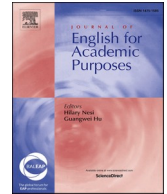




ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

Journal of English for Academic Purposes

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jeap

Learner-centered EAP practices: Managing agenda in tutorial interaction

Teppo Jakonen^{*}, Derya Duran

School of Languages and Translation Studies, University of Turku, Finland

ARTICLE INFO

Handling Editor: Dr Hilary Nesi

Keywords:

ESL tutoring
Agenda setting
Learner-centeredness
Negotiated curriculum
Conversation analysis (CA)

ABSTRACT

Many higher education institutions support the linguistic needs of ESL students by providing various kinds of tutorial services. Although tutorial interaction has received much research attention, few studies have investigated how tutors and students make decisions about what language skills and activities to focus on during tutorials. In this article, we use conversation analysis (CA) to explore how participants jointly set the tutorial agenda in video recordings from ESL tutorials in dyadic tutor-tutee interactions between an L1 English tutor and L2 tutees at a community college in the United States. We examine participants' interactional practices of initiating agenda management, identifying the tutee's language learning needs, proposing learning activities, and managing disagreement about proposed activities. Our analysis shows how the participants orient to the tutee as the person who is expected to take the lead in agenda setting. From the perspective of a learner-centered EAP pedagogy, agenda management constitutes an important practice because it enables the individualization of the tutorial, which is essential in an instructional environment characterized by a diversity of students' language skills and learning needs. Recognizing the situated, collaborative, and negotiated nature of tutorial interaction can help educational institutions and EAP practitioners further promote learner-centeredness in their practice.

1. Introduction

The notion of learner-centered language teaching (e.g., Nunan, 1988; Tarone & Yule, 1989; Tudor 1996) emerged in the 1970s as part of a broader shift in thinking about language teaching methodology. Learner-centeredness meant moving away from a subject-centered orientation that emphasized the learning of prescribed sets of grammar and vocabulary, and instead placing increasing attention on learners' active participation, their diverse needs, personal preferences and goals, as well as ensuring more equal possibilities for decision-making in the learning process through power sharing (Benson, 2012; Bremner, 2021). While there have been varied interpretations of the term (see e.g., Tudor, 1992; Bremner, 2021), learner-centeredness has over the years become a fairly broadly accepted "educational value" (Wenden, 2002, p. 34). In the field of language teaching, earlier studies have explored issues such as curriculum development and task design (Nunan, 1988), learner skills (Wenden, 2002), learner autonomy (Benson, 2013), and the roles of the teacher and learner (Tudor, 1993) in the learner-centered classroom. Although these and other studies have shed light on the nature and potential of learner-centered pedagogies, there has been little empirical attention on the interactional practices and processes through which learner-centered instruction is negotiated and accomplished. A rare exception to this is a study

^{*} Corresponding author. Arcanum building, Vatselankatu 2, FI-20500, Turku, Finland.
E-mail address: teppo.jakonen@utu.fi (T. Jakonen).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2024.101345>

Received 12 April 2023; Received in revised form 22 October 2023; Accepted 19 January 2024

Available online 2 February 2024

1475-1585/© 2024 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

by Antón (1999), who found clear differences between a teacher-centered and learner-centered second language (L2) classroom in terms of the interactional opportunities afforded to students to participate in the negotiation of linguistic meaning and form. The lack of research regarding the interactional features of learner-centered language pedagogies is surprising, given that social interaction is at least implicit in many key ideas in the literature, beginning from David Nunan's (1988) notion of the "negotiated curriculum" and his later suggestion that in the learner-centered pedagogy "what gets taught and how it is learned are arrived at through *discussion and compromise*" (Nunan, 2012, p. 57, emphasis added).

In this article, we respond to this research gap by investigating what a learner-centered pedagogy might look like in the context of language lab tutorials provided to English as a second language (ESL) students in a U.S. community college. Community colleges are so-called short-cycle tertiary educational institutions, which in the U.S. typically offer two-year programs in technical and vocational fields. Most U.S. community colleges have different kinds of learning assistance centers designed to support students' needs by providing academic tutoring, computer-assisted learning, and counseling activities (Perin, 2004). Language labs and language-related tutoring are particularly important components of many such centers because these services support ESL students in a range of academic language skills, typically focusing on reading, writing, and critical thinking. Language tutorial activities are also a perspicuous site to investigate learner-centered pedagogies in action because individualized tutoring needs to cater not only to students' diverse academic language learning needs, preferences, and motivations but also their different study programs and day-to-day changing course assignments.

Our empirical investigation focuses on the practice of agenda-setting in these ESL tutorial sessions. Agenda setting can be defined as an activity "that serves to determine what concerns will be addressed in the tutorial, the priority of each, and (possibly) the order in which each concern will be addressed" (Reinking, 2012, p. 76). Existing practice-oriented studies of (writing) tutorials have argued that setting the agenda at the beginning of each tutoring session is important because it allows tutors to negotiate an appropriate goal for each session (Henning, 2001; Thompson, 2009; Thonus, 2002). We aim to expand these studies by exploring how the tutorial agenda emerges in and through social interaction. By drawing on conversation analysis (CA), we investigate how participants initiate talk about the tutorial agenda, make propositions about what to do, and finally arrive at decisions, thus exploring the ways in which their interactional work may or may not accomplish a learner-centered language pedagogy. In what follows, we first review existing literature on agenda management in L2 tutoring interaction, followed by the research questions guiding our study (section 2). We then introduce our dataset (section 3), analyze in micro-analytical detail how the agenda is set in selected data extracts (section 4), and discuss what our findings suggest about ESL tutorial interaction as a learner-centered space (section 5).

2. Setting the agenda in L2 tutorial interaction

Many higher education institutions around the world offer one-on-one or small-group tutorials to support the linguistic demands of students who are conducting their degree studies in an L2. As Reinking (2012, pp. 76–78) points out, institutions may have various kinds of prescriptive recommendations for tutorial practices, some of which also concern the ways in which participants should establish the goals and tasks in each tutorial meeting. In addition to institutional guidelines and tutor guides (e.g., Macauley, 2005), a sizeable writing center scholarship has explored practices for agenda setting in the context of writing conferences, i.e., tutorial meetings in which typically either a faculty member or a peer tutor guides a student on their written work (e.g., Bowles, 2021; Thonus, 1999, 2002, 2004; Williams, 2005). For instance, Newkirk (1989) suggests that without an agenda "a [writing] conference can run on aimlessly and leave both participants with the justifiable feeling that they have wasted time" (p. 303). Similarly, Henning (2001) argues that how well the tutor and the tutee negotiate an agenda that meets the tutee's expectations is a key factor contributing to the perceived success of the session. While these and other studies suggest that a clear tutorial agenda can promote student engagement, they have reported differences in who sets or should set the agenda as well as how and in what stage of the tutorial it should be negotiated (cf. Reinking, 2012; Ritter, 2002).

In contrast to the writing center studies, details of L2 tutorial interaction have been documented extensively in CA studies, which have explored a range of topics such as advice-giving (e.g., Leyland, 2020; Park, 2012, 2015; Waring, 2005) and expertise (Back, 2016), the role of learning material artifacts (Ro, 2021), feedback and assessment (Koshik, 2002; Shvidko, 2018) and interactional affordances for language learning (Belhiah, 2013; Young & Miller, 2004) in tutorial interaction. Within this literature, however, a focus on agenda management has been less systematic. A particularly relevant exception for our purposes is Reinking's (2012) dissertation which examined the opening, agenda-setting, and closing phases of writing tutorials between graduate-student tutors and graduate-student L2 tutees. In her data, agenda-related discussions were typically initiated by the tutors through turns such as "What are you working on today?" and "How can I help you today?". Reinking (2012) suggests that these kinds of turns pave the way for participants to discuss topics for the tutorials as well as negotiate their priorities and ways of attending to the matters at hand. In yet another study, Ritter (2002) investigated what she termed as tutors' "diagnostic practices" in writing conferences between ESL students and first language (L1) English tutors, arguing that tutors tend to dominate the initial stage of the session (p. 167).

Some CA studies have touched upon practices of agenda management while analyzing how tutorial openings are organized interactionally (e.g., Belhiah, 2009; Benwell & Stokoe, 2002; Park, 2015). These studies suggest that ways of managing the agenda reflect institutional roles, responsibilities, and situated identities in tutoring encounters. For example, Benwell and Stokoe (2002) showed how identity categories are relevant for participants in agenda discussions. In their context (British higher education), the tutors commenced the small-group sessions by setting the agenda and tasks and by holding students accountable for their academic responsibilities (i.e., for having done the pre-readings and homework). Moreover, Belhiah's (2009) study of ESL tutorials in a U.S. university highlighted the multimodal nature of tutorial openings. The study demonstrated how the tutor's gaze shifts and repositioning of the body toward instructional materials can project the beginning of talk about agenda, suggesting a need to attend to

embodied aspects of interaction in analyzing tutorial data. Studies have also documented how tutees can take initiative over agenda-setting. Park's (2015) study showed how tutees begin agenda management in the opening moments of tutorials through two types of requests, which she termed as low epistemic requests (e.g., "I don't know X") and high entitlement requests (e.g., "I want X"). The author argued that these requests activate different domains of authority as the grounds for assistance and also have consequences for how the agenda-related discussion unfolds subsequently. The study serves as a reminder of the need to consider the kinds of social roles and relationships that turns-at-talk construct during agenda management.

In sum, the practice-oriented literature on tutorials has recurrently pointed out the importance of the agenda for successful tutorial meetings (e.g., DeSanctis & Murray, 2007; Henning, 2001), yet few studies have specifically explored how agenda management takes place in and through tutorial interaction. Negotiating the aim, focus, and tasks of a meeting is essential because it enables participants to align their expectations toward the instructional activity at hand. Many existing pedagogical guidelines for tutorials emphasize elements of learner-centeredness, viewing the student as an active and autonomous agent in decision-making about the contents of a tutorial session. Yet, much less is known about how a learner-centered pedagogy can be constructed in and through social interaction. Our contribution to the literature is a fine-grained CA investigation of agenda management in ESL language lab tutorials in a U.S. community college. Our research questions are as follows:

1. How do participants collaboratively set the agenda of ESL tutorial meetings? How is agenda-setting organized sequentially?
2. How do participants orient to decision-making authority while managing the tutorial agenda?
3. How can a learner-centered pedagogy be constructed in and through social interaction?

3. Data and method

3.1. Data, context, and participants

The data for this study come from dyadic and small-group ESL tutorial sessions at an urban community college in the Northeast U.S. The participants are an L1 user of English tutor and seven L2 users of English tutees. Fifteen naturally occurring tutorials between these participants were video-recorded over five weeks during spring 2019. The duration of each session ranged from 60 to 120 minutes, and altogether the corpus amounts to 18 hours of video data.

The ESL tutorials were part of the support services offered by the learning center of the community college. Participation in the tutorials was on a voluntary basis. The primary goal of the tutorials was to support the linguistic needs of ESL students in the diverse population of the large metropolitan area. Tutoring services were in high demand across degree programs because the college had large numbers of students to whom English was a second language and who needed support to cope with the linguistic demands of their coursework. The tutoring sessions were held on weekdays in the college ESL lab, a physical space dedicated to supporting students' English language learning, their familiarity with the U.S. culture, and academic practices in their institution. Students could sign up for hour-long appointments with one of the tutors to practice their academic English language skills such as speaking, reading, writing, and grammar. Although a typical focus in the tutorials was helping tutees complete course assignments, the meetings often also involved conversations about cultural aspects related to living and studying in the U.S.

The participants met each other several times (between 3 and 8 sessions for each student). The second author introduced the study to the tutees and secured their consent in the initial meeting, and our video data collection began from each tutee's second session onwards. This was done to allow the participants to build their tutor-tutee relationship and mutual trust during the initial meetings. On the one hand, the recurring nature of language lab visits may have helped the tutor to keep track of each tutee's relevant learning needs and/or activity preferences. On the other hand, the tutees' changing course assignments presented a need to set the agenda each time the participants met, which also meant a greater range of possible activities and materials compared to typical writing conferences that often revolve around a piece of student writing.

Altogether seven tutees (5 females and 2 males) coming from Bangladesh, Belarus, Ecuador, Senegal, Ukraine, and Thailand participated in the study. They were aged between 18 and 34 and majored in different disciplines. We did not have access to students' language proficiency test results, but the tutees reported having lived in the U.S. between 1.5 and 6 years at the time of data collection. Their oral skills in English varied, and some reported having few opportunities to interact with L1 users of English speakers outside the college. The tutor had been working in the ESL lab for 1.5 years, teaching ESL writing, conversational practice, and exam practice. She had earlier completed a BA degree in public relations and journalism, and was completing an MA in TESOL at a U.S. university at the time of data collection. She also had previously worked as a teaching assistant in an intensive ESL summer course, which had given her experience in designing learning activities and supporting ESL students in preparation for a college-level writing test.

All data were collected with the informed consent obtained from participants and approved by the institutional review board of the community college. In the extracts shown in this article, we have removed any identifiers related to the institution and have replaced participants' names by pseudonyms to protect anonymity. We have also blurred the faces of those participants who requested it.

3.2. Methodological framework

We analyze the data from a conversation analytical perspective (see e.g., Sacks et al., 1974; Sidnell & Stivers, 2012). CA aims to describe the organization of interaction from an emic perspective by grounding analytical claims in participants' observable orientations in interaction. A multimodal research orientation in CA entails a focus on micro-level details of how participants use not only talk but also embodied conduct (gaze, gesture, movement, etc.) and the surrounding material environment as resources for social

action (see e.g., Keevallik, 2022). More specifically, our study is inspired by the line of CA work that has explored how power, control, and agency are displayed, accepted, and sometimes contested in social interaction. Stevanovic and Peräkylä (2014) have conceptualized this as the deontic order of human interaction, which includes the ways in which participants orient to each other's "rights to determine actions" (p. 190). Such deontic rights are determined by both an individual's deontic status, i.e., their position "in a certain domain of action, relative to his/her co-participant(s)" (ibid, p. 190), and the deontic stance conveyed by the linguistic and embodied design of their turns. To give an example, a teacher typically has a greater institutionally derived deontic status than students insofar as determining what to do in the classroom. Yet, decision-making in teacher-student interaction also involves displays of deontic stance through the participants' social actions (such as whether they simply announce or propose a decision) and the kinds of responses they project. Moreover, these actions can be constructed in different ways through linguistic resources such as modal verbs (e.g., "You could do X" vs. "You should do X"), which convey different implications about the deontic order between the participants.

For English for academic purposes (EAP) research related to power and (in)equity (see e.g., Appleby, 2009; Bastola & Ho, 2022), the framework of deontics can offer a useful analytical lens to explore these issues in social interaction. For our purposes, it enables an exploration of how the participants in ESL tutorials manage their relative right to make decisions about the tutorial agenda (RQ2) through action sequences such as proposal-acceptance. Our approach shares similarities with Stephenson's (2020) recent study on how EAP students negotiated their deontic rights in managing the agenda of peer-group L2 speaking tests at a university language school in the UK. In contrast, the tutor-tutee interaction in our study is a context where one participant (tutor) holds more institutionally derived deontic authority over another participant (tutee), but, as our analysis will show, instead of unilateral decision-making, agenda setting in the focal context is characterized by an orientation to the tutee's deontic rights.

Typical for CA research, we began the analysis with an open stance toward the data rather than formulating specific theory-led research questions for the study. We viewed the video recordings multiple times to get familiar with the data and began paying attention to the opening moments of tutorials. We then noticed that these moments involved discussion about the session's agenda, and identified a collection of all such instances from the data set and analyzed them to identify similarities and differences across these cases. We described the sequential organization of agenda setting and the social actions used to arrive at decisions about the agenda. We then made a collection of 15 such interactional episodes, transcribed them according to Jefferson's (2004) conventions adding annotations on participants' relevant embodied conduct, and analyzed them in a line-by-line manner. In this article, we have selected extracts from dyadic tutorial interactions for analysis. The multi-party interactional data come from one group of four students, who were enrolled in the same course and knew each other very well. While agenda management in the group took largely place through similar kinds of action sequences (e.g., proposals and requests), the negotiations also tended to be longer and include recurring off-task side sequences involving joking, teasing, and occasional humorous subversion of the institutional purpose of the sessions. Exploring the multi-party data (and its possible idiosyncrasies) in sufficient detail is beyond the scope of this paper, which is why we have decided to focus on the dyadic data.

4. Analysis

4.1. Sequential trajectories of agenda setting

In Fig. 1, we present a simplified and schematic representation of agenda management in our data. As illustrated, agenda setting in our data can be initiated by either the tutor ($n = 9$) or the tutee ($n = 6$). A typical way for a tutee to topicalize the agenda is through verbalizing a language-related problem they feel they have (Extract 3). Some agenda management sequences are initiated when the tutee tells about their struggles with ongoing coursework or simply hands over an essay draft or some other piece of coursework to the tutor (Extract 2). As social actions, troubles tellings and embodied displays of coursework project talk about the session agenda, which demonstrates the participants' orientation to the institutional purpose of the meetings. Such actions are routinely either followed by a tutor's proposal for a learning activity or the problem itself becomes the tutorial agenda when the tutor begins to explain it or help with the coursework.

The tutor-initiated agenda-setting sequences overwhelmingly begin with the tutor's explicit request for the tutee to identify a topic or an activity (Extracts 1, 4). Typically, this takes the form of wh-questions such as "What do you want to work on today?", which topicalizes the tutee's individual needs and concerns related to language learning. The sequential trajectories that follow the tutor's requests show similarities to the tutee-initiated cases in the sense that the tutees typically respond to the request by identifying a personal language-related problem, mentioning their coursework, or proposing an activity from the resource book available in the language lab. On some occasions, the tutee does not make any agenda propositions when the tutor asks what the tutee wants to do. Regardless of who initiates the agenda-setting, whenever the tutor makes a proposal for a session agenda, it is always subjected to the tutee's agreement.

In what follows, we analyze five extracts in detail to further illustrate these different sequential trajectories of agenda-setting in dyadic interactions. We focus the analysis on how the participants create an interactional space to discuss the tutee's learning needs and preferences in the early moments of agenda management sequences (section 4.2), how they manage proposals for a concrete activity (section 4.3), and how they resolve situations of disagreement about what to do (section 4.4).

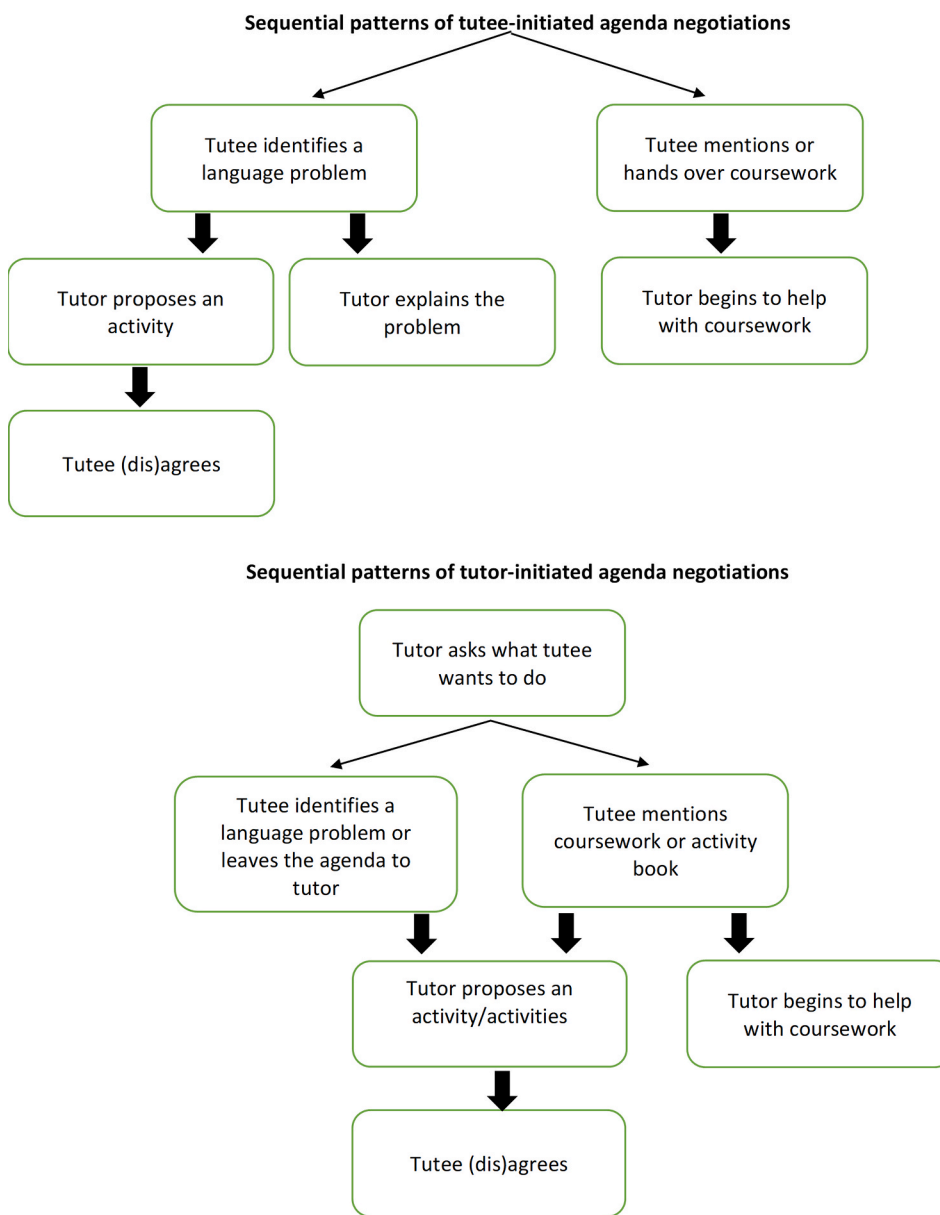


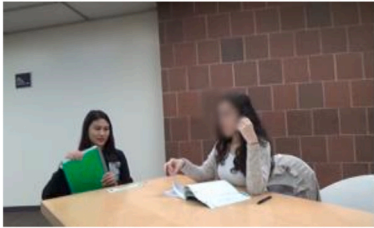
Fig. 1. Different sequential patterns of agenda-setting in the ESL tutorial dataset.

4.2. Creating a space for talk about the tutee’s needs and preferences

Extract 1 illustrates a transition from small talk to agenda setting by way of a tutor’s wh-question. The discussion takes place approximately 1 min into the session, after brief catching up on recent personal events. During the long silence at the beginning of the extract (line 1), the tutee’s (Fai) and the tutor’s embodied conduct makes the end of small talk relevant and prepares the grounds for transitioning to agenda management (line 4). The extract comes from Fai’s fifth meeting with the tutor and demonstrates how participants orient to the tutee’s desires as they manage the session agenda. The tutor has in front of her a grammar activity book, which she sometimes brings along as a backup resource material to the meetings and which here becomes the object of Fai’s request for an agenda (line 6).

Extract 1. Gerunds and infinitives

- 01 (12.0) ((Fai takes out notebook and pencil case, and drinks water;
T alternates gaze between her and the book on table)) **#images 1-2**
- 02 Fai °okay° ((leans forward toward the table, gaze to T))
- 03 (2.0) ((T shifts gaze to Fai)) **#image 3**



1: Fai takes out notebook



2: Fai drinks



3: T looks at Fai

- 04 T so::, (0.6) what do you wanna work on °today°
- 05 (1.9)
- 06 Fai first, (0.9) err I wanna work on °in the book.°= ((points))
- 07 T =in the book? (.) more activities? (.) [okay. ((looks at book))
- 08 Fai [°more=
- 09 =activi[ties°) ((nods))
- 10 T [uhh, (0.5) ((browses the book))
- 11 let me see what kind of things they <have> °here.°
- 12 (19.0) ((T browses the book; Fai looks at other tables))
- 13 T do you know the difference between uhm (1.1)
- 14 err the gerund and the to infinitive? ((gaze to Fai))
- 15 (1.0) ((Fai withdraws gaze from T)) **#image 4**
- 16 Fai uhm:: yes.
- 17 (0.6) ((T nods and looks at the book))
- 18 Fai so yes I'd like to work on that.



4: Fai withdraws gaze

During the 12.0-s silence at line 1, Fai takes out her notebook and pencil case from her bag, takes a sip from her water bottle, and puts it away. At the same time, the tutor alternates her gaze between Fai and the activity book that the tutor has in front of her on the table (see images 1 and 2). In other words, Fai's assembling her personal learning materials on the table both project and prolong the beginning of the tutorial session, and the tutor is observably 'doing waiting' (Svinhufvud, 2018) for Fai to get settled in, monitoring her preparatory work with her gaze. Once Fai has placed her materials on the table, she corrects her posture and softly utters the word 'okay' (line 2). The single-word turn marks a transition and displays Fai's "state of readiness" (Beach, 1993) for moving on in the tutorial interaction. This is visible in how the tutor subsequently shifts her gaze to Fai (image 3) and begins agenda management (line 4).

The tutor's question that sparks off agenda management is prefaced with an elongated 'so', which frames the course of action being launched as incipient and "relevantly pending" (Bolden, 2009). By topicalizing the recipient's 'want', the tutor treats it as relevant for the session agenda and orients to the tutee as a participant who has at least equal if not greater deontic rights to set the agenda. Interestingly, the beginning of Fai's response ('first') at line 6 indicates that she may be about to propose multiple activities. Fai's response ('I wanna work on °in the book°') is also formatted as a highly entitled request form (Park, 2015) and in that way aligned with the design of the tutor's question. Moreover, as Fai responds, she also points at the activity book in front of the tutor. The design of Fai's request treats the activity book exercises as a familiar agenda. It is indeed not the first time the tutor and Fai have been working on the book, as also the design of the tutor's confirmation check ('more activities', line 7) makes it clear.

After Fai's confirmation (lines 8–9), the tutor starts to go through the book looking for a potential activity (lines 10–12). Instead of directly identifying a particular activity, the tutor checks the tutee's knowledge about a grammatical topic (lines 13–14), thus displaying an orientation to the personal relevance of the agenda to Fai. Fai's response comes after a delay during which she withdraws from the mutual gaze and moves her eyeballs to the corner of her eye (image 4), enacting what Goodwin and Goodwin (1986) have described as a "thinking face", an embodied display of momentary disengagement from social interaction. The beginning of Fai's response ('yes') is ambiguous in that it can be heard to make a claim of knowledgeability regarding the 'difference' the tutor is asking. However, Fai quickly repairs the turn so that it treats the tutor's previous turn not primarily as a question about grammatical knowledge but as a proposal for a specific activity which makes relevant Fai's acceptance ('yes I'd like to work on that') or rejection.

Overall, Extract 1 illustrates how participants treat agenda management as a distinct activity phase in a tutorial session, the beginning of which is projected by refraining from further small talk, making relevant preparations for the session, and by providing signals of readiness. The segment also exemplifies a typical tutor-initiated way of initiating an agenda management episode in our data with a first-pair part action (question) that treats the tutee as entitled to introduce a topic, a personal learning aim, or an activity for the tutorial. Identifying a more specific activity in the book via a proposal action sequence exhibits a similar orientation to the primacy of the tutee's individual learning needs and her deontic rights for agenda-related decision-making. Extract 2 shows a similar tutee-centered case, but, in contrast to Extract 1, agenda setting is initiated by the tutee without much earlier small talk. The episode, drawn from the tutee's (Ali) second meeting with the tutor, takes place at the very beginning of the session when Ali demands an agenda with a help request (line 6) as he is still settling in at the tutoring table.

Extract 2. Speech class

01 T good morning,
 02 Ali >good morning<
 03 T how are you,
 04 Ali (°good°)
 05 (3.5) ((Ali puts phone and headphones in his pocket))
 06 Ali today I need help for my class of speak. #image 1
 07 (0.5)
 08 T >speech class.< ((looks at Ali))
 09 (0.5)
 10 T >no problem.<
 11 (9.4) ((Ali settles into his seat; T looks away from Ali, fidgets with her hair))
 12 Ali cos we got like visual aid? (0.3) you know, ((T shifts gaze to Ali))
 13 (1.5)
 14 Ali visual aid?
 15 T yeah.
 16 Ali (we) need to take a graph and explain it,
 17 T yes yes yes. ((Ali nods))
 18 Ali (I took that,) (1.4) ((reaches for bag))
 19 I took s- something like from, (0.4) from a newspaper?
 20 ((takes a clip from his bag, gives it to T)) #images2-3
 21 T ((starts to read the clip aloud))



1: Ali arrives



2: Ali takes clip



3: Ali shows clip to T

Following a greeting exchange between the tutee and the tutor (lines 1–4), Ali is still getting seated (image 1) as he requests an agenda for the session in a highly entitled manner (Park, 2015) at line 6, formulating it as a matter of ‘need’. The tutor receives the request at line 8 with a so-called embedded correction (e.g., Brouwer et al., 2004) of the lexical item Ali used (‘class of speak’). Ali does not react to the correction verbally or in an embodied manner during the subsequent silence, and the tutor grants Ali’s agenda request with a ‘no problem’ statement (line 10). The tutor’s turn affirms the tutee’s deontic right to set the agenda for the session, treating herself as a provider of an individualized service.

While Ali is sitting down (line 11), the tutor withdraws her gaze away from him and fidgets with her hair. Similarly to Extract 1, this can be seen as an embodiment of ‘doing waiting’ (Svinhufvud, 2018) for Ali to get settled in and to display a sufficient state of readiness. Ali breaks the long silence at line 12 with a turn that accounts for (‘cos’) his way of requesting help so directly, treating his own conduct as conduct that requires explanation. Ali elaborates on the help he is seeking by first naming his class assignment (‘visual aid’) and then explaining what he is expected to do in it (line 16). The tutor acknowledges the explanation with repeated affirmation tokens (line 17), which claim understanding of Ali’s task. Ali then takes out the material (i.e., a newspaper clipping) he has selected to use in the task and hands it over to the tutor (lines 18–20, images 2 and 3). The tutor begins to examine the text (line 21), and the two begin to work on the assignment together (omitted from the transcript). In other words, Ali’s course assignment becomes the agenda for the session.

All in all, extracts 1 and 2 demonstrate the initiation of agenda management by both the tutor and the tutee. In addition to verbal topicalizations of session agenda, the participants orient through their embodied conduct to agenda setting as a distinct, projectable activity at the beginning of the session. By getting texts and assignments ready, monitoring as they are being taken out, and by pointing at them, the participants treat these artifacts as relevant for agenda setting. In these ways, agenda management is a material practice. Common to both extracts is also the participants’ orientation to the tutee as a deontic authority when it comes to making decisions about the session agenda. This allows the tutor to create an (learner-centered) interactional space by providing an interactional slot for the tutees to introduce their perceived learning needs and preferences for a topic or activity, by being responsive to such needs and preferences, and taking them as the starting point of decision-making about what to do during the tutorial session.

4.3. Turning verbalized learning needs into concrete learning tasks

The previous examples showed how the tutee’s learning needs or preferences can be topicalized and verbalized for the purposes of determining an agenda for the tutorial meeting. Both Fai’s and Ali’s verbal descriptions already implicated a specific kind of activity, whether that entails working on the grammar resource book (Extract 1) or looking at a written text or a graph together (Extract 2). Sometimes the tutee’s stated problem is more vague or broad in scope, in which case more interactional work is needed to establish what kind of learning activity might best fit the problem. This typically takes place through various kinds of tutor proposals for a concrete language learning activity. Extract 3 demonstrates such a case in which the tutor receives a tutee’s (Fai) relatively broad problem statement (a need to improve vocabulary) by proposing a vocabulary synonym activity (line 17). The extract is taken from Fai’s second session with the tutor, and just prior to the exchange, the parties have talked about Fai’s future career plans.

Extract 3. Improve vocabulary

```

01  Fai  alright,=
02  T    =;hh=
03  Fai  =;thank [you ] ((opens her notebook))
04  T    [ye:ah] hope that- (.) it's helpful.
05  Fai  yes it ;i:s.
06          (2.0) ((Fai takes out papers from her file)) #image 1

```



1: Fai takes out papers

07 Fai I just took an exam midterm, (0.6) [today?
 08 T [to-
 09 T uh huh? (.) how did it go,
 10 (1.0)
 11 Fai I ↑feel like (.) I:: (.) need to:: (.) improve my
 12 vocabulary, and (build) like a strong example in my essays.
 13 T right ri[ght °right.° ((nods))
 14 Fai [I-
 15 I alway::s, (0.6) like when- when the words come up?
 16 I use (like/I) just so simple words.
 17 T .hhhh we could do uhm (.) we could do a synonym practice.
 18 (0.5) ((Fai nods))
 19 T you know what synonyms [are?
 20 Fai [yes. ((nods))
 21 T they're words that mean the same thing.
 22 like two words=>two or more words that mean the same thing so<
 23 (.) for example (0.6) beautiful and gorgeous right,
 24 (0.7) ((Fai nods))
 25 T they're- (.) they mean the same ↑thing
 26 but they are two different ↓words.
 27 (0.5)
 28 T or like, (0.9) uh:: (0.8) happy and pleased. (.)
 29 right? it's- [it's- (.) >it's not exactly the same<=
 30 Fai [°yeah°
 31 T =but it's <synonyms> it's si- similar. (0.4) right?
 32 Fai yeah I wanna do that. ((nods))
 33 T so (.) I- I do this exercise with my students, ((continues describe the task))

As in Extract 1, the transition to agenda setting is marked by the handling of Fai's notebook, which she opens (line 3) as the previous advice-giving sequence is being closed. She takes out papers from the notebook (image 1) during the silence at line 4 and begins to talk about her recent midterm exam (line 5). The tutor responds to the emerging telling by asking Fai to elaborate on how it went (line 7). Notice that instead of evaluating her exam performance with assessments such as 'well' or 'badly', Fai treats the tutor's question as an occasion to verbalize a personal learning need (lines 9–10). The design of her turn ('I feel like I need to improve my vocabulary') and its positioning right after closing an earlier activity make it relevant for deciding what should be next on the agenda. Fai contextualizes her learning need by describing a two-fold problem related to essay writing: she has insufficient vocabulary knowledge and ways of giving examples in essays. Of these two, she further elaborates on the vocabulary-related problem by saying that she uses 'simple' words (lines 15–16). The design of Fai's self-directed complaint ('I always ... use so simple words') makes it hearable as an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986).

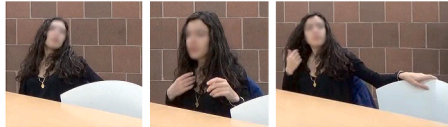
The tutor responds to the complainingly produced learning need by proposing an instructional activity (synonym practice) that could help Fai expand her vocabulary (line 17). This suggests that she treats the tutee's telling as request-implicative. The proposal is formatted through the use of the modal verb 'could', which treats the "projected action as an option, not an obligation" (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012, p. 307). Fai nods during the following silence, possibly indicating either recognition or agreement, but the tutor checks that Fai knows what the word 'synonym' means (line 19). In partial overlap, Fai nods and utters 'yes' (line 20), which is a more unambiguous claim of knowing the word. Nevertheless, the tutor launches an extended explanation of the word 'synonym', first defining it (lines 21–22) and then providing example word pairs (line 23). Fai nods again (line 24), and the tutor recaps the definition (lines 25–26), this time emphasizing that synonyms are 'different' words, and gives a further example of a synonym pair (line 28). Following the explanation, Fai shows that she treats the tutor's action as a proposal by verbally accepting the proposed agenda, formulating her acceptance as an issue of desire ('I wanna do that', line 32). Having agreed upon an agenda, the participants then proceed to begin the task (line 33).

Extract 3 exemplified the process of reaching an agreement on the agenda in a situation in which the tutee's way of participating in the decision-making is less forthright as conveyed by the direct requests in Extracts 1–2. Nevertheless, in Extract 3 Fai makes her wishes and expectations towards language learning very explicit, thus demonstrating language awareness and agency over her own learning process. However, and as earlier research on learner-centered language classrooms has pointed out, it is not always the case that students "know what they want" (Nunan, 2012, p. 54) or do not make this as clear as Fai does in Extract 3. Extract 4 illustrates how

course assignments can provide an entry point for setting an agenda in a situation in which the tutee does not provide any particular wishes for an agenda when requested. The extract is taken from the tutee's (Ana) third session. Just prior to the extract, the tutor has been complaining about the big differences between day and night temperatures in the spring, from which she transitions to begin agenda setting at line 5.

Extract 4. Maybe essay

01 T and it's like- (0.4) I don't wanna carry the coat [around,] #image 1
 02 Ana [ruhuh]
 03 T *I don't know* (.) (*not fun/that's fine.*) ((leans forward)) #image 2
 04 (1.3)
 05 T so, (0.3) what do you wanna work on. ((pulls chair away from table)) #image 3



1: T leaning back 2: forward lean 3: T pulls chair away

06 (0.7)
 07 Ana I don't know maybe hh (0.3) you can- (0.5) help me about someth- †hhhheh=
 08 T =sure.
 09 (1.2) ((T looks up, mouth open))
 10 T u:hm, (0.5) do you prefer to work <on> like a specific (0.3)
 11 †grammar <point> or an essa:y? (0.4) [o:r,
 12 Ana [uhh maybe essay (.)
 13 becau::se er: today we have (.) er::m (0.4) practice essay.
 14 T sure, (.) okay.
 15 .hh do you want me to get you an essay topic? ((points toward the lab))
 16 (0.5)
 17 Ana u::hh maybe [yeah ()]
 18 T [okay.=or do you] have one you wanna [do (too.)] ((points))
 19 Ana [hh o.]
 20 I- err I have (something) I have err, (0.9) I have (1.0) ((searches bag))
 21 (I got-) (1.1) uhm no topic (but) this is just uhh (1.8) ((opens notebook))
 22 paragraph? ((takes out notebook and a paper in it))
 23 (3.5) ((Ana opens and hands over a paper)) #image 4
 24 Ana uhh we (.) read (0.6) ((points)) uh >yesterday?< (0.5) about it #image 5



4: Ana hands over text 5: Ana points at text

25 .hhh and uh we will be have (0.3) uhh (0.3) something else
 26 er: like this er (.) topic. (0.8) on this (thing.)
 27 (1.2)
 28 T .tsk (0.7) okay so a tax o:n, (0.8) so that you have
 29 to pay mo::re, (1.4) if you are obese. ((gazes at Ana))
 30 Ana †uhhuh=
 31 T =you know >or that like< v- (.) if you're very overweight.
 32 Ana †yeah I [know yes (.) †uhhuh
 33 T [basically.
 34 ((T reads text for 37 secs and begins to explain the topic))

The tutor seems to make an assessment to close her complaining sequence at line 3 and simultaneously leans forward (image 2) closer to the table. Followed by a 1.3-s silence, she uses the transition marker ‘so’ to preface a typical agenda-inquiring question (‘what do you wanna work on?’) as a pending activity (Bolden, 2009). Similar to Extract 1, the question seeks information about the tutee’s reason for visiting the language lab and foregrounds the tutee’s personal learning aims. While delivering the question, the tutor also pulls the chair between the participants (Ana is off-camera, to the right) away from the table (image 3). The tutor’s two embodied actions can be seen as preparatory work that projects and enables participants to establish a joint visual focus on texts that might be placed and scrutinized on the table. However, instead of responding with a turn that would identify a particular language skill, task, or topic as an agenda for the session, Ana displays indecisiveness with the prepositioned epistemic hedge ‘I don’t know’ (Weatherall, 2011) and rolls the ball back to the tutor by asking her help with ‘something’ (line 7). In other words, Ana does not take up the deontic authority to set the agenda that the tutor’s question at line 5 projects for her. Interestingly, Ana follows her turn with laughter, which is often used as a resource for managing moments of interactional trouble (e.g., Glenn & Holt, 2013). Here, Ana’s laughter seems to account for her lack of initiative in agenda-setting as a delicate matter and orient to the possibility that coming to the tutorial without a purpose for the visit can potentially give rise to a negative impression of herself as a disengaged student.

The tutor receives Ana’s refusal to propose an agenda as unproblematic (‘sure’, line 8). During the subsequent silence, she looks up and has her mouth open, suggesting that she is momentarily disengaging from interaction but is about to continue talking. By offering a choice between activities (lines 10–11), the tutor treats Ana as someone whose agency in the tutorial meeting needs to be supported. While offering an alternative choice does limit the range of projected options, it still treats Ana as the primary decision-maker regarding what to do. Asking for Ana’s ‘preferences’ (line 10) could potentially orient to the relatively brief shared history between the participants, this being Ana’s third meeting; at the same time, it reminds the tutee about the expected deontic roles of the tutorial. Ana initially chooses to work on an essay and accounts for her choice by pointing out its relevance to her current class work (line 13). The tutor acknowledges her choice and offers to get a sample essay from the language lab (line 15), which Ana accepts in a less than enthusiastic manner (‘↑uhh maybe’, line 17). The tutor orients to the hesitation in Ana’s response by offering another option, i.e. to work on an essay topic Ana might wish for (line 15).

While Ana initially emphatically insists that she does not have a topic in mind (line 19), she seems to shift course and begins to search for materials from her bag, and eventually hands over a sample assignment to the tutor (image 4), a ‘paragraph’ (line 22).¹ Ana describes what the text is (lines 24–26), and the tutor begins to examine it (image 5). Going through the text, the tutor paraphrases the title of the essay aloud, which Ana acknowledges (line 30). The tutor also treats the word ‘obese’ as a possibly unfamiliar word to Ana by replacing it with the expression ‘very overweight’ in her turn (line 31). Ana treats this as a knowledge check by responding with multiple, emphatic claims of knowing the word (‘↑yeah I know yes ↑uhhuh’, line 32). A long silence ensues during which the tutor examines the text, after which she starts to explain its contents to Ana, eventually providing more examples and asking Ana to come up with reasons why an obesity tax might be a good or a bad idea (not shown in the transcript). In other words, the negotiated agenda involves making sense of a classroom text and assisting Ana in preparing for the eventual essay writing task.

All in all, identifying the tutee’s needs takes considerably more effort in Extract 4 than in Extract 3, and the process of agreeing upon an agenda is also much more implicit, with no verbal proposal and acceptance sequence over a particular activity. Yet, the participants proceed with a shared understanding of what to do next, despite some misaligned orientations towards Ana’s vocabulary knowledge (see also Extract 5 in the next section). When the tutee does not provide a clear preference for the agenda, as is the case here, a course assignment or another text can become treated as the agenda itself, an object of sense-making, clarification of understanding, and language-related instruction. While it may initially seem that the tutor is leading the agenda management in Extract 4 with the series of alternative questions, the questions and their sequential environment suggest that they are done to promote the tutee’s participation in the decision-making, as if to ‘nudge’ her to take up the deontic authority to identify an agenda.

4.4. Managing disagreement about the proposed agenda

Our final extract illustrates a situation of emergent disagreement in which the tutee initially appears to agree with the tutor’s activity proposal but then backs out from the agreement by identifying a learning need for which the proposed activity is not an ideal fit. Similar to previous cases, the extract demonstrates the key role that the tutee’s verbalized learning need plays in agenda setting, here in the sense that the problem the student identifies (vocabulary) becomes the basis for a new agenda proposal. The extract features the tutor and Ana and comes from their second session. As in Extract 4, Ana initially comes across as somewhat inconclusive about what she would like to do during the session. Extract 5 shows the very beginning of the recording as Ana tells the tutor that she has no homework they could work on during the session (lines 1–2), suggesting participants have already started talking about the agenda.

¹ The text is a sample essay that Ana has covered in class the day before the tutorial session, and she needs to complete a similar assignment in the future. The essay is about taxing people who are obese and who smoke.

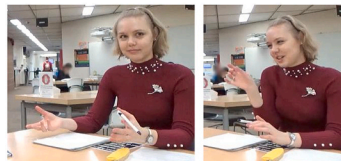
Extract 5. My dictionary

01 Ana er: my (1.1) my professor (.) ((name))
 02 er: she:: (2.1) get for us er: (0.9) \$rarely homework\$
 03 T >she doesn't give you like homework?<
 04 Ana yeah
 05 T okay, (0.7) uhm (1.5) do you wanna work, (0.4)
 06 do you wanna work on an essay? ((Ana turns to T))
 07 Ana .hhh 1yeah ((nods))
 08 T I could get a topic for [us, ((points toward the lab))
 09 Ana [1okay
 10 [1uhhuh] ((nods))
 11 T [a:nd] uhm (0.5) I coul- >we could< do that, (0.5) uhm (.)
 12 >and then I can< see (.) your writing?
 13 and I could see what like kind of grammar problems you [have,=
 14 Ana [1uhhuh] ((nods))
 15 T =>if you have< any,
 16 Ana 1uhhuh .hhh [erm,] ((looks away from T)) #image 1-2
 17 T [u:hm]



1-2: Ana withdraws gaze

18 T and then we can do::, ((Ana's gaze back to T))
 19 (0.5) more <grammar> later [on?
 20 Ana ((nods)) [uhhuh,
 21 Ana my big problem (0.6) .hh is my er: my er: (1.1) #image 3
 22 oh (1.3) my dictionary is:,,=
 23 T =your vocabulary= ((Ana gestures)) #image 4



3: Word search gesture 4: Gesturing "small"

24 Ana =vocabulary= ((hand toward T))
 25 T =is [limited?]
 26 Ana [easy] yeah= ((laughs))
 27 T =limited?
 28 Ana uhhuh
 29 (0.4)
 30 T 1okay, (0.3) well we could do uhm (0.5) we could do some =
 31 =you know what a synonym is?
 32 Ana 1yeah
 33 T .hh we could do some synonyms practice.
 34 Ana 1uhhuh=
 35 T =if you <want,> .hh what I like to do with uhm (.) with students
 36 who (0.7) don't know a lot (academic) vocabulary? [is uhh]
 37 Ana [1uhhuh]
 38 T (0.6) I'll like write (.) basic words? ((continues))

Over lines 5–6 and 8, the tutor proposes working on essay writing and offers to go get a topic. Ana provides early agreeing responses to both turns (lines 7, 9–10), prosodically delivered with a high-rising intonation. The tutor then describes the instructional focus of the essay writing task: it would allow her to get a sense of what kinds of ‘grammatical problems’ Ana may have (lines 11–13). In producing the turn, the tutor self-repairs the way she refers to the actors of the proposed activity (‘I could’ -> ‘we could’). This way she maintains an orientation to decision-making as a joint and collaborative interactional project. The tutor also mitigates her turn by adding that Ana may not ‘have any problems at all’ (line 15). By treating the tutee’s ‘problems’ as unfamiliar, the tutor not only orients to the limited shared interactional history between the participants but also conveys their relevance for the tutorial agenda. At this stage, Ana

begins to treat the projected agenda as problematic. Immediately after yet another agreement token, she takes a sharp in-breath and shifts her gaze first up and then away from the teacher to mid-distance (line 17, see images 1–2). It seems like she is about to take a turn ('erm') but that gets overlapped by the tutor, who outlines what kinds of further agenda working on the essay topic would involve ('then we can do more grammar later on', lines 18–19).

Ana responds by verbalizing a learning need, her 'big problem' in using L2 (line 21 onwards). Her turn contains a number of hesitation markers, pauses, and a word search, which she conveys through embodied conduct by displaying her hands in mid-air, palms facing upwards (see image 3). She resolves the word search by uttering the phrase 'my dictionary is' (line 22), which the tutor immediately corrects. Simultaneously, Ana is already providing an embodied completion (see [Olsher, 2004](#)) for her problem description by way of a pinching gesture (image 4), which is a recognizable depiction of smallness. The tutor orients to the gesture by providing a potential word ('limited') that the gesture represents in this context (line 25) and by repeating the word at line 27 to correct another word ('easy') that Ana uses after her gesture.

Once Ana's problem description is collaboratively established and (linguistically corrected) the tutor proposes a different task (synonym practice) for the session and checks the tutee's familiarity with the keyword (synonym) of the task at lines 30–31 (see also [Duran & Jakonen, 2022](#)). Again, the tutor phrases the possible agenda as something they 'could' do and formats her action as a proposal that still requires the tutee's acceptance, which treats the tutee as the ultimate deontic authority. The tutor also verbally and explicitly orients to Ana's wishes being a relevant factor in agenda-related decision-making (line 31), and thereby provides an interactional space for Ana to either accept or reject the proposed task. Ana's two agreement tokens (lines 34, 37) suffice as a go-ahead signal for the tutor to begin the task (lines 35–36, 38).

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study has explored agenda setting in dyadic ESL language lab tutorials by analyzing how participants jointly manage the session agenda and how such interactional activities are organized sequentially (RQ1); and how participants orient to their decision-making related (i.e., deontic) rights and authority during agenda setting (RQ2). The CA analysis has shown that agenda-setting can be made interactionally relevant and initiated by both the tutor and the tutee. A typical way for the tutor to initiate agenda setting is through explicit requests for the tutee to propose a topic or a task for the session. This might take the form of service offers such as "How can I help you today?" or questions that topicalize the tutee's personal needs, aims, and concerns related to language learning such as "What do you want to do today?" (see also [Ritter, 2002](#); [Reinking, 2012](#)). As interactional turns, these inquiries place the recipient in a position where they can request learning topics or activities to do in the session, and thus treat them as a participant who is expected to exercise significant deontic authority. In addition to the tutor-initiated instances, agenda management in our data also routinely begins with the tutee's problem statements or troubles-telling (Extracts 2 and 3; also Extract 5 in non-initial position), which are followed by a pedagogical response such as a proposal for a learning activity that somehow addresses the problem. Besides tutees' verbal problem statements, tutees' ways of taking out and browsing their learning materials (course assignments, notebooks, etc.) can also project the beginning of agenda setting (Extracts 1, 3, 4), a finding that aligns with studies (e.g., [Belhiah, 2009](#)) that depict tutorial interaction as a fundamentally multimodal and material activity where participants inspect each other's embodied actions by reference to the institutional purpose of the sessions.

Previous research on agenda management in ESL tutorial interactions has taken an interest in participants' interactional roles and power dimensions (e.g., [Ritter, 2002](#); [Thompson, 2009](#); [Thonus, 1999](#)). Some scholars have identified interactional phenomena such as turn length as an indicator of interactional dominance ([Ritter, 2002](#); [Thonus, 1999](#)). Investigating our cases of agenda management through a CA deontic lens, we do not observe the tutor to dominate agenda setting. Quite the opposite, the participants orient to the tutee as the person who is expected to take the lead in agenda-setting. The tutor makes this visible by asking (Extracts 1, 4, 5) as well as waiting (Extracts 1–3) for the tutee to introduce topics for the session before offering them and by revising her agenda proposals if they do not appear to fit the tutee's needs (Extract 5). The tutees treat themselves as entitled to set the agenda by expressing personal learning needs or desires (Extracts 2–3; see also [Park, 2015](#)) and by treating their lack of initiative as interactionally problematic (Extract 4). Our study thus demonstrates that the decision-making rights and responsibilities of the tutor and the tutee are linked and emerge through joint and situated negotiation. We have observed that some tutees in our dataset seem to take a more active role in directing the focus of the tutorial around their personal needs (e.g., Fai in Extract 3). On the other hand, when the tutee displays less determination towards the agenda, the tutor tends to adjust her practices in ways that nevertheless maintain tutee agency, such as by 'fishing' for possible activities that the tutee would like to do (Extract 4) or by asking about the tutee's coursework (Extract 5). In all these ways, the tutee is treated as a participant with considerable deontic authority in the tutorials when it comes to setting the agenda.

Based on the analysis, we argue that agenda management sequences are a key practice for configuring what [Nunan \(2012\)](#) has described as the "negotiated curriculum". Setting the agenda together allows participants to seek agreement on a mutual goal for the tutorial session, providing a way for them to discuss "what gets taught and how it is learned" ([Nunan, 2012](#), p. 57). Explicit agenda management enables participants to sustain a learner-centered interactional and pedagogical space in the tutorial. In this sense, the ways in which the agenda is negotiated (or not negotiated at all) make visible situated institutional ideologies and pedagogical norms about the role of the tutorial in the student's learning process. In our cases, the tutor, through her interactional conduct, supports the tutees' deontic authority in decision-making, which can be seen to facilitate learner autonomy, active participation, and self-regulation of the learning process, and to ensure the tutorial sessions have personal relevance to tutees and that they support tutees' coursework. Having recurring opportunities to articulate one's personally felt learning goals can also help the tutor to get to know the tutee as a person and their needs better, which can potentially enable more individualized instruction. Deontically, the participants seem to orient to a division of labor and responsibilities regarding the "what" and the "how" of the agenda: Whereas the tutee is treated as the

individual who is expected to identify topics for the session, it is the tutor who tends to propose how those topics could be addressed through particular activities (Extracts 3, 4, 5) other than helping with the tutee's coursework or working on the activity book.

It is interesting that in our data the tutor seems to have a 'toolbox' of activities such as the synonym practice (Extracts 3 and 5) that she recurrently proposes to tutees, sometimes without apparent consideration to the recipient's familiarity with synonyms (Extract 3). Having a repertoire of pre-planned activities could mean that support is not tailored to specific needs, which could be seen as tension with the learner-centered way of forming the agenda based on a learner need. On the other hand, a repertoire of go-to activities can help the tutor manage the inevitable unpredictability that comes along with the ESL language lab format where the focus is not as specified as in other tutorials such as writing conferences. The repertoire is perhaps particularly useful in initial encounters when the tutee's needs may not have yet become so clear to the tutor. In Extract 5, the tutor quite specifically orients to the synonym activity as a resource that can help her assess Ana's learning needs in their second meeting. It seems plausible that, over time, agenda setting becomes more routinized as participants get familiar with each other and the institutional purpose of the language lab. For instance, in Extract 1, Fai and the tutor in their fifth meeting appear to set the agenda with a greater shared understanding of the expected distribution of deontic rights and interactional labor. However, it should be noted that a longitudinal analysis of the development of agenda management practices over time is beyond the scope of this study, and the tutees' varying English skills undoubtedly impact their engagement in agenda management. Considering that tutees have very different language skill levels, needs, and interests, it is important for the tutor to build a repertoire of easy and modifiable activities, as well as interactional competence to manage individualized agendas effectively in the context of such individual differences.

There are several limitations to the present study. Firstly, our dataset only shows one tutor interacting with a small number of tutees in dyadic tutorials in the particular context of language labs, which limits the generalizability of our findings. On the other hand, as for example [Seedhouse \(2005\)](#) has argued, the aim of micro-analytical investigation of single instances is to reveal what kind of general 'machinery' and interactional organization produces them. We suspect that the kinds of service offers and activity proposals we have described in this article are fairly common social actions for managing the agenda in other kinds of tutorial settings, but ascertaining this requires further research in different kinds of instructional contexts. Similarly, the management of deontic rights and authority is something we would expect to organize decision-making activities in other tutorial and educational contexts, although the action sequences used to arrive at decisions could look different in other institutional settings. Another limitation of the study is that we have focused our inquiry on how the session agenda is identified in the early moments of tutorials, and have not systematically analyzed how the agenda is potentially revised or recalibrated later during the sessions. Thus, agenda management is potentially, and perhaps even quite likely, a broader concern for participants beyond the interactional practices we have been able to describe in this study.

Overall, our study complements and extends previous interactional studies of ESL tutorials (e.g., [Belhiah, 2009](#); [Jones et al., 2006](#); [Park, 2015](#)) by showing how the tutorial agenda emerges through participants' joint, multimodal, and cooperative negotiation. Language labs such as we have analyzed here have a key role in EAP practice in that they function as a support system designed to help ESL students with the linguistic demands of their academic work in higher education. In such a context, setting the agenda locally at the beginning of each session is essential for the individualization of the tutorial not only because the students' ongoing coursework changes from session to session but also because of the range of students' language skills and learning needs. The focal sequences enable the participants to discuss and identify what is currently relevant to each tutee within the very broad scope of the language lab tutorials, which routinely address concerns ranging from coursework to more general language learning activities and sociocultural issues. Agenda management sequences are a key interactional practice through which EAP tutors can provide such a contingent support service in a learner-centered manner.

Funding

This work was supported by the Academy of Finland [grant number 343480] and the Ella and Georg Ehrnrooth Foundation, Finland [grant number 230013].

Author statement (CRediT)

Teppo Jakonen: Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Methodology; Visualization; Writing - original draft and review & editing, Derya Duran: Data curation; Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Writing - original draft and review & editing.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to our study participants. We would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their comments on our manuscript.

References

- Antón, M. (1999). A learner-centered classroom. Sociocultural perspectives on teacher-learner interaction in the second language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 83, 303–318.
- Appleby, R. (2009). The spatial politics of gender in EAP classroom practice. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 8(2), 100–110.
- Back, M. (2016). Epistemics and expertise in peer tutoring interactions: Co-Constructing knowledge of Spanish. *The Modern Language Journal*, 100(2), 508–521.
- Bastola, M. N., & Ho, V. (2022). 'Don't become so much high sounding': Power dynamics in master's thesis viva. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 60, Article 101180.

- Beach, W. A. (1993). Transitional regularities for 'casual' "Okay" usages. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 19(4), 325–352.
- Belhiah, H. (2009). Tutoring as an embodied activity: How speech, gaze and body orientation are coordinated to conduct ESL tutorial business. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41, 829–841.
- Belhiah, H. (2013). Gesture as a resource for intersubjectivity in second-language learning situations. *Classroom Discourse*, 4(2), 111–129.
- Benson, P. (2012). Learner-centred teaching. In A. Burns, & J. C. Richards (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to pedagogy and practice in second language teaching* (pp. 30–37). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Benson, P. (2013). *Teaching and researching: Autonomy in language learning*. Routledge.
- Benwell, B., & Stokoe, E. H. (2002). Constructing discussion tasks in university tutorials: Shifting dynamics and identities. *Discourse Studies*, 4(4), 429–453.
- Bowles, B. (2021). The "ghost" in the tutorial: How do tutors and students engage with faculty feedback? *Praxis: The Writing Center Journal*, 18(3).
- Bremner, N. (2021). Learner-centredness. *ELT Journal*, 75(2), 213–215.
- Brouwer, C. E., Rasmussen, G., & Wagner, J. (2004). Embedded corrections in second language talk. In R. Gardner, & J. Wagner (Eds.), *Second language conversations* (pp. 75–92). London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
- DeSanctis, C., & Murray, K. (2007). *The art of the writing conference: Letting students set the agenda without ceding control*. GWU Law School Public Law Research. Paper No. 369.
- Duran, D., & Jakonen, T. (2022). Mobilizing context: Vocabulary checks in ESL tutoring sessions. *System*, 107.
- Glenn, P., & Holt, E. (Eds.). (2013). *Studies of laughter in interaction*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Goodwin, C., & Goodwin, M. (1986). Gesture and co-participation in the activity of searching for a word. *Semiotica*, 62(1), 51–75.
- Henning, T. (2001). *Theoretical models of tutor talk: How practical are they? Paper presented at CCCC*. Denver, CO: ERIC Document Service. No. ED 451 569.
- Jefferson, G. (2004). Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In G. H. Lerner (Ed.), *Conversation analysis: Studies from the first generation* (pp. 13–31). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Jones, R. H., Garralda, A., Li, D., & Lock, G. (2006). Interactional dynamics in on-line and face-to-face peer-tutoring sessions for second language writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 15, 1–23.
- Koshik, I. (2002). Designedly incomplete utterances: A pedagogical practice for eliciting knowledge displays in error correction sequences. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 5, 277–309.
- Leyland, C. (2020). Academic writing tutorials for international students: Deferring to an expert and follow-up advice. *Language and Education*, 34(3), 212–230.
- Macaulay, W. J., Jr. (2005). Setting the agenda for the next thirty minutes. In B. Rafoth (Ed.), *A tutor's guide: Helping writers one to one* (pp. 1–8). Portsmouth, NH, USA: Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.
- Newkirk, T. (1989). The first five minutes: Setting the agenda in a writing conference. In C. M. Anson (Ed.), *Writing and response: Theory, practice and research* (pp. 317–331). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Nunan, D. (1988). *The learner-centred curriculum: A study in second language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Nunan, D. (2012). *Learner-centered English language education: The selected works of David Nunan*. Routledge.
- Olsher, D. (2004). Talk and gesture: The embodied completion of sequential actions in spoken interaction. In R. Gardner, & J. Wagner (Eds.), *Second language talk* (pp. 346–380). London: Continuum.
- Park, I. (2012). Seeking advice: Epistemic asymmetry and learner autonomy in writing conferences. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 44, 2004–2021.
- Park, I. (2015). Requests: Knowledge and entitlement in writing tutoring. *Language & Communication*, 43, 1–10.
- Perin, D. (2004). Remediation beyond developmental education: The use of learning assistance centers to increase academic preparedness in community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 28(7), 559–582.
- Pomerantz, A. (1986). Extreme case formulations: A way of legitimizing claims. *Human Studies*, 9, 219–229.
- Reinking, L. D. (2012). *Writing center tutorials with international graduate students: An empirical investigation*. Doctoral dissertation. Purdue University.
- Ritter, J. J. (2002). *Negotiating the center: An analysis of writing tutorial interactions between ESL learners and native-English speaking writing center tutors*. Doctoral dissertation. Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
- Ro, E. (2021). Using PowerPoint slides as a resource for coordinating understanding during presentation consultations at an L2 speaking center. *Applied Linguistics Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/applrev-2020-0052>
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, 50, 696–735.
- Seedhouse, P. (2005). Conversation analysis as research methodology. In K. Richards, & P. Seedhouse (Eds.), *Applying conversation analysis* (pp. 251–266). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Shvidko, E. (2018). Writing conference feedback as moment-to-moment affiliative relationship building. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 127, 20–35.
- Sidnell, J., & Stivers, T. (2012). *The Handbook of conversation analysis*. Oxford, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Stevanovic, M., & Peräkylä, A. (2012). Deontic authority in interaction: The right to announce, propose, and decide. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 45(3), 297–321.
- Stevanovic, M., & Peräkylä, A. (2014). Three orders in the organization of human action: On the interface between knowledge, power, and emotion in interaction and social relations. *Language in Society*, 43(2), 185–207.
- Svinhufvud, K. (2018). Waiting for the customer: Multimodal analysis of waiting in service encounters. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 129, 48–75.
- Tarone, E., & Yule, G. (1989). *Focus on the language learner: Approaches to identifying and meeting the needs of second language learners*. Oxford University Press.
- Thompson, I. (2009). Scaffolding in the writing center: A microanalysis of an experienced tutor's verbal and nonverbal tutoring strategies. *Written Communication*, 26(4), 417–453.
- Thonus, T. (1999). Dominance in academic writing tutorials: Gender, language proficiency, and the offering of suggestions. *Discourse & Society*, 10, 225–248.
- Thonus, T. (2002). Tutor and student assessments of academic writing tutorials: What is "success?". *Assessing Writing*, 8, 110–134.
- Thonus, T. (2004). What are the differences?: Tutor interactions with first-and second-language writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13(3), 227–242.
- Tudor, I. (1992). Learner-centredness in language teaching: Finding the right balance. *System*, 20(1), 31–44.
- Tudor, I. (1993). Teacher roles in the learner-centred classroom. *ELT Journal*, 47(1), 22–31.
- Tudor, I. (1996). *Learner-centeredness as language education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Waring, H. Z. (2005). Peer tutoring in a graduate writing center: Identity, expertise and advice resisting. *Applied Linguistics*, 26(2), 141–168.
- Weatherall, A. (2011). I don't know as a Prepositioned Epistemic Hedge. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 44(4), 317–337.
- Wenden, A. L. (2002). Learner development in language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 23(1), 32–55.
- Williams, J. (2005). Writing center interaction: Institutional discourse and the role of peer tutors. In K. Bardovi-Harlig, & B. Hartford (Eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics: Exploring institutional talk* (pp. 37–66). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Young, R. F., & Miller, E. R. (2004). Learning as changing participation: Discourse roles in ESL writing conferences. *The Modern Language Journal*, 88, 519–535.

Teppo Jakonen works as Academy of Finland Research Fellow at the School of Languages and Translation Studies at University of Turku, Finland. His research explores social interaction in different kinds of language teaching and learning contexts. Jakonen's recent publications have appeared in journals such as *Modern Language Journal*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *Applied Linguistics*, and *Classroom Discourse*.

Derya Duran is a postdoctoral researcher at the School of Languages and Translation Studies at University of Turku, Finland. Her research concerns interaction in English-medium instruction classrooms and ESL tutorial contexts. Duran's recent publications have appeared in journals such as *Linguistics and Education*, *System*, and *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*.