

Could you check my grammar? The forbidden request in the university writing center

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Abstract

Along with the shift of the literacy education, the university writing center has evolved in its philosophy for writing instruction from a mechanical, error-correcting service to a collaborative process. From this pedagogical shift of writing instruction, proofreading has been prohibited from the services that the writing center can provide. Despite the policy, however, the proofreading request is still one of the most frequent requests that the tutor receives. Especially for L2 writers who have learned English grammar as explicit rules through exams, the ‘no proofreading policy’ of the writing center is not only ineffective but also incomprehensible. In this regard, this study investigates how L2 writers ask for proofreading and how the L1 tutor works with the forbidden request in a way that the center can provide. This study aims to understand the work of the writing tutorial and the philosophy of the writing instruction of the university writing center.

Keywords: proofreading; grammar instruction; writing tutorial; writing center; L2 writer

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1. Introduction

“The Writing Center does not proofread. We will discuss grammar issues with you and give you advice on how to proofread your own work, but we will not give you a proofed draft” This quote is the policy that the writing center declares as the work that they do not provide during the tutorial. With the shift of literacy education, the pedagogy of the Writing Center has evolved from the view of writing as a product to the view of writing as a process. Along with the shift, the instructional approach of the writing center has moved from a remedial ‘fix-it-shop’ that focuses on error-correction to a process-oriented instruction. As pioneering scholars who established the fundamental basis for the writing center’s instructional philosophy, North and Lunsford provided philosophical and institutional theory and practice for writing tutorials transferring from the product-focused to the process-focused. North (1984) claimed that the job of “the writing center is to produce better writers, not better writing.” The tutor works with the writers, not with the text and the instruction is performed through conversation with the tutee. Lunsford (1991) also stated that writing is a socially negotiated collaborative process and tutor’s work for the writing tutorial is beyond the level of fixing problems. The contemporary writing center emphasized the ‘process’ of writing instruction through negotiation instead of the ‘product’ of writing instruction; in other words, they put the value of the instruction on the change of the writer, not the text itself. This philosophical change of the writing instruction has been represented as the ‘no proofreading’ policy and the focus of the instruction, also having changed, is not to make an error-free paper, but to make the tutee a better writer. The no proofreading policy has been a major representative policy of the university writing centers with the new approach of the process-focused writing instruction.

However, despite the new instruction and the policy statement in the Writing Center, proofreading for grammar, punctuation and syntactic clarity is still one of the major concerns for those who visit the Center. The tutees who would like to receive proofreading service show up to the Center constantly. Especially for those L2 (Second or Foreign Language) writers who have learned English from the classroom setting and learned grammar as explicit rules for exams, and who never experienced the process-oriented writing instruction previously, the conversation based process focused instruction which is represented with the no proofreading policy of the writing center is not only ineffective but also incomprehensible.

The discrepancy between the Center’s pedagogy of writing instruction and the immediate needs for the problems that the tutee brings with their writings causes tension and conflict between the tutor and the tutee during the tutorial. The no proofreading policy, which represents the pedagogical philosophy of the contemporary writing center conflicts with the tutee’s needs for the help that they desire for their writings, which must have strongly motivated them to come to the Center. Rejection of the very need that the tutee brings to the Center to get help for their writing may create misunderstanding of the Center’s policy and the fundamental philosophy of the Center’s pedagogy of the writing instruction. This is why dealing with the proofreading request, particularly from the first time visitors and L2 writers is critical for the work of the tutorial in the writing center. How to deal with the proofreading request for the tutorial is important as it can determine the quality of the writing tutorial and their future visits to the Center for the work of writing. Based on how they understand what they are aiming for from the work of tutorial, the instruction can be cooperative and coordinated or it can be hostile and uncoordinated by the lack of understanding of what they are trying to do for their work of the tutorial. Working with the request for proofreading in this regard becomes a part of the curriculum that the Center attempts to achieve for the work of the writing instruction that the contemporary writing center pursues.

The tutor, in this light, takes the responsibility to connect the gap between the misperception about the proofreading that the tutee brings to the Center and the help that the Center can provide for writing instruction by dealing with the forbidden request for proofreading in a way to be acceptable to the work of the tutorial of the

writing center. In order to provide the actual work of the tutorial for the paper that the tutee brings, the needs and goals for the work of tutorial should be agreeable to both the tutor and the tutee. In this way, instructing the new curriculum of the writing center is a part of the curriculum that the Center pursues for writing instruction and it becomes the first task that the tutor requires to achieve for the work of writing tutorial.

Therefore, this study investigates how L2 (Second or Foreign language) writers ask for proofreading for the writing tutorial and how the L1 (Native Language) tutor works with the request for proofreading in a way to be acceptable to the work of tutorial that the Center can provide. By examining their talk-in-interactions about the proofreading request between the L2 writes and the L1 tutor, this study aims to understand the actual work of the writing instruction of the tutorial and the pedagogical philosophy of writing instruction of the university writing center.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Institutional History of the Writing Center in the US

Writing Centers in the US first appeared in the 1930s as subsidiary organizations of the English departments in order to help the L1 students' deficiencies in writing. Since then, the work of the university writing center has been re-shaped as a research center that provides academic services on campus not just to the students who are deficient in writing but also to the students, faculty, staff and administrators across departments. However, despite the significant roles that the writing centers have played in the past 50 years, the idea of a writing center was considered as a first aid 'fix-it-shop', rather than an independent organization as an academic department. Since Moore (1950) referred to the writing centers as "remedial agencies for removing students' deficiencies in composition", the misconception of the work of the writing center prevailed (Walvoord, 1981; Hairston, 1982; Wallace, 1991; North, 1984).

The shift in the concept of literacy education changed the view of writing instruction of the writing center from the 'product-focused' instruction to the 'process-focused', conversation based, writing instruction. The no proofreading policy in this regard is the major representative policy that supports the Center's pedagogical philosophy. North (1984) claimed, "Writing centers produce a better writer, not better writing (p. 438)", emphasizing the process of the writing instruction rather than the product for the work of writing tutorial, which became the philosophical background of the 'no proofreading' policy. Lunsford (1991) also contested that writing instruction is not just fixing the problems but a collaborative process that is socially negotiated through conversation.

Accordingly, the tutor's job of the writing center is about the writer, not the text. Success in tutoring does not mean an immediate improvement in a particular text of the student's paper. Their focus of writing instruction is to influence the writer in order to improve their writing. Text in this sense is just a medium that makes the conversation between the tutor and the writer possible. North (1982) argued that the individual piece of writing that the writer brings to the tutorial is a point on a continuum for them to become a better writer. The target for a change in the instruction is the writer, not the text and the instruction of the writing is done by talk, not by text. This is why the writing center puts the emphasis on the conversation of the writing instruction, which requires negotiation for its collaborative process.

Although the writing center has been established for the native English speakers in its inception of the institutional history, the major population who visits the writing center nowadays is second language learners. With the increasing number of international students in the universities in the U.S., more than half of the students who visit the writing center now are second language writers. For them, the writing center that provides help for writing for the students is attractive in terms of the efficiency and convenience as a place that the students can reach easily on campus with no extra charge. However, while many international students visit the writing center to get help with sentence-level assistance, proofreading, most writing center tutors are trained to prioritize larger

organizational issues over the minor mechanical issues (cited in Williams, 2008; Gilleppe & Lerner, 2004; McAndrew & Reigstad, 2002; Harris, 1986). The discrepancy between the Center's pedagogical approach and the international students' desire and expectation of the service that they would like to receive from the writing center creates tension between the tutor and the tutee during the tutorial. Sometimes, it even causes conflict (Kim, 2014).

2.2 Second Language Writers in the Writing Center

L2 learners who learned English for as an academic subject in the EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom environment have a tendency to view English grammar as concrete rules that they should master instead of understanding them functionally for the use of communication. Because their English learning experience in their home countries is heavily focused on rule-learning for examination in the decontextualized learning environment, their reading skills are more competent than their oral/aural skills for communication and their writing skills are still limited due the lack of the experience of writing in English (Dvorak, 2016; Linville, 2009; Reid, 1998).

So when they come to the writing center to get help for their writings, many L2 writers experience difficulty and frustration from the oral communication with the tutor that comes from the different instructional approach. The instruction through conversation during the tutorial in the writing center is challenging to the students who lack oral fluency and aural comprehension. Also for those who are familiar with the teacher-centered, remediation focused instruction for an examination, the process-focused instruction that includes multiple levels of writing stages in the face-to-face conversational settings with no written feedback, is not just stressful but confusing to understand the purpose of and the expected roles for the work of the instruction (Ferris, 2009, 2003). So once they learn that they cannot get the grammar check – proofreading – for their writing, it simply means that there is no benefit of the tutorial.

The debate between proofreading and no proofreading originated from the discrepancy between remediated-focused and collaborative-focused and lower-order concerns and higher-order concerns for writing instruction. It is not just an issue between the tutors and the tutees who do not know the Center's pedagogy. It is an issue about how to teach writing. Although the process-oriented instructional approach has been settled for the past several decades, issues and debates about the effectiveness of grammar instruction for L2 writers is still ongoing (Bell & Elledge, 2008; William & Severino, 2004; Thonus, 2004; Myers, 2003; William, 2002; Bookman, 2002; Cogie, Strain, & Lorinskas, 1999; Ronesi, 1995; Severino, 1993; Harris & Silva, 1993). The no proofreading policy is a procedural requirement for the process-oriented instruction that the contemporary writing center pursues and the debate of the effectiveness is the debate about explicit vs. implicit, directive vs. non-directive, product-oriented vs. process-oriented instructional styles (Kim, 2014).

The controversy about the instructional pedagogy of the writing center is also represented in the international writing center outside of the US. Whereas the writing center has its inception in the US in the 1930s, the writing centers in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Africa were developed in late 1990s. The international writing centers that followed the US model have reported struggles in adapting the process-oriented instructional pedagogy and collaborative peer tutoring (Lee, 2014). The students and faculty who have different social and educational backgrounds from the US have different notions of plagiarism and writing ability. The tutors in these writing centers are not peer tutors; they are usually faculty and the visitors to the writing center are mostly graduate students working on their theses or articles for publication. The work that the tutors in the Center provide is not just for help in writing but also for language support, which means, taking a non-directive approach and withholding knowledge from the tutees is not really considered effective. The tutors negotiate their practice based on the contextual needs that the tutee brings to the tutor (Bräuer, 2009; Harbord, 2003; Santa, 2002). The writing centers in South Korea (Turner, 2006), the Middle East (Ronesi, 2009; Eleftheriou, 2006) and South Africa (Archer, 2007) also reported difficulties in taking the process-oriented pedagogical approach in their work of the writing center. The tutors are not monolingual like in the US; they are multilingual. As it was in

Europe, the tutors in the writing center are not peers, but faculty. The population of the tutees is not consistent like in the US either. The tutees are graduate students or even faculty who prepare for publishing in a journal in English. Not just the tutees, but also the tutors themselves in the writing center are not familiar with the US-based instructional pedagogy of the writing center because the writing instruction in their local educational context is not like it is in the US. This means, many international students who come to the writing center in the US have no knowledge about the writing center itself and have no understanding about the different instructional styles of writing that the university writing center in the US provides.

Teaching 'how to write' face-to-face during the limited time through conversation, either in the conferences in the ESL classroom, or in tutorials in the writing center, is intriguing to investigate in terms of the various aspects inherent in the scene itself between the teacher/tutor as an expert and student/tutee as a novice. The debates about efficiency and effectiveness of methodology, philosophy, evaluation and measurement between product-focused and process-focused, teacher-centered and student-centered, directive and non-directive are vigorous and are still ongoing. However, very few studies have examined the actual scene of the tutorial instruction in terms of what actually happens during their talk and the interactions between the tutor and the tutee. Thus, instead of discussing or evaluating the effectiveness of the issues above, this paper will examine how the writing center frames the writing instruction in a way to be agreeable to the Center's pedagogy for the L2 tutees who do not have an understanding about the work of the writing center. In this regard, I will show how proofreading requests are made by the L2 tutee in the tutorial and how the L1 tutor handles them to move on to the work of the tutorial that the Center allows, in other words, how L2 writers solicit proofreading and how their solicitations are dealt with and steered by the L1 tutor in an acceptable way for the work of the tutorial.

3. Data and Method

The excerpts selected in this study were collected from the university writing center located in a major Midwestern university in the U.S. Eleven tutors (8 graduate students, 3 undergraduate students) who had two to three years of tutoring experience at the time the data were collected participated in this study. All were U.S. born, native English speakers. Thirty-six international students (17 graduate students, 19 undergraduate students) participated in this study. Thirty-three students were from East Asia (China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Vietnam), 1 student was from Estonia, 1 student was from Turkey and 2 were from Africa. Thirteen students were first time visitors, and twenty-three students were returning tutees.

With the IRB permission obtained in 2010, 36 tutorials (1,290 minutes) with the consent of the tutors and the tutees were videotaped. Semi-structured, informal interviews after the tutorials about their tutorial experience were conducted. Among the thirty-six videoed tutorials (1,290 minutes), the sequences that reveal the recurring patterns in the interactions of the requests for proofreading were selected for transcribing. Conversation Analysis was employed for an analytical framework and the close analysis of the talk-in-interaction during the tutorial through a thick description (Geertz, 1973) was provided and the selected sequences were transcribed following the conventions of transcript notation by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974). Specific attention was given to the sequential organization of the participants' talk-in-interactions that display the fine-grained details of the instructional work of the writing tutorial and the interactional competence of the participants that are accomplished and managed in its interactional context of the writing instruction.

4. Analysis

In the next section, I will introduce how the first-time visiting L2 writers make a request for proofreading and how the tutor manages the requests in a way to be acceptable to the Center's policy.

4.1 Making a Direct Request for Proofreading

The first-time visitors to the writing center are more likely to make a direct request for proofreading for their paper. Particularly L2 writers who have learned English as an academic subject for examinations, which must

have made them more sensitive and vulnerable to their grammatical errors, tend to think of their grammar mistakes on their paper as failure of their work. Cleaning up all the errors from their writing and making an error-free paper is like a guarantee of a good grade for the paper. Therefore, once they finish their draft of a paper, it is time to seek help to clean up the errors and mistakes for a better grade. In this regard, how their requests for proofreading are treated and what they experience in their first visit to the Center becomes critical for their next visit to the Center. Examining the interactional patterns of the first-time tutee's request for proofreading is important in order to understand what the tutee expects from the tutorial for their writing and to help the tutor to be prepared for the work with the first-time visiting tutees.

The tutee, an undergraduate South Korean student, in the next sequence is a first-time visitor to the Writing Center. He makes a direct request for a grammar check and the tutor refuses it. Then the tutor explains the 'No proofreading' policy and suggests what they can do instead of proofreading.

Excerpt 1. Request followed by immediate rejection and suggestion

- 22 ► C: I- I- I wanna: uh get tutorial (.1) wi- *the-* eh- cheking(.) e:h- grammar
 23 ► T: =Okay (.) We don't proofread (.1)
 24 ► U:m we can talk about grammar but we-I have to actually
 25 ► talk about (.) the grammar
 26 ► U:m (.3) Okay(.) Other than grammar(.)
 27 ► What ar- do you have any concerns about this particular paper?
 28 C: H:m hm (h) um- uh- usually u:h I- I'm compusing to use some-some
 29 verb grammar (.) u:m maybe (.5)
 30 Pas- e:h the pas- past (.) a:n da: presen(.) an puture
 31 T: Um-hm

The tutee makes a direct request for proofreading in line 22, asking to check the grammar for his paper. The tutor rejects the request immediately and tells him what they can do with the grammar instead of proofreading, which is "talk about the grammar" (line 24). Then the tutor asks a new question about what the tutee wants for the tutorial. This is a routine opening question for a tutorial. The request for proofreading that the tutee made in line 22 was nullified by this new opening question, "What ar- do you have any concerns about this particular paper?" (line 27). The tutee now is back in a position to make a new request for what he wants from the tutorial. What the tutee asked for, proofreading, was rejected and he needs to make a new one. The tutee revises his request and asks about 'verb tense' (lines 28-30) as advised by the tutor in lines 24-25, "talk about (.) grammar". The tutor gives his receipt for agreement to the tutee in line 31. The request for proofreading that was rejected initially was revised as a way that the tutor can accept for the work of the tutorial. Now they can move on to the work that the Center can allow.

The first time tutee in the next sentence is an undergraduate student from Hong Kong. She asks the tutor for help with grammar and syntax for her paper.

Excerpt 2. Request followed by delayed rejection and suggestion

- 5 ► C: I just want you to like to see if my grammar and syntax is fine
 6 T: [Okay
 7 C: [Because this is my weakest point (.h)(.h)
 8 T: Okay(.) How long is the paper?
 9 C: Hm it's over five pages(.)
 10 T: =Okay
 11 C: =it is pretty long one
 12 ► T: =Okay well usually here we try not to (.) spend so much time just
 13 ► individual working on grammar mistakes
 14 C: [Hm hm
 15 ► T: [But we can take a look at your paper and maybe if there are some(.2)
 16 ► patterns(.)
 17 C: Okay

- 18 ► T: of some mistakes or issues (.) then we can talk about those.
19 C: Alrighty(.

This first time tutee makes a direct request for help with grammar and syntax in line 5, which is a request for proofreading, and she introduces her concerns about grammar and syntax as her weakest point. The tutor, however, delays his answer to the request for proofreading till line 12. The sequence between lines 8 and 11 is an embedded sequence asking the number of pages of the paper. Having received the estimation, the tutor now gives his answer to the tutee, “we try not to (.) spend so much time just individual working on grammar mistakes”(lines 12-13) To the tutee’s request for proofreading in line 5, the tutor delayed his answer for rejection till line 12.

His delayed rejection, which shows his reluctance to the request that the tutee made, is followed immediately by a suggestion of what they can do instead in next turn: “take a look at your[the tutee’s] paper” to see if there are some “patterns” instead of working on the individual grammar mistakes (lines 15-16). The tutor’s suggestion of what they can do follows in line 18 as “we[the tutor and the tutee] can talk about those [patterns of some mistakes or issues]”.

The tutee’s request for proofreading was rejected; however, the tutor provides a reformulation of what they can do instead for the work of tutorial, such as “talking about the patterns of some mistakes or issues”. The way that the tutor reformulates the tutee’s request in lines 12-13 reveals that the tutor strategically downgrades working on individual grammar mistakes by saying “spending so much time”. By downgrading the effectiveness of working on individual grammar mistakes, proofreading and providing a reformulation of the tutee’s request for proofreading, the tutor steers the direction of the work of the tutorial in a way that can be acceptable to the Center’s pedagogy and instructs the tutee in what the Center can do to help her writing in terms of grammar and syntax instead of providing proofreading.

The tutee in next sequence is from South Korea. This is her first visit to the Center and she is making a request for proofreading for her paper.

Excerpt 3. Request followed by half acceptance/half rejection with suggestions

- 90 ► C: Could you also check my *grammar* for (.5) *like words or grammar*?
91 ► T: (.hh) U:m yeah we can do that (.) but we don’t really edit here(.)
92 like we don’t
93 C: =Uhh
94 T: just look at your paper (.) and tell you (.) what to fix
95 C: =Uhh
96 ► T: = but if you have(.) u: m question specific questions about things (.)
97 ► I can help with those things
98 C: =U::hh *okay*

In their previous work before this sequence, the tutee made her request about APA style citation for her paper, which was accepted by the tutor for the work of the tutorial. Here in this sequence, she makes an additional request for checking grammar in line 90, “Could you also check my *grammar* for (.5) *like words or grammar*?” She belittles her request for proofreading with a soft voiced “*grammar* for (.5) *like words or grammar*” and makes it secondary after her main request about APA citation style was accepted. Her soft voice shows her uncertainty about whether her request will be accepted. The tutor’s answer in line 91 is delayed with the filler, “U:m”, which is a dispreferred response (Pomerantz 1978, 1984; Sacks, 1987; Koshik, 2005). This delayed response shows the tutor’s reluctance to the request that is not allowed by the Center’s policy. The tutor accepts the request reluctantly, however, with the clarification of what we do as “but we don’t really edit here (.)” in lines 91-92. The tutor’s reluctant acceptance of the request for proofreading is followed by the clarification of what they don’t do, ‘editing’, in the Center, which is to instruct what is acceptable and what is not acceptable for the work of the tutorial. This is an instruction about what the Center can do for the work of the tutorial, which is a part of their instructional curriculum about *what* the Center does. This instruction comes for

the first time visitor who asks for the help that the Center does not provide.

Three different versions of work are going on in their talk so far: the tutee's request for checking grammar, what the tutor accepts as what they can do for it, and the editing that the Center doesn't provide. None of the versions of work has clarified concretely what they are like. Her definition of the work that is allowable for the tutorial follows in lines 94, 96-97. Instead of editing the paper, the tutor can look at the paper and "tell" what to fix and if the tutee has specific questions, then the tutor can help. The tutee gives the control over her paper to the tutor by asking to "check grammar", which is yielding her ownership over her paper, but the tutor gives the ownership back to the tutee so that the tutee can take control over the problems of her paper by asking "if you have...specific questions about things I [the tutor] can help with those things" (lines 96-97). This is an instruction about *how* they can work for the problems that the tutee brought about 'grammar' in a way that the Center can allow.

The instruction for *what* the Center does to help with the tutee's writing and *how* the Center works for the tutee's writing is provided to the first time visitors before they start the actual work of their writings. Only when they, the tutor and the tutee agree with 'what' they do and 'how' they do it for the work of the tutorial, can they move on to the actual work of writing for the tutorial. In other words, only when the instruction about 'what' they do and 'how' they do it for the work of the tutorial, which is an instruction about the curriculum that the Center offers, is done successfully, can they start the actual work of writing instruction for the tutee's paper.

When the tutor receives the forbidden request for proofreading from the tutee, the tutor accepts it, but not as the way that the tutee asked, but as the way that the Center can allow. The tutor transforms the tutee's request that is forbidden to provide during the tutorial into a form that can be agreeable for the work of the tutorial that the Center can allow, and gives the ownership back to the tutee over her paper. By giving the authority over her paper back to the tutee, the tutor straightens up the misperceptions that the first time tutee might have brought with her proofreading request about who is responsible for the work of writing and what the Center can do to help the tutee for her writing.

The tutor in excerpt 1 made an immediate rejection to the proofreading request and advised what they can do instead, which helped the tutee to revise his request to "talk about grammar" in a way to be an acceptable to the Center's policy. The tutor in excerpt 2 delayed his rejection to the request for proofreading by estimating the amount of the paper to work on, which shows his reluctance to say 'No' directly to the first-time visitor. His rejection to the proofreading request is followed by the reformulation of what they can do for the work with "grammar and syntax" without violating the Center's policy. The tutor in excerpt 3 transformed the tutee's request for proofreading in a way to be acceptable to the Center by clarifying what the Center can do, which is, telling the tutee what to fix and what not to fix, which is editing. The tutor also made it clear that the tutee is responsible for her paper and has control over her paper and what the tutor can do to help the tutee with her paper.

These first time visiting tutees, L2 writers who are not familiar with the Center's "No proofreading policy", make a direct request for proofreading that violates the Center's policy and the tutor takes the responsibility for instructing them what is acceptable and what is not acceptable for the work of the tutorial. This instruction becomes the first task that the tutor needs to achieve to start the work of the tutorial. By advising what the Center can and cannot do and reformulating the forbidden request into an acceptable way to the Center, the tutor instructs the tutee what type of instruction can be offered to the tutee and steers the instruction to the way that the Center pursues. When this instruction about the Center's pedagogical philosophy works successfully, they can move on to the actual work of the writing tutorial with the tutee's paper.

4.2 Making a request for proofreading as routine as possible

Returning tutees have knowledge about the policy and pedagogy of the writing center from their experience of tutorials. They bring their requests for proofreading as well but they make their requests differently from the

first-time visiting tutees. From the knowledge that they gained from their experiences of the tutorial, they know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable for the work of the tutorial. In other words, they know how to make their request for proofreading that is forbidden to the work of tutorial to be acceptable to the Center. Thus, there is no need for the tutor to instruct the returning tutees in what is acceptable and what is not acceptable for the work of the tutorial. If the tutee knows *what* to work with and *how* to work for the work of the tutorial, it means that they know the instructional curriculum of the writing center. There is no need for instruction for it. They can just move on for the actual work with the tutee's paper for the tutorial.

The next excerpt shows how the returning L2 writer makes her request for proofreading to be acceptable to the Center. This experienced L2 tutee makes her request for proofreading as routine as possible to be unmarked and the L1 tutor handles the request for the work of the tutorial.

Excerpt 4. Making a request as routine as possible with coded terms

- 11 ► T: Okay. What kinds of things are (.2) you (.) especially concerned about?
12 ► C: =Ah- I just interested in like flo:ws (.1)*and* punctuation?
13 ► T: =And ()? Okay
14 ► So (.1) grammar flow(.) punctuation(.) clarity //something like that*?
15 C: //Yes ((nodding))
16 ► T: =Okay

This returning tutee is an undergraduate student from South Korea. The tutor asks the tutee what her concern is about her writing in line 11, which is a routine opening question for the work of the tutorial. The tutee replies by latch, "I just interested in like flo:ws(.) *and* punctuation?" in line 12. The latched reply to the tutor's question of how she wants to be helped shows the readiness of the tutee for the tutor's question. The returning tutee knew that the question 'why you are here' was coming and was prepared to provide the acceptable answer for the work of the tutorial.

The tutee elongates the term "flo:ws" with stress, and adds "punctuation" with a soft voiced *and* in a rising tone. Instead of asking for 'checking grammar' or 'proofreading', her elongated "flow:s" with stress on it shows her competence and expertise in knowing what to ask for that can be acceptable to the tutor. However, the additional request for "punctuation" which was connected with the soft voiced *and* shows her uncertainty about the request because it is clearly a term for asking proofreading. This experienced tutee mitigates the possibility of potential rejection to the request for proofreading by adding the modifier "just" in the beginning of her request and downplays what she asks for – proofreading- as unmarked, and makes her request as routine as possible with the formulaic term, "flo:ws".

Flow is one of the coded terms that the returning tutees use to formulate what they want for their paper. It includes the issues of structure, organization and logical coherence of the paper. It is not to ask for working on the minor individual grammar mistakes, but rather fits the Center's work in what they can provide to help the tutee for their writing. The term is acceptable for the tutor and the work of the Writing Center and the returning tutees know it from their experience. However, despite the confident use of the coded term, "flo:ws" which is routinely acceptable, she makes her request for "punctuation" in a rising tone with the soft voiced "and", which reveals her uncertainty of its acceptability for her request.

The experienced L1 tutor receives the request that includes the routine coded term with the sophisticated tone of expertise. She latches the tutee in line 13 with acceptance and reformulates the request in her own terms more precisely in line 14, "grammar flow(.) punctuation(.) clarity". As soon as the tutor formulates, "grammar flow(.) punctuation(.) clarity", the tutee overlaps the tutor with the agreement of "Yes" and nodding in line 15. The tutor gives a confirmation by latch to the tutee's agreement in line 16.

Looking into their talk-in-interactions, most of their turns are latched by the next turn, which shows that they are very skillful in doing this work – making a routine request for the tutorial and accepting it by

reformulating it clearly. Their talk in turns is routine as usual, which they must have done many times before, and for which there is nothing new, just the ordinary. Both the tutor and the tutee know what is acceptable for the work of the tutorial and have their own understandings of how the tutorial will move on. There is no need for any instruction about ‘what’ the Center can do and ‘how’ they do it for the work of the tutorial. They can just move on to their actual work of the tutorial.

The next excerpt is about a returning L2 writer who came from China. He is an undergraduate student and came to the Center with the paper from the class English 110. English 110 is the first mainstream English course that is required for both native and non-native English speakers.

Excerpt 5. Tutor formulates the request for proofreading as a routine work

- 1 T: So how has your work been coming?
 2 C: ((The tutee is searching his paper from the bag)) (.3) Excuse me?
 3 T: =Uh- Overall ((gesturing with hands)) how’s your work been coming?
 4 C: =Oh I think it’s not bad
 5 T: =Pretty good ((nodding)) *Okay*
 6 C: Hmmm uh This one is (.2) e:h (.2) very(.2) e:h very rough draft(.2)
 7 The- It only has(.3) introduction paragraph
 8 a summary of my (.3) e:h- primary source
 9 T: Ok
 10 C: ((The tutee talks about his draft to the tutor in lines 10-27.))
 28 T: Alright(.) then what primary source did you choose?
 29 C: Oh(.2) it’s um(.3) it’s a movie called *Eyes Wide Shut*
 30 T: Okay
 31 C: directed by(.2) Stanley Kubrick(.) Have you heard of it?
 32 T: Okay (.) You know (.2) I’ve heard of the film but I haven’t seen it
 33 C: Ah ((nodding))
 34 T: ((T, nodding))
 35 (0.8)
 36 C: ((C nods and closes his page of his paper))
 37 ► T: (.hh) Okay so (.) as far as things I should keep an eye out for
 38 ► is it still pretty much like clarity: and grammar type of stuff //or
 39 C: //yep
 40 T: =Yea (.) Okay

After greeting with each other in lines 1-5, the returning tutee takes his paper out of his bag and begins to talk about it to the tutor. Without waiting any moment, he begins to introduce his paper and shows the part he has worked on, which is the introduction paragraph (lines 6-8). The tutor gives him a continuer (line 9). In lines 10-27 that are omitted in this excerpt, he provided the information about the topic and the organization of the paper, how much he worked on it, at which stage he is now in his writing, etc. This experienced tutee knows what information to provide for the work of the tutorial and provides it to the tutor without assistance. After he introduces his primary source, which is the movie (lines 29 and 31) “*Eyes Wide Shut*”, he asks if the tutor heard of the movie. The tutor says no and the tutee gives her a receipt (line 33) with nodding. The tutor nods as well for a receipt in line 34. There is a 0.8 second pause that doesn’t belong to anyone. The tutee nods again and closes the page of his paper (line 36). The introduction of the paper is done. The tutee provides all the information that they may need for the work of the tutorial. By giving a receipt in line 33 with nodding and the 0.8 second pause to wait for a tutor’s response in line 35, the tutee shows that his part was done. In the next line, he nods again and closes his paper, which is to show that his part of work – providing the necessary information for the work of the tutorial – is over.

The tutor sees the tutee has finished introducing his paper for the tutorial. Before moving on to the next course of action for the tutorial, the tutor makes sure of how the tutee wants to be helped for his paper by formulating it as “clarity: and grammar type of stuff” in lines 37-38. It is a formulation for proofreading, however, not as a way to violate the Center’s policy but as a way to be agreeable to the work of the tutorial. The

way that the tutor provides a formulation for the tutee indicates that the request for proofreading is not new, rather it is a routine request that the tutee brings. It is common and ordinary work that they do every day for the work of tutorial in the writing center.

The tutor initiates a formulation of what the tutee routinely brings to the Center while still being open to find another possibility for any other specific request by adding the “or” at the end of her formulation for the tutee in line 38. The tutee agrees with the tutor immediately after “grammar type of stuff” in overlap and it is confirmed by the tutor by latch (lines 39-40).

This indicates that the tutor and the tutee know what to do for the work of the tutorial. What the tutor formulates in lines 37-38 is simply to make sure of their understanding with each other about the work they are going to do. The following latched agreement from both the tutee and the tutor in lines 39-40 also shows how routine their talks are. There is nothing marked at all. It is as ordinary as they must have done every time when they do the tutorials. The tutor moves on without instruction for clarifying “what” to do and “how to work”. There is no need for the instruction.

This excerpt shows the proofreading request is not new to the tutor at all. Rather, the tutor knows that is the usual concerns that the tutees bring with their papers and expects to work on the issues. Working on the proofreading issues of grammar, punctuation and clarity is not something that they make a deal with; it is rather the routine work of the tutorial that they do every day in the writing center. It is not what they don't do. The issue is ‘how’ they do it. Returning tutees know how to ask for help in a way to be acceptable to the Center from their experience and the way they introduce their paper shows their knowledge and expertise about the work of the Center. When the tutor sees their expertise, they move on to the work of tutorial smoothly. This is how they work for the tutorial everyday in the writing center.

The returning tutee in next excerpt is a Japanese graduate student. Without any initiating question from the tutor, the tutee begins to talk about his paper. He introduces the structure and organization of his paper and shows the part that he is working on.

Excerpt 6. Displaying the old-hand expertise as an experienced tutee

- 1 C: This part of thing um(.2) basically I'm(.) writing a: started to
2 writing () like this?
3 T: =Okay
4 C: This (.1) definitely are my chapter (.)(.hh) u:h(.) I've uh-
5 T: So which chapter is this- the: is this the- which chapter is it?
6 C: Oh i:t'ss (.) second third chapter
7 T: =Okay Okay
8 C: =Uh(.) each chapter need to have introduction// (it's of them)
9 T: //Yes ((T, nodding))
10 ► C: =And(.) Most of them are like (.2) introduction
11 ► C: and I'm still moving forward but the (.hhh) () grammar(.)
12 ► and the uh te:nse(.) and this(.hhh)
13 T: =Okay
14 C: So:
15 T: [Alright
16 C: [And some of the (.) specific (.) questions I have(.) for example (.1)
17 we can(.) probably(.) read through it (.) and sometimes I had a-
18 I can point out(.2) wanting to say(.) alright like this(.)
19 but I have difficulti:: () things
20 T: =Sure (.1) (.hh) (.3)
21 Okay well- uh uh- Three things one(.) we can absolutely work that way
22 and that's gonna- be just fine (.1) U:m in terms of you (.) saying (.)
23 what you meant to say (.) and (.) me trying to help you (.1) get there
24 ► U:m secondly we do::n't proofread
25 ► C: =Alright //Right ((C, nodding))

26 T: //Um(.) Okay(.) We're cool with that

The tutee introduces his paper in lines 1-2 and the tutor gives him a continuer by latch in line 3. The tutee continues introducing his paper in line 4 and the tutor interrupts the tutee to make sure what chapter he is talking about in line 5. The tutee answers and the tutor accepts it by latch in lines 6-7. The tutee latches the tutor in the next line and continues introducing his paper. The tutee continuously latches the tutor, which shows that he has things to explain about his paper in order to ask help from the tutor. The tutor sees that as well and he waits for the tutee to formulate what he wants by giving him a continuer with agreement overlapping with the tutee in line 9. Both know what they are moving forward to, which is a formulation of what the tutee wants from the tutorial. They latch each other continuously and overlap for agreement. In lines 10-12, the tutee finally pronounces, "I'm still moving forward but the(.hhh) grammar (.) and the uh te:nse(.) and this (.hhh)". Although it was not formulated as a full, complete sentence, what the tutee wants from the tutor is to check his grammar and tense for his paper. The tutor gives him a receipt by latch in line 13. What they have been rushing to move forward to hear was finally announced, "grammar and tense", which is proofreading. However, other than the quick receipt in line 13, the tutor does not initiate any comment. The tutee announced what help he wants from the tutorial. The tutor doesn't show any action about the tutee's request. Instead of just waiting for the tutor's response, this experienced tutee initiates the next turn in line 14 "So:" with an elongation to figure out the next move for the action. Both the tutor and the tutee initiate the next turn simultaneously. As the tutor also seems to be waiting for the tutee to make a complete formulation of what he wants, the tutor stops his turn and the tutee continues. The tutee in lines 16-19, makes a suggestion of how to work on his problems for the work of tutorial.

Suggesting how to work for the tutorial is usually a tutor's job. But this experienced L2 tutee knows what the routine work of the tutorial is like. There is no need to just wait for the tutor to begin the work of the tutorial. The tutee skips the tutor's reply to *what* to do for the work of the tutorial, which is not needed for him. He moves on to the next course of action, which is about *how* to work for the tutorial. Instead of waiting for the tutor to suggest how to work on his paper, the tutee himself makes a suggestion for a next move.

As the tutor has seen the tutee make a suggestion of how to work, the tutor latches him with agreement in line 20. The tutor now sees what is going on from the tutee's side. He hasn't agreed or confirmed anything about 'what' to work, or 'how' to work about the tutee's paper for the work of the tutorial yet. What the tutor has heard about the concerns that the tutee brought with his paper is just "grammar and tense". But the tutee is already moving on to "how" to work. The tutor now wants to clarify things about *what* to work and *how* to work before they move to the next course of action for the tutorial. He wants to make sure if they need the instruction of *what* and *how* for the work of the tutorial. First, the tutor gives him an acceptance to what the tutee asked about the "grammar and tense", which is an acceptance to *what* to work and he announces, "We do::n't proofread" (lines 21-24).

The tutor accepts that he can help the tutee with "grammar and tense" for his paper but rejects the request for proofreading. The tutor wants to clarify the difference between helping the tutee with grammar and tense and proofreading, which is the important first instruction that the tutor is responsible to teach in order to start the actual work of instruction on the tutee's paper. The tutor clarifies that "we [the writing center] do::n't proofread" by elongating the sound in line 24. The experienced L2 tutee sees what the tutor tries to explain – what is acceptable and what is not acceptable for the work of the tutorial - which he doesn't need because it is clear to him. The tutee latches him with repeated agreement and nodding (line 25). It shows that the no proofreading policy of what is acceptable for the work of the tutorial is not new to him and there is no need of instruction for it. He claims his expertise as an experienced tutee who knows clearly about the policy of the Center. The tutor also sees the tutee's strong acknowledgement about his understanding of the 'no proofreading policy'. The tutee's strong claim about his understanding of the instructional curriculum of the writing center is acknowledged by the tutor in line 26. They are free from the instruction about what the Center does for the work of the tutorial. Now they can move on to the next course of action for the tutorial.

The possible miscommunication that might have occurred about proofreading is solved and agreed to by each. There is no misunderstanding on the *what* and *how* to do the work of the tutorial. Both show their understanding of what is the acceptable work of the Center and what is not, and agree on how to work for the tutorial. It is clear for both of them.

We have examined how returning L2 tutees ask for proofreading and how it is handled by the L1 tutor. Although they bring the same request for proofreading, the returning tutees made their requests different from the first-time visiting tutees. They made a request in an agreeable way to the tutor as routine as possible that shows their knowledge and expertise to the work of the tutorial in the writing center. Also their requests for proofreading were handled by the tutor as one of the routine requests that they encounter everyday in the writing center. Both the tutor and the experienced tutee have a mutual understanding about what the work of the tutorial is like and how it moves on for the work of the tutorial. For both the first time visiting tutees and returning tutees, the request for proofreading is just one of the routine works that they do every day in the writing center for the work of the tutorial.

5. Findings

5.1 Proofreading VS Discussing the Grammar Issues

As shown from the excerpts, the request for proofreading – working with grammar on the paper – occurs all the time during the tutorial as a routine request that the tutor encounters everyday in the writing center. The tutor knows that the request for proofreading comes to them anyway because it is what many tutees are concerned about for their writing, and they are prepared to handle the requests for the work of the tutorial. However, if they know that the request for proofreading will come up in the tutorial, and if they accept the request for proofreading for their work of the tutorial, why do they announce the “No proofreading” as a major policy of the writing center? What does the no proofreading policy really mean? What is the difference between “proofreading” and “discussing the grammar issues” during the tutorial?

This is not a simple question because the difference between “proofreading” and “discussing the grammar issues” signifies the transition of the concept of literacy education. It is a question about the philosophy of the writing instruction between the traditional and the contemporary writing center. It is a clash between traditional instruction vs. contemporary instruction; remediation process vs. collaborative process; product-focused vs. process-focused; teacher-centered vs. student-centered; and text-based vs. conversation-based.

The no proofreading policy does not mean that working with grammar for the tutee’s paper is not important or ineffective to work during the tutorial. It is more likely a question about *how* they work for writing instruction, rather than *what* they work with for the tutee’s paper. It is about the style of instruction, rather than the content of the instruction. The writing center still works with the grammar issues of the tutee’s paper and instructs to make their writing better as well as instructing to make them better writers. What matters more is about how the request is made by the tutee. If the tutee knew what is acceptable and what is not acceptable for the work of the tutorial, the way they ask for it would be different. So the tutor tries to find out if the tutee knows the work of the writing center by introducing the “no proofreading” policy. By introducing this policy, the tutor measures the tutee’s knowledge and experience about the Center’s policy and pedagogy. If they have the knowledge and experience of the writing center, they would know what the work of the tutorial is like. This means that they will work with the tutor for their writing through talk with collaborative negotiation instead of trying to get their paper cleaned for free by not doing any work for it.

5.2 What the tutors do for the ‘Request of Proofreading’

Thus instructing this new approach for the work of tutorial is the first task that the tutor needs to accomplish. If the tutor fails to achieve the mutual agreement about *what* to work and *how* to work for the tutorial, i.e., if the

tutor and the tutee approach the work of the tutorial from two opposite directions: process-focused conversation based instruction (tutor) and the product-focused text based instruction (tutee), there is no doubt that there will be a cacophony in their work of the tutorial. This is why how to deal with the request for proofreading in the beginning five minutes of the tutorial is significant. When the forbidden request for proofreading comes to the tutor for the work of the tutorial, the tutor sees it coming and takes an action to transform the request in a way to be acceptable to the Center.

If the tutee does not follow the way the tutor leads for the work of the tutorial, they would either leave the cubicle immediately or stop coming to the Center. Chances for improvement for their writing from the tutorial will disappear as well. This is why the tutor works hard to prevent this thing from happening and tries to achieve the mutual understanding and agreement for the acceptable course of action for the tutorial that doesn't violate the Center's policy. Thus, the tutor's rejection to the request for proofreading is not a rejection for the work of the tutorial. The rejection is to instruct the new instructional curriculum of *what we do* and their pedagogical philosophy of *how we work* for writing in the writing center. In this way, dealing with the proofreading request becomes a part of the instructional curriculum of the contemporary writing center.

6. Conclusion

L2 writers or first time visiting tutees who have no understanding or experience of the conversation based, process-oriented writing instruction require instruction about the writing center's pedagogical approach and the philosophical background of the writing tutorial they provide. The actual instruction about the pedagogy of the writing tutorial for the new comers (L2 writers and first time visiting tutees) occurs in the first tutorial session and is provided by the individual tutors.

The process-oriented approach is not a new instructional approach in the US. It has been popularized as a major philosophy of writing instruction and settled successfully in the field of writing instruction for the past several decades. However, it is very new to the international students who are now the major customers of the writing center in the US. Many international students from Asia, South America, and the Middle East are not familiar with the process-oriented approach and they are not even fully equipped with oral/aural skills to conduct a conversation-based instruction. For them, to work properly and effectively with the tutor to improve their writing proficiency, they need 'time' and 'practice' to work with the tutor as expected, as well as to build the oral/aural proficiency to receive successfully the instruction that the Center offers. If they are disappointed with the first tutorial session by not getting what they expected – proofreading – and never come back, they lose a chance to improve their writing skills.

In this light, the first experience of the writing tutorial and how their proofreading requests are dealt with are important; and each individual tutor is in charge of instructing the major curriculum of the writing center - the 'contemporary process-oriented instructional approach' being against the 'traditional product-oriented instructional approach' by rejecting the 'proofreading request' and offering to 'discuss and talk about grammar issues'. 'Discussing the grammar issues' instead of 'proofreading' describes what the work of the tutorial is like, which already signifies the nature of the 'interactive work of the tutorial by talk'. The solution for the problem is not just offered as ready-made answers for the tutee. The solution of the problems in the text and the assignment should be developed through negotiation and be agreed upon by each other collaboratively. First time visiting tutees, particularly L2 tutees who have no understanding about the instructional philosophy need an instruction about the new way of learning through talk. What the tutors try to instruct during their first visit is how to work with the tutor in the center. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Both the tutors and the tutees need 'time' and 'practice' to be socialized with the new way of instructional styles and the different linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds. By knowing these differences of L2 writers, the writing center is able to negotiate and utilize the instructional strategies by mixing and adjusting the traditional and contemporary styles.

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Appendix

Transcript Notations

- (.) micro pause
- (2.0) Timed silence within or between adjacent utterances
- // Notes the point at which one speaker overlaps another.
- = Notes the ending of one utterance and the beginning of a next without gap or overlap.
- Underlining indicates stress
- (.h) Indicates an in-breath
- (h) Indicates out breath
- Hyphens indicate a word cut off in its production
- * * Notes soft speaking
- : A colon indicates a sound stretch on a word or word portion
- () Empty indicates an unheard utterance
- (()) Double parentheses contain descriptions of the scene
- [Left bracket indicates a simultaneous start by two speakers
-] Right bracket indicates two utterances ending simultaneously

