



## **The Strategic Use of Withdrawal by Korean Tutors of English Writing**

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This study explores how Korean writing tutors use withdrawal, i.e., canceling feedback or questioning the reliability of feedback, and the different purposes of employing this strategy. While studies investigating interactions between writing tutors and tutees usually focus on those between L1 tutors with non-native speaker tutees, recently, a few studies have examined non-native speaker tutor interactions with tutees. However, very few attempts have been made to examine how EFL tutors work with their tutees. EFL tutor interactions are interesting in that due to self-perceptions of lower English proficiency, these tutors may use unique strategies when interacting with their tutees. To explore these strategies, we audio-recorded 11 writing tutorials of four Korean writing tutors across one semester and interviewed the tutors. Analysis of the recorded data reveals that all four tutors frequently used the strategy of withdrawal. The interviews confirm that withdrawal accomplishes multiple functions: compensating for the tutor's uncertainty and limited knowledge, attributing the responsibility of revision to the tutee, and considering the tutee's intentions and emotions. These findings are an important step to better understand non-native writing tutor-tutee interactions and can provide guidance on training future tutors.

**Keywords:** withdrawal, tutor interaction, tutor feedback, EFL, non-native tutors

### **Introduction**

Over the last few decades, a significant amount of writing tutor research in the first language (L1) context has investigated how native speaker (NS) tutors interact with either NS tutees or non-native speaker (NNS) tutees (Blau & Hall, 2002; Powers, 1993; Ritter, 2002; Thonus, 1999a, 1999b, 2004; Williams, 2004a). Many of these studies have found that tutors behave differently when they interact with NNS tutees from when they interact with NS tutees. Thonus (1999a), for example, found that tutors became more direct and didactic with NNS tutees. Some scholars have asserted that these differences originate in part from the intentional efforts of tutors to enhance tutee understanding and provide



comprehensible feedback, as the tutors demonstrated awareness of NNS tutees' limited English proficiency (Powers, 1993; Thonus, 1999b).

While these studies have focused on differences between interactions between NS tutors and NS/NNS tutees in the L1 context, only a few studies have been conducted to investigate tutor-tutee interactions in the EFL (English as a foreign language) context. For example, Park (2007) found that Korean tutors used questions for various purposes, such as locating issues to be dealt with, clarifying unclear parts, or expressing doubts. In another study, Park (2011) discovered that Korean tutors used different strategies depending on problem sources—while they gave advice directly on grammatical issues, they usually checked the tutee's intentions before giving advice on issues such as word choice. Whereas these findings are not particularly unique to the EFL context, Mack (2012) and Cho and Kim's research (2014, 2017) focused on the peculiarities of an EFL context. Mack (2012) examined reflective journals of five NNS tutors who worked for the writing center at an international university in Japan and found that they were faced with problems distinctive from those of an ESL context, such as whether to start with global concerns or local concerns or when to intervene. After studying Korean NNS writing tutors, Cho and Kim suggested that Korean tutors used L1 translation as a way of facilitating tutee understanding of feedback, a result specific to EFL tutor and tutee interactions, as participants share the same native language. As seen here, not only the fact that English is not used outside of the classroom, but also their NNS identities may lead them to develop their own strategies unique to the EFL context, in interacting with their tutees. The present study contributes to this line of research focusing on how tutors' NNS identities may impact their implementation of unique strategies to compensate for their limited knowledge or proficiency of English. Here we focus on their unique strategy of withdrawal—that is, canceling or questioning the reliability of their feedback—to identify their occurring patterns and purposes.

## Literature Review

### Strategies Used by Native Speaker Tutors

To date, research on writing tutorials have investigated how NS tutors interact with their NS and NNS tutees, focusing primarily on the strategies used by tutors. Findings across studies indicate that tutors tend to use different strategies when interacting with NS tutees and NNS tutees (Blau & Hall, 2002; Powers, 1993; Ritter, 2002; Thonus, 1999a, 1999b, 2004; Williams, 2004a). All studies show that NS tutor interactions with NNS tutees are likely to be more direct than with their NS counterparts. First, tutors often use different types of questions when working with NNS tutees. According to Powers (1993), NS tutors are usually trained to use Socratic questions, that is, questions that help tutees figure out solutions for themselves. In interactions with NNS tutees, however, Powers showed that this strategy did not always work and that NNS tutees needed more intervention, such as editing and proofreading within their writing process. In her research that investigated actual NS tutor-NNS tutee interactions, Thonus (1999a, 2004) corroborated this finding, showing that NS tutors used less-modulated directives and became more direct and more didactic with NNS tutees, due to their limited English proficiency. In the similar vein, Blau and Hall (2002) also found that NS tutors asked NNS tutees closed questions (i.e., “Such as such, right?” or “XYZ, don't you think?”), that is, questions that had one answer, instead of questions that opened up thinking or discussion.

The tendency of tutors to use a more direct approach is also confirmed in their limited use of mitigation strategies with NNS tutees compared to NS tutees (Thonus, 1999a, 1999b, 2004; Williams, 2004b). For example, through an investigation of four NS tutors' interactions with tutees, Thonus (1999a) found that with NNS tutees, the tutors used fewer mitigating politeness strategies and more direct and dominant imperative forms, while with NS tutees, they used politeness strategies such as compliments and mitigating question tags and gave more suggestions. Similarly, Williams (2004b) also found that tutors used not only fewer mitigating politeness strategies when working with NNS tutees but also more

upgraders such as *you have to* and imperatives. Thonus (1999b) concluded that the tutors' use of less modulated and more direct strategies with NNS tutees is a result of their wanting to make their advice more comprehensible to the tutees who have lower English proficiency than their NS counterparts.

## Strategies Used by Non-native Speaker Tutors

As seen in the above, while the body of research investigating NS tutor interactions with both NS and NNS tutees is quite large, little research has been done on strategies used by NNS tutors working in the EFL context (Mack, 2012; Ronesi, 2009). This shortage could be attributed to the fact that, oftentimes, EFL resources for writing instruction, including not only writing tutorials but also physical locations to create a community for writers (i.e., writing centers), are not as plentiful as in the ESL context, as several second language writing scholars have pointed out (Hyland, 1996; Lee, 2013). Despite a lack of writing tutorials in EFL context, a few studies have been conducted using a conversation analytic perspective, in particular, in the Korean context (Jung, 2007; Kim, 2008; Park, 2007, 2011). Park (2007) analyzed the different functions of Korean tutors' use of questions, such as clarifying unclear parts (i.e., What is X?), confirming what they think the tutee meant in the text (i.e., So you're saying that X, right?), or giving comments and advice (i.e., In what sense? What would be the examples?). In examining the strategies used by tutors to give advice to their tutees, Park (2011) found that they gave advice in different ways depending on error types: while direct advice was given regarding grammar mistakes, their interactions with regard to word choice were more extended, involving tutor use of clarification requests to ascertain the tutee's intentions, followed by the tutee's responses, then by actual advice-giving.

Although these studies examined interactions involving NNS tutors, they did not reveal specific patterns unique to NNS tutors. As it is often found that cultural differences affect speakers' use of strategies (Nguyen, 2018; Tsuda Shigemitsu, & Murata, 2007), however, NNS tutors may have developed tutoring strategies unique to their own context and identity. For example, after examining Korean tutors' interactions with their Korean tutees, Cho and Kim (2014, 2017) found that, for the purpose of helping the tutees to understand feedback as well as to identify solutions on their own, the tutors often referred to direct translation from L1 to L2 or vice versa, which is a strategy utilized only among tutors and tutees who share the same native language background. Cho (2019), in a study examining Korean writing tutors' identity development, implied that NNS tutors have developed peculiar identities as writing tutors: they feel like they are straddling a border, as they identify themselves neither as writing instructors nor as native speakers of English. Their insecurity was represented in their written feedback: they preferred indirect feedback and hedged comments because of their lack of confidence as tutors who had no experience of tutoring writing. Cho (2019) only investigated their written feedback, but their interactions with tutees are also worth exploring to see whether their peculiar identities as NNS tutors may lead them to use specific strategies while working with their tutees. To add to this understanding, this study explores what strategies NNS tutors use during their tutorials and how their use of a certain strategy relates to their identities as writing tutors. In particular, this study focuses on their use of withdrawal (i.e., canceling feedback or questioning reliability of feedback), in order to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How do Korean tutors of English use the strategy of withdrawal during their tutorials?
- 2) What are their motivations and intentions in using this strategy?

## Method

### Participants

The participants of this study were four tutors (Tutor A and C are females while Tutor B and D are males) and five tutees (all of them are females). At the time of the study, the four tutors were enrolled in a

seminar course on teaching and conducting research on second language writing. In this course, they were required to work as writing tutors and to be matched by the instructor with one or two of the tutees who volunteered to participate in this study. Tutor A tutored two tutees (Tutee A-1 and A-2), while the other tutors tutored one tutee each. Table 1 summarizes the tutors' detailed demographic information. In contrast to the tutors' diverse background information, all tutees are quite homogeneous: they were first-year English major students without any experience of studying abroad; they were all placed into a lower-level writing class according to the result of a writing placement test; and they had to complete two semesters of writing as a departmental requirement, and during this study, they were enrolled in the second semester course. The course was designed to help them practice academic writing in English and focused on developing logic and supporting opinions using outside materials. In this course, the tutees were asked to complete three major writing assignments—a one-paragraph summary, a compare-and-contrast essay, and an argumentative essay.

TABLE 1  
*Demographic Information of Tutors*

Tutor	Gender	Age	Degree	Studying Abroad	Teaching Experiences	Previous Tutoring Experiences
A	F	32	Doctoral	3 yrs. (went to a high school in Australia)	1 semester (tutoring English at an open university)	2 yrs.
B	M		Doctoral	No	3 yrs. (teaching English at a university as part-time lecturer)	1 semester
C	F	29	Doctoral	No	1 yr. (teaching English at a university as part-time lecturer)	No
D	M	31	Doctoral	1 yr. (studied at a U.S. university as an exchange student)	6 yrs. (teaching English to high school students at a private institute)	No

## Writing Tutorials

The data for this study consists of audio-recordings of writing tutorials, written documents (i.e., student texts and tutors' written feedback on them), and posterior interviews with the tutors. Total number of tutorials varied depending on tutor and tutee schedules: Tutor A conducted eight tutorials (five with Tutee A-1 and three with Tutee A-2); Tutor B conducted three; Tutor C conducted one, and Tutor D conducted four. Out of these 16 tutorials, five tutorials were excluded (because they were conducted after the tutees received teacher feedback in their classes, they often discussed teacher feedback and thus the interactional patterns diverged from those of the other tutorials) and thus only 11 tutorials were included in this study, for the sake of consistency. Tutorials lasted approximately 25 minutes, the shortest around 11 minutes and the longest around 48 minutes. Although written feedback was not requested from the tutors, all tutors—except Tutor C—prepared written feedback prior to face-to-face interaction.

Audio-recordings of tutorials were first transcribed line by line and coded based on a modification of Williams' (2004a) three categories of the writing-revision process: detection (noticing the problem), identification (diagnosing the problem and deciding how to fix it), and correction (revising). Because this study did not examine student revision, we focused on detection and identification, segmenting the identification process into two: identification (diagnosing the problem) and decision (deciding how to fix it). After the initial analysis was completed, moments were identified when tutors withdrew their feedback at each stage. A withdrawal is marked when a tutor weakens the reliability of his or her feedback as follows: by raising a question about one's own feedback (e.g., "Am I wrong?") or by

acknowledging that the tutee's expressions are okay as well immediately after giving one's own feedback (e.g., "You can leave it as you wrote," "You're right"). All the tutorials were coded by the first author of this study, while each tutorial was coded by one of the other authors of this study. Whenever disagreements occurred, the authors had enough discussion until arriving at the same conclusion.

## Posterior Interviews

After a tutor's use of withdrawal was identified across all tutorials, posterior interviews were conducted with the tutors to examine their motivations in withdrawing feedback. The interviews were conducted by the authors of this study, either online using Webex, an online meeting program, or over the phone. While being shown the transcript with examples of where they withdrew feedback, the tutors were asked about their motivations for doing so.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim and went through thematic analysis, as recommended by Leki (2006). The transcribed interviews were coded line by line and read through by the authors of this study until common categories emerged. Once categories were identified, the authors double-checked the specific transcriptions with the audio-recordings to ensure accuracy. Table 2 summarizes the categories that emerged from the interview data.

TABLE 2  
*Common Categories that Emerge from the Tutor Interviews*

Common Themes	Examples
Tutor Status (TS)	If I were the instructor, I would definitely say "do this." But I was just in the position of a writing tutor.
Limited Knowledge (LK)	Since I was not sure about this either, I asked the tutee.
Tutee Emotions (TE)	I may sound too offensive to say that this is wrong. So I said this considering the tutee's emotions.
Tutee Ownership (TO)	I just gave a guideline and withdrew it so that the tutee would make her own title.
Tutee Intention (TI)	Once I heard about the tutee's intention, I came to think that now it makes sense.

## Results

Table 3 shows the total number of tutorials, the total number of withdrawals each tutor made during their tutorials, and the average number of withdrawals per tutorial. While there is a clear variation in the number of withdrawals used per tutor—Tutor C used withdrawals most frequently and Tutor A least frequently—it is noticeable that the strategy of withdrawal is used across all tutors.

TABLE 3  
*Number of Tutorials and Withdrawals per Tutor*

	Tutor A	Tutor B	Tutor C	Tutor D
# of Tutorials	5	2	1	3
# of Withdrawals	6	5	6	7
Average	1.2	2.5	6	2.3

Table 4 shows the types of withdrawal utilized by each tutor at each stage of pointing out a problem in the text. While Tutor A used withdrawal at every stage—detection, identification, and decision, the other tutors used this strategy predominantly at the stages of identification and decision; in particular, Tutor D's use of withdrawals were restricted to the detection stage. Overall, their reasons varied: Tutor A withdrew her feedback mostly because of her limited knowledge and sense of insecurity as a tutor; Tutor B and C used this strategy as a way of considering the tutee's emotions and intentions as well; on the other hand, Tutor D used this withdrawal strategy mostly for respecting tutee's ownership. But upon dissecting the

tutorial process, interesting patterns emerged. During the identification of a problem, a withdrawal was likely to be performed in relation to the tutor's limited knowledge or their particular status as a tutor. However, during the detection or decision stages, the themes varied; for example, they withdrew feedback considering the tutee's emotions, intentions, or ownership, not necessarily because of their limited knowledge or status. The typical cases when tutors used a withdrawal are detailed below.

TABLE 4  
Each Tutor's Use of Withdrawals in Relation to their Reasons

Stage	Tutor A			Tutor B			Tutor C			Tutor D		
	D	I	Dc	D	I	Dc	D	I	Dc	D	I	Dc
Type	LK(1)	TS(1) LK(1)	TS(2) TE(1)		TS(1)	TS(2) TI(1)		TS(1) TI(1)	TS(2) TE(2)			TI(1) TS(1) TO(5)

Note. The number in parentheses indicates frequency; D = detection stage; I = identification stage; Dc = decision stage; TS = tutor status; LK = limited knowledge; TE = tutee's emotions; TI = tutee's intention; TO = tutee ownership

### Withdrawal at Detection and Identification

When a withdrawal was made during either the detection or the identification stage, tutors cancelled their feedback usually due to their insecurity or lack of knowledge, and thus did not move on to the next stage (the decision stage), as seen in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 1 (Tutor A) (Detection and Identification, LK)

Detection: Tutor A: I think this part needs a space. ***Am I wrong?***

Tutee A-1: I don't know it very well.

Identification: Tutor A: Wait (Looking for a book). Don't I have the book? Huh, I don't have it. Don't you think they need a space? Uh, you don't put a space there. Because this part needs a space. ***Am I wrong?*** Isn't there any information about this in the textbook?

Tutee A-1: I think so. There may be some information about spacing. I'll look for it. <sup>1</sup>

In this excerpt, Tutor A detected the problem that Tutee A-1 did not put a space between the initials of an author's first and middle names in her reference list, as seen in Figure 1. After pinpointing this problem during the tutorial, Tutor A immediately withdrew her feedback by saying "Am I wrong?" Even during the identification stage, in Line 6, she withdrew her feedback again by showing doubt on it. Instead of giving a definite answer regarding how to correct this problem, Tutor A ends up suggesting that the tutee should look for the relevant information in the textbook.

Kim, D.K. and Yoo, B.B. (2016). 노키즈존 확산, 어떻게 볼 것인가?[The Spread of the No Kids Zone, How Do You See It?]. <i>Issue&amp;Analysis</i> (221), 1-25.
Kim, W.Y. (2019). 낭만적 예찬을 넘어서 이미지 시대의 아동을 생각하다[Think of the Children of the Age of Images beyond Romantic Worship]. <i>Changbi Review of Children's Literature</i> , 17(1), 27-36.
Lee, S.A. (2011). Cafe as Hybrid Spaces and Cultural Scapes of Nomadic Subjects. <i>Culture &amp; Society</i> , 10, 34-66.

Figure 1. Tutee A's draft.

<sup>1</sup> All the tutorials were conducted in Korean, and the excerpts cited in this study were translated in Korean by one of the authors. Bold in italics indicates a withdrawal of feedback by tutor.

The posterior interview with Tutor A revealed that her choice of withdrawal strategy, as witnessed in Excerpt 1, originated from her lack of knowledge about MLA and APA citation styles.

#### Excerpt 2

I thought that there should be a space between initials of an author's names, but there are several kinds of writing styles, such as MLA or APA. I know they're different, but at that moment, I didn't know how different they are from each other. So I could not definitely tell the tutee to put a space or not. I should have consulted a book or an article myself, but I didn't have it at that time.  
(from Interview with Tutor A)<sup>2</sup>

As she mentioned, Tutor A was aware that the two writing styles, MLA and APA, are different from each other, but she did not exactly know how different they are at the moment of the tutorial and thus suggested to Tutee A-1 that she should look it up herself.

In addition to tutors' limited knowledge regarding writing, their in-between status, being neither writing instructors nor native speakers of English, also led them to withdraw their feedback as follows:

#### Excerpt 3 (Tutor B) (Identification, TS)

Detection: I wrote that it is not necessary,

Identification: but *now I think you can leave it as you wrote. It is not necessarily implied, because you only said that they use it.*

In Excerpt 3, Tutor B discusses his written comment on Tutee B's writing, which was given before the tutorial. Tutee B wrote on differences between Korean and English and used the sentence, "English has been a common language in the world because many countries use English and it is possible to communicate only with English in the countries that you cannot speak their own language." As seen in Figure 2, regarding this particular expression, "it is possible to communicate only with English in the countries that you cannot speak their own languages," Tutor B gave the written feedback, "I could understand what you mean by this phrase as a Korean speaker myself, but I've also got the impression that this would not be needed because the previous clause already implied this meaning." During the tutorial, as seen in Excerpt 3, however, Tutor B withdrew this feedback, by stating that the previous clause did not necessarily communicate this particular meaning and that the tutee could use her own expression as it is.

Figure 2. Tutor B's written feedback.

<sup>2</sup> The posterior interviews with the tutors were originally conducted in Korean; the excerpts quoted in this study were translated into English by one of the authors.

Later in the posterior interview, Tutor B related the reason why he withdrew his feedback:

Excerpt 4

I said it like this because I was a tutor. If I was her instructor, I would definitely say that this is not correct. I'm not a native speaker of English, I'm in the same process of learning English as a non-native speaker, so I could not firmly argue my point of view. (from Interview with Tutor B)

Excerpt 4 shows that Tutor B withdrew the advice given in his written feedback to Tutee B because he felt he was limited in his status as a tutor and as a non-native speaker: he positioned himself as not having the same degree of authority as an instructor and as a learner of English himself.

As seen in the cases of Tutor A and Tutor B, withdrawals were often made during the detection or identification stage because of their status as a writing tutor (and not an instructor) and as a learner of English themselves (and not a native speaker) as well as their limited knowledge of English writing. Therefore, since they are not sure about their feedback while giving it, the tutors do not move on to the correction stage when making withdrawals at the detection or the identification stage.

### Withdrawals at Decision

While a few withdrawals were made at detection and identification stages, as seen above, most were made in the decision stage. These withdrawals also originated from the tutor's status, as observed in the detection and identification stages, but they were made for more diverse reasons. Excerpt 5 shows a case where a tutor withdrew feedback while taking into account a tutee's emotions.

Excerpt 5 (Tutor C) (Correction, TE)

Detection: I'm wondering, you started the summary with "who am I?"

Identification: Umm, you used various subjects. Sometimes you used "I" and sometimes "We."

Correction: If you make a correct summary, you may use "I" or "We," but I think in TOEFL or other writing tests, you should say "the author." Because you said "the author" before, I thought that you knew about it. So you can use the subject "the author," but ***I didn't mean that this was wrong.***

In Tutee C's one-paragraph summary assignment, Tutor C detected and identified the problem of using the pronouns "I" or "We." Because Tutor C thought that this may not be appropriate in TOEFL or other official writing tests, she suggested a correction, that is, that the tutee should use "the author" rather than "I" or "We." However, by saying that she did not intend to imply that the tutee's choice of "I" or "We" is wrong, in some sense, she undermined the strength or appropriateness of her own feedback, which may have the effect of cancelling or nullifying her feedback. Excerpt 6 shows that Tutor C's withdrawal of feedback at the decision stage, as witnessed in Excerpt 5, comes partly from her consideration of differences between courses and partly from her effort not to offend the tutee.

Excerpt 6

When I took an English writing class, I learned that I should summarize a text as "the author, the writer said," but I thought that this may vary depending on a class and that it may sound offensive to say you're wrong. Instead of just saying you're wrong, I said like this considering the tutee's emotions. (from Interview with Tutor C)

The next case of a withdrawal made at the decision stage shows another reason why the tutor attempts to do a withdrawal of his feedback—in order to build up tutee autonomy or increase their awareness of ownership.

Excerpt 7 (Tutor D) (Correction, TO)

Detection: Tutor D: First of all a text should be informative. Second of all who is going to read your essay?

Identification: Your professor will read this essay and a title will inform her of what this essay is about.

Tutee D: I tried to put a title, but I couldn't.

Correction: Tutor D: I made a tentative title, like “Robot taxing should be introduced in the society.”

***You can use it or make your own.***

In her argumentative essay, Tutee D wrote about robot taxes and argued that, to be fair, robots should be taxed as humans are. Excerpt 7 shows that Tutor D detected the problem of no title and suggested a title in Lines 6-7. Immediately after giving his title, however, he withdrew his feedback by saying that the tutee does not necessarily need to accept his title, but that she can make her own. In Excerpt 8, Tutor D remarks that he withdrew his feedback because he intended to give his tutee guidance, not a definite answer.

Excerpt 8

I just wanted to give her my title as guidance so that she can make her own title. That's the reason why I withdrew my feedback. (from Interview with Tutor D)

As seen in Table 4, the majority of withdrawals—five out of the seven withdrawals that Tutor D made—originated from his concern about the tutee's autonomy. During the follow-up interviews, he often used the term “tutee's autonomy.”

So far, we have seen cases where tutors' withdrawals originate from various reasons, including consideration of their status as a tutor, the tutee's emotions, or their lack of knowledge, although they did not necessarily think that their feedback was wrong. Interestingly, however, there were cases where the tutors canceled their feedback after negotiating with their tutees and realizing that their feedback was not appropriate. For example, Tutee B wrote the sentence “This does not mean that Korean follows this rule absolutely” in her draft as seen in Figure 3. Tutor B gave his feedback by commenting that it would be better to say “this does not necessarily mean that Korean follows this rule absolutely” by adding the adverb ‘necessarily.’

<p>the use of post modification (Lim, 2013, p. 12). Namely, the predicate that indicates the main meaning in the sentence is put at the end of it. This does not <u>necessarily</u> mean that Korean follows this rule absolutely. Rather, Korean has a postpositional particle having a grammatical function behind the word, so inversion of composition in sentence is natural (Mun, 1993, p. 7).</p>	<p>owner, 2019-12-09 PM 메모 포함: 메모 [o2]: 이곳에서는 necessarily 가 들어가서 꼭 의미하지는 않는다. -로 쓰는게 좋을 것 같아 이렇게 남겨두게 되었습니다.</p>
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Figure 3. Tutor B's draft.

During the tutorial, Tutee B raised a question about the possibility that the adverb ‘absolutely’ in her original sentence may have a similar meaning to the adverb ‘necessarily.’ After hearing Tutee B's explanations, Tutor B initially suggested that the tutee could delete ‘absolutely’ and keep his suggestion, ‘necessarily.’ However, in the ensuing turns, he retreated from this initial position and made another

suggestion—that the tutee can use whatever she prefers—while acknowledging that she made a good point.

Excerpt 9 (Tutor B) (Correction, TI)

Detection: Tutee B: You put ‘necessarily’ here but doesn’t the word ‘absolutely’ here contain that meaning?

Identification: Tutor B: You mean it doesn’t mean because of the word ‘not.’ I got it, I got it.

Correction: Then I think you can delete the word ‘absolutely,’ you can delete ‘absolutely’ and put ‘necessarily.’ ***You’re right. You made a good point. You can use what you’d like to use because this means ‘does not mean.’***

Excerpt 10

Here, once I heard the tutee’s explanations, I came to understand her point, so I said you made a good point. Now I got it. But more importantly, this is the intention I didn’t catch while reading her text, and thus I said that you can leave it as it is. Once I heard her additional explanations, I came to understand what she was trying to say. (from Interview with Tutor B)

Excerpt 10 shows that Tutor B withdrew his feedback after understanding the tutee’s intentions, even though he did not comprehend her intention while reading her essay. In the previously quoted cases, tutors did not really mean to cancel their feedback, but instead admitted to having other purposes, such as considering the tutee’s emotions, fostering the tutee’s autonomy, or compensating for their lack of authority. Unlike these cases, however, TI (withdrawal made after considering or understanding a tutee’s real intentions) shows a real case of tutors’ withdrawal of their own feedback after understanding the tutee’s original intention.

As seen here, when the tutor made withdrawals at the detection and identification stages, they did so primarily for their lack of knowledge about English writing or their unique status as a writing tutor (not a writing instructor nor a native speaker of English); on the other hand, they made withdrawals at the decision stage for more various reasons (i.e., considering tutee’s emotions, intentions, and ownership), including their lack of knowledge or limited status as a writing tutor.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The data demonstrates that Korean tutors of English writing withdrew their feedback for many reasons, depending on in what stage they did it. First, tutors were likely to withdraw their feedback at the identification stage when they considered that they did not have the same level of authority as the writing instructors or when they were not sure of their knowledge regarding English academic writing. This finding is in line with previous studies on the tutor identity of non-native writing tutors who work in the EFL context. For example, Cho (2018) found that non-native EFL tutors did not feel as authoritative as writing tutors, which often resulted in a lack of confidence in giving feedback. Examining the identity development of these non-native EFL writing tutors, Cho (2019) regarded them as legitimate peripheral participants who were working on the margins—not quite novice writing tutors or full-fledged writing scholars and instructors—and argued that they could benefit from this typical ambivalence by learning from their struggles to figure out what their roles are as writing tutors. Due to this similar lack of authority as a writing tutor, being neither a writing instructor nor a native speaker of English, the participants of this study were found to use the strategy of withdrawing their feedback during the writing tutorials.

On the other hand, most withdrawals identified in this study occurred at the decision stage. While some originated from tutors feeling a lack of authority, the majority derived from other reasons, such as tutors mitigating their feedback, attributing the responsibility of decision-making to the tutee, and taking into account the tutee's intentions. Interestingly, the withdrawals originating from the last reason (i.e., tutor withdrawal of feedback after negotiation with the tutee), are perhaps the only cases when the tutors genuinely intended to withdraw their original feedback: the other cases, in fact, disguised the real intentions of tutors. As Cohen and Wang (2018) found in their study of ESL learners' vocabulary learning strategies, one strategy can serve multiple functions; here, the Korean tutors used the strategy of withdrawal for multiple functions: avoidance, mitigation, increase of tutee autonomy, and consideration of tutee intentions. Use of this strategy across functions may help tutors efficiently handle various precarious situations but may also have the risk of confusing tutees, leaving them bewildered as to whether they should accept tutor feedback or not. As this study did not explore whether tutees did, in fact, incorporate tutor feedback into revision when tutors withdrew their feedback, further studies are needed to investigate how tutor use of withdrawal affects tutee incorporation of feedback in their revisions. These studies will provide a more comprehensive picture by linking a tutor's use of specific strategies during writing tutorials to the outcome in student writing.

Although the findings of this study are not completely generalizable due to a limited number of participants and tutorials, they do imply that non-native tutors in EFL contexts have developed their own strategy in the process of juggling and struggling with their identities which are distinguishable from those of L1 tutors who work in the native language context. This study explores one key strategy, withdrawal, used by non-native English writing tutors in an EFL context; focusing on when and why this strategy is implemented. The use of the same strategy represents various purposes, from compensating for their lack of knowledge or limited tutor status, to considering tutee's intentions and emotions. Based on these findings, this study implies that non-native writing tutors should have a better understanding of what strategies they are using for what purposes, what kinds of strategies are available for them to utilize, and what effects their choice of a certain strategy will bring about on their tutees, which will make them better prepared as tutors who give feedback on writing written in the language of which they are not native speakers and rather are learners themselves.

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