A Study of EFL Tutor-Student Interaction in Writing Tutorials: Exploring Discourse Features and Student Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the discourse features and attitudes of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) college students during one-on-one writing tutorials, framing the interaction within Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory for collaborative learning. Existing research primarily focuses on first language (L1) or English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts, leaving a critical gap in the understanding of Asian students in foreign language settings. To address this, we analyzed the dynamics between an EFL peer tutor and nine sophomore English majors across two argumentative essays. Dialogues from two individual tutorials per student were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for interaction patterns, supplemented by student interviews and post-questionnaires. Findings indicate that EFL students typically exhibited passive interactions compared to the tutor, who employed a diverse range of discourse features. Nevertheless, certain students showed potential for making tutorials more collaborative and student-centered. Student attitudes varied; most preferred the tutor to lead, but a minority favored a more collaborative partnership. The success of writing tutorials hinged on students' expectations, personal preferences, and learning styles, underscoring the necessity for tutors to adapt their interaction styles for each student. Findings highlight the need for balanced tutor scaffolding that fosters student agency and engagement in EFL writing contexts. They support the importance of creating a collaborative learning atmosphere and confirm the positive impact of peer tutoring on student writing.

Keywords: peer tutoring, discourse features, tutor-student interaction, writing tutorial, EFL writing

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1 INTRODUCTION

Effective English writing instruction demands personalized support, a necessity often unmet by traditional whole-class instruction. Writing tutorials are a key solution: they are individualized, process-focused discussions that help tutors grasp student intentions (Murray, 1985; Rose, 1982) and support diverse learners (Lerner, 2005). Grounded in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory, this approach utilizes scaffolding to provide customized support, fostering students' eventual learning independence. Research confirms that peer interaction enhances writing accuracy and responsibility, while simultaneously decreasing instructor workload and promoting student development (Blake, 1992; Gholami Pasand & Tahriri, 2017). Consistent tutor support is also linked to improved student engagement (Consalvo & Maloch, 2015; Young & Miller, 2004). However, the dynamics of these interactions are significantly shaped by cultural and personal factors, including student backgrounds and expectations (Ahn & Witmer, 2009; Lin, 2014).

Research into writing tutorials has often explored the impact of cultural background on interaction patterns. Several studies indicate that learners from diverse cultural backgrounds possess distinct preferred interaction styles. For instance, Asian students often participate less actively, a tendency attributed to their deference to and expectations of tutor authority (Black, 1998; Liu, 2009a, 2009b; Thonus, 1999).

Furthermore, the research examining the direct effect of verbal interactions on students' revisions has yielded mixed findings. Goldstein and Conrad (1990) observed variation in students' discourse even within a student-centered framework; specifically, two students actively engaged while one remained dependent on the tutor, despite the tutor interacting with them similarly. Conversely, Jacobs and Karliner's (1977) work suggested that students did not necessarily produce more revisions when tutors adopted a directive, leading role in the writing tutorials.

These mixed results emphasize the importance of tailoring instruction to individual needs. As Yang (2022) found, the design of writing tutorials should be customized based on a student's proficiency level. For example, upper-intermediate students tend to favor suggestions focusing on content-related issues, while students with lower English proficiency require support across both content and language-related aspects. Ultimately, the structure of the tutorial and the student's language proficiency can significantly influence the level of student participation, which is why each tutor-student interaction remains inherently unique.

Weigle and Nelson (2004) further suggested that tutors' roles and beliefs can influence the nature of negotiation in writing tutorials. Therefore, it remains uncertain whether Asian students' interaction patterns and perceptions are the same when working with different tutors. Many studies have investigated writing tutorials; however, few have examined the tutor-student discourse analysis in Taiwanese tertiary EFL settings. To bridge the gap, this study aims to

investigate how tutor-student discourse unfolds during EFL writing tutorials and how students' participation is shaped by tutor guidance, interaction patterns, and individual learner factors. It further examines how peer tutoring affects students' engagement and their attitudes in learning English writing.

2   METHODOLOGY

Nine English-major sophomores (eight females and one male)

from National Kaohsiung Normal University (NKNU), most of whom were at the intermediate level and one at the high-intermediate level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), participated in the study. All were enrolled in English Writing (II) and had no prior experience with tutor-led tutorials held by a graduate student majoring in English. The graduate student worked as a teaching assistant and was considered a peer tutor rather than a teacher during the class. She was responsible for checking students' writing assignments before they handed them in to the writing instructor. With students' consent, data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and writing tutorials. Questionnaires were adapted (cf. Lin, 2014; Liu, 2009a; Liu, 2009b) and reviewed by one EFL writing expert for content validity. During the 18-week semester, students completed pre- and post-tutorial questionnaires (Appendices 1 and 2). Since the students had never attended tutor-student writing tutorials before, they were provided with some guidance in preparation for the upcoming tutorials. Based on appendices 3 and 4, students received training on the purpose and structure of successful writing tutorials (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2008), practiced sharing their writing ideas by using a General English Proficiency Test (GEPT) high-intermediate writing sample (Chu, 2008), and role-played with their classmates using models from Leisner (2011) and Neubert and McNelis (1990). After students got familiar with the tutoring procedures, they had to make an appointment with the tutor. In total, they participated in two tutor-led tutorials, conducted in weeks 6 and 14, followed the tutor-student tutorial form (Appendix 5) based on Glenn and Goldthwaite (2008), Leisner (2011), and Murray (1979). The form illustrated how the tutor conducted the writing tutorials including the opening, middle, and closing sessions of a tutoring process. Before starting writing tutorials, the tutor recorded students' writing issues using a student recordkeeping form (Appendix 6) adapted from Leisner (2011).

The purpose of the form was to help the tutor understand the difficulties or problems students encountered while writing their argumentative essays. In other words, it could make the tutor know how to assist students with their English writing. Finally, they participated in interviews (Appendix 7), adapted from Lee (2008), Liu (2009a, 2009b), Lin (2014), and McLaughlin (2009). Eighteen recordings of tutor-student writing tutorials were transcribed and coded based

on Goldstein and Conrad's (1990) tutor-student interactive framework for four discourse features: nomination (similar to topic discussion), turns (speaker changes), questions (asked by both the tutor and the students), and negotiation (questions used to confirm the understanding of revisions). The coding was then checked by the other rater for consistency. To explore the nature of tutor-student collaborative interaction in depth, this study employed a qualitative case study design, supported by descriptive quantitative analysis of interaction features. The questionnaire and interview data of writing tutorials were analyzed to inform EFL writing instruction.

3 RESULTS

To better understand tutor–student interaction, the analysis examined the number and percentage of nominations, turns, questions, and negotiations during each tutorial. Overall, the tutor played a primary role in guiding the discussions and evaluating students' essays, reflecting students' limited self-regulation in writing. Nevertheless, the data revealed variations in student participation: while some students contributed actively to topic initiation and questioning, others tended to follow the tutor's lead. These differences suggest that discourse dynamics are influenced by learners' confidence, familiarity with argumentative writing, and individual communicative styles.

3.1 Nomination

Nomination, the introduction of new topics, was mostly tutor-led, accounting for 60.00–88.46% of nominations per tutorial (8.50 to 29.50). Tables 1 and 2 showed that students contributed 11.54%–40.00%, mostly following the tutor. Student H was notably active, making 23 nominations in her first tutorial to seek feedback on her argument structure.

An Excerpt from Student H's First Writing Tutorial

T   Yeah! I will think that if the video games are violent or not.

H   So I should briefly introduce the content of video games? And then?

T   Yeah! You have to mention it or I don't know about it. The reason is that I don't play video games. But you are right. If people play video games, they know them, but I do not play video games. Therefore, I will have questions.

From the tutor–student excerpt above, it is evident that the peer tutor's knowledge of the students' writing topics could lead her to adopt different interactional styles. Specifically, the tutor acted as a reader to probe into the students' writing ideas. By doing so, a collaborative tutor–student learning atmosphere was harmoniously established.

Table 1: Tutor's and Students' Mean Number of Discourse Features per Tutorial

Discourse features per Tutorial (Number)	Students								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Tutor's Nominations	20.00	23.00	8.50	9.00	18.50	27.50	22.50	29.50	13.00
Students' Nominations	7.00	3.00	4.50	6.00	4.00	6.00	4.50	16.50	5.00
Tutor's turns	179.50	91.00	74.00	101.00	96.00	128.50	96.00	171.00	131.00
Students' turns	175.00	86.50	58.00	100.50	73.00	121.50	62.00	153.00	146.00
Tutor's Questions	48.00	65.50	21.00	35.50	24.50	57.50	20.00	68.50	54.50
Students' Questions	10.50	1.50	7.50	4.50	0.00	4.50	2.00	4.00	15.50
Tutor's Negotiations	55.00	37.50	18.50	41.00	36.00	50.00	30.00	72.00	62.50
Students' Negotiations	46.50	3.50	14.00	13.00	18.00	18.50	10.50	25.00	27.50

Table 2: Tutor's and Students' Mean Percentage of Discourse Features per Tutorial

Discourse features per Tutorial (%)	Students								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Tutor's Nominations	74.07	88.46	65.38	60.00	82.22	82.09	83.33	69.41	76.74
Students' Nominations	25.93	11.54	34.62	40.00	17.78	17.91	16.67	30.59	23.26
Tutor's turns	50.63	51.27	55.85	50.12	56.80	51.40	60.76	56.62	51.17
Students' turns	49.37	48.73	44.15	49.88	43.20	48.60	39.24	43.38	48.83
Tutor's Questions	82.05	97.76	73.68	89.87	100.00	92.74	90.91	94.48	77.86
Students' Questions	17.95	2.24	26.32	10.13	0.00	7.26	9.09	5.52	22.14
Tutor's Negotiations	54.19	91.46	56.92	75.93	66.06	72.99	74.07	74.23	69.44
Students' Negotiations	45.81	8.54	43.08	24.07	33.94	27.01	25.93	25.77	30.56

3.2 Turns

Table 3 showed that the tutor dominated turn management, initiating most speaker changes during the tutorials. Students contributed fewer turns overall. However, the relatively smaller gaps for most students suggest their potential for co-constructing conversations during tutorials.

Table 3: The Tutor's and Students' Mean Numbers of Turns, Words, and Length per Tutorial

Students	Turns per Tutorial					
	T			S		
	TW	TN	TL	TW	TN	TL
A	2936.50	179.50	16.36	2636.50	175.50	15.02
B	2269.00	91.0074.	24.93	1133.00	86.50	13.10
C	1295.50	00	17.51	1255.50	58.00	21.65
D	2371.00	101.00	23.48	2239.00	100.50	22.28
E	2528.50	96.00	26.34	1041.00	73.00	14.26
F	2180.33	128.50	16.97	1741.50	121.50	14.33
G	1877.00	96.00	19.55	803.00	62.00	12.95
H	3424.00	171.00	20.02	2043.00	131.00	15.60
I	2277.00	153.00	14.88	2848.50	146.00	19.51

Note. T=Tutor, S=Student, TW=Total Words, TN=Turn Number, TL=Turn Length

The tutor generally spoke more (1,295.50–3,42400 words) than students (803.00–2,848.50 words). However, student I spoke more words than the tutor despite fewer turns, actively explaining and clarifying his writing, demonstrating strong engagement. The excerpt illustrates that student I was actively engaging in metacognitive reflection on his writing choices. The student demonstrated an awareness of essay structure, particularly the role and placement of topic sentences and counterarguments and attempted to reconcile personal writing strategies with conventional expectations. The dialogue with the tutor shows collaborative scaffolding, as the tutor prompted clarification and guided the student toward articulating his argument more clearly. This interaction reflects the benefits of a peer- or tutor-supported writing tutorial, where students can verbalize their reasoning, negotiate structural decisions, and develop a deeper understanding of effective argumentative writing.

An Excerpt from Student I's First Writing Tutorial

T   What I meant was that how the opponents think…

I   Because people usually say that when they see the topic

sentences, they can know the half part of the essay. If they cannot know my topic sentence in this paragraph, isn't it useful anymore? If I follow the concept of following the topic sentence, I have to write although the time issue can be a problem but…..

T   Yeah! Then you start talking about your argument in detail. Is that what you meant?

I   In this way, I should put my topic sentence to the first sentence, but I don't want to do that. Do you think it is right? or like me. I wrote the counterargument first. Until I finished it, I thought my last sentence is the topic sentence. Then my last sentence should be a counterargument. It is from thus because thus is my opinion.

From the excerpt above, it can be shown that Student I's outspoken personality made him more open-minded about sharing his writing ideas with the tutor. This may be attributed to his view of the tutor. In other words, he did not see the tutor as an authoritative figure but was willing to use his own reasoning to persuade the tutor to accept his perspective.

3.3   Questions

Table 4: Examples of Tutor's and Students' Questions

Questions	
T	S
1. Where is your thesis statement?	1. Are you talking about my opinions?
2. Where are your topic sentences?	2. Can I write my essay in this way?
3. Do you have evidence to support your arguments?	3. How can I write this part?
4. Do you restate your arguments again in your conclusion?	4. Do you think my arguments are strong enough?
5. Where are your ideas from?	5. Where can I find more information to support my arguments?

Note. T=Tutor, S=Student

Questioning was mostly tutor-led, with 21.00 to 68.50 questions per tutorial. Only students A and I asked more than a few—10.50 and 15.50 questions—showing proactive and engaged behavior. As shown in Table 4, the tutor used open-ended and yes/no questions to clarify writing and guide revisions, creating a relaxed, interactive atmosphere. Even though the tutor asked most of the questions to guide students in discussing their essays, this indirect approach still encouraged students to fully participate in the interaction, as they viewed the tutor as a partner and felt comfortable sharing their ideas. These findings correspond to Sperling's (1990) study.

3.4 Negotiation

Negotiation focused on clarifying meaning and revising content, mostly led by the tutor. However, students performed differently from one another. Interestingly, the contributions of students A and B in this category were completely opposite even though both had prepared some questions to ask the tutor beforehand. In student B's case, she always accepted the tutor's comments immediately without further reflection.

In contrast, due to individual differences, student A was highly engaged because of her passion for learning and diligent personality, which led her to produce the highest number of negotiations. Her second writing topic focused on whether video games could have negative influences on teenagers. The excerpt showed that she was negotiating the meaning of revisions with the tutor and expressing concern about the subsequent changes. Meanwhile, the tutor used comprehension checks to help student A better understand her revision strategies, demonstrating a collaborative atmosphere in the tutor–student interaction.

An Excerpt from Student A's Second Writing Tutorial

T   Yeah. Don't you think these two paragraphs are similar?

A   So you mean I should delete it? Then that sentence can be my topic sentence two? or should I write the other one?

T   I think you can put it……

A   You mean put it together?

T   Put it together. What if you combine them together, are you able to do that? Because the paragraph is long enough.

A   But if I combine them together, the paragraph will be pretty long.

T   Yeah.

A   In the way, would it be too much?

T   How about here…. But from even to here, it is ok for you not to combine.

A   So you mean I should delete it and then change it to the beginning of the next paragraph?

T   Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! Because you are still talking about its types, right? Aren't you talking about war games? Right?

The excerpt above also illustrates student A's active engagement in revising paragraph structure and topic sentences. Through collaborative dialogue, the tutor provides scaffolding, prompting

the student to evaluate options and make informed decisions, highlighting the benefits of tutor-supported writing tutorials for developing structural awareness and revision strategies.

Students H and I contributed 25.00–27.50 instances of negotiation per tutorial, which fell within the medium range compared with other students. In both students' transcripts, issues related to the structure of argumentative essays frequently appeared in the tutor–student interactions. As a result, they asked many questions to confirm the tutor's suggested revisions. The interactions demonstrate how tutor-supported tutorials promote metacognition and effective revision because students actively engaged in structuring and clarifying their essays with the tutor's guidance.

An Excerpt from Student H's First Writing Tutorial

H   OK! I am thinking about it. So you meant I write my introduction in the beginning?

T Yeah!

H   And then I mention my thesis statement?

T   Yeah! Your arguments.

H   And then I mention Zheng Jie who has no critical thinking in the second paragraph? Because it is his personal problem, and there is nothing to do with video games?

T   Yeah!

H   And then in the third paragraph, many things are more violent than video games, and they will make the teenagers become violent?

T   You're right. Aren't you talking about news and films?

An Excerpt from Student I's First Writing Tutorial

I   So you meant I should just write the opponents' views? How about neutral?

T   Because you still should be firm in your argument.

I   No! What I meant was that I should write my arguments such as time management and the interpersonal relationship in the workplace again?

T Yeah!

I   You meant I write them again in the conclusion?

T   Yeah! But you should restate them again in a different way.

I   So you meant I don't need to talk about the counterargument? What if I don't want to mention it?

T   Yeah! You don't have to mention it.

Students E, F, C, and D also participated differently in the tutor-student writing tutorial. These differences could have resulted from their writing problems and prior knowledge related to their writing topics. For instance, students may engage in fewer negotiations if their English writing skills are stronger and they have no difficulty understanding the tutor's comments. Moreover, motivation and personality play important roles in students' participation in negotiations. Because of her talkative personality, student D negotiated more frequently than the less motivated student F.

Both excerpts below show that both students actively negotiated content and structure in their writings. Student D explored the inclusion of neutral or balanced arguments in the conclusion, while student F clarified how to support arguments with examples. In each case, the tutor provided scaffolding to guide decision-making, demonstrating how tutor-supported tutorials foster metacognitive awareness and effective revision strategies.

An Excerpt from Student D's First Writing Tutorial

D   What if I write something like this in my conclusion.

T   Yeah!

D   What if I want to mention its advantages.

T   Yeah!

D   What if I want everyone not to overuse the cell phones

because I don't want to show its advantages. Yeah! What if I give a neutral argument?

An Excerpt from Student F's First Writing Tutorial

T   Yeah! Then the second argument can be in this paragraph, right? Then you talk about the potential. OK! And then you start to talk about your topic sentence in detail. I meant what you think in this way and then give an example. That's the way.

F   So you mean the first argument is with one example?

T   Yeah!

F   And another argument is also with one example?

T   You're right!

The diverse performance among students in the tutorials makes it difficult to define an optimal interaction pattern for all participants. This outcome, instead, confirms the unique,

individualized nature of each tutor-student relationship, which likely contributes to the differences in students' expectations regarding the tutorials.

3.5 Student Attitudes

According to table 5, the results of questionnaires showed that most students still expected the tutor to lead the writing tutorial. This phenomenon could be explained as follows. First, students were accustomed to listening to the tutor's comments rather than initiating ideas for discussion. Second, the learning culture in Taiwan differed from that of western countries, indicating that Asian students still tended to prefer tutor-dominated interactions (Lin, 2014; Liu, 2009a; Thonus, 2004). In other words, implementing a student-centered writing tutorial in an EFL context remained challenging. Their interview responses revealed that most students generally preferred a tutor-centered approach at the beginning of writing tutorials. They felt that starting with the tutor's feedback or guidance helped them identify problems, clarify ideas, and generate questions, especially when they were unsure how to begin or reflect on their writing independently. This suggests that an initial tutor-led structure can scaffold students' metacognitive awareness and facilitate more productive, interactive discussions.

"I hope the tutor starts the writing tutorial first. If I don't understand or forget to mention something, I would bring up my questions. Because I am still used to the feelings of being taught." (Student A)

"I think the interaction was nice, but it would be more tutor-centered. I might listen to the tutor's suggestions first, and then see whether I have anything to say. Because I feel my writing is ok when I finish. If somebody has already read before, I am more willing to listen to others." (Student G)

"I think the tutor should give us suggestions first and tell us where we should improve. The reason is that I didn't know my problems when I finished checking my writing. Therefore, the tutor should talk about where we should revise and give our suggestions first because most people do not know what their problems are. The tutor should talk and then ask if I have any questions after her comments." (Student B)

"I think the tutor-centered is better. This is because the tutor read my writing first and knew some problems. Then the tutor could ask me the reason for those ideas in my essays. I can answer that, and I think it is better to construct the writing tutorial." (Student D)

"I think it's half and half, but I would like the tutor to be more active. I think the tutor should be in charge of writing tutorials in the beginning because I don't know how to start or think of any questions. The tutor can ask my ideas about the essays. Then I can think of some new questions, so I think the tutor can take more responsibilities first." (Student C)

From the students' excerpts above, it can be observed that most students relied heavily on the tutor's guidance and instruction. Nevertheless, according to Student C's responses, the tutorials can gradually help students learn how to co-construct interaction, demonstrating the positive influence that peer tutoring has on students' self-efficacy in English writing and their willingness to build a positive relationship with the tutor rather than experiencing excessive pressure.

Table 5: Items 1 to 4 of Students' Perceptions of Interaction in Writing Tutorial

Item	Number	SA	A	N	D	SD	*Note.* SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree
	Frequency Percentage						
1. I like the interaction with the tutor in the writing tutorial .	9	5 55.56%	4 44.44%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	
2. I like the tutor to lead the writing tutorial.	9	3 33.33%	4 44.44%	2 22.22%	0 0%	0 0%	
3. I like to lead the writing tutorial.	9	0 0%	1 11.11%	7 77.78%	0 0%	1 11.11%	
4. I feel comfortable when interacting with the tutor during the writing tutorial.	9	4 44.44%	4 44.44%	1 11.11%	0 0%	0 0%	

As shown in table 5, even though most students depended on the tutor to lead the interaction, two students selected "neutral" for question item 2 because they preferred a more collaborative approach. The following students' responses showed their willingness to cooperate with the tutor. This suggested that Asian students could still potentially take an active role in their learning under the influence of one-on-one tutoring.

"I think the interaction in the writing tutorial was great. People from both sides don't win." *(Student H)*

"The tutor and I can work together to discuss the writing because it is my writing." (Student I)

One student also believed that her writing would determine how she interacted with the tutor, indicating that students still wished to maintain ownership of their writing and viewed the tutor as a partner in completing their assignments.

"I think it depends on the essay. While discussing each paragraph, if the tutor and I have ideas, just talk about them. I would combine those ideas to make the paragraph better. It's not like you lead or I lead". (Student E)

Student F chose not to lead the writing tutorials because she wanted to listen to others' perspectives. From her interview, she mentioned that the writing tutorials conducted by the tutor gave her an opportunity to discuss her writing out of class, demonstrating her willingness to collaborate with the tutor to improve her English writing. Likewise, Student C elaborated on the benefits of peer tutoring, noting that it differs from traditional English writing classes. Within the cooperative and friendly tutor–student atmosphere, students became more open-minded in sharing their writing ideas.

"If I keep talking about my essay, I can't know my problems. If I listen to others' suggestions first, I will think and know what I should add more to my writing." (Student F)

"The tutor does not have to worry about the interaction on her own. I can also discuss. Because writing tutorials are not like writing classes, we can discuss the essay together. Because I have more time to think about how to answer during the tutorials." (Student C)

Based on the students' interview responses, the tutorials provided a safe space for students to express their concerns and difficulties that they might hesitate to share with their writing instructor. The tutor's strong interpersonal skills further facilitated students' engagement in discussions of their English writing. By maintaining students' ownership of their work and positioning herself as a partner rather than an authority figure, the tutor fostered active participation, highlighting the connection between tutor roles and student engagement. In other words, students' learning outcomes may be positively or negatively influenced by how tutors interact with them during tutorials. Therefore, maintaining a cooperative learning atmosphere is essential for effective instruction.

4 DISCUSSION

Student participation varied depending on students' familiarity with the writing genre, personality, learning motivation, and preferred tutoring style. Specifically, students who could write stronger argumentative essays did not necessarily participate more actively, as they had fewer questions to ask the tutor. This finding contradicts the claim that interaction becomes more cooperative when students have higher language proficiency (Eckstein, 2013; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997). In other words, language proficiency alone cannot be assumed to affect tutor–student interaction.

Meanwhile, students with more outgoing personalities and stronger motivation were observed to engage more actively in discussions about their writing. Most importantly, although the tutor largely retained control over topic shifts and turn-taking—reflecting the tutor-centered discourse typical in many Asian educational contexts (Lin, 2014; Thonus, 1999)—students could still help make the writing tutorials more student-centered through collaborative interaction. This suggests that students' motivation and the rapport built between the tutor and students are key factors in increasing engagement during interaction (Consalvo & Maloch, 2015; Gilliland, 2014; Martin & Mottet, 2011). The findings suggest two teaching implications that tutors should balance their authority with scaffolding strategies that invite student agency, especially in contexts where students expect tutor-led interactions (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Saville-Troike, 2006). Using writing samples may help students who are new to argumentative essays engage more confidently and collaboratively with the tutor during writing tutorials, demonstrating the benefits of peer tutoring in motivating students to learn. (Cheng & Ku, 2009; Medcalf et al., 2004). Finally, this study extends the concept of scaffolding by showing how discourse balance evolves with student confidence.

5 CONCLUSION

This study examined peer tutor–student discourse and the benefits of the interaction during EFL writing tutorials, revealing how interaction patterns reflect both tutor scaffolding and student agency. Differences in learners' personalities, motivation, and expectations shaped the degree of participation, even within the same instructional context. Tutors should therefore adapt their interactional strategies to students' needs, balancing guidance with opportunities for autonomous contribution. These findings underscore the pedagogical value of personalized scaffolding and peer-style tutorials in promoting active learning and reflective writing. Future studies should include larger and more diverse samples to further validate these findings and explore cross-cultural differences in tutoring discourse.

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APPENDIX 1: A PRE-TUTORIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Personal

> Hello students,
>   I am a graduate student in NKNU, and it is so nice to have you as my participants in my study. The following questionnaire is only for understanding your personal information first, and they will be stored up confidentially. Please feel free to fill out the questionnaires. Thanks for your help and participation.
>   Graduate Student: Ya-Ting Chuang
>   Instructor & Advisor: Ming-Tzu Liao

Background Information

1. **Chinese name _____   Student number:_____**

2. **Sex: □ Female □ Male**

3. **How long have you been learning English? _____years**

4. **What do you think about your overall English proficiency?**

□Very good □ Good □ Fair □ Poor

5. What are the English proficiency tests that you have taken before?

□ TOEFL IBT score: _____(listening/reading)_____(speaking/ writing)

□ IELTS score:_____ (listening/reading)_____(speaking/ writing)

□ TOEIC score:_____(listening/reading) _____(speaking/ writing)

□ CSEPT level: _____, score:_____

□ GEPT: _____level

□ Others, name of the test: _____score/level:_____

□ Freshman writing class scores: _____

□ Sophomore writing class scores:_____

□ Nope

 Personal English and Writing Learning Experiences

6. What do you think about the most difficult part in writing?

□ Idea development □ Grammar and sentence structures □ Vocabulary

□ Others: _____

7. How often do you practice your writing?

□ Always (1-7 times) □ Usually (3~5 times) □ Sometimes (2~4 times)

□ Seldom (0~1)   □ Never

8. What activities have you experienced in the English writing course?

□ Discussion of readings   □ Peer review

□ Teacher-student writing tutorial   □ Peer writing tutorial

□ Practice on writing strategies (such as paragraph development)

□ Practice on grammar

□ others examples: _____

9. What writing assignments have you experienced?

□ Book report   □ Persuasive essays

□ Narrative essays   □ Analysis essays

□ Research paper   □ Poem   □ Others _____

Personal Experiences in Writing Tutorials and Anticipations

10. Have you ever experienced the writing tutorials before (prior to the current one)? If yes, what did you do? What did you think about it? If no, you can answer question 11 directly.

_____

_____

11. Which of the following are your expectations/perceptions about the tutor-student writing tutorials? (check as many as applicable)

□ a. I am expecting the tutor to point out all the grammar errors in my draft.

□ b. I want to tell the tutor what I am trying to say in my draft.

□ c. I am expecting the tutor to give me suggestions on how to improve my draft.

□ d. I want the tutor to tell me how to get an A on this essay.

□ e. I want to ask my tutor the requirements of the essay.

□ f. I enjoy talking with the tutor privately. I think the tutorials can help us better know each other personally.

□ g. Other expectations (please specify in the blank)

_____

This is the end of the pre-tutorial questionnaire. Thanks for your cooperation!

APPENDIX 2: A POST-TUTORIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear students,
Thanks for your participation and hard work during this semester. The purpose of the questionnaire is to know your opinions after attending two writing tutorials held by the tutor. Please feel free to express your ideas and fill out the questionnaires. Thank you very much!
                    Graduate Student: Ya-Ting Chuang
                    Instructor & Advisor: Ming-Tzu Liao

Your name: _____ Student number:_____

No.	Question Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
		5	4	3	2	1
1.	I like the interaction with the tutor in the writing tutorials.	□	□	□	□	□
2.	I like the tutor to lead the writing tutorials.	□	□	□	□	□
3.	I like to lead the writing tutorials	□	□	□	□	□
4.	I feel comfortable when interacting with the tutor during the writing tutorials.	□	□	□	□	□

Thank you for filling out the post-tutorial questionnaires!

APPENDIX 3: A TUTORIAL TRAINING FORM

Introduction

Q1. What is the writing tutorial?

It is about teacher-student i_____n, and it is conducted i_____y.

Q2. What is the role of the teacher in the writing tutorial?

The teacher aims to h_____p students with their writing problems.

Q3. What is the role of the student in the writing tutorial?

Students aim to d_____s their writing problems with the teacher.

Q4. What is a successful writing tutorial?

A successful writing tutorial tends to be s_____t-centered.

Q5. What is the difference between peer writing tutorials and writing tutorials?

The big difference between these types of tutorials is the t_____r. The tutor in the writing tutorial is usually a t_____r, but the tutor in the peer writing tutorial is usually a person of a similar age.

Training Procedures

1. Role-play with the researcher. (one volunteer)

2. Divide students into groups

3. Give students a writing sample.

4. Students discuss the writing sample.

5. Students share their thoughts

APPENDIX 4: A WRITING SAMPLE FORM FOR THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Dear students,

In order to help you know writing tutorials better, the following paragraph is an English writing sample, and questions are for you to discuss with your classmates. If you have any questions, please let me know. Thanks in advance.

Graduate Student: Ya-Ting Chuang

Instructor & Advisor: Ming-Tzu Liao

Topic: How to Improve Your English Writing

There are four steps to effective writing. The first step is to build a strong vocabulary, for words are the building blocks of composition. Next, compose your paragraphs with short sentences. After you get a handle on short sentences, you may begin to combine some of your short sentences. Finally, you can start working on organizing your writing in a logical way. Be sure to revise and edit your draft carefully in order to produce a well-crafted piece of writing.

Guided questions for a modeling writing tutorial

Q1. How can I help you with your writing?

My difficulty in writing the paragraph is _____.

Q2. What is good about the writing?

This paragraph is good because_____.

Q3. What suggestions will you give to the writing?

This paragraph needs improvements on_____.

Q4. What do you learn from the peer writing tutorial?

I learn_____ from the peer writing tutorial.

APPENDIX 5: THE TUTOR-STUDENT TUTORIAL FORM

Guided Questions for Opening Session
1. What questions do you have of me?
2. What difficulties did you discover while writing the essay?
3. How can I help you with your writing?
Guided Questions for Middle Session
Introduction 1. Where is your thesis statement? Is your thesis statement specific? 2. Does your introduction draw readers' attention? 3. What can you add more to enrich your introduction?
Organization of the Paragraphs 1. Where are your ideas from? 2. What do you think about your arguments? Are they strong? 3. What else do you need to add to support your arguments? 4. What do you think about the paragraphs? 5. What does the paragraph mean? What do you want to write?
Sentence Structures and Vocabulary 1. What does the sentence mean? 2. Why do you want to write this sentence? 3. Why do you choose this word to write? What does that mean?
Conclusion 1. What do you think about the conclusion? 2. Do you think it is enough and complete? 3. Do you restate your arguments again?
Guided Questions for Closing Session
1. What questions do you still want to ask about your writing? 2. What else do you want to discuss?

APPENDIX 6: A STUDENT RECORDKEEPING FORM

Adopted from Leisner's (2011) study

Student Name	Date	Focus/Agenda	Teaching Notes

APPENDIX 7: AN INTERVIEW FORM

1. What would you like the tutor to do more at the tutorial? Why?

2. In what way do you want the tutor to construct the writing tutorials? Why?