

11

Developing Translingual Dispositions to Negotiate Gatekeeping in the Graduate Writing Center

Sarah Summers

ROSE-HULMAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Writing programs must respond to the unmet—and mostly unstudied—needs of multilingual graduate writers. Consequently, programs are pulled between the pressure to help these students navigate academic writing and the desire to help them challenge linguistic norms. Using transcripts of graduate writing center (GWC) tutorials with multilingual graduate writers, I analyze how tutors enact translingual pedagogies that honor writers' linguistic backgrounds and acknowledge academic gatekeeping norms. Specifically, I examine tutorials that focus on building confidence, making language use transparent, and rethinking higher- and lower-order concerns. These strategies, I argue, help multilingual writers identify as scholars who can both fulfill and challenge academic writing expectations.

Keywords: graduate writing, writing centers, translingual tutoring, international students

During an interview in Liberty University's graduate writing center (GWC), Kwan explained that for international graduate students like him, "writing is the most important. I can just keep a silence in the classroom. But I cannot keep the silence in my paper." In other words, writing requires him to demonstrate a voice. Drawing on transcripts of GWC tutorials, I demonstrate how translingual dispositions observed between tutors and writers help international multilingual graduate students cultivate this voice. This chapter helps to define the needs and priorities of international graduate students writing in English—a population not yet comprehensively studied by translingual scholars—as they relate to, and sometimes challenge, translingual scholarship. This chapter also situates these needs within the context of writing programs and larger institutional goals. This connection between scholarship, writers'

and tutors' experiences, and institutional context is particularly important in making these findings applicable to writing programs, both international and national, that employ English-medium instruction. By understanding how these theoretical and practical factors influence one another in this example case, writing programs can determine how to best leverage ongoing translanguaging conversations and pedagogies within their own contexts. For example, as reflected in both U.S. writing center scholarship and the content of the European Writing Centers Association Conference (2016), writing centers, like Liberty's GWC, are often at the heart of the struggle between helping students navigate academic gatekeeping norms and the desire to be sites of progressive language policy.

Despite the breadth of work on multilingual writers in writing centers—and general agreement that multilingual graduate students can benefit from more focused writing center and writing program efforts (Brooks & Swain, 2008; Ferris & Thaiss, 2011; Jordan & Kedrowicz, 2011)—very little attention has been given to multilingual graduate students specifically. Multilingual graduate writers have unique needs and those needs, on the surface, seem to run counter to progressive attitudes toward language, including translanguaging. For example, multilingual writers in GWCs often ask for help with sentence-level writing, grammar, and error correction (Phillips, 2013; Zhang, 2011). As the introduction to this collection establishes, one of the frameworks for understanding a translingual disposition is acknowledging the limited visibility of translingual processes in final writing products. This chapter shows how a translingual disposition can lead to a seemingly “standardized” product. This tension is particularly important to capture for multilingual graduate students whose professional careers depend on their ability to create standard academic writing, even as we acknowledge that those norms are beginning to change (Canagarajah, 2002; Lillis & Curry, 2004, 2006; Tardy, 2003; Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006).

In this chapter, I argue that the flexible and open habits of mind that characterize translingual pedagogies allow Liberty's tutors to inhabit a middle space between these two poles of linguistic gatekeeping and resistance to linguistic norms. Moreover, I demonstrate how multilingual graduate writer's priorities and requests necessitate the kind of negotiations that set the stage for the translingual dispositions that I observed. As both Canagarajah's (2013) definition of translingual communication as orientation and this collection's framework emphasize, the negotiation of meaning is at the heart of translanguaging. That spirit of negotiation extends to the practices of setting goals and expectations for tutoring sessions. As this study demonstrates, when both tutors and writers are willing to negotiate—both in terms

of textual meaning and the meaning (or purpose) of the tutorial, translingual dispositions emerge.

The ability to write technically correct prose not only determines international graduate students' ability to succeed professionally, but also influences their confidence as writers and scholars. Beyond external barriers, Elizabeth Erichsen and Doris Bolliger (2011) also found that language differences contribute to internal barriers to success, including anxiety, stress, and a loss of confidence among international graduate students that create a sense of social and academic isolation. In these contexts, style, grammar, and word choice are no longer lower-order concerns, but instead represent ways to help students gain a particular kind of institutional power that allows them to pass through academic and professional gates. That these gates remain, in part, controlled by markers of linguistic difference is no doubt problematic, but, however much writing centers wish to strive for a translingual disposition, they cannot do so at the expense of the needs of graduate writers in the present. Thus, GWCs offer spaces to reconsider not only how different populations of students prioritize writing problems—and therefore necessitate a reprioritization of writing center practices—but also how to integrate a focus on those problems with discussions about students' scholarly identity and the mutual respect and inquiry that characterize a “translingual approach” (Horner et al., 2011).

Throughout this chapter, I rely on Bruce Horner, Min-Zhan Lu, Jacqueline Jones Royster, and John Trimbur's (2011) definition of a translingual approach as one that “encourages reading with patience, respect for perceived differences within and across languages, and an attitude of deliberative inquiry” (p. 304). The tutors I observed for this chapter all exhibit these traits in their consultations, despite the fact they had not received explicit training in translingual dispositions toward writing.¹ The value of these transcripts is that they demonstrate how translingual principles—“patience,” “respect,” and “inquiry”—can help tutors navigate a graduate writing culture that is obsessed with error, correctness, and standards. The language of error, then, is not absent from these transcripts, and I never witnessed tutors encouraging writers to create linguistically heterogeneous documents. Though Horner et al. (2011)

1 At the time of this study, Liberty's GWC tutors received no explicit training about translingual pedagogies. To prepare them to work with multilingual students, they read “Helping ESL Writers Grow” (Green, 1998) and “Reading an ESL Writer's Text” (Matsuda & Cox, 2011), discussed Ferris' (2002) concept of treatable errors, and viewed *Writing Across Borders*. Most of their training happened on-the-job and through informal conversations during staff meetings.

argue that the concept of “Standard Written English” is “bankrupt” (p. 305), I demonstrate throughout the chapter its very real consequences for graduate writers—consequences felt by the GWC. This chapter examines how what I have identified as translanguaging dispositions—though sometimes imperfect or incomplete—can grow organically from relationships between tutors and multilingual writers that are built on a foundation of respect. These dispositions—perhaps especially because they arise naturally from relationships with peers, rather than being imposed from theory—also help tutors honor linguistic diversity within a larger discourse that reifies standard academic writing.

In the sections that follow, I first provide context both for Liberty University’s GWC and for my role and methods as a researcher. I then describe and analyze the practices I observed between GWC tutors and multilingual writers that allow tutors to address the expressed needs of clients within the larger pedagogical goals of the writing center, and I connect these practices to translanguaging pedagogies. I conclude by considering the broader applications of these practices, and the ways writing programs might foster more translanguaging dispositions across their campuses.

Institutional Context

Liberty University’s GWC began as a response to a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation requirement. According to the “Quality Enhancement Plan” (QEP) (Runion, 2006), which outlines Liberty’s response to SACS, a university-wide assessment found that “on average, Liberty’s first year residential graduate students needed writing skills training in areas including (but not limited to) organization structure, clarity of content, and grammatical or mechanical errors” (p. 5). Moreover, a survey distributed to graduate faculty found that the majority of faculty members “were unsatisfied with respect to the scholarly and discipline-specific syntactical writing skills of their students” (Runion, 2006, p. 7). With these problems in mind, the university outlined a five-year plan for improving graduate writing, which included required graduate-level writing courses, professional development for graduate faculty, and a graduate writing center. The GWC, which opened in 2006, offers free, hour-long appointments to students from across Liberty’s residential master’s and doctoral programs.

Liberty’s focus on conservative ministry and counseling degrees contributes to the international student population at the university and, thus, at the writing center. Over two-thirds of the GWC’s returning clients are international students. Many of these students are from South Korea, which has

“linguistic and rhetorical traditions markedly different than those of the U.S.” (Jordan & Kedrowicz, 2011, n.p.). Kwan, the doctoral student in counseling from South Korea, whom I quoted at the beginning of the chapter, explains that many South Korean students come to Liberty to study theology or seminary because of the large American missionary presence in South Korea:

The first American missionaries had a very conservative theology, and there was so many Koreans who want to study conservative theology. Liberty is one of the most conservative universities in America. That’s the reason why many Korean students want to come here.

Recognizing the needs of this large group of students, Liberty’s GWC employs Kwan as a liaison who translates for Korean students during appointments and helps both clients and tutors become more attuned to differing norms between American and Korean academic cultures. The GWC also employs two international students as tutors, including Michael, who is a Master’s of Divinity student from South Korea. Many of the tutors—international and native to the US—see themselves as cultural informants who help initiate international students to American academic and social customs.

For international students, the typical needs for graduate students—to learn new genres and become part of new discourse communities—are layered with new cultural norms and differing levels of familiarity with Standard Written English. As a result, GWC tutors spend many of their consultations helping students with academic literacy, such as research strategies, and language issues, such as grammar and word choice. The GWC’s tutors have grown to see meeting these needs as an integral part of their work in helping graduate students become confident, independent writers and scholars—a goal that I address more specifically in later sections of this chapter. The perception outside the GWC, however, as reflected both in institutional documents and in faculty attitudes reported by the GWC director, is that these consultations and workshops are meant to remediate weak writers. This perception reflects what Harry Denny (2010) refers to as the “othering” of second-language writers. He defines othering as a practice “either explicit or lurking just under the surface. *They* are a problem that requires solving, an irritant and frustration that resists resolution” (2010, p. 119). Thus, Liberty’s GWC has the complex challenge of meeting the needs of international students without “othering” them.

The QEP itself, while integral in establishing a resource for graduate writers, is not blameless in the remedial perception of the center or in the othering of multilingual writers. Both in terms of language and execution,

the plan contributes to an institutional view of what it terms “developmental writers” as others who need to be remediated and establishes the GWC as the frontline for that remediation. For example, the QEP describes the GWC as a site that can “bear some of the burden the QEP imposes on faculty members’ time” (Runion, 2006, p. 35). The burden, as the paragraph explains, arises from the obligation to “diagnose,” “ferret out,” and “fix” student errors and problems (Runion, 2006, p. 35). Thus, the QEP represents a struggle between the importance of “creating a culture of professional writing” for graduate students that is supported through a variety of resources, and the perceived need to “fix” students who do not meet the assumed standards of professional writing. Liberty’s GWC is at the heart of this struggle.

Methods

I came to study multilingual writing pedagogies because I was familiar with the type of struggle Liberty’s GWC faces. As the graduate student coordinator of Penn State University’s GWC, I collaborated with many international graduate writers who felt anxious about their academic writing ability and, in turn, their potential as graduate students and scholars. Writing center scholarship suggests a range of best practices for supporting multilingual students (Bruce & Rafoth, 2009; Harris, 1997; Harris & Silva, 1993; Myers, 2003; Severino, 2009; Thonus, 2004), with very little written about multilingual graduate students. Thus, I selected Liberty as a case study site because the GWC director indicated, in response to an initial survey, that over 60 per cent of their recurring clients are multilingual students and that they employ multilingual students as consultants. As such, Liberty is a data-rich site for investigating the role of linguistic differences and the resulting pedagogies in GWC consultations. Moreover, Liberty is a small, private institution with a religious affiliation and thus provides a unique institutional perspective that extends the current picture of graduate writing beyond the traditional, high-profile research institution.

Over three days in February 2013, I visited Liberty’s GWC and conducted interviews with three administrators, five tutors, and two clients. I observed and audio recorded four consultations, two with international students. Table 11.1 provides information about the participants included in this chapter, all of whom have been assigned pseudonyms with the exception of the director. During those three days, I also attended two workshops hosted by the GWC and one meeting of the semester-long required writing course for graduate students, and participated in informal conversations with administrators and tutors. The case study was part of a larger,

IRB-approved study. I approached my data using grounded theory, which begins with themes in the data, rather than an external theory, and allows researchers to see data collection, analysis, and theory building as a recursive, open-ended process.² Thus, rather than beginning with translingualism and trying to fit tutors' practices into that theory, translingualism entered at the end of the process as one potential lens for locating the practices I observed in a larger scholarly conversation.

Table 11.1. Liberty University case study participants.

Name/Pseudonym	Role
Tess Stockslager	GWC Director
Jim	GWC Tutor Graduate Writing Course Instructor
Eric	GWC Tutor M.A. Student, English
Brittany	GWC Tutor M.A. Student, Counseling
Michael	GWC Tutor International Student, Seminary
Kwan	Korean Liaison to the GWC International Ph.D. Student, Counseling
Marlena	GWC Client International M.A. Student, Counseling
Sun	GWC Client International M.A. Student, Counseling

Using Translingual Pedagogies to Reach Beyond the Remedial

In the sections that follow, I analyze the ways that Liberty tutors attempt

2 Although I used Dedoose, a software program that allows users to visualize the frequency of codes, I did not arrive to my conclusions by counting codes. I share the rationale for not counting codes that Creswell (2007) provides in *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*. As he explains, “counting conveys a quantitative orientation of magnitude and frequency contrary to qualitative research. In addition, a count conveys that all codes should be given equal emphasis and it disregards that the passages coded may actually represent contradictory views” (p. 152). Thus, this chapter represents the richest and most relevant examples from my research.

to meet the needs of their clients while moving beyond merely “fixing” their work or “remediating” them. While tutors’ goals do not come from an explicit focus on translingual pedagogy, their training materials reflect many of the attitudes that invite a translingual disposition, including identifying one’s own biases and assumptions and emphasizing respect and understanding. Prior to their first consultations, tutors read a document called “GWC Tutor Guide to Working with International and ESL Students.” Rather than provide specific tasks or strategies to students (those are discussed in relationship to readings and reflection on tutorials), the document focuses on assumptions and attitudes. For example, the document reminds tutors that “Many of our students have previous graduate degrees and may have excellent writing and/or speaking proficiency in their native languages; they may be accomplished preachers or published authors.” In other words, the document reminds tutors that multilingual graduate students are experts in their fields and in their native languages, which sets the tone for a mutual exchange between peers who both have something to offer in the tutorial. The document also reminds them that there’s “no single correct way” to conduct a tutoring session, thus positioning both the tutor and the writer as individuals who must negotiate the trajectory of their session together. This document, while it never references translingualism, still encourages the habits of mind and communication that help tutors and writers together build relationships that reflect a translingual disposition of mutual respect and negotiation.

There are three ways that the practice and foundational attitudes of Liberty’s GWC encourage translingual dispositions (even if they ultimately result in conventional products). First, Liberty’s GWC blends writing center practice and the values of their campus environment, which privileges fields like ministry and counseling, as a way to build writers’ confidence. Many tutors mentioned confidence building as a primary goal in their consultations, and they see it as a way to make “better writers” while still improving students’ writing. Second, I argue that Liberty’s GWC rethinks the traditional categories of higher-order concerns (HOCs) and lower-order concerns (LOCs) based on the expressed needs and wishes of their multilingual clients. They recognize that, for example, word choice might represent a HOC for an international student, and they have developed strategies for addressing these concerns that move beyond merely correcting an error. Finally, I argue that Liberty tutors use both of these strategies—confidence building and rethinking HOCs and LOCs—to attempt to help clients see themselves as scholars and write in a way that reflects their place in the scholarly community, perhaps a concern of the highest order for graduate students.

Building Writers' Confidence

All of the tutors I interviewed mentioned building writers' confidence as a primary part of their role in the GWC. As Brittany put it, "I think it's just making people feel more confident in their ability to write a paper without someone else's help." Confidence building, then, becomes a version of "make better writers, not better writing"—a common writing center mantra—by focusing on helping the writer feel able to complete writing tasks—something with which international students often struggle. Similarly, international students often feel insecure about their language proficiency and the ability for their speaking and writing to fit in with their native-speaking peers. This anxiety reveals itself even during writing center consultations, as it did in this appointment between Brittany and international student Marlena:

Marlena: It seems that the author did not do any experiment, any metho- . . . how do you call that?

Brittany: Method section.

Marlena: Method. He just did research about how Christianity is . . . how do I say this? Sorry.

Brittany: That's okay.

Marlena apologized several times during the consultations when she paused to think of or ask for words, suggesting that even with Brittany she felt self-conscious about her language skills. Michael confirmed that this lack of confidence in speaking with peers is often a problem for international students at Liberty. He finds that the students he consults with in Korean are often much less nervous than students who cannot conduct their consultations in their native language, despite what Michael describes as their "substantial ability to actually say what they want." Despite this ability, he explains, international students often have "this intense nervousness to explain their idea in English, because they feel like they just can't talk." Thus, building confidence is important in helping students overcome nervousness or anxiety with tutors and for helping students overcome barriers—like writer's block and writing anxiety—outside the classroom that may hinder their academic success.

At the most surface level, the tutors in the GWC build students' confidence by verbally reassuring them throughout appointments. Often praise is as simple as Jim telling a writer, "I think that's a great idea," when she comes up with a new way to focus her topic, or Eric reassuring a writer that her sentence structure is "actually very good." Tutors also praise good writing habits, like students bringing a draft in well before the due date, or giving themselves

plenty of time to do research. To allay writers' anxieties, tutors often also draw on their roles as peers to reassure writers that the difficulties they experience are normal. As Romy Clark and Roz Ivanic (1997) argue, "it is important to share insights about the process and practices of writing with learner writers as soon as possible and to let them voice their worries about them" (p. 233). In Liberty's GWC, writers can express their anxiety about writing and be met with reassurance about the difficulty of managing the writing process. In fact, tutors' willingness to put themselves in the position of "peer" and relate to the difficulties of writing in graduate school is one reason that Stockslager believes GWCs are places that build confidence: "It's just this [writing center] environment; I think it builds confidence for a lot of people."

The most common strategy employed by tutors to build writers' confidence is listening. As Brittany, who is working toward a graduate degree in crisis counseling explains,

Through my experience in practicing counseling sessions and really just reflecting back to people, if they ask me a question, I'll be like, "Well, what do you really think about that? What is it that you noticed?" rather than just telling them [what to think or notice].

In other words, Brittany and others use genuine listening to help students discover their own ideas or reflect ideas back to students. Recent rhetorical scholarship has recovered the practice of listening as not just one-sided reception but as an active, engaged rhetorical practice. For example, feminist rhetorician Krista Ratcliffe (2005) describes what she terms "rhetorical listening" as "a trope for interpretive invention" (p. 17). For Ratcliffe, listening is not just receptive; it can be generative and lead to moments of rhetorical production. Cheryl Glenn, feminist historiographer and rhetorician, similarly redefines silence as productive in *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence* (2004). She argues that a "rhetorical silence of careful listening" (p. 153) changes the goal of rhetorical interaction from one of persuasion to one of understanding that can "readjust relations of power" (p. 156). When tutors listen, then, they give writers the power to express their ideas or their anxieties about writing in an atmosphere that encourages understanding and invention. Indeed, one of the central goals of Horner et al. (2011) translingual approach is "honoring the power of all language users to shape language to specific ends" (p. 305). Rhetorical listening, then, is one way to demonstrate to writers that they have linguistic power because it removes the perceived barriers created by linguistic difference and creates a mutual context for communication—an essential feature to enable translingual dispositions.

Rethinking HOCs and LOCs

Students' feelings about writing are not the only issue that Liberty's GWC reframes as a higher order concern. My observations reveal that Liberty's tutors are, like many writing center tutors, highly attuned to the distinctions between Higher Order Concerns (HOCs), such as argument, structure, and evidence and Lower Order Concerns (LOCs), such as word choice, grammar, and formatting, as well as the benefits and pitfalls of "fixing" grammar. For example, Michael explained that he tries to leave grammar to the end of a session, particularly if he notices larger structural problems with a student's argument. This approach is consistent with the traditional writing center philosophy to address HOCs over LOCs. However, the tutors also realize that what seem like LOCs in general writing center scholarship may, in fact, be HOCs in practice. As I suggest in my introduction, sentence-level concerns are often a priority for international students. The stakes are too high for graduate writers, as Phillips (2013) suggests, for graduate students to adopt policies that merely resist standards or refuse to help students correct their work: "Sentence-level problems—even those that tutors might judge to be minor or moderate—may have serious implications for [multilingual graduate writers'] professional advancement" (n.p.).

Translingual dispositions provide yet another way of understanding the value of attention to style. Horner et al. (2011) call for "*more*, not less, conscious and critical attention to how writers deploy diction, syntax, and style" but not in order to force students' work to conform to a standard (p. 304). Instead, this focus on style creates a rhetorical opportunity to consider audience, purpose, and the potential effects of language (Horner et al., 2011). In order to best navigate institutional demands, pedagogical goals, and student needs, GWC tutors may have to embrace multiple approaches. That is, they can help students identify a standard while modeling the rhetorical engagement that demonstrates the power of language. This section reveals the strategies that Liberty's tutors use to treat word choice and citation style as HOCs worthy of engaged collaboration between tutor and writer. As the following consultation between Eric and Sun shows, this collaboration ranges from more directive correcting to less directive conversations about choices the writer has.

As Eric explains in an interview, he does sometimes correct students' work: "Yes, I correct. I read it [aloud], usually I read it incorrectly, and then I tell them or I show them . . . I give them a demonstration of what needs to be changed and usually explain why." I observed Eric using this technique in his appointment with Sun. Sometimes—most often with missing articles—he just offered corrections without any explanation. Articles, for example, are

incredibly difficult for non-native English speakers to master and explaining the complicated rules regarding articles would likely not have a lasting effect (Ferris, 2002; Myers, 2003). In most other cases, however, Eric would point out the error, explain how to fix it, and explain the rule, so that the student might be able to better understand the mistake. Thus, Eric did not merely edit the papers; he tried to also offer a way for Sun to understand a mistake and potentially correct it herself in the future. For example, in her text, Sun had written, “The actions people might chose to do might harm themselves.” Eric explained that chose is the past tense of the verb, and that “choose” would make the most sense in the sentence: “The actions people choose to do might harm themselves,” and that keeps us in the present tense, because you’re talking theoretically.” Eric, in other words, provides a correction and then an explanation that the writer might be able to recall the next time she uses the verb “to choose.” Sun responded that she understood, and they continued with the document. A purely translanguing approach would not have treated Sun’s document this way. Horner et al. (2011) argue that “the possibility of writer error is reserved as an interpretation of last resort” (p. 304). Thus, Eric’s calls upon a range of approaches, some—like the former—more corrective and others, like the following example, more deliberative.

Other kinds of difference, particularly those related to syntax or idiomatic speech, inspired much more collaborative, engaged discussions between Eric and Sun—the kind of “deliberative inquiry” called for in a “translingual approach” (Horner et al., 2011, p. 304). For instance, when Sun arrived, she specifically requested help with word choice, explaining, “I just don’t know what are the words that can be used . . . So maybe I will keep using the same words, or I will like to try more variety of words.” With this request in mind, Eric addressed word choice specifically throughout the appointment. Rather than merely correct poor word choice, however, he engaged in conversations with Sun about her choices, as he does in the following example. In a sentence about counselors using rational thinking as opposed to Biblical examples, Sun had used the verb “alternate,” which confused Eric.

Eric: Well, let’s see. Okay. So you’re saying that, I mean, basically that when people are getting counseled, they should alternate rational thinking with Biblical truth? They should use both?

Sun: For a counseling session which is not Biblically based, they don’t need to use the Bible. But if it is for a Christian counselor, they would use Bible truth because that’s what they believe.

Eric: Okay, so . . . are you saying “alternate” as in “use both one and the other,” you know, use them like, you know, you alternate between going to class one day and going to a difference class on a different day?

Sun: Oh, no. No. Alternate with negative with the positive.

Eric: Okay, yeah. I think that’s what we were getting confused on. I think you mean “alternate,” which is the same word, same spelling, just, basically, used differently. So you’re saying the Biblical thinking should be the alternative to purely rational thinking?

Sun: Should be substituted. The negative thoughts should be substituted with the Biblical thinking.

Eric: Okay, say that one more time.

Sun: The negative thoughts, which are stated here, should be substituted with the Biblical truth.

Eric: Okay, okay. I get it. Okay. So not “alternate” as in “switch back and forth” but as “substitute.” So that’s probably the word you want to use there. “Substitute.”

In this exchange, Eric does not simply correct what he perceives to be a mistake in word choice. Doing so would, in part, assume meaning on the part of the writer—meaning that he seems to be unsure about. Instead, he adopts a more collaborative stance and engages the writer in a conversation about her meaning. Throughout the conversation, he employs several strategies. For example, he provides a definition of the word “alternate” and then gives an accessible example about alternating between classes. Immediately, the student realizes that her intended meaning does not match the meaning as Eric understands it. Eventually, the student comes up with her own word—substitute—as a way to replace the confusing “alternate,” which could be a verb or an adjective.

By treating word choice as a higher order concern—one that deserves engaged collaboration—as opposed to a lower order concern to be left to the end of the appointment, Eric accomplishes a number of goals, all of which address Sun’s stated need to improve her word choice. First, he models the rhetorical effects of word choice by discussing his evolving understanding of the meaning of the passage. This modeling is Canagarajah’s (2013) definition of “translingual literacy” in action; it demonstrates shifting meanings and the importance of mutual influence on both composing and understanding texts.

Second, he explains the possible range of meanings and parts of speech of the word *alternate*. Finally, he helps Sun perform the process of making decisions between possible word choices by asking her to rephrase her original meaning. This leads Sun to come up with a new—and clearer—word choice on her own. Thus, Eric does not just correct Sun's passage, but gives her a more focused understanding of the word in question and collaborates with her to give her strategies for addressing word choice in the future.

Word choice might seem remedial, particularly in the larger contexts of graduate writing, which includes publishing articles and drafting dissertations. However, Liberty's tutors realize that style and mechanics represent real concerns for students. Working with multilingual dissertators has created opportunities for Liberty tutors to rethink HOCs and LOCs so that appointments meet the needs of the student population that use the GWC. And rather than treat these students as remedial or merely "fix" errors, as the observations described above demonstrate, Liberty's tutors use these appointments as opportunities to model the processes that academic writers use, from considering the rhetorical effects of word choice to matching a citation question to the answer in a style manual.

Moving from Style to Scholarship

By building writers' confidence and paying attention to the issues of grammar and style that often serve gate-keeping functions in the academy, Liberty's GWC tutors are not just remediating students or proofreading their work. Within these conversations about style, Liberty's tutors also use strategies to attempt to help initiate writers into a scholarly community, and allow anxious and sometimes underprepared writers to see themselves as scholars. Because international and returning adult students may feel isolated (Ericksen & Bollinger, 2011), helping these students see themselves as scholars and represent that scholarly identity in their writing is an invaluable role for the GWC. Moreover, this role allows the GWC to have a more holistic goal in mind while still addressing LOCs. I observed tutors making this move from addressing style to addressing issues of scholarship in two ways. First, they provide academic vocabulary to writers. Second, they give writers strategies for developing a distinct scholarly voice.

Although international students may be unfamiliar with academic jargon, Liberty's tutors do not talk down to their clients or omit this jargon from their appointments. Instead, they give students access to these terms that are often markers of belonging to an academic community. In fact, helping graduate students develop a distinctive scholarly voice also often

requires sharing particular language with them. Myers (2003) suggests, for example, that international students “may require macro-organizing language . . . or other language to signal sequencing of information across a text, provide background for contrast, or announce the dimensions in which the topic will be presented (e.g., whether the writer is going to evaluate, analyze, report, or critique). The language and the writing are inseparable” (Myers, 2003, p. 52). While this macro language is important across undergraduate and graduate writing, it is especially crucial to graduate students, whose careers hinge on their ability to make original arguments while aligning with and distinguishing themselves from other scholars. In other words, graduate writers are expected not only to articulate the scholarly conversation but also to articulate their position within that conversation. Brittany described it as moving writers to “the next level of paper writing,” and accomplished this by modeling ways for Marlena to distinguish her scholarly voice from others during their appointment.

One of the strategies Brittany used was to give Marlena specific vocabulary for indicating the source of each of her arguments. For example, after reading a passage that left her unclear about whether Marlena was explaining another author’s work or her own interpretation, Brittany said, “I think what the big thing is, is just making sure that whoever is reading it understands that this is the author’s point, not your point. So, saying things like ‘the author found’ or ‘the author researched.’” Later in the appointment, Brittany repeats these phrases for Marlena, “Even just saying, like, ‘the author stated,’ or ‘the author found,’ those sorts of [phrases].” Pointing to very specific passages in Marlena’s work, Brittany is providing the kind of macro-level signaling language that is typical of academic writing but perhaps unfamiliar to Marlena.

Beyond providing sign-posting language, Brittany also encourages Marlena to more clearly develop her own voice throughout the paper. The assignment, a critical review of an article, asks for the writer’s analysis of and interaction with the main ideas of the article. Marlena, however, feels uncomfortable moving beyond summary: “I was just cautious on not to push myself on saying so much.” Brittany encourages her to think about her own response to the article:

Brittany: Your interaction would be a combination between the two [your ideas and the article]. It would be how you understood the article, like the lessons learned, and how you understand love differently.

Marlena: It doesn’t have to be . . . like I have to research, cite it, and all that?

Brittany: Not necessarily. It would depend on if you pulled the statement from the article saying, like, “This is what he says, and I believe that this . . .”

Again, Brittany models a way for Marlena to use scholarly patterns of language that mark the difference between the author’s voice and her own opinion. Simultaneously, she reassures Marlena that her opinion is a valuable source of critique in a review and does not necessarily have to depend on research. During the appointment, Marlena expresses clear opinions about the theme of Biblical love, but she does not use conventional academic markers to signal those opinions in her work. Brittany helps Marlena to develop a more distinct scholarly voice by modeling for her how to separate her own ideas from those she is analyzing.

Brittany often seems to focus on smaller, sentence-level concerns. However, she is able to translate these concerns to larger issues of the kind of voice markers that are expected in academic writing, particularly graduate-level academic writing. Thus, even as she seems to be focusing on word choice or transition phrases, those phrases actually model for inexperienced graduate writers how to write their way into academic discourse.

Together, these strategies—confidence-building, rethinking lower- and higher-order concerns, and recognizing style as a way to address scholarly identity—help Liberty’s GWC meet the expressed needs of clients while also providing strategies to enhance their academic and professional writing style more holistically. As Phillips (2013) argues, GWCs “need to explore ways of providing support for writers’ whole texts—from the first word to the complete paper in all of its disciplinary situatedness—and for the whole writing process, from research design to editing” (p. 5). By combining sentence-level concerns with larger issues of scholarly discourse and a sense of academic belonging, Liberty’s GWC tutors move toward this holistic approach to attempt to meet the range of scholarly needs for their populations of graduate students.

Applications

Tutor training presents the most direct applications of reframing the goals of writing center sessions to include LOCs, issues of style, and affective dimensions like building writers’ confidence. The tutors in my study had no specific exposure to translanguaging; instead, they cultivated these strategies through intensive experience with multilingual graduate writers. Tutors would no doubt benefit, however, from reading work on translanguaging and discussing

how it might influence their practices as tutors. Using transcripts of tutorials (with consent) and analyzing them for translingual moments might also help tutors see that the dispositions cultivated in a translingual approach are already very much a part of the collaborative spirit of a writing center. Those discussions should also include reflections on the limitations of translingualism and, returning to the exchange between Eric and Sun, considerations of when “error” is an appropriate construct for graduate writers.

A second and equally important application of this chapter is a reconsideration of the (often unwritten) rules and policies of writing centers, particularly at the graduate level. A blanket policy not to edit work, for example, or training tutors to exclusively address HOCs and leave LOCs for the final five minutes of a session might not best meet the needs of multilingual graduate writers. A “respect for perceived differences within and across languages” (Horner et al. 2011, p. 304) also means a respect for perceived differences in priorities. Part of the deliberation and collaboration inherent in a tutorial should be exploring priorities, making those priorities and their rationales transparent, and negotiating how tutors can best help writers respond to issues of style and syntax.

Conclusion

Writing centers, particularly those that serve graduate students, are often pulled between wanting to be sites of progressive language policy and needing to acknowledge the standards of their institutions and of professional and academic writing that have real stakes for writers. Bringing a translingual disposition to writing center work, particularly as tutors help writers build confidence and cultivate a scholarly voice, can help tutors better navigate these tensions. While translingual theory certainly has a place in tutor training, as this chapter demonstrates, emphasizing respect and the truly mutual capacity of tutors and writers to make meaning can create the conditions for translingual dispositions to develop organically. One potential strategy would be to allow these dispositions to develop and then to introduce them to tutors, allowing them to name and more consciously develop their translingual dispositions. Bringing attention to translingual dispositions in tutoring can enhance writing center praxis in at least three ways:

- Revealing new areas of scholarship, including applied linguistics, and rhetorical studies of listening and silence, that can complement and inform writing center practice and scholarship.
- Challenging default dichotomies, like directive or indirective tutoring

or HOCs and LOCs, by providing suggested practices that value flexibility and a range of practices to meet the needs of individual writers.

- Encouraging tutors and writing center administrators to identify and articulate norms in academic writing, which may make them more aware of generic conventions and how and when those conventions can be subverted.

Writing centers and writing programs more broadly can also benefit from the active promotion of translanguaging dispositions. Often writing centers, particularly those that serve a large population of international students, carry a remedial stigma that causes other writers and faculty to resist writing center services (Isaacs, 2011). One way Liberty has tried to address this problem is to expand their services as cultural ambassadors. As Kwan explains, “I sometimes make PowerPoint for faculty members [about] how they can understand Korean [students].” These kinds of projects, which translate what the writing center knows about its clients to faculty who teach these students, can recast the writing center as a resource for helping writing programs and institutions better understand the linguistic backgrounds and resources that their students bring to the classroom. The GWC, then, becomes a site of research and produces knowledge that aids both writers and the university.

Localized research projects might also help change the campus perception of international students as remedial. As Paul Matsuda (2010) explains, despite a perception that students acculturated in academic writing should be the norm, in reality, “the presence of language differences is the default.” Thus, academic writing could—perhaps should—represent a larger variation of language use and scholarly voices. Min-Zhan Lu (1994) advocates a “way of teaching which neither overlooks the students’ potential lack of knowledge and experience in reproducing the dominant codes of academic discourses *nor* dismisses the writer’s potential social, political, and linguistic interest in modifying these codes” (p. 449). This approach toward the teaching of writing, she argues, encourages innovative language use and a broader range of rhetorical options for writers. The GWC could play a leading role in shaping institutional attitudes toward language difference and in determining what standards best capture the range of linguistic and academic diversity among an institution’s students. A shift in perception—of both the GWC and the students it serves—ultimately would allow the writing center to embrace the hybrid space between institutional standards and a wholesale rejection of those standards by helping students work within established standards while leading the way in reshaping and rethinking them—a truly translanguaging goal.

References

- Brooks, L., & Swain, M. (2008). Linguaging in collaborative writing: Creation of and response to expertise. In A. Mackey & C. Polio (Eds.), *Multiple perspectives on interaction: Second language research* (pp. 58-85). Routledge.
- Bruce, S., & Rafoth, B. (Eds.). (2009). *ESL writers: A guide for writing center tutors*. Boynton/Cook.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2002). *A geopolitics of academic writing*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Canagarajah, S. A. (2013). *Translingual practices: Lingua Franca English and global citizenship*. Routledge.
- Clark, R., & Ivanic, R. (1997). *The politics of writing*. Routledge.
- Creswell, J. W. (2006). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Denny, H. C. (2010). *Facing the center: Toward an identity politics of one-to-one mentoring*. Utah State University Press.
- Erichsen, E., & Bolliger, D. (2011). Towards understanding international graduate student isolation in traditional and online environments. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 59, 309-326.
- Ferris, D. (2002). *Treatment of error in second language student writing*. University of Michigan Press.
- Ferris, D., & Thaiss, C. (2011). Writing at UC Davis: Addressing the needs of second language writers. *Across the disciplines*, 8(4). <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/atd/ell/ferris-thaiss.pdf>
- Glenn, C. (2004). *Unspoken: A rhetoric of silence*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- Harris, M. (1997). Cultural conflicts in the writing center: Expectations and assumptions of ESL students. In C. Severino, J. Guerra, & J. Butler (Eds.), *Writing in multicultural settings* (pp. 220-233). Modern Language Association.
- Harris, M., & Silva, T. (1993). Tutoring ESL students: Issues and options. *College Composition and Communication*, 44(4), 525-537.
- Horner, B., Lu, M., Royster, J. J., & Trimbur, J. (2011). Opinion: Language difference in writing: Toward a translingual approach. *College English*, 73(3), 303-321.
- Isaacs, E. (2011). The emergence of centers for writing excellence. In N. Mauriello, W. J. Macauley, & T. Koch (Eds.). *Before and after the tutorial: Writing centers and institutional relationships* (pp. 131-149). Hampton Press.
- Jordan, J., & Kedrowicz, A. (2011). Attitudes about graduate L2 writing in engineering: Possibilities for more integrated instruction. *Across the Disciplines*, 8(4). <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/atd/ell/lancaster.pdf>
- Lillis, T. & Curry, M. J. (2004). Multilingual scholars and the imperative to publish in English: Negotiating interests, demands, and rewards. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(4), 663-688.
- Lillis, T., & Curry, M. J. (2006). Professional academic writing by multilingual students: Interactions with literacy brokers in the production of English-medium texts. *Written Communication*, 23(1), 3-35.

- Lu, M. (2004). Professing multiculturalism: The politics of style in the contact zone. *College Composition and Communication*, 45(4), 442-458.
- Matsuda, P. K. (2010). The myth of linguistic homogeneity in U.S. college composition. In B. Horner, M. Lu, & P. K. Matsuda (Eds.), *Cross-language relations in composition* (pp. 81-91). Southern Illinois University Press.
- Matsuda, P. K., & Cox, M. (2011). Reading an ESL writer's text. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 2(1), 4-14.
- Myers, S. (2003). Reassessing the "proofreading trap": ESL tutoring and writing instruction. *Writing Center Journal*, 24(1), 51-70.
- Phillips, T. (2013). Tutor training and services for multilingual graduate writers: A reconsideration. *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal*, 10(2).
- Ratcliffe, K. (2005). *Rhetorical listening: Identification, gender, whiteness*. Southern Illinois University Press.
- Runion, G. (2006). *Response report to the visiting committee: Quality enhancement plan, Revised*. Liberty University. <https://www.liberty.edu/media/1136/QEP%20%20Final%20Revised%2008-10-06.pdf>
- Severino, C. (2009). Avoiding appropriation. In S. Bruce & B. Rafoth, (Eds.), *ESL writers: A guide for writing center tutors* (pp. 48-59). Boynton/Cook.
- Tardy, C. (2003). A genre system view of the funding of academic research. *Written Communication*, 20(1), 7-36.
- Thaiss, C., & Zawacki, T. M. (2006). *Engaged writers, dynamic disciplines: Research on the academic writing life*. Boynton/Cook.
- Thonus, T. (2004). What are the differences?: Tutor interactions with first- and second-language writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13(3), 227-242.
- Zhang, Z. (2011). A nested model of academic writing approaches: Chinese international graduate students' views of English academic writing. *Language and Literacy*, 31(1), 39-60.