Translingualism in the Writing Center: Where Can We Meet?

Lara M. Hauer
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Abstract  A translingual approach to composition studies has been discussed in the fields of composition and linguistics as perceptions of language difference in second language writing which continues to be regarded as deficient or erroneous by those who prefer the academic variety of Standard Written English (SWE). University writing centers play a key role in the ability to negotiate with second language writers through personal interaction, goal setting, and explicit discussion of language variation and how it is perceived in academic writing. Following a review of relevant scholarly literature, the author argues for a translingual approach to writing center tutorials with second language writers and suggests professional development opportunities for writing center faculty.
Introduction

University writing centers have traditionally served the purpose of not only improving student writing but also helping students become better writers, as Stephen North (1984) suggested in “The Idea of a Writing Center” (Lape, 2013; Rafoth, 2015; Thonus, 2004; Williams, 2004). Although tutors typically work with students through individual consultations in a non-directive manner, asking questions and making suggestions, they may feel conflicted as to their role and function when they feel the need to be more directive with second language writers. Working with more linguistically and culturally diverse student writers, many tutors feel challenged as they function as a medium between the student writers and their composition instructors. Expectations vary among faculty regarding the need to conform to Standard Written English (SWE) conventions; therefore, writers and tutors should be aware of what professors require. When SWE is the norm for college composition, deviation is considered to be an error, or poor writing that must be fixed or corrected (Canagarajah, 2015; Zawacki & Habib, 2014).

Some writing centers employ specific strategies in working with second language writers including the use of multilingual tutors (Lape, 2013), “simultaneous focus on form and meaning” (Rafoth, 2015, p. 48), explicit grammar explanations (Blau & Hall, 2002; Nakamaru, 2010), and directive strategies (Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015). Because scholarly inquiry has moved into blurred areas of language difference in which languages are hybrids rather than separate systems, it would benefit writing center faculty to consider a translingual approach to working with second language writers. In this sense, second language student writers are those who speak and/or write in other native or first languages, making English a second or additional language (also called L2 writers). Writing center research has been gradually moving away from measuring
second language writers against native speaker norms and standards, appreciating difference and
dialect as resources rather than errors.

The purpose of this essay is to offer a consideration of translingual writing theories for
Writing Center (WC) tutoring of second language writers. This essay incorporates a literature
review, focusing on the shift in WC philosophy and pedagogy from grammar-based to idea-based
tutoring. This paradigm shift reveals the need for conceptualizing the writing center as a contact
zone (Lape, 2013; Thonus, 2004), through which scholars question the myths of monolingualism
and native speaker norms. In the second section, this work reviews differences in writing center
strategies used with first, second, additional, and Generation 1.5 English language writers. The
writing center tutor’s role is often negotiated when working with second language populations;
the translingual approach, however, has been given little consideration in WC research. This
approach, described in the third section, addresses how language goals and priorities are
negotiated between writer, tutor, and faculty. A table is provided to summarize how
translingualism can be put into practice. Finally, possible directions for future research on
translingualism in Writing Centers are proposed.

I propose that the translingual approach in writing centers can be enacted through (a)
negotiation of an agenda, language goals, and priorities for the session; (b) tutor discussion of
SWE as an option rather than a mandate; and (c) tutor focus on global and local errors
simultaneously, thus avoiding proofreading for error. Recent scholarship has provided multiple
perspectives and aspects of translingualism in composition. For instance, *College English*
dedicated its January 2016 issue to translingual work in composition. Still, the ways in which a
translingual approach can be enacted in WC tutor interactions offer potential avenues of deeper
investigation. While negotiation of meaning has been an area of rich exploration in terms of language, translingualism offers a reconceptualization of the interaction between tutors and second language student writers.

**Shift in Writing Center Philosophy**

Writing center philosophy and practice have changed since North’s (1984) seminal work on the purpose of working with student writers. According to North (1984), writing centers are more than a place to clean up grammar in papers; they should serve to focus on talking to the writer and improving the writer’s skill rather than the final product. Since that time, the perception of “standard” English has been challenged as writing centers have become sites for negotiation. The role of the writing center has extended as student populations and world Englishes become increasingly diverse.

**Perception of Standard English**

Fewer and fewer composition instructors and writing tutors are expected to correct surface-level errors, or deviations from formal Standard Written English (SWE), in student writing. The notion of writing in a single correct standard form preserves a myth of monolingualism and a norm of native speakerism. While writing centers have moved away from pedagogy reflecting such a myth, the practice of correcting grammar is still seen today. Several authors (Blau & Hall, 2002; Lape, 2013; Matsuda & Cox, 2009; Nakamaru, 2010; Williams & Severino, 2004) have pointed to the work of Carol Severino (1993) as the beginning of (1) a gradual movement toward an acceptance of non-standard dialects and rhetorical styles in college composition and (2) attention to second language writing issues in writing centers.
The notion of Standard Written English (SWE) or Edited American English (EAE) has come into question as the only correct and proper dialect to be used in formal writing. The past two decades of research and scholarship, particularly in sociolinguistics, have brought attempts to dispel the stereotypes and conventional beliefs surrounding the myths of monolingualism and SWE (Canagarajah, 2006, 2015). Nonconformity to the “standard” in terms of sentence-level, lexis, and rhetorical style has been perceived in different ways by readers of second language writing. Error gravity studies examine how professors tolerate perceived error, showing that errors that affect meaning (“global” errors) are more frustrating to readers (Matsuda & Cox, 2009). Specifically, Matsuda and Cox (2009) examine reader response to second language writers’ “surface level” errors including word formation, sentence structure, prepositions, verbs, and articles taking priority over second language writers’ accomplishments (p. 42). Second language writing has often been seen as “deficient”; however, Matsuda and Cox state, “Differences are not necessarily signs of deficiency” (p. 43). The authors discuss three stances that readers take when responding to SLW: assimilationist (the writer must conform to the standard and correct errors; this stance should be avoided); accommodationist (the writer learns the native speaker’s norm but maintains L1 identity); and separatist (the writer preserves the differences among language within a document). While the traditional assimilationist stance perceives difference as deficiency, the separatist stance involves reading “beyond the differences if the tutor can suspend judgments, focus on meaning, and be aware of their own preferences and biases” (Matsuda & Cox, 2009, p. 49). Tutors should be aware of their own expectations and responses and respect the writer’s language.
In addition to perceiving difference as error at the sentence level, writing center tutors and composition professors have also perceived rhetorical differences, such as argument writing style, as problematic. The field of contrastive rhetoric examines how rhetorical difference is influenced by culture. Severino (1993) critiques Robert Kaplan’s 1966 depiction of contrastive rhetoric in five general categories: English, Oriental, Romance, Russian, and Semitic. This depiction presented diagrams to represent the rhetorical style of writers in these cultures. She argues that these types of generalizations reflect an assimilationist stance, stating “in a multicultural society, English-speaking readers will have to learn to read writing in different rhetorical forms without pronouncing it ‘bad’ simply because it isn’t thesis and topic-sentence driven (Land and Whitley), the pattern sometimes preferred in some US schools by some US teachers” (p. 47). Her writing center pilot study of L1 Chinese writers shows that cultural expectations of “good” writing vary: “If writing center relationships are truly collaborative negotiations of meaning and form, native English-speaking tutors and Chinese-speaking writers might . . . work out hybridized, ‘culturally balanced’ styles that will be acceptable in Chinese rhetorical traditions but also in US composition and in the other academic disciplines” (Severino, 1993, p. 56). Severino (1993) calls for culturally balanced rhetorical styles that will be accepted by readers in various disciplines rather than conforming to prescribed cultural rhetorical norms. This challenges writing center directors and tutors who, in a sense, serve as mediators between the tutor and the composition instructor. The writing center may be the perfect place to negotiate expectations.
Role of the Writing Center

The shift in writing center philosophy in working with second language writers, reflecting a change in perception of SWE and error, as well as increased diversity in university populations, echoes the view of the writing center as a contact zone. Thonus (2004) extends Mary Louise Pratt’s (1991) “Arts of the Contact Zone” metaphor, arguing that Writing Center tutors are responsible for creating a meeting place for different cultures and different languages. Focusing on differences between “native speaker” (NS) and “non-native speaker” (NNS) tutor talk, Thonus (2004) examines four years of writing center tutorials across several disciplines through an interactional sociolinguistics framework (p. 229). Her analysis of themes including “(1) communicative dominance by tutors, (2) conflicting perceptions of tutor roles . . . , (3) tutor involvement, and (4) . . . uncertainty in tutor-tutee behavior” has implications for tutor training in working with second language writers (Thonus, 2004). Thonus suggests that training may eliminate tutor frustration when interacting with second language writers. Additionally, tutors should use a flexible approach to working with second language writers rather than rigidly adhering to the conventions of SWE.

Part of a flexible approach to working with second language writers is allowing the writer’s voice to come through in his or her text. Severino (2009) recounts a foreign-language writing experience in which her instructor corrected her syntax and vocabulary to the point where her voice was lost in the writing; it became the teacher’s voice. Taking over a writer’s paper is highly discouraged in writing center pedagogy. Severino (2009) cautions tutors against “native speaker-izing” (p. 52) second language writing and provides suggestions on how tutors can avoid this practice in tutoring. Tutors should accord the writer his or her own authority in the
writing process, focus on higher order concerns, and explain any suggested changes. Most crucially, the tutor must avoid misrepresenting the writer’s voice. Severino (2009) also advises responding to the writer’s needs and ensuring the writer’s participation. This concept is one that can lay a foundation for translingual work, assuming that the writer’s linguistic identity is maintained.

**Differences in Tutoring for L1/L2 Writers**

Writing center philosophy has reflected a shift in the concepts of error and correction, SWE conventions, native speaker norms, and multilingualism. The following section reviews tutor strategies used with second language writers, with the aim of opening avenues of further exploration into translingual writing approaches.

**Differing Strategies, Perceptions, and Expectations**

With shifts in writing center philosophy, research has explored multiple aspects of writing center tutoring strategies with second language writers (Blau & Hall, 2002; Matsuda & Cox, 2009; Nakamaru, 2010; Rafoth, 2015; Williams, 2004; Williams & Severino, 2004). Studies have revealed that many tutors experience anxiety or guilt when working with second language writers for several reasons including uncertainty of their role as tutor (Thonus, 2004), the feeling of being unqualified to work with second language writers (Blau & Hall, 2002), or the tendency to line-edit rather than focus on global concerns as they do with native/L1 writers (Blau & Hall, 2002; Matsuda & Cox, 2009). Research has also uncovered the need for tutors to use different strategies with second language writers than they use with L1 writers. By examining trends in tutor strategies with second language writers, a movement toward a negotiation approach (Ritter, 2002) has become evident yet remains underexplored.
It has been debated how and why writing center tutoring sessions differ between first and second language writers and which strategies are more effective in tutoring second language writers. Blau and Hall (2002) and Williams and Severino (2004) identify problems with tutoring second language writers such as tutors tending to focus more explicitly on lower-order concerns and surface-level errors, possibly due to incomprehensibility of the writing. Williams and Severino (2004) examined how L1 and L2 writing center tutorials differ, focusing on the role of tutor as an authority for second language writers. That is, L2 tutees expect L1 tutors to be experts in English who can fix errors or help their writing to conform to SWE conventions. When tutors use this approach, it reflects an accommodationist stance wherein the tutor teaches the conventions of SWE that are perceived as necessary for acceptable writing. The authors also suggest that tutors tend to use more “directive and authoritative” strategies with second language writers (Williams & Severino, 2004, p. 166). Thonus (2004), in a similar vein, points out that tutors tend to dominate the session more with second language writers, particularly in the agenda-setting stage of the tutorial. This could be due to the perception of the tutor as expert, or the tutor’s feeling that she or he needs to outwardly explain aspects of the language to the second language tutee as an institutional authority (Ritter, 2002). Such a stance calls into question the power relations that accompany SWE; in other words, who owns the language? The answer may lie in the consideration of a translingual philosophy.

Furthermore, not all second language writers use the same linguistic and rhetorical styles, but some empirical studies have attempted to produce generalizable findings. Williams and Severino (2004) state that having students read their drafts aloud is not as effective with second language writers as it is with native English writers (p. 167). Distinguishing between
“immigrant” and “Generation 1.5” second language writers who were educated in the U. S. and “international” second language writers who received English education abroad, Williams and Severino (2004) argue that the former are “ear-based” English learners while the latter are “eye-based” learners (p. 168). Reading drafts aloud is not as effective with eye-based learners who are less likely to detect their own errors when they hear them. Additionally, the authors suggest that email tutoring may benefit second language writers who often have a metalanguage for talking about linguistic aspects of English but does not afford the opportunity for tutors to ask clarifying questions immediately.

Writing tutors often possess extensive knowledge of English linguistics, enough to explicitly teach certain elements of grammar and provide a brief explanation of rules. Blau and Hall (2002) examined how cultural differences affect writing, iterating that cultural and linguistic differences are not errors. They note that writing centers should prioritize errors interfering with communication as higher-order concerns before turning to editing for “perfect” English (p. 28), reflecting the paradigm discussed in the previous section. In an effort to please professors, second language writers wanted to eliminate errors. According to their study, Blau and Hall (2002) identified issues that “suggest a rethinking of conventional tutoring strategies for the NNES student” (p. 29), including the role of cultural informing, the technique of Socratic questioning, the sequencing of global concerns and local concerns, and the strategy of working line by line. The authors cite examples of how tutors and tutees organize the session by a process of negotiating. For example, a tutee who asks the tutor to proofread for grammar errors, and a tutor who has been trained to focus on global issues first, must compromise by working jointly on both global- and sentence-level errors. Regarding negotiating priorities, Matsuda and Cox
(2009) argue that while some professors still require SLW to visit the Writing Center to get their papers “cleaned up” (p. 46), tutors should first read a piece of second language writing for the gist before rereading for areas that caused confusion for him or her as a reader. This is typically the same strategy used with L1 writers, but tutors of second language writers are often so distracted by linguistic or rhetorical differences that they feel the need to edit the paper first.

**Examination of Writing Tutor Practice**

Research has explored specific aspects of tutoring second language writers, including an examination of the practice of revision (Williams, 2004) and lexical aspects of writing (Nakamaru, 2010). Williams (2004) examined tutor strategies for revision as a goal-oriented process with the purpose of connecting tutor strategy with actual revision made by second language writers. Specifically, she focused on the relationship between what is addressed in session and what writers choose to revise (Williams, 2004, p. 177). Williams’s (2004) study reveals that writers are more likely to revise “issues explicitly addressed by the tutor” (p. 185), and “text-based revisions that can be traced to WC discussion are associated with interactional features of negotiations” that may occur during the tutorial (p. 190). The author’s discussion of negotiation in WC sessions with second language writers opens avenues to consider a more flexible approach to tutoring second language writers. Negotiating goals may be a useful practice for second language writers and their tutors.

When second language writers seek consultations at the writing center, they often bring attention to their faulty grammar or lack of grammar skill while in reality their issue may be more global. Nakamaru (2010), while acknowledging the problematic terminology of “L2” writer, “examines whether the tutors in [her] study exhibit the same orientation toward linguistic
aspects of students’ texts that is reflected in the literature—i.e., do they prioritize grammar over lexis?” (p. 98). She notes, “International students focused more on lexical issues in their sessions than the US-educated students, who had more lexical choices immediately available to them and perhaps more modest rhetorical or academic goals for the particular text they were working on at the time” (Nakamaru, 2010, p. 106). She suggests training on addressing lexical issues with second language writers, as many tutors have “internalized the bias in writing center discourse toward characterizing language in terms of ‘grammar’ ” (Nakamaru, 2010, p. 109). Indeed, deeper awareness of lexical resources of Generation 1.5 learners should be encouraged.

Prioritizing higher-order concerns over lower-order concerns in WC tutorials is a complex process considering the web of expectations: those of the tutee, those of the tutor, and those of the university writing professor. Rafoth (2015) calls for tutors who can recognize diverse student populations and the consequences that privilege and marginalization can have for students’ writing. . . . who understand and can identify with culturally and linguistically diverse populations of writers. . . . who possess the kind of strategic knowledge for helping second language writers that the field of SLA [second language acquisition] has made us aware of. (p. 13)

In order to develop this ability to assist diverse populations of second language writers, tutors should build knowledge of writers’ backgrounds. Professional development and open conversation among tutors, and between tutors and directors, are necessary steps toward advancement in working with second language writers. Tutoring second language writers involves modifications not only to specific strategies and techniques but also, perhaps more importantly, in tutors’ attitudes and dispositions toward the nature of the interactive, opportunity-
rich sessions that second language writing tutorials provide. The following section will review principles of translingual practice, offering a lens through which one may consider how such an approach can be applied to tutoring second language writers in multilingual writing centers.

Translingual Approach and Negotiation Model

A translingual approach to writing has been the subject of a growing body of research in the fields of applied linguistics and college composition (Canagarajah, 2006, 2015; Griffo, Ninacs, & Huster, 2015; Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011; Horner, NeCamp, & Donahue, 2011; Lape, 2013; Rafoth, 2015; Zawacki & Habib, 2014). Meanwhile, the issue of translingual approaches in college, university, and online writing centers has only begun to emerge. Contrary to monolinguist assumptions about languages, translingualism seeks to cross boundaries between languages and to portray language as heterogeneous and constantly changing. In writing centers, a translingual approach may be applied in negotiating language goals and priorities for the session (and improvement of writing); such negotiation occurs between the second language writer and the tutor, taking into account other readers, including the instructor who is often also the assessor of the writing.

Translingual Writing

Translingual writing presents a view of language and language difference in terms of plurality, heterogeneity, and fluidity. The idea that deviations from SWE are unacceptable is rejected in the translingual approach. At the International Writing Center Association’s fall conference, Griffo et al. (2015) reported that students are often unaware of their use of non-standard dialects in their writing or the reasons why these deviations from SWE or EAE are perceived as errors by readers. Griffo et al. define a translingual approach, in conjunction with
their research in multilingual writing, in three ways: a disposition of other-centeredness, a practice relating reading-writing to transformation, and an awareness of the co-constructive relationship among language, its users, and contexts. Furthermore, the translingual approach fills a gap between SWE and the varieties of English used by students. Expectations and criticisms from university writing instructors reveal that deviations from SWE are still perceived as error and poor writing. There is also a belief among some composition instructors that the writing center proofreads and edits second language writers’ work. Further research would help to clarify instructors’ perceptions related to the translingual approach.

Horner, Lu, et al. (2011) call for a change from the traditional approach and advocate for the translingual approach—which regards language difference as a resource rather than a barrier or problem. Therefore, composition instructors should help writers to preserve, develop, and utilize difference which is not necessarily error (p. 304). The translingual approach recognizes the heterogeneity of language users, requires negotiation, and confronts monolingualist expectations and traditional notions of correctness. Translingual does not hold the same connotation as the term multilingual. According to Rafoth (2015), “Whereas multilingualism refers to a state or goal, translingualism refers to efforts to reach beyond the limits of any single language and thus create communication bridges . . . that compel cooperation through communication” (p. 29). Translingual writing, as a practice, involves negotiation and effort on both the part of the tutor and the tutee, the instructor and the student. Experimental at first, the translingual approach is not a simple practice that can be perfected in a day or even a week, but gradually over time. Some writing center personnel may find that they have already been incorporating translingual practice all along by negotiating with student writers and considering
SWE as only one option for written communication. Change in perspective is the first step toward beginning to implement a new approach.

Change in perceptions and practices of teaching writing to second language students will need to occur before moving toward a translingual approach. Horner, NeCamp, and Donahue (2011) and Canagarajah (2006) have argued that monolingualist ideologies must be rejected in order to implement a translingual approach, embracing instead the concept of English plurality. Horner, NeCamp, and Donahue (2011) propose a “translingual multilingualism” model that “taps not only linguistic ability within single languages, but also the ability to move translingually (and transculturally) across, as well as within abstracted languages and cultures” (p. 286). In this model, which can be applied to writing in any foreign or additional language, native speaker-like accuracy is neither the norm against which second language writers are measured nor the learner’s communicative goal. To enact a change in practice, there must be a shift in attitudes and dispositions among the scholarly community toward a translingual norm.

Likewise, Canagarajah (2006) rejects a monolingualist ideology and distinguishes between metropolitan Englishes (ME) that claim ownership of a dominant language variety and world Englishes (WE) when he states that there is an “unequal and hierarchical relationship between English varieties” (p. 588). Despite this problem, second language speakers use strategies to “negotiate their differences and effectively accomplish their purposes” (p. 590). Whether it involves different languages, or different varieties or dialects of the same language, interlocutors work around these differences in order to accomplish a communicative task. In order to successfully implement the translingual approach, it benefits everyone involved to develop a broader linguistic repertoire. Canagarajah (2006) points out that translingual practices
are longstanding within multilingual communities; they are not new. However, ways to utilize them for purposes of communicating, teaching, and learning in our disciplines should be examined. Canagarajah (2015) further clarifies that translingualism does not ignore SWE; rather it includes SWE as one variety which is also a social construct. As an additional dialect, it can be taught and incorporated into one’s collection of dialects or languages. The pedagogy of the translingual approach, therefore, requires reconceptualization of the purpose and propriety of Standard English.

**Translingual Approach to Writing Center Multilingual Writing Tutorials**

While a translingual approach to teaching college composition has been researched extensively, published scholarship on translingualism and the writing center is gradually becoming a more deeply explored subject of analysis (Griffo et al., 2015; Lape, 2013; Rafoth, 2015; Zawacki & Habib, 2014). Zawacki and Habib (2014), among the first to publish research at the intersection of second language writing and WC scholarship, examine the language that instructors use when they talk about SLW error. They identify the “need for a new translingual paradigm that sees ‘difference in language’ not as error but rather as evidence of a writer negotiating meaning across fluid and heterogeneous linguistic boundaries” (p. 186). Using qualitative methods, they interviewed faculty across disciplines, comparing what they said about standards and expectations for good writing with second language students’ perspectives. They revealed that instructors sent students to the writing center to correct errors because they themselves lack the time, knowledge, or both that they feel they need to help second language writers build writing proficiency. In the data analysis, Zawacki and Habib focus on points where faculty participants either negotiated or refused to negotiate language difference. Faculty
members expect second language writers to use SWE and are often willing to either help them or send them to the writing center. According to the authors, faculty should learn to read “with patience, respect for language difference, and a deliberative attitude (Horner et al., 2011) that seeks to understand the causes for perceived error and is open to the possibility of negotiation” (p. 201). Similarly, Griffo et al. (2015) suggest that the WC can implement translingual practices by designing workshops for students that teach strategies for negotiating meaning and workshops for faculty that discuss assessment strategies to use with second language writers.

Some of the current literature on multilingualism and translingualism in the Writing Center suggests that multilingual tutors are better equipped to assist multilingual writers. For instance, Lape (2013) describes a multilingual Writing Center (MWC) in Pennsylvania as a model for translingual practices. Tutors at this MWC have been educated in multiple languages and collaborate with foreign language departments to best meet the needs of second language writers. In this capacity, the translingual approach recognizes heterogeneity of languages and maintains a contact zone in which diverse individuals are able to “construct hybrid identities” (p. 3). Lape’s (2013) study of two WC tutors’ perceptions of different cultural rhetorical styles provides implications for translingual work in Writing Centers. Multilingual tutors are better able to break down linguistic and cultural barriers surrounding Standard Written English in a way that enables second language writers to move through them. Making SWE accessible as an option, such tutors “demystify the educational culture by explaining rhetorical relationships, genre, and discourse conventions” (Lape, 2013, p. 4). Lape and colleagues at her writing center recognize that there is more than one correct definition of good academic writing and that all writers have
the choice to adapt or conform to the dominant standard conventions. Additionally, Lape
suggests balancing global- and sentence-level concerns in WC tutoring sessions, as previously
mentioned, as an act of negotiation.

Negotiation between tutor and tutee is a crucial part of translingual practice. Rafoth
(2015) recommends that WC directors work closely with tutors to begin incorporating the
translingual approach in their work with students. While “negotiated interaction” has been
present for decades in the field of language learning, writing center tutors should now use this
concept in a “simultaneous focus on form and meaning” (Rafoth, 2015, p. 48). All parties
involved in the interaction must be willing to cooperate and remain flexible. WC tutoring
sessions with second language writers, as previously discussed, present challenges and
sometimes create anxiety for both the tutors and tutees. For the translingual approach to work in
writing centers, tutors must be prepared to negotiate not only language differences but also
language goals and priorities for the session. As time permits, WC tutors should be able to
comfortably discuss with second language writers the conventions of SWE without imposing it
as the one and only correct way to write for college composition and for their instructors who
expect student writing to conform to it.

Writing center tutors—novice and experienced, monolingual and multilingual—as well
as directors and composition instructors may wonder how to apply a translingual approach in a
practical way. Most tutorials last between 30 and 60 minutes, a short time to change one’s
attitude regarding SWE conventions and the monolingualist conception of error. The translingual
approach is most often enacted through the process of negotiation; awareness of audience
expectations for good academic writing must be promoted. We can begin by negotiating session
goals in terms of prioritizing higher-order, global concerns over lower-order, sentence-level issues. Sometimes a balance can be achieved in which tutors and tutees simultaneously focus on both types of concerns. It is important for the tutor to remain flexible. By negotiating goals and priorities, realizing that SWE is only one of many linguistic registers, and avoiding proofreading for error by using non-directive strategies, the translingual approach offers a number of practical implications.

Table 1 summarizes preliminary steps to implementing a translingual approach in writing center sessions with multilingual writers. All of these practices should begin with writing center staff meetings and professional development training.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Practice</th>
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<tr>
<td>Translingualism is based on negotiation and meeting in the middle.</td>
<td>Tutors explicitly address the idea of writing “Standard” while negotiating session goals; briefly discuss audience expectations, grades, student assumptions, and similar issues as appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concept of plurality means that second language writers benefit by being able to use the semiotic resources of more than one language or language variety.</td>
<td>Tutors begin to develop broader linguistic repertoire. Not every tutor must know all languages that our multilingual students speak, but familiarization would help. Have bilingual dictionaries in the WC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutors should use a flexible, less dominant approach to working with second language writers.</td>
<td>Tutors apply more questioning and fewer non-directive strategies. This is applicable to all writers and especially for second language writers.</td>
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**Direction for Future Research in Writing Centers**

Language, by nature, ephemerally changes and evolves as research in applied linguistics and composition continues to advance. While more studies have begun to examine translingual writing approaches in the framework of teaching second language writing, deeper research into
translingualism and the writing center is necessary in order for directors and tutors to be more successful in working with second language writers. At a university writing center, I would like to propose a study investigating how second language writers and their tutors interact in tutorials, specifically focusing on two main areas: (1) writer-tutor negotiation of a session agenda including whether (or how) goals and priorities focus on global and local errors simultaneously or separately for their sessions, and (2) explicit discussion of SWE as an option rather than a mandate within the session.

A translingual approach suggests a reconceptualization of the interaction between tutors and second language student writers. The researcher should not focus on language negotiation in terms of lexical or syntactical issues in written communication. Suggested research questions are, (1) How are language goals negotiated between tutors and second language writers? Which goals are the predominant focus of the session? (2) To what extent do WC tutors correct second language “errors” that deviate from SWE? (3) To what extent do instructors tolerate deviation from SWE in second language academic writing? The practices and perceptions surrounding the proposed questions can be gleaned through analysis of recorded WC tutorials for evidence of goal negotiation, writer-tutor roles in the negotiation process, and tolerance of language varieties deviating from SWE. In future research, second language writers may be recruited through collaboration between the writing center and composition instructors. After participant selection and IRB approval, tutors may audio-record individual sessions with second language writers for an established time period, depending on contextual and institutional factors. Additional data collection methods may include pre- and post-session interviews with the students who have
been recorded as well as with their composition course instructors. Field notes, observation, and collection of writing samples pre- and post-assessment may enhance the research.

As discussed in this paper, a translingual approach begins with a consciousness in practice and suspension of judgment. Because it is well known that writer-tutor interaction and talk are a critical part of the session, tutors may learn to practice listening to the writer talk about, defend, or elaborate on what he or she is writing; discuss with writers how their language and culture affect their writing, in terms of rhetorical, lexical, or syntactical styles; share valuable cultural information with writers, including an explicit discussion about differences; and learn about not only the writer but also stereotypes or assumptions that may be commonly held about the writer’s language and culture. Within these interactions and exchanges lies the heart of negotiation, as walls and barriers crumble. On a larger scale, professional development and training for tutors of second language writers should be open to learning about such issues.

Discussion of scholarly work such as Blau and Hall (2002) and seminal work of 1993 (Severino, 1993; Thonus, 1993) may be encouraged as a means to building a foundation for tutors before engaging in a translingual approach. In sum, honing in on a few aspects of translingualism in writing centers can lead to new implications for second language writing work.
References


