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DIRECTIVENESS IN TUTOR TALK

ABSTRACT

The reigning orthodoxy in writing centres has been to avoid directive approaches and embrace non-directive approaches to tutoring. Although since the late 1990s various writing centre scholars have debunked this myth, many guidebooks on tutoring still adhere to it. We believe that theory-led empirical research on tutor approaches and actions is necessary to demonstrate the situation-dependent efficacy of directive approaches and thereby dispel the myth that a peer role is preferred to a teacherly role. This paper starts addressing the need for theory-led empirical research on directiveness by applying theories of linguistic pragmatics to analyse writing centre consultations and assist writing centre tutors to develop a critical awareness of both their actions and students' responses. First, a synopsis is given of how directiveness is portrayed in the writing centre literature. This is followed by an overview of micro- and macro-pragmatic theories on speech acts in linguistics and suggestions on how they may be applied to better understand the role of directiveness in writing centre consultations. Finally, the present research project is described and an analysis of two excerpts (speech events) from a particular consultation is offered as an illustration of the insight offered by pragmatic theories.

Keywords: *Directiveness; non-directiveness; macro-pragmatics; micro-pragmatics; writing centres; writing consultations; writing tutors.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Advice typically given to novice tutors in a writing centre is to avoid a directive (teacherly) stance and rather assume a non-directive (peer-centred) stance (Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984; Brooks, 1991). However, this advice is largely based on lore[1], which has its roots in fictionalised scenarios termed "the methodology as mythology of tutoring" by Plummer and Thonus (1999: 9). This methodology is based on "what not to do," or rather "how to be a peer and not to be a teacher when in the role of writing tutor" (Thonus, 2001: 61).

Since the late 1990s, scholars have started advocating a flexible view regarding directiveness (Blau, Hall & Strauss, 1998; Shamoon & Burns, 1995; Lunsford, 1991; Plummer & Thonus, 1999). However, there is little theory-led empirical

1 Lore, sometimes referred to as "orthodoxy" in writing centre discourse, can be defined as "statements that come more from a range of assumed values rather than from researched findings" (Shamoon & Burns, 1995: 136).

research on directive approaches and the variables that may influence their efficacy, as voiced by Morrison:

> If writing center researchers are to better represent the efficacy of our practices and if we are to influence the way that we teach and talk about writing across the disciplines, we must speak a common research language, one that allows others from both within and outside of our field to retrace our steps and to test our claims (2008: 4–5).

This paper attempts to start filling the research gaps related to directiveness as a graded strategy by responding to the following question: *How can micro- and macro-pragmatic analyses of writing centre consultations inform our appraisal of the notion of directiveness in tutor talk?* The results of this explorative research will serve to indicate how an empirically based pedagogy of directiveness may assist writing centre scholars in testing their claims and underpinning tutor training.

First, we discuss directiveness and non-directiveness as the notions appear in the writing centre literature. This is followed by an overview of speech act theories in linguistics and suggestions on how stakeholders could use micro- and macro-speech act theories in analyses of directiveness in writing centre consultations. The next section comprises a description of the method and findings of different cycles of research in a project aimed at analysing a corpus of video-recorded tutorials at a large residential university in South Africa. We conclude the article by a reflection on the contribution of our research to the theoretical and empirical underpinning of writing centre work as well as an application to tutor training.

2. DIRECTIVE AND NON-DIRECTIVE TUTORING

2.1 Restrictive views of directiveness

The reigning orthodoxy in writing centres, influenced by the theoretical perspectives offered by experts between the 1950s and the 1980s (see Boquet, 1999), was boldly non-directive. Early experts explain non-directive tutoring as a strategy that encourages students to formulate their own solutions based on listening to and questioning the advice of the tutor (Vitae, n.d.), "thus encouraging his students to discover truths through their own thinking" (Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984: 31).

Proponents of non-directive tutoring highlighted the value of this approach as one that reduced "teacher-talk" by forcing students to play an active role in their learning (Carino, 2003: 105). Tutors "drew out" knowledge (see Lunsford, 1991) from students by asking a range of questions, mainly open-ended, to encourage students to talk about their writing and their writing problems. Tutor roles following the non-directive approach are most clearly defined in early tutor training manuals. Tutors are warned against holding a pen or pencil, interpreting texts, making suggestions, pointing out or correcting errors, talking about their own writing and using Socratic questioning (Greller & Kalteissen, 2008). This literature is largely recognised as the foundation of writing centre practices although no empirical studies validate the claims put forward. Non-directive tutoring was simply accepted as dogma (Carino, 2003).

Directive tutoring, often referred to as teacher-centred tutoring, was defined as an approach that saw the tutor do most, if not all, the talking and much of the work for the student, by silently reading students' papers and identifying defects as well as issuing tutorial "commands" (Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984). The most frequently used strategies included responding, explaining, exemplifying, telling and suggesting (Morrison, 2008; Mackiewicz

& Thompson, 2014). The directive tutor was vilified (Corbett, 2015) as a "shaman, guru or mentor" (Hawkins, 1984: 31).

Yet, despite these very strong remonstrations against directive tutoring, there are no clear theoretical guidelines to help one understand directiveness (Clark, 2001). Furthermore, directive tutoring is also always presented as an either/or dichotomy – a tutor is directive or non-directive. Early experts, however, did point to the suitability for particular writing concerns (lower order concerns), with a particular type of student (novice, multilingual) (Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984; Harris, 1986).

2.2 Flexible views of directiveness

Since the late 1980s, leading experts began to comment on the anti-directive orthodoxy of writing centre literature. Questions were raised about the "honesty" of tutors who withheld information because they feared providing too much assistance and about the belief that writing was essentially a solitary, process-based and disciplinary task, using Socratic methods of eliciting what the students tacitly know (Lunsford, 1991; Shamoon & Burns, 1995).

A close analysis of audio- and video-recorded consultations also showed, contrary to traditional views, that tutors function as a combination of peers and teachers (Davis *et al.,* 1988). Tutors often fulfil a teacherly role more than a peer role (Thonus, 2001) by evaluating tutees' writing, suggesting solutions and talking more than the student does; however, this does not negatively impact on the success of a tutorial (Henning, 2001). The converse is often true: directive tutoring is often far less frustrating (Blau, Hall & Strauss, 1998) and more enriching than non-directive tutoring, especially for novice writers (Shamoon & Burns, 1995), students from non-western cultures (Moussu, 2013) and multilingual writers (Appleby-Ostroff, 2017). Sadly, writing centre lore and dogma have been so entrenched in the minds of those working in writing centres that tutors who use directive approaches feel guilt and frustration, even when they know that it may be the most effective way to help the tutee (Nicklay, 2012).

Despite the years of admonitions against directive tutoring and the voices in favour of more flexible approaches, very little research has been conducted on directiveness as a tutoring strategy – or rather, on the various directive strategies that are available to tutors. None of the writing centre scholars quoted thus far provide indications of what exactly they understand under tutor strategies such as responding, instructing, telling, explaining, exemplifying and suggesting, and at which discursive level these strategies are enacted. We are of the opinion that the domain of pragmatics, specifically speech act theories and theories of situated pragmatic action, may provide us with the tools to describe and appraise seemingly directive tutor strategies more flexibly.

2.3 Using speech act theory to underpin analyses of directiveness

Speech act theory developed from the work of two philosophers, John Austin and John Searle, in the 1960s and 1970s (Schiffrin, 1994: 49). They held the belief that the central function of a language is not merely to describe how things are, but to perform actions. In canonical terms a *speech act* is an act a speaker performs by uttering certain words, such as "I promise to do x and y" under the right conditions, termed "felicity conditions" by Searle (1976: 6).

However, soon it was realised that the speaker does not always use a verb that corresponds to what s/he intends to say (e.g. promise, request, command, etc.) and thus many speech acts are implicit (Geis, 1995). Furthermore, the purposes of actions performed by means

of utterances do not necessarily align with the grammatical form of the sentence type that is used; for instance, an interrogative sentence does not necessarily imply that the speaker means to ask a question. In other words, speech acts may be indirect (Geis, 1995).

During the years when first-generation speech act theory ("micro-speech act theory") was developed (approximately 1960–1980) various taxonomies or typologies saw the light. The first one was that of Austin, who distinguished between verdictives (give a verdict, e.g. *grade*, *assess*, *rule*), expositives (explain how utterances fit in the context, e.g. *reply*, *argue*, *illustrate*), exercitives (exercise powers, rights or influence, e.g. *appoint*, *advise*, *warn*), behabitatives (relate to social behaviour, e.g. *apologize*, *congratulate*, *challenge*) and commissives (commit one to doing something, e.g. *declare*, *promise*, *agree*) (Austin, 1961: 51).

Searle (1976) criticised Austin's classification on various grounds. These grounds included focusing on English speech act verbs and not on illocutionary acts (what speakers do with language); not all verbs are illocutionary verbs; the categories overlap and are heterogeneous; many of the verbs listed in a category do not fit the definition of the category and there is no consistent principle of categorisation. Searle lays the foundations for a taxonomy underpinned by an elegant theory on the conditions necessary for the realisation of the various acts. This theory is underpinned by 12 criteria; however, he applied only four of his own criteria: (1) illocutionary point or force, (2) direction of fit between words and the world, (3) expressed psychological state of the speaker and (4) propositional content (what the speech act is about).

Searle's categories overlap with those of Austin but are somewhat less heterogeneous. The taxonomy comprises representatives (e.g. *assert*; *conclude*, *deduce*, *explain*), directives (e.g. *ask*, *order*, *command*, *request*, *invite*, *permit*, *advise*, *suggest*), commissives (e.g. *promise*, *offer*), expressives (e.g. *thank*, *congratulate*, *apologize*, *condole*, *deplore* and *welcome*) and declarations (e.g. *declare*, *nominate*) (Searle, 1976: 10–14). Although Searle acknowledges that "differences in illocutionary verbs are a good guide", he contends that it is "by no means a sure guide to differences in illocutionary acts (1977: 28).

The "directive" actions mentioned by writing centre scholars fall primarily into two categories, representatives/constatives and directives. *Telling* is clearly a representative, while *asking leading questions*, *advising* and *instructing* are directives. *Explain* and *exemplify* do not fit neatly into any of Searle's main categories. Austin's expositives seem to be a more appropriate superordinate category. Although attempts at classification are helpful in getting us to think deeply and critically about our practices, classification ambiguities demonstrate that a strict taxonomy can never account for all situated pragmatic actions. Table 1 below is an attempt to show similarities and differences between Austin's and Searle's taxonomies. In essence, we used Searle's (1976) taxonomy, to which we added two of Austin's criteria that we found useful to characterise the actions regularly manifested in tutor talk: Verdictives and Expositives. Declaratives/Exercitives is a largely redundant category as far as tutor-tutee conversations are concerned. However, we included it for the sake of comprehensiveness. The main criteria we used for the categorisation were the speaker's psychological state expressed through the speech act (a belief or a desire) and the illocutionary point of the speech act (see column 1 below).

Table 1: Comparison between Austin and Searle's micro-speech act taxonomies

Characterisation (Cap 2010; Bach & Harnish 1979)	Austin (1961)	Searle (1976)	Examples
Assertions of the speaker's belief regarding a state of affairs in the world		Representatives	*assert, conclude, claim, appraise, attribute*, *conclude*
An expression of the speaker's desire to elaborate on how utterances fit into the verbal context	Expositives		*explain, argue, illustrate*
An expression of the speaker reflecting his/her desire to get the hearer to do something		Directives	*ask, order, command, request; invite, advise, suggest*
An expression of the speaker's judgement about something (his/her belief about the quality of an entity)	Verdictives		*grade, assess, evaluate*
Acts whereby the speaker exercises powers/rights to bring about change in the world	Exercitives	Declaratives	*appoint, declare, nominate, name*
Expression of the speaker's own intention or desire to do something		Commissives	*promise, offer, invite, volunteer, bid*
Expression of the speaker's desire to vent his/her attitude or psychological state	Behabitatives	Expressives	*thank, congratulate, apologise, welcome, deplore, praise*

What is still lacking in these micro-pragmatic theories (expressed as taxonomies), is an explicit account of the situatedness of practices in institutional settings, such as writing centres. We found support for this perceived hiatus in a range of theories that are broadly characterised as "socio-cognitive" and "macro-pragmatic". Proponents of such theories are, among others, Mey (1995; 2001; 2009), Geis (1995), Kecskes (2010) and Cap (2010). Geis (1995: 18) concludes that "illocutionary acts must be seen as communicative actions, rather than linguistic acts with a social dimension". Mey (2001; 2009) offers a "pragmatic act" approach, according to which (micro-) speech acts are always accompanied by other acts that contribute to conversational success. These may include extralinguistic aspects of communication, such as gestures, intonation, facial mimics, posture, head movements and laughter (2009). Mey also emphasises the role of the physical environment in understanding communicative actions. According to this author, it is crucial that speech acts are placed in a context and a situation, especially when conversations are analysed (2001; 2009). The acting of the interlocutors is influenced by the "affordances" of the scene (Mey, 2009: 751). Kecskes (2010: 2890) describes this approach as "a dialectical socio-cognitive perspective on communication and pragmatics". For him, "[c]ommunication is the result of interplay of intention and attention motivated by socio-cultural background that is privatized by the individuals" (ibid).

The socio-cultural background consists of dynamic knowledge of interlocutors, which derives from both their *prior experience* encoded in the linguistic expressions they use and

their *current experience* in which those expressions make meaning (ibid). Current experience includes the use of the body, and this interaction between speech and bodily action cannot be captured by the simplistic notion of the "speech act" (Mey, 2009: 751). Mey's notion of a "pragmatic act" encompasses a complex multimodal interaction realised in a given situation. Analogous to familiar linguistic terminology, such as "lexeme" and "phoneme", Mey terms this unit a "pragmeme". He says "Adopting familiar linguistic terminology (*cf.* terms such as phoneme, morpheme, etc.) I call this (proto-)type of act a 'pragmeme'. Individual pragmatic acts realize a particular pragmeme (e.g. 'inciting to declare war'); we may call these 'practs'" (Mey, 2009: 751). The manifestation of the pragmeme "inciting to declare war" (ibid). consists of the following two components:

- an activity part: speech acts, psychological acts (emotions), prosody (intonation, stress) and physical acts (gestures, facial expressions, and bodily expression of emotions)
- a textual part (the co[n]text): inferencing, establishing reference, relevance, voice, shared situational knowledge, metaphor and "metapragmatic joker" – any element that directs the attention of the interlocutors to something happening on the metapragmatic level, e.g. word order, etc.

A problem with this distinction is, however, that macro-features of analysis are contained in both components. Speech acts can be analysed as "activities" and as text, and speech events or practs are to be analysed as linguistic utterances in context and activities embedded in bodily actions.

Another approach (Cap, 2010; 2011) is to distinguish between micropragmatics and macropragmatics in a dichotomous way: micropragmatics is the study of illocutionary force at an utterance level (ibid). Macropragmatics (ibid), in turn, focuses on the series or sequences of utterances that form discourses, and which are the carriers of the speaker's global intentionality (i.e. the intentionality resulting from different speech act configurations, referred to as "speech events" – which roughly coincide with Mey's "practs"). An example of a speech event is "assigning homework" (Cap 2011: 65). This event may include an expressive (reprimanding students for submitting poor work in the previous assignment), a commissive (threatening to fail students if they again submit unedited assignments), a directive (instructing students to do a particular task) and an assertive or representative (describing a rationale for the task).

Next, an overview is given of the research project on which we report in this article, with an emphasis on the complementary relationship between micro- and macropragmatic analyses of two purposively selected speech events from a writing consultation.

3. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

3.1 Research design and method

The research approach underlying the design of this study is qualitative. First, we undertook a thorough review of canonised writing centre literature to identify salient themes that may guide the analysis of the empirical data. The project could be regarded as a case study (Merriam, 1998). The broader "case" is a tutorial programme housed in a particular setting (its "real-life context", as described by Yin (2003: 13), where specific social actions (tutorial sessions) take place and that the researchers were interested to explore. At a more specific level, we were interested in the cases of our writing centre consultants and the strategies they use to improve

the writing abilities of students at the institution under scrutiny. At this level, it is a multiple case study (Hood, 2009). This article draws the boundaries of the case even narrower and, through the analysis of two speech events (practs), it becomes an "instrumental case study" (Hood, 2009: 70). The ultimate goal is to illuminate a particular issue: a tutoring style that is directive at the utterance level but facilitates self-discovery and independent meaning construction at the level of situated action.

3.2 Data collection, analysis and findings

The reason for conflating data collection, analysis and findings is that these phases were iterative, and analyses and findings of one phase served as data for another.

We gathered data for the larger project through videorecording 10 writing centre consultations with linguistically diverse first-year, first-time visitors to the centre between March and September 2018. A professional transcription company then transcribed the video data using Jefferson's (1984) transcription symbols as adapted by Seedhouse (2005).

First-order analysis of the data (all 10 consultations) focused on the transcribed video recordings. We started by reading through the transcriptions a few times to get a sense of salient broad themes. Three main themes precipitated, which also resonated with pertinent topics in the writing centre literature: Tutoring strategy (coded as directive or non-directive), Text level (higher-order or lower-order concerns) and Appeal (cognitive or affective). All 10 transcriptions were then coded for these themes using Atlas.ti 7; a computerised qualitative data analysis program. Codes were assigned per utterance and not per turn, as turns often comprised more than one speech act.

"Directive talk" – tutor talk giving the student no options for autonomous decision-making and cognitive elaboration – was found to be the most frequently occurring first-order code, generating 1430 quotations. All quotations bearing the code "directive", were then subjected to another round of coding, which started with the suggested list of directive actions mentioned in the writing centre literature (Reigstad & McAndrew, 1984; Morrison, 2008; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2014; Corbett, 2015): asking leading (closed) questions, commanding (instructing), telling, explaining, exemplifying and suggesting. Each of these actions was classified according to our own, customised taxonomy of writing centre speech acts, distilled from Austin (1961) and Searle (1976) and defined in the codebook. Codes that emerged during the second round of coding were defined and categorised in the codebook, and retrospectively applied to the already coded transcriptions. Table 1 represents the final codebook, with examples from the corpus.

Table 2: Codebook for utterances classified as "directive" in writing centre parlance

Pragmatic act	Description (psychological state and illocutionary point)	Examples from the corpus
DIRECTIVES		
Instructing	Expressing the tutor's belief that it is necessary to provide clear and specific direction that would assist the student in producing an effective assignment or improve his/her academic writing	• *Okay. So just work on that.* • *Okay, so in the concluding statement, reflect on what you've been arguing.* • *Just end the sentence there.* • *Just work on the format of your in-text references, né?*
Advising	Expressing the tutor's belief that there is sufficient reason for the student to perform a specified action in order to improve the assignment or his/her academic writing	• *You just, literally (.) I think you needed to say 'argue'. Alright? This essay will argue the issue of (.) or 'will argue that'.* • *Okay. Um. Then I would make a stronger thesis statement* • *And then, (.) it is very important that your essay, from your introduction (.) to your conclusion, (4s) it flows, (.) it hangs together (.) well.*
REPRESENTATIVES		
Telling	Expressing the tutor's belief that the hearer needs to take note of a certain fact about the task or about academic writing	• *We call that a refutation.* • *So your main points were those main ideas you're building on.* • *We call that a refutation.* • *This is a very long sentence.*
*Confirming	Checking or confirming whether the student, tutor or both understand(s/believe[s]) something	• *Okay. (.) So, just looking at this checklist, there is a clear introduction, body and conclusion.* • *ok so this is your argumentative essay, right?* • *So you're just filling this side, né?*
**Responding	Expressing the tutor's belief that it is necessary to say something in reply to a question asked or a statement made by the hearer	• *Student: What do you mean by 'left align'?* • *Tutor: Left aligned, it's when: (2s). Okay, you'll see it on: (2s) Microsoft Word. Just (.) Just (.) look at those tabs. So one is 'left align', one is 'centred', one is (.) 'right-hand side' and (.) the one you used is the last one, the justified.*

Pragmatic act	Description (psychological state and illocutionary point)	Examples from the corpus
	***VERDICTIVES	
*Evaluating	Expressing the speaker's belief about the quality of an aspect of the student's assignment under consideration	• *Okay, so this sentence is very long, okay this is a long sentence.* • *And then, I see that you've… you've summarised your main points here, which is very good* • *I don't think that's (.) a strong enough refutation –* • *Okay. Here I think this sentence is a bit too short: 'Children should be exposed (.) to violent stories to learn about the reality and cruelty of life.' (writes in the document) '… and that (2s) and that they should know that they will face such situations.'*
	***EXPOSITIVES (Searle)	
Explaining	Expressing the tutor's belief that the student could benefit from his/her exposition of an aspect of the student's writing or of academic writing in general	• *(.) So: (.) when you summarise, you're not just going to tell me the point that you made, like saying that: 'This essay just discusses the causes and consequences of obesity and highlighted, you know, whether the state should intervene.' You wanna tell me the point that you made.* • *Okay. So just (.) include one. Just add a refutation here (.) so that you're not contradicting yourself, né?* • *Another way we can link our paragraphs is using connectors, (2s) okay.* • *So that (.) you unfold the rest of your argument and we know what side you're on otherwise we're on the fence, you know?*
Exemplifying	Expressing the tutor's belief that the student could benefit from examples that illustrate a particular explanation, rule, guideline or principle.	• *And then, the next paragraph should discuss, say, for example, families and what they need to do. (.) Okay?* • *But (.) some essays (.) You can, for example, use a statistic.*

*These entries are our own additions based on experience in writing centres.

**Responding is usually combined with another pragmatic act, such as explaining or exemplifying.

***Verdictives and expositives have been taken from Austin's (1961) taxonomy, since none of Searle's (1976) categories adequately cater for the considerable number of utterances in tutor talk that express a judgement of students' verbal utterances or their written work and a verbal elaboration on something that has been asserted.

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A micropragmatic analysis of directiveness in a particular speech event (transcript from Video 00064) is included below. The turn numbers and the dialogue are captured in the left-hand column and the speech act categories for each turn regarded as "directive" in writing centre terms are categorised, first in terms of their micropragmatic speech act "category" and then in terms of a specific type of directive action listed in the writing centre literature and defined in our codebook:

Excerpt 1: (Video 0064, turns 237–250)

Turns and dialogue	**Speech act categories and codes**
TURN 237	
Tutor:	
• Okay, now. One (.) another very important thing, I think one of the most important things is (.) if we look at (.) thesis statement. You'll hear that word a lot (.) at a university.	Constative: Telling
• You'll hear thesis statement, you'll hear he's writing a thesis, um then you'll hear um antithesis (touches her left hand with her right forefinger when uttering each of the stressed words).	Constative: Telling
TURN 238	
Student: (laughter)	
TURN 239	
Tutor: You'll hear syn- (.) synthesis (completes the series of emphatic hand gestures)	Constative: Telling
TURN 240	
Student: Oh my goodness.	
TURN 241	
Tutor: You must synthesise, (clears throat) sorry, you'll hear hypothesis. But (.) if you just remember (.) when you go to a shisa nyama…	Constative: Telling
TURN 242	
Student: (laughter)	
TURN 243	
Tutor: And you eat a (.) sosatie.	Constative: Telling
TURN 244	
Student: Ja?	
TURN 245	
Tutor: Kebab. There's a stick in there. (lifts her right hand holding the pen in a vertical position)	Constative: Telling
TURN 246	
Student: (laughter)	
TURN 247	
Tutor: Okay? And that stick (.) is your thesis {statement.} (draws a stick on the erasable sheet in front of her).	Constative: Confirming Constative: Telling
TURN 248	
Student: {Oh:} it holds everything together.	
TURN 249	
Tutor: You're brilliant.	Verdictive: Evaluating
TURN 250	
Student: (laughter)	

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In this excerpt, the tutor facilitates the tutee's understanding of the notion of a thesis statement. Separately, the utterances are directive acts: telling, confirming and evaluating; however, together they form an interactively scaffolded explanation of a speech event. The explanation is accompanied by hand gestures that emphasise the members of the lexical category with -thesis- as the stem. The information conveyed by the tutor elicits laughter from the student and the student's interjection "Oh my goodness" seems to mark surprise or amazement. In attempting to render a vivid explanation of a concept with which a first-year student may not be familiar, the tutor resorts to the use of a verbal metaphor. The source domain is that of a *sosatie* (Afrikaans for a kebab), made of cubes of curried or spiced meat held together by a skewer or stick and often enjoyed at barbecues (the Zulu word for a barbecue is *shisa nyama*, meaning "hot meat"). The word *stick* is used as the vehicle for the notion of a thesis in an essay. Just as the stick (skewer) of a kebab holds together the pieces of meat, the thesis holds together the parts of an argument (reasons and evidence). The gesture of holding a pen vertically, as shown in Figure 1, adds another modality to the verbal metaphor "stick":

Figure 1: Turn 245 "There's a <u>stick</u> in there."

The tutor's drawing of a stick on an erasable plastic sheet adds another layer to the "modal ensemble" (Kress, 2010), while she repeats the verbal metaphor "<u>that</u> stick". This multimodal ensemble that draws on shared cultural knowledge clearly helps the student to understand the notion of a thesis statement. The student's response "Ja?", pronounced with rising intonation in turn 244, serves to indicate interest in hearing more. Her confirmation that she has understood, by confirming the metaphorical meaning in turn 248, "{Oh:} it holds everything together", indicates that she has given her full attention throughout the explanation and has understood the tutor's message perfectly well. Furthermore, the fact that the student is smiling broadly during the entire exposition may indicate that she is entertained by the

tutor's creative use of imagery and her playful teacherly "voice", as well as pleased with her own understanding of a crucial concept in essay-writing.

Excerpt 2 is another example of a speech event, which is predominantly directive according to a micro-pragmatic analysis:

Excerpt 2: Facilitating understanding of background information in an essay introduction (Video 0064 and 0065, turns 195-208)

Turn numbers and dialogue	Speech act categories and codes
TURN 195	
Tutor: • So that includes sometimes important definitions. • It may include a timeline. • It may include a specific field of research (draws a circle with both hands in the upper centre space). • So it's like (.) laying the table (moves both hands, palms down, outwards in an expansive gesture just above the surface of the table). • You understand?	Constative: Telling Constative: Telling Constative: Telling Constative: Telling Directive: Asking a closed question
TURN 196	
Student: Ja. (nods)	
TURN 197	
Tutor: • There's a plate, but there's no food. • There's a knife and fork (indicates the position of the knife and fork on the table in front of her). • Everything is there, but the food is to follow.	Constative: Telling Constative: Telling Constative: Telling
TURN 198	
Student: Ja. (nods)	
TURN 199	
Tutor: • But your background is your table (draws a rectangle just above the surface of the table with both hands). • It grounds (.) your	Constative: Telling Constative: Telling
TURN 200	
Student: What you're going to talk about.	(cont.) Constative: Telling
TURN 201	
Tutor: • Yes. • Do you understand?	Constative: Responding Directive: Asking a closed question
TURN 202	
Student: Ja.	
TURN 203	

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Turn numbers and dialogue	Speech act categories and codes
Tutor:	
• What I'm saying?	Asking a closed question
• All right. So please highlight your background.	Instructing
TURN 204	
Student: (student highlights on the page) Uh from what I'm seeing here, my background really is minimal. It's really not saying a lot. And (.) ja (.) this work (inaudible).	
TURN 205	
Tutor: But that's wonderful. (laughter; performs an expansive gesture with both hands)	Verdictive: Evaluation
TURN 206	
Student: (laughter)	
TURN 207	
Tutor: Because now you know what you need to work on. (laughter)	(cont.) Constative: Confirmation
TURN 208	
Student: Ja, my background, it's, it's not saying whether I'm going to be discussing only in South Africa? In Africa? In the world? Or what? And ja.	

In this example, the tutor is demonstrating the relevance of background information in an introduction (the speech event). In turn 195, using a sequence of four instances of telling, the tutor enumerates the possible ingredients of the background section of an essay introduction. She ends the turn with a question aimed at confirming the student's understanding. In turn 197, the tutor uses three additional descriptive sentences (telling) with metaphorical meanings to stress the fact that a background section is a preparation for what is to follow in the body of the essay. Metaphorical co-speech gestures[2] strengthen the multimodal explanation: a circle drawn in the central space in front of the tutor with both hands portrays an academic field as a bounded object (turn 195) and an expansive sideways gesture with both hands indicates complete satisfaction with the student's level of understanding (turn 205). Iconic gestures[3] are used to represent objects such as a table (drawing a rectangle with both hands in the central space), the position of cutlery on a table, as well as the movement of the hands when spreading a tablecloth to lay a table (turns 197 and 199).

2 Metaphoric gestures are embodied representations of abstract objects, spatial relations or movements (McNeil, 1992).

3 Iconic gestures bear a perceptual relation with concrete entities, spatial relations and actions. They depict objects and/or movements (McNeil, 1992).

Figure 2: Turn 199 “But your background is your table”.

The student signals understanding through head nods (turns 196 and 198) and confirms understanding by completing the tutor’s metaphorical statement “But your background is your table. It grounds (.) your…” with the literal phrase “What you’re going to talk about” (turn 200). Once the tutor is sure that the student has understood, she instructs the student to highlight the relevant background section in the text. However, the instruction does not close down opportunities for meaning creation; it leads the student to discovering the deficit in her own writing. While reading the highlighted section, the student acknowledges that her background information is “minimal” and not sufficiently comprehensive. The tutor’s exclamation of a positive appraisal, “But that’s wonderful”, accompanied by spontaneous laughter and an expansive gesture (indicating abundance) during which the palms are turned upwards (metaphorically, “up” means “good”). This embodied metaphorical expression of complete satisfaction with the student’s self-discovery of what is lacking in her introduction serves as motivation to the student to use her newfound knowledge to improve the background section of her essay. The student’s non-verbal response (audible laughter) indicates recognition of the praise. In turn 207, the tutor then confirms their shared understanding of what is still lacking in the student’s background and, in turn 208, the student justifies the faith that the tutor has in her ability to augment the background, by specifying exactly what, in her opinion, is still lacking: She confidently looks the tutor in the eye and says: “Ja, my background. It’s not saying whether I’m going to be discussing only in South Africa? In Africa? In the world? Or what? And ja”. She also demonstrates that she is beginning to discover her own voice.

4. CONCLUSION

We believe that this article makes distinct contributions to knowledge in the field of writing centre research. By drawing on five decades of linguistic research on speech acts we demonstrate that analysis at the level of the linguistic utterance combined with analysis at

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the level of the speech event leads us to viewing directiveness in writing centre consultations differently. Until recently, much of the writing centre literature fairly uncritically defined directiveness in terms of a number of actions, such as instructing, telling, explaining, exemplifying, suggesting and asking leading questions. However, to date no criteria have been offered for such a categorisation and no indication has been given of the level of the analysis (e.g. sentence, utterance, turn, etc.). Through a review of the theoretical literature on speech acts we showed the value of older taxonomic speech act models (Austin, 1961; Searle, 1976) as well as more recent models that focus on the speech event (pract) (Mey, 2001; 2009; Kecskes, 2010; Cap, 2010; 2011). On the one hand, coding tutor talk in the transcriptions of video-recorded consultations at the utterance level assisted us in establishing the most frequently occurring (micropragmatic) directive speech acts in tutor talk. On the other hand, analysing (macropragmatic) speech events on topics such as "Explaining the notion of a thesis statement" assisted us in demonstrating that situational information about the ongoing conversation modifies our views of the actions that take place and that the meaning is constructed dialogically. We, for instance, found that a series of directive speech acts comprising telling and asking closed questions may compositionally become a speech event of creating spaces for co-construction of meaning. "Mitigating" situational factors include the enactment of multimodal (often embodied) metaphors drawn from the cultural life-worlds of the tutor and the student; word stress, humour and laughter influence the student's verbal and non-verbal behaviour: being entertained, becoming animated (physically) and demonstrating eagerness to find solutions to writing problems.

We conclude that directive tutoring can and does stimulate learning and interactive discussion with undergraduate, first-time visitors to a writing centre. Contrary to early writing centre literature that "vilified" directive tutoring, the excerpts show that directive tutoring does not take ownership of the text out of the hands of the student. The two excerpts above, though largely directive, saw student engagement in numerous ways, from responding non-verbally with a simple nod and/or laughter to longer responses sharing their views and ideas with tutors. Despite the seemingly directive actions of the tutor, a close analysis of the talk revealed that she was not doing the work for the student but, through a series of actions, explained concepts and equipped the student with the knowledge and skills necessary to complete the task. Directive tutoring was previously described as hierarchical, authoritarian, teacher-centred, undemocratic, didactic and prescriptive (Duke, 1975). The directive tutor was an expert who knew the rules and controlled the direction of the session (Reigstad, 1980) and yet the excerpts above, though they are largely directive, do not exhibit evidence of authoritarianism and inflexible prescriptiveness. Despite the teacherly role assumed by the tutor, she appears to succeed in stimulating the student's thinking about writing, and there is no indication that the student is voiceless and powerless, as would be the case if the tutor had been undemocratic or prescriptive.

In quoting North (1982: 434), we believe that our exploratory findings using a pragmatic framework to analyse tutor talk is still "not necessarily a dependable body of data for use in supporting generalizations about tutoring". Our methodology has just started to align practices with theory and vice versa. Our work merely begins to provide the evidence-based research (*cf.* Denny, 2014) that has recently been called for by writing centre scholars. However, we believe that our methodology can help train tutors so that they understand not only the characteristics that make a tutorial successful but also "how to use and analyse a variety of tutoring methods

and techniques (both directive and non-directive) to achieve these characteristics" (Henning, 2001: 10).

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