mali might not trust Yun’s tutoring ability. Such speculation is confirmed by the following excerpt where Mali explained her distrust about Yun as her tutor:

8 I doubt her suggestions sometimes…She knows () she is really great in what
Excerpt 2 not only provides evidence for Mali's initial distrust about Yun, but also shows that such doubt comes from Yun's accent and Mali's "first impression" when she saw Yun.

In the interview, when I asked Mali to elaborate on her statement that working with Yun feels different from working with NS tutors (lines 6–7), she emphasized the importance of NS status as opposed to any other qualifications:

11 I don't know, but I think (3s) because we are not the native speaker::r↑ (.) so:: I
12 think when we (.) when we (.) write or the native speaker writes (.) like (.)
13 different (.) like (.) I don't know how they express th- the sentence and the words
14 (.) I don't know (.) I like the way the native speaker:: expresses the word or the
15 sentence more than (2s) us (.) because I don't know (.) we might just learn (.) the
16 grammar::r and stuff and we didn't use it like (.) yeah. (Interview 1, Excerpt 3)

Note that the causal clause "because we are not the native speaker::r↑" suggests that from Mali's point of view, simply by virtue of NNS status (not other factors), one is not able to write as well as a NS does. Mali further compared NSs to NNSs and explicitly stated her preference for the ways that NSs express ideas, indicating her assumption that all NSs are superior to all NNSs. Mali's preference is further evidenced in her response to my question regarding her willingness to work with Yun as her tutor again (see Question 4 on Appendix A):

17 Um::: (.) I would (.) Uh (.) It's really depends on (.) °a lot of (.) but not my first
18 choice (.) I mean >I CAN I CAN< (.) make another session with her but it's not
19 (.) she is not gonna be my first choice (.) I mean I still prefer (2s) the native
20 speaker. (Interview 1, Excerpt 4)
The analysis of Interview 1 shows that Mali’s evaluation of a WC tutor is affected by the tutor’s NNS/NS status rather than the tutoring ability that the tutor possesses.

**Mali’s comments on Tutorial 2 and Emma: “Just keep the way she is.”** Analysis of Interview 2 revealed Mali’s great trust in Emma’s writing ability and her deep appreciation for Emma’s suggestions, which is evidenced in the following excerpt when Mali responded to my question asking her to assess the success of Tutorial 2:

1 It’s a successful one... I think I love her writing style, like the ways she
2 suggested. If it was her, she would write (.) this way. I mean (.) I feel like (.) oh
3 yeah (.) that’s better... it’s just the style I like her style. (Interview 2, Excerpt 1)

In Excerpt 1, after stating that Tutorial 2 was successful, Mali explained why she speaks highly of the tutorial; in such a short excerpt, she mentioned twice that she likes Emma’s writing style (see “love” at line 1 and “like” at line 3). As the interview progressed, Mali elaborated on the reason why she liked Emma’s writing style:

4 When I sent my papers to my advisor, I always have (.) she would use the track
5 change, and I always have a lot of like corrections. But for the last paper that
6 after I have a session with her, it’s like very few. It’s really really like very few.
   (Interview 2, Excerpt 2)

As can be seen in Excerpt 2, one of Mali’s criteria to assess the success of the tutorial involves another stakeholder, Mali’s advisor, who has provided a significantly reduced number of corrections after her tutorial with Emma. Not surprisingly, when asked if she would be willing to work with Emma as her tutor again, Mali replied without hesitation:

7 Yeah. Yeah. I’ve already made another appointment. (Interview 2, Excerpt 3)

With regard to the suggestions that Mali would like to offer to Emma, Mali said:

8 I don’t have anything. (5s) I don’t know. I really don’t have any
9 suggestions. I mean just keep the way she is. (Interview 2, Excerpt 4)
The analysis of the excerpts in Interview 2 provides clear evidence that Mali trusted Emma’s suggestions as she repeatedly stated that she “likes her writing style.”

**Implications for Tutors and Tutor Preparation**

One salient finding seems to suggest that the NNS student judged the tutors’ tutoring ability and the success of the tutorial based on the tutors’ NNS/NS status rather than their competence. This finding is consistent with those of Chang (2011) and many studies on nonnative English speaker teachers in TESOL (e.g., Rubin, 1992). This finding is also consistent with my observation of the WC at the research site; very often, tutors who have foreign names and/or accents (even though their accents do not affect comprehensibility between tutors and students) are less preferred by students. This study suggests that training should be offered not only to WC professionals and tutors, but also to students to broaden their horizons and help them become cross-culturally aware that tutors should not be judged by their NNS/NS status. Perhaps WC directors and/or writing specialists could hold workshops to emphasize that all tutors, regardless of their NNS/NS status, are trained and qualified. Both NNS and NS tutors should be encouraged to present and discuss their respective strengths at those workshops.

The study also reveals that Mali’s initial bias toward Yun when she saw her and heard her accent was reinforced by the tutoring approach adopted by Emma in Tutorial 2. To be more specific, throughout the tutorial, Emma uses the approach of recasts quite frequently (40 out of 49 times), and she often recasts immediately after she identifies an error. What Emma does in Tutorial 2 is very much preferred by Mali, perhaps because it is more aligned with what Mali wants. However, I call the effectiveness of this strategy into question.¹¹ Ben Rafoth (2015) points out that although recasts can be an effective strategy, if a tutor does not use it strategically or appropriately, this strategy could lead to an editing session without contributing to student learning. I further argue that if throughout the session, the tutor is the one who frequently, if not exclusively, adopts recasts immediately after the tutor identifies an error without discussing why a correction is needed or addressing recurrent patterns of problematic spots, the tutoring session is highly unlikely to...

¹¹ This is not to say that recasts should be avoided in all situations. For example, it could be a very effective approach if tutors use recasts when they have clear evidence that students cannot propose solutions on their own.
facilitate student acquisition because it does not leave any interactional space for the learner to propose solutions on their own.

I also suspect that novice monolingual NS tutors who are not trained in TESOL or are unfamiliar with second language acquisition theory and pedagogy may be inclined to use recasts at the first occurrence of an error. They are likely to simply make the correction for students because they often know what sounds right or wrong by relying on their NS intuitions about English. Furthermore, many non-TESOL monolingual NS tutors are unaccustomed to analyzing their own language, which makes it difficult for them to offer explanations of why certain corrections are needed.

This suggests that NS status alone does not guarantee effective tutoring. WC directors and/or multilingual specialists should discuss with tutors effective approaches to offering feedback by having them read foundational scholarship on feedback provision in the field of second language acquisition. Foundational articles include but are not limited to Ali Aljaafreh & James P. Lantolf (1994) and Hossein Nassaji & Merrill Swain (2000). Beginning with such readings, tutors can discuss with each other the pros and cons of each approach so they can make informed decisions about when to use what approaches and why, rather than exclusively using recasts when offering corrective feedback.

I suggest that tutors’ training should include discussions about some empirically supported approaches offered by TESOL practitioners. The approach of providing feedback within a learner’s ZPD, for example, has been reported to be effective in promoting learners’ acquisition (e.g., Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Nassaji & Swain, 2000). The Regulatory Scale developed by Aljaafreh & Lantolf (1994) can be adapted and built into tutor preparation. The scale presents assistance as a continuum starting from the most implicit level of help to the most explicit level of help. This approach is largely aligned with the idea of producing “better writers not better papers” (North, 1984) because it encourages students to propose their own solutions, which is likely to lead students to be effective, independent writers.

The ZPD approach was in fact frequently used by Yun in Tutorial 1. Although it is empirically supported, it was not preferred by Mali. It even aggravated the misalignment between Yun’s understanding of the WC frame and the student expectation to have her grammar proofread. This finding reveals the importance of raising students’ awareness of a WC collaborative frame and, more importantly, the reasons why tutors do what they do. As Harris & Silva (1993) suggest, when tutors notice that student expectations collide with the WC frame, delicate negotiation needs to happen. I suggest that such negotiation occur in the
beginning of the tutorial to preempt some of the potential misaligned expectations.

It is also worth noting that neither Yun nor Emma discussed recurrent patterns of issues in tutorials. Both of them addressed grammatical errors as the issues occurred. In fact, given the short time length of the tutorial, the preferred read-aloud strategy, and sometimes unrealistic student expectations to have all grammatical errors fixed, it might be a very difficult task for both NNS and NS tutors to identify recurrent problematic patterns as they read student papers aloud during the tutorial, especially for tutors who encounter the manuscripts for the first time at the meeting, which is the case for both Emma and Yun. WC practitioners and researchers might want to rethink the protocols for WC practices. Perhaps having tutors read the manuscript before the meeting would allow them more time to identify recurrent patterns and provide more constructive feedback during the tutorial.

In addition to the suggestions offered above, it is also important to note that the approach of transcribing and analyzing tutorials such as the one presented in this study could be built into tutor preparation to sensitize tutors towards interactional nuances, which can help tutors develop the skills to observe student behavior, decode their talk, and then respond accordingly.

Limitation of the Study and Future Research

Before I close, I acknowledge the limitation of the study: as the finding is based on the interactions between one NNS student with one NNS tutor and one NS tutor, the pedagogical implications presented above are still suggestive. However, the current study is one of the first studies to explore NNS tutors in the WC community. Given the fact that the population of NNS WC tutors is growing and they have been largely neglected, more studies on NNS tutors are needed. In fact, other researchers can conduct similar studies by adopting the methods presented in this study; i.e., video recording and analyzing tutorials between students and tutors, coupled with retrospective interviews with students. Such studies would be essential in understanding both NNS and NS tutors' practice to ultimately help us better serve students.
Appendix A: Guided Interview Questions with Mali

1. How do you feel about the tutorial? Would you say it is a successful or an unsuccessful tutorial? Why or why not?
2. How do you feel about your tutor? Would you say she is a successful tutor? Why or why not?
3. What suggestions would you like to offer to the tutor?
4. Imagine your next appointment at the writing center: would you be willing to work with her again?

Appendix B: Transcription Conventions

( ) (period in parentheses) micro-pause: 0.2 second or less

(0.4) (number in parentheses) length of silence in tenths of a second

underline a raise in volume or emphasis

. (period) sentence-final falling intonation

? (question mark) rising intonation

, (comma) phrase-final intonation (more to come)

:: (colon(s)) prolonging of sound

= latch: two utterances that follow one another without any perceptible pause

°word° (degree symbols) speak softly/decreased volume

↑word (upward arrow) high pitch on word

12 The guided interview questions for Interviews 1 and 2 are the same. Interview 1 was conducted to explore Mali’s opinions on Tutorial 1, and Interview 2 was conducted to learn about Mali’s opinions on Tutorial 2.
Acknowledgement

* I would like to thank Professor Carol Moder for her support for this study and invaluable feedback on earlier versions of this manuscript. I would also like to thank the WCJ editors and anonymous reviewers for their useful feedback. Finally, I would especially like to thank Mali, Yun, and Emma (pseudonyms) for allowing me to record their tutorials.
References


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