Connection of Clients' Original Requests and Negotiated Session Goals in Hiroshima University Writing Center

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Dialogue between tutors and their clients (students) in a writing center is important in order to determine clients' real needs. Consequently, "students are encouraged to participate actively in setting the agenda for how the tutor and student will spend their time together" (Harris). Furthermore, dialogue is essential for determining the direction of sessions and building good relationships with clients (Eleftheriou 793). When clients book tutorials through the online booking system of Hiroshima University Writing Center (HU-WRC), they have to explain what they want to achieve in the tutorials. Later, at the beginning of each tutorial session, tutors and clients have to decide their session goals, which are subsequently recorded by the tutor after each session. Interestingly, a difference between an original request and its corresponding negotiated session goal is frequently observed. For example, a client may request "to make my paper easier to understand." However, after the client's dialogue with the tutor, the negotiated session goal may be recorded as: "to check if the 'literature review' section is appropriately organized." Therefore, it is crucial for tutors to understand their clients' exact requirements and negotiate an appropriate goal for each session. To avoid misunderstanding, the tutors of HU-WRC are trained to set session goals in agreement with clients by adjusting the original requests and adding other points.

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In this study, we investigated clients' requests and the corresponding negotiated session goals stored in HU-WRC's online booking system using KH Coder (a co-occurrence analysis software) and compared them to clarify the role of dialogue in writing tutorials. For this purpose, we asked two questions. First, what requests do clients make in the booking system, and how do these requests differ from the

real goals they intend to achieve? Second, do tutors incorporate their clients' real requests, which are found through dialogue, into their session goals? Clients of HU-WRC consist of native speakers of Japanese (L1) and non-native students (L2). Because clients are required to write session requests in Japanese prior to the session, tutors must carefully find the L2 students' real requests, which is sometimes more challenging than with L1 students. In this study, we focused on the difference between the negotiated session goals and original requests of both L1 and L2 students.

METHODS

We collected 877 records that included clients' original pre-tutorial requests and the negotiated session goals written by their tutors after the sessions ended. The records, collected during the period from January to December 2017, were written in Japanese by 177 L2 students and 138 L1 students and 28 graduate student tutors at Hiroshima University. The collected sample contained many non-specific words, such as "first time" and "please," or emotional words, such as "anxiety." These words are contextually important, and clients' emotions should be carefully heeded. However, these words are not directly connected with clients' requests. Therefore, words that are not specific were removed before analysis. Four raters independently decided whether certain words necessitated deletion. Inter-rater reliability among the four raters was higher than 80%. The final decisions regarding deletions were made through discussions among the four raters.

After removing words deemed not specific and prepositions (*Joshi*), we selected the 60 most frequently used words for further analysis. Four types of data—1) clients' original requests of L1 students, 2) negotiated session goals of L1 students, 3) clients' original requests of L2 students, and 4) negotiated session goals of L2 students)-- were independently analyzed using KH Coder software (Higuchi "part I" 77-89, Higuchi "part II" 137-45) for co-occurrence analysis, to calculate the relevance of those 60 words. Then, a co-occurrence cluster of the words was drawn by KH Coder to categorize words into several groups.

Next, we named each category to reflect all the words included in the same group.[1] For instance, when "*Kakikata* (how to write)," "*Ronbun* (research article)," and "*Jyogen* (advice)" were categorized into the same group, the category was named "Give me some advice on how to write a research article" (see Table 1).

RESULTS

L1 Students: For L1 students, one of the categories of clients' original requests contained the words "basic," "how-to," "teach," and "report," allowing us to name the category as shown in item 1

in Table 1. Since many of the L1 students were still in their first year, they were worried about their ability to write an academic report. Furthermore, the L1 students asked the tutors to check aspects of their writing such as its logical flow and comprehensibility. Thus, clients' original request (item 2) was named after "ensuring," "logic," "flow," and "sentence." Clients' original request three was named after "Japanese," "conveyance," "appropriateness," "research," "title," and "methods." Next, we named categories of negotiated session goals after words in each category. Interestingly, we found that clients' original requests one through four are extremely similar to negotiated session goals A, B, C, and D, respectively (Table 1). These results suggest that the tutors set session goals corresponding to original requests through dialogue with clients.

However, clients' original request five was too vague to understand what they really needed. We speculate that the tutors had to ask clients what they wanted to achieve in the session to set more clear session goals (negotiated session goals E and F). Clients' original request six does not appear to correspond to any of categories of negotiated session goals and seems too ambiguous to be reflected in session goals. In contrast, negotiated session goals G and H are more clearly defined. In other words, these categories of the session goals include more detailed content compared with the clients' requests. Thus, the tutors not only incorporated clients' requests into session goals, but also clarified their real requests by adding more specific words.

Table 1. Categories of L1 students' original requests and negotiated session goals.

Client's Original Requests	Negotiated Session Goals
1. Teach me the basic knowledge of how to write an academic report.	A. To learn how to write an academic report.
2. Check the logical flow.	B. To check if the flow is logical.
3. Check if my Japanese is appropriately conveyed.	C. To check if the content is properly conveyed.
4. Check if my discussion is understandable.	D. To check if sentences are understandable.
5. Check the structure.	E. To reconstruct the structure from the viewpoint of coherence or logical connection. F. To check if there is any logical leap in the purpose and background of research.
6. Give me some advice on how to write a research article.	G. To understand how to refer to previous research. H. To check if problems are described appropriately.

L2 Students: The categories of clients' original requests and corresponding negotiated session goals used to classify the relevant words extracted from the sessions with L2 students are summarized in Table 2. Similar to the observation with the categories for sessions with the L1 students, clients' original requests one through six appear to correspond to negotiated session goals A through F, respectively; however, clients' original requests seven and eight do not directly correspond to any categories of negotiated session goals, although they are distantly related to all categories, suggesting that these requests were changed through dialogue with the tutors.

The majority of the L2 students needed to correct their Japanese expressions. This is demonstrated by clients' original request (item 1), which contains "expression," "correcting," and "Japanese language." Indeed, L2 students frequently asked tutors to check their grammatical or expressional difficulties. Additionally, the tutors needed to listen to what their clients said during the tutorials in order to identify their real requests or problems. This may explain why negotiated session goal A contains many more words, such as "grammar," "check," "Japanese," "appropriateness," "expression," "understanding," "writing," "research article," and "document structure," compared with clients' original request one. As indicated by their original requests, grammar correction was a critical issue for L2 students. However, in compliance with the philosophy of HU-WRC—which emphasizes cooperative improvement of texts in the session—the tutors do not correct or revise texts written by clients. Consequently, the tutors changed "correcting"—shown in clients' original request one—to "check" in negotiated session goal A.

Clients' original request six contains "instruction" and "how to write," whereas negotiated session goal F contains "flow" and "overall." Since the contents of these categories seem similar, the difference in selected words suggests that the tutors could answer the real requests of clients by offering "reader feedback on developing drafts of papers" (Harris).

Table 2. Categories of L2 students' original requests and negotiated session goals.

Client's Original Requests	Negotiated Session Goals
1. Correct my Japanese.	A. To check Japanese grammar, expressions, and the appropriateness of the client's research article.
2. Diagnose the written contents and if the flow is appropriately conveyed.	B. To check if Joshi (preposition) is correctly used and if what the client wants to write is conveyed properly.
3. Teach me how to use words.	C. To check if the structure of sentences is appropriate and their meanings are understandable.

4. Check how to refer to previous research.	D. To learn how to quote previous research and write a report.
5. Give me your opinions or comments concerning the difficulty of understanding and the lack of explanation.	E. To provide constructive comments and suggest improvements.
6. Give me instructions concerning how to write the research design.	F. To check the overall flow and logical connections in the research design.
7. Teach me the Japanese writing style in reports.	
8. Check if there are any unusual expressions.	

DISCUSSION

In this study, we analyzed the co-occurrence of words in session records that included clients' original requests and session goals negotiated through dialogue with tutors. Because many of the descriptions written by the clients were too ambiguous to be reflected in the session goals, the tutors had to ask questions such as "why did you write this request?"; "what is the most worrying part in your document?"; "are there other questions?" If the tutors started their sessions strictly following the original client-written requests, the resultant session goals would not reflect the clients' real goals. Thus, dialogue is particularly important to decipher the clients' real requests/actual problems and appropriately set each session's goals.

Although the clients of HU-WRC have to input their requests into the online booking system, they may explain only parts of their requests in the booking system, or they may change their mind through dialogue with their tutors. Thus, the tutors added more detailed information in negotiated session goals E and F shown in Table 1, whereas corresponding clients' original request five is very simple. It is likely that the information clients input into the booking system may be ambiguous if they lack the vocabulary to appropriately phrase their requests. In addition, because the negotiated session goals were written by the tutors, they may just be using the language they have learned in their training, and the clients' requests may not have changed through dialogue. However, the data described here suggest that the tutors clarified clients' requests and appropriately constructed session goals. Thus, the tutors seem to offer their best efforts to identify what their clients really need or hope to achieve in their sessions. William J. Macauley Jr. notes that "for a tutorial, charting a course for the session means setting the agenda for how you (tutor) want the session to unfold" (2). We believe that the determination of goals at the beginning

of each session is one of the most critical parts of tutorial sessions provided by HU-WRC.

In tutorial sessions provided by HU-WRC, L1 students want to improve their skills to write logically enough for readers to understand their content (negotiated session goals B, C, D, and E in Table 1). In contrast, L2 students tend to focus on grammatical accuracy over logical consistency (negotiated session goals A and B in Table 2). It may be difficult for the L2 students to understand a native reader's perspective. Since the language levels of many of the L2 clients of HU-WRC are too low for them to anticipate the flow of a reader's thought, editing may be required in order to logically construct documents. Moreover, many L2 graduate students of Hiroshima University do not have sufficient time to improve their grammar skills because of the deadlines they have to meet to submit their master's theses. Consequently, the tutors have to help clients in situations in which they really require help to rectify mechanical errors. Thus, HU-WRC is confronted with a complicated situation. Half of the L2 graduate students have to write their theses in Japanese, even though the other half of them can use English. Furthermore, approximately half of HU-WRC's clients are L2 graduate students who are expected to write all of their assignments in Japanese. Therefore, at this time tutors recommend that clients find friends who "would be very likely to provide the vocabulary and grammar correction that the tutors in the writing center are not comfortable providing" (Meyers 61). We may need another system or another writing center to help the L2 graduate students correct grammatical errors in the final stage of writing their theses.

Grammatical issues are critical in sessions with L2 writers because "very few ESL students who walk into a writing center are likely to have such high levels of proficiency" (Meyers 53). However, Suzanne Edwards instructs tutors "not to edit the paper for mechanical errors. This includes finding or labeling the spelling, punctuation, or grammar mistakes in a paper" (8). Therefore, HU-WRC tutors show the L2 writers what is wrong with their texts rather than correcting the errors for them. For example, tutors show clients what a particular sentence really means by using example sentences or drawing pictures. Sometimes, tutors show alternative choices to correct mistakes for particular situations, allowing clients to learn quickly. Since it is difficult for L2 writers to construct sentences without hints, example sentences help these clients construct additional contextually identical sentences.

In conclusion, we have demonstrated that the tutors of HU-WRC managed to set session goals corresponding to the original

requests clients inputted into the booking system. The session goals were similar to but clearer and more specific than clients' original requests. L1 students tend to ask their tutors to check logical flow and comprehensibility of their reports, whereas L2 students need to correct their grammatical errors and Japanese expressions. Thus, the process by which tutors and clients negotiate session goals through dialogue is really important because they have to set session goals that meet the policy of HU-WRC. However, in this study, we only used session records registered in the booking system and did not record real dialogue between tutors and clients. Our study will be helpful in empirically supporting the importance of dialogue early in the session and the kind of words or ideas that are effective to negotiate with clients on session goals.

NOTE

1. Although English translations "how to write" and "research article" are not single words, the original Japanese words "Kakikata" and "Ronbun" are single words. Sometimes it is not easy to explain a Japanese word by using a single English word.

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