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Directiveness in the Center: L1, L2, and Generation 1.5 Expectations and Experiences

Abstract

Writing centers generally espouse tutoring policies for native speakers intended to help students improve their writing skills through minimalist intervention and a reliance on student intuition. At the same time, researchers have recommended somewhat directive tutorials for L2 writers who may lack native-speaker intuitions about culture or language. Yet the literature is unclear about whether L1, L2, and Generation 1.5 writers observe a difference in writing center practices based on their language background. This study examines the reported expectations and experiences of 462 writing center tutees by grouping them according to their language background (L1, L2, and Generation 1.5) and comparing their expectations with their reported writing center experiences on eight measures of tutorial behavior. Results indicate that all writers reported receiving similar and directive tutorials, a finding that differs from discourse-analytic results. The findings further demonstrate differences in what writers expect, with L1 writers expecting reflective tutorials, Generation 1.5 writers expecting negotiation, and L2 writers expecting directiveness. While necessarily abstract, results can nonetheless be useful in pre- or in-service tutor training in centers with high concentrations of Generation 1.5 or L2 writers.

Introduction

Directiveness in tutoring, which can be described reductively as telling students how to revise their writing, has generated substantial debate in writing center research, according to Steven J. Corbett (2008), and those debates are currently being revived. In the mid-1970s, writing center practitioners and researchers advised tutors against directive tutoring (Clark, 2001). Joan Hawthorne (1999) wrote pointedly, “If our focus is on the writer, . . . directive tutoring is out” (p. 1) and Stephen North (1984) popularized the notion that tutors should ideally draw writers out and “ask them questions they would not think to ask themselves” (p. 440). The strategies of nondirective tutoring—that tutors should focus on a text holistically, ask leading questions, and encourage students to make changes to their text rather than providing revision directives—are meant to give students choices and therefore more negotiating agency in the revision process. It is thought that students are more likely to revise their work if they are engaged in the revision process through negotiation (Jacobs & Karliner, 1977; Newkirk, 1995). Nondirective tutoring is a remarkably resilient approach such that virtually all writing centers in the United States espouse some form of nondirective tutoring practices or policies (Salem, 2016; Thompson, Whyte, Shannon, Muse, Miller, Chappell, & Whigham, 2009).

Yet whether nondirective tutoring benefits students is still up for discussion (Denny, Nordlof, & Salem, 2018), and to what extent students of various language backgrounds expect or receive it is likewise unclear and forms the basis of my study. Judith K. Powers (1993), Susan Blau & John Hall (2002), Jessica Williams & Carol Severino (2004), and Lori Salem (2016) have all suggested L2 writers may actually benefit from directive tutoring, particularly if it can compensate for linguistic, cultural, or rhetorical information writers might struggle intuitively to access in their second language (Cogie, Strain, & Lorinskas, 1999; see also Eckstein, 2018). For instance, L2 writers may need tutors to give them direct detail about an unfamiliar idiom or clarify the rhetorical structure of an American academic essay. Furthermore, Gail Nash (2006) indicates that the pragmatic effect of nondirective tutoring can be confusing for L2 writers who struggle to interpret a polite imperative couched as a question or suggestion. In other words, L2 writers may *not* be able to provide a better version of their thinking through guided self-reflection, and thus their writing tutorials must be different from tutorials with L1 writers.

The concern over nondirective tutoring practices would likely be less noticeable or serious if it weren't for the overwhelming presence of nonnative English speakers and marginalized learners who visit writing

centers. In 1995, Judith Powers & Jane Nelson reported on 75 graduate writing centers in which all but one indicated working with L2 writers and 26% of centers claimed that at least 70% of their tutorials were with L2 writers. More recently, Salem (2016), in her impressive study of students who do and do not visit her writing center, found that “non-native speakers of English, women, and non-white students are all more likely to use the writing center than native-speakers of English, men, and white students” (p. 158), suggesting that writing centers should expect to cater to writers from traditionally less privileged groups. She went on to decry nondirective tutoring, framing it as pedagogy for “privilege[d]” students who “already feel a sense of self-efficacy and ownership over their texts” (p. 159), hardly the demographic most likely to frequent her writing center.

In response to demographic realities in writing center usage, several researchers have investigated whether tutors actually do provide different tutoring experiences to L1 and to L2 writers, especially in terms of directiveness. Terese Thonus (1999a) found that L2 writers received an equal number of or fewer polite suggestions than L1 writers. She further found that tutorials with L2 writers were shorter than those with L1 writers (1999c), and that L2 tutorials demonstrated less volubility (or talkativeness), greater variability in types of directives, fewer imperative directives, fewer first-person directives, and less mitigation of suggestions. Other researchers found shorter opening and longer diagnosis phases in L2 tutorials (Williams, 2004), more interactional dominance by the tutor (Cumming & So, 1996; Ritter, 2002; Young, 1992), and tutors taking on more authoritative roles (Williams, 2005). Together, these observational findings suggest L2 tutorials are comparatively *more* dominated by the tutor than L1 tutorials and reflect more of an *instructional* event for L2 writers rather than a typical *negotiated* tutoring session for L1 writers.

These findings are meaningful because they demonstrate that, in some ways, tutorial practices may be meeting the ideological recommendations for more directiveness called for in L2 writing center literature. However, there are two major limitations of this research. The first limitation is that the majority of these findings have been drawn through analyses of tutor-tutee discourse for which researchers have recorded and transcribed tutoring sessions and then tallied counts of specific tutorial behavior. This limitation is only partial since such investigations are invaluable in observing differences, yet additional research is needed to quantify these observations, further extend them over many contexts, and subject them to statistical analysis so as to increase their generalizability and interpretability beyond just the institution(s) where the studies were conducted. The second limitation is that most analyses of language learners in writing centers distinguish native and nonnative speakers of English

while overlooking the unique characteristics of an in-between group commonly referred to as Generation 1.5 (Gen 1.5) learners. Linda Harklau, Kay M. Losey, & Meryl Siegal (1999) popularized this term as a label for students who are not strictly L1 or L2 writers. Gen 1.5 learners are often early arriving immigrants who speak English at school but a native language at home. Joy Reid (2006) calls them “ear learners” because they have acquired their English through interactions with friends and teachers or through media exposure and social talk rather than formal study. As a result, Gen 1.5 learners may sound like native English speakers and may be very familiar with dominant culture, but their writing is distinguished from L1 and L2 writing by limitations in lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical knowledge. Although there are scarce demographic data indicating the number of Gen 1.5 learners in higher education, the U.S. Census Bureau (2016) estimates that more than 63 million, or 21%, of Americans five years old or older speak a language other than English at home. A growing body of Gen 1.5 research in writing centers exists (Doolan & Miller, 2012; Nakamaru, 2010; Ritter & Sandvik, 2009; Thonus, 2003), but given that L2 and Gen 1.5 writers can vary greatly in their tutoring needs, and that writing centers tend to cater to less privileged students, further research is needed to understand distinctions among L1, L2, and Gen 1.5 writers.

An important question still remains as to whether different groups of writers report different amounts of directiveness and whether their experiences match expectations. The study reported in this article investigates tutorial behavior in order to triangulate prior discourse-analytic observations about tutorial directiveness and determine whether there are significant differences in tutorials with L1, Gen 1.5, and L2 writers, and it seeks to determine whether writers expected the interactions they experienced.

Understanding student experiences and expectations is important because, as Susan Blalock (1997) indicates, matches between tutor practice and tutee expectations impact tutees’ satisfaction with the experience (see also Thompson et. al., 2009). A student’s perception of usefulness, for instance, has a substantial effect on the perceived success of a tutorial and subsequent student revision (Harris, 1986; Raymond & Quinn, 2012; Severino, Swenson, & Zhu, 2009; Thonus, 2002; Williams, 2004). Early L2 researchers, such as Jean Kiedaisch & Sue Dinitz (1991), have also reported that mismatches lead to greater levels of dissatisfaction among L2 writers than among L1 writers and have been thought to contribute to attrition of L2 writers who use the writing center (Linville, 1997; Moser, 1993). If writers see their tutorial experience as helpful, they may continue to take advantage of the valuable learning resources available at writing centers and engage in meaningful revisions.

Admittedly, the arguments presented above regarding directiveness fail to take into consideration the wide spectrum of tutorial approaches to student writing, as well as the diversity of writers and tutors themselves. While I have necessarily pitted directiveness against nondirectiveness in this essay in order to discuss trends on a broad scale, as one director mentioned to me, this dichotomy is increasingly less relevant as tutors strive to focus on individual writers with unique needs. Yet despite this limitation of the study, the distinction between directive and nondirective tutoring still represents a valid and current framework for analyzing tutorial behavior. One anonymous reviewer of this article explained that tutors can still benefit from naming approaches and deciding whether to be directive or nondirective and to what extent. The dichotomy further facilitates an investigation into aggregated perceptions of writers that could not be analyzed through individual case studies or discourse analysis, for example. Thus the purpose of this research is not to examine tutorials as individualized experiences; rather, it is to take a step back (perhaps several miles back) in order to glimpse global trends, however rough, of writer experiences.

With this background in mind, this research addresses the differences L1, Gen 1.5, and L2 writers report in terms of tutorial directiveness and was guided by the following three research questions:

1. To what extent do L1, L2, and Gen 1.5 writers differ in their reported *experiences* of tutorial directiveness in their writing tutorials?
2. To what extent do L1, L2, and Gen 1.5 writers differ in their *expectations* of tutorial directiveness in their writing tutorials?
3. How closely aligned are L1, L2, and Gen 1.5 writers' reported experiences and expectations?

Methods

To investigate writing center experiences and expectations, I developed a survey for recent writing center patrons that included extensive demographic questions so participants could be categorized as L1, Gen 1.5, or L2 writers.¹ Respondents were classified as L1 writers if they reported using English exclusively to communicate while growing up, were born in and were citizens of the United States (or naturalized U.S. citizens from Canada), and if their parents were also born in the United

1 IRB protocol number 311899-1.

States. This category ruled out individuals for whom English was not the primary language while growing up, especially in the home. I categorized these participants in the L2 group if they reported being international, visa-holding students from a non-English-speaking country in addition to speaking a non-English language in the home (care was taken to exclude native English speakers who grew up internationally). Also, L2 writers were so classified if they had graduated high school outside the United States *and* had lived in the United States for less than five years. Respondents were grouped as Gen 1.5 students based on Dana R. Ferris & John S. Hedgcock's (2014) characterization scheme:

- a) Their parents were newly arrived immigrants; b) the primary language spoken in their home was not English; c) all or nearly all of their education was largely or exclusively in the [second language] context (and delivered in the L2); and d) some of their educational experience, at least in the early years, was influenced by their [English-language-learner] status. (p. 36)

Thus, Gen 1.5 respondents included those who reported natively speaking a language in addition to English in the home (not students who had just studied a foreign language in high school), had immigrant parents, were relatively long-term residents of the United States (five or more years), and had graduated high school in the United States.

The survey also presented respondents with a list of statements about the experience they had in their most recent tutorial and a parallel list asking about their expectations of an ideal writing center experience. Participants could rate their agreement with these statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The first statement was worded, "My writing tutor encouraged me to do most of the talking." The parallel statement was worded, "A writing tutor should encourage me to do most of the talking." These statements about tutor-tutee interaction were drafted to coincide with eight major characteristics of L1/L2 tutorial differences as posited by Thonus (2004), which are explained below and represented in the survey in statements the student could agree or disagree with (appendix):

- **Encouragement of tutee talk**—the degree to which the tutee felt encouraged or allowed by the tutor to talk during the tutorial.
- **Mitigation/directiveness of suggestions**—the degree to which the tutor gave directive suggestions, such as saying "You need to do X."

- **Negotiation of revision**—the degree to which the tutor helped the tutee formulate their own revisions by discussing options or alternatives rather than providing an explicit revision plan.
- **Charge taking**—the degree to which the tutor took control of the tutorial by focusing on what they felt was serious rather than exploring the tutees' concerns.
- **Holding of the floor**—the degree to which the tutor seemed willing to interrupt the tutee to share their thoughts and ideas.
- **Social closeness**—the degree to which the tutor seemed relaxed and warm and had a sense of humor.
- **Reflection of authority**—the degree to which the tutor seemed to have as much authority as a teacher.
- **Involvement in conversation**—the degree to which the tutor was conversational or engaged in small talk at the beginning of the tutorial session.

Survey Dispersal

The survey was sent electronically to more than 800 writing center directors whose contact information was taken from the Writing Center Directory, a collaboration of the International Writing Centers Association and the Write Place at St. Cloud State University (<http://web.stcloud-state.edu/writeplace/wcd/cUSA.html>). It was additionally sent to three writing centers at schools I was familiar with that serve large international student populations. I emailed all writing center directors personally and requested that they advertise the survey in their writing centers and/or directly contact recent patrons of their writing center with the survey link. The link remained active from October 2012 through June 2013, or most of the 2012–2013 academic school year.

Of those I contacted, 56 writing center directors in 26 U.S. states specifically responded that they would help facilitate the survey. Because of institutional approval limitations, I was not able to link student responses to individuals or even to individual schools, and I did not have the foresight to ask which state they resided in, so it is impossible to determine the geographical distribution of the respondents or to know exactly what model of writing center each respondent attended.

Participants

In total, 462 respondents finished the survey, and the results of the demographics section indicated there were 280 (60.6%) L1 participants,

105 (22.7%) Gen 1.5 participants, and 77 (16.6%) L2 participants. While all L1 participants spoke English natively, the wide range of Gen 1.5 participants represented 22 languages from Arabic to Wolof (spoken in Senegal), though Spanish (25 speakers) and Chinese (6 speakers) were the most common. These numbers compare with general language trends in the United States, where, according to Rubén G. Rumbaut & Douglas S. Massey (2013), Spanish speakers were the largest non-English group in 2010, accounting for 12.6% of the U.S. population, followed by Chinese speakers at 0.9%. All L2 participants spoke a native language other than English, and 20 languages were represented, with Chinese (29 speakers) and Japanese (5 speakers) the most common languages; so while the Gen 1.5 group was more Latinx, the L2 group was more Asian.

It is notable that L1 writers represented the widest range of students in terms of years at school, as is detailed in Table 1. Nearly as many L1 first-year students as L1 seniors reported using the writing center. This was not the case for Gen 1.5 or L2 writers, who demonstrated a sharp decline in writing center visits from first year to sophomore year. These data suggest writing centers serve multilingual writers in beginning years, a trend early writing center researchers observed as well (Linville, 1997; Moser, 1993). On the other hand, more graduate-level L2 writers attended tutorials, another trend observed early on by Powers & Nelson (1995).

Table 1
Tutees in the Writing Center by Year in School

	L1		Gen 1.5		L2	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
First year	65	23	41	39	20	26
Sophomore year	52	19	18	17	7	9
Junior year	50	18	18	17	6	8
Senior year	70	25	15	14	8	10
Graduate	39	14	12	11	36	47
Precollege	4	1	1	1	0	0

Analysis

In order to answer the research questions, all survey data for the rating-scale items were converted into numerical scores. The first two research questions were analyzed using the Kruskal–Wallis test, which is equivalent to a one-way ANOVA but used when ordinal data (from surveys, for example) violate assumptions of a normal distribution. The

language group (L1, Gen 1.5, L2) was the independent variable, and each of the eight items relating to tutorial directiveness was a dependent variable. When an item showed statistical significance, a post hoc pairwise comparison using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .0126 (.05/3) was performed in order to determine how the three language groups differed. An adjusted alpha level effectively raises the threshold for accepting findings as significant when multiple (in this case three) pairwise comparisons are made; it reduces the risk of falsely positive results.

Although the null hypothesis assumed no differences among groups, it was nevertheless my expectation that all eight measures of tutorial directiveness would result in significant differences among the three language groups in terms of their *experiences* of directiveness because of Thonus's previous research (1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2003, 2004) demonstrating that L2 writers tend to receive qualitatively different writing tutorials compared to their L1 peers. I similarly anticipated there would be many significant differences among the language groups in terms of writers' *expectations*, particularly for the L2 students, who may have expected direct feedback more than their L1 peers. I further reasoned L1 writers would have the most matches because they had likely been socialized into expecting non-directive tutorial interactions. Additionally, the writing center is an historic outgrowth of peer-feedback services originally instituted to serve native English speakers, according to Ronnie Dugger (1976), Kenneth Bruffee (1978), Elizabeth H. Boquet (1999), and Neal Lerner (2009), and many of these centers continue to this day with ideology that favors native-English intuitions about language, culture, and academic rhetoric.

The third research question required the use of a Wilcoxon signed-rank test, the equivalent of a t-test when normal distribution of results cannot be assumed, as with the case of ordinal survey data. I compared the reported expectations and experiences for each group for which nonsignificant results would indicate a match between expectations and experiences. I anticipated there would be many matches in the L1 group, fewer in the Gen 1.5 group, and very few for the L2 group, members of which, I posited, would expect even more directiveness than their tutors were willing to provide. For this analysis, I set the alpha level at .05, the conventional probability level for claiming significant results in social science and humanities research; there was no need for an adjusted level since t-tests do not require post hoc comparisons.

Delimitations

As with all research, there are necessary limits to the methods employed, the most obvious being the use of self-report data from anon-

ymous research participants, which affects generalizability based on where respondents attended their writing tutorials. After all, writing centers demonstrate “mind-boggling heterogeneity” (Jones, 2001, p. 6), and tutor training and backgrounds can similarly differ in countless ways. Moreover, no data were collected on tutor backgrounds, including experience, age, L2 training, or preferred tutorial approach. Thus the context of each individual response and its relation to a specific tutor or tutorial were not accounted for.

Another delimitation is related to writing center exposure. Since participants may have visited the writing center at least once before, their responses may have reflected a particularly cheerful or idealized view of the writing center. Their expectations may also have been formed in various ways, including previous writing center experiences, information received from a teacher or friend, or their own imaginations. Furthermore, writing tutorials are by design incredibly personalized interactions that often defy tidy descriptions and are unlikely to be effective if they are entirely standardized, so making broad claims about what a tutorial with one group of learners should look like is an oversimplification of the research purposes. Instead, this research must be viewed as a broad and formative description of otherwise complex and disparate interactions with equally complex and disparate student writers.

Finally, it is risky to ask tutees about both their expectations and experiences of a tutoring session only after the session is completed. Doing this introduces bias at best and, at worst, merely reveals tutees’ satisfaction or “grievance” score, so follow-up research will doubtlessly be needed to further triangulate findings that were otherwise delimited by the research design. Even with these constraints, however, the quantitative results of reported tutorial directiveness are still illuminating.

Results and Discussion

Student Experiences

The first research question asked what writers *experienced* in terms of tutorial directiveness in their most recent writing tutorials. The results showed there were almost no reported differences among the three language groups. The only statistically significant finding was that of interruption ($H(2)=.673, p=.035$): in the post hoc analysis, L1 writers reported significantly fewer interruptions by their tutors than did Gen 1.5 writers ($p = .012$). This may suggest tutors felt more comfortable talking over multilingual writers, or conversely, L1 writers were perhaps more adept at holding the floor. On average, all language groups agreed the tutor

encouraged them to do most of the talking, provided direct instructions, negotiated revisions, was friendly, and engaged in small talk.

Overall, these findings are surprising given the excellent discourse-analytic work that shows many qualitative differences between L1 and L2 tutorials (see Thonus, 2004; Williams, 2005) and the long-standing advice to approach L1 and L2 writers differently (i.e., Blau & Hall, 2002; Williams & Severino, 2004). Yet these results indicate tutors do not report tutoring practices that significantly differ from group to group. In many ways, the most surprising finding in this data is the lack of reported difference in the item that specifically discussed directiveness. The means for this item suggest all language groups agreed their tutors were directive (L1 = 2.97, Gen 1.5 = 3.05, L2 = 3.19). I had expected to find more variation here, with L1 writers reporting very nondirective tutorials (as per traditional writing center practices) and L2 writers reporting more directive tutoring (as per L2 writing center recommendations and research reports; see Thonus, 2004). In reality, writers reported no significant differences in the directiveness of their tutorials, which they reported as being fairly directive anyway.

An important implication of these findings is that tutors may be providing directive tutorials to all three groups of learners without discriminating based on students' needs and backgrounds. Certainly, tutoring is an individualized practice, and generalizing tutorial approaches at such a broad level involves the risk of overgeneralizing and perhaps aggregating a practice so nuanced it is hard to detect systematic differences among language groups. Nevertheless, the point of this research is to validate prior discourse-analysis research on tutorial directiveness, and the findings above indicate that L2 writers reported fairly directive tutorials and that all writers reported similar experiences, suggesting a wide application of directive tutoring, not the kind of contrasts between L1 and L2 tutoring that has been reported in the literature (Thonus, 2004).

Student Expectations

The second research question asked what L1, L2, and Gen 1.5 writers *expected* in terms of directiveness in their writing tutorials. Specifically, the items asked writers to indicate what tutors *should* do or be like, meaning writers were encouraged to report ideal (not cynical) expectations. Participant responses to the eight items dealing with directiveness are included in Table 2.

Table 2*Areas of Significant Difference for Tutorial Expectations by Language Group*

A writing tutor should...		<i>n</i>	Mean	Mean rank	sd	X ²	<i>p</i>
1. Encourage you to do most of the talking	L1	246	3.01	195.2	0.7	4.26	0.119
	Gen 1.5	87	3.15	220.9			
	L2	67	2.99	193.4			
2. Be direct when giving you suggestions by saying things like “you need to do X”	L1	256	3.05	196.1	0.825	8.27	0.016
	Gen 1.5	91	3.32	234.5			
	L2	67	3.22	214.4			
3. Help you to formulate your own revisions by discussing options or alternatives	L1	255	3.54	210.1	0.563	6.06	0.048
	Gen 1.5	92	3.59	223.3			
	L2	69	3.39	182.8			
4. Take charge of the tutor session by focusing on what they feel is serious	L1	248	2.75	197.3	0.857	2.65	0.265
	Gen 1.5	91	2.88	214			
	L2	69	2.90	217.7			
5. Be allowed to interrupt you to share their thoughts and ideas	L1	248	2.69	187.4	0.882	15.11	0.001
	Gen 1.5	89	2.88	213.1			
	L2	67	3.15	244.4			
6. Be relaxed, warm, and have a sense of humor	L1	257	3.59	215.3	0.574	5.45	0.066
	Gen 1.5	91	3.56	208.9			
	L2	68	3.41	182.4			
7. Have as much authority as a teacher	L1	254	2.61	198.2	0.913	3.11	0.211
	Gen 1.5	85	2.81	222.5			
	L2	67	2.63	199.5			

A writing tutor should...		<i>n</i>	Mean	Mean rank	sd	X ²	<i>p</i>
8. Be conversational and engage in some small talk at the beginning of a session	L1	240	3.09	192.6	0.751	1.13	0.568
	Gen 1.5	87	3.18	205.3			
	L2	66	3.18	202			

As can be seen, the mean scores suggest writers tended to agree with every statement; however, three statistically significant differences emerged. Writers varied in their expectations of mitigation/directiveness of suggestions ($H(2)=.827, p=.016$), negotiation of revision ($H(2)=.6.06, p=.048$), and holding of the floor ($H(2)=15.11, p=.001$).

In interpreting this analysis, I first describe the meaning of the non-significant findings. The results show there were no significant differences in what writers expected in terms of spoken participation, charge taking, feelings of social closeness, representation of authority, and involvement in small talk. In other words, the null hypothesis (that there is no difference among language groups) must be accepted. This is important because it suggests that despite their diverse needs, students in the three language groups had relatively similar expectations of tutors. The average scores for nearly all responses aligned with the category of “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.” In this sense, writers in all language groups expected tutors would want the writer to do most of the talking, cede charge of the tutoring session to the writer, be friendly, and engage in some small talk; writing center directors would undoubtedly cheer at these mutual expectations. However, even though no significant differences emerged for these measures, the means suggest there were some small differences that may be worth exploring through interviews or discourse analysis in future research.

I now investigate the three significant findings in more detail. Item 2 asked writers whether they felt a tutor should be directive by making statements like “you *need to* do X.” The mean results corroborate Isabelle Thompson, Alison Whyte, David Shannon, Amanda Muse, Kristen Miller, Milla Chappell, & Abby Whigham (2009) and Thonus (2001), who have suggested all students want directive tutoring. Nevertheless, the post hoc analysis of significant findings showed L1 students were significantly less likely to agree with this compared to Gen 1.5 writers ($p = .005$). Stated differently, both the Gen 1.5 and L2 groups were more likely than L1 writers to feel tutors should be directive—a finding that corroborates L2 tutoring advice (see Blau & Hall, 2002; Salem, 2016), and in fact, Gen 1.5

writers were the most expectant of tutorial directiveness. As ear learners, these Gen 1.5 students may prefer directive oral instruction and feel the writing center is an optimal place to receive it.

Item 3 asked writers whether they thought a tutor should help them formulate their own revision plans through discussing options and alternatives. This question was meant to get at students' expectations for conversational negotiation. Again, all writers agreed highly that tutors should do this, but L2 students were significantly less likely to agree than were Gen 1.5 writers ($p = .015$), meaning they least expected negotiation. In other words, they seemed to expect more focused revision advice instead of engagement in give-and-take conversations. This finding is fairly unsurprising given that some L2 writers may be uncomfortable interacting with others they see as having authority, such as writing tutors in a university-sponsored writing center. Similarly, L2 writers may feel uncomfortable negotiating because of limitations in their oral abilities and thus favor a more passive learning role, or they may view overt interactions as impolite. Another interesting finding is that Gen 1.5 students were more likely to expect negotiation than their L1 peers. Again, the explanation here may be related to the fact that Gen 1.5 writers are accustomed to oral interactions as their predominant mode of learning. If this is true, it makes sense for them to prefer and expect oral negotiation of revision.

Finally, item 5 asked whether tutors should be allowed to interrupt the writer. Ostensibly, tutors who interrupt the writer may contradict traditional tutoring ideology, which views tutoring as a coaching session in which the writer's ideas are the most important. The mean scores suggest all writers were hesitant to agree with this statement, though the post hoc analysis showed L2 writers were significantly more likely than L1 writers to expect tutors to interrupt them ($p = .001$). This finding seems to correlate with Item 3 in that L2 writers expected the tutor to dispense suggestions and correct the student. Conversely, L1 writers were the least likely to expect tutors to interrupt. In fact, this mean is the second lowest for any question on the list, maybe because L1 writers felt a sense of personal right to their own opinions. Whereas writing centers traditionally reinforce this concept by encouraging student talk, it seems logical that L1 writers would be protective of this right. Gen 1.5 responses were centered between the L1 and L2 responses.

The overall findings show that despite many overlapping preferences, writers from the different language groups expected slightly different tutorials with regard to directiveness, negotiation, and interruption. From these results, some very limited profiles of the three language groups can be articulated in the broadest sense:

- L1 writers feel a tutor should listen to their ideas.

- Gen 1.5 writers feel tutors should provide opportunities for negotiation.
- L2 writers feel tutors should offer direct suggestions and instructions.

While these profiles are interesting, it is probably premature to recommend altering tutoring practices based on these findings alone, especially since it can be difficult to distinguish Gen 1.5 writers from L1 or L2 writers in a short tutorial. Nevertheless, these profiles may be helpful when combined with observations from experienced tutors and in establishing a heuristic for understanding common writer expectations, particularly since these observations are drawn from writers themselves across multiple contexts and reveal significant differences that add nuance to practical tutoring advice.

Alignment of Expectations and Experiences

The final research question asked whether writers received the kind of tutoring they expected. For the sake of interpretation, I've organized the data by language group starting with L1 writers. As shown in Table 3, L1 writers had several mismatches between expectation and experience. The top line in each item shows what writers expected, and the bottom line per item shows what writers experienced.

Table 3
L1 Experiences Versus Expectations

		N	Mean	sd	Mean Rank	Z	p
1. Encouraged me to do most of the talking	Expected	246	3.01	0.658	42.36	-0.844	0.399
	Experienced	231	2.99	0.775	43.54		
2. Was direct when giving me suggestions by saying things like "you need to do X"	Expected	256	3.05	0.855	42.09	-1.37	0.171
	Experienced	237	2.97	0.863	51.41		
3. Helped me to formulate my own revisions by discussing options or alternatives	Expected	255	3.54	0.545	33	-4.148	0.000
	Experienced	238	3.34	0.709	40.74		

		N	Mean	sd	Mean Rank	Z	p
4. Took charge of the tutor session by focusing on what they felt was serious	Expected	248	2.75	0.87	56.5	-1.181	0.237
	Experienced	231	2.69	0.902	61.14		
5. Interrupted me to share their thoughts and ideas	Expected	248	2.69	0.894	52.87	-4.992	0.000
	Experienced	231	2.38	0.895	55.04		
6. Was relaxed, warm, and had a sense of humor	Expected	257	3.59	0.567	33.38	-3.893	0.000
	Experienced	236	3.43	0.658	34.21		
7. Seemed to have as much authority as a teacher	Expected	254	2.61	0.881	46.12	-3.638	0.000
	Experienced	234	2.83	0.895	45.72		
8. Was conversational or engaged in some small talk at the beginning of the session	Expected	240	3.09	0.774	36.22	-1.716	0.086
	Experienced	230	3.16	0.799	44.15		

The first and second areas of mismatch involved negotiation and interruption; L1 writers expected more than they reported receiving. Given the findings of the previous research questions, which illustrate that different language groups reported receiving similarly directive tutorials, and that L1 writers expected to talk during a tutorial, their expectation of more *interruption* is interesting. This mismatch may be an indication that L1 writers were expecting the typical conversational give and take of a nondirective tutorial despite reporting fairly directive ones.

The third area of mismatch is that of tutorial warmth. Apparently, L1 writers felt their tutors were not as warm or relaxed as the writers expected. It should be emphasized, however, that L1 writers did not necessarily find their tutors to be *cold* or *unrelaxed* since the mean score of 3.43 lies

between the categories of “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” that their tutor was relaxed, warm, and had a sense of humor.

Finally, L1 writers seemed to perceive their tutors as authoritative. They moderately agreed tutors should have as much authority as a teacher yet indicated the tutors actually seemed more authoritative than that. In this sense, L1 writers appeared to expect a more peer-like experience in the writing center.

Item 2 zeroed in on directiveness and showed no significant differences between expectations ($M = 3.05$) and experience ($M = 2.97$), a finding just as important as all the rest. This finding suggests L1 writers got what they expected, and whereas they reported a rather high level of directiveness, their expectation of that level serves to indicate they anticipated tutors telling them specifically what to do in directive ways. This finding seems to reveal an interesting pattern suggesting L1 writers expect a richly negotiated peer-based conversation but also expect directives on what to revise. Such a combination of tutoring pedagogy is a tall order for sure and certainly reflective of the complex juggling act tutors have been obliged to perform for decades.

The analysis of mismatch between expectation and experience among Gen 1.5 writers shows some similarities and some differences from the L1 group. These results are included in Table 4 and indicate three areas of mismatch ($p \leq .011$).

Table 4
Gen 1.5 Experiences Versus Expectations

		N	Mean	sd	Mean Rank	Z	Sig.
1. Encouraged me to do most of the talking	Expected	87	3.15	0.771	16	-.170	0.865
	Experienced	83	3.11	0.733	18.06		
2. Was direct when giving me suggestions by saying things like “you need to do X”	Expected	91	3.32	0.815	14	-2.554	0.011
	Experienced	85	3.05	0.937	20.09		

		N	Mean	sd	Mean Rank	Z	Sig.
3. Helped me to formulate my own revisions by discussing options or alternatives	Expected	92	3.587	0.5958	9	-3.508	0.000
	Experienced	82	3.33	0.738	10.67		
4. Took charge of the tutor session by focusing on what they felt was serious	Expected	91	2.88	0.867	15.65	-.040	0.968
	Experienced	85	2.85	0.994	17.47		
5. Interrupted me to share their thoughts and ideas	Expected	89	2.88	0.902	12.5	-1.309	0.191
	Experienced	82	2.67	0.93	16		
6. Was relaxed, warm, and had a sense of humor	Expected	91	3.56	0.562	11.5	-2.746	0.006
	Experienced	85	3.36	0.652	12.14		
7. Seemed to have as much authority as a teacher	Expected	85	2.81	0.945	11.56	-1.089	0.276
	Experienced	81	2.69	0.996	12.29		
8. Was conversational or engaged in some small talk at the beginning of the session	Expected	87	3.18	0.74	14.21	-.558	0.577
	Experienced	81	3.22	0.791	16.13		

The first mismatch involves directive suggestions. Gen 1.5 writers expected their tutors to use more directive phrases than what the writers reported. Considering that Gen 1.5 writers may have L2-like needs for language and writing instruction, it is not surprising they felt tutors should offer directive suggestions for revision. Moreover, this mismatch serves as a major distinction between L1 and Gen 1.5 writers, with the former expecting as much directiveness as they reported and the latter expecting even more.

The second mismatch demonstrates that Gen 1.5 writers reported experiencing less negotiation than they expected. This is a similar finding

to that for L1 writers and may be explained by the fact that Gen 1.5 writers are ear learners who are accustomed to picking up language and writing skills through oral interactions rather than rule-based instructions. So although Gen 1.5 writers seem to expect directive suggestions, they still want an opportunity to discuss revision alternatives and understand their options for revision. Finally, Gen 1.5 writers, like their L1 peers, expected their tutors to be more relaxed and warm than they were.

Except for these three significant findings, Gen 1.5 writers seemed to get from a writing tutorial essentially what they expected. For instance, they expected tutors would encourage them to do most of the talking, take charge of the tutorial to some degree, reflect some teacher-like authority, and offer small talk at the beginning of the session. Furthermore, Gen 1.5 writers, unlike their L1 peers, did not show a mismatch in their expectation of tutor interruptions, though they also seemed to report higher levels of them. This finding suggests tutors may intuitively interrupt Gen 1.5 writers more than L1 writers, which could reflect conversational closeness or a tutor's heightened sense of authority, what Thonus (2001) calls an "instructor role," as tutors observe language-based writing needs.

In sum, Gen 1.5 writers seemed a lot like L1 writers with at least one important difference: they expected to receive more directive suggestions for revision. This observation raises the question of whether students who expect a level of directiveness ought to receive it. According to this research, they are already experiencing fairly directive tutorials; is it reasonable to make the tutorials *even more* directive because of what students expect? Because Gen 1.5 writers have some legitimate vocabulary and language needs, it seems both reasonable and considerate for tutors to offer informed directives after discussing revision options with the writer.

The analysis of expectation/experience matches among the L2 writers differed substantially from that for the other groups. The single significant mismatch is that of interruption; L2 writers reported less tutor interruption than the writers had expected ($Z = -4.383, p < .001$). This finding is similar to that for L1 writers. Also like the data for L1 writers, the L2 data did not show a significant mismatch in expectations and experiences of directiveness; only the Gen 1.5 data showed writers expected more than they received.

Besides these observations, L2 writers seemed to receive the kind of tutorials they expected, in which the tutor encouraged tutee talk, offered directive suggestions, negotiated revision, took charge of the tutorials, was relaxed, was relatively authoritative, and was conversational. And given that those tutorials were rated as fairly directive, it appears L2 writers expected and reported receiving directive tutoring.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to triangulate claims in the literature that tutors treat L1 and L2 writers differently in tutorials (in terms of directiveness) and that writers expect this differential treatment. Findings from this study differ from the discourse-analysis research by indicating tutees do not report significantly different tutorials across L1, Gen 1.5, and L2 backgrounds. In fact, all language groups reported that their tutors were rather directive anyway. Writers did, however, seem to expect the kind of differences the literature calls for, namely more reflective tutorials for L1 writers, more negotiated tutorials for Gen 1.5 writers, and more directive ones for L2 writers. The resulting experience/expectation mismatches showed that both L1 and Gen 1.5 writers expected tutorials that differed in many ways from what they received, while L2 writers indicated expecting just what they received. The bottom line of these analyses, in terms of directiveness anyway, is that in this large-scale, aggregated study, writers across language backgrounds reported receiving directive tutorials that comported with their expectations, except that Gen 1.5 writers expected even higher levels of directiveness.

Regarding the important, underrepresented group of Gen 1.5 writers, results from this study suggest they ought not to be lumped together with L2 writers given that their perceptions of writing tutorials were distinct from either L1 or L2 groups. Tutors in schools with a high immigrant enrollment are probably already aware of the unique writing needs of this group and are tasked with finding ways to offer directive *and* negotiated feedback.

In addition to these findings, the interpretation of these data leads to an even more important conclusion. It seems, from writers' perspectives at least, that tutors use directive tutoring practices with all language groups, indicating a move away from traditional nondirective pedagogies proposed in the 1980s in favor of more directive approaches championed in the 1990s and beyond. Current research strongly advocates for directiveness, particularly with marginalized groups such as Gen 1.5 writers (see Salem, 2016), and the pendulum of directiveness seems to be swinging away from nondirectiveness both in practice and in theory. It is therefore perhaps time for tutors across the board to question feelings of guilt (Blau & Hall, 2002; Nicklay, 2012) when offering informed and thoughtful directives to all language groups, not just L2 writers, especially when individuals come specifically to seek directive help (see Denny, Nordlof, & Salem, 2018)

Of course, the interpretation of results in this study is constrained by the questions asked, and for this research I asked about writers' expectations, not their preferences. The difference is important since writers

might expect one thing but in reality really want something very different. Thus, this study indicates what writers have come to expect, and questions still remain as to where these expectations originate. For instance, do L1 writers expect nondirective tutorials because that's what they have been socialized into or because that's what they really want? If expectations are merely a reflection of socialized behavior, it is incumbent upon the field to determine whether the practices we socialize writers into (e.g., directive vs. nondirective tutoring) are helpful. If expectations are a matter of preferences, we must wrangle with the question of whether writers' preferences should help guide tutorial practices.

Certainly, more research is needed to extend or complicate the present findings. One approach might be to ask tutees for their expectations before the tutorial and then about their experiences afterward and do so with individuals who have not visited the writing center before. This approach, though much more resource intensive, would eliminate potential exposure bias. Another future direction involves interviewing students to capture the origin of their expectations, the evolution of their experiences and expectations over time, and their beliefs about the value of directive or nondirective tutoring. While replicable, aggregable, and data-driven research allows us to draw broader conclusions across multiple sites, using that data to inform interview-based conversations can flesh out the numbers and illuminate student perceptions and their preferences.

In the meantime, the aim of this study was to triangulate discourse-analytic evidence of tutor behavior (when working with L1, L2, and Generation 1.5 writers) and to compare this evidence with tutee expectations. The major takeaway is that writers from different language groups did not report differences in the way they were tutored despite expecting differences in directiveness, negotiation, and interruptions. Further, L1 writers expected the least directive tutorials, followed by L2 writers and then Gen 1.5. This information hopefully provides a useful springboard for further research, especially investigations into how tutors can work with writers from various language backgrounds to meet their expectations, preferences, and ultimately their feedback needs.

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Appendix

Writing Center Questionnaire: EXPECTATIONS OF WRITING CENTER ATTENDEES

The purpose of this questionnaire is to learn about your preferences in a college or University Writing Center.

Biographical information

1. How old are you?
 - a. 19 or younger
 - b. 20-24
 - c. 25-29
 - d. 30-34
 - e. 35-39
 - f. 40-49
 - g. Over 50
2. What is your year in school?
 - a. Freshman in college/university
 - b. Sophomore in college/university
 - c. Junior in college/university
 - d. Senior in college/university
 - e. Graduate student
 - f. Pre-college/university (i.e.: Student at a high school, technical school, intensive language program, etc.)
 - g. Other:
3. What kind of college or university do you attend?
 - a. 4-year institution
 - b. 2-year institution
 - c. Intensive English program
 - d. Other:
4. How large is your institution?
 - a. Large—more than about 30,000 students
 - b. Medium—between about 15,000 and 30,000 students
 - c. Small—Under about 15,000 students
 - d. Very small—under about 5,000 students
5. Outside of school, what percentage of your day do you currently use English to communicate?
 - a. 0-24%
 - b. 25-49%

- c. 50-74%
- d. 75-100%

6. Please describe your fluency in the English language.

Reading and writing

Very limited Weak Good Very Good Excellent

Listening and speaking

Very limited Weak Good Very Good Excellent

7. Were you born in the U.S.?
- a. Yes (**Skip to Question 9**)
 - b. No (what country? _____)
8. If you were born in another country, how long have you been living in the United States?
- a. Less than 5 years
 - b. 5-10 years
 - c. 11-15 years
 - d. Over 15 years
 - e. I was born in the U.S.
9. With your family (or in the house where you spent most of your childhood), do/did you mostly speak English?
- a. Yes (**Skip to Question 12**)
 - b. No (what language other than English is/was most commonly used? _____)
10. How many years of formal (school) education have you had in that language other than English?
- a. I have only studied in English
 - b. None or less than 1 year
 - c. 1-5 years
 - d. 6-8 years
 - e. More than 8 years
11. Please describe your fluency in this non-English language.

Reading and writing

Excellent	Weak
Very Good	Very limited
Good	I only use English

Listening and speaking

Excellent	Very limited
Very Good	I only use English
Good	

12. How old were you when you started learning English?
- Since birth
 - a. 1-3 years old
 - b. 4-5 years old
 - c. 6-8 years old
 - d. 9-16 years old
 - e. 17 years +
13. How many years of formal (school) education have you received in the United States?
- a. None or less than 1 year
 - b. 1-3 years
 - c. 4-5 years
 - d. 6-8 years
 - e. More than 8 years
14. Did you graduate from high school in the U.S.?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
15. What is your status in the U.S.? Please note that this survey is completely confidential and anonymous. Your answers will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team.
- a. International (visa) student
 - b. U.S. resident, including refugee and immigrant status
 - c. Naturalized U.S. citizen born outside of the U.S.
 - d. U.S. citizen (but your parents were immigrants)
 - e. U.S. citizen (your parents were born in the U.S. too)
 - f. Other:

Writing Center Preferences

16. Writing center tutors need to adapt to what students want in a tutoring session. Please rate your level of agreement with the following characteristics of a writing center tutor. Use the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

	☹ ← Rating → ☺			
A writing tutor should...	1	2	3	4
a. Encourage you to do most of the talking				
b. Be direct when giving you suggestions by saying things like “you <i>need to do X</i> ”				
c. Help you to formulate your own revisions by discussing options or alternatives				
d. Take charge of the tutor session by focusing on what he or she feels is serious				
e. Be allowed to interrupt you to share his or her thoughts and ideas				
f. Be relaxed, warm, and have a sense of humor				
g. Have as much authority as a teacher				
h. Be conversational and engage in some small talk at the beginning of a session				

17. How did your writing center tutor work with you in your most recent visit? Please rate your level of agreement with the following characteristics of a writing center tutor. Use the following scale:

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4

	☹ ← Rating → ☺			
My writing tutor...	1	2	3	4
a. Encouraged me to do most of the talking				
b. Was direct when giving me suggestions by saying things like “you <i>need to do X</i> ”				
c. Helped me to formulate my own revisions by discussing options or alternatives				
d. Took charge of the tutor session by focusing on what he or she felt was serious				

	☹ ← Rating → ☺			
e. Interrupted me to share his or her thoughts and ideas				
f. Was relaxed, warm, and had a sense of humor				
g. Seemed to have as much authority as a teacher				
h. Was conversational or engaged in some small talk at the beginning of the session				

18. Do you have specific comments about your preferences at the writing center?

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