

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF A MIDDLE EASTERN WRITING CENTER:  
THE PERCEPTIONS OF TUTORS AND TUTEES

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# **AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF A MIDDLE EASTERN WRITING CENTER: THE PERCEPTIONS OF TUTORS AND TUTEES**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis presents the findings of a study of writing center tutorial practices in a Middle Eastern university where the language of instruction is English. Data from stimulated recall activities, written observations, and interviews were analyzed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do tutees perceive the effectiveness of writing center tutorials?
2. How do tutors perceive the effectiveness of writing center tutorials?
3. Which type of tutoring approach do tutees find more effective?
4. Which type of tutoring approach do tutors find more effective?

The data revealed that tutees noticed an improvement in their assignments, believed that their concerns had been addressed, and that they had acquired transferable skills. Most tutees assessed their tutors positively, valuing tutors who inspired confidence and were able to explain concepts clearly. Although tutees appreciated knowledgeable tutors, they valued egalitarian peer-tutoring relationships. Tutors reported that tutorial sessions improved their tutees' assignments and that tutees had acquired transferable skills. Nevertheless, tutors were critical of their own performance. Some tutors admitted to lacking the knowledge necessary to explain certain writing concepts, including grammatical concepts; some felt they dominated the tutorials; and others felt their approach was too directive. The data revealed that both tutors and tutees preferred the directive approach for lower order concerns and a non-directive approach for higher order concerns. This study shows that diverse tutoring models that accommodate the background and experiences of Middle Eastern students, and their particular strengths and weaknesses, should be considered. It recommends tutorial training that emphasizes flexibility and recognizes the distinctive nature of each tutorial situation and the opportunity it presents to address the needs and expectations of individual students. These findings could signal a direction for the development of writing center pedagogy that focuses on the linguistically and culturally diverse students in the Middle East.

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## **KEY WORDS**

Writing Center effectiveness

Tutorial interaction

NNS tutorials

Middle Eastern students

Peer tutoring

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## **Abbreviations**

MENAWCA: Middle East-North Africa Writing Centers Alliance

MEU: Middle East University

MSA: Modern Standard Arabic

NNS: Non-native speaker

NS: Native speaker

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

SR: Stimulated recall

I: Interview

VSRI: Video-stimulated recall interview

## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

In recent years, educators have become increasingly aware of the importance of developing writing centers in educational institutions. In North America, most high schools, colleges, and universities today provide writing centers to help students improve their writing skills. Writing centers offer free, individualized writing assistance from trained consultants or trained peer tutors. During writing center tutorials, students and peer tutors work together on various aspects of writing, including thesis development, organization, outlining, paragraphing, sentence-structure, wording, vocabulary, and mechanics. Most writing centers strive to teach students to recognize and correct their own errors with the goal of making them more confident, self-sufficient writers (North, 1984).

Writing centers in North America have typically eschewed a directive approach to instruction, preferring a non-directive, collaborative approach. With non-directive strategies, learners take an active role in the tutorial. Tutors are encouraged to promote a sense of responsibility in the student for their writing: “Make sure that writers take ownership,” “Trust the writers’ ideas of the text,” “Ask them their plans for revision,” and “Keep hands off and let writers make corrections” (Gillespie & Lerner, 2006, p. 45). Contemporary writing center theorists use the term “collaborative” in conjunction with “non-directive” to describe learning situations that emphasize the active role of the student and the interactive nature of the process. The term collaborative, non-directive approach in this thesis encompasses terms that are used interchangeably in the literature: facilitative, minimalist, Socratic, and noninterventionist. The term directive will be used to encompass terms that are used interchangeably in the literature: authoritative, top-down, and interventionist. With directive tutorial strategies, the responsibility for the tutorial is placed in the tutor’s hands. The strategies used with this approach include “mak[ing] corrections on the page” and “tell[ing] writers what to do” (Gillespie & Lerner, 2006, p. 45).

The directive approach to instruction has been supplanted by the non-directive approach, and many tutors attempt to honor non-direction in their interactions with their writing center tutees (Blau & Hall, 2002; Brooks, 1991; Carino, 2003; Corbett, 2008; Evertz, 1999; Jones, 2001; Shamon & Burns, 1995; Thonus, 2001, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004). There

is a compelling amount of evidence, however, that even though tutors seek to maintain a non-directive role with their writing center tutees, in actual practice, the peer relationship reflects a more complicated dynamic. Grimm (1996) identifies the “loss of innocence” among researchers and practitioners regarding the dynamic and influence of the tutor-tutee relationship in day-to-day writing center work, while Shamon and Burns (1995) critique the notion of “pure tutoring” in writing center pedagogy. Some researchers have observed that the notion of the tutor-tutee relationship that envisions an egalitarian balance and does not allow for an authoritarian aspect in the interaction is untenable. Over the last 15 years there has been a growing movement to challenge the orthodoxy of the non-directive peer tutoring perspective and to identify and consider the real-life conduct of the peer interaction to determine its impact on the effectiveness of instruction (Clark & Healy, 1996; Grimm, 1996; Henning, 2001; Shamon & Burns, 1995; Thonus, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2004; Weigle & Nelson, 2004).

### **1.1.1 Non-Native Speaking Students in the Writing Center**

The questioning of the peer relationship and the effectiveness of a strictly non-directive approach to tutoring have emerged out of the growing research focus on the learning of non-native speaking (NNS) students who come to English-language writing centers (Harris & Silva, 1993; Harrison & Krol, 2007; Jones, Garaldo, Li, & Lock, 2006; Thonus, 2004; Williams, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004). Some studies indicate that NNS students may benefit from a more directive approach in their tutoring interactions (Blau & Hall, 2002; Jones et al., 2006; Schultz, 2010; Shamon & Burns, 1995; Thonus, 2001, 2004; Williams, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004).

My study examines the tutor-tutee relationship in an English-language writing center in the Middle East, serving students for whom English may be a second or third language. There is relatively little research on English language learning in writing center work with this population. The literature review discusses several recent articles that explore the rise of writing centers in the Middle East (Hill, 2010; Ronesi, 2009) and suggests that the collaborative, non-directive model, the dominant approach to writing center instruction, may not be the best tutoring approach in this region. The literature will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

## 1.2 ASSESSMENT OF WRITING CENTER TUTORIALS

As the debate over the viability of directive versus non-directive approaches to instruction has progressed, there has been a call for greater accountability in writing center work (Bell, 2002; Bringhurst, 2006; Clark, 1988; Cogie, Strain, & Lorinkas, 1999; Hobson, 2001; Jones et al, 2006; North, 1984). This, in part, reflects a general push towards outcome-based evaluation of educational delivery that has come to dominate policy and academic circles in the U.S. However, it also signifies a genuine interest among researchers and practitioners to move beyond their assumptions about best practice in the writing center, and to actively question and evaluate the systems in place to determine whether NS and NNS students may be better served through new ways of thinking about writing center pedagogy overall, and the peer tutoring relationship in particular (Bell, 2000; Carino, 2003; Cogie, 2001; Evertz, 1999; Thonus, 2001, 2002; Williams & Severino, 2004).

Each writing center trains and utilizes its tutors differently, and it is challenging to assess the effectiveness of the tutorial within writing center practice overall. Another confounding factor is that writing centers may serve second language learners exclusively or alongside native language speakers (NS). The pedagogical needs of second language learners are quite different from the needs of native speakers and, as Hutchings (2006) points out, involve a “dual task” of “learning both the written code as well as the grammatical and discourse competence of the second language” (p. 249). Accounting for the various effects these factors may have on writing center tutorials is an appropriate, but challenging, consideration when assessing a writing center’s effectiveness.

Given the specific nature of writing center work and recognizing that the dynamics of a single tutorial interaction are distinct and reflect the potential influence of a wide range of factors, an interpretive approach to my study has been selected as best-suited to address the questions being explored. The positivist approach to research has dominated scientific inquiry for over a century, and its influence is still apparent in the wide-range of studies across a variety of disciplines that reflect a positivist orientation (Chen & Hirschheim, 2004; Kim, 2003; Samdahl, 1999). The constraints of a positivist experimental design, however, with its controlled environment and isolated consideration of variables, has been deemed too limiting for considering the impact of multiple -- and perhaps, as yet, unknown -- influences on the

effectiveness of the peer tutoring relationship with the NNS population at the center of this research.

The characteristics of interpretive, qualitative research suit the purpose of this study, which is to examine the dynamics of the peer tutoring relationship. Interpretive research allows for the investigation of individual engagement in activities and attempts to identify how individuals construct meaning through their experiences.

Interpretive study provides a way of examining the tutors' work with NNS students within a writing center that is based in the NNS environment: it represents an opportunity to consider the interaction within the natural environment and the effects of socio-cultural variables on the exchanges (Kim, 2003; Rowlands, 2005). Moreover, it allows for an assessment to be performed authentically: evaluating the reactions of tutors and tutees to peer tutoring by monitoring their behavior and eliciting their perceptions of the interactions and of the knowledge transferred (Thonus, 2002).

### **1.3 CONTEXT OF STUDY**

The Middle East University (MEU), a pseudonym for a university located in the United Arab Emirates, receives hundreds of foreign students annually. According to the 2009 Institutional Research University Board, the student body consists of 20% Emirati students, 42% students from the rest of the Arab world including Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, and Syria, and the remainder are from countries including Iran, India, and Pakistan. The university curriculum is modelled on the curriculum of American universities; it has received American accreditation, and the language of instruction is entirely in English.

Approximately half the MEU students have been educated in schools where the language of instruction has not been English. Most of the students in this group have been educated in Arabic school systems. The remaining students have been educated in a number of school systems, including Urdu, Hindi, Persian, and Afghani. English is the second or third language and occasionally the fourth for many of the students. This situation is characteristic of many American, British, or Australian universities in the United Arab Emirates.

All students at the university are required to take 15 credits of communications courses as part of their major programs. The challenges these students face while writing in English is a serious concern for faculty members and students. As part of an effort to address writing issues,

the university established a Writing Center with a peer tutoring program in the 2004/2005 academic year. Students are strongly encouraged by their instructors to visit the MEU Writing Center where they will receive individualized instruction. About 85% of the clientele at the Writing Center request help for their freshman composition courses. The rest visit the Writing Center for assistance with writing assignments in courses such as Economics, History, Biology, Business, and International Relations.

Peer tutors are recruited from the composition courses to work in the Writing Center. The term “tutor” is used throughout this thesis to refer to undergraduate students who have been trained in a semester long course to assist students in the Writing Center. The term “instructor” is used to refer to professors who are teaching courses in the university. The students who are selected to become tutors are not required to be native speakers of English. Frequently, they are multilingual, and occasionally, they are even unable to identify their native language. Nevertheless, all the tutors have attended high schools where the language of instruction was English, British, Australian, Indian, or Pakistani schools among others. Their proficiency levels in English are relatively high.

The instructors of composition courses assist in the selection process of tutors. They recommend their most competent and confident English writers, and those who wish to become tutors are trained during a semester-long course by faculty members in the Writing Studies Department and then supervised by the Director of the Writing Center. The tutors are paid 30 dirhams an hour for their work and are employed for 6-15 hours a week.

Following the American writing center model, both in the use of the term peer tutoring and in the organization of the Writing Center, MEU offers one-on-one tutoring sessions by appointment or on a drop-in basis to all students throughout the university. Instructors teaching writing-intensive courses or courses with a writing component often encourage or even require their students to visit the Writing Center for supplemental help. Students can also self-refer. During the tutoring sessions, tutees and tutors work on global concerns such as improving content, organization, and tone and/or local concerns such as clarifying confusing or improperly constructed sentences, correction punctuation, grammar, and mechanics (Ryan, 2002). The writing center offers writing workshops and contests, and is now piloting on on-line tutorial program. There are two locations at the university that offer services from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. during the academic week.

## 1.4 THE NATURE OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the peer tutoring program which was implemented in 2004/2005, tutors were trained to use a non-directive, collaborative approach to tutoring. They were encouraged to promote an egalitarian relationship by establishing rapport with their tutees at the beginning of the session, sitting “side-by side” with their tutees to mitigate the nature of the authoritarian tutor-tutee relationship. They were advised to encourage the tutee to be an active participant in the tutorial discussion by asking the tutee to read aloud, placing the assignment in front of the tutee, and giving the tutee control of the pen or pencil, or keyboard if working at the computer.

Tutors were advised to use non-directive strategies, such as asking questions about the tutees’ goals and assignments, negotiating an agenda, outlining/mapping with the tutees, asking tutees to explain and clarify their ideas orally, asking tutees to write independently, and asking questions to develop critical self-awareness. The tutors were trained to facilitate this process by responding as readers, and by practicing the use of silence and wait time. Instead of merely observing these strategies, the tutors were actively engaged in responding to written tutorial scenarios where they brainstormed on various ways in which non-directive strategies could be implemented. For example, tutors were given a tutor-tutee dialogue and asked to critique the tutor’s responses and guidance to the tutee during the tutorial session. Tutors practiced the non-directive strategies during mock tutorials where the strategy of silence or wait time was emphasized. They were asked to record the amount of time they waited after asking a question before repeating the question or providing their tutees with the answer.

Although tutors tried to implement the recommended strategies, it soon became increasingly clear that this approach was not always effective. Tutors expressed frustration about trying to elicit knowledge tutees did not have; tutees suggested the tutors were deliberately withholding information, or that they were not sufficiently knowledgeable about writing. Tutors were then advised to modify their approach and to use a directive approach when they thought the non-directive approach was not effective. The MEU Writing Center Handbook was revised to include a section about using the directive approach:

If something is clearly wrong with the paper and you see a clear and simple solution, you may tell the writer. However, it is best to combine a directive remark with a non-directive one: “This sentence doesn’t work here. It interrupts the paragraph’s continuity. Still, the

idea is an interesting one, where could we add it in the paper to make it more useful to your argument?”

(MEU Writing Center Handbook, p.5)

Tutors were advised to use the directive approach when they felt they had no other recourse. They were cautioned against simply fixing errors and told to provide the tutee with strategies for correction. The handbook was modified to reflect this concern, but informal observation indicated the emergence of problems relating to the tutors’ attempts to implement this advice. A study was designed to determine the ways in which tutees and tutors perceive the effectiveness of writing center tutorials when tutors who have been trained to use directive approaches are now trying to decide when and if they are appropriate. It takes into account the particular circumstances of a Middle Eastern university where the students come from ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds to study in an English medium university. Unlike tutors in the US who are usually native speakers of English, the tutors at MEU are native speakers of languages such as Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, and English. Most writing center scholarship and research has been conducted with NS tutees, NNS tutees, and NS tutors in North America.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Many writing center researchers emphasize the importance of improving assessment practices and maintaining a willingness to question accepted notions of writing center pedagogy across the range of NS and NNS populations (Thonus, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004). This study sought to understand and evaluate the effectiveness of the interactive process of the writing center tutorial by exploring tutor and tutee perceptions of the tutorials. Discerning patterns that recur during the sessions could lead to a deeper awareness of the perceptions of the tutors and the tutees, which will help the writing center director to improve the training of tutors and maximize the benefits of the Writing Center.

The following research questions were addressed within the given NNS context:

1. How do tutees perceive the effectiveness of writing center tutorials?
2. How do tutors perceive the effectiveness of writing center tutorials?
3. Which type of tutoring approach (e.g. non-directive vs. directive) do tutees find most effective?
4. Which type of tutoring approach (e.g. non-directive vs. directive) do tutors find most effective?

## **1.6 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

Writing Center tutorials at the MEU Writing Center were videotaped, transcribed, and analyzed, and stimulated recall was conducted with the tutees and tutors within 24 hours after the tutorials. The stimulated recall was tape-recorded and transcribed. Interviews were conducted with all participants within 72 hours of the stimulated recall. Data for the study came from videotapes of the tutorials, stimulated recall, and interviews.

By looking closely at transcribed stimulated recall sessions and final interviews with the tutors and tutees, the researcher was able to gain a clearer understanding of the following: tutors' and tutees' expectations of writing tutorials in general, their perceptions of the tutorials' effectiveness overall, and an understanding of which types of strategies (non-directive vs. directive) they felt were most effective. A detailed description of the study is provided in Chapter 3.

## **1.7 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

Informal observations and surveys have shown that students and faculty have a positive attitude about the MEU Writing Center; however, a formal study has never been undertaken to assess the effectiveness of writing center tutorials. Although many studies have been conducted to examine non-directive and directive strategies with NNS students (Powers, 1993; Thonus, 1999, 2001, 2002; Williams, 2005; Williams & Severino, 2004), studies have not been conducted in a university in the Middle East where the students are multilingual and the language of instruction is English.

Writing centers are still relatively new in the Middle East, but their value is starting to be acknowledged and several have been established in the area. Many universities including the

United Arab Emirates University, College of the North Atlantic in Qatar, Sultan Qaboos University in Oman, and the University of Bahrain recognize that writing centers and research that focuses on what really works in this area are vitally important to the success of our students.

Writing center research and scholarship has developed in Western contexts, and the models have evolved to promote a non-directive, collaborative approach. The pervasive influence of this discourse extends to the Middle East, where the emphasis on this approach may not be the most effective way to address the particular challenges experienced by Middle Eastern students working to develop their English writing skills. Students in the Middle East who seek help in writing centers where the language of instruction is English may not have had prior experience with the style of teaching involved in non-directive, collaborative tutorials. My exploratory study may provide the stimulus required to find more relevant ways of looking at the situation in the Middle East and reconsidering the types of strategies that are effective with NNS students in the region and in non-Western universities in general.

## **1.8 OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS**

The following chapters conduct an analysis of the tutors' and tutees' perceptions of the effectiveness of their writing center tutorials. Chapter 2 surveys the literature and discusses a shift away from writing center orthodoxy that has dominated research and practice since the mid-1980s. The literature shows there is a greater awareness arising from research with NNS populations over the last decade that one size does not fit all in writing center pedagogy. Chapter 3 turns to a discussion of the methodology used in this research. This chapter discusses the interpretive approach which allows the researcher the opportunity to achieve an authentic and deep description of the phenomena at the center of the research effort. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, and Chapter 5 offers an analysis and discussion of the data presented. Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation with a brief summary of the material discussed in previous chapters and recommendations for future tutor training.

## **CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 THE WRITING CENTER PEDAGOGY DEBATE**

The prevailing consensus is that prior to the mid-1980s, writing centers served largely as programs that provided remedial assistance to struggling writers. Writing center interventions commonly proceeded from a positivist learning perspective which involved directive instruction designed to correct errors and drill grammar and composition skills (Carino, 1995; Clark & Healy, 1996; Grimm, 1996; Hobson, 2001). However, Carino (1995) argues that the linear progression described by many of the researchers does not accurately represent writing center evolution. Hobson (2001) notes that even in the years prior to the move toward a more constructivist approach to writing center instruction that occurred in the mid-80s, many writing centers were engaged, “albeit often covertly,” in helping writers develop their writing beyond the basic grammar and editing corrections (p. 166). As several researchers have observed, writing centers often faced challenges in academic environments where faculty and staff members were concerned that services provided through the writing center led to inappropriate levels of editing or rewriting, and, in some instances, even charges of plagiarism (Bringhurst, 2006; Clark, 1988; Clark & Healy, 1996; Cogie, Strain, & Lorinkas, 1999; Grimm, 1996). Writing center administrators have long sought to find the appropriate balance between providing meaningful assistance to weak writers without actually co-writing students’ work (Cogie, 2001). They followed the direction of the research towards a non-directive, collaborative approach. Shamoan and Burns (1995), however, share the concerns of other researchers that even the constructivist perspective may reinforce certain codes of “faith” or “orthodoxy” that assume all non-directive instruction is inherently preferable to any form of directive instruction (p. 226). They note that such a belief is not necessarily supported by the data and that writing center practitioners must be wary of adhering unquestioningly to any single theoretical approach.

## **2.2 WRITING CENTER PEDAGOGY**

### **2.2.1 Constructivism**

Models of learning deriving from the constructivist ideology make up the theoretical foundation of writing center pedagogy. Constructivism emerged as the primary paradigm guiding educational research and practice in 1970s (Kaufman, 2004), but its influence did not extend to writing center pedagogy until the 1980s. It is a reaction against the dominant philosophy of behaviorism and its emphasis upon rote practice in skill development. Constructivism shifts the emphasis and holds that learning is meaningfully realized in cognitive gains when the learner is able to connect new information to existing constructs. Thus, learning proceeds from the desire or need to construct meaning. The construction of meaning becomes necessary in order to process and assimilate that which is new or unexpected or previously unimagined.

Constructivism acknowledges that each learner brings his or her particular and individual beliefs, values, experiences, and models of comprehension to the process of understanding. While learning models connected to behaviorist theory often focus on breaking down and repeating specific aspects of information with a goal of eventually building whole comprehension through the mastery of individual components, constructivism emphasizes holistic comprehension through the use of schema for organizing and processing information within the known context of the learner. Constructivists emphasize instruction that takes into account students' prior knowledge and experience, using existing concepts to explain new content.

The ways in which learners perceive the world form critical aspects of the learning process. According to Kaufman (2004), the educational theorist Piaget is credited with framing the essence of this discussion in terms of the developmental aspects of "cognitive constructivism." Piaget describes cognitive development as a series of progressive stages through which a child "assimilates," "accommodates," and achieves "equilibrium" with new information by discovering and comparing it to prior experience and schema. The term "social constructivism" is used to describe the effect that socio-cultural influences and context have on the development of knowledge. Kaufman (2004) notes that while Vygotsky is generally credited with expanding constructivism to account for these influences, other researchers have contended that social constructivism is implicit in Piaget's developmental view of the stages of learning. Theories of learning that hold that social and cultural contexts in the form of environment, social

relations, familial relations, and interactions with teachers and other students (among other potential social and cultural influences) have a pronounced effect on students' formulation of meaning and that the process of learning is therefore strongly shaped by these forces.

Vygotsky (1978) referred to a "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) to describe "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Associated with ZPD is "scaffolding," a term coined by Jerome Bruner in 1978 and subsequently used by several theorists to describe situations when learners are involved in supportive dialogue that helps them collectively to reach higher levels of performance than they could on their own. Kaufman (2004), for instance, explains that external scaffolding occurs through the exploration of learning tasks by breaking them down into elemental components; these components are then developed through modeling, coaching, feedback, and personal ownership of the material. Internal scaffolding emphasizes reflection and self-regulation on the part of the learner during the knowledge acquisition process.

According to Kaufman (2004), if teachers are to be effective, they must maintain the ability to identify and respond to students' learning progression by adapting instruction to account for new demands. As students move through their individual zones of proximal development, the teacher must be able to provide learning opportunities and scaffolding designs that support the students' evolving constructs of meaning (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994, as cited in Lantolf & Beckett, 2009). Kaufman (2004) contends that the teacher is critical to students' knowledge development by providing meaningful learning interventions that recognize the influence of both "endogenous factors and internal schema combined with exogenous social and cultural variables that contribute to the transformation of the learner's internal schema" (p. 304). Constructivism is learner-centered: it considers that students' engagement in a given task and their negotiation of meaning is central to the learning process.

DiPardo and Freeman (1988) emphasize the importance of student-centered learning in writing instruction. They discuss the importance of student conversations that "bring together cognitive and social aspects of language learning" (p.130). Meaning is not handed down by a knowledgeable instructor; rather, it is a product of social interaction. DiPardo and Freeman identify several studies in language instruction that demonstrate how instructors and peers

working within the ZPD can effectively transfer control and direction for learning over to students and thereby meaningfully realize language development gains (Palincsar & Brown, as referenced in DiPardo & Freeman, 1988, p. 132). Given the centrality of the peer tutoring relationship in writing center pedagogy, the manner in which constructivist theory explains and provides direction for building on the peer communication process is important.

Forman and Cazden compared two cohorts of fourth graders working on a science experiment (as cited in DiPardo & Freedman, 1988, pp. 132-133). The first cohort was composed of students working individually; the second was composed of students working in pairs. The dyad cohort reported greater gains in learning than did the students working individually. Within the dyads, there were different collaborative styles. In the most “cooperative” of these styles, in which students monitored their partners’ work and coordinated their roles, there was also the greatest evidence of “cognitive conflict” – in which students debate conflicting solutions before arriving at a shared conclusion.

The researchers note that this conflict resolution is consistent with Piaget’s claim that learning gains arise out of challenge and that cognitive conflict provides that stimulus. It is Vygotsky, however, who provides a framework for Forman and Cazden whereby they explore “the interactional transformation of interpsychic into intrapsychic regulation that can occur among peers” (DiPardo & Freeman, 1988, p. 133). Drawing on their dyad cohort, they demonstrate that students engaged in a collaborative effort in which one observes, suggests, and corrects while the other engages in a specific task were realizing a learning effect similar to that seen in the tutoring relationship, where a more expert peer facilitates and thereby mediates the development of the learner engaged in the performance of the task.

The relation between collaborative learning and social constructivism is made explicit by several researchers, including Oxford (1997), who describes collaborative learning as occurring within “knowledge communities” that absorb and work on the learner through acculturation – an embrace of shared commitment to a knowledge community’s particular goals (p. 444). In describing the role of collaborative learning in the L2 classroom, Oxford references Vygotsky’s theory that the learner is assisted in his or her own process of development by the teacher or instructor whose job it is to serve as “a facilitator or guide or provider of assistance” (p.448) for the student. Language development is encouraged and reinforced through scaffolding stratagems that seek to deepen and strengthen the learner’s language foundation, and as concepts become

ingrained and the learner develops mastery, the scaffolding supports are no longer required. Oxford distinguishes between cooperative and collaborative learning in the L2 classroom by stating that collaborative learning “seems less technique-oriented, less prescriptive, and more concerned with acculturation into the learning community” (p.449). She claims that collaborative learning is “more explicitly oriented to negotiating and fulfilling the potential traversing the ZPD [zone of proximal development] of each L2 learner” (449).

### **2.2.2 Constructivism in Writing Center Practice**

The work of the writing center is closely aligned with a constructivist, collaborative learning model and has taken the form of the non-directive, collaborative approach in most writing centers in the United States and in many centers throughout the world (Bishop, 1992; Carino, 2003; Clark & Healy, 1996; Corbett, 2008; Grimm, 1996; Hobson, 2001). The non-directive, collaborative approach assumes that writers understand how and why writing improvements should be made in order to achieve “agency” in their own learning processes (Evertz, 1999). A non-directive, collaborative approach encourages tutors to question writers about their goals. Ideally, the writer’s responses initiate the process of discovery. Current writing center pedagogy posits that students learn most meaningfully when instruction is conducted in a non-directive manner: when they are led to understand something through their own trial and error, with the guidance of a teacher or tutor providing a support role (Brooks, 1991). The significance this theory has for writing practice involves the role of the student during the tutorial and the strategies employed by the tutor. Students are expected to take an active role and to assume responsibility for the tutorial, and tutors are encouraged to use non-directive strategies that encourage discovery and thinking. Non-directive strategies include the following: asking the tutee questions to prompt reflection, encouraging the tutee to identify and correct errors, and allowing the tutee to write independently in order to develop confidence.

The emphasis on non-directive strategies developed in the 1980s as a reaction against traditional, product-oriented, directive perspectives in which knowledge was thought to be transmitted from teachers to students rather than being constructed. In the writing center literature, non-directive and directive approaches are often presented in terms of an either/or dichotomy. Directive tutoring is associated with hierarchical instruction and non-directive tutoring with collaboration. Directive strategies are generally described by theorists as applying

to situations where tutors dominate the tutorial and assume an authoritative role (Corbett; 2008). When adopting a directive approach, tutors use strategies such as identifying and correcting students' errors, providing students with alternative language verbally or in writing, and asking leading or closed questions.

### **2.2.3 Collaborative Learning and Peer Tutoring**

Many writing center theorists and researchers have observed that collaboration is at the heart of the peer tutoring relationship. Collaborative learning consists of peer tutoring, peer review and discussion, team work, and any other strategies designed to achieve individual learning through peer interactions. In positioning the writing center tutorial within the realm of collaborative learning, Bruffee (1984) distilled the work of other educational theorists including Vygotsky (Hobson, 2001; Truesdell, 2008). Bruffee (1984) and others (Bishop, 1992; Calder, 2002; Carino, 2003; Falchikov, 2001) have asserted that peer tutoring constitutes its own distinct form of learning environment and mirrors the process of discussion, analysis, revision, and collaborative learning that is at the heart of knowledge construction. Peer tutoring has been used in North American educational institutions since the 1970s and is now an essential feature of most writing center work. Tutors in most writing centers are peers who are selected because of their knowledge of and interest in writing and their ability to communicate effectively. Some tutors are trained in informal workshops; others undergo more intensive training in credit-bearing courses. The tutors in writing center contexts are different from "same-level peers" (Falchikov, 2001, p. 8) where participants have equal status. Same-level peer tutoring takes place between students with similar experience and achievement levels, such as when tutors/tutees are in the same class group, share similar levels of competence, and are at similar levels of development. Tutoring may also take place between "cross-level peers" (Falchikov, 2001, p. 9), where tutor and tutee have unequal status. These tutors may be regarded as peers in terms of social hierarchy, but they have been selected because of their writing skills, training, and academic record. This type of interaction is also referred to as "expert-novice, in which one interlocutor (the tutor) generally controls the flow of discourse;" however, there is "moderate mutuality in which the expert actively encourages the participation of the novice" (Storch, as cited in Williams, 2005, p. 38). The relationship implicit in the term "expert-novice" may not adequately describe the peer tutoring relationship in the Middle East because the tutors and tutees in this area share similar

cultural, social, and educational experiences; moreover, English is not the first language of most tutors and tutees.

Justification for peer tutoring has been established in the field of rhetoric and composition (Bruffee 1984, 1993; Falchikov, 2001; Gere, 1987; Hobson, 2001; Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984; Oxford, 1997). In universities across North America, students enrolled in language classes are able to receive additional help with their writing from peer tutors in writing centers, and peer tutoring has been considered an important supplement to the instruction that students receive in the classroom (Bishop, 1992). Hobson (2001) claims “that peer tutoring as a form of collaborative learning assumes that helping other writers learn to handle concepts and skills more effectively creates an education system built around a community of learners instead of single authority figures” (p. 171). This learning scenario relies on an unrealistic ideal of “a community of learners” and occludes any aspect of the relationship between tutors and tutees that could impede the transfer of skills and knowledge. It affirms the value of a collaborative learning model, but it does not take into account the possibility of communication errors deriving from social and cultural assumptions, or from the inability of tutors to consistently offer sufficient guidance. Moreover, it assumes that tutors have the requisite information or the access to it and the experience to help their tutees generate knowledge and understanding.

Bruffee (1993) advocates peer tutoring “because it provides the kind of social context, the kind of community, in which normal discourse occurs: a community of knowledgeable peers” (p. 424). Bruffee (1993) explains that the conversation that occurs in the Writing Center is similar to the conversation from which knowledge emerges. His theories have been used by writing center researchers to advance a collaborative, non-directive tutoring approach as the best way to create peer conversation. Bruffee’s (1993) theories assume that tutees will take an active role in the tutorial and that they will respond readily to a non-directive, collaborative approach. His assumption that all normal discourse occurs within a community of knowledgeable learners is unrealistic. Social contexts include individuals with varying levels of information, insight,

intelligence, and learning styles. Further research on the nature of Middle Eastern discourse could contribute to a broader understanding of the judicious use of a non-directive, collaborative approach.

#### **2.2.4 Writing Center Training Manuals**

Contemporary writing center training manuals encourage tutors to view themselves as peers rather than authority figures. They recommend sitting side-by-side, and not at a distance, to promote an egalitarian relationship (Gillespe & Lerner, 2006; Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2006). The same training manuals advise tutors to assume a non-directive approach when tutoring their peers. Gillespe and Lerner (2006) emphasize the differences between “tutors” and “editors.” Tutors are discouraged from taking on the role of an editor who would “take ownership of the text,” “work with an ideal text,” “make corrections on the paper,” and “tell writers what to do” (p.45). Rather, tutors are encouraged to promote a sense of responsibility in the students for their writing: “Make sure that writers take ownership,” “Trust the writers’ ideas of the text,” “Ask them their plans for revision,” and “Keep hands off and let writers make corrections” (p. 45). The distinction between tutor and editor is an integral part of peer tutor training. Tutors who are using non-directive strategies will resist the role of editor; however, recent research recognizes the need to occasionally draw attention to specific errors and therefore to use directive strategies (Blau & Hall, 2002; Henning, 2001; Myers, 2003; Thonus, 2002, 2004; Weigle & Nelson, 2004). If a student does not recognize a significant mistake or problem with the text, there is no point in asking the tutor to maintain his/her distance and to withhold information that could help the student to identify it in this paper and to avoid it in subsequent papers.

Goeller and Kalteissen (2008) describe the non-directive, collaborative model as an approach that allows the learner to have control of his or her writing process -- empowering the individual writing center student to overcome his or her limitations through guidance and encouragement. They contend that the non-directive, collaborative approach means that the tutor is not a “proofreader, fact-checker, editor, ghost writer, collaborator, or human thesaurus,” and is instead, a party to the writing student’s own discovery through practice and revision (p.7). The manuals have cleared space for the presentation of their ideas by criticizing all traditional writing practices; however, empirical research reveals that this model has proven to be unworkable in practice. Thompson et al. (2009) write:

As writing centers continued to amass experience and as research about writing centers grew, the increased experience and the empirical findings led to questions about once-accepted mandates concerning the tutors' roles in their collaborations with students. Over the past twenty years, empirical research has shown the limitations or inaccuracy of some lore-based mandates and has provided support for others.

(p. 79)

Although most writing centers continue to adhere to the collaborative, non-directive model where tutor and tutee create shared knowledge, this type of tutorial is often perceived as ineffective by both tutors and tutees (Henning, 2001). Tutors at the MEU Writing Center who had been trained to adhere to the non-directive practices advocated by these manuals and who attempted to apply these approaches experienced occasional difficulties during their tutorials. Although they tried to use non-directive strategies, they found it necessary at times to function as “proofreader, fact-checker, editor, ghost writer, collaborator, or human thesaurus” in order to be party to the students' own discovery. Recent research (Blau & Hall, 2002; Carino, 2003; Cogie, 2001; Henning, 2001; Weigle & Nelson, 2004; Williams, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004) recommends a level of flexibility which may minimize frustration with the tutorial situation. This recommendation for flexibility is particularly relevant where the students are primarily NNS. It has become increasingly apparent during the past eight years at MEU that the non-directive, collaborative approach is necessary, but it is not sufficient. Moreover, the difficulties students, tutors, and tutees have experienced in trying to apply and to respond to a non-directive, collaborative approach leads to questions about the viability of strict adherence to this approach.

The current non-directive approach promoted in the manuals also encourages tutors to focus on whole text concerns or higher order concerns, such as thesis or focus, audience and purpose, organization, and development, rather than lower order concerns, such as sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar. Gillespie and Lerner (2003) in “The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer-tutoring” define higher-order concerns as “the big issues in the paper, ones that aren't addressed by proofreading or editing for word choice” (p. 35). Brooks (1991) argues that when tutors correct sentence level errors, they are not helping the student become an independent

writer. Similarly, Goeller and Kalteissen (2008), in their “Guide for Tutors in the Rutgers Writing Center” state that it is critical that tutors keep an eye on what is important -- that while syntax and grammar are important -- it is even more important that ideas are effectively conveyed through writing. They note that the critical role of the tutor is to “teach the writer, not the writing” (p. 11), which is consistent with the philosophy of the writing center espoused by North (1984), Bruffee (1984, 1993), and others. Williams and Severino (2004) note this focus on higher order concerns is intended to connect the writer more integrally to his or her writing -- in the hopes of creating student agency and ownership of text. The thinking is that necessary grammar and syntax improvement will occur naturally; improvements which do not come naturally are more easily learned through other instructional mechanisms once the student establishes the necessary connection to his or her text. Although the handbooks and the strategies they advocate are consistent with contemporary writing center philosophy, they may fail to take into account individual circumstances. While focusing on higher order concerns may help some students improve rhetorical, syntactical, and lexical aspects of language, there may be students who will benefit from a focus on lexical and syntactical before higher order concerns or from a flexible alternation between these approaches.

### **2.2.5 Representations of the Directive Approach**

Hobson (2001) argues that writing center practice is best viewed as an evolving organic process that must remain responsive to the conditions of the particular circumstances at hand. He notes that no single theory of practice or assessment is sufficient to address the needs of all writing centers or all writing center students. Learning environments are not static, even in highly structured cultures and societies. Therefore, it is imperative to consider the “cultural situatedness of particular centers, and the extent to which each center is defined by local context (institutional, philosophical, educational, physical, communal)” (p. 169), when considering the question of what constitutes effective writing center pedagogy.

The evolution of writing center instruction reflects a Western and, more particularly, an American pedagogical orientation. Most of the research on writing center work has been done by researchers working with writing centers based in the US (Lefort, 2010). Many of the international studies on writing centers refer to and cite these studies and thus, in a self-referential manner, the current thinking on writing center instruction and assessment is directly

informed by the American writing center experience. There has also been a strong emphasis on writing center work with English native language speakers (NS), and these studies have dominated the literature. In recent years, the focus has moved to the particular learning challenges experienced by students working with writing centers in a language that is not their native one.

The non-directive, collaborative approach which emerged in writing centers across the US during the late 1970s and 1980s mirrored a general educational trend in the realm of composition studies (Williams & Severino, 2004). In the writing center, emerging and desirable practices reflected a “liberatory” perspective (Evertz, 1999), supporting writing student agency and text ownership, with collaboration as the preferred model for instruction intervention (Blau & Hall, 2002). This approach has been so universally embraced by writing centers that Thonus observed that challenging a tutor for “[b]eing directive, is the strongest criticism a writing tutor can levy against self or a colleague; it signals ‘too much’ involvement in the student’s work,” (Thonus, 2001, p. 64).

Directive instruction has not always been fairly represented. Frequently, it has served as a foil to highlight and endorse, by contrast, non-directive instruction. The exclusive endorsement of non-directive instruction has led to prescriptive approaches which are not consistent with constructivist pedagogy, as advocated by Vygotsky, for instance. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that “assistance might include a hint or clue, a word of praise, a suggestion, a learning strategy, a grammar reminder, or an intensive review – anything that the particular L2 student needs at a given time” (p. 448). Rejection of directive instruction and adherence to non-directive instruction might prevent tutors from providing their students with the scaffolding necessary for optimal learning gains. Shamon and Burns (1995) state that not all authoritative instruction is “authoritarian” in nature, and directive does not have to be “dictatorial” (p. 233). These researchers propose that writing center practitioners should resist complete adherence to any tutoring schemes that tend to be prescriptive. They cite instances in which an expert, authoritative voice is beneficial to student development, using the analogy of a master class in music in which constructive information or tips are revealed through observation, practice, and repetition. Such an approach is ideal for students with moderate to advanced skill levels in that they are provided the environment to “make the shift from general strategies to domain strategies” (Shamon & Burns, 1995, p. 234). In the case of novice students, directive instruction

can be productively implemented through modeling of practice by the tutor. While a novice student may not be able to arrive at a skill or knowledge level through trial and error based on his or her limited knowledge, practice of a skill or behavior that has been modeled for the struggling student can create opportunities for additional learning gains.

### **2.2.6 The “Loss of Innocence” Regarding the Tutorial Role**

The constructivist view of writing center pedagogy advanced the idea that a collaborative, non-directive instructional approach would largely eradicate problems associated with traditional, hierarchical structures for learning. North’s (1984) article on writing center pedagogy was influential in establishing the constructivist writing center as a model of egalitarian reform with the potential to further the writing development and, by extension, the critical thinking, of all students who engaged in non-directive peer tutoring.

It was also North (1984), however, who questioned his own assertion that a non-directive approach to instruction assured that the student would not be unduly influenced by the tutor’s perspective. This perspective would invariably reflect the academic world in which the writing center was situated. North’s use of the word “innocence” to describe his earlier belief was echoed by Grimm (1996) who included the phrase the “loss of innocence” in the title to her article exploring this issue. In other words, writing center students continue to function in a learning environment that may have changed philosophically, while remaining unchanged at a practical level. As one tutor cited in Thonus’s study describes the situation, tutors often “see writing as something that has rights and wrongs, a way to write what the teacher wants, or a right way to write for the academy” (Thonus, 2001, p. 68). The tutor’s comment accurately describes an important aspect of the writing process: the acquisition of the rules of grammar and of academic, cultural conventions for both higher order and lower order issues. It seems reasonable to ask if the rules and conventions of academic writing can be legitimately viewed as an impediment to students’ learning. Bringhurst (2006) counters Grimm’s (1996) complaint that writing centers serve as “normalizing agents,” saying this is exactly what writing centers are supposed to do: help students learn to participate fully, through effective writing, not only in the language of the academy but in the language of society. He argues that it is patronizing the intelligence and adaptability of struggling writing students, particularly those outside of the dominant culture, to assume they are “victims” of an academy that requires them to adopt

institutional norms (Bringhurst, 2006, p. 285). They are attending a university, so they most likely expect or want to adapt to its norms. Regarding NNS students as victims does little to help them improve their writing skills in the target language.

While the dominant theory of writing center pedagogy embraces the idea that the tutor is distinct from a traditional teacher, recent studies demonstrate that peer tutors often fulfill “teacherly” roles within the tutoring relationship, and therefore, are not to be regarded solely as peers in their interactions with writing center students. Analysis of the interaction between tutors and their NS and NNS tutees has revealed that tutors typically dominate during tutorial interactions: they exhibit features of conversational dominance such as longer turn length, taking charge, and holding the floor (Thonus, 2001, 2002). This conversational dominance is even more prominent in tutorials with NNS students (Thonus, 2002, 2004; Williams, 2005). In her study examining tutor-tutee interaction, Williams (2005) examines the interaction between tutors and their NNS tutees to determine the status of the tutor within the tutorial and whether tutors behave differently when tutoring English NS writers compared to English NNS writers. She videotaped ten tutorials between the pairs, transcribed them, analyzed them, and conducted a modified version of stimulated recall with all the tutors and tutees. She concludes that NNS writers tend to have a very long diagnosis phase, the part of the tutorial where tutees discuss their concerns and what has brought them to the Writing Center. Williams (2005) claims that the longer diagnosis phases may be attributable to the challenges NNS writers and their tutors experience in attempting to “come to a mutual understanding of their task” (p. 60). Williams’s (2005) analysis of the tutorials shows that even though tutors’ styles of tutoring vary throughout the tutorials to accommodate the student they are assisting, they tend to be more dominant and authoritarian, and that this tendency is emphasized in NNS tutorials: “With L2 tutorials, tutors take on the authority of the status more easily, displaying it more frequently though unmitigated or more forceful suggestions” (p.59). She explains that some tutors felt they had to be more directive to increase NNS tutee comprehension. Tutors felt that simpler, clearer, unmitigated directives might help the NNS writers better understand and apply the advice they were being given.

As mentioned previously, writing center scholarship has traditionally advocated that tutors act as peers rather than as authority figures (Hobson, 2001; Weigle & Nelson, 2004); however, this has not been supported by empirical studies. Research has shown that tutors “take on a multiplicity of roles, from more to less authoritative” (Weigle & Nelson, p. 204), and there

has been no conclusive evidence demonstrating a connection between tutors taking on the role of peer and any perceived or actual tutorial success (Henning, 2001; Thonus, 2002; Weigle & Nelson, 2004).

Henning (2001) reviews writing center scholarship that deals with the characteristics of successful tutorials and concludes that empirical research does not uphold the idea that the collaborative, non-directive approach contributes to tutorial success. She claims that successful collaborative models of writing center pedagogy, based on the assumption that a successful tutorial is one in which “the tutor talks less, avoids directive discourse, and works with the writer to create shared knowledge, are not completely supported by empirical research” (p. 10). She states that the main features that contribute to a successful tutorial are related to how well the tutor and tutee negotiate an agenda; how well the tutor helps the tutee apply prior knowledge and the knowledge learned to future writing assignments; how well the tutee’s concerns are addressed during the tutorial, and how well the tutor and tutee establish rapport. Henning argues that these findings have implications for tutor training and that new tutors should be trained to understand that a non-directive, collaborative model is not the most effective in all tutorial situations. Tutors should not adhere to a single approach and should use a number of approaches in each tutorial to achieve successful tutorial outcomes. Training should help tutors understand that directive strategies may sometimes be necessary, and they should be educated on how and when to use directive and non-directive strategies during tutorial situations.

Thonus (2001) explores perceptions of tutor-tutee relationship and the nature of their interactions. She surveyed seven students, their writing center tutors, and their faculty instructors at writing centers based in Indiana University-Bloomington and conducted a “triangulated inquiry” to determine how the “construction of the tutor identity” within the context of the writing center informed the nature of the student-tutor, student-teacher, and tutor-teacher interactions. Thonus (2001) conducted taped observations of a tutorial session for each of the seven tutor-tutee pairs, as well as two taped interviews with each of the tutors and each of the tutees (each conducted with individual subjects). She also conducted one interview with each of the course instructors.

Her findings indicate that tutors, tutees, and instructors have different perceptions about the role of the tutor. Most course instructors seemed to regard the tutors as surrogates -- expecting them to provide writing instruction without guidelines or supervision. Other instructors

expected the tutors to reinforce the instruction they were conducting in their classrooms and to be guided by their evaluation criteria. They assumed it was the tutor's job to address the grammar or composition issues identified by the instructor and to rectify the problems in their tutorial sessions with the student. Several of the tutors expressed their inclination to fulfill the surrogate instructor role with or without an instructor's direct guidance. Most of the tutors, however, relied on "general writing principles" to construct tutorial interventions with students, or they asked the students to request specific guidelines from their instructors (Thonus, 2001, p. 67). During the interviews with the tutors, Thonus (2001) notes that they criticized the instructors because of vague instructions to the students and lack of clarity about grading. Thonus (2001) observes that the number and intensity of these complaints suggest that the tutors, perhaps subconsciously, perceived themselves as peers of the instructors, rather than as peers of the writing students. This perception was echoed in the tutors' interactions with their tutees and the tutors invariably carried out teacherly functions, engaging with some frequency in directive instruction (Thonus, 2001).

Based on interviews with the writing center students she surveyed, Thonus determines that while they regarded their writing center tutors as different from their instructors, the students still did not quite regard their tutors as peers; they perceived them as having a "higher status" within the academic environment (Thonus, 2001). Thonus suggests that the tutors similarly reflected an imbalance in the peer dynamic from the tutors' perspective, noting how often directive approaches were used by tutors to get students to perform a particular task; however, she also observes that there is evidence that students expect their tutors to engage in some directive instruction and, in fact, even desire it under particular conditions (Thonus, 2001). Thonus (2001) notes that studies with both NS and NNS students have suggested this preference for directive instruction. She states that her study "broke no new ground" in either design or conclusions drawn from the data, but that the findings were useful in that they provided support for anecdotal observations reported elsewhere in the writing center research literature.

In her 2002 study, Thonus expanded her study population to consider 12 tutorial relationships: six featuring English NS and six featuring English NNS (these NNSs were students from Asian backgrounds). Thonus (2002) explores features of tutorial interaction which may have played a role in determining whether or not the tutorial was successful. One of the features of the interaction highlighted by Thonus (2002) is the frequency and type of directive

interventions. The tutor-tutee pairs are drawn from the Indiana University (IU) Tutorial Services (WTS) that is charged with working with freshman and basic English composition students as well as other undergraduate and graduate students who could benefit from writing support. The demographic data provided for the tutors and tutees indicates that seven of the pairs constituted the study sample for her earlier (2001) research study mentioned above. Five pairs of tutors-tutees were added, with four of the new tutees identified as NNS. Thonus (2002) proposes several questions regarding the tutor-tutee exchange:

1. What linguistic and interactional features appear in conversations in these tutorials?
2. Which of these linguistic and interactional features do tutors and tutees reference when commenting on the success of the tutorials, and is the recurrence of any of these features correlated with assessments of a tutorial as “successful”?
3. What conclusions can be reached linking analysis of the tutorials with reflections upon the tutorials as regards perceived success of the tutorial and its impact on writing improvement?

(pp. 113-114)

To address these questions, Thonus taped and transcribed a tutorial session for each of the twelve pairs (2002). In a fashion similar to her 2001 study design, Thonus (2002) considered data including each tutee’s assignment sheet and assignment, the tutor’s report of the tutorial session, and information drawn through individual meetings with each tutor and tutee to discuss their perception of the tutorial session. A subsequent meeting with each tutor and tutee allowed them to review Thonus’ notes and transcriptions (2002), and invited them to offer any comments or changes and to discuss the observations more fully. Each tutor and tutee was then asked to identify the tutor behaviors they considered to be most essential to student learning and tutorial effectiveness.

In reporting her findings, Thonus (2002) observes that tutors and tutees were largely consistent in identifying conversational features as factors that contributed to the success, or lack of success, of the tutorial exchange. Some of the features of successful tutorials outlined by Thonus (2002) are as follows: (a) tutors act as experts in academic writing and their role as authority is not openly negotiated, (b) a strong rapport characterized by small talk and laughter is

present between tutor and tutee, (c) conversational structure resembles “real” conversation rather than “ask and advise,” and (d) tutors and tutees have symmetrical interpretations of directive forcefulness and tutor “helpfulness” (p. 127).

Thonus (2002) was surprised to discover that two of the most successful tutorials were actually first time tutorial encounters between the tutor and tutee, while one of the unsuccessful tutorials was a repeat encounter between the tutor and tutee. Another interesting finding for the three most successful tutorials as well as for the two unsuccessful tutorials was that the tutor’s area of expertise did not correspond with their tutee’s subject. Thonus (2002) observes that gender, age, and student language proficiency were not efficient predictors of success in the tutor-tutee relationship.

The significance of Thonus’ 2002 study is that it focuses on the outcome of the tutorial relationship. She states that in the current educational climate, with its emphasis on outcome-based measurement to confer educational program value, it is imperative for writing center researchers and practitioners to produce evidence of the success of their work in improving student writing. Thonus prioritizes tutors’ and tutees’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their tutorial sessions. She states that to “contrast ‘good’ and ‘bad’ tutorials is essential, but to distinguish between ‘excellent’ tutorials and ‘the rest’ requires training tutors in specific interactional and pragmatic features that research of this type suggests are most conducive to success” (2002, p. 130). The responses of the tutors and the NS and NNS tutees lead her to conclude that strict adherence to the collaborative, non-directive view of the peer tutoring relationship may be somewhat misguided and that tutees rely on the tutor serving less as peer, and more as authoritative guide. Holding to the idealized view of what the tutoring relationship should be -- non-directive, peer-collaborative -- may restrict the discourse and limit the possibility of discovering best practices.

A point to consider is that all the tutors in Thonus’ 2001 and 2002 studies are native speakers of English. Generalizations derived from her studies are relevant but limited to similar situations; they do not extend to the situation in the Middle East, for instance, where tutors in English institutions are for the most part non-native speakers of English. Another point to consider is that the tutors in her study are graduate students or adjunct instructors. They are on average 13 years older than the tutees, who are undergraduate students. The tutor’s age and

higher status within the institution may change tutees' expectations and tutors' assumptions about the nature and function of the tutor's role.

Thonus (2004) later condensed a series of studies, including much of her own research between 1999 and 2003, which explored the nature of tutor-tutee interactions within the writing center context, with a particular focus on potential differences between tutorials with NS tutees and those with NNS tutees. As noted in the discussion of the 2001 study, the tutors and tutees are drawn from the Indiana University – Bloomington Writing Centers, and they include both NS and NNS of English. For the purposes of her 2004 analysis, Thonus considered data culled from four years of recorded and transcribed interviews with 25 graduate-student tutors (including Thonus herself) and assessed their work with two graduate tutees and 42 undergraduate tutees: 25 tutees were NS, and 19 were NNS. The 2001 and 2002 studies included only NNS students from Asian backgrounds; the 2004 study included students whose native language ranged from Farsi to Arabic to a variety of Asian languages.

Thonus' analysis of the data confirms her earlier recognition (2001, 2002) that interactional dominance is characteristic of the majority of tutor-tutee exchanges, with the tutor serving less as a peer according to conception of a collaborative tutoring relationship, and more as an authoritative figure providing directives. Tutors were more likely to provide direct guidance to NNS tutees than NS tutees. This finding is consistent with research Thonus previously reported (1999, as cited in Thonus, 2004, p. 236) in which NNS tutees were inclined to perceive the tutor as an authority figure, rather than as a peer. The NNS tutorials regularly reflected fewer conversational features such as small talk, overlapping dialogue and laughter than were evident in tutor exchanges with NS tutees. Confusion over tutorial roles is evident, Thonus (2004) contends, in the uneven durations of tutorial exchanges, especially in the length of NNS sessions that ran the gamut from short to long, while sessions with NS tutees were of a more consistent length.

Based on the review of her own findings, considered within the context of other contemporary studies on writing center tutorials with both NS and NNS tutee populations, Thonus (2004) concludes that there are significant differences between tutorials involving NS tutees and NNS tutees. Rather than using a "one size fits all" approach in writing center pedagogy, Thonus suggests that more flexibility may be required. She says that tutors "must be reassured that there are reasons for their frustration – first and foremost, they (and their

supervisors) must be willing to relinquish the orthodoxy of the collaborative frame and permit more realistic and appropriate ‘contact zones’ for tutorials with NNS” (p. 240). Thonus’s studies contribute to an understanding of tutor-tutee interactions in specific contexts related to North American universities. The implications of Thonus’s studies do not extend to international contexts because many of the same tutor-tutee dyads served as study subjects across her research (2001, 2002, and 2004); moreover, her tutors were all NS graduate students.

Weigle and Nelson (2004) support Thonus’s (2001, 2002, 2004) findings. Their study with NNS students also concludes that tutors and tutees negotiate their relationships in a variety of ways, depending on a number of factors, and tutors do not always play the role of a peer. Weigle and Nelson conducted a case study of three different tutor-tutee relationships to examine how tutors’ conceptions of their roles changed over time and how both tutors and tutees assessed and valued features of successful tutoring. The tutors were drawn from a class of candidates for the Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MATESOL) program at Georgia State University who were enrolled in an “Issues in Second Language (L2) Writing” course. As part of their course requirements, the graduate students were required to tutor an NNS tutee for 10 hours during the course of the semester. The NNS tutees either came either from a freshman composition course designed for NNS students, or from a graduate level writing course for NNS students. Over the course of the semester and the tutoring sessions, the tutors were assigned to online discussion groups to discuss writing assignments and issues that emerged with their tutees. While the instructor for the “Issues in L2 Writing” course did not participate in the discussion groups, the instructor was available to tutors for consultation. At the close of the semester, tutors were asked to submit a five-page paper reflecting on their tutoring experiences.

Three tutor-tutee dyads agreed to have the researchers videotape their sessions at the mid-point of the semester and expressed willingness to participate in the study. Six tutoring sessions, two for each pair of participating tutors-tutees, were conducted, tape-recorded, and later used to prompt stimulated recall in interviews with one of the researchers. Unlike the participants in Thonus’s 2001, 2002, and 2004 studies, the three dyads who agreed to take a part in this study were comprised of graduate tutors and graduate tutees, and one of the dyads included an NNS tutor and NNS tutee.

Weigle and Nelson conclude that “a complex set of variables influence the roles that tutors play and that there is not a direct connection between specific roles and the perceived

success of tutoring” (2004, p. 222). They argue that the ideal writing center theorists imagine whereby tutors construct themselves as peers of their tutees may not always be realized. The peer tutoring model may be effective for NS students or highly proficient NNS students, but students with low proficiency may require more “language support” (p. 222). Although the case study sample was quite small, Weigle and Nelson (2004) express confidence that when considered within the context of other similar research, it demonstrates that flexibility with traditional tutoring roles may be beneficial to NNS tutees.

Studies observing the differences of NNS students compared to NS students in the writing center indicate they benefit from different types of writing center instruction, and this difference is explored more fully in the next section of the chapter.

## **2.3 NNS STUDENTS**

### **2.3.1 NNS Students in the Writing Center**

In the mid-1990s, research on writing center pedagogy began to emerge that reflected the growing number of NNS students using writing center services (Williams & Severino, 2004). This research examined NNS cross-cultural issues: how background and experience inform NNS students’ learning processes, expectations, and the dynamics of tutor-tutee relationships (Powers, 1993; Thonus, 2001, 2004). It also revealed differences in NS and NNS language processing and approaches to text (Harris & Silva, 1993).

Powers and Nelson (1995) set the stage for NNS writing center research by raising important issues about the needs of NNS students. To investigate the differences between NNS students and native speakers of English in writing centers, they mailed a questionnaire to 110 graduate institutions throughout the United States and received responses from 75. The authors concluded that there is a growing demand for NNS tutorials, that NNS students tend to request more help with lower order issues than NS students, and that tutors are insufficiently trained to work with these students. They argue that to work successfully with NNS students, tutors must understand their unique needs and receive more training in NNS issues, especially hands-on training. They also suggest incentives for tutors to remain in their positions because the longer they tutor NNS students, the more proficient they become. Finally, they recommend that tutors and writing center specialists work together to provide students with assistance they cannot find elsewhere on campus.

One of the most significant findings is that NNS students do not appear to benefit from the non-directive, collaborative approach in the same way or to the same degree as NS students. Harris (1997) reports that 80 NNS students participating in a survey about writing center tutorials expressed dissatisfaction with the strategies used, strategies involving non-directive approaches typically used with NS students. She argues that NNS students are not familiar with the type of active learning and discussion typically promoted in these tutorials; they expect the tutor to take control of the session and explain “how to fix their papers” (p. 225). This makes it difficult for the tutor to apply a collaborative, non-directive approach and can lead to frustration and disappointment on the part of students. Harris cautions tutors to be aware that NNS students may not share the same goals as NS students and urges them to be more flexible.

Blau and Hall (2002) discuss the frustration many tutors feel when attempting to use a non-directive, collaborative approach with their NNS tutees and the accompanying guilt when they resort to a directive approach. They explore how their tutoring practices with NNS students differ from the guidelines proposed in the standard tutor training manuals by conducting research on NNS students who received assistance at the Writing Center at Boston University’s College of Communication. They reviewed 18 transcripts based on audio-taped tutorial sessions with NNS students conducted during a two-year period. The last five sessions transcribed also included the observer’s notes on tutor and tutee body language, energy, tone of voice, as well as other elements of the exchange that might clarify the dynamics at play. In comparing these transcripts with those drawn from tutorial sessions with NS students in the writing center, Blau and Hall identified several themes that characterized the transcripts of NS tutorials and several that characterized NNS tutorials.

The researchers note that it is difficult for tutors to engage in strictly collaborative efforts with NNS tutees who have low English proficiency. Engaging in Socratic questioning may not prove a valid approach if the tutor cannot communicate the question so that the tutee can meaningfully understand and interpret what is being asked of him or her. Blau and Hall (2002) propose that tutors of NNS tutees “might feel less conflicted and battle-weary if we accept that the line-by-line process is a fundamental part of teaching [NNS] students how to write English more clearly, concisely, and correctly” (2002, p. 41). In addition to working line-by-line, Blau and Hall propose that tutors of NNS tutees be better trained in using contrastive rhetoric, more culturally aware of differences in NNS communication exchanges, and comfortable using a

directive approach with lower order concerns. They suggest that the discussion of long papers in short sections would make the reading aloud strategy more effective. Like Thonus (2001, 2002, 2004) and Weigle and Nelson (2004), Blau and Hall claim that “guilt-free tutoring” is possible only when we become aware of the differences between NS and NNS students and recognize that the strategies that are successful with NS tutees may not necessarily work for NNS tutees. They contend that a more directive approach in tutoring may be what certain NNS students require and that philosophical adherence to collaborative approaches may need to be relinquished. This shift may clear space whereby new forms of relationship negotiation and practice can be explored. Echoing this, Thompson et al. (2009) found that effective tutors “are flexible in the strategies they use, sometimes directive and sometimes not directive, based on their ongoing diagnoses of students’ needs” (p. 81).

The specific challenges of learning in a second language that confront NNS students suggest that self-correction strategies that characterize a non-directive collaborative tutoring approach may not be amenable to the needs of NNS students, at least not at the start of their work with the writing center (Jones et al., 2006). It is futile to try to prompt learning through questioning when the student does not have ready access to the knowledge necessary to fully comprehend the questions being asked, or to understand their relevance to learning. As Williams and Severino (2004) claim, “the tutor cannot elicit what the writer does not know” (p. 167). Williams and Severino call for more research on whether strategies such as reading aloud, starting with lower order concerns, on-line tutoring, and code switching are effective with NNS students.

### **2.3.2 Differences between NS and NNS Writers**

The current research on NS and NNS students indicates that there are meaningful differences between how these two groups process elements of writing instruction as well as differences in how they respond to tutoring strategies. Studies focusing on NNS students have established that they frequently exhibit problems with morphology, lexical mastery, and syntax (Williams & Severino, 2004). NNS students are still developing their knowledge of the English language: they may have more lexical and syntactical issues than NS students (Myers, 2003); they may lack the vocabulary to be clear and as a result write papers that are “vague and confusing” (Minett, 2009, p. 74), and NNS students may require more feedback on their word

choice (Cogie, 2006).

Williams's (2005) research with NNS students and NS English tutors indicates that the NNS students and their tutors engaged in more extensive diagnosis of the student's writing challenges (e.g. grammar, lexical issue) than has been reported in most tutoring research with NS students. Furthermore, NNS students elicited greater directive instruction from their tutors than was apparent with most NS populations. The non-directive strategy of focusing on higher order concerns may be difficult to realize when students are still struggling with basic elements of a new language and how meaning is constructed in that language. For these students, structured guidance may be necessary in order to enable them to develop the requisite facility in another language. Williams and Severino (2004) offer compelling discussion of the research on NNS students, and they identify patterns of difference in how students respond to instruction. Study findings indicate that NS students benefit more from reading texts aloud in order to identify and correct errors than do NNS students (Matsuda & Cox, 2009). Harris and Silva (1993) report that NNS students engage in less planning for their writing; they struggle more with the process, and are less likely to reread what they have written than their NS peers. The researchers suggest that the former probably lack the intuitive sense of what sounds right in the target language that is possessed by NS students (Harris & Silva, 1993, p. 529).

Another area where NS and NNS students may differ is in their knowledge of American academic conventions. Harris (1997) suggests that one of the main differences between NS and NNS students is a difference in rhetorical patterns. NNS may transfer their writing conventions to English (Kaplan, 2001) and may lack an adequate knowledge of English rhetoric. Differences in rhetorical strategies, in levels of writing decorum and in other aspects of argumentation may represent cultural differences, not an inability to write with clarity (Mosher, Granroth, & Hicks, 2000). The conventions of clear and precise writing that are valued in Western culture do not always coincide with those of other cultures.

There is also evidence that cultural differences can profoundly impact the exchanges that occur within the tutoring relationship (Powers, 1993; Schultz, 2010; Thonus, 2004; Williams, 2004). English speakers often employ conversational language in their exchanges, and studies have demonstrated that this extends to instruction. Critique is often couched in supportive or encouraging language by English speakers, seeking to be non-confrontational in their exchanges. However, for some NNS students, this interactive style can be confusing (Thonus, 2004, p. 228).

It seems reasonable to ask if NNS students who have been trained as tutors will adopt styles of communication that seem to be more appropriate for NNS tutees, or if indeed, these styles would be more suitable. Although NNS students have been trained as tutors in MEU, few NNS tutors have been trained as tutors in American institutions, and there is currently limited research on the subject. Another factor that may influence tutorial interaction is how NNS students perceive the role of the tutor. As mentioned previously, Thonus (2001, 2004) notes that her research in NNS populations strongly reinforces the idea that NNS students regard their tutors as authority figures. This finding supports Williams and Severino's (2004) report that many of the studies they reviewed indicate that tutors were inclined to assume the role of authority figure in their interactions with NNS writing students.

The implication of these cultural differences, particularly in reference to English language tutoring for multilingual students is potentially significant. Studies by Canagarajah (2007) and Al-Jamhour (2001) suggest that extrapolating from the findings of studies conducted in populations of NNS students in North American contexts may be ill-advised. These issues are discussed fully in the next section.

### **2.3.3. Possible Challenges Facing Arabic NS Tutees in the Writing Center**

Research has shown that Arabic NS students may face particular challenges in the ways in which they respond to teaching methods and in the types of writing problems they encounter. The tutees participating in this study were primarily Arabic NS students living in the United Arab Emirates. Reid claims that Arab culture has a preference for auditory learning (as cited in Raymond, 2008). Some research with Arab students in the Middle East has shown that applying constructivist approaches to an Arab educational setting can be problematic and inappropriate because of cultural factors (Martin, 2006). Researchers suggest that some Arabic NS students do not respond positively to student-centered, facilitative teaching methods because their pre-university education emphasizes passive learning and rote memorization (Martin, 2006, Richardson, 2004). Martin (2006) points out that authority figures or those in power are rarely publicly criticized in the United Arab Emirates. This tendency extends to the classroom situation. Teachers are treated with respect, and they are seldom challenged. Students "are not expected to initiate communication or speak up unless called upon to do so" (Wilson as cited in Martin, 2006). Mynard (as cited in Martin, 2006) says that students from Arab societies may appear not

to challenge rules or take initiative or risks in learning situations because they fear shame. Mynard claims that these students:

frequently feel unable to adjust to a different system of education-one where they are expected to take more responsibility for their own learning and apply higher-level cognitive processing and problem-solving skills. Students often feel ill equipped to make the move toward autonomy.

(Mynard as cited in Martin, 2006, p. 3)

Richardson (2004) supports this view, claiming that:

the current student-centered learning paradigm where the student forms a partnership with her teachers to achieve her individual potential is a notion contradictory to the Arab students' home lifestyle. In fact, individual growth is seen as a concept that could cause disharmony within families.

(p. 432)

As a result, students in Arab societies may feel anxious and disoriented when they are expected to take an active role in their education.

Cultural background influences students' learning and achievement. According to Bedell and Oxford, teaching strategies being used in opposition to the learners' cultural backgrounds could cause problems (as cited in Martin, 2006). The observations of the researchers have particular relevance for writing center pedagogy which has stressed the importance of non-directive, collaborative strategies. Another point to consider is the nature of the writing center, where students are less likely to feel inhibited and more likely to take an active part in the discussion with their tutor who is socially their peer.

Researchers have identified differences between rhetorical patterns in Arabic writing and in English writing. Kaplan, in his seminal essay in 1966, observed characteristic parallel constructions in the paragraph development of Arab NS writers. He claims that parallelism is responsible for the "zigzag movement" of Arab NS students' paragraphs (2001). Severino (1993) criticizes Kaplan's claims and explains that his focus on paragraphs is problematic: the

paragraph is an arbitrary unit of discourse, not always considered by the author as a unit of thought, so it may not reveal cultural thought patterns like whole discourses. She also draws attention to the fact that Kaplan did not consider the backgrounds, developmental factors, and previous writing instruction of his subjects and that his phrasing is often disparaging and assimilationist: "The foreign student who has mastered the syntax of English may still write a bad paragraph or a bad paper unless he also masters the logic of English" (as cited in Severino, p. 47). Although the language Kaplan is using is no longer fashionable among language theorists, it has been observed that students, particularly students at MEU, aspire to achieve levels of competence in English comparable to NS of English.

Ostler, like Kaplan, found that parallelism and coordination were evident in the Arabic NS student essays he analyzed (cited in Al-Qahtania, 2006). Ostler claimed that parallelism can be found in Arabic writing because it seeks balance. Her T-unit test revealed that Arabic essays have more coordination compared with English essays which have more subordination. Ostler explains that Arabs use classical Arabic, the language of the holy Quran, as an ideal model for writing. Sa'adeddin (1989) explains that colloquial Arabic discourse includes parallelism, repetition, broad generalizations, and ornate vocabulary. Arabic speakers rely on this style of communication in argumentation and rhetorical persuasion. Arabic speakers may transfer the parallel and coordinate structures when writing in English. Harfmann (cited in Al-Qahtania, 2006) made similar discoveries about parallelism and coordination in Arabic writing. He analyzed 20 Arabic and German essays and concluded that the students writing in Arabic used coordination, repetition, and parallelism to achieve cohesion and to engage their audience. The qualities the researchers have identified have been characteristic of many types of English writing throughout the ages, and they have been admired when used appropriately according to genre, the requirements of the writing task, and the nature of the writer's audience. The assumption that the rich literary and culturally diverse background of Arabic NS students is an impediment rather than an advantage is untenable. Arabic students could be encouraged to draw upon their own backgrounds and knowledge of rhetorical devices and transfer this knowledge to specific writing tasks in English.

Arabic NS students learning to write in English may encounter lexical and syntactical difficulties that share similar characteristics. Fender (2008) notes that most Arabic-speaking children learn to communicate in a colloquial dialect, but when they enter school they are

required to write and read according to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which can differ dramatically from many of the colloquial dialects in terms of vocabulary, phonology and grammar. Consequently, Fender states, MSA might be considered an L2 for most Arabic speakers. For instance, the colloquial Arab dialects tend to use a consistent and transparent phoneme- to- letter-mapping. While Fender acknowledges that there have been relatively few studies exploring English language development among Arabic speakers, he notes that there is evidence that Arabic NS students may have more difficulty grasping English language skills than their equally-matched NNS peers from other countries. Fender reports on studies showing that “Arab ESL learners have more difficulties recognizing English words in isolated context-free environments relative to other proficiency-matched ESL speakers” and observes that this might be attributable to their first language colloquial dialect mastery because there may be “difficulties in perceiving and acquiring precise English orthographic forms or word spellings” (p. 28). The differences in phoneme-mapping between the L1 (colloquial dialect) and English are significant, and the Arabic NS student may be confused by the inconsistencies in English phoneme-grapheme. Presented with an inability to recognize words based on their L1 decoding skills, Arabic NS learners may find it difficult to decipher accurately, and this will impact their reading and writing comprehension. Consequently, in a tutorial situation, tutees may require explicit direction about spelling errors, and compared to NS English students, they may have more difficulty adhering to the customary practice during writing center tutorials of reading their texts aloud.

Al-Khasawneh’s (2010) study of Arabic NS students’ experiences with learning academic English writing at the College of Business at Universiti Utara Malaysia revealed that Arabic NS students experience fundamental problems in organizing their ideas in writing and in handling elements of language such as grammar, spelling, referencing, and vocabulary. Al-Khasawneh interviewed ten graduate business students to discover the types of writing problems they generally experienced in English. Interviews may not be the most effective research tool for identifying areas of perceived weakness in writing. Is it reasonable to assume that students of business or any discipline apart from linguistics, language, and composition studies would have the terminology or the analytical skills to elucidate on particular aspects of writing problems? If this approach were combined with analyses of students’ writing, insights could be gained into the specific types of student errors.

Like Al-Khasawneh (2010), Al-Buainani (2006) revealed similar problems in Arabic NS students' academic writing. She examined the essays of 40 Qatari students in a freshman composition course who were majoring in English at the University of Qatar. Students were given two topics and asked to write a 250-word text followed by a 350-word text in two hours. An analysis of the essays using a ten-point scale to evaluate elements such as structure, spelling, punctuation, coherence, and cohesion was used. The most common writing problems for the subjects were sentence-level errors such as relative clauses, articles, fragments, noun modifiers, and prepositions; however, Al-Buainani says that these issues are common among all NNS speakers. While she acknowledges the importance of "more sophisticated levels of discourse addressed in the process approach" (p. 12), she maintains that teaching language rules may be essential to achieving that higher level of discourse.

Arab NS students face syntactical and lexical issues that confront all NNS students, but some problems particular to Arab students may be better dealt with by being explicit. For example, there is no distinction in Arabic between actions completed in the past with and without a connection to the present. This may lead to difficulties when Arab NS students use the present perfect tense. If Arabic speaking NS students are struggling with the present tense, adhering to a solely non-directive, collaborative approach may be ineffective because the students do not possess information that the tutor is trying to elicit.

While some researchers argue for a move towards grammar instruction (Al-Buainani, 2006; Al-Jamhour, 2001), other researchers argue that a focus on grammar instruction and outdated approaches to English language instruction are to blame for Arabic NS students' low English proficiency levels. Al-Hazmi (2006) observes that a commitment to sentence level construction and grammar consideration is one of the central drawbacks of English L2 writing instruction for Arabic NS students. He notes that that instruction has remained distinctly teacher-centered and that, consequently, Arabic NS learners have little opportunity to practice critical skills of self-reflection and self-regulation in developing their writing skills. Like Al-Hamzi, El-Sadig (2010) claims that low proficiency among Arabic NS is a result of outdated teaching methods. He compared and evaluated course outlines and materials for the three university programs in Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia and concluded that all three language programs approach English language instruction from a "product approach" perspective with a strict emphasis on sentence elements and sentence construction. As El-Sadig states, such an approach

to pedagogy “reduces writing to a mere exercise in English grammar” (p. 36). He claims that the emphasis on grammatical mastery fails to consider that writing communication relies on a variety of mechanisms, grammar being but one of them, to convey meaning. The research indicates that scholars have different views about the degrees of emphasis on product and process approaches. Writing consists of many interrelated activities and adherence to the rhetoric of a single approach is restrictive.

#### **2.3.4 A Cautionary Note against Prescriptivism with NNS Students**

Many researchers advise against “prescriptivism” when teaching writing to NNS students, arguing that a focus on L1 may be misleading (Al-Jamhour, 2010). Harris and Silva (1993) claim that tutors should remember that “[a] not all members of a particular group may manifest all of the problems or cultural preferences associated with that group; and [b] not all problems will be a result of transfer of L1 patterns” (p. 530).

These insights are particularly relevant in educational institutions in the Middle East where students hail from a variety of countries in the region. In countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf States, there are considerable historical, political, cultural, and linguistic differences. In Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco, for instance, individuals speak French as well as Arabic. There are different religions, variations within religions, different forms of Arabic, and very different ideological assumptions among genders, age groups, and socioeconomic classes. Furthermore, students interact with various cultures on the Internet, including social networking sites; they watch Western television and film; and they are required to respond to the cultural and societal values in countries where populations consist largely of ex-patriots and guest workers. In some of these countries, educational institutions are staffed by primarily native English speaking faculty. The unique nature and circumstances of the United Arab Emirates, a multilingual, multicultural society, form the basis for this study.

Canagarajah (2007) observes that multilingual populations demonstrate a distinct facility for linguistic negotiation because there “is constant interaction between language groups, and they overlap, interpenetrate, and mesh in fascinating ways” (p. 930). He claims that these “individuals and communities are so radically multilingual that it is difficult to identify one’s mother or native language” (930). Multilingual communities thus present a challenge to

traditional notions of language identity because different sociocultural influences, not to mention language usage, will be adapted to address frequently shifting contexts. In these communities, different languages take on new characteristics, reflecting the range of influences so that they lose “their purity and separateness” (Canagarajah, 2007, p. 931). Strategies of interaction are the salient feature of communication in multilingual populations and, as such, specific emphasis on rules of grammar or proper sentence structure is not particularly useful to realize English proficiency consistent with real-life English usage. Canagarajah states that it is necessary to rethink the monolingual dictates that have shaped English language instruction and to consider the learning communities within which language development occurs.

The particular relevance of Canagarajah’s (2007) ideas lies in his recognition of the “polydialectal competence” of Middle Eastern multilingual, multicultural students. The points he makes about grammar, however, are not tenable in the context of a post secondary language program in an English-speaking university, because university students expect to receive a high level of fluency and proficiency in standard, traditional English, and future employers and graduate schools will expect the same, based on their possession of the degree. Moreover, a tutorial, one-on-one situation is an appropriate time to accommodate the needs of individual students, including those who acquire grammatical information easily and use it to improve their written and spoken English.

The population for this Middle Eastern study is drawn from a multilingual, multicultural, and polydialectal context. While most students enrolled at MEU are Arabic speakers, they form a significantly different mix from Arabic speakers in other Middle Eastern countries: they generally speak more than two languages, they use English as the language of commerce, and they attend universities where the language of instruction is English. Their socioeconomic status allows many of these students to travel extensively and to attend fee paying universities. The profile of the population for this study illustrates Canagarajah’s (2007) argument that multilingual students bring distinct and significant linguistic processing skills to the teaching/learning situation. Similarly the students in this study instantiate Byram and Fleming’s (1998) definition of an intercultural competent person as someone who “has knowledge of one, or, preferably, more cultures and social identities and has the capacity to discover and relate to new people from other contexts for which they have not been prepared directly” (1998, p.9). Students at MEU, including tutors and tutees, have high levels of intercultural

communicative competence and intercultural awareness. They share particular experiences of diversity depending on the religious, cultural, ethnic, and social groups with which they identify.

### **2.3.5 Strategies for Tutoring NNS Students in the Writing Center**

The research on NNS students in the writing center has brought about a number of recommendations for tutors that are different from those found in tutor training manuals. These recommendations include explaining clearly to students the expected outcomes of the writing tutorial (Blau, Hall, Davis, & Gravitz, 2001; Bruce, 2009; Shin, 2002; Thonus, 2004); encouraging students to get involved in a conversation about the writing process (Shin, 2002; Thonus, 2004; Wilson, 1998; Williams, 2005); using fewer words and more silence during tutorials because “an avalanche of words can overwhelm the ESL student who is unfamiliar with idioms, uncommon words, and complex syntax” (Berry, 1999); and creating common ground with students by being aware of cultural differences in both tutorial interaction and writing, rhetoric and language (Harris, 1997; Mosher et al., 2000; Powers, 1993). Critics have suggested being more directive when offering assistance on lexical, syntactical errors (Myers, 2003, Weigle & Nelson, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004).

One of the most challenging issues for tutors assisting NNS tutees has been how to handle syntactical and lexical errors in NNS students’ writing. In the 90s, tutors were advised to deal with NNS errors by using a modified version of the non-directive, collaborative approach. They were advised to look for patterns of errors and prioritize errors depending on whether they were global or local errors (Cogie et al., 1999; Harris & Silva, 1993; Powers, 1993). They were to avoid being directive by identifying and correcting student errors; rather, they should encourage independence in tutees by asking them to keep track of their errors, so they could avoid making the same errors in subsequent writing assignments (Cogie et al., 1999; Gillespie & Lerner, 2000; Shin, 2002). The rules that were used for NS sessions were applied to NNS sessions as well, although the writing concerns of NNS students were different from those of NS students.

Though there are still some who believe that tutors should resist giving feedback on sentence-level concerns (Staben & Nordhaus, 2009), attitudes about error feedback and correction for NNS tutees have changed recently. There has been a recognition that rhetorical proficiency and linguistic proficiency are very closely linked in the development of second

language writing ability, and that addressing these concerns can be intertwined (Blau & Hall, 2002; Myers, 2003, Williams, 2002). Blau and Hall (2002) argue “that sentence-level errors can create global concerns, such as “errors in a student's thesis statement that make his or her central point confusing” (p. 36). They believe lexical and rhetorical concerns should be interwoven and that a tutor and tutee may move back and forth from lexical to rhetorical concerns as needed. Myers (2003) concurs with this view of dealing with errors in NNS writing. She states that the biggest challenge many NNS have is learning the syntactical and lexical aspects of the English language, and she advises tutors to use a more directive approach when assisting NNS students with grammatical arrangement and function. She argues that “writing tutors need to acknowledge and respond to the central role of lexis in language learning” (p. 65) and that they should have sufficient knowledge of English grammar. Myers suggests using a more traditional approach to tutoring NNS students, such as rephrasing students’ sentences, inserting corrections into students’ texts, and even offering practice exercises that target specific areas of weakness. She argues that tutors must relinquish the attitude that giving second-language students the language they need is “unethical” (p. 66).

Though some may worry that students’ texts may be appropriated with this directive type of help, most practitioners believe tutors can be good language resources for students without taking ownership of the text away from the tutee. Severino (2009) maintains that appropriation does not take place if tutors offer reasons for the changes they suggest to their tutees. Reid (1994) also suggests that “intervening” by offering phrases and options to students to “provide [them] with adequate schemata (linguistic, content, contextual, and rhetorical)” (p. 286) is not appropriation; rather it “demystifies the writing process” (p.286). Pyle recommends that tutors be given “more leeway to... give the L2 students... more robust feedback in the arena of expression [e.g., grammar and word choice], as well as training... in how best to do so” (as cited in Kastman, Breuch, & Clemens, 2009, p. 134). Myers (2003) argues that combining rhetorical and linguistic feedback is essential and in keeping with the commonly accepted role of the tutor as cultural informant:

Culture refers not only to the contours of personal space, the educational roles of teacher and students, the sense of time, the politeness conventions and the discourse conventions of a given group, but to language and its forms. Culture includes the way that a given language determines, subordinates, complements, coordinates, pluralizes, counts, modalizes, interrogates, lexicalizes. In fact, the greatest problem many ESL writers have is in controlling the syntax and lexis of the English language.

(p. 55)

There is consensus among writing center researchers these days that some combination of non-directive and directive practices may provide the best solution to the variety of learning challenges faced by NNS students (Blau & Hall, 2002; Williams, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004). Williams (2004) suggests that the “the best alternative to either asking or telling is showing and explaining” (p. 195). Other researchers have noted the benefits of tutors engaging in modeling to help writing students achieve the necessary, lower-order writing skills that can empower them to realize higher-order connective learning, typically associated with ownership of text and self-regulation in effective writing (Clark & Healy, 1996; Corbett, 2008; Shamoon & Burns, 1995). Williams and Severino (2004) claim that while research in the early 1990s called for more authoritative roles for tutors, recent research points towards a more balanced approach to NNS tutorials: using directive approaches to offer the guidance NNS students need and collaborative approaches to ensure that students “maintain ownership of their texts” (p. 166).

#### **2.4 RESEARCH ON WRITING CENTERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

There is a limited amount of literature available on writing center research in the Middle East. The Middle East-North Africa Writing Centers Alliance (MENAWCA), the organization created to build connections and improve communication between English language writing centers throughout the Middle East and northern Africa, has published only two newsletters since its inception in 2007 -- one in 2008 and the second in the spring of 2010. Despite the lack of research on writing center practice in Middle East environments, there is evidence that writing centers are serving a growing population of students (Murray, 2010). Writing on the rapid growth of student use of the writing center at UAE University (UAEU) based in Al Ain in the United Arab Emirates, Hill (2010) tracked a steady increase of clients from approximately 700

student visits in the fall of 2006 to over 7,500 student visits in the fall of 2009. He notes that the initial writing center was based on the women's campus of the college but that this center expanded in 2006, and a center was opened on the men's campus as well. Satellite offices of the center and writing center services offered online extended the UAEU's writing centers' reach among students. In the same issue of the MENAWCA newsletter in which the Hill (2010) article appears, there is an article by Lefort (2010) that questions the application of non-directive, collaborative tutoring with NNS students. Lefort states that the non-directive approach, dominant in writing center pedagogy, "may not be appropriate to our local contexts where we work almost wholly with non-native English speaker (NNS) students" (p. 6). She cites Bringhurst (2006) and Clark and Healy (1996) in arguing that while the constructivist methodology of collaboration had been accepted as the "ethical" approach to writing center pedagogy, in fact, the question was still open as to whether non-directive instruction was truly (and therefore, ethically) serving all writing center students.

Ronesi (2009), an Assistant Professor who teaches the peer tutoring course at MEU, discusses the challenges she faced when designing the peer tutoring training course without region-specific literature. She explains that most of the tutor training literature has emerged from North American contexts, and she has misgivings about their application at MEU. Nevertheless, she has drawn upon the "US centric canon because it is student oriented and practical" (p. 79). Following the precedent of Harvey Kail, Ronesi recognized the value of her students' experiences and encouraged them to share them (p. 79) in order to establish a stronger, more relevant tutorial training program. A deeper understanding of issues involved in MEU writing center writing will be achieved when insights such as those derived from Murray's, Lefort's and Hill's articles form the background of experiences for additional research.

As much of the literature discussed in this chapter suggests, the expectation that NNS students can develop their writing through non-directive instruction provided by peer tutors, and relying exclusively on the non-directive, collaborative approach, is not realistic. As a number of researchers have argued (Bringhurst, 2006; Corbett, 2008; Jones et al., 2006; Lefort, 2010; Thonus, 2004; Williams, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004), it is important for writing centers to continue to challenge the orthodoxy of dominant theory. It may be that a conclusive answer is not possible, but in the quest to address it practitioners and researchers may refine and improve tutoring practices that recognize the differences not just between NS and NNS students, but

among different populations of NNS students in order to find ways to meet individual student's particular needs.

It is the intention of this study to resist the inclination to reinforce orthodox views of writing center pedagogy and to remain open and responsive to the possibility of alternative ways of interpreting tutorial interactions. The study is described in detail in Chapter 3.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **3.1 PARTICIPANTS**

Tutee and tutor participants were solicited at the beginning of the semester. Participants were selected based on the time they arrived for their tutorials. Tutees who arrived earliest for their appointments were recruited first. Fifteen tutees and 15 tutors participated in the study. Typically, 3 to 12 tutor/tutee pairs have been used in qualitative studies which involve interview data about the tutorial process with both tutors and tutees (Thonus, 2001, 2002; Weigle & Nelson, 2004; Williams, 2004).

The 15 tutees were enrolled in writing composition courses and were seeking assistance with writing assignments for their composition courses. Tutors who were paired with these tutees were asked to participate in the study. They will have fulfilled the requirements for tutoring at the Center: a credit-bearing course on peer tutoring and writing. The peer tutoring course is designed to help students become familiar with and to think critically about writing and peer tutoring issues and to develop a practical approach to peer tutoring in writing. Students who achieve high grades in this course may become tutors in the Writing Center, or they may choose to work as a writing fellow at the university. Inexperienced tutors are required to attend bi-weekly training sessions for a month before they start working at the Writing Center. Activities such as role playing tutorials, observing and critiquing tutorials, and discussing related topics are meant to familiarise tutors with the responsibilities of their new jobs and provide them with the strategies and knowledge required to assist students. Both inexperienced and experienced tutors are required to meet with the director bi-monthly throughout the academic year to discuss issues and concerns that may arise during tutorial sessions.

### **3.2 DEMOGRAPHICS**

#### **3.2.1 Tutees**

For the purposes of this study, the stimulated recall interviews and the interviews of 15 tutees and 15 tutors were separately examined. As shown in Appendix A, nine of the tutees were female; 10 tutees were freshman, two were juniors, two were sophomores, and one was a senior. Fourteen of the tutees were Arabs, and one student was Pakistani. Most tutees spoke only Arabic at home (13), eight were taught in both Arabic and English in high school, and six were taught

only in Arabic. Twelve tutees spoke Arabic as a first language, and 11 spoke English as a second language. Tutees had a variety of academic majors (i.e., electrical engineering, mass communication, mechanical engineering, civil engineering, international studies, design management, chemical engineering, computer science, marketing and management, and architecture).

Table 1

*Means and Standard Deviations of Tutees' English Fluency Ratings*

	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Written Score	15	2.27	0.88	1	4
Oral Score	15	2.47	1.13	1	4

Table 1, above, shows the tutees' fluency for oral and written English. Tutees were asked to rate their written and oral language skills on a scale ranging from 1 = Strong to 5 = Weak. The average tutee fluency for both written and oral English was rated as moderate. The average and standard deviation for English fluency represents a typical sample of Writing Center clientele in a given semester.

### **3.2.2 Tutors**

Most tutors were female (13) and seven were 21 years of age, as shown in Appendix B. As with the tutees, the tutors had a range of academic majors (i.e. mass communication, mechanical engineering, chemical engineering, marketing and management, international studies, architecture, finance and management, visual communication, as well as English literature). Tutors had a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and they spoke a variety of languages (e.g., Arabic, English, French, Bengali, Farsi, Konkani, Tamil, Pashtu, Malayalam).

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations of Tutors' English Fluency Ratings*

	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Written Score	15	1.07	0.26	1	2
Oral Score	15	1.13	0.35	1	2

Tutors were also asked to rate their written and oral English on a scale ranging from 1 = Strong to 5 = Weak. Although the languages spoken at home were diverse, the average tutor English fluency for both written and oral was rated as strong. The average and standard deviation for tutors' English fluency represents a typical sample of Writing Center staff in a given semester (see Table 2 above).

### 3.3 JUSTIFICATION OF METHODOLOGY

In order to place my study within the context of contemporary research, I read the available literature and considered two dominant paradigms: positivist and interpretive. I compared them and chose an interpretive approach because it accommodates the complex issues encountered during tutorial interactions in our Writing Center.

#### 3.3.1 Positivist Research

A positivist perspective contends that natural science methodology can be used to explore and explain social events and trends. Thus, certain innate principles are understood to be applicable across a range of environments and individual behaviors and experiences. Social reality "is external to individuals," objects have an independent existence and are not dependant on the knower. Knowledge is "hard, objective, and tangible" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p.11). Positivist researchers typically use quantitative data collection methods with a presumption that quantitative analyses confer objectivity and reliability through statistical evidence (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

Critics of positivist research claim it is useful only insofar as it captures an empirical snapshot of a constructed (experimental) event, occurring under controlled circumstances with a set series of variables that may never be replicated again, outside of the initial experiment. The absolutism of positivist theory is anathema to interpretive researchers who regard social interactions as mutable and the potential range of influences as unlimited. Moreover, a strictly positivist methodology cannot adequately account for the diverse “complexity of human behavior where the elusive and intangible quality of social phenomena contrast strikingly with the order and regularity of the natural world” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, p. 11). These critics argue that this is most relevant in an educational context where teaching and learning interactions pose large obstacles to the positivist researchers.

### **3.3.2 Interpretive Research**

Interpretive research is a broad category that includes phenomenological, ethnomethodological, and symbolic interactionist perspectives (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.25). The interpretive paradigm allows for the interplay of numerous variables; moreover, it positions the researcher to receive and to respond to ideas about research findings that may have not been anticipated (Kim, 2003; Rowlands, 2005). The interpretive paradigm positions the researcher to understand subjective experiences and gain insights into people’s motivations and actions in natural settings. The assumption underlying an interpretive approach to social science research is that reality is constructed through a complex interplay of behaviors, beliefs, and events and that the theories that seek to explain conditions or circumstances do not stand outside of these happenings but rather have the potential to affect and change them (Rowlands, 2005). Social science is considered a subjective rather than objective activity (Cohen, Morrison, & Manion, 2007). This view of social science was introduced by Shutz’s phenomenology, which emphasizes that “people living in the world of daily life are able to ascribe meaning to a situation and then make judgements” (as cited in Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). A phenomenological approach places importance on personal perspective and interpretation and questions the “commonsense taken for granted assumptions of everyday life” (Husserl as cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 22). Researchers working within the phenomenological tradition typically employ qualitative methods of data collection to collect people’s perceptions and to represent them (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

One criticism of interpretive research is that study findings cannot be judged conclusively because situations and contexts are ever-changing. Kim (2003) claims that “there is no mind-independent reality to correspond with hypotheses to serve as an external reference point on their acceptability” (p. 13). Kim also notes that interpretive methodologies often involve a degree of researcher subjectivity insofar as the very design of an interpretive research effort reflects the researcher’s belief or interest in the relevance of certain conditions to the question(s) at hand. In fact, the phrasing of the research questions themselves reflects researcher subjectivity because the contextual issues considered are those that have been identified by the researcher. Kim notes that interpretive researchers who are diligent in their methodology learn to apply mechanisms for reducing the influence of their personal biases in their observations and analysis but added that even then, it is “almost impossible to completely remove this crucial source of error” (p. 13).

The limitations presented by interpretive approaches to evaluation must be weighed against the opportunities for authentic assessment and the potential for identifying mechanisms for change. Samdahl (1999) articulated this significance when he wrote:

. . . interpretive research can positively impact the lives of study participants in ways not possible through traditional inquiry (Pedlar, 1995). In the context of evaluation, interpretive research might produce information about how a program works in addition to standard assessments about whether it was effective (Karlis & Dawson, 1994). The hope held out for interpretive research stems from the complex and unexpected understandings that emerge from this type of inquiry.

(p. 3)

This observation is at the root of Thonus’s (2002) contention that writing center pedagogy will benefit from identifying the practices and behaviors of tutors that are most effective in promoting writing development. It is not enough merely to determine whether certain factors positively influence student writing performance; it is necessary to elucidate how factors interact and how they are influenced by other variables in order to identify the potential range of conditions that contribute to creating a tutorial situation that produces knowledge gains for the writing center student. Interpretive research study provides an opportunity to identify and then to consider the possibilities of the tutorial relationship without imposing positivist restrictions regarding the type of variable(s) to be studied. It avoids the limitations inherent in a controlled,

experimental environment that cannot capture the complexity of a natural (real-life) context. Consequently, an interpretive approach to examine the effectiveness of the tutor and NNS tutee interaction was used for my study.

### **3.3.3 Qualitative Research Methods**

It has been argued that the manner in which writing centers, and specifically the tutoring relationship is better measured is via qualitative methods that capture a more holistic picture of student improvement. Hawthorne (2006) and others have argued that it is a mistake to accept the belief that there is an innate superiority to quantitative methodology; in fact, qualitative methods may be better suited to writing assessment. Increasingly, qualitative models are regarded not as inferior, soft-analysis mechanisms, but as more nuanced approaches to elucidating complex systems and revealing the interplay between various and relevant factors. Qualitative methods hold the potential for describing the “specific interactional and pragmatic features” that Thonus (2002, p. 130) identifies as necessary to determine what aspects of the tutoring interaction are most effective in improving student writing outcomes. Quantitative methods may help researchers measure the level of effectiveness, but, as Thonus and others have observed, there is not yet a clear consensus on what types of tutoring strategies produce knowledge gains for students and under what circumstances. The complex interplay of factors is best illuminated through qualitative mechanisms such as observation, simulated recall, and interviews.

It is worth noting that there have been some problems associated with qualitative assessment of writing center work. It has been observed that self-study or “insider” status in which, for instance, writing center directors perform the evaluation of their centers’ effectiveness or tutors provide a report of the successful nature of their tutorials may be well-meaning efforts to report on the workings of a center, but are more often than not self-serving in their evaluations, even if at an unconscious level (Bell, 2000, 2001; Lerner, 2002). But reliability problems are not associated with qualitative approaches only, and the ability to “quantify” data does not ensure the quality of an evaluative effort. Conducting data analysis of student surveys or graphing the number of writing center tutorial visits provides a picture of something, but usefulness of this hard data in terms of establishing effectiveness of programming should be regarded with some scepticism (Lerner, 1997).

A close reading of the writing center tutorial evaluation discussion reveals that many researchers and practitioners, regardless of their pedagogical orientation, are in agreement that there simply is not enough yet known about which approaches and practices -- and in what combinations -- produce the most optimal writing improvement results for students who come to the writing center. Keeping in mind the extensive amount of literature noting the potential differences that exist between NS and NNS students (Harris & Silva, 1993; Harrison & Krol, 2007; Jones et al., 2006; Lefort, 2010), as well as between different subgroups of NNS students (Blau & Hall, 2002; Leki, 2009; Williams & Severino, 2004), in their responses to strategies or the nature of the tutor-tutee interaction, the complexity that characterizes the assessment domain of writing center research is apparent.

There is evidence that qualitative evaluation strategies may be better suited than quantitative ones for application in cross-cultural research environments. Cronjé (2009) states that qualitative approaches produce the “longitudinal evidence derived from multiple sources [which] provides a rich picture of the teaching and learning situation” in situations with NNS learners (p. 71). Research indicates that the holistic nature of qualitative study offers an “authentic” picture of different learners’ experiences and responses, and this is something, Cronjé contends, that those working within cross-cultural learning environments should seek to achieve. It may be for this reason that there a number of qualitative studies of English language learning across a range of populations, seeking to explore and describe ways in which NNS students receive and interpret English-language instruction (Lerner, 2002).

Typical examples of qualitative methods of assessment include interviews, surveys, ethnographic techniques, narratives, journals, portfolios, and assessor observations. Many writing center directors rely on qualitative methods in their day-to-day writing center practice: watching how students and tutors interact, gauging effectiveness based on informal (and sometimes formal) conversations with the tutors and tutees. One of the problems with qualitative approaches to assessment of writing center research has been that “studies are of suspect validity and limited reliability” (Jones 2001).

However, as Lerner (2002) notes, qualitative methods of assessment are likelier to give us a more comprehensive picture of the tutoring relationship than possible through quantitative means. According to Thonus (2002, p. 113), it is important “to ask what factors students and (secondarily) tutors appeal to in accounting for the perceived ‘success’ of writing tutorials,” (p.

113). There are a variety of qualitative approaches that writing center researchers may employ to conduct assessment. Based on a review of the methods, three have been selected for use in this research effort, and a brief discussion of each is provided below.

Table 3

*Description of Data Collection Methods*

Data Collection Methods	Timeline	Purpose
Observation	Concurrent with tutorial session	Noted elements of tutorial session Identified tutorial strategies
Stimulated Recall	Within 24 hours of tutorial session	Prompted recall of thoughts during tutorial sessions
Interviews	Within 72 hours of stimulated recall	Asked questions to gather perceptions of tutorial effectiveness

### 3.4 DATA COLLECTION

#### 3.4.1 Data Sources and Procedures

The study took place in March and April 2010. It received approval from the IRB and the Leicester School of Education. All participants were asked to sign a letter indicating their agreement to participate in the study. They were informed of their right to withdraw their permission at any time (See Appendices C and D). Tutees who agreed to participate in the study completed a questionnaire that elicited information about their nationalities, educational backgrounds, their language skills, their reasons for visiting the Writing Center, and their writing courses (See Appendix E). Tutors participating in the study were also asked to complete a similar form indicating their nationalities, educational background, language skills, and their level of experience (See Appendix F).

Triangulation, using more than two methods of collecting data about human behavior, was used to ensure credibility and validity in qualitative research (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). It demonstrates “concurrent validity, particularly in qualitative research” because relying solely on one method “may bias or distort the researcher’s picture of the reality being investigated” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p.141). Researchers can feel greater confidence in their results if the results of different methods of data collection yield similar findings. In an effort to enhance the credibility of my findings, I employed three methods for gathering data.

### **3.4.2. Observation**

One of the methods used in this research effort was observation (see Table 3 above). Observation in data gathering has an established history in writing center practice as it is often the method employed by writing center directors when they report on their own evaluation efforts. As Lerner (2002) notes observation practices run the gamut from low degrees of structure to high degrees of structure. In his research, his observation was of the participant-observer variety because he was integrally involved in the daily operations of the writing center as director where he observed the tutors’ work with the student writers. This combination of roles occasionally presented a minor problem because there was a level of noncompliance in some cases, with the tutors neglecting to follow through on practices Lerner had asked them to undertake in order to assist his evaluation. Ultimately Lerner found some value in the participant-observer role but thought that the challenges of distinguishing between the role of the evaluator and the role of the writing center participant may inhibit the process of data collection.

My study recognizes the difficulties inherent in participant observation and uses unstructured non-participant observation. This type of observation involves a thick description of the event and people observed. It gives the researcher the freedom to adopt a comprehensive or a focused perspective: to notice anomalous, unusual or unexpected situations. There is no direct participation in the actual work that is being performed during the tutorial interaction and the researcher carefully watches a videotape of the interaction. Moyles, Adams, and Musgrove (2002) claim that video-stimulated reflective dialogues can help teachers to examine their own teaching practices. They argue that though most observation is hands-off, the data results from the observation can help bring about more observation and reflection in practice, and in turn, improve it.

Videotaping provides the researcher with an opportunity to arrive at a thick description of subjects' experiences, perceptions and motivations (Lerner, 2002; Speilmann & Radnofsky, 2001). Moreover, video-recorded tutorials provide an opportunity for the researcher to observe the tutorials thereby minimizing the effects of the researcher's immediate presence on the behavior of the tutors and tutees. The tutorials that were examined in this study took place in an office one floor above the Writing Center, which is used for tutorials when there is overflow. This location was a natural setting because the tutors and some of the tutees were accustomed to working there. Video recording had been attempted in the Writing Center, but the open concept of the Center and the ambient noise level made video recording difficult and disrupted the daily business of the Center. Once tutees and tutors agreed to participate in the study, they met in the room where a digital video camera had been placed at the corner of the room. The room was set up in a similar fashion to the Writing Center: one round table with two comfortable chairs and dictionaries, grammar handbooks, and writing center handouts within reach.

In order to facilitate further exploration of the writing tutorials at some future time, materials from the tutorials such as assignment sheets, drafts, and tutorial report forms were collected before and after the tutorial. These data, however, have not been analyzed for the present study.

The observer's state of mind can affect how the event is perceived and videotaped (Moyles et al., 2002). To prevent this from happening, all tutorials were videotaped from the same distance (6 feet away), and the focus of the camera included both the tutor and the tutee in the range. This allowed the researcher to observe the body language and facial expressions of both tutor and tutee while allowing the camera to be unobtrusive. I pressed the "record" button on the stationary camera, left the room, and then returned at the end of the session to stop the camera. Though there was a risk of the camera malfunctioning during the recording time, it was decided that this risk was worth taking to create a more natural tutorial atmosphere. Apart from one tutor, the tutors and tutees said they forgot about the camera a few minutes into the tutorial. It seems reasonable to assume that contemporary students, accustomed to social media, are less inhibited by the presence of the camera than previous generations: the impression was that the camera did not significantly influence the dynamic of the tutorial.

Once the tutorials were videotaped, they were watched repeatedly for two purposes. Firstly, tutorials were watched for the purpose of taking extensive notes on all elements of the

tutorial such as the communication between tutor and tutee, the dynamics between tutor and tutee, the effectiveness/non-effectiveness of the tutorial strategies, the reactions of the tutees, the overall effectiveness of the tutorial, and other factors that may have occurred to the researcher. Secondly, the tutorials were watched with the purpose of identifying the strategies the tutors and tutees later would discuss during the stimulated recall activity.

Moyles et al. (2002) raise the issue of reliability and validity in observation as a research method. They argue that observation on its own is not enough to give a holistic picture of events because it can only give a limited interpretation of the event. In order to address these weaknesses and to prevent researcher bias and interpretation issues, I asked a colleague who teaches the tutor training course to watch one of the tutorials and make notes. We then compared our notes and discussed our observations. There were no significant discrepancies in our observations. In addition to ensuring inter-coder reliability, I used a combination of methods, including stimulated recall and interviews, to provide a holistic picture of the findings.

### **3.4.3 Stimulated Recall**

Devised by Benjamin Bloom in 1953, stimulated recall is a verbal reporting method that utilizes support (stimulation) to assist the subject in recovering and articulating what he or she was thinking about while performing a certain action. Stough (2001) identifies stimulated recall as a “‘think aloud’ protocol” (p. 2) that is a variation of introspection. Gass (2001) observes that for many years introspection, as an evaluative mechanism, was in disfavor, especially when behaviorism dominated much of the research inquiry in the social science arena, but she reports that in recent years it has gained a significant research following. The stimulated recall method is widely used in educational research. Shulman (1986) claims that in order to adequately understand their actions in class-rooms, it is necessary to study the thought processes of teachers, their methods of evaluation, problem-solving and decision-making in different phases of the teaching process. Lyle (2003) argues that “the method has considerable potential for studies into cognitive strategies and other learning processes, and also for teacher/educator behavior, particularly complex, interactive contexts characterised by novelty, uncertainty, and non-deliberative behavior” (p. 861). Stimulated recall is designed to shed light on what the subject is thinking and experiencing during task performance; it is therefore useful for writing center research in order to gain insight into what the tutee or tutor is thinking during the tutorial.

In stimulated recall in writing center assessment, the participant is asked to revisit a particular writing task and to recall what he or she was thinking or feeling while engaged in the task. In order to stimulate the recall, audio, or videotape of the performance of the task is played for the participant.

Detractors of stimulated recall argue that it needs to fulfil a number of conditions in order to achieve accuracy in reporting. It depends on the ability of participants and researchers to clearly verbalize what they are thinking and to correctly identify that what they recall happened at the identified moment. Gass (2001) notes that certain guidelines must be observed in stimulated recall such as minimizing the length of time between the recall and the event. Stough (2001) observes that stimulated recall practice should occur very shortly after the initial exercise in order to reduce the potential for related memories to cloud the participant's remembrance. Researchers must be very precise about what they ask the participant during the stimulated recall so that participants are not responding to a question in the moment but consistently responding to questions about the recalled event. Gass also observes that "sentence matching tasks have been used recently in SLA studies, yet an examination of their validity shows them not to give the same information for non-native speakers as they do for native speakers" (p. 22). Thus, caution must be exercised in employing stimulated recall with different populations of writing center students. These caveats do not detract from the usefulness of stimulated recall strategy but rather must be kept in mind when employing the technique in the research situation.

For the stimulated recall activity, the fifteen tutor-tutee pairs at the MEU Writing Center were videotaped while they participated in writing center tutorials. Stimulated recall was used to prompt participants to recall the thoughts they had during the tutorials. In order to enhance the possibility of success (Gass & Mackey, 2000; Stough, 2001), the stimulated recall was conducted immediately after the tutorial for all tutees and within 24 hours with the tutors.

A detailed research protocol was developed following the guidelines in Gass and Mackey (2000), and the same protocol was used for each participant (see Appendix G). A pilot study with two tutorial pairs was conducted to ensure that all the instructions and procedures were clear to both tutors and tutees. The pilot study brought to light problems in the research protocol instructions. Even though the research protocol included instructions for participants to recall thoughts and feelings at the identified moment, both tutors and tutees made reflective comments from the present (e.g. "I can't believe how much I'm talking over the tutee!") rather than

recalling their thoughts and feelings at the time of the event. As a result, the research protocol was rewritten and the instructions were reformulated with more clarity and repeated twice. The revision in the protocol was successful: there were only two cases where the tutees or tutors made comments about another moment in time. When this occurred, they were gently reminded to focus on the event during the observed session.

During the stimulated recall sessions, the participants were asked to use a remote control to stop the videotape when they wanted to comment about a particular segment of the session. The researcher also paused the videotape to ask the tutors/tutees what they were thinking or feeling during certain interactions that were of interest (e.g. if a tutee seemed confused, annoyed, frustrated, satisfied, or pleased), or if they had not stopped the videotape for some time. The researcher responded as much as possible to participants' comments by backchanneling ("Oh," "I see," "Okay") to avoid asking leading questions (Gass & Mackey, 2000). The stimulated recall was tape recorded and transcribed. The tape recorder was placed discreetly on the table and the stimulated recall sessions were transcribed following the transcription conventions outlined in Appendix H.

#### **3.4.4 Interviews**

Interviews were used along with observation and stimulated recall in the study. Among the drawbacks of interviews is the difficulty facing the researcher of ensuring subject accuracy in reporting. As Sengupta and Leung (2002) found in their research with English language learners, subject feedback may not reveal the nature of the exchange or may reflect the subject's desire to frame responses he or she perceives will please the interviewer/researcher or, perhaps, devise an answer that the subject believes will reflect more favorably on him/her. Cumming (2001) notes that in his research with ESL/EFL instructors, some of the data drawn from the semi-structured interviews he conducted revealed that, when compared with other data collected, instructors reported on what they thought they did in practice (or perhaps, wanted to be doing, but were not doing) rather than what they were actually doing in practice. Their own self-reports were not entirely reliable and required verification through other data points.

There are, however, many benefits to conducting interviews in a qualitative research design. It is possible to confirm or consider interview data so long as other data collection methods are utilized as well (Kaakinen & Hyona, 2005; Olson, Moyer, & Falda, 2002). This way

the researcher can perform cross-checking of subjects' reports of what they did in the tutoring interaction (Hawthorne, 2006). If systems for more complete consideration of interview data are in place, the benefits of semi-structured interviews become apparent. Interviews represent a better method for capturing subjects' beliefs about their writing interactions and about the nature of evaluation itself than perhaps any other data collection process. They can provide true authenticity because subjects report their lived experiences in their own words (Simmons-Mackie & Damico, 2001). The semi-structured interview allows the researcher to compare the responses of each participant to closed questions in order to determine if patterns of belief and behavior exist; the responses of each participant to open-ended interview questions allow the researcher to elicit more comprehensive responses, thereby placing their closed-question responses within a contextual framework (Block, 2000). Semi-structured interviews are better suited for this study which acknowledges established pedagogical assumptions but is not determined by them. Ribbens (2007) also supports the semi-structured format for interviews claiming that compared to more unstructured forms of interviews such as discussions or chats, it "substantially reduces the possibility of interviewer bias and increases the comprehensiveness and comparability of interviewee response, facilitating final data analysis" (p. 210). Even though the semi-structured format has flaws, such as less flexibility and diminished relevance from the perspective of the interviewee, Ribbens maintains that on a practical level, this interview format "is the best approach to adopt" (p. 210).

The structure of the interview and the context in which the interview is conducted can be adjusted to encourage ease and honesty on the part of the interview participant. I attempted to work around the limitations of interviews and followed the interview guidelines provided by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) to create an interview situation that encourages authentic reporting.

Ribbens states that "schedules for interviews, especially when one-off, must be thought out in detail" (p. 210). In order to ensure that the interview questions would produce rich and reliable data, the interview schedule was tested in a pilot study. During the pilot study, I discovered that the wording of a number of the questions was unclear to NNS students with lower English proficiency and caused these participants to misunderstand the questions, so the questions were revised to simplify the vocabulary.

Interviews were conducted with all participants within 72 hours of the stimulated recall. I entered the interviews with a prepared set of questions (See Appendices J and K); however, I was flexible and allowed emerging circumstances to guide the interview process. I asked for clarification or additional information and encouraged tutors and tutees to elaborate on their answers. Before the interview was conducted, I provided an explanation to each tutor and tutee about the purpose of the interview. They were assured that their responses to the questions would remain confidential, and they were informed that they could opt out of the interview at any time. I requested their permission to audio record the interview, and I was prepared to take handwritten notes if the participants felt uncomfortable with the presence of a tape recorder. Participants were greeted warmly and offered refreshments. Furthermore, friendly conversation about their lives was made to promote a friendly atmosphere. The interview questions started with background informational questions about their own lives, school, and work experiences to initiate the dialogue.

The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by student workers with a high level of English proficiency who were provided with guidelines for transcription (See Appendix H). The digital tape-recorder was placed at the edge of the table, and interviews were transcribed using Express Scribe Transcription Playback Software. A sample transcription is provided in Appendix I.

### **3.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

Rice & Ezzy state that in order to demonstrate rigor through thematic analysis, the researcher identifies the themes through “careful reading and re-reading of the data” (in Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Fereday and Muir-Cochrane explain the importance of establishing credibility and trustworthiness in interpretive research and recommend demonstrating clearly how the themes were created from the participant data. The thematic process is described in detail below.

Once the data were collected and entered into a spreadsheet, an independent rater and I coded the transcriptions of the stimulated recall and interviews independently. The rater has an MA in Education and has experience with coding and analysis, but she does not have experience with writing centers. A hybrid approach to analysing the data was used. The analysis was both theory driven and data driven.

The analysis began with a grounded theory approach. Neff (2002) recommends this approach in research on writing centers because it is useful for “conceptualizing complex activities and developing theories about them” (p. 134). Weigle and Nelson (2004) explain that in grounded theory, researchers must move constantly between empirical data and theory construction. Data coding moves from open coding, in which researchers apply provisional categories to the data, to axial coding, in which researchers make connections between the categories that are formulated through open coding, to selective coding, in which the researcher “refines and develops provisional category relations until the core category is firmly established and other categories are placed into relationship with it” (Neff, 2002, p.139).

After becoming familiar with the stimulated recall and interview transcriptions, the independent rater and I began with open coding. We applied comments and possible themes to sections of the interview data and the stimulated recall data. Comments assigned to themes consisted of phrases, partial and complete sentences. The purpose of this coding was to continue systematically the process of noticing provisional categories. Upon the completion of the open coding of all the data, we began to perform axial coding, in which the categories were refined by examining, comparing, and thinking about them in relation to each other. This triangulation helps to ensure that consistent judgments are being made. Glasser describes this comparison as the process “by which the properties and categories across the data are compared continuously until no more variation occurs” (in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison 2007, p. 469). Once the process of axial coding was completed, selective coding began. The independent rater and I worked together to create an overarching theme. The process was iterative, reflexive, and interactive: we coded both the interviews and the stimulated recall data independently, but we were involved in discussions to resolve discrepancies and reach a consensus on emerging categories.

Having analyzed the data using a grounded theory approach and generated relevant themes, I adopted a theory driven approach in order to examine the discourse about the non-directive and directive strategies and to answer Research Questions 3 and 4.

I began by looking through the data to identify references to non-directive and directive strategies. When the type of strategy being referred to in the stimulated recall was unclear, my research assistant, a tutor with two years experience in the Writing Center, watched sections of the tutorials with me to help identify the moves used in tutor talk. Strategies such as negotiating the tutorial agenda with tutees, discussing writing with tutees, and encouraging tutees to think

critically and independently were considered at the non-directive end of the continuum. Strategies such as telling tutees how to rephrase a sentence, taking notes for tutees, and identifying and correcting tutees' errors were considered at the directive end of the continuum. The research assistant and I had minor disagreements about the labeling of a number of the moves, but these were typically when a combination of directive and non-directive strategies were employed. In these cases, comments were labeled "non-directive and directive" instead of "non-directive" or "directive." When there was insufficient information from the comment or the videotaped tutorial to label the strategy being referred to as "directive or non-directive," the strategy was left unlabeled.

Guidelines offered by Hycner (1985) on analysing data phenomenologically were followed. Hycner's guidelines are meant to "be true to the phenomena of interview data while also providing concrete guidelines" (in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 471). Hycner first recommends "delineating units of meaning relevant to research question" (p. 471). Once the non-directive and directive labels had been added to the transcriptions, the rater and I looked for patterns in the transcribed data bearing in mind references to non-directive and directive strategies from both tutors and tutees. Hycner then advises "eliminating redundancies, clustering units of relevant meaning, and determining themes from clusters of meaning" (p. 472). Having completed that process, the next step was to combine and catalogue related patterns into sub-themes. In addition to identifying patterns in the data, I calculated the frequency of themes and subthemes, non-directive and directive comments, and positive and negative comments. I then compared the notes I had taken while watching the tutorials with the results that were generated through the study.

Following Hycner's guidelines, I wrote a summary of each stimulated recall session and a separate summary of each interview, and I incorporated the themes that emerged from the analysis into the summaries. Hycner (1985) recommends showing the summaries to participants to establish that they match the interviewee's recollection of the interview, but in this case, it was feasible to do this only to a certain extent: the students were busy with end of semester activities, and I was only able to check the summaries with four participants. All four participants confirmed the summaries as an accurate depiction of the interviews.

### **3.6 DESCRIPTIONS OF THEMES**

Rice and Ezzy (1999) recommend demonstrating clearly how interpretations of the data have been achieved by “illustrating findings with quotations from, or access to, the raw data” in order to show rigor in interpretive research (in Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 3). Patton (2002) also recommends providing participants’ reflections in their own words to “strengthen the validity and credibility of the research” (in Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 3). The theme definitions, descriptions, and key comments from the participant data are provided below to demonstrate how the themes for the study were formulated.

### **3.6.1 Themes for Tutees**

#### *3.6.1.1 Tutoring Approach Efficacy*

This theme encompasses comments made by tutees about the strategies that were used by their tutors during the tutorial. The theme was divided into directive, non-directive, and unclassified strategies. Many tutees made specific comments about strategies that were used. For example, in the following comment, the tutee E2, responded positively to a directive strategy that was used (tutor identifies and corrects error for tutee). E2 said, “*She made it very simple, she was direct, she wasn’t trying to give me another example. No, she just sticks to the material, and she said ‘this is what’s wrong and this is how you fix it’ ...and that was good.*”

#### *3.6.1.2 Transferable Skills*

This theme includes comments that tutees made about skills, strategies, and concepts they learned during the tutorial which could be applied to future writing assignments. For example, E5 said:

So improve my points and improve my knowledge about the essay. For the next essay, I won’t do the same mistakes I did in this one even ...if the meeting was specifically about this essay. But then, her way showed me where my mistakes are in general in all essays.

#### *3.6.1.3 Assessment of Tutor*

This theme encompasses comments made by tutees about the interaction with their tutor. The theme identifies tutees’ comments about their perceptions about various aspects of the interaction with the tutee. It identifies positive or negative comments that demonstrate the tutees’

perceptions of the interaction with their tutors during the tutorials. Did they feel the tutor understood their concerns? Did they feel the tutor was listening to them? Did they feel comfortable speaking up, asking questions, and voicing their concerns? For example, E14 said, “*she was friendly, her tone was motivating, she was understanding, and she was patient.*” This theme also includes positive or negative comments made by tutees when discussing whether the tutors performed their job as tutor effectively or ineffectively. For example, E2 said: “*It shows that she is professional, so she is someone I can depend on. That was good.*” E3 said, “*I don’t view that she’s experienced, she has experience in transitions. Not like I remember someone in the writing center, he was really good in this way.*”

#### *3.6.1.4 Attention to Tutees’ Concerns*

This theme identifies comments that tutees made about whether their specific concerns had been addressed. Many of the tutees came to the writing center looking to address specific concerns with their individual papers, and this theme explores whether the tutor attended to those concerns or not (yes or no). E4 said that he came to the Center to “*[fix] the conclusion and [to] have a look at the reference list. And that's what we didn't do.*”

#### *3.6.1.5 Impact of Tutorials on Tutees’ Assignments*

This theme refers to comments that were made regarding the tutorial’s impact on the writing assignment worked on during the tutorial. E12 said, “*When I wrote it again, in the final draft, after her advice, it sounded better.*” The theme is then broken down further to specify which aspect of the tutorial was being referred to and whether the comments were positive or negative.

#### *3.6.1.6 Tutorial Session Efficacy*

This theme identifies comments that were made about the overall tutoring session. For example, E5 said, “*All the strategies are good and effective,*” and E12 said, “*It was generally good.*”

#### *3.6.1.7 Efficacy of Tutoring Strategies*

This is a label for comments that addressed the effectiveness of tutorial strategies. Although this theme may seem similar to the first theme, “Tutoring Approach Efficacy,” this theme refers to the comments that were made about the efficacy of the tutorial strategies that were not classified as directive or non-directive. Strategies that were not categorized as directive or non-directive were discussed by the tutees and labeled as positive or negative. For example, E13 said:

I was kind of scared because I wanted her to help me... because I came here to get help, so I wanted her to be more involved in what I was doing, but she wasn't: I was just reading and reading. But then after she stopped me and started talking, and helping, and she re-checked over what I did. So...I was happy, because now she was involved in what I did.

E14 said:

Here I think she was also helpful, she gave time for each question like each application to give it a lot of time. She stopped very often to give advice. She analyzed it, she checked the grammar mistakes, she checked how I had it, and how it relates to the question. It was really helpful.

### **3.6.2 Themes for Tutors**

#### *3.6.2.1 Tutoring Approach Efficacy*

This theme encompasses comments made by tutors about the strategies they used with their tutees during the tutorial. The theme identified the tutors' impressions of the effectiveness of the specific strategies that they used: directive, non-directive, or unclassified. For example, in the following comment, the tutor, U15, is responding positively to a non-directive strategy (asking tutee to rephrase orally):

Here I pretended I didn't really understand the sentence, so she could explain it more. I was like, “what a frog he kissed him?” And then she said that and that made her explain it more in detail, like in a more proper way, so when she said it again, I was like, “yeah that's good, so you should say it in that way, so it makes more sense.”

### 3.6.2.2 Tutors' Self-Assessment

This theme identifies comments that demonstrate tutors' assessment of their performance during the tutorial. The theme was further broken down to illustrate positive and negative comments. This theme includes comments about the tutors' judgments of tutorial strategies and their reflections on how to proceed with the tutorial. U9 reflected on her tutorial strategies when she said:

Well,... as soon as it comes to things like ancestors... it's not incorrect, but it's just not appropriate, so... I had a little bit of difficulty explaining that you don't use that kind of terminology, and be more specific about what you mean. I was trying to get that point across, but .... I don't know how successful I was. I think eventually she started to understand what I was saying, but... at the time I was thinking, how am I going to explain this without telling her the answer.

The theme also includes comments tutors made about the tutorial strategies they used or their general performance as a tutor. In certain instances, tutors realized during the tutorial that the tutorial strategies they were using were not effective. For example, U6 said:

Yeah this is where I realized that it's, it's not an 001 paper and then I'm like, "oh whoops." I should have used a different technique because usually I'm a little more directive with 001 students, and if they're a 101 or 102, then I take like a more mature approach to them.

### 6.2.2.3 Impact of Tutorials on Tutees' Assignments

This theme refers to tutor comments that were made regarding the tutorial's impact on the tutee's writing assignment. U10 said, "*I felt a bit confident because I felt we did well. Her paper looks like it's pretty good.*" The theme was then broken down further to specify whether the comments were positive or negative.

### 6.2.2.4 Tutorial Session Efficacy

This theme identifies general comments that were made about the tutor's perception of the overall tutoring session. For example, U8 said:

So I guess I wouldn't say she was satisfied. She probably wanted to work on it more and... Well, in the beginning she said mechanical errors, so I'm sure she wanted that as well. So I don't think she was... satisfied.

#### *6.2.2.5 Efficacy of Tutoring Strategies*

This is a label for comments that addressed the effectiveness of tutorial strategies. Although this theme may seem similar to the first theme, "Tutoring Approach Efficacy," this theme refers to positive or negative tutor comments that were made about the overall efficacy of tutorial strategies used. Strategies that were not specifically categorized as directive or non-directive were discussed by the tutors. For example, U7 said:

I found it helpful to...wrap up the main points that I talked about. If I see a particular pattern of mistakes or a particular pattern which has kept on occurring in the whole paper, I mention that as well... he had a thing for run-ons, so some sentences were running on, so I told him that you know you have a pattern for run-ons...Sometimes I feel that they might had not made notes or they might not remember while they are doing the essay. So, it's helpful to just remind them that these are the things you need to fix and kind of put them all together.

In summary, the themes above, were identified through qualitative methods. These themes were used to answer the research questions about tutor and tutee perceptions of tutorial effectiveness and to identify whether directive or non-directive tutorial approaches were perceived to be more effective. The findings are presented in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The stimulated recall (SR) interviews and the interviews (I) of 15 tutees and 15 tutors were analyzed separately. The themes that emerged from the data were used to answer the research questions. Below, tutees' and tutors' perceptions of the effectiveness of the writing center tutorials are addressed through the specific themes that emerged through both the stimulated recall and the interview data. The list of themes which are relevant to each of the research questions can be seen in Table 4, located in Appendix L.

### 4.1 RESEARCH QUESTION 1: HOW DO TUTEES PERCEIVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WRITING CENTER TUTORIALS WITHIN THE GIVEN NNS CONTEXT?

#### 4.1.1 Tutees' Perspective: Tutorial Session Efficacy

In the stimulated recall data, two tutees mentioned three times that they found their tutorials effective (see Table 5 below). The interview data revealed similar results: 10 participants mentioned the overall effectiveness of the tutorial session 18 times and most comments were positive (16). In both data sets, most tutees said they found the session effective because they left with new knowledge.

My teacher [instructor] here marked something... but she [the tutor] explained why she marked it. Not just 'it must be like this'. She explained to me, and I understand it. So I can use this knowledge in next paragraphs. This was very good session.

(SR, E3)

E9 said, "*In general...coming to the Writing Center and sitting with a tutor... has improved my idea of writing... how to write sentences properly and to go with the flow (I).*" Interestingly, one tutee, a sophomore, described how her impression of the tutorial changed as a result of her experience: "*It was a helpful experience. When I was a freshman ...I thought Writing Center won't help me, but I changed my mind. It really helps*" (I, E14). Some of the tutees were satisfied with their experience in the Center and expressed an interest in returning in the future. For example, E5, a tutee who had been required to attend a tutorial by his course instructor, said, "*I*

will come again to the Writing Center. Our... next essay is optional writing center, and I'll attend writing center, Insha'Allah, I'll meet with the tutors" (I, E5).

Table 5

*Tutees' Perspective: Tutorial Session Efficacy*

	Number of Participants	Number of Mentions	Positive		Negative		Positive/Negative		Neutral	
			Mentions		Mentions		Mentions		Mentions	
Stimulated Recall	2	3	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Interviews	10	18	16	88.90%	1	5.60%	0	0%	1	5.60%

Many tutees mentioned that good rapport with their tutors contributed to their successful sessions. When describing their tutorials, most tutees used the words “*comfortable*” (I, E1; I, E3; I, E5; I, E6; I, E7; I, E8; I, E15), “*relaxed*” (I, E10) and “*connected*” (I & SR, E13). Sessions that were perceived as effective had one or more of the following features: the tutees and tutors sit side by side, the assignment is positioned directly between the tutor and tutee, tutees hold a pen to make revisions and write, and there is ample back and forth discussion, laughter and good rapport. The tutees in such sessions do not hesitate to speak up and ask their tutors for clarifications or explanations.

The one tutee who was displeased with her overall session (E12) mentioned that her tutor did not provide her with enough feedback and did not address her concerns about her conclusion. She also perceived her conversation with her tutor as negative, and during her stimulated recall, paused the tape at various intervals to point out that she did not have faith in her tutor’s knowledge. This tutee’s assessment of her tutor will be discussed further in the section *Tutees’ Perceptions of Their Tutors: Assessment of Tutor*. It is interesting to note that in the video, there is no rapport, little eye contact between tutor and tutee, no laughter, long silences and tutor turn lengths are much longer than in the other tutorials examined in this study.

#### 4.1.2 Tutees' Perspective: Impact of Tutorials on Tutees' Assignments

The goal of the Writing Center is to help students become better writers; an important aspect of this goal is to help them improve their papers. As seen below in Table 6, the stimulated recall data revealed that five tutees mentioned eight times that the tutorial had achieved this goal. For example, E4 said:

I felt good. I felt that now I have a good essay. I have a very good one....I had a very weak structure, so we improved it here, and we fixed everything. And I was feeling satisfied with the paper.

(SR, E4)

Table 6

*Tutees' Perspective: Impact of Tutorials on Tutees' Assignments*

			Positive		Negative		Positive/Negative		Neutral	
	Number of Participants	Number of Mentions	Mentions		Mentions		Mentions		Mentions	
Stimulated Recall	5	8	8	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Interviews	12	17	15	88.20%	1	5.90%	0	0%	1	5.90%

The interview data yielded similar results (see Table 6 above). All 12 tutees who mentioned their assignments (17 times) believed that they had an improved paper as a result of the tutorial. E5 said, “[It is] better than the third draft. I’m looking forward that the professor will find a great difference from the third to the fourth draft.” Several of the tutees felt increased confidence in their paper because of their tutorial. E 15 said, “I feel better than yesterday...when someone else has revised it with me. I found she was very good at this...”

### 4.1.3 Tutees' Perspective: Efficacy of Tutoring Strategies

Writing Center practitioners and directors train tutors to use strategies that will make their tutees more receptive to learning. The stimulated recall revealed that most tutees felt positively about the strategies their tutors used during the tutorial sessions (see Table 7 below). Tutees referred to tutorial strategies 153 times, and most felt positively about the strategies their tutors used: 114 comments were positive, 36 were negative, 1 was positive/negative, and 2 were neutral. The interview data yielded slightly different results. Tutee comments about the strategies were divided evenly: 9 comments were positive, 9 were negative, and two were neutral. This discrepancy between the two data sets may have resulted from the research methods that were used to elicit the responses.

Table 7

*Tutees' Perspective: Efficacy of Tutoring Strategies*

	Number of Participants	Number of Mentions	Positive Mentions		Negative Mentions		Positive /Negative Mentions		Neutral Mentions	
Stimulated Recall	15	153	114	74.50%	36	23.50%	1	0.70%	2	1.30%
Interviews	12	20	9	45.00%	9	45.00%	0	0.00%	2	10.00%

As shown above in Table 7, the interview data revealed slightly more negative comments towards the tutorial strategies because some tutees experienced discomfort with a strategy that is frequently used by tutors and is considered best practice in writing center pedagogy: asking the tutee to read aloud. When asked about tutoring strategies during their interviews, five tutees were distressed at having had to read aloud and mentioned it repeatedly throughout their interviews. Reading aloud is supposed to engage tutees during the tutorial and allow them to hear their writing and consequently pick out their own errors as they read. The videotaped tutorials show that all tutors asked the tutees to read aloud. When asked about the tutoring strategies during his

interview, E1 said that reading aloud “*made [him] nervous and wasted time.*” E1 explained that he did not find this strategy worked because focusing on the pronunciation of the words was an obstacle to understanding and discussing the text. The tutee’s level of English did not factor into the read-aloud method preference or non-preference. E2, a tutee with high level proficiency said, “*I didn’t like the fact that I had to read it out loud...If someone reads something out loud you won’t be concentrating as much as when you’re reading it yourself.*”

It should be noted, however, that about half of the tutees found the reading aloud method effective. In both the stimulated recall and the interviews, several tutees mentioned the read aloud method positively. For example, E5 thought the read aloud method worked well for her because of the control it gave her over the session. She said, “*It was good because...I know what I wrote so I think ...I can point to the point where I want to stop, I can stop, where I can just go fast because I know that these sentences are correct*” (SR, E5). Another tutee talked about how her view of reading aloud changed over the course of the tutorial: “*It felt awkward at the beginning...but then I realized that she was right, that maybe reading out loud will make us see if the order is right*” (SR, E13).

The stimulated recall and interview data revealed that tutees appreciated their tutors reading aloud portions of their writing and found it facilitated their ability to pick up on their errors. Even though E2 did not like being asked to read aloud, she said she was better able to notice weaknesses in her last body paragraph when she and her tutor took turns reading it aloud: “*The last body paragraph when I was reading it, and she read it, and I read it again, and then I realized it made no sense at all; that was a shocker*” (SR). During her interview, she elaborated on the effectiveness of this strategy: “*I was understanding her point because when she read, it sounded completely different, and when I read it was something different as well.*” E9 said that she found her tutor reading a portion of her writing aloud effective. In the video, E9 is not able to identify her mistake when she reads it aloud. The tutor picks up the paper and begins to read aloud to the tutee. At this point, the tutee smiles and picks up on her error immediately. In the stimulated recall, she paused when the tutor employed this read aloud strategy and said, “*I was like, ‘yeah, why did I repeat the same sentence?’ It was good*” (SR, E9).

There was a negative reaction by tutees in both data sets to their tutors' insistence on hearing the full text before proceeding with the tutorial. Some tutors will ask the tutee to read his or her paper from the beginning to the end before providing feedback. Of the 15 tutorials, four tutors asked their tutees to read from beginning to end. In all cases, their tutees claimed that they found this strategy ineffective. E3 complained that his tutor moved backwards rather than moving forwards: "*After reading many sentences, she go again to a sentence that we have already done. It made me a little confused...I was prepared to focus on one sentence and then go on... but we go back,*"(SR). During his interview, E7 mentioned this strategy as the least effective strategy during the tutorial: "*Reading the first sentence and go to end and then go back to first sentence. I was confused. I prefer to go...step by step.*" E5, in contrast, praised his tutor for providing feedback throughout the reading of the paper: "*It was really helpful, and it was like...going step by step with me...but then, I say a word, and then she stops me where it's wrong*" (SR).

Another unexpected finding was that tutees find silence stressful. In the tutorials, there are many instances where tutors use strategies such as silence and wait time, which are promoted in standard training manuals and in training guidelines for NNS tutees (Berry, 1999; Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2006). Interestingly, the silence strategy seemed to be a hindrance rather than an aid to communication for tutees at all levels of English in this study. Three tutors use the strategy consistently in their tutorials and the responses are negative in both the stimulated recall and the interviews.

Throughout Tutorial 11, the tutor asked a series of questions and deliberately allowed the tutee ample time to answer the questions. The average wait time was 10 seconds. The tutee, a student with low level English proficiency, did not appreciate these silences and claimed that they made him "*nervous*" and "*stressed*" (SR, E11). A tutee with a higher level proficiency claimed that the silences in her tutorial were "*awkward*" and that she was unable to ascertain whether her tutor understood her ideas (SR & I, E5). Another tutee with higher level proficiency said that she disliked when her tutor "*wasn't really involved*" and "*just sitting there*" and that she felt more confident and motivated to discuss her work when her tutor "*was involved*" (SR, E13). Though a larger sample is needed to draw definite conclusions about the silence strategy, it is interesting to note that students chose to single out this strategy as an obstacle to good communication with their tutors.

It is worth noting the reference to code-switching in the stimulated recall by one of the tutees. Code switching is not a strategy that is commonly used by the tutors, and this is reflected in the videotaped tutorials. The two times tutors switched to Arabic to assist their tutees, they were met with a positive response. U6, a tutee with low English proficiency, was pleased that his tutor helped him translate a phrase into English. The tutor understood that he mistranslated a phrase from Arabic to English. In the video, they both switched to Arabic to discuss the awkwardly phrased sentence. U6 said about this instance:

Here it translates from Arabic to English directly. Maybe the English teacher will not understand that. I think she understands because ...she's Arabic. She understands what I am writing, and she gave me good word that English teacher will understand it.

(SR, U6)

#### **4.1.4 Tutees' Perspective: Attention to Tutees' Concerns**

Success in tutorials is often measured by whether or not tutees' specific writing concerns were addressed during the tutorial (Weigle & Nelson, 2004). The stimulated recall data revealed that tutees felt their concerns had been addressed during the tutorials (see Table 8 below). Seven tutees commented on the degree to which specific concerns were, or were not, addressed during the tutorial. The comments indicated that the tutees' concerns were in fact addressed: 8 out of 12. Three of the comments were neutral, and one of the comments revealed the tutee's concerns were left unaddressed. E3 said, "*She gives me a lot of solutions: question, example, conversation – a lot of solutions to my problem.*" One of the tutee comments showed that the tutees' concerns were not addressed. For example, E15 revealed that her concern about comma splices was not addressed even though she asked her tutor about it:

I really wanted to know about the comas splice. I always have this mistake... so first I thought, I should maybe separated into two sentences, and then she told me 'no you have to use some other word' ...and I was a bit confused.

(SR, E15)

Table 8

*Tutees' Perspective: Attention to Tutees' Concerns*

	Number of Participants	Number of Mentions	Yes		No		Neutral	
			Mentions	Percentage	Mentions	Percentage	Mentions	Percentage
Stimulated Recalls	7	12	8	66.70%	1	8.30%	3	25.00%
Interviews	14	22	16	72.70%	5	22.70%	1	4.50%

The interview data also revealed that most tutees (14 out of 15) felt that their concerns were addressed during tutorials (see Table 8 above). The tutees entered the tutorial hoping to receive feedback and guidance on specific writing issues, and most received the feedback they required: E13 said, *“I wanted more advice ... I wanted her to be specific of where the problem is not just it’s not clear. She actually pointed out where I needed to fix things.”*

In cases where tutees pointed out that their concerns had not been addressed, it was noted in the observational notes that these tutors were sometimes trying to use a non-directive approach or did not have the knowledge necessary to address their tutees’ concerns.

**4.1.5 Tutees’ Perceptions of Their Tutors: Assessment of Tutor**

The tutees’ assessment of the tutor contributes to an understanding of the effectiveness of the tutorial and helps to ascertain the qualities that tutees perceive as essential. The stimulated recall data revealed that most tutees assessed their tutors positively. Of the 52 times the 14 tutees assessed their tutors, 42 comments were positive, nine were negative, and one was neutral (see Table 9 below).

Table 9

*Tutees' Perceptions of Their Tutors: Assessment of Tutor*

			Positive		Negative		Positive/Negative		Neutral	
	Number of Participants	Number of Mentions	Mentions		Mentions		Mentions		Mentions	
Stimulated Recall	14	52	42	80.80%	9	17.30%	0	0%	1	1.90%
Interviews	10	16	9	56.30%	3	18.80%	0	0%	4	25.00%

The interview data yielded similar results: of the 16 times ten tutees assessed their tutors, 16 comments were positive, four were negative, and one was neutral (see Table 9 above).

*4.1.5.1 Features of Positive Tutor Assessment*

An examination of both the stimulated recall and the interviews revealed factors that contributed to a positive tutor assessment. Tutees showed a preference for a “*qualified professional expert*” (SR, E2). In the videotaped tutorials where tutees assessed their tutors positively, tutors directed the form, content, and distribution of discourse during the tutorials. Tutors spoke confidently and competently and provided clear explanations for students’ queries. The tutees appeared to appreciate certain features of informed guidance: their tutors should have expertise in writing and provide direction when necessary. Most of tutees felt confident with expert tutors and assessed them positively. A bilingual Emirati tutee said:

It’s like she really knows her grammar, so she can actually teach you the grammar... I felt like I could trust her, that she is a professional. If I tell her something she will be able to explain it to me. And that was a good feeling.

(SR, E2)

E8, a student with moderate English proficiency, came to the Writing Center to discuss her argumentative essay on the nuclear weapons program in Iran. There were serious coherence issues in her essay, so the tutor assumed an authoritative role in this tutorial, asking leading questions, offering suggestions on content, and delivering mini-lectures about paragraph and

essay structure. E8 responded positively to her tutor's authoritative role and said: "*Her comments are so good. It made me feel that she knows the subject really well, and I'm talking to an expert*" (SR). E6, a student with low English proficiency, said he was "*shocked*" when he found out that the young woman sitting in the chair beside him was going to be his tutor. He thought "*she was just a student*", but when she proved her expertise by correcting his verb tenses, he became "*more comfortable*" (I, E6).

Even though tutees appreciated an expert tutor, it should be noted that tutees who assessed their tutors positively did not regard their tutors as "instructors," and in fact, were grateful for peer-like, collaborative aspects of the tutorials. A tutee who rated herself as bilingual and who was instructed in English in high school said:

I liked the fact that she gives me a chance to explain myself...and the fact that she doesn't try to act like, "I know it all" because some tutors are like that...like we are the same age, but some go like "I know more than her, so I get to do this."

(SR, E2)

Another near-native tutee felt similarly about the peer-like status of the tutor:

What I liked about it was that I first thought that a teacher would be tutoring me, so all right that's fine, but when she came into the picture I was like, "O my God, she is young, she doesn't know what she is doing," but she was a professional, and she was my age, so that's a plus, so she can relate to me. She actually says, "cool," and it made sense to us, so it was easier for us.

(SR, E13)

A tutee with high English proficiency appreciated that her tutor acted as a second reader rather than as an instructor:

Throughout the essay, she was just giving me... comments using "I" and "I think" and this is good because I feel that she's one of the readers...reading my essay. Like anyone could be in her place, and not just giving me points or checking or marks or grading.

(I, E5)

The student's level of English did not seem to affect this preference for a "peer-like relationship": E10, a tutee with low English proficiency stated: "*He is not treating me as a tutor [sic]. He is trying to relax me so that I can't feel that "uh-oh, I'm doing really bad"* (I, E10), and E3, a student with low English proficiency, said that he could ask his tutor questions, unlike his "course instructor" (SR, E3).

When assessing their tutors positively, tutees mentioned patience and encouraging feedback as positive tutor characteristics:

It's good here how we finished, and she went back to the question to the middle. She was patient with me. When we finished the conclusion, she could have told me "see the model answer;" however she went back to the middle to explain more.

(SR, E14)

E5 appreciated this characteristic in his tutor as well: "*She gave me a lot of time and whatever I want to say, she gave me the time to say, and not just one, two, three and then, she says 'this is your thesis'*" (SR). Tutees also assessed their tutors positively when the tutors offered praise. E9 liked that her tutor was "encouraging" (SR), E14 appreciated her tutor's "motivating tone" (I), and E3 said his confidence in his writing increased when his tutor said, "Good job" (I).

Tutors who asked questions about the assignment and about tutees' concerns before starting the tutorial were also assessed positively. E7 said, "*She was ...asking questions about the course and what the course is before we start the paper...,and I think that was good. I was impressed*" (SR). E8 and E3 also paused the video as their tutors were asking questions about the assignment and said they thought this was an indication of a "good" tutor. E3 said during his interview, "*She said to me 'What do you want?' Then, I can be clear for her...I think it's a good point for her...*"

#### 4.1.5.2 Features of Negative Tutor Assessment

Although most tutees assessed their tutors positively, both data sets reveal factors that contributed to a negative assessment. An important aspect to consider in the tutees' perceptions of the tutors' ability to help them is whether or not the tutor has sufficient knowledge to be able

to identify and to address writing concerns. The tutors may be trained in how to conduct a tutorial, but if they have not been adequately educated and are not able to draw upon an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the writing process, the tutee will lose confidence in the tutorial session; therefore the tutorial session will be perceived as ineffective.

Tutees assessed their tutors negatively when their tutors offered contradictory or unclear information. One tutee said:

Here I was a little bit confused because she told me I just have to combine these them in one sentence, but it is always hard to combine many sentences into one sentence, so I didn't really know what she wanted me to do.

(SR, E15)

E15 said that her tutor was indecisive and vague: *"Sometimes she refers to something, she starts thinking about it and then she tell me it's fine, but I don't understand what is it that confusing her"* (I, E15). It is clear from the videotaped tutorial that the tutor was not able to explain some of the grammatical concepts to the tutee. She was seen giving incorrect explanations and talking around grammatical problems. E12 also complained that her tutor was not able to provide her with the answers to her questions. At one point in the tutorial, her tutor gave her contradictory information about APA Documentation. At that point, E12 paused the videotape to ask the researcher: *"Is that right? Because I don't believe it."*

Another factor that contributed to a negative tutor assessment was when tutees received conflicting information from the tutor and their course instructors. The tutee in Tutorial 1 was puzzled by his tutor's claim that she had never heard of writing a descriptive essay on a movie, and he saw this contradictory information as a weakness. During the stimulated recall, he stopped the tape when the tutor seems confused by his instructor's assignment and said, *"Here, I am sorry to say, when she said, 'I get confused'; I got the impression that she is not the person who can help me. I just got that she isn't"* (E1).

E10 rejected her tutor's advice to define terms and include APA documentation in her assignment. She was confused about her tutor's insistence on adding APA and said that her instructor did not require documentation for the assignment (SR). Similarly, E12 said that her

tutor's advice about counterarguments and APA documentation did not correspond with her instructor's advice, and she decided to dismiss it (SR).

In Tutorial 15, the tutor was trying to explain to the tutee that she should add the points in her essay into her thesis statement. The tutee challenged the tutor by saying her professor advised her to write it in this way. The tutee paused the videotape during the stimulated recall session to say that she felt confused by this contradictory information and that she "*just didn't get her [tutor's] point.*" All four tutees assessed their tutors negatively in these instances. It is worth mentioning that tutors found dealing with conflicting information from instructors challenging. U1 described her frustration at not understanding her tutee's assignment:

At that point I could sense he was frustrated, but I was pretty frustrated too because I don't get what the point of the essay was. Now he starts talking about purposes and how he has one purpose and the professor says it's OK. First he says the professor said "stick with one purpose," and then I asked him again and he says his professor said it's OK to use many different purposes. But then all the while, I'm thinking it's a description essay, so why are you talking about purposes? So at this point I was trying as hard as I could to understand what the point of the essay was.

(SR, U1)

U15 described how she handles situations where there is conflicting information from the course instructors:

But then ...she said, "My professor wanted a fourth paragraph about this," and I was like, "OK fine, that's what your professor wanted." Because a lot of times I feel like professors want different things.... It's a red line. It makes me scared to say anything like "Oh no! but you should write this way"..... I never saw a paper that way, which had another fourth paragraph, and it had nothing to do with her argument, but she said, "No, no my professor said, he wanted this." I was like, "okay if your professor said that, then that is fine."

(SR, U15)

In tutorials, tutors will try to establish the tutee's goals at the outset of the session; this goal-setting phase is unique to writing center tutorials and is known as the diagnosis phase of the tutorial (Williams, 2005). Tutors were assessed negatively in tutorials with the longest diagnosis phases and in tutorials where there was disagreement about the diagnosis. In Tutorial 1, the tutee did not understand the requirements of the assignment and was confused by his instructor's comments. The tutor attempted to establish a diagnosis for 40 minutes and spent only 20 minutes discussing the content and mechanics of the assignment with the tutee. There was clear frustration on the part of the tutee and the tutor, and conversation between them was strained. When re-watching his tutorial, E1 claimed that he did not trust his tutor when she could not understand the assignment requirements. Both tutor and tutee were visibly frustrated in the video and made disparaging comments about the session during the stimulated recall. The tutor became impatient with the tutee's inability to explain the assignment, and she indicated that the assignment did not seem logical, which caused her tutee to lose faith in her ability to help him. A few days later, after having time to reflect on the session, both tutor and tutee changed their impressions of the diagnosis phase of the session when discussing it in their interviews. This can be illustrated by U1's comment:

When I was in it, I was really frustrated, and I felt like we weren't getting anywhere at all. And even when it got over I just felt like it was a really bad tutorial. But looking at it now, I think that it was only natural that it would have to take that much of effort to get to understand what the entire essay was about because he wasn't very clear about it himself. So, I think when I think about it now, I think it was a pretty good tutorial. It seemed to me that it was really confusing. I was confused and he was confused. So, just to get through all that confusion you need to spend a lot of time.

(I, U1)

In Tutorial 4, the tutor and tutee disagreed on the diagnosis and the tutor spent half of the tutorial trying to convince the tutee that his essay structure needed to be reorganized. The tutee and the tutor had met about this specific assignment before, and the tutee was under the impression that this tutorial was about improving the conclusion and double-checking his documentation formatting. The tutor informed the tutee that they should continue to work on the

organization because his thesis was not specific enough, and his topic sentences and ideas needed to be more focused. In the stimulated recall, the tutee disclosed that he was furious with his tutor for not diagnosing his problem correctly in previous tutorials and said that he was “mad” during the tutorial and could not understand why “*she didn't mention anything about the structure before.*”

#### **4.1.6 Tutees’ Perceptions of whether the Skills They Acquired during the Session were Transferable**

One of the writing center’s goals is to help students acquire writing skills that they can apply to future writing tasks. Although this study does not determine if skills acquired will be effective for future writing assignments, the tutees’ perceptions of transferability is relevant and important. Tutees are more likely to become involved in the writing process and become confident writers if they believe the skills they are acquiring are transferable to other writing tasks and if they recognize that effective writing can be an interrelated incremental process. The stimulated recall data revealed that most tutees (9 out of 15) believed the skills they had acquired during the tutorial could be transferred to future independent writing tasks (see Table 10 below). E10 said, “*But it is OK because I got some mistakes and I knew how to check them, so I wasn’t worried about the last page.*”

Table 10

*Tutees’ Perceptions of Whether the Skills They Acquired During the Session Were Transferable*

	Number of Participants	Number of Mentions
Stimulated Recalls	9	15
Interviews	14	36

Similarly, the interview data demonstrated that tutees believed the skills they acquired during the tutorials could be applied to future writing contexts. Fourteen out of 15 tutees mentioned this theme 36 times (see Table 10 above). For example, E8 said, “*She pointed out the mistakes...Now I know where I stand in writing and what I should do and what I should not.*”

Interestingly, tutees mentioned during their interviews that the most useful tutorial moments were those that focused on the mechanics of writing and specific writing strategies that have general application. E8 said that her tutor’s advice to back up her ideas in her paragraphs was the most useful because now she knows “*how [she] should write an essay.*” E3 claimed that learning how to use quotations was the most useful moment in the tutorial because now he can use them “*forever.*” Both E5 and E13 were grateful to their tutors for teaching them how to construct a thesis statement, which will help them “*not only for this essay,*” but “*for all essays*” (I, E5). Seven of the 15 tutees believed that their tutorial sessions were effective because they had learned proofreading strategies that would help when writing future assignments, such as rereading the essay carefully (E2, E3, E15, E17), asking questions from the perspective of a reader (E5, E10) and reading the essay aloud (E5).

## 4.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: HOW DO TUTORS PERCEIVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WRITING CENTER TUTORIALS WITHIN THE GIVEN NNS CONTEXT?

### 4.2.1 Tutors’ Perspective: Tutorial Session Efficacy

The interviews revealed that most tutors perceived their tutorial sessions as being effective: the theme *Tutorial Session Efficacy* was mentioned 22 times by 14 tutors, with 18 positive mentions, three negative mentions, and one neutral mention (see Table 11 below).

Table 11

#### *Tutors’ Perspective: Tutorial Session Efficacy*

			Positive		Negative		Positive/Negative		Neutral	
	Number of Participants	Number of Mentions	Mentions		Mentions		Mentions		Mentions	
Stimulated Recall	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Interviews	14	22	18	81.80%	3	13.60%	0	0%	1	4.50%

During the stimulated recall sessions, tutors did not comment on the effectiveness of the sessions, as shown above in Table 11. The two methodologies, stimulated recall and interviews, elicited responses that reflected the context and differed in content: during the interviews, tutors were asked to comment on the overall effectiveness of their tutorial sessions; during the

stimulated recall, they were asked for spontaneous comments about specific aspects of the tutorial sessions.

Several tutors claimed that the effectiveness of the tutorial was related to independent learning. They said their tutees had learned skills that they could now transfer to future writing assignments such as using a full-stop (U11), placing commas (U3), and writing a conclusion (U13). U13 said, “*She understood certain issues that she has. She won’t be making the same mistakes in other essays. I don’t expect her to come back without a conclusion.*” U10 said that despite the strained communication he perceived between him and his tutee, it was an effective tutorial because his tutee “*picked it up very quickly and started fixing her own paper.*” U15 said her tutorial was a success because by the end of the tutorial, her tutee started to self-correct:

She noticed the tenses; she started figuring it out by herself, like, “I used past tense here, so I should use it here again.” I felt she got that. The idea stayed with her, and the APA stayed with her, because the mistake was very simple.

(I, U15)

U9 reported that her tutorial was successful because her tutee had acquired skills that would help her revise her paper independently: “*She was realizing something in her own writing, something that she continues to do, so I think it will help her more for later papers.*”

Two tutors (U4 and U9) attributed the success of their tutorials to regular writing center attendance. For example, U4 said:

I really think that it helps a lot if you have read the paper and then ask the tutee to make these revisions, and then he makes those revisions and comes back to you. Then you can help him a lot more because you know the paper.

(I, U4)

Many tutors claimed positive communication was one of the factors contributing to the effectiveness of a session. They believed that tutorials were effective when their tutees took on an active role and participated in the tutorial discussion. U7 pointed out that her tutee was being “*interactive,*” which contributed to the success of the tutorial. She said that the discussion “was

*not one sided*’ and that *“he was contributing a lot.”* U13, U15, and U3 said the tutee was *“contributing to the session”* (U13), *“interacting during the tutorial”* (U15), and *“participating because he was not shy”* (U3). U9 had worked with her tutee many times and felt that the *“back and forth discussion”* worked very well. Although this tutee had been quiet in previous tutorials, U9 felt that the familiarity between them enabled her tutee to interact and subsequently to benefit from the tutorial.

U7 described how her tutee, who did not have any experience with the Writing Center, and had misgivings about it, changed his opinion after the collaborative process of the tutorial:

In the beginning, I got this vibe that he didn't really think it would be that useful, like if he thought that he just had to re-write it, then...he can just go home and ...do it again. But, I think once we went through the session, he realized that it has helped him a bit... I think he understood what kind of things he had to fix, and I think that he liked the way that I...told him without making it too patronizing. I think he appreciated the comments I made. I think it helped him, and he'll be back.

(I, U7)

Three tutors considered their tutorials ineffective; they explained that their tutees were inactive participants who expected their tutors to take on the role of an authority. U6 said that the tutorial *“could have been better”* and that it *“would have been nice if [E6] had been a little more responsive.”* U10 suggested that the tutee’s lack of participation in the conversation was a barrier to tutorial effectiveness. He said that his tutee was *“just following what [he] was saying.”* U12 attributed her ineffective tutorial to *“poor chemistry”* and a *“strained and uncomfortable conversation.”* She said:

I don’t know if this would be perhaps a fault on my part or.... if she was more interested in listening to what I had to say rather than perhaps...discussing it to a certain extent but ...I felt like in this tutorial, there was some sort of hierarchy where I was ...telling more than really sort of facilitating.

(I, U12)

Several tutors (U1, U7, U13, and U14) said that asking about the assignment and gathering information about the tutee's background and concerns contributed to tutorial effectiveness. U13 mentioned that the tutorial was successful because she focused on setting goals at the beginning of the tutorial:

I just basically wanted her to be clear on what we are going to do...because first she said thesis...and then she said grammar, so I just wanted to make clear that we can't do everything. It worked; she was satisfied in the end. The whole thing went well.

(I, U13)

When asked about tutorial effectiveness during her interview, U6 said that the tutorial was not as effective as it should have been because she did not spend enough time gathering information about the student, the assignment, or the tutee's concerns. In the video, the tutor delves into reading the tutee's assignment without completing the report form or asking the tutee about his assignment. It is worth noting that during her stimulated recall, U6 mentioned that she realized too late in the tutorial that her tutee was more advanced than she had originally assumed:

Yeah, this is where I realized that it's not a 001 paper, and then I'm like, "oh whoops." I should have used a different technique because usually I'm a little more directive with 001 students, and if they're a 101 or 102, then I take like a more mature approach to them.

(SR, U6)

#### 4.2.2 Tutors' Perspective: Impact of Tutorials on Tutees' Assignments

The interview data revealed that tutors felt the tutorial session had a positive impact on their tutees' assignments (see Table 12 below). There are eight references to tutor theme *Impact of Tutorials on Tutee's Assignments*: six positive, one negative, and one neutral. There are no references to tutor theme *Impact of Tutorials on Tutee's Assignments* in the stimulated recall data. As previously noted, the methodology may account for this discrepancy.

Table 12

*Tutors' Perspective: Impact of Tutorials on Tutees' Assignments*

	Number of Participants	Number of Mentions	Positive		Negative		Positive/Negative		Neutral	
			Mentions	0%	Mentions	0%	Mentions	0%	Mentions	0%
Stimulated Recall	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Interviews	7	8	6	75.00%	1	12.50%	0	0%	1	12.50%

U8 said of her tutee's paper: "*I thought it was better because when you read it now, probably you would get a sense of what she was trying to convey.*" Despite the difficulties they faced during the tutorial, U1 thought her tutee's paper had "*improved significantly.*" U15 said: "*I felt a bit confident because I felt we did well. Her paper looks like it's pretty good.*" U9 felt the tutorial had helped the tutee with her paper because she now "*knew what her next step was to improving her paper.*"

#### 4.2.3 Tutors' Perspective: Efficacy of Tutoring Strategies

Writing Center practitioners and directors train tutors to use strategies designed to make their tutees more receptive to learning. The stimulated recall revealed that most tutors felt positively about the strategies they used during the tutorials. Fifteen tutors commented on the effectiveness of their tutoring strategies (see Table 13 below). One hundred and forty six comments were counted: 82 were positive, 45 were negative, and 19 were neutral.

Table 13

*Tutors' Perspective: Efficacy of Tutoring Strategies*

		Positive		Negative		Positive/Negative		Neutral	
	Number of Participants	Number of Mentions	Mentions	Mentions	Mentions	Mentions	Mentions	Mentions	Mentions
Stimulated Recall	15	146	82 56.20%	45 30.80%	0 0%	19 13.00%			
Interviews	15	72	33 45.80%	28 38.90%	0 0.00%	11 15.30%			

The interview data similarly shows that tutors felt positively about the strategies they used: 15 tutors commented on the effectiveness of their tutorials a total of 72 times: 33 comments were positive, 28 were negative, and 11 were neutral (see Table 13 above).

Both sets of data revealed that some tutors faced problems with the reading aloud method. Some tutors mentioned that they could not follow along or understand their tutees' ideas when their tutees read aloud. In the video, U3 can be seen going back to read her tutee's paragraphs after he reads aloud. In her stimulated recall, she paused the tape to say:

Actually, while he was reading, I realized that I couldn't really understand his way of speaking, and I was wondering if I could like stop him and say, "I'll read" or something like that...Then I just started focusing on the paper because obviously I couldn't understand it from his voice or anything. So I had to ...look at the paper...So anyway, after that, I read it again...

(SR, U3)

U13 and U15 acknowledged that the reading aloud strategy was problematic, but they said the benefits outweighed the shortcomings. U13 claimed that reading the paper herself was more effective: *"I get lost when my tutees read aloud, but I ask them to read aloud because I want them to feel that it is their paper"* (I). U15 said that asking tutees to read aloud was time-

consuming and did not leave enough time to address all the tutee's concerns during a tutorial. She described how she compensated for the problems inherent in the reading aloud strategy:

I don't know if it's something bad that I do, but I let her read through the whole paragraph for one time, and then I go through it. It takes more time, it makes the session longer, but I feel it's like the best way. I need to read it twice to understand, so sometimes it makes the session a little bit long. I like to let her read it once first and then we go through the mistakes in the second time.

(I, U15)

Both sets of data revealed that tutors liked the strategy of reading aloud selections from the tutees' assignments. Several tutors can be seen reading portions of their tutees' writing in the videos. The tutors have selected sections of the paper where tutees have not been able to identify their own errors after reading their own writing. It is worth noting that U9, like her tutee, mentioned the effectiveness of this strategy and paused the tape at the same instance her tutee did to point out that her tutee was better able to identify the repetition in her sentence when the tutor read her sentence aloud. In her interview, U9 said:

I end up reading big chunks of their writing, because when I'm reading, they can hear my voice, so they can hear when things are you know a bit off, and then they figure it out... I know it's better for them to read it themselves... they hear it from someone else. I think it's a good strategy.

(I, U9)

U13 can also be seen in the video using the read aloud strategy when her tutee is not able to see that her thesis statement contains run-on sentences. In the video, the tutee is able to identify the problem in her thesis statement. The tutor paused the tape during the stimulated recall to point out that "*reading it to her was helpful because she heard her own words.*"

Though codeswitching was mentioned by a tutee as an effective strategy, only one tutor mentioned that it may have been useful to speak the tutee's language to facilitate the discussion about the goals and details of the tutee's assignment:

I would think that it would be very helpful if someone spoke his language, which is Arabic...I think he is a very competent student. It's not a matter of him not wanting to participate. I think it's just a language barrier. A lot of times when he would say, "this is in Arabic, how do you say," and then he would struggle with explaining it to me. So, if someone could speak to him in Arabic and then from there move on. Because it's hard to help somebody improve their writing in English when you are talking to them in English, if that's where they are weak...so, I wouldn't suggest the entire tutorial be conducted in Arabic, but just things you really want to stress on. I think that would help a lot.

(I, U1)

#### 4.2.4 Tutors' Self-Assessment

Reflection prompted by stimulated recall and interviews led to critical analysis and self-assessment by the tutors. This process of close observation and analysis contributed to their perceptions of tutorial effectiveness. The data recorded during the stimulated recall revealed that most tutors perceived their performance negatively: the theme *Self-Assessment* was mentioned 56 times by 12 tutors, with 35 negative mentions, 19 positive, and two neutral (see Table 14 below).

Table 14

##### *Tutors' Self-Assessment*

	Number of Participants	Number of Mentions	Positive Mentions	Positive %	Negative Mentions	Negative %	Positive/Negative Mentions	Positive/Negative %	Neutral Mentions	Neutral %
Stimulated Recall	12	64	9	14.00 %	44	68.80%	0	0%	11	17.20 %
Interviews	11	17	1	5.90%	15	88.20%	0	0%	1	5.90%

The interview data yielded similar results (see Table 14 above). Eleven tutors mentioned the theme *Self-Assessment* 17 times: 15 comments were negative, one was positive, and one was neutral.

In both data sets, a number of tutors admitted to not having the knowledge necessary to explain writing or grammatical concepts. They said that they were aware their tutees did not understand their explanations, but they did not know how to rephrase their questions or explanations to help them understand. In Tutorial 2, the tutee seemed confused when the tutor was explaining the concept of “few” or “less.” During her stimulated recall, U2 said, “*At this point, I still felt though I explained it again, she didn’t really get it...but then I didn’t like know how to... say it again and make it clearer.*” Similarly, U3 mentioned that her tutee was confused by her explanation of colon use because she did not have sufficient knowledge of the rules (SR). U14 explained that she was not able to help her tutee understand the model answer that had been provided by the course instructor: “*At the back of my mind I knew the answer but didn’t know how to get her there,*” which she said resulted in her tutee’s confused reaction (SR). U9 also said she was aware her tutee had not understood how to connect sentences to improve the flow of her writing because “*later on, she made the same mistakes*” and mentioned that her explanation was to blame because she knew she did not “*explain properly*” (I). U4 said that the tutee did not understand her suggestion because of her inability to explain the significance of the word “dictatorship:”

I couldn't explain to him that “dictatorship” could be used in that context, and yet it wouldn't sound as harsh as Saddam Hussein's regime. I couldn't explain it well, so I just told him, that “yeah, you can use it here.” But, I couldn't think of anything at that time, like how to show him the difference in context, and I don’t think he understood.

(SR, U4)

In both sets of data, several of the tutors mentioned that talking for long uninterrupted periods of time may have been an obstacle to tutees’ understanding of explanations. U4 and U14 said that their tutees were not “*following*” when they talked for long periods of time. In Tutorial 4, the tutee appeared frustrated and confused and said, “*okay, okay*” impatiently when the tutor talked for a long period of time. In the video, the tutor immediately relented, stopped talking and gave the tutee time to process the information she had just given him. During the stimulated recall session, U4 said that she knew her tutee was not following her:

He's like, "okay, okay," but he doesn't understand. I think it doesn't really help if you talk a lot, and say that "you need to do this." I felt like I'd lost him here, like I kept telling him, and he wasn't really absorbing what I was saying.

(SR, U4)

Most negative comments from tutors who criticized their own performance were about their being too directive and not giving tutees sufficient distance and independence to fix their errors and to learn from them. U11 paused the tape during a section in the tutorial where he identified and fixed a pronoun error in his tutee's paper and fixed: "*I was wishing I had not read the sentence and said "our." Because then that means he is not learning to point out the mistake by himself.*" U2 felt that her instinct to point out every grammatical error did not facilitate learning:

Being a tutor I couldn't help myself... That second I knew that she doesn't really know what run-ons are, or fragments are, or clauses are for that matter.... But I couldn't help myself, pointing out, every single time she had a grammatical mistake that, "Oh, this is wrong, ...ah, this is a grammatical mistake"...she wasn't really understanding or listening anymore.

(SR, U2)

U6 felt similarly about using a directive approach: "*There are couple of times I was very directive, so he did it... but... he didn't... really understand why I was asking him to do it*" (I). U3 said that telling her tutee the main idea of his paragraph rather than explaining the function of topic sentences and asking him to determine the main idea on his own meant that "*he'd probably ask another tutor again, 'what's my main idea now?'*"(SR).

Three tutors were also critical of themselves for not giving their tutees sufficient time to identify their errors and to fix their errors. U11 said the most ineffective moment of the tutorial was when he "*just straight away gave him a correction rather than asking him a question back*" (I). U4 also paused the tape to point to an instance during her tutorial where she drew attention to an incorrect word choice without asking her tutee to identify the error or to correct it: "*I knew I*

*should have given him more time to think.... He was talking about it, he was getting somewhere, but ...I just said 'dictating' ” (SR).*

Several tutors reported that they may have been too forceful with their recommendations and suggestions. For instance, U8 reflected on the session and wondered if she had intervened excessively:

So here, I truly did not like the example at all because..... I didn't get the idea behind it. I didn't want to tell her... cut it out, scrap it. I wanted her to come to that conclusion by herself, but she wasn't ready to come to that conclusion because she really believed that it made sense, and it would help the reader to understand her idea better. So I'm trying to sort of work around it and trying to be tactful, but then it wasn't working out. And I think in the end, like a few seconds from now, she says, “Ok fine, I'll just scratch it out”...I think she did understand it, but then if I hadn't been there, and if I had just told her about it, you know, —I don't like this so much, it doesn't make sense so much, and I had just left it, and I hadn't pursued it, like I hadn't really pushed it so much, she would not have changed it. She would have left it there. So I think in a way I got her to do something she might not have wanted to do by herself.

(SR, U8)

U4 questioned the way in which she allowed the tutee to make decisions for himself:

Over here, I felt like I was dictating way too much..... But...I realized I was doing that and I tell him, “okay, what do you think is right?” One thing that I always try to keep in mind is that it's his paper or her paper. It's not my paper, so.., I let him do it the way he wanted to. But I didn't think it was the right way.

(SR, U4)

Another tutor questioned the amount of information she was trying to convey and the necessity of the information:

You're not sure if you should be telling them what points they've missed, ...You never know how far you're supposed to help them with content based information, so I was asking questions, trying to get her to realize maybe some points that she missed. But I still felt that she still like needed a bit of direct suggestion. Sometimes, you never how much of it you are supposed to come up with. It's always a weird line.

(SR, U9)

### **4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: WITHIN THE GIVEN NNS CONTEXT, WHICH TYPE OF TUTORING APPROACH (E.G. NON-DIRECTIVE VS. DIRECTIVE) DO TUTEES FIND EFFECTIVE?**

The stimulated recall data revealed that most tutees felt positively about both non-directive and directive strategies: 14 tutees mentioned non-directive strategies as being effective 43 out of 55 times, and directive strategies as being effective 35 out of 55 times (see Table 15 below). The interview data yielded slightly different results, but the number of instances was too low to be considered significant.

Also shown below in Table 15, tutees did not have a strong preference for the non-directive or directive approach; nevertheless, patterns emerged that show that tutees find each approach effective for specific concerns and in particular contexts. Tutees favored a directive approach when discussing lower order concerns. They reported that they appreciated clarity and directness when their tutors addressed issues such as verb tenses, punctuation, and word choice. E2 stopped the tape as her tutor explained how to identify and correct a run-on sentence to say:

She made it very simple, she was direct. She wasn't trying to give me another example. No, she just sticks to the material, and she said 'this is what's wrong, and this is how you fix it' ...and that was good.

(SR, E2)

Table 15

*Tutees' Perceptions: Tutoring Approach Efficacy*

			Positive		Negative		Positive/Negative		Neutral	
	Number of Participants	Number of Mentions	Mentions		Mentions		Mentions		Mentions	
Non-directive										
Stimulated Recall	14	56	43	76.80%	11	19.60%	0	0.00%	2	3.60%
Interviews	3	4	2	50.00%	2	50.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Directive										
Stimulated Recall	14	51	35	68.60%	15	29.40%	1	2.00%	0	0.00%
Interviews	3	4	2	50.00%	1	25.00%	0	0.00%	1	25.00%
Directive / Non-directive										
Stimulated Recall	3	5	5	100%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Interviews	1	1	1	100%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Unclassified										
Stimulated Recall	14	41	31	75.60%	10	24.40%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Interviews	9	11	4	36.40%	6	54.50%	0	0.00%	1	9.10%

E8 found it helpful when her tutor pointed to the term “cannot,” explained its connotation and suggested that a term such as “would not” may be more appropriate in the context: *“I liked this part. I didn't know the exact meaning of ‘cannot’. She made this clear.”* Some tutees mentioned not having the knowledge necessary to identify and correct their grammatical errors and so appreciated a more directive approach. In the video of Tutorial 15, the tutor pointed to the word “discriminate” and instructed the tutee to use “discriminate against”. The tutee paused the tape at this instance to say:

I was not English educated, and sometimes, I feel I have some problems in my writing like I don't know the correct way of using a certain word, so... I really appreciated how she told it and explained it to me.

(SR, E15)

During his interview, E6, a tutee with low English proficiency, said that he found his tutor U6 effective because she identified and corrected his errors for him rather than expecting him to correct them on his own. He explained that he did not have the necessary knowledge to make the corrections: *“Because I went high school, I studied only Arabic, just like 2 years I studied English.”*

Although tutees found the directive approach effective for lower order concerns, the information or direction without supplementary explanation was ineffective. During his stimulated recall, E1 paused the tape to point to an instance when his tutor corrected an error without explaining the reasoning behind her correction:

Here, for example, she just corrected the word but she did not give me an idea if it is the correct way to say in English or not. So, I had to ask for that. She did not mention it.

(SR, E1)

Another tutee also complained about his tutor making a suggestion without an explanation. In the video, the tutor tells the tutee to replace the word “divide” with the word “sever” in the phrase “sever the relationship”. In his stimulated recall, he paused the tape to say: *“Okay, 'til now, I don't know what 'sever' means, okay? She just told me add 'sever.' I didn't know what it means. I just wrote it. That's the point. Not good.”* Several tutees acknowledged their preference for information supplemented by explanation. For example, E3 paused the videotape during his tutor's explanation of comma usage to say that he understood her explanation because *“she was excellent in explaining.”* E13 also appreciated her tutor's explanation of using a conjunction to clarify her thesis statement: *“Here she did a great job at explaining to me”* (SR).

Although most tutees preferred a directive approach when dealing with lower order concerns, it was surprising to discover that some tutees, even those with low English proficiency, also complained about this approach, especially if it entailed line-editing or corrections without instruction. In Tutorial 4, the tutor asked the tutee to rewrite his thesis statement, and she provided the tutee with the words to rephrase his sentence. E4 expressed his dissatisfaction with this method by pausing the tape during this section of the tutorial to say:

I believe that the main goal or aim of the Writing Center is to help students be better in writing, try to find their mistakes...without any tutor...and to try to improve their essay by themselves. But here, this is not the thing. She's just... telling me to write down the sentence, and this is not useful. I'm not learning, sorry, anything here. So as I said, here I was feeling happy that I will not think, but I knew...I was not learning.

(SR, E4)

Tutees seem to want their tutors to be authoritative, confident and knowledgeable, but they still want to retain a level of control over the session. In Tutorial 12, the tutor used a directive strategy by pointing to the word “expressions” and recommended that her tutee change it to “words and actions.” It is clear from the video that E12 seemed hesitant to make the change: she was silent, paused for a few seconds before finally scratching out her own word to make the suggested change. E12 said during her stimulated recall that she was not convinced and did not understand the tutor’s reason for this change: *“I didn’t like that she told me to change it. I thought it just made the sentence longer.”* E2, a student with high English proficiency, also reacted negatively when directed by her tutor to change her word “*offspring*” to “*population*.” In the video, the tutor made the suggestion but did not give her tutee a clear explanation for why this change should be made. In the stimulated recall, E2 pointed out that she wasn’t convinced about her tutor’s suggestion:

This part where she keeps saying “decrease the population”... she didn’t notice that I said “offspring” for a reason. I said “offspring” because it is inanimate. Offspring sometimes when you think about it, is not a child, it’s not a baby, it’s something else. And then she said “population” and that was something totally different, so she wasn’t listening at that moment, and when she said “write decrease population,” I ignored her, and I just put decrease, but she didn’t even notice that.

(SR, E2)

It is interesting to note that tutees with higher English proficiency, such as E2 and E12 above, rejected tutors’ suggestions and questioned the tutors’ advice more often than tutees with lower English proficiency. E5, the other tutee who rated her English proficiency as strong and

who was instructed in English in high school, felt confident rejecting her tutor's suggestions as well. Throughout the tutorial, the tutor and tutee had a relatively egalitarian relationship: it was a highly interactive tutorial with both tutor and tutee taking turns leading the tutorial session. The tutor suggested that the tutee combine two of her ideas into one paragraph rather than discuss the ideas in two separate paragraphs. E5 did not challenge her tutor's suggestion during the tutorial, but during the stimulated recall, she paused the tape to tell the researcher she had ignored her tutor's suggestion because "*essay writing is all about opinions.*"

Both sets of data revealed that there were more instances of the lower level NNS students accepting the tutor's advice in instances where they did not completely agree with the recommendations. In Tutorial 6, the tutor recommends that the tutee change the word "religion" in his text to "Islam" to make it more specific. During the stimulated recall, Tutee E6 stated that he did not agree with his tutor's suggestion: "*I not want like to mention the name of the religion. Want to just to write religion, but she told me to write Islam. I write Islam but not completely agree. She know correct.*" Similarly, E4, a student with intermediate proficiency of English, disagreed with his tutor openly during the tutorial when she recommended the word "dictatorship" to describe the parenting style in the Middle East; however, in the end, he accepted her suggestion because she "*knows better*" than him, and he is "*not very good at writing*" (SR, E4).

Both sets of data revealed that most tutees believed a non-directive approach was most effective when addressing higher order concerns such as structure, organization, argument, and coherence. Outlining, an organizational strategy, was mentioned by several tutees as being effective. In Tutorial 2, the tutor told the tutee that she had serious problems with coherence in her essay. The tutor can be seen in the video writing numbers and headings and drawing boxes on a sheet of paper and then asking the tutee to write her idea in each box. Her tutee, E2, paused the tape during this activity to say: "*I may look grumpy, but I am really happy. I liked her method, I said so, and it was making sense and boxes really help.*" E13 also found the outlining strategy helpful. In the video, her tutor asked her to write down the main idea for each paragraph and the sub points under each main idea. She stopped the tape during this activity to comment on how helpful it was: "*She wanted to see how they connect. I was thinking that was a very good idea. I can organize my paragraph.*" E9 felt similarly about the outlining strategy. During their previous tutorial, her tutor had asked her to create an outline to help her organize her ideas. At

the beginning of the tutorial, the tutee can be seen in the video showing the outline to her tutor. During her interview, E9 said:

I was told my organization was wrong... I just wrote the essay without writing an outline first. So then she advised me to write an outline so that would help me out because I wasn't even meeting my word limit...so then I went home...I wrote my outline...it helped me to revise my words and then re-arrange my paragraphs.... It was very helpful.

(I)

Another non-directive strategy that tutees found effective was being asked to write on their own to rephrase a sentence or to add an idea to their writing. During her stimulated recall, E5 said it was “*challenging*” to write on her own in order to rephrase her thesis statement, but thought it was “*was really helpful*” because the tutor was “*making [her] do all the talking and the writing*” rather than “*telling [her] the thesis.*” During her tutorial, E9 was asked by her tutor to rephrase many of her sentences. During her stimulated recall, she said, “*I came up with a new sentence by myself...and she was encouraging.*” During her interview, she elaborated on why this strategy was effective: “*I came up with new sentences that were better and...that was good...so that might make my next essays more consistent.*” E14 also found it challenging to rephrase her sentences on her own but thought this strategy effective: “*She gave me her time to rephrase it myself... not her rephrasing it, in order for me to understand it in the future assignment. It was helpful*” (I).

A non-directive strategy that tutors frequently employed was asking tutees to explain or clarify their ideas orally in order to help them rephrase their sentences. In these instances, tutors can be seen asking their tutees questions such as “*Can you explain what you mean here?*” or “*What is your main idea in this sentence?*” Most tutees responded favorably to this non-directive strategy. E3 paused the tape as his tutor asks him “*What do you mean in this sentence?*” to say that he appreciated this strategy because his tutor could not know his intended meaning without asking him for clarification:

I think this is a good point...because I want she to know what I want to write. Not to suppose that I want to write this, and then I write in here not thinking. I want think. I am

writing the story, but if [the tutor] write another, the meaning will be different. So I like it. I like this...I like it when she asked me what do I mean.

(SR, E3)

One surprising finding was that most of the tutees with lower English proficiency reported satisfaction with non-directive strategies when addressing higher order concerns. In one instance, U1 asks her tutee to create a thesis statement, but he waits with pen in hand for the tutor to provide him with the words to write the thesis. The tutor does not comply and instead gives the tutee a notepad to write the sentence on his own. During the stimulated recall, the tutee said:

I was really comfortable and happy at the same time. She asked me to write something, and then I asked her to do it, and she said, “no you can do it.” I really liked that. I liked the procedure that she was encouraging me to think and work.

(SR, U1)

E10, another tutee with low English proficiency, also found it effective when her tutor asked her to identify and correct her own errors:

That time I felt like I can get my mistake solved, like I can get it without a tutor or something. Like, he is helping me to get my mistakes even if I didn't come to the Writing Center later in another paper, not this paper. So I felt it's better to get some ideas and know how to...pick up your writing problems.

(SR, E10)

Although the non-directive strategies mentioned above were considered effective by most tutees, there were some exceptions with tutees at all proficiency levels. In Tutorial 8, the tutor asked her tutee, a student with moderate English proficiency, to clarify the meaning of her topic sentence and handed her a pad of paper to rephrase the sentence on her own. The tutee paused the tape during this portion of the tutorial to say:

Okay, this part, it was stressful. When I sit at home, I'm relaxed, the words come up. But then, I felt that I looked stupid in front of her. .. When she told me come up with your own sentence, I feel stressed. I cannot come up with the appropriate words. When someone tells me do this, I cannot. I get stressed.

(SR, E8)

In Tutorial 11, E11, a student with low English proficiency, was not being receptive to his tutor's questions as he attempted to engage him in discussion. At the beginning of the tutorial, the tutor asked the tutee to identify the thesis and main ideas in his essay. E11 paused the videotape during this section, and in subsequent sections of the tutorial where his tutor was using non-directive strategies, to say he found these strategies "*stressful*" and "*confusing*." In Tutorial 2, the tutor used a variety of approaches with E2, a student with high English proficiency. E2 said that her tutor was "*unclear*" and reported that she felt "*lost*" when her tutor used a non-directive approach by trying to engage her in a discussion about the logic of her arguments.

It is interesting to note that the three tutees above give drastically different opinions about the non-directive strategies used by their tutors throughout the stimulated recall. Close examination of the data revealed that these tutees' perceptions of non-directive strategies changed as their tutorials progressed. The negative comments appeared at the beginning of their stimulated recall sessions but became progressively more positive towards the end. Their comments about non-directive strategies were also positive during the interviews. For example, when asked about her thoughts on writing independently and rephrasing her sentences towards the end of the tutorial, E8 claimed she "*liked*" the writing strategy and found it made "*everything clear*." The same applies to E11 who reported that he did not like being asked about the problems in his writing. When asked the questioning strategy later in the tutorial, he said:

Over here, when he told me ... "what the wrong here?"... He gave me a chance to try to think about it, to figure out how... to know what my mistake and not to tell me what my mistake, so it's help me.

(SR, E11)

During his interview, he expanded on why he found his tutor's non-directive strategy helpful: *"It's like let me to... figure out what my problem."*

All three tutees were first-time visitors to the Center. It is possible that they were not accustomed to the writing center approach and expected their tutors to act as instructors providing direct instruction and correction. Once they became accustomed to talking about their writing, they can be seen reacting more positively to non-directive strategies in the video, and this is reflected in their comments in their stimulated recall and interviews as well.

A few other exceptions to a preference for non-directive strategies for higher-order concerns were also noted. Tutees who were not familiar with academic conventions of writing preferred direct suggestions and explicit advice for higher order concerns. For example, although E13, a student with moderate English proficiency, was one of the most active tutees, contributing and responding well to non-directive strategies for both higher and lower order concerns, she said she found it very helpful when her tutor gave her a mini-lecture on what to include in a conclusion because she had never been taught how to write a formal conclusion. In the video, the tutor told her that her conclusion is not complete and proceeded to explain what types of information she should include. E13 paused the tape at this instance to say:

I was actually happy that she was doing that. Now I will write my conclusion, and I am sure of it. Because she gave me the explanation of how a conclusion should be...So now I can do a conclusion for any paragraph..... She gave me something new.

(SR, E13)

Both sets of data revealed that all tutees who mentioned their tutors using both non-directive and directive strategies responded positively. Several tutees said that switching approaches when necessary worked well. E6 stated in both his stimulated recall and interview that he appreciated how his tutor asked him to identify and correct his own errors first but then became more directive when it was clear he did not have sufficient knowledge to self-correct. During his stimulated recall, he stopped the tape during a portion of the tutorial when the tutor is asking him to identify the mistake in his sentence, but he is not able to locate the error. The tutor can then be seen providing him with an answer and explanation: *"She told me 'write this,' but not from the first. She made me thinking...."* In his interview, E6 reiterates that he found the

strategy effective: “*She told me read sentence first, then after I finished, then she asked me if that’s right. Find mistake yourself first, then I can’t, she will say it. This is good.*”

E8 and E2 also mentioned that a switch from a non-directive to directive approach worked well because they did not have the necessary knowledge to work independently. In Tutorial 8, the tutor noted that the tutee had not included topic sentences in her paragraphs. She started off by asking her tutee to summarize and write down the main idea for each paragraph, but her tutee responded negatively to this request: she was quiet, sighed audibly numerous times, and was unable to write. At this point, U8 can be seen changing her approach, perhaps because she realized that her tutee was not familiar with the concept of a topic sentence. She explained the function of topic sentences and suggested various methods of phrasing a topic sentence. E8 paused the tape at this point to say:

When she began to give me ideas, I used it to write it on my own. So, I liked this way more than the other one when she asked me to come up with the points. I liked it when she suggested the points that I should write, and I expressed it in my own words. This way I learned topic sentences.

(SR, E8)

Similarly, E2 can be seen having difficulties with rephrasing one of her topic sentences. Her tutor encouraged her to rephrase independently, but E2 was unable to proceed on her own. On the video, she hesitated and was unable to write. Her tutor then offered suggestions on how to begin a topic sentence. She paused the tape as her tutor models a topic sentence to say: “*She gave me advice on how to write it, how to explain more...and that made sense, so it was good.*”

#### **4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 4: WITHIN THE GIVEN NNS CONTEXT, WHICH TYPE OF TUTORING APPROACH (E.G. NON-DIRECTIVE VS. DIRECTIVE) DO TUTORS FIND EFFECTIVE?**

The stimulated recall data revealed that most tutors felt positively about both non-directive and directive strategies; however, there was a stronger preference for non-directive strategies (see Table 16 below). Fourteen tutors mentioned non-directive strategies 72 times:

45 comments were positive, 25 were negative, and two were neutral. Fourteen tutors mentioned directive strategies 50 times: 22 comments were positive, and 15 were negative.

Table 16

*Tutors' Perspective: Tutoring Approach Efficacy*

			Positive		Negative		Positive/Negative		Neutral	
	Number of Participants	Number of Mentions	Mentions	%	Mentions	%	Mentions	%	Mentions	%
Non-directive										
Stimulated Recall	14	72	45	62.50%	25	34.70%	0	0%	2	2.80%
Interviews	12	19	11	57.90%	8	42.10%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Directive										
Stimulated Recall	14	50	22	44.00%	15	30.00%	0	0%	13	26.00%
Interviews	13	22	5	22.70%	17	77.30%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Directive / Non-directive										
Stimulated Recall	2	3	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Interviews	4	5	5	100%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Unclassified										
Stimulated Recall	8	21	12	57.10%	5	23.80%	0	0%	4	19.00%
Interviews	12	26	12	46.20%	3	11.50%	0	0.00%	11	42.30%

The interview data revealed that tutors had misgivings about the directive approach: 13 tutors referred to directive strategies 22 times: 17 comments were negative, and only five were positive (see Table 16 above). The preference for the non-directive approach was apparent in both sets of data.

Most of the tutors who answered the interview question “Which strategies, if any, did you find ineffective?” felt that the directive strategies they used were the least effective. As mentioned in the section *Tutor Self-Assessment*, tutors who assessed their own performance

negatively felt they were being too directive by failing to give their tutees sufficient distance and independence to fix their errors and learn from them. Most tutors felt that a non-directive approach would have been more beneficial. U12 said the “*directive approach just put [her tutee] off*” and that she “*should have been more facilitative because this is someone that clearly would have been very co-operative with [her]*” (I). U9 said she felt she was “*giving her [tutee] too much help with content*” and “*giving her the answers was not successful because she could deal with them herself*” (I). U3 said that “*it would have been better to be facilitative throughout*” and that the directive strategies she used with her tutee “*did not work*” (I).

Tutors were more critical of a directive approach in the interview data than in the stimulated recall session; nevertheless, both sets of data show that different tutors displayed consistency in their preference for directive and non-directive approaches. Tutors favored a directive approach when discussing lower order concerns, particularly in cases where rules were not obvious and a native-like fluency was required. U4 reported that she used the directive approach when correcting her tutee’s prepositions: “*It becomes very difficult to explain to the tutees when to use a certain preposition,...so, you tend to just say ‘it’s just like this,’ and you have to remember it*” (SR). U15 can be seen using the directive strategy frequently when addressing lower order concerns throughout her tutorial. In some of these instances, she corrected her tutee’s expressions by pointing to them, saying they are incorrect and supplying the tutee with the correct answer. For example, she informed her tutee that the expression “discriminate people” should be revised to “discriminate against people.” During her stimulated recall, she paused the tape as she corrected this expression to explain why she took a directive stance:

I just felt that she didn’t know it, that she couldn’t know it, you know? I tried to get her to figure it out, but she was not going to, and when I found out that she was not...., I just gave it to her, because it is something that has to do with fluency, practicing and speaking and listening to a lot of English. People that have English as a second language...these things they don’t really know, so she couldn’t really figure it out. I just gave it to her at the end. It sounded off in a sentence, right? But she wouldn’t pick up on it at all, so I just...things like this are mostly what I use, when I use a directive approach.

(SR, U15)

During her interview, U15 explained that her attempts to use a non-directive approach with lower order concerns turned into a guessing game:

That wasn't very effective when I tried to get her to guess it, like no... "try it again and again." So the guessing was not very effective, so we have to be more directive as opposed to trying to let her guess. Because she does not have the knowledge, she cannot know.

(I, U15)

U6 also felt that her tutee required a more directive approach because he was not responding to her questions. In the video, she asked her tutee to revise an expression that he had translated from Arabic, but he was unable to rephrase it and eliminated the sentence from the text. The tutor said she felt she was at "*a dead end*," and she had to be "*very direct to get him to respond...*" (SR).

Three tutors (U2, U3 and U11) reported using a directive approach when they felt they did not have the time to devote to using a non-directive approach. U3 mentioned telling her tutee the main idea of his paragraph rather than asking him to locate it "*out of a hurry to finish*," but she recognized that she should have "*asked him to say it*." U2 also felt that the non-directive approach would have consumed too much tutorial time:

I remember being less facilitative and being directive because I thought...we're past the point of...wasting time in asking questions: "should there be an 'and' here? Should there be a 'comma' here?" because she had more...pressing problems to deal with, like connecting ideas, and we had very little time.

(SR, U2)

It is worth noting that some tutors mentioned staying away from the directive approach even though they felt such an approach may have been necessary. There were several reasons for this. U9 reported that she was not clear how much content-based information she was supposed to provide her tutee because she did not want to overstep any boundaries. She claimed that she engaged her tutee in a Socratic process of questioning even though her tutee could not

understand what the questions were driving at without “*a bit of direct suggestion*” (SR). U1 also worried about taking over her tutee’s paper with too many direct suggestions. She felt she was being “*too directive*” with her tutee and found herself not helping him with vocabulary because she “*didn’t want to introduce too many new words into his essay*” (SR).

Most tutors favored a non-directive approach, especially when addressing higher order concerns. Tutors asked tutees to clarify and explain unclear ideas orally in order to make them clear. U6 claimed that asking her tutee to clarify his ideas orally was effective:

I like to use the question, “What were you thinking here?” and I find that when students respond to me that way and they tell me, “Ok, I was trying to say this, I was trying to say that,” and they usually give it to me in very clear English, and ... if they just write that down it’s perfect.

(I, U6)

U9 said that asking for clarification was an effective strategy with her tutee. In the video, U4 can be seen turning the tutee’s paper away and asking “*what are you trying to say here?*” During her stimulated recall, she explained why this non-directive strategy was effective:

There are some writers who... have a lot of ideas and they made the connections in their heads, and they know exactly where they’re going, but they don’t write that down on paper. So as a reader, I was really, really confused... But when she explained it to me, I understood: ... “this is where she’s going”... So I just asked her to sort of like make the connections herself and put them down on paper. And...at this point I felt she did understand.

(SR, U2)

Outlining is another non-directive strategy that tutors frequently use to address higher order concerns such as the organization of an assignment. All tutors who used this strategy said it was effective in helping their tutees understand the connections between ideas in their assignments. U9, the tutor who asked her tutee to create an outline of her essay, used it to help her tutee throughout the tutorial. During her stimulated recall, she explained her objective:

Here, I was trying to ask her a question to get her to realize that this relates to this paragraph... The outline I asked her to make was really, really helpful because that was a good tool for me to show her that this point can go in this paragraph, like move B to paragraph one and things like that; so that's what I was hoping she'd understand here.

(SR, U9)

U13 felt the outlining strategy was successful because it clarified the direction of the essay. She said that her tutee was capable but that she needed guidance in organizing her ideas: "*She knew what she was doing and was very clear in what she wanted to say, but I was kind of lost in the beginning, and this helped*" (I). U2 also mentioned the effectiveness of the outlining strategy with her tutee. Her tutee was highly proficient in English but not familiar with the formal academic conventions of essay writing. U2 said she "*decided to take the pen and the paper and actually draw out a chart for her so that it's easier, so she could see her organization.*" She felt this strategy was successful: "*I thought things were getting clearer because of drawing on the paper and...if you notice she's like leaning over, and she's actually holding the pen and she's doing something*" (SR). During her interview U2 explained that this strategy works well because tutees do not like being told what to do: "*I found that if I write it or draw her stuff she wouldn't feel like I'm being...like a professor and telling her what to do and what not.*"

Another non-directive strategy that most tutors found effective was asking their tutees to rephrase a sentence or to express an idea independently. U4 claimed that this strategy was always effective because most people are visual learners:

I always find it helpful to let the tutee write. Like, when he says a sentence, he forms it in his mind and he tries to utter it. But if I give him the notepad to write, like "write what you're thinking," then I think it's much better ...I feel like everyone is a visual learner, so when you look at what you have written, then it's much better than just to form it in your mind and say it in a very abstract way.

(I, U4)

U3 was surprised to find that the writing strategy was effective with her low proficiency tutee:

I guess at that time I had already formed like two or three sentences in my head of how to rephrase it, and yeah, I just wanted to say it. But I guess from his writing it was clear that he wasn't like that poor in English. His writing skills were good; his sentence structure was mostly quite clear and... so I wanted him to, to rephrase it on his own. So I mean, finally in the end I was like, "yes!" because he did rephrase it.

(SR, U3)

Engaging the tutees in a discussion is another non-directive strategy that tutors deemed successful. Two examples of tutors who spoke positively about the discussion strategy are U13 and U9. During her stimulated recall, U13 paused the tape as she and her tutee were discussing the purpose of the essay: "*There is a lot of back and forth. I felt like it was going really well, I felt like we were getting where we needed.*" U9 also said that discussion generated ideas for content:

I'm trying to build on that, to get more ideas going. That kind of worked in the end. She thought of one thing and then, you know, I was trying to open it up to all the other topics that it could be. I was just trying to get to that, that kind of discussion going, because once again, this is about content, like it's important that she contributes to this part.

(SR, U9)

Although most tutors reported finding non-directive strategies with higher-order concerns effective with their tutees, there were some exceptions that are worth noting. Several tutors claimed that a lack of tutee knowledge, regardless of proficiency, was sometimes an obstacle to using a non-directive approach. For example, in the video, U2, a student with high English proficiency, can be seen trying to use non-directive strategies at the beginning of the tutorial to help her tutee with the organization of her ideas, but she changed her approach when she noticed her tutee is not being receptive:

I think directive worked better for [E2's] case, because when I shot her open-ended questions...it didn't really work on her...she became nervous and she became confused, you know? At this level, at least I feel she really does not know exactly where she's

wrong...I feel as a tutor and I could be wrong, that she feels her language is good...and it is good, you know...Her language is a lot better than a lot of the other tutees we have at the Writing Center, but language is not all that you need to communicate. You need structure and organization, which I think she lacks...I don't think she recognizes that problem.

(I, U2)

U8 is another example of a tutor who started off the tutorial session using a non-directive approach with E8, a student with moderate English proficiency. She changed her approach when she noticed her tutee was not responding positively because she lacked sufficient knowledge of academic writing conventions. She described her struggle with asking her tutee to organize her essay by summing up her main ideas and writing them independently:

So you see how long the topic sentence is! It's not even one sentence. It's already two sentences, and you know, in my head, I was just screaming, "Stop, stop, stop writing!" But, I didn't want to stop her, because she was just getting all her ideas out, so I thought OK, "let her do that," and then I would ask her to condense it. But, that did not happen. Plus, she was just so reluctant to write it in the first place that I didn't want to stop her...So it was almost as if she was... I don't know... doing me a favor by writing the topic sentences, you know. That's what I was thinking.

(SR, U8)

It is interesting to note that though both tutors felt the non-directive strategies were not successful at the beginning of the tutorials, they felt more positively about them by the end. Both tutors attributed this change to their tutees' unfamiliarity with the writing center approach. For example, U2 said that the non-directive strategies did not work with her tutee for most of the tutorial. During the interview, she reported that this difficulty with the non-directive approach may have resulted from her tutee's lack of knowledge about the tutorial process: "*I don't think she even came to the Writing Center thinking I would be asking questions...She sort of thought that I would be telling her what to do.*" U2 said that her tutee began to respond more positively to non-directive strategies towards the end of the tutorial:

Initially, she was sort of sensitive. I was new to her, and she was new to the Writing Center concept, and she really didn't know how to react or...what to expect. She didn't even know how to react to criticism, so initially she was defensive,...but then she warmed up and then she became... more comfortable to asking questions and being more interactive too.

(I, U2)

U8 felt similarly about the reason for the ineffectiveness of the non-directive approach. During the interview she said:

I feel that it was one-sided, and I was dominating...But she wasn't exactly a lively participant. And she was just like, "yeah, I have to be here, I'm just being forced to be here so... tell me what to do, I'll do it. You want me to write a topic sentence? Okay I'll do it"...but by the end, she knew what to expect, so I could be more facilitative.

(I, U8)

Both sets of data revealed that all the tutors who used a combination of directive and non-directive strategies found it effective (see Table 16 above). Tutors who believed a combination of approaches worked best said that they often started the session with the goal of using non-directive strategies but changed their approach if they noticed their tutees were not receptive to it. U13 said she found being flexible is most successful for her tutees: "*I try to use a facilitative approach first to get them to learn and to see things themselves, so if it doesn't work then I switch a little bit*" (I).

U11 started off the tutorial with a non-directive approach but changed his approach when he realized it was not effective with his tutee:

It was kind of hard to get him to focus onto what I was trying to say using facilitative approach. I don't think he understood what I was trying to ask him. I think that was my fault because I was being too facilitative. I wanted to get him to think about his writing. And about how he could say it better, but what I found out is he'd just keep on reading,

so I had to move from facilitative into more directive, actually point out where he had his mistakes.

(SR, U11)

U15 said that she tried using a non-directive strategy, questioning, when she noticed that her tutee had a problem with the semi-colon. She asked the tutee to identify the problem with the semicolon, but when it became clear that her tutee did not know how to use a semi-colon, she “*explained it to her,*” and her tutee understood (SR).

Tutors reported that their strategies were most successful when they took into consideration their tutees’ personalities and English proficiency. U6 started off using a non-directive approach but felt that her student’s proficiency was too low to respond to the non-directive strategies she used:

I found that there were a lot of times when he wouldn't really understand my question, and he would nod, but then I kind of understand that he's really lost. So then I would be a little directive and try to tell him, “OK, do this,” and this worked much better.

(I, U6)

U3 said she started off the tutorial using a directive approach because her tutor’s spoken English was difficult to understand, and she assumed that he was a 001 student; however, she switched to a non-directive approach when she noticed that “*his written English was better than his spoken English*”(SR). She goes on to say that this approach suited her tutee much better.

U8 said that she realized fairly quickly during the tutorial that her tutee did not have the kind of personality that suited a facilitative approach:

I tried to use a mix of directive and facilitative strategies because she wasn't the kind of student who was lively enough and was really interested enough to do everything by herself, so I couldn't completely go to a facilitative mode. So...I tried my best to be facilitative, but there were situations where I was directive, saying, “yeah, you should write this,” and “you shouldn't say this, so cut this out.” So I thought a mix between both of them worked best. Because it wasn't like she wasn't saying anything. If I asked her a

question, she did try to respond and, be clear in what she was saying, but it wasn't to the extent that I could just be facilitative, and that was it.

(I, U8)

Similarly, U13 used a non-directive approach because of her tutee's personality and proficiency:

I would advise [tutors] to be facilitators because it is easy to be with E13 because she is going to cooperate, and she has good knowledge, compared to other 001 students to participate in the session, without getting really confused with the questions.

(I, U13)

The findings above are summarized, discussed and analyzed in Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS, SYNTHESIS, AND DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WITHIN THE GIVEN NNS CONTEXT, HOW DO TUTEES PERCEIVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WRITING CENTER TUTORIALS?**

Most tutees in the study found their tutorial sessions effective: they noticed an improvement in their assignments after the tutorial and felt increased confidence in their writing skills as a result. The data revealed that in addition to noticing an improvement in their assignments, tutees claimed that they had acquired skills that could be transferred to future writing tasks and that tutors had addressed their writing concerns. They said that the most useful tutorial moments were those that focused on the mechanics of writing and specific writing strategies that have general application. This is in line with Henning's finding (2001) that transferable knowledge is a feature of successful tutorials. Although tutors often claim that tutees are just interested in improving their grades, the tutees themselves claim they are interested in acquiring skills that will help them to express thoughts and ideas more coherently in the future. These students may recognize that low marks in their discipline-specific courses could be accounted for by inadequate writing skills. Another possibility is that the Writing Center may be seeing a higher than typical proportion of students who are motivated and determined to be successful, and who therefore make the time and the effort to attend the Writing Center. Consequently, they are not just focused on the grade of the paper being examined and feel that learning long-term writing strategies is an important aspect of the tutorial process.

Most tutees who found their tutorials effective said that "feeling comfortable" to speak and ask questions during the tutorial was an important feature of the tutorials' success. This finding seems to be consistent with most writing center scholarship about what constitutes successful writing tutorials with both NS and NNS tutees (Henning, 2001; Thonus, 2002; Weigle & Nelson, 2004). Most tutors in the study made an effort to establish a rapport by introducing themselves, making small talk, smiling, and praising the tutee. In the cases where these qualities were not evident, tutees' perceptions of the tutorials were more likely to be negative. Much of the research with NNS tutees emphasizes the cultural conflicts that may arise when NS tutors are tutoring NNS tutees (Harris, 1997; Schultz, 2010; Wilson, 1998). Tutors and tutees in this study did not indicate that they had any problems understanding one another. As mentioned in Chapter 2, MEU students are multilingual, multicultural, and may have what Canagarajah (2007)

describes as polydialectical competence. Canagarajah contends that people from multilingual societies may have distinct facility for linguistic negotiation because there “is constant interaction between language groups, and they overlap, interpenetrate, and mesh in fascinating ways” (p. 930).

Although the tutees assessed the tutors’ strategies positively during the stimulated recall, a few days later during the interviews, when students attempted to delineate and to comment on the strategies, they were more detached and less involved in the personal aspect. During the interviews, tutees were slightly less positive and more likely to be critical: strategies such as asking the tutee to read aloud, the silence strategy and insisting on reading the whole text before providing feedback were identified as ineffective strategies by several of the tutees. Reading aloud has traditionally been considered best practice because it is believed to engage tutees during the tutorial, allowing them to hear their writing and consequently to pick out their own errors as they read. According to some researchers (Harris & Silva, 1993; William & Severino, 2004), however, reading aloud to discern errors by ear may not be effective with NNS writers because they lack native familiarity with the language and because of the “excessive cognitive load of reading aloud and monitoring at once” (Williams & Severino, 2004. P.167). Interestingly, proficiency does not seem to play a role in tutees’ preference for the reading aloud method in my study; some low-proficiency tutees said they found the strategy effective, while other tutees with high proficiency found it ineffective. This finding supports the need for a more holistic type of tutoring that takes into account the tutees’ circumstances and individual needs. The tutor may want to give the tutee different options for how they should review the essay together, such as having the tutor read aloud or reading the paper together silently. Tutees also felt overwhelmed when their tutors asked them to read their entire assignment or targeted portions before providing feedback. This finding is consistent with Blau and Hall’s (2002) warning that waiting for the tutee to finish reading the assignment aloud is not effective for NNS students. They suggest that the reading aloud technique is more effective when NNS tutees and their tutors stop after reading short sections of the assignment to discuss issues that may have arisen during the reading.

Perhaps decisions about how to read the text should be made with the tutee at the beginning of the tutorial when tutors typically gather information about assignments, ask tutees about their goals for the session, and negotiate an agenda for the session. Tutees responded positively to the idea of taking a part in setting the agenda for their tutorials. This finding is

consistent with research that shows that negotiating an agenda with the tutee is a feature of successful tutorials (Blau et al., 2001; Henning, 2001; Thonus, 2002; Wilson, 1998). Morrison and Nadeau (2004) come to a similar conclusion that asking tutees about the assignment and negotiating the agenda is a way to help students have more realistic goals about the session and more confidence in their tutors.

Another unexpected finding was that tutees find silence stressful. In the tutorials, there are many instances where tutors attempt to elicit the tutee's own knowledge through strategies such as silence and wait time, which are promoted in standard training manuals (Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2006). Some writing center professionals have recommended using silence for NNS students because each phrase the tutor utters must be decoded and an "avalanche of words can overwhelm the students" (Berry, 1999, p.6; Linville, 2009). Interestingly, however, this study shows the silence strategy to be a hindrance rather than an aid to communication for tutees at all levels of English. Moments of silence which are intended to promote calm reflection and insight are reported to create feelings of unease and annoyance among tutees at all levels of proficiency. This important strategy, which is stressed during in-service tutor training in North American contexts, does not have the effect that it is assumed to have in the literature. Students in the Middle Eastern culture may be governed by cultural assumptions about the interaction with their tutors that differ from those in other cultures. As mentioned in Chapter 2, some research has shown that students from Arab societies may not want to take initiative or risks in learning situations because they fear failure and shame (Martin, 2006). The tutor's strategy of allowing the tutee ample time to initiate discussion or respond to questions may have caused tutees anxiety and discomfort, and until there is further study on the issue, the silence strategy, for instance, should be used with caution.

The strategy of code-switching was only used by tutors twice throughout the tutorials, but tutees responded positively both times. Tutors discuss code-switching as a potential strategy in their peer tutoring training class. Ronesi (2009), a faculty member at MEU who teaches the peer tutoring course, describes her students' divided attitudes about code-switching: "While everyone agrees that English should be used primarily, students are often split as to whether breaking into native tongue to explain an abstract idea or clarify some vocabulary constitutes good practice" (p.90). Informal conversations with tutors, however, reveal that they are reluctant to use this strategy because during their elementary and high school years they were discouraged from

using their native tongue in the classroom. Their own experiences have established models they feel they should follow: out of the 15 tutorials, it is only used twice, even in cases where it would have facilitated communication. Code-switching has been suggested by some as a possible method to assist NNS students in the writing center (Williams and Severino, 2004), but there is a dearth of literature addressing the subject. The results of this study show that tutors are sometimes faced with situations where they have to relate the rhetorical conventions of English to the tutee and find it difficult to do so in a second language.

In addition to assessing the tutor's strategies, tutees assessed the overall effectiveness of their tutors. They responded well to tutors who inspired confidence and were able to explain concepts with clarity, accuracy, and precision. Although tutees respected and appreciated the authority of knowledgeable tutors, they valued an egalitarian peer tutoring relationship. Standard writing center pedagogy advocates a peer relationship between tutors and tutees rather than a teacher-student relationship (Bishop, 1993; Bruffee, 1984, 1993; Hobson, 2001), and most training guides suggest that tutors view their tutees as peers and treat them accordingly (Gillespie & Lerner, 2000; Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2006 ). However, recent literature has criticized this approach and has shown that tutees are as likely to perceive success with a tutor in an authoritative role as they are with a tutor in a non-authoritative role (Blau & Hall, 2002; Henning, 2001; Thonus, 2001, 2002, 2004; Weigle & Nelson, 2004; Williams, 2004, 2005). This perception is particularly true for NNS tutees who may need more guidance during tutorials and for whom a peer tutor-tutee relationship may be ineffective and inappropriate (Blau & Hall, 2002; Harris & Silva, 1993; Thonus, 2001, 2004; Williams, 2004, 2005). Recent research conducted by Thonus and others (Ritter, 2002; Thonus, 1999, 2001, 2004) demonstrates that NNS tutees prefer a more authoritative tutor. One of the significant findings in Thonus's work is NNS students' "unshakeable belief in the authority of the writing tutor" (2004, p. 236). She claims that "no amount of appeal" to the non-directive, collaborative approach to writing "can pry them away" from their preference, "putting their view at odds with mainstream writing center philosophy" (p. 236).

The results of this study are not entirely in line with research that shows NNS tutees expect and prefer an authoritative tutor. Although the tutees seem to appreciate authoritative direction if tutors are knowledgeable and reliable, they also appreciate a congenial, egalitarian atmosphere. Other researchers have shown that hierarchical systems are not always the most

successful in second language tutorials: Weigle and Nelson (2004) have observed that NNS writers and peer tutors operating outside of the writing center setting were able to negotiate a variety of relationships, from hierarchical to egalitarian. Tutees in this study preferred tutors who were able to play a variety of roles, from peer to authority. Elements of the tutorial such as individual preferences, personality factors, student expectations, familiarity with the writing center approach, and language proficiency influenced the roles that tutors assumed in this study. Most tutees in this study, however, appreciated that their tutors were not “instructor-like,” which is consistent with Vygotsky’s (1978) suggestion of working within the ZPD to help the student reach his or her level of potential development in collaboration with a “more capable peer.” It is also in line with Williams’s (2005) distinction between true peers and writing center peers: writing centers tutors are more experienced peers because they have expertise and authority as well as “commonality of experience with the writers” (p. 60). Tutees appear to want authoritative knowledge in a friendly, egalitarian atmosphere.

The discrepancy between research with NNS tutees in North America and the findings in this study may be attributable to demographics and context. As shown in Chapter 3, the tutors in the study have a high level of proficiency in English; they are multilingual, and like the tutees, they come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Most of the tutors have lived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for many years, so they are familiar with a multitude of intersecting cultures such as Arabic, Indian, Pakistani, Iranian, and African that are found in the UAE. Canagarajah (2007) observes that populations from multilingual societies may have a better facility for communicating successfully with speakers of other languages. In North American university writing centers, tutors are mainly American, and tutees are mainly non-American. Tutors in this Middle Eastern context share the experience their tutees have of learning and functioning in English, a globally dominant language, which represents the hegemonic influence of the West. They also share the experience of speaking several languages, but they lack the English language proficiency of native speakers of English.

Tutors were assessed negatively in tutorials that had the longest diagnosis phases. The structure of the writing center tutorial typically follows three phases: diagnoses, directive and report (Agar, 1995 as cited in Williams, 2005). In her research, Williams (2005) noticed that the diagnosis phase in NNS tutorials tended to be longer compared to NS tutorials. Tutors and tutees in this study who experienced long diagnosis phases compared to other tutorials in the study

assessed these parts of the tutorial negatively; however during the interviews both tutors and tutees considered these tutorials effective. The tutor and tutee were visibly frustrated in Tutorial 1 and made disparaging comments about the session during the stimulated recall. A few days later, after having time to reflect on the session, both tutor and tutee changed their impressions of the diagnosis phase of the session when discussing it in their interviews and the tutee assessed his tutor positively. It is interesting to speculate on the discrepancy between the two sets of data. It may be attributable to the difference in research methods used to elicit responses. The stimulated recall data was collected immediately after the tutorial; the interview data was collected within 72 hours of the tutorial. The stimulated recall elicited an immediate instinctual response that focused on, and was directly related to, the teaching/learning experience of the tutorial. The interview elicited a more reflective critical response. Writing can be a very difficult process; it is increasingly so in the presence of a tutor who has been trained to help you by analyzing the process and noticing weaknesses. It is reasonable to assume that time and distance enabled the tutees to view this frustrating process from another perspective. Thoughtful consideration may have allowed tutors and tutees to recognize the necessity for a long diagnosis phase in their tutorials. Blau et al. (2001) discuss the difficulty tutors in their study experienced with deciphering the assignment of NNS tutees. The tutors tried to elicit as much information as they could from their tutees but still failed to understand the assignment. They explain that NNS tutees have a more difficult time explaining the requirements of the assignment to their tutors partly because they do not have the language necessary to explain and “because they often only have a vague idea what the parameters are of the assignment” (p. 2).

Disagreement in the diagnosis also contributed to a negative assessment of tutors. As mentioned in Chapter 4, E4 assessed his tutor negatively when she dismissed his concerns at the beginning of the tutorial and insisted that they focus on the structure of the assignment rather than the conclusion and the documentation, which were the tutee’s main concerns. Though the tutor did diagnose the assignment problem correctly, she did not make an effort to explain her reasoning to the tutee or negotiate with him, which left him unsatisfied. Tutors in the study were occasionally directive without providing explanations or rationalizations to their tutees, which resulted in tutees’ negative perceptions of their tutors. Tutees appreciated when their tutors provided clear explanations with their directions. They reacted negatively to contradictory or unclear information. The videotaped tutorials indicated the tutors did not always have sufficient

knowledge to address tutees' concerns, a problem which will be discussed in detail based on the tutors' responses in the discussion of Research Question 2.

Information and directions from the tutor that differed from those of the course instructor led to negative tutor assessment. Tutees wanted information from tutors that was in line with that of their instructors. In many cases, tutors were not able to clarify because they did not have immediate access to the instructor or the details of the assignments. Although U15 disagreed with her tutee's course instructor, she recognized that the course instructor's advice was "a red line" that she could not cross. However, the student may have misunderstood the instruction, and instead of avoiding the issue, the tutor could have asked the student to confirm the information with the course instructor or she could have asked the director to communicate with the instructor for clarification. Better communication with course instructors may be helpful to tutors and tutees. Perhaps if tutors were familiar with the course instructors' expectations and evaluation criteria for specific assignments, they would be better equipped to handle tutees who have not understood their assignments.

## **5.2 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 2: WITHIN THE GIVEN NNS CONTEXT, HOW DO TUTORS PERCEIVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WRITING CENTER TUTORIALS?**

Most tutors found the tutorial sessions effective and believed that tutorial sessions improved their tutees' assignments. Like the tutees, tutors identified the acquisition of transferable skills as one of the most important features of successful tutorials. Effective tutorials were also characterized by interactive discussion and a rapport between the tutors and tutees. This finding is similar to findings in other studies (Henning, 2001; Thonus, 2002, Thompson et al., 2009). Tutors who considered their tutorials ineffective explained that their tutees were inactive participants who expected their tutors to do all the work during the tutorial. Though tutors often assumed the initiative in tutorials, they wanted their tutees to take an active role and to engage in the discussion. When tutees were responsive to the tutors, it was easier for tutors to gauge the success of their strategies and to decide whether to build on them or to switch strategies. The comments from the stimulated recall sessions revealed that the thought processes of tutors as they are tutoring is a complex and nuanced decision-making process that takes into account the tutees' emotional responses, their body language, and their apparent ability to apply

the skills they have acquired. Indifferent or apathetic responses, whether verbal or non-verbal, led the tutors to report that they doubted the effectiveness of the tutorial. Many tutees may be visiting the Writing Center seeking a shortcut to satisfactory completion of their assignments; nevertheless, it is worth considering that peer tutors are peers and may not be aware of other strategies to engage a seemingly resistant writing center client.

Tutors claimed that repeat visits by their tutees contributed to a general improvement in their writing. This value of repeated visits is supported by Carino and Ender's study (2001). They conclude that though tutees' levels of satisfaction are not influenced by regular writing center attendance, repeat visits do increase the tutees' levels of confidence and their perceptions that their writing has improved. Repeat visits with the same tutor were perceived as beneficial because the established rapport with the tutee enabled the tutors to focus on the tutees' specific concerns and use their time more efficiently. Studies have demonstrated that "repeat tutorials can build on acquaintanceship" (Thonus, 2008). Weigle and Nelson (2004) point out the benefits of the same tutor-tutee pairs working together over an extended period of time: the tutor-tutee pairs in their study developed a relationship over a ten-week period, and tutors noted that the familiarity was helpful because it allowed them to better "read" their tutees (p. 221). However, Thonus's 2002 study does not support repeat tutorials: two of the most successful tutorials in her study were first time tutorial encounters between the tutor and tutee, while one of the unsuccessful tutorials was a repeat encounter between the tutor and tutee.

Tutees and tutors agreed that establishing goals and discussing the assignment are important features of successful tutorials. Most tutors asked questions about the assignment and tried to establish the goals of the session, but when they failed to do so, problems arose: U6 realized only at the end of the tutorial that she should have been less directive because her tutee was not enrolled in the beginner-level writing course as she had assumed. She was very directive with her tutee, stopping at every line to make corrections that he was capable of making independently. Writing center researchers and practitioners (Blau et al., 2001; Hennings, 2001; Mosher, Granroth, & Hicks, 2000; Thonus, 2002) have emphasized the importance of asking questions at the beginning of a session to determine the students' academic level and their needs, for both NS and NNS tutees.

Although tutors felt confident about the strategies they had used, opinions about the value of the tutees reading their assignments aloud divide almost equally between those who found it

beneficial and those who did not. Indeed, perception of this might depend on the tutor's first language or their experience with reading aloud in their early schooling. This issue could justify further research. Several tutors admitted they had difficulty following along or understanding their tutees' ideas when their tutees read aloud. It is worth noting that some tutor/tutee pairs had drastically different perceptions of the tutee reading aloud strategy. Although the tutors perceived that the reading aloud session was working well, the tutees in these pairs were uncomfortable with this strategy and felt there were more effective methods of examining the paper. Reading aloud does not accommodate all learning styles. Lexical and syntactic confusion may be more apparent while a tutee is reading aloud, and possibly being inhibited by pronunciation, than by the tutee reading silently.

Tutors generally found the sessions to be effective; nevertheless, they were critical about their own performances. Some tutors admitted to lacking the knowledge necessary to explain certain writing or grammatical concepts. This finding was perhaps the most disturbing. Although the tutors have been trained in peer tutoring strategies in a semester long course, some do not have the requisite linguistic knowledge to function efficiently as "expert peers," (Williams, 2005, p.60). As mentioned in Chapter 2, researchers make the distinction between expert peers and true peers: true peers are equals who have similar backgrounds, status, and knowledge whereas "expert peers" have some expertise and authority. Williams (2005) argues that this expertise as well as commonality of experience makes them potentially more beneficial to student writers. Myers (2003) notes that tutors "should ...be equipped with much better knowledge of the pedagogical grammar of English as a second/foreign language" in order to help NNS students. Implicit in the assertions of both Williams (2005) and Myers is the assumption that training is a necessary condition for effective tutorial sessions, but it is not a sufficient condition.

It seems reasonable to assume that our tutors would be more familiar with lexical and syntactic conventions of English because they are multilingual; however, most were educated in schools where English was the language of instruction, and their tacit way of knowing the English language does not give them the requisite knowledge required to identify and to explain lexical and syntactic confusion. It is interesting to note that the two tutors who did not rate themselves as proficient in English as other the tutors were indeed more capable of providing explanations of grammatical rules. Unlike the group of tutors who were educated in elementary and high schools where English was the language of instruction, these tutors attended elementary

schools where Arabic and Urdu were languages of instruction. They were required to take English courses where the rules of grammar were taught explicitly. Tutors who were educated in institutions where the language of instruction was English may not have the explicit knowledge about language required to help their tutees: their comparative level of fluency in English, their desire to appear knowledgeable and their confidence in their training may prevent them from acknowledging areas of weakness as compared to tutors who have had explicit grammar instruction.

Some tutors were critical of their own dominance in conversation and their uninterrupted talking time. They felt this may have been an obstacle to tutees' understanding of explanations. The videotaped tutorials reflect the accuracy of their perceptions. There are many cases, for example Tutorials 4 and 7, where the tutors delivered mini-lectures lasting more than 20 seconds with tutees merely back channeling. Features of interactional dominance such as longer turn length have been found in much of the writing center scholarship (Ritter, 2002; Thonus, 1999, 2001, 2004; Williams 2004, 2005). On average, tutors tend to talk 50% more than tutees, and with NNS students, the talk time is even longer and more frequent (Thonus, 2004). Though the mini-lectures did offer helpful information, it is clear in the videotaped sessions that the tutees stopped listening and were not able to later apply this knowledge when asked to do so by the tutor. It is interesting that in most instances, the tutors noted that their instructor-like approach was not working and switched to a more interactive approach where they paused and asked tutees questions. In a few instances, however, tutors did not comment critically on their longer turn length. U7 for example, spent much of the tutorial delivering long uninterrupted speeches with her tutee, but she felt comfortable in this instructor-like role. Just as in studies conducted with tutor-tutee relationship in North-American contexts, there was "considerable variation across tutors, with some more comfortable in an authoritative role and others gravitating toward a peer-relationship" (Williams, 2005).

Some tutors expressed reservations about using directive strategies in some instances, but unlike tutors in North America (Blau & Hall, 2002) tutors in this study did not feel guilty about rejecting the non-directive approach in favor of a more directive approach. The videotaped tutorials reveal that most tutors in this study employed directive strategies frequently, as much as, if not more than non-directive strategies. Tutors justified their choice of approach by explaining that tutees' proficiency was low and they were not capable of self-correcting.

Although there were many instances when tutors used directive strategies successfully, such as in Tutorial 3 or 15 where it was clear from the videotaped tutorials that tutees were not familiar with colon use (U3) or idiomatic expressions (U15), there were many other instances where tutors overused directive approaches when non-directive approaches would have been more effective.

Many of the tutors who had misgivings about their performance said they were too directive or too forceful with their recommendations when discussing higher-order concerns. As in Thonus's study (2001), the tutors in this study used the term directive to mean "offering too much assistance." They were concerned about text appropriation. The stimulated recall revealed that they often felt they were exerting too much control over their tutees' writing and were often unsure how far to intervene. Severino (2009) points out that it is often difficult for tutors, teachers or researchers to identify appropriation. She claims that the only way to determine when appropriation has taken place is if "the writer thinks and feels at the gut level that it has" (p. 56). Unfortunately, there were many instances when tutees expressed discomfort with the degree to which their tutors altered their texts, and they claimed they did not understand the rationale for these changes. In some cases, tutors did not sense their tutees' unease, but in others, they were very critical of their performance; for instance, U8 wondered whether she may have led her tutee to "*do something she might not have wanted to do by herself*" (SR). Severino mentions that it is a mistake to consider every tutor suggestion and direction as an act of appropriation. There is a discrepancy between U8's assessment of her tutorial and what was observed on the videotape, which shows that her interventions were helpful. She provided clear explanations for the changes she recommended and allowed her tutee agency by asking for her input throughout the session.

### **5.3 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 3: WITHIN THE NNS CONTEXT, WHICH TYPE OF TUTORING APPROACH DO TUTEES FIND MORE EFFECTIVE: NON-DIRECTIVE OR DIRECTIVE?**

Most tutees felt positively about both non-directive and directive strategies. Tutees did not have a strong overall preference for either approach; nevertheless, patterns emerged that reveal tutees find each approach effective for specific concerns and in particular contexts. Tutees favored a directive approach when discussing lower order concerns. They reported that they appreciated specific direction when their tutors addressed issues such as verb tenses, punctuation,

and word choice because they did not have the level of proficiency in English necessary to know how to self-correct. This report is consistent with findings with NNS tutees in North American contexts (Blau & Hall, 2002, Harris, 1997; Myers, 2003; Thonus, 1999, 2001; Williams, 2004) who point out that NNS tutees may indeed require the directive approach of an informed tutor. Mastery of lower order concerns is critical to both reading and writing texts, and while NS learners often have some operative understanding of these functions, NNS learners must learn these elements before proceeding to fuller text comprehension (Williams & Severino, 2004). Williams (2004) observes that deciding on whether to use a directive or non-directive approach is “not a yes/no question. There is much that no amount of questioning, indirect or otherwise, could ever elicit from [NNS] writers because there is so much that they simply do not understand about their L2 and academic writing” (p. 195). Williams presents data from her study in which tutors attempted to use non-directive strategies with their NNS tutees, and these interactions resulted in “almost absurdly circuitous interactions, in which the writer engaged in a sort of guessing game” (p. 195). In Tutorial 15, U15 said she attempted to elicit the correct answer from her tutee, but that it led to “a guessing game,” so she decided to switch to a directive approach. Her tutee said that she appreciated the more directive approach because she had been educated in a school that did not use English as the language of instruction, and therefore was not familiar with idiomatic expressions or nuanced meanings.

Drawing on Shamon and Burns’s research (1995), Myers (2003) claims that there can be value in a directive approach, including traditional rhetorical strategies such as modeling and imitation. In the videotapes, tutors can be seen employing these types of traditional directive strategies: explaining rules relating to the particular errors while correcting them, illustrating how errors can be avoided and fixed in other writing contexts, and modeling different ways of writing sentences. Tutees were particularly responsive to situations when the tutor used examples to illustrate their errors. When discussing comma usage, for instance, U3 not only mentioned the grammatical rule for comma placement, she wrote a sentence on a notepad and explained where one would place the punctuation. She then asked the tutee to address the comma issue in his writing, and he was able to identify the position of the misplaced comma. The tutee identified this strategy as effective, thereby illustrating Myer’s (2003) claim that “showing is better than telling” (p. 66).

Tutees at all levels of English proficiency complained about the directive approach when it entailed only line-editing or corrections without instruction or explanation. Tutees frequently requested additional explanations so that they could understand where they had erred and how they could improve. In North American contexts, tutees who are not native speakers may require more rules, explanations, and illustrations than NS students to make sense of the language (Williams & Severino, 2004). Perhaps our tutees, who are predominantly NNS, require a similar style of instruction.

Tutees generally preferred a non-directive approach for higher order concerns such as structure, organization, argument, and coherence. Non-directive strategies, such as negotiating an agenda, asking questions about the assignment, asking tutees for clarification on their intended meaning, outlining with tutees, and asking them to write independently were deemed effective by most of the tutees, even those with low English proficiency. This result is surprising in one respect: most of our writing center clientele have experienced Arabic style schooling, which focuses on traditional, authoritative styles of teaching. As discussed in Chapter 2, most Arabic schools in the Middle East follow a teacher-centered curriculum dominated by methods such as memorizing lists, following orders and establishing disputed points by reference to authority (Martin, 2006, Richardson, 2004). Discovery and critical thinking, important elements in the non-directive approach, are not generally encouraged. Although our tutees have been accustomed to directive approaches, they seem to respond well to non-directive approaches and to the possibility of gaining a higher level of agency and responsibility. They adapted to the writing center approach and seemed to appreciate being able to ask questions and participate in discussions about their writing. As mentioned in Chapter 4, tutees who were first time users of the Writing Center were reluctant to participate in the tutorials actively, but as the tutorial sessions progressed, they became more adept at handling the tutor's non-directive methods and even realized the value of these techniques. It is interesting that the non-directive strategies of asking for clarification, outlining, and writing independently are strategies that are also considered effective with NS writers. While insufficient grammatical knowledge prevented some tutors from providing their tutees with complete information, tutees found their tutorials effective and claimed that they learned many essential writing skills through engaging in collaborative activities with their tutors.

Studies conducted with NNS tutees in North American contexts (Blau & Hall, 2002; Harris, 1997; Thonus, 2001, 2004) indicate that tutees perceive their tutors as representatives of the academic institution, and that they prefer directive approaches. Tutors in the Middle Eastern context are students themselves who share common ground with their tutees, and they prefer non-directive approaches. They are peer tutors, and, like their tutees, they are studying in a Middle Eastern university where the language of instruction is English, and the instructors are European or American. The pre-secondary education of many of these students has been in English, and they have had experiences interacting with people from many cultures. Ronesi has observed that they are “multicultural and multilingual, and often multidialectal” (2009, p, 77). Perhaps they respond well to non-directive approaches because they are more adaptable, having had years to develop high levels of what Byram (1997) describes as “intercultural communicative competence and intercultural awareness.” Although these tutors and tutees come from families, educational institutions and societies that are largely hierarchical and patriarchal, they respond well to the egalitarian nature of peer tutoring relationships. Not only do they have a tacit understanding of each other, they appreciate the opportunity to engage in discussions about their writing where they are able to generate insights and ideas rather than to receive them. Their ability to “decentre” and understand how messages will be perceived in another cultural context (p. 3) has been tested in ways that may not be characteristic of many NNS students in the US. A tutorial session typically includes male and female tutors and tutees with various nationalities and ethnicities; for instance, an Iranian tutor could be working with an Indian tutee, an Afghani tutor with a Sudanese tutee, or a Syrian tutor and a Lebanese tutee.

All tutees responded positively to their tutors using a combination of directive and non-directive strategies. Tutees accepted when tutors assumed more authoritative roles as language informants, but they also enjoyed having a role in the discussion of their writing. Much of the writing center scholarship discussing NNS writers recommends more flexible tutoring models than those used with NS writers (Blau & Hall, 2002; Thonus, 2001, 2002, 2004; Williams, 2004, 2005; Williams & Severino, 2004).

#### **5.4 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 4: WITHIN THE NNS CONTEXT, WHICH TYPE OF TUTORING APPROACH DO TUTORS FIND MORE EFFECTIVE: NON-DIRECTIVE OR DIRECTIVE?**

Tutors found non-directive strategies to be useful for higher order concerns; they found directive strategies effective for lower order concerns, particularly when rules were not obvious. Occasionally tutees lacked sufficient knowledge to respond to a non-directive approach. It is interesting to note that many tutor/tutee pairs commented on the same instances when discussing the effectiveness of the directive approach. For example, U15 and E15 both commented favorably on the tutor's use of the directive approach when explaining the error in "*discriminate people*." The tutee said that she was not familiar with the expression "*discriminate against*" and appreciated her tutor's explanation. The tutor said she felt that a directive move such as identifying the error and correcting it for her tutee was appropriate and effective in this situation. These findings are consistent with studies in North American contexts (Blau & Hall, 2002; Thonus, 2001, 2004; Weigle & Nelson, 2004; Williams 2004, 2005). Blau & Hall (2002) suggest "a rethinking of conventional tutoring strategies" (p. 29) for NNS tutees and suggest that tutors should feel comfortable using a directive approach when addressing lower order concerns and line editing with students. Weigle and Nelson (2004) maintain that more language support is needed for students who are struggling with low proficiency and a tutor who can provide answers to language questions may be necessary.

Tutors reported using a directive approach when they felt there was not sufficient time to deal with all the issues in a tutorial. It was noted in videotaped tutorials that this expedient use of the directive approach was not accompanied by justification or explanations. Most tutors recognized that this type of instruction did not result in learning gains for their tutees. U3 explained that she became more directive at the end "*out of a hurry to finish*" (U3, SR), but she said that her tutee had not acquired any transferable skills.

Another issue recognized by the tutors and related to ethical concerns is the possible appropriation of tutee texts. Tutors expressed concern about whether they were overstepping boundaries and supplying their tutees with too much information when they used a directive approach to address higher order concerns. Though the directive approach can provide tutees with relevant information, it can compromise tutees' agency. These instances of compromised agency can be seen primarily in situations where tutors suggested modifications without

explanation. Changing the text without accompanying feedback can take agency away from tutees and lead to negative appropriation (Severino, 2009). It is especially problematic in this context because tutees with a low to mid-level English proficiency followed their tutors' advice unwaveringly, even when they were skeptical about the recommendations. Challenges and rejections are rare in all tutorial situations, and they are even less common with NNS learners (Williams, 2005).

The tutors' concern about text appropriation is reasonable. Some faculty members assume that the writing center can lead to inappropriate levels of editing or rewriting, a concern that has also been noted in the literature (Bringhurst, 2006; Clark, 1988; Clark & Healy, 1996; Cogie et al., 1999). Ethical dilemmas about whether or not to intervene directly or how much to intervene are complex. However, as these researchers and others have observed, a non-directive approach with struggling writers can present another ethical dilemma. Bringhurst (2006) and Clark and Healy (1996) argue that while the constructivist methodology of collaboration has been accepted as the "ethical" approach to writing center pedagogy, in fact, the question is still open as to whether non-directive instruction is truly serving all writing center students. Until students are equipped with enough knowledge to be able to ask meaningful questions and make connections to take ownership of their writing, it is difficult for them to serve as real peers in the tutorial process; they are not in a position to direct their own learning. Tutors may have to provide the knowledge-based guidance they require in order for the tutees to gain new skills.

The non-directive approach is less controversial than the directive approach and more amenable to the establishment of best practices, which can serve as a guide for tutors and tutees. Blau and Hall (2002) observed the guilt and frustration the tutors in their study experienced when trying to employ directive methods of tutoring with NNS students. Thonus (1999) claims, "the realities of the writing center create a clash with tutor training philosophies and create a cognitive dissonance for tutors" (p. 227) as they try to resolve these opposing tutor roles.

Tutors favored a non-directive approach when addressing higher order concerns. They reported that non-directive strategies such as asking tutees for clarification, outlining, mapping, and asking their tutees to write independently were more effective for addressing issues such as unity and coherence of essay assignments. Tutors found that their tutees were most animated and receptive when they were engaged in activities which contributed to the writing process. As mentioned earlier, this finding does not correspond with studies that have been conducted in

North American contexts, and it is surprising when considering that most students who participated in the study have been through more traditional Arabic style schooling.

Although most tutors favored a non-directive approach for higher order concerns, several explained that this approach was unsuccessful when tutees did not have sufficient knowledge of academic writing conventions or when they were first time users of the Writing Center. In Tutorial 2, the tutor began the tutorial with a non-directive approach because her tutee was bilingual; however, she soon realized that her tutee was unfamiliar with the rhetorical conventions of academic writing and required direct instruction in essay unity, formal academic language, and logical fallacies. Shamon and Burns (1995) argue that though writing center practice favors a non-directive approach, a directive approach can be more effective because it models discourse for students who are unfamiliar with a knowledge community and “unmasks the system of argumentation at work within a discipline” (p. 237).

Tutorial 8 is another instance where a non-directive approach was ineffective with higher order concerns. The tutor’s strategy of questioning was unsuccessful because her tutee, a first time user of the Center, was unresponsive to the questioning. The tutor recognized her tutee’s discomfort and changed her approach. As the tutee became more relaxed, the tutor reintroduced some of the non-directive strategies towards the end of the tutorial, and the tutee’s perception of the non-directive approach became more positive. By the end of the tutorial, both tutor and tutee commented that many of the non-directive strategies that were ineffective at the beginning of the tutorial were effective towards the end. As Cogie (2001) says, “fostering student authority is not a matter of following a single approach and avoiding another” (p. 47). Tutors should use their discretion, honed by experience, to determine the appropriate approach for each tutee, each assignment and during each phase of the tutorial.

Blau and Hall (2002) caution against treating all NNS students in the same way and advise tutors to consider students’ individual differences by assessing each situation as it arises. Carino (2003) advises tutors to consider each individual tutee’s needs as they arise during tutorials by anticipating when to focus on global issues such as content, when to pay closer to attention to lower order concerns such as grammar, or when to spend time on both. He argues that tutors need to prepare to deal with both “interpersonal and intertextual” features of tutorials and advises tutors to avoid “all-too tempting sort of rules of thumb” that can lead to “prescriptive dictums that can unintentionally cement a strained social relationship between tutor and tutee”

(p. 113). Shamoon and Burns (1995) maintain that tutors should not adhere to a sole single approach but rather should include directive and non-directive tutoring in their tutoring repertoires that will lead to “stronger connections between the writing center and writers in other disciplines, and increased attention to the cognitive, social, and rhetorical needs of writers at all stages of development” (p. 239). It is not surprising then that tutorials deemed most successful by tutors and tutees were those in which tutors were most self-reflective and self-critical during their stimulated recall and interviews. They demonstrated an ability to take into account tutees’ level of ability, their personalities, and their responses to different choices and decisions. These tutors were attuned to the changing needs and levels of confidence of their tutees and navigated between the directive and non-directive approaches as they interacted with their tutees.

As a number of researchers have argued (Bringhurst, 2006; Corbett, 2008; Jones et al., 2006; Lefort, 2010; Thonus, 2004; Williams, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004), it is incumbent upon writing centers to continue to challenge the orthodoxy of dominant theory and to keep asking themselves, “how can we serve writing students better?” The results of this study indicate the dynamic nature of writing center research and the need to be wary of fixed theories and categories that are not responsive to the changing needs of tutors and tutees. This study reveals the importance of recognizing the differences not only between NNS tutees here and NNS tutees in North American contexts but also among different populations of NNS tutees within our writing center to better meet the individual tutee’s particular needs. Thonus (2001) suggests that qualitative research efforts should focus on “what the practice of tutoring *is* rather than what [it] *should be*.”

The implications of the study’s findings are discussed in Chapter 6.

## CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

### 6.1 CONCLUSION

This study is an exploration of the ways in which instruction is conducted in a writing center based in the Middle East by observing the use of various non-directive and directive strategies and by considering the perceptions of the effectiveness of the tutorial sessions by the tutors and their tutees. Very little research is currently available on English language writing center practice in the Middle East. Most training manuals which advocate a non-directive, collaborative approach to tutoring are written for a North American audience (Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2006), and most studies on NNS writers in writing centers are conducted in North American contexts. Given the very different context of English language writing centers in the Middle East, it is worth questioning whether all of the strategies espoused in North American writing center orthodoxy apply seamlessly in this very different context. They may not be the most effective ways to address the particular local challenges experienced by tutees who are working to develop their English writing skills and by the tutors who are trying to assist them.

The findings revealed that tutees noticed an improvement in their assignments. They reported that their tutors addressed their concerns and that they had acquired transferable skills. Tutees appreciated and responded well to tutors who were able to explain concepts with clarity, accuracy and precision, but they were unsatisfied with tutors who dominated the session and with those who did not provide explanations for changes or corrections. They appreciated the authority of knowledgeable tutors, but they valued an egalitarian peer tutoring relationship.

Tutors also claimed that the tutorials were effective. They reported that the sessions improved their tutees' assignments and that they believed that the tutees had acquired transferable skills. Nevertheless, tutors were critical about their own performances. Some tutors admitted that their knowledge and understanding of certain writing concepts was insufficient; some felt they had dominated the tutorials, and others felt their approach was too directive. The data revealed that both tutors and tutees generally preferred a directive approach for lower order concerns and a non-directive approach for higher order concerns.

Though many of the findings of this study are similar to findings with NNS students in North American contexts, there are some differences. NNS tutees at all levels of proficiency in this study enjoyed the peer-like aspects of the relationship with their tutors. They appreciated

having a sense of control over their tutorials and did not like their tutors to dominate tutorials. Like NNS tutees in North American contexts, the tutees in this context claimed that they preferred a directive approach for lower order concerns when they did not have sufficient knowledge to respond to their tutors' non-directive approaches.

Although there has been a greater emphasis in recent literature on the role of more directive strategies in writing center instruction (Bringhurst, 2006; Harris & Silva, 1993; Jones et al., 2006; Shamon & Burns, 1995; Thonus, 2001, 2002, 2004; Williams, 2004, 2005), this study indicates that writing center practitioners should not abandon constructivist practices of collaboration and non-directive strategies; rather, they should use these strategies when it is appropriate to do so. The current evidence suggests that a combination of non-directive and directive practices may provide a solution to addressing the variety of learning needs exhibited by NNS writers in particular (Blau & Hall, 2002; Carino, 2003; Harris & Silva, 1993; Henning, 2001; Shamon & Burns, 2001; Thonus, 2001, 2002, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004). This study confirms that the non-directive/directive binary alternatives are too simplistic to be helpful in practice because individuals with varying abilities and experiences need tutoring approaches that can be adapted to their requirements at different times. It emphasizes the importance of flexibility, of the judicious use of both directive and non-directive strategies.

This exploratory study reveals that strategies deemed successful with NS and NNS students in North American contexts may not be effective in Middle Eastern contexts. It raises questions about several well-established strategies in writing center tutorials. The strategy of silence, for instance, was generally not well received by tutees. Reading aloud, a strategy commonly used by many tutors, was also not well-received by several tutees. Determining the reasons for the tutees' negative assessment of these strategies warrants further research. Another finding is the tutees' preference for a peer tutoring, egalitarian relationship that enabled the generation of ideas through collaborative interaction and the strengths and limitations of this approach. Some tutors admitted to lacking the knowledge necessary to explain certain writing or grammatical concepts. Tutors are expected to be flexible and sensitive to the needs of individual students, but an adequate understanding of lexical and syntactical aspects of the English language is also necessary.

Problems related to the qualifications and to their training are addressed in Section 6.4 "Implications of this study."

Studies conducted in North American contexts (Blau & Hall., 2002; Harris, 1997; Thonus, 2001, 2004; Williams, 2004, 2005) indicate the NNS tutees prefer authoritative tutors who use directive approaches. This Middle Eastern study, however, indicates that tutors and tutees prefer non-directive approaches, particularly with higher level concerns. As suggested in Chapter 5, these students may be more responsive to the non-directive approach because of their experiences living and studying in the Middle East. They have international perspectives and world views that have been informed through their travel, their education, and their experiences living in and adapting to two or more cultures and languages. The findings of this study reveal the distinctive nature of this cohort and the implications this has for future research.

## **6.2 STUDY LIMITATIONS**

The study yielded promising results about the perceptions of effectiveness in a Middle Eastern writing center context, but there were some shortcomings that could be addressed in future research. My insider status as Director of the MEU Writing Center was a concern because I am responsible for hiring and supervising the tutors and for overseeing daily operations of the Writing Center. As Lerner (2002) states, insider status may produce biased results. Lerner (2002) does not insist that insider status invalidates assessment undertaken by writing center directors (or graduate/undergraduate students). Rather, his observation is that in these instances, the director must strive to import the perspective of an outsider and attempt to bring a sense of neutrality to the process of participant observation. As Director, I tried to balance the role of insider and outsider and pursue the ideal that Lerner (2002) advocates. I used triangulation to acquire data that tested the veracity of my interpretations. I also invited some of the participants to read through notes and double-check my conclusions. Colleagues who were not invested in the Writing Center also helped me to code the data.

The tutees in the study were not familiar with me or my position in the Writing Center; the tutors, however, were my employees, and it is possible that my position may have affected the way they expressed themselves during the stimulated recall and during the interviews. I took measures to reduce anxiety and ensure authentic responses. Participation in the study was voluntary, and I assured tutors that their responses would not jeopardize their position. The tutors are accustomed to an informal tutoring environment where I am in a position to hear and observe tutorials as they take place. Throughout the semester, I oversee, observe, and discuss tutorials

with the tutors. The tutors claimed that knowing that I would be observing their tutorials did not make them nervous during the sessions or throughout the study. They understood the objectives of the study; they knew that their names would not be used and that our discussions were based on trust and mutual respect.

A wider range of demographics would have been a more accurate reflection of the diversity of tutees in the Writing Center, and although I had anticipated having students from a wider range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, most of the tutees who volunteered in the study were native Arabic speakers.

The stimulated recall was conducted immediately after the tutorials; interviews were conducted a few days later to assess the overall effectiveness of the tutorial. It was interesting to note the change in perceptions on some aspects of the tutorials immediately after the tutorial and a few days later. Some researchers have concluded that perceptions remain the same even two months after the tutorial (Bell, 2000). Others have noted that tutorial satisfaction levels may change with the passage of time (Morrison & Nadeau, 2003). Morrison and Nadeau (2003) conducted a study to determine the effect of the passage of time on students' perceptions of the tutorial experiences. They discovered that students' perceptions of their experiences became more negative after students had received the grades for their assignments. It may have been worthwhile to check back with students after they received their grades for their assignments or the final grades for the course to determine whether their perceptions of their tutorials remained the same. Did they still feel that they had gained something of long-term value as they had claimed they did during the stimulated recall and interview sessions? Were they able to apply the skills they felt they had acquired to subsequent writing assignments when writing independently? While examining students' perceptions long term would have been worthwhile, students may have been more reluctant to participate in the study if it had entailed such a long-term commitment. Furthermore, memory is subject to degradation and distortion over time, and later perceptions may be as likely to introduce inaccuracies as insights.

### **6.3 FUTURE RESEARCH**

This exploratory study answered questions about how tutors and tutees perceive writing center effectiveness in a Middle Eastern context, and it introduced several questions which could prompt further research. Although this study of the interaction between tutors and tutees yielded pertinent information that can inform tutor training, it did not connect the tutees' perceptions to their subsequent revisions. Tutees' drafts were collected in addition to the video recording and stimulated recall and interview data, but the drafts were not compared to the final drafts of their assignments to see whether positive perceptions of tutorials had an effect on subsequent revisions. Although most tutees reported that the tutorials were effective and that their papers had improved as a result of their sessions, they may have not revised their drafts according to the tutors' suggested revisions. Williams (2004) claims that there is insufficient empirical research on actual effectiveness of writing center tutorials, particularly with NNS writers. Examining how students' perceptions influenced their revisions after the tutorials is a worthwhile goal for a future study.

Tutees responded positively to code-switching, but it was not used frequently by tutors in the study. Code-switching in peer interactions among younger NNS students has been found to facilitate learning as peers assist each other during writing activities (Kibler, 2010), but there has been little empirical research about the possible benefits of using tutees' native language to facilitate tutorial communication between tutors and tutees in a writing center context (Williams & Severino, 2004). Perhaps this is not an option in most North American writing center contexts, but it could be considered in a Middle Eastern context where tutors and tutees often share the same first language.

Another question that was raised is whether NNS students who have been trained as tutors will adopt styles of communication that seem to the tutors themselves more appropriate for NNS tutees. A close analysis of the communication between NNS tutors and tutees may provide insights into their styles of communication and further information about the efficacy of certain aspects of tutorial interaction. This study revealed that our tutees appreciated the peer-aspects of tutorial discussions, but conversational analysis in future research of transcribed tutorials that include silences, pauses, overlaps, interruptions, and back-channeling may reveal patterns of communication and provide a more complete picture of tutorial interaction.

Research has shown that tutors and tutees who have already established a relationship may be more adept at reading each other thereby facilitating tutorial interaction (Weigle & Nelson, 2004). This conclusion sounds reasonable; moreover, it coincides with the claims of several tutors and tutees who said they preferred to work with the same person. It may be worthwhile, however, to consider the reasons for their preference, the basis for their comparison and the fact that they are regularly required to adapt to the teaching styles of a variety of professors. Tutors and tutees may be adept at reading each other, but perhaps each group would benefit from having to adapt to different tutors and tutees.

## **6.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

Although tutors and tutees claimed that the tutorial sessions were generally effective, the study shows that both groups were aware of aspects of the sessions that require alteration and improvement. The following recommendations are based on the findings of this study.

### **6.4.1 Emphasize the Importance of Pre-Tutorial Discussion**

Tutees responded positively to tutors who spent time at the beginning of the tutorial asking questions about their assignments, their concerns and negotiating an agenda for the session. This aspect of tutorials could be emphasized during training, and tutors reminded of its importance throughout their employment at the Writing Center. This information gathering is particularly important for NNS tutees who may not be sufficiently fluent in English to understand the requirements of the assignments or to explain their own intentions about the assignment. Decisions about whether or not the tutee will read the text aloud or at what points during the reading the tutor will provide feedback could be made during this section of the tutorial.

This initial dialogue also gives the tutorial direction and establishes rapport between tutor and tutee. The study revealed that the tutoring relationship can be affected by many NNS students' unfamiliarity with the type of discussion that is typically used in the writing center. According to Bruce (2009), "the concept of shared responsibility for writing is alien" to NNS students (p. 34). This study confirmed her observation and affirmed the desirability of encouraging tutors to explain the writing center approach to first time clients at the beginning of the session and to implement it with sensitivity.

### **6.4.2 Improve Communication with Faculty**

It has been noted that NNS tutees do not understand the requirements of assignments (Blau et al., 2001). It would help if course instructors would provide their students with written instructions for each assignment, explaining the requirements and the process of evaluation. If a collegial dialogue could be established with faculty so they could understand the importance of clearly delineating the requirements, instructions and expectations of each assignment, tutors would be in a better position to help their tutees. If a notice were sent to faculty about the importance of providing students with clearly written assignments, course instructors may become aware that their verbal instructions are insufficient. Workshops could be provided for faculty who recognize the need for help in designing written assignments.

### **6.4.3 Avoid Appropriation**

Although tutees preferred a directive approach while addressing lower order concerns, they were resistant to this approach if it bordered on appropriation. Several tutees reported that their tutors occasionally assumed too much control of their papers. This situation can be ameliorated if tutors have had adequate training so that they are aware of the need to involve their tutee in each stage of the discussion and to explain suggested changes. If the directive approach is used with sound judgment, it can provide the tutees with the conventions of discourse that are expected in academic institutions giving them more control over their writing. Occasionally the directive approach will involve the strategy of modeling: “Rather than assuming that this imitation will prevent authentic self-expression, the tutor and the student assume that imitation will lead to improved technique, which will enable freedom of expression” (Shamoon & Burns, 2001, p. 232).

When tutors were rushed and felt they did not have the time to explain adequately the reasons for their suggestions, the possibility of appropriation was heightened. In this situation, the tutee could be given a handout that specifically addresses the issues, directed to a relevant online site, or asked to make another appointment at the writing center at which time the specific problem could be addressed.

Tutors who have been trained to value the non-directive approach and to use directive approaches only when required find it difficult to know when to intervene with a directive approach, and how to determine the extent and the effect of their interventions. They lack the

experience and the expertise to confidently negotiate this indeterminate area; moreover, they have acknowledged this difficulty and asked for guidance. Although tutors have misgivings about using the directive approach because of their training, some of them realize that it has proven to be effective on several occasions. If congenial learning situations were created where tutors could reflect on the teaching styles they are developing, perhaps they could change or modify them, if necessary. Activities such as role playing, stimulated recall or close vertical transcriptions, for instance, could help them to identify their characteristic teaching patterns and the resources they require in order to be more confident and effective.

#### **6.4.4 Provide in-Service Grammar Training**

This study indicates that tutors' knowledge of grammar and related issues such as parts of speech, sentence structure and punctuation is insufficient. Grammar training throughout tutor training and with continuous professional development may be offered to tutors throughout their employment. In his article, "English for those who think they already know it," Rafoth (2009) says that successful tutoring sessions start with appropriate tutor resources and training, and argues that a familiarity with the framework of the English language "brings about more interesting and helpful interactions with the students we tutor" (p. 120). Tutors are not always able to explain the errors in the tutees' assignments. Brooks (1991) claims that "fixing flawed papers is easy; showing the students how to fix their own papers is complex and difficult" (p. 224).

Tutors who are able to identify the errors in grammar themselves and to access resources through handbooks and reliable online grammar sites, including interactive grammar sites, may be better able to engage in a discussion with tutees about their papers. An understanding of grammar is one of the interrelated activities involved in writing, and once the basic grammatical elements are acquired, it would be useful to tutors to know how to access further details when they are required. In some instances NNS tutees may be more familiar with grammatical terminology than their tutors; therefore, knowledge of English grammar is a valuable tool for tutors, both to instruct their tutees, and to maintain their credibility as authorities on English writing. In addition to knowing how to access resources that explain rules of grammar, tutors could be offered workshops that focus on specific elements of grammar. Asking tutors to read NNS student papers to learn to identify some of the most common errors in NNS writing may be

an effective way to help tutors identify which errors they should work on with their tutees. Furthermore, reading student texts and discussing how to approach grammatical errors in the context of the assignment may help tutors feel more confident when addressing grammatical errors during tutorial sessions. Although tutors prepare a short grammar presentation during their peer tutoring course, this aspect of tutorials has not been emphasized during in-service training. The findings of this study reveal that a more detailed understanding of grammatical rules is necessary because the tutees requested information the tutors could not provide. If tutors have a more comprehensive understanding of lexical and syntactical aspects of grammar, they will be in a stronger position to help their tutees to achieve greater coherence, cohesion, clarity, and precision. Knowledge of grammar will enhance the students' ability to organize knowledge, to generate ideas and insights, and to develop persuasive arguments. Knowledge of grammar can form an important part of the recursive process of writing.

#### **6.4.5 Provide Tutors with Information in Contrastive Rhetoric**

Tutors are required to read Severino's (1993) article and participate in a discussion about contrastive rhetoric in their training course, but informal observation and the results of this study reveal that tutors do not engage their tutees in discussion about contrastive rhetoric. Raising learners' awareness of some of the basic differences between English and Arabic may help Arabic NS students, particularly low proficiency students who did not attend English language high school. For example, the inclusion of a pronoun is required in relative clauses; in English, it is omitted. This tendency may result in errors such as "Where is the book which I gave *it* to you last week?" A tutor who notices that her tutee is including a pronoun in relative clauses would be expected to explain the difference. An understanding of contrastive rhetoric and an awareness of exemplary instances can form part of the tutors' arsenal, but tutors should not be constrained by the rhetoric of this approach because it can lead to prescriptivism. Many researchers caution against being prescriptive (Al-Jamhour, 2010; Harris & Silva, 1993): an alternative to being prescriptive is to point out to writers the choices that are available to them, including the choices native speakers of English tend to make. Although tutors should be aware of characteristic instances of contrastive rhetoric, they should not pigeonhole Arabic NS students, for instance, by assuming they will make similar errors in their writing. In addition to providing tutors with readings in contrastive rhetoric, tutors could be provided with examples of students' writing and

the opportunity to discuss characteristic errors made by Arabic, Persian, and Urdu NS students, for instance.

#### **6.4.6 Adopt a Flexible Approach to Tutoring**

This study shows that more flexible tutoring models that accommodate the experiences of our tutors and tutees and their particular strengths and weaknesses may be of value. Much of the writing center scholarship discussing NNS writers recommends more flexible tutoring models than those used with NS writers (Blau & Hall, 2002; Cogie et al., 1999; Thonus, 2001, 2002, 2004; Williams, 2004, 2005; Williams & Severino, 2004). The results of this Middle Eastern study support a similar recommendation. Pedagogical models designed to accommodate NNS students in North American contexts provide valuable insights about the relation between writing and learning. Middle Eastern writing center studies can build on this body of research and develop approaches that are flexible in ways that take into account the particularities of our clientele.

It is up to writing center directors, however, to be aware of writing center pedagogy as it evolves in response to research; tutors should be able to assume that advice from directors is based on such research. If this level of confidence is established, tutors may be less inclined to regard established writing center models as prescriptive and more inclined to be flexible and to take into account the disparate needs of the tutees. The study revealed, for instance, that the reading aloud strategy occasionally distracted the tutees' attention rather than focusing it. Future tutors will be trained to take this into account and to recognize that this change in strategy derives not from personal preference but from research. It cannot automatically be assumed that the strategy of reading aloud or other strategies will work with all tutees in all situations.

#### **6.4.7 Provide Guidance for Directive Strategies**

The data revealed that tutors are self-critical and uneasy about using directive strategies. In reviewing the tutor training program in light of the data, it has become apparent that tutors have not been given the requisite education or direction about how to use directive strategies and when to use them. Tutors have been advised to use these strategies when "it is necessary" and "when there is no other recourse," but this indeterminate situation is not helpful for novice tutors. The program would be improved if tutors were more confident about when to use directive

strategies and how to use them. Greater emphasis could be placed on strategies such as modeling, asking leading or closed questions, offering suggestions, and identifying and correcting errors. These strategies could be described in more detail, and situations where such strategies may be useful could be provided. In order to become more confident and more capable of making judicious decisions about directive and non-directive approaches, tutors could participate in mock tutoring sessions that simulate difficult tutorial situations. Tutors could be guided to discuss ways of looking at and dealing with a situation and be encouraged to think critically of viable ways of dealing with it instead of viewing it in the context of established assumptions about the importance of using non-directive approaches. This guided process could enable the tutors to discover possibilities about their own strengths and weaknesses that could be articulated more precisely during stimulated recall sessions as discussed under Section 6.5.

#### **6.4.8 Promote an Egalitarian Tutorial Relationship**

The peer aspect of tutorials was deemed effective by both tutors and tutees. Tutees want access to authoritative, reliable knowledge in a friendly, egalitarian atmosphere. They claimed that they liked their tutors to involve them in the discussions as much as possible. Tutors have been trained not to control and dominate the conversation, but both sets of data revealed that many had a tendency to do so. In order to make tutors aware of this tendency and of the importance of involving the tutee in the session in meaningful ways, it is necessary to draw attention to that weakness in their tutorials. It is important to promote an atmosphere of collegial collaboration so that tutors will be self-critical and willing to accept helpful suggestions. Involving tutors in self-observation so they can be aware of conversational elements such as interruptions, turn length, timed pauses, back-channels, and overlaps may help tutors notice patterns and detrimental practices in their tutoring. Gilewicz and Thonus (2003) recommend exercises such as asking tutors to transcribe their tutorials. This study used stimulated recall activities following a recorded tutorial session. The enlightened self-criticism that was generated suggests that this method can promote an egalitarian tutorial relationship by providing a context whereby the tutors can see and hear themselves in action.

### **6.5 DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENT PROMOTED THROUGH RESEARCH**

The data derived from stimulated recall is particularly interesting; moreover, it could form the basis of a tutor training method. The stimulated recall sessions with the tutors elicited insightful comments that brought about reflection, and they drew attention to some of the decisions tutors have to make during tutorial sessions. The observations and reflections of the tutors led me to consider the possibility of using stimulated recall as a tool in tutor training. Stimulated recall has exceeded all other forms of introspective design I have used during in-service training (journaling, one-on-one interviews, and direct observation) in terms of the insights it produced. During stimulated recall, the tutors engaged in intense self-reflection, and they proved remarkably efficient at identifying strengths and weaknesses in their tutorial practice while identifying, through recall, moments of self-doubt or questioning. Viewing themselves on tape and revisiting their tutoring session enabled the tutors to engage in direct critical analysis and to avoid shaping or interpreting their actions; rather, they reported directly on what they were thinking or feeling. Stimulated recall is a beneficial process that can illuminate important aspects of the tutoring process. It could be implemented as a standard tutor training method to provide opportunities for enhanced self-awareness, reflective thought, and discussion.

Encouraging tutors to be self-reflective is vital for effective tutoring. The data reveals that the more self-critical and self-aware tutors were, the more adept they had been at providing tutees with effective tutorial experiences. It is important to create a dynamic, congenial environment where research informs tutor training and indeed becomes a part of it.

Writing center directors should be receptive to emerging research in order to continue to evolve standards of best practice. Insights derived from research and scholarship indicate the need for additional, clear-sighted research that takes into account the actual working conditions of writing centers in different countries. The tutors who are expected to be knowledgeable, flexible and sensitive to individual needs are often students themselves. They are students from a variety of disciplines who have excellent academic records and an interest in writing and tutoring. It is unreasonable, however, to assume that their education encompasses the breadth of knowledge that is required to meet the needs of individual students in the Writing Center. It is the responsibility of the writing center specialists or directors to be familiar with traditional and contemporary writing center theories and to be part of the ongoing discourse about writing in order to recognize the viability of particular strategies and the possibility of adapting them, in this case, to the requirements of a Middle Eastern university writing center.

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## Appendix A Frequencies and Percentages of Demographics Information for Tutees

### *Frequencies and Percentages of Demographics Information for Tutees*

	N	%
Tutee		
Gender		
Male	6	40.0
Female	9	60.0
Age		
17	2	13.3
18	8	53.3
19	2	13.3
20	2	13.3
21	1	6.7
Major		
Electrical Engineering	4	26.7
Civil Engineering	2	13.3
Mass Communication/Journalism	2	13.3
Architecture	1	6.7
Chemical Engineering	1	6.7
Computer Science	1	6.7
Design Management	1	6.7
International Studies	1	6.7
Marketing and Management	1	6.7
Mechanical Engineering	1	6.7
Nationality		
Jordanian	4	26.7
Egyptian	2	13.3
Lebanese	2	13.3
Palestinian	2	13.3
Syrian	2	13.3
Emirati	1	6.7
Iraqi	1	6.7
Pakistani	1	6.7
Language Spoken at Home		
Arabic	13	86.7
Arabic/Persian/English	1	6.7
Urdu	1	6.7

(continued)

*Frequencies and Percentages of Demographics Information for Tutees, continued*

	N	%
Language Instructed at High School		
Arabic/English	8	53.3
Arabic	6	40.0
English	1	6.7
Languages (Reading and Spoken) <i>First-Second-Third</i>		
Arabic – English	8	53.3
Arabic – English – French	3	20.0
Arabic – Persian – English	1	6.7
English – Arabic	1	6.7
English – Arabic – French	1	6.7
Urdu – English	1	6.7

## Appendix B Tutee Demographics Form

### *Frequencies and Percentages of Demographics Information for Tutors*

	N	%
Tutor		
Gender		
Female	13	86.7
Male	2	13.3
Age		
19	1	6.7
20	3	20.0
21	7	46.7
22	1	6.7
23	3	20.0
Major		
Mass Communication – Journalism	3	20.0
Chemical Engineering	2	13.3
Mechanical Engineering	1	6.7
English Literature	1	6.7
Mass Communication/International Studies	1	6.7
Mass Communication	1	6.7
Architecture	1	6.7
Finance and Management	1	6.7
Finance	1	6.7
Visual Communication	1	6.7
Marketing and Management	1	6.7
International Studies	1	6.7
Nationality		
Indian	4	26.7
Pakistani	3	20.0
Egyptian	2	13.3
Afghan	1	6.7
Australian	1	6.7
Bangladeshi	1	6.7
Canadian/Jordanian	1	6.7
Emirati	1	6.7
Syrian	1	6.7

(continued)

*Frequencies and Percentages of Demographics Information for Tutors, continued*

	N	%
<b>Language Spoken at Home</b>		
Arabic	3	20.0
English	3	20.0
Arabic/English	2	13.3
Urdu/English	2	13.3
Bengali/English	1	6.7
Farsi	1	6.7
Konkani	1	6.7
Tamil	1	6.7
Urdu	1	6.7
<b>Language Instructed at High School</b>		
English	15	100.0
<b>Languages (Reading and Spoken) <i>First-Second-Third-Fourth-Fifth</i></b>		
English	2	13.3
English – Arabic	2	13.3
English – Urdu	2	13.3
English – Bengali	1	6.7
English – Arabic – French	2	13.3
English – Konkani – Hindi	1	6.7
English – French – Arabic – Malayalam	1	6.7
English – Urdu – Farsi – Pashtu – Arabic	1	6.7
Arabic – English – French	1	6.7
Tamil – English – Hindi – Arabic	1	6.7
Urdu – English – Sindi	1	6.7

## **Appendix C Subject Informed Consent Document: Tutors**

### **Investigator's name and address**

Maria Eleftheriou

### **Site where study will be conducted**

Middle-Eastern University Writing Center

### **Phone number for subjects to call for questions**

██████████

### **Introduction and Background Information**

You have agreed to participate in a research study. This study is being conducted by Maria Eleftheriou. The study will take place at the Middle-Eastern University Writing Center.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the study is to assess the effectiveness of writing center tutorials and to discover ways to improve our tutorial services.

### **Procedures**

In this study, you will be asked to do the following

- complete a questionnaire about your background and number of years as a tutor in the Writing Center
- allow the researcher to videotape one of your writing center tutorials
- watch the videotaped session and answer questions during a stimulated recall activity (the duration of this activity will be 30 minutes)
- participate in an interview (the duration of this activity will be 30 minutes)
- participate in a follow-up interview with the researcher to double-check notes and interpretations of data (the duration of this activity will be approximately 10 minutes)

### **Potential Risks**

There are no foreseeable risks to you during this study though there may be unforeseeable risks. Your participation in the study will not impact your position as a tutor in the Writing Center.

### **Benefits**

The information may not benefit you, but the information may help us improve training practices for the peer-tutoring course.

### **Compensation**

At the end of the study, you will receive 150 dirhams.

**Confidentiality:** Your privacy will be protected. Your name will not be published, and if results of this study are published, your name will appear as a pseudonym.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You may decline to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable.

You will be told about changes that may affect your decision to continue in the study.

**Research Subject's Rights, Questions, Concerns, and Complaints**

If you have any concerns about the study, you have two options:

You may contact the investigator at [REDACTED] or by mailing her at [REDACTED]

You may also discuss your rights as a subject with the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Dana Abou Al Nasr, by calling [REDACTED] or by e-mailing her at [REDACTED]

This letter detailed what will happen during the course of the study. Your signature means that this study has been discussed with you, that your questions have been answered, and that you voluntarily agree to take part in the study. This informed consent document is not a contract. You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this document. You will be given a signed copy of this paper to keep for your records.

**Signature of Subject** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name of Subject** \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix D Subject Informed Consent Document: Tutees**

### **Investigator's name and address**

Maria Eleftheriou

### **Site where study will be conducted**

Middle-Eastern University Writing Center

### **Phone number for subjects to call for questions**

██████████

### **Introduction and Background Information**

You have agreed to participate in a research study. This study is being conducted by Maria Eleftheriou. The study will take place at the Middle-Eastern University Writing Center.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the study is to assess the effectiveness of writing center tutorials and to discover ways to improve our tutorial services.

### **Procedures**

In this study, you will be asked to do the following

- complete a questionnaire about your background and writing concerns
- allow the researcher to videotape one of your writing center tutorials
- allow the researcher to retain any materials discussed during any of your tutorial including drafts of papers, copies of instructor feedback and notes made during the tutorial.
- watch the videotaped session and answer questions during a stimulated recall activity (the duration of this activity will be 30 minutes)
- participate in an interview (the duration of this activity will be 30 minutes)
- participate in a follow-up interview with the researcher to double-check notes and interpretations of data (the duration of this activity will be approximately 10 minutes)

### **Potential Risks**

There are no foreseeable risks to you during this study though there may be unforeseeable risks.

### **Benefits**

The information may not benefit you directly, but the information may help us improve the services we offer at the Writing Center.

**Compensation**

At the end of the study, you will receive 150 dirhams.

**Confidentiality:** Your privacy will be protected. Your name will not be published, and if results of this study are published, your name will appear as a pseudonym.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You may decline to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable.

You will be told about changes that may affect your decision to continue in the study.

**Research Subject’s Rights, Questions, Concerns, and Complaints**

If you have any concerns about the study, you have two options:

You may contact the investigator at [REDACTED] or by mailing her at [REDACTED]

You may also discuss your rights as a subject with the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Dana Abou Al Nasr, by calling [REDACTED] or by e-mailing her at [REDACTED].

This letter detailed what will happen during the course of the study. Your signature means that this study has been discussed with you, that your questions have been answered, and that you voluntarily agree to take part in the study. This informed consent document is not a contract. You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this document. You will be given a signed copy of this paper to keep for your records.

**Signature of Subject** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name of Subject** \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix E Tutee Demographics Form**

**Tutee Demographics Form**

**General Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ AUS ID : \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Major: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_ M \_\_\_ F  
Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

**Language**

Language spoken at home: \_\_\_\_\_ Language of instruction in high school: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list the languages that you speak below and rate each language in terms of fluency for reading and writing (*1=Strong and 5=Weak*).

Language:	Written	Spoken
_____	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
_____	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
_____	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
_____	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

**Writing Center Information**

**How many times have you visited the writing center this semester?**

\_\_0 \_\_1 \_\_2 \_\_3 \_\_4 or more

**Why are you here today?**

- 1) Requirement by teacher
- 2) Voluntary

**For which class are you seeking assistance?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What specific writing concerns would you like to discuss with the tutor today?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix F Tutor Demographics Form**

**Tutor Demographics Form**

**General Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ AUS ID : \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Major: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_ M \_\_\_ F  
 Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

**Language**

Language spoken at home: \_\_\_\_\_ Language of instruction in high school: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list the languages that you speak below and rate each language in terms of fluency for reading and writing (*1=Strong and 5=Weak*).

Language:	Written	Spoken
_____	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
_____	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
_____	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
_____	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

**Writing Center Information**

**How long have you been tutoring in the Writing Center?**

\_\_\_ Less than one semester      \_\_\_ One to two semesters  
 \_\_\_ Two semesters to Four Semesters      \_\_\_ Four semesters or more

**Have you had any other tutoring experience outside the Center? If yes, what type of tutoring? Where?**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G Stimulated Recall Protocol

Phase 1: Videotaping tutorials and note taking during tutorials followed with video stimulated recall interview within 24 hours of the recording

Phase 2: Video-stimulated recall interview (VSRI)

Aims of VSRI:

1. To determine tutees' and tutors' perceptions of tutorial interaction and to identify behaviours/strategies they think are successful

Instruction:

[Researcher reads the instructions for research participants]

### Option 1:

*'What we are going to do now is watch the video. I am interested in what you were thinking at the time by looking and talking about the pictures. We can hear what you were saying by looking at and listening to the video, but we don't know what you were thinking. So what I would like you to do is tell me what you were thinking during those events recorded in the video recording. (Option 1) **You can pause the video** any time you want. (Option 2) **If I have questions** about what were you thinking, then **I will push pause** and ask you to talk about the video'*

### Option 2:

#### Tutee

If the student or tutor does not speak (after two minutes), researcher may pause and ask questions about the video such as:

1. Did the tutor understand your concern at this point?
2. Did you find that the tutor answered your question clearly at this point?
3. What were you thinking when the tutor used that particular strategy i.e. reading aloud, outlining, drawing an essay box, asking you to take notes, telling you how to phrase your thesis ...etc.
4. Did you find that particular strategy helpful or not helpful?

#### Tutor

If the tutor does not speak (after two minutes), researcher may pause and ask questions about the video such as:

1. Did you feel as though you understood the student's concern at this point?
2. Did you feel as though you answered the student's question clearly at this point? Do you feel the student understood you?
3. How do you feel the student was responding to that particular strategy i.e. reading aloud, outlining, drawing an essay box, asking you to take notes, telling you how to phrase your thesis...etc.
4. Did you find that this particular strategy was effective in helping the student

### **Appendix**

Sample instructions for stimulated recall (adopted from Gass & Mackey. 2000, p.59)

[Researcher reads the instructions for research participants]

*What we are going to do now is watch the video. We are interested with what you were thinking **at the time** of the tutorial. We can hear what you were saying by looking at and listening to the video, but we don't know what you were thinking.*

*So, what I would like to you to do is tell me what were thinking, what was in your mind **at the time** while you were talking to the tutor.*

*I'm going to put the remote control on the table and you can pause the video any time you want. So if you want to tell me something about what you were thinking, you can push pause. If I have a question about what were you thinking, then I will push pause and ask you to talk about that part of the video.*

#### **Notes for researcher:**

When analyzing the tutorial recording, specifically observe for specific tutorial interactions related to facilitative/directive strategies.

#### **Instructions for researcher collecting recall data:**

After reading the instructions to the participants, model/show the action of stopping the video and asking for question. For example, choose a segment and stop the video.

Ask your question. If they stop the video, listen to what they say. If you stop the video, ask something general like:

*What were you thinking here/at this point/right then?*

*Can you tell me what were you thinking at that point?*

*I see you're laughing/looking confused/saying something there, what were you thinking then?*

**Extra notes for researcher.**

- If the participant says ‘I don’t remember,’ accept the comment and move on.
- Researcher should not give concrete reactions to participants’ responses. Backchannelling or non-responses are preferable. For example,

<i>Oh</i>	<i>uh-huh</i>
<i>Mhm</i>	<i>ok</i>
<i>I see</i>	

- It is important to avoid extended responses or three-part exchanges, because providing feedback or input to learners may alter the nature of their recall comments.
- Be a ‘warm body’ not a conversational partner.

## Appendix H Interview Transcription Guidelines

Please follow these guidelines when transcribing the stimulated recall and interviews:

- Use Times New Roman, 12 pt. font
- Double-space
- Add the number of the tutorial, the tape number, and the name of the interviewee at the top of the page.
- Use **I** to indicate the interviewer and the **E#** or **U#** for the interviewee.
- Indicate the time on the left-hand side of the utterance each time the interviewer and interviewee speak.
- Change as little as possible. Accurately represent each speaker's words. Type contractions as spoken (I'll, not I will).
- Leave out back channeling comments by the interviewer such "how interesting" or "really?" or "I see" which the interviewer made only to show that he/she was listening.
- Spell words correctly. Do not use phonetic spelling. For example, write "You" instead of "U".
- Do not correct grammar or change the sentence structure.
- Use parentheses ( ) to indicate speech that you cannot decipher
- Use [ ] square brackets to indicate audible expressions such as laughter
- Use { } to indicate disruptive sounds on the recording

Adapted from:

<http://unh.edu/linguistics/index.cfm?id=2A71CD79-B974-02AE-117795596BB1C26F>

## Appendix I Transcription Sample

Stimulated Recall Transcription: Tutorial 2 with E2

Time	Speaker	Comment
0:00:03	E2	I don't like the fact that I had to read it out loud, um, and I think I have this belief that if someone reads something out loud you won't be concentrating as much as when you're reading it yourself, like, so she could have maybe like, like she was critical, she was really good, but it did not make me feel comfortable I guess, you know, because I am not, like, I get nervous when I read a lot, so that was something..like I don't like that.
0:01:50	E2	I like that she noticed that I have grammatical mistakes, people won't usually notice that um..because they are small, but there is just like a comma or a point, so it shows that she is professional, so she is someone I can depend on. That was good, that was nice.
0:02:39	<b>Researcher</b>	<b>What were you thinking here?</b>
0:02:42	E2	She made it very simple, she was direct, she wasn't trying to give me another example. No, she just sticks to the material, and she said "this is what's wrong and this is how you fix it"...and that was good.
0:06:18	E2	I like the fact that she gives me a chance to explain myself...and the fact that she lets me correct myself...like she doesn't try to act like 'I know it all', because some tutors are like that...like we are the same age, but some go like "I know more than her, so I get to do this". [Laughs]. But no she is right, like she was very patient, she explained things, and she is like um good.
0:09:33	E2	She was helpful, and when I suggested something she went along with it, and she specified exactly what I had to do, how she did not understand the sentence, like she is not...for instance so many people they let you read the whole paragraph and then they state all the mistakes at once, but instead while I was reading she tells me, this is this, do this at the same time, so it was step by step, so it is much easier to understand like that.

## Appendix J Tutor Interview Questions

The purpose of this interview is so I can gain a clearer understanding of your tutorial interactions and your perceptions of the effectiveness of your tutorial.

1. How long have you been tutoring at the Writing Center?
2. What did the student tell you that he/she hoped to accomplish by attending the writing center tutorial?
3. Did you feel that you accomplished what the student wanted?
  - a) If yes, how did you address the tutee's specific writing concerns during the tutorial?
  - b) If not, what do you feel you could you have done to help the tutee better?
4. What aspects of the tutorial, if any, did you find were effective?  
Can you please explain why?
5. What aspects of the tutorial, if any, did you find were ineffective?  
Can you please explain why?
6. What strategies, if any, do you feel were effective with the tutee?
7. What strategies, if any, do you feel were ineffective with the tutee?
8. Which part of the tutorial do you believe was the most useful to the tutee?

Why do you believe this was the most useful moment?

9. Which part of the tutorial do you believe was the least useful to the tutee?

Why do you believe this was the least useful moment?

10. In what ways, if any, do you believe the tutee's writing has changed as a result of the writing center tutorial?
11. How do you think the tutee felt about the quality of his/her paper after the tutorial?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience with the tutorial?

## Appendix K Tutee Interview Questions

The purpose of this interview is so I can gain a clearer understanding of your tutorial interactions and your perceptions of the effectiveness of your tutorial.

1. Are you a first-time user of the Writing Center?  
If not, how many tutorials have you attended?
2. What did you hope to accomplish by attending your writing center tutorial today?
3. Did you accomplish what you wanted?
  - a) If yes, how did the tutor help you accomplish what you wanted?
  - b) If no, what do you think the tutor could have done to help you better?
4. What aspects of your tutorial, if any, did you find were effective?
  - a) Can you please explain why?
5. What aspects, if any, did you find ineffective in your session?
  - a) Can you please explain why?
6. What strategies, if any, do you feel were helpful?  
Provide tutee with suggestions for strategies if they are not able to respond (tutee writing independently, tutor asking questions, tutee reading aloud, .....
7. What strategies, if any, do you feel were not helpful?  
Provide tutee with suggestions for strategies if they are not able to respond (tutee writing independently, tutor asking questions, tutee reading aloud, .....
8. What section of the tutorial do you believe was the most useful to you?
  - a) Why do you believe this was the most useful moment?
9. What section of the tutorial do you believe was the least useful to you?
  - a) Why do you believe this was the most useful moment?
10. In what ways, if any, do you believe your writing has changed as a result of your writing center tutorial?
11. How do you feel about the quality of your paper after the tutorial?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience in the Writing Center?

## Appendix L Themes Relevant to each Research Question

Table 4

*Themes Relevant to Research Questions*

RQ1	RQ2	RQ3	RQ4
Tutee Theme: Tutorial Session Efficacy	Tutor Theme: Tutorial Session Efficacy	Tutee Theme: Tutoring Approach Efficacy	Tutor Theme: Tutoring Approach Efficacy
Tutee Theme: Impact of Tutorials on Tutees' Assignments	Tutor Theme: Impact of Tutorials on Tutees' Assignments		
Tutee Theme: Efficacy of Tutoring Strategies	Tutor Theme: Efficacy of Tutoring Strategies		
Tutee Theme: Attention to Tutees' Concerns	Tutor Theme: Self Assessment		
Tutee Theme: Assessment of Tutor			
Tutee Theme: Transferable Skills			