Fixing” the Writing, the Writer, or the Institution? Writing Centres, Multilingualism and “New” Literacies in Select(ive) Anglophone Academies

by

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Abstract

This study examines how writing centres in the universities selected for consideration support the literacy practices of multilingual students in anglophone institutions of higher education. This research draws on critical writing centre scholarship that suggests research in writing centres must account for the impact of the institutional and societal discourses around literacy that shape the roles and pedagogical practices undertaken in the writing centre (Boquet, 2002; Grimm, 1996, 2008, 2009; Olson, 2013).

In pursuing this research and accounting for the discursive frames that impact and are often enacted in writing centres, this research employs a multiple methods approach. First, I undertake a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of 12 writing centre websites, and second I draw insights from a case study in a single writing centre site using data collected through interviews, focus groups and observations with writing centre leadership, writing centre advisors and multilingual students.

The findings demonstrate that powerful literacy discourses operating at the societal and institutional levels frequently draw upon autonomous views of literacy as discrete, transferrable skills, which often position multilingual students as deficient. The CDA of writing centre sites suggest these discourses impact the espoused pedagogy and public discourse of writing centres. However, the data from the observed literacy events in writing
centre tutorials and the interviews and focus groups with multilingual students and writing centre advisors suggest that the interpersonal interactions in writing centres diverge from the espoused practices. Indeed, the data suggests that while students often seek to integrate or socialise themselves to the powerful literacy practices of the academy, the educator role definitions of writing centre advisors can move outcomes beyond socialisation. Instances of careful subversion or ambiguous resistance can be found in some of the approaches taken by advisors in this study in an effort to broaden and challenge literacy practices that mark multilingualism as deficit.
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my Aunt, Karen Lea
who has herself blazed many paths and always inspired me.
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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACE: Academic Copy Editing
ACSC: Academic and Cultural Support Centre
ANU: Australian National University
APA: American Psychological Association
ASLC: Academic Skills and Learning Centre
AWC: Academic Writing Centre
BEd: Bachelor of Education
C4W: Centre for Writers
CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis
DU: Dalhousie University
ECP: Engineering Communication Program
EFL: English as a Foreign Language
ELL: English Language Learner
ELWS: English Language and Writing Support
ESL: English as a Second Language
GTA: Greater Toronto Area
HOCs: Higher Order Concerns
IETC: Internationally Educated Teacher Candidates
L2: Second Language
LOCs: Lower Order Concerns
MA: Master of Arts
MEd: Master of Education
MT: Master of Teaching
MU: McGill University
NES: Native English Speaker
NNES: Non Native English Speaker
NLG: New London Group
NNES: Non-Native English Speaker
OISE: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
OSSC: OISE Student Success Centre
PhD: Doctor of Philosophy
PD: Professional Development
PREP: Pre-Field Experience Program
RRU: Royal Roads University
SLC: Student Learning Centre
TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language
UBC: University of British Columbia
UCB: University of California, Berkeley
UCL: University College London
U of A: University of Alberta
U of O: University of Otago
U of T: University of Toronto
U of T, Arch.: University of Toronto, Architecture
U of T, Eng: University of Toronto, Engineering
U of T, Ed.: University of Toronto, Education
U of T, Health Sci.: University of Toronto, Health Sciences
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot
Chapter 1: Introduction

Sometimes students come and they realise their writing is not what is acceptable or what is privileged, and that they have to enter this kind of third space that for them is very hard to understand. I think the third space is perhaps what the OSSC in a way facilitates (Nisha).

I have to write in English. I have to learn the way it is to write in English, if I don’t do it I perish. So I must do this and I cannot complain. For me it’s like I need to learn and I need to learn to do it very well in order to legitimise my knowledge (Julian).

As national and international boundaries become more porous, universities are increasingly sites where the global and the local meet; ideas, positions, cultures and languages are negotiated and transformed through the daily interactions of the academy. The growing internationalisation of universities requires more sophisticated ways of understanding, appreciating and supporting the diversity students bring to institutions of higher education.

Writing centres have had a long history in institutions of higher education, and have generally been thought of as supportive spaces for literacy instruction outside of the formal classroom setting. Indeed, many attribute the creation and expansion of extra-classroom supports such as writing centres to the access expansion mandates of universities through the 1950s and 1960s (Murphy, 1995; North, 1984), although there is evidence they existed in various forms in universities throughout the twentieth century (Boquet, 1999; Carino, 1995; Lerner, 2009). Thus, writing centres have been a feature of universities for some time, and more recent trends of globalisation and internationalisation have made language proficiency and literacy development important mandates for diversely named “skills centres” or writing centres in higher education (Barkas, 2011). Indeed, in the last 20 years scholarship on writing centres has reported that multilingual students make up an ever-increasing proportion, even the majority, of the students using writing centres (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002; Olson, 2013; Powers & Nelson, 1995; Ronesi, 1995; Thonus, 2014).
Despite the increase in multilingual students in the writing centre, research and scholarship have not kept pace (Allen, 2009; Williams & Serverino, 2004; Williams, 2004). In addition to the scarce scholarship on multilingual students in writing centres, scholars working within writing centres have begun to point out the ways in which dominant conceptions of literacy in higher education have made writing centres that uncritically accept their role as “supporting” students complicit in upholding unequal monolingual and monocultural power relations in the university where difference is often marked as deficiency (Bailey, 2012; Grimm, 2008, 2009, 2011; Olsen, 2013). As multilingual and multicultural students become the norm in writing centres across contexts, a radical rethinking of the dominant discourses and ideologies of writing centre theory and praxis is becoming increasingly urgent.

For nearly 30 years, writing centre pedagogy has taken much from Stephen North’s oft quoted (yet later qualified) call for writing centres to “produce better writers, not better writing” (North, 1984, p. 438). Indeed, North’s 1984 article, “The Idea of a Writing Center” generated a large body of scholarship focused on the work of the writing centre in higher education. Eager to do away with conceptions of writing centres as mere “fix-it” shops for students struggling with composition, and to carve out an identifiable space in the academy, writing centre scholarship began to galvanise around “grand narratives” (Grutsch-McKinney, 2013), “lore” (Thompson et al., 2009), “articles of faith” (Shamoon and Burns, 1995), or “cherished beliefs” (Capossela, 2001) in descriptions of their work. The “lore” often sounds something like this: writing centres are neutral places where thoughtful (often native English speaking\(^1\)) tutors help writers who are struggling through one-to-one tutoring. The pedagogical practices include a peer support model based on non-directive and collaborative learning that focuses on the writer, not the text. In the 30 years since this “lore” was generated it has ascended to nearly hegemonic status as research and theorising about writing centres often stays neatly in this lore-based frame to

\(^1\) Tutor handbooks have often promulgated the myth or assumption that writing centre tutors need be Native English speakers (Bailey, 2002; Thonus, 2014).
the detriment of more nuanced accounts of writing centre work. As Jackie Grutsch-McKinney (2013) states, “writing centre work is complex, but the storying of our work is not” (p. 3).

While it is likely that multilingual students have long been active in writing centres it was not until the mid-1990s that empirical research on multilingual (often referred to as L2 or ESL) writers in writing centres emerged. In the early publications, scholarship provided writing centre tutors with advice to support multilingual students based on contrastive rhetoric and how “typical L2 error profiles” (Williams & Servino, 2004) could be best addressed in writing centre tutorials (Harris & Silva, 1993; Kennedy, 1993; Thonus, 1993). Later, publications piled up on the (in)effectiveness of the non-directive approach to tutoring, and many suggested that when working with multilingual students tutors should take a more directive approach (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002; Cogie, Strain & Lorinskas, 1999; Murphy & Stay, 2006; Thonus 1999, 2001, 2002). Finally, as more writing centres found multilingual students required grammatical support, an additional guideline that promoted a focus on higher order concerns (HOCs) over lower order concerns (LOCs) was adopted to ensure tutors did not fall into the editing “trap” (Bell & Elledge, 2008; Brooks, 1991; Gillespie & Lerner, 2000). Today, despite nearly a decade of research related to multilingual writers in the writing centre, the conventional lore-based pedagogy advocating a non-directive tutoring protocol that focuses on the writer as the subject for improvement and prioritises HOCs over LOCs endures (see for example Gillespie & Learner, 2008; Caposella, 1998).

Concurrently, while empirical research on multilingual students proceeds in ways that are often intertwined around a predictable, narrow narrative, writing centre scholars have also begun a critical discussion regarding what writing centres should do, and not do, especially with increasingly diverse student populations (Allen, 2009; Bailey, 2012; Grimm, 2008, 2009; Olsen, 2013; Philips, 2013; Thompson et al, 2009; Wang, 2012). Indeed, calls for challenging conceptions of a writing centre as a place where helpful tutors teach students to reach the goals their instructors have set—never domineering, nor ambitious to take part in the curriculum—are getting louder (Grutsch-McKinney, 2013, p.
Engaged discussions about writing centre work have illuminated how monolingual and monocultural power structures are upheld through scholarship and training manuals that position multilingual speakers as “problems,” “dilemmas,” or “separate concerns” that disrupt the neat writing centre narrative (Allen, 2009; Bailey, 2012; Grimm, 2009; Wang, 2011). Critiques of the ways conversations around multilingual students become discussions of “othering, either explicit or lurking under the surface. They are a problem that require solving, an irritant and frustration that resists solution” are increasingly unsettling (Denny, 2010, p. 119, emphasis original). Further, calls for writing centres and writing centre scholarship to play a key role in mitigating the marginalisation of ESL writers “by bringing cultural and linguistic issues to the forefront of research, training and institutional dialogues on academic support” have arisen (Nowacki, 2012, p. 1).

In pursuing more critical and inclusive frameworks for theorising the work of writing centres, several scholars have recently turned to insights from multiliteracies (Bailey, 2012; Balester, V., Grimm, N., Grutsch McKinney, J., Lee, S., Sheridan, D., & Silver, N., 2012; Denny, 2010; Grimm, 2008, 2009; Trimbur, 2000). Certainly the visions of The New London Group (NLG) and their conceptions of multiliteracies appear to provide compelling new perspectives that address the dynamic and situated nature of supporting multilingual and multicultural writers in higher education. However, the bulk of the literature professing the importance of multiliteracies as a pedagogy to move writing centre practice towards more ethical, equitable and effective practices in the university focuses almost exclusively on multimodality (Balester et al, 2012; Sheridan & Inman, 2010), discusses the benefits and drawbacks of renaming writing centres “multiliteracy centers” in the wake of multimodal competencies (Balester et al, 2012; Grutsch-McKinney, 2013), or presents anecdotal accounts from writing leadership related to what “ought to be” in new critically informed centres (Grimm, 2009). Finally other scholars have advanced that the marginal location of the writing centre itself makes it one that can empower students to contest power and authority (Bawarshi & Pelkowski, 1999) and “effect social and individual change” in institutions of higher education (Carter, 2001, p. 210).
Therefore, competing visions and narratives exist around writing centre work from those who work in and study writing centres. Indeed, the discussion above illuminates two key narratives from the writing centre site. The first I call the “public” writing centre narrative, which goes something like this:

**Narrative 1:** *Writing centres are friendly, collaborative spaces where peer tutors help students “discover” their writing potential but writing centres do not “do” students work. “We’ll discuss your work with you and help you to develop strategies to improve your own writing but we won’t edit your work!”*

This first narrative depicts the ways writing centres commonly position themselves in higher education, and this narrative has impacted research agendas within empirical work on multilingual students in writing centres. Indeed, much of the empirical research from this narrative discusses the ways writing centres do not do what they say they do with multilingual students. Writing centres tutors often do not uphold non-directive practices with multilingual students. Writing centres do not only focus primarily on “global concerns” or higher order concerns such as ideas, organisation and genre with multilingual students. Tutors are not positioned or perceived as peers to the multilingual students they work with. As successive studies piled up suggesting that writing centres transgress the received wisdom of non-directive, higher order focused peer-ness, scholars began to ask what writing centres do, or as Elizabeth Boquet (2002) asks “Where is the noise?!” (p. 20). The second narrative, which I call the writing centre “critical narrative,” makes more “noise” as it advocates for writing centre discourse and practice that goes beyond the lore-based theorising. It suggests:

**Narrative 2:** *Writing centres are radical spaces in institutions of higher education that empower students’ development of literacies and subvert harmful approaches to literacy that “mark” certain Englishes, registers, accents and writing as other and deficient in the institution. “Writing centres are marginalised, yet radical spaces, that must/can/should/do act to challenge or change oppressive approaches to literacies in the academy.”*
Several of the scholars writing from critical perspectives suggest that writing centres have already been doing critical work with the aims of empowering students (Grimm, 2009; Grutsch McKinney, 2013; Shafer, 2012; Truesdell, 2013) and “attend[ing] to the realities of the intersections between language, power and identity” (Olson, 2013, p. 4). Yet, the narrow frames of current writing centre theorising have similarly narrowed the research agenda as well as stories from the writing centre (Grutsch McKinney, 2013), and writing centres have not yet “not made these ideas explicit” in their application to practice in scholarship (Olson, 2013, p. 4) or empirical research.

While these two narratives suggest tensions and incongruences in how writing centres describe and promote their roles versus how they enact and envision their roles, these two framings of writing centre work endure. However, to add further complication, a third narrative on writing centres often circulates in higher education among those who are external to the writing centre. This third narrative, which I call the “institutional narrative,” suggests:

Narrative 3: Writing centres are places deficient students go for remediation. “Your writing needs cleaning up. Go to the writing centre.”

This final narrative emerges from dominant discourses of deficit related to student writing in higher education that sees academic writing as an autonomized and ultimately transferrable “skill” (Lea & Street, 1998, 2006). Those who do not possess such “skills” upon entering the academy are deficient and require remediation (Hallett, 2010; Turner, 2011). It is within this powerful and hegemonic deficit discourse that writing centres operate in institutions of higher education. While it is certainly true that may student support centres, be they writing centres or otherwise, are subjected to the discourses of remediation, deficit and marginalisation, this research argues that such discourses may play a particularly problematic role for writing centres. Indeed, the most recognisable forms of early writing centres were those that did participate in the handing out of “skills” through a focus on surface level skills to “deficient” students (Murphy, 1995). This past has continued to haunt the work of writing centres today where much of the public
discourse states, often emphatically, what writing centres do not do (Narrative 1, making better writers) in an effort to shed the remedial label. However, I argue that the public protestations against remediation have often worked to keep the discourse around writing centres firmly within the remedial frame, which maintains deficiency labels—students need to get “better”—rather than questioning the broader ideologies that mark them deficient. Thus, it is not surprising that anyone who has ever been sent to a writing centre knows they have not been sent there to share “good” writing, they have been sent there to have their writing “fixed.”

These narratives around writing centres suggest that although writing centres have become a familiar feature of institutions of higher education, their purpose is far from clear. Indeed, the ways writing centres are understood in institutions of higher education, the way writing centres position themselves to be understood in institutions of higher education, and the ways writing centres understand themselves are frequently mismatched. It is the nexus of these three narratives of writing centre that define the starting point for this research.

**Rationale**

This research examines the ways literacy practices are described and enacted in the selected writing centres with multilingual students. Using a multiple methods approach it first situates the discourses of writing centres across contexts and then undertakes an in-depth case study in one writing centre site in an anglophone university. Through examining literacy practices, and accounts of literacy events from the perspectives of writing centre leadership, advisors and multilingual students it adds depth to the existing body of writing centre literature through moving beyond critiques of existing pedagogy and positing new ways of examining and reimagining writing centre work. It allows for often overlooked, and rarely privileged, voices of writing centre advisors and multilingual students to be heard (Boquet, 2002; Wang, 2012) to reveal the real tensions interlocutors in the writing centre negotiate every day in the face of institutional expectations and the broader narratives of the writing centre. Finally, it makes a small contribution to the calls
for complexity and critique that are increasingly necessary, it aims to make neat narratives messy, or as Boquet (2002) implores it makes the “noise” from the writing centre audible. This research, then, will replace visions of what ought to be with visions of what “is” in order to start new, more ethical and inclusive dialogues for the future of writing centres.

In pursuing this agenda this research draws on the critical literature that suggests research in writing centres must account for the impact of the institutional and societal discourses around literacy that shape the roles and pedagogical practices undertaken in the writing centre (Boquet, 2002; Grimm, 1996, 2008, 2009; Olson, 2013). Thus, this research emerges from the perspective that literacy is an inherently social practice, meaning “literacies are positioned in relation to the social institutions and power relations which sustain them” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 1). Thus, the normalising tendencies and/or empowering potential of writing centres are necessarily constituted by and within institutions and the power relations therein. Indeed, writing centres are not themselves bounded systems, even if writing centres wish themselves to be such. The interactions therein do not occur in a vacuum but are rather informed, impeded and implicated in broader situational and institutional discourses and relations.

Thus, in understanding the interactions that are impacted and enacted within institutional and societal power relations I draw on Cummins’ (2001) model of power relations, which positions interactions as ranging from collaborative to coercive. In applying Cummins’ model of power relations, this research is attentive to the ways educators (in this case writing centre advisors) define their roles when working with multilingual students. While other empirical studies have posited that the ways writing centre tutors define their roles are important to the outcomes of the interactions therein (Chui, 2011; Ritter, 2002), without broader analyses of the institutional and societal structures, including policies, assessment practices and pedagogy, the analyses fall short of connecting the ways macro-level relations impact the micro-level relations that occur in writing centre interactions.
Additionally, this research draws on academic literacies as proposed by Lea and Street (1998, 2006) to examine the complexity of the writing practices that students undertake in university settings. Through the lens of academic literacies, pedagogical approaches are neither linear nor isolated, rather pedagogical approaches in this model are understood as encapsulated or overlapping (Lea & Street, 1998, 2006). The encapsulated model examines literacy in academic contexts as including models of study skills, academic socialisation and academic literacies. Through understanding the connected nature of these perspectives it is possible to understand how writing centre pedagogy has oscillated between a focus on study skills and a focus on acculturation, while more recent critical scholarship advocates for more attention to the epistemological and social practices of writing. The encapsulated nature of the model also allows for an examination of how all of these approaches may occur simultaneously in a single centre.

Finally, drawing on rich narratives from directors of writing centres that have negotiated the “margins” or borrowed Pratt’s (1991) “contact zones” to depict writing centres as “betwixt” (Nicolas, 2008) spaces, this research builds on the concept of liminality (Gourlay, 2009) and its application to the writing centre site (Boquet, 2002; Sunstien, 1998). In advancing the concept of liminality I draw on research that has combined academic literacies with the construct of liminality as “a state of indeterminacy, emotional destabilization and status ambiguity in transition” (Gourlay, 2009, p. 184). The liminality concept allows for an understanding the ways identities are negotiated, while accounting for the often emotional struggles such negotiations entail.

Research Questions

This research includes analyses of situational power (Cummins, 2001), academic literacies, and encompassed pedagogical orientations (Lea & Street, 1998; 2006), and positions interactions in the writing centre as occurring in a liminal space wherein literacy work can result in either legitimacy and belonging or exclusion and indeterminacy for multilingual students. Thus, guiding this research was the following research question and related sub-questions:
How do writing centres in select(ive) anglophone institutions describe their roles related to the development/support of multilingual students’ literacy practices and how are such roles enacted in a single case study site?

The related sub-questions were:

1. a) What does critical discourse analysis reveal about the situational discourses and expressed pedagogical approaches of select(ive) writing centres across contexts in anglophone institutions of higher education?

b) How do the situational discourses of writing centres sampled address/exclude multilingual students?

2. How do writing centre directors/leadership in the case study site hire, train, and expect writing tutors enact their roles with multilingual writers?

3. How do advisors describe their roles and what pedagogical practices do they enact when working with multilingual students in the case study site?

4. a) How do multilingual students describe their experiences and interactions in the case study site?

b) In what ways do the interactions in the case study site help/modify/subvert multilingual students’ abilities to negotiate literacies and identities?

Significance

This research builds on existing writing centre theory in several ways. First, it is responsive to the ongoing calls for more critical and theoretically informed accounts of writing centre work (Boquet, 2002; Carter, 2001; Grimm, 2008, 2009, 2011; Grutch McKinney, 2013). Secondly, it privileges the often overlooked voices of writing centre tutors (Boquet, 2002) and takes analyses of writing centre tutors’ roles beyond the frame of directive/non-directive to understand how writing centre tutors define and enact their roles vis-à-vis multilingual students in supporting literacy practices (Ritter, 2002).
Finally, it responds to calls to illuminate the voices of multilingual students (Wang, 2012) as important stakeholders in writing centre work and examines how students describe the ways the writing centre did or did not support them in learning “how to negotiate literacies to include their diverse backgrounds” (Carter, 2001, p. 208).

With regard to writing centre practice it adds to the small collection of studies that have illuminated the ways multilingual graduate students use writing centres (Phillips, 2008, 2013; Powers & Nelson, 1995; Wang, 2012) while also illuminating the often overlooked contributions of multilingual tutors in the writing centre (Taylor, 2007; Wang, 2012). Finally, as this research is situated in a disciplinary-specific writing centre (education), it adds to the paucity of research on disciplinary-specific writing centres and their impact on student learning and tutor practices (Kiedaisch & Dinitz, 1993; Mackiewcz, 2004). Thus, this research aims to fill several intersecting gaps within the body of scholarship related to multilingual students in the writing centre by illuminating student and tutor voices, including the perspectives of multilingual tutors and graduate students within a disciplinary-specific writing centre from a perspective informed by critical literacies.

Position of the Researcher

As an advisor and then coordinator in the OISE Student Success Centre (OSSC) for nearly six years, I have been consistently involved in writing centre work, specifically in the case study site. I have seen the OSSC through many changes, challenges and successes, and some of my own experiences are echoed in the voices of participants in this research. Many of the advisor participants were known to me and were colleagues, yet my role as coordinator made me privy to leadership understandings as well as those of advisors. Here I dwelled in the in-between, understanding the experiences of both advisors and leadership, while not being fully integrated in either. Thus, I am in many ways an active member of writing centre discourse and an “insider” in the writing centre under examination in the case study (Kanuha, 2000).

While my status as an insider in the research site afforded me a certain level of access and trust and encouraged openness among my advisor and leadership participants, I also
engaged in ongoing reflection about my subjective positioning and the ways that my own preconceptions, experiences and biases may impact the research. Indeed, I consistently examined my own preconceptions through being as open as possible to those of my participants. As Maykut and Morehouse (1994) illuminated

the qualitative researcher’s perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others—to indwell—and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand. (p. 123).

While my work in writing centres afforded me an understanding of the culture therein, I have also been consistently aware that my positioning as an advisor and coordinator in the OSSC impacts my understanding. Moreover, I also acknowledge that as a native English speaker educated in Canada, who has been able to internalise and reproduce the academic brand of English that is privileged in the anglophone institutions within which this dissertation revolves, my experiences also depart from the experiences of many of the multilingual students who participated in this research.

While my current positioning as a native English speaking advisor may make me an outsider to the experiences of the multilingual students in this research, my views on academic writing, and specifically academic writing in a second language, were formed several years ago during my undergraduate studies. At that time I minored in French and was required to produce many papers in French. It was then that I felt the sting of deficiency, confusion and emotional destabilisation brought on by writing in a second language. My written French was poor, I used English academic writing norms and wrote circuitous essays that could only be matched in quality by something written in English and run through Google Translate. I felt a profound loss of voice and struggled to navigate my professors’ expectations after receiving difficult and sometimes hurtful feedback on written essays. My own experience writing in my second language has had a substantial impact on the way I view the negotiations one makes when producing academic writing in an additional language, which in turn impacted my interactions in the OSSC site and my perceptions of the data collected in this study.
Thus, in undertaking this research I maintained an awareness of my insider-outsider position and rather than understanding insider and outsider as binaries, I dwelled in the space between. Indeed, I frequently moved between the roles of insider and outsider and embraced the “hyphen” at the intersection of insider-outsider “as a third space, a space between, a space of paradox, ambiguity, and ambivalence, as well as conjunction and disjunction” (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 60). In this space I consistently worked to ensure that I was “open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of [my] research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience” (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 59) while laying bare my own positionality and biases throughout this process.

Overview of the Dissertation

In Chapter 2 of this dissertation I present the theoretical and conceptual framework that guided this study. The first section of this chapter undertakes a review of canonised theory that often informs many discussions and analyses of writing centre work. This review is followed by an examination of the existing empirical research on multilingual students in the writing centre.

The second part of Chapter 2 outlines the critical framework adopted to analyse and understand the complex work of the writing centre. I first explain Cummins’ (2001) model of coercive and collaborative power relations including its attention to policies, programs and curriculum in the educational environment, as well as educator role definitions. Role definitions provide an important source of information in this research as the way advisors define their roles supporting multilingual students’ literacy practices, as well as how multilingual students perceive those literacy events, provides insight into the outcomes of such interactions. Additionally, the use of the academic literacies perspective also allows for nuanced accounts of pedagogical approaches that may oscillate between the emphasis on study skills, to acculturation, to the epistemological and social impacts of literacy education in context (Lea & Street, 1998, 2006). Finally, through positioning the writing centre as representing a “liminal” space, this research is
also attentive to the identity negotiations and emotional impacts such negotiations entail (Gourlay, 2009).

In Chapter 3 I present the multiple methods qualitative approach undertaken in this study. I describe the process for the selection of the 12 websites for the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the procedures for analysis. I also describe the case study approach in the focal writing centre site including participants, data collection procedures, and the data analysis process. This chapter also describes the ethical considerations and the limitations and trustworthiness of the research.

In Chapter 4 I present the findings from the CDA of the 12 writing centre sites across contexts. The findings from the discourse analysis generate a macro picture of writing centre discourse before moving to descriptions of the case study site in Chapter 5. In Chapter 5 I provide a description of the case study site, the OISE Student Success Centre (OSSC) located within the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto and present the findings from the leadership interviews. Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 present the data from the interviews, focus groups and observations with multilingual students and advisors in the OSSC site. The data in these chapters are organised thematically and move from institutional (macro) themes to interpersonal (micro) themes. The organisation of the findings chapters is depicted in Figure 1.
Finally, Chapter 8 presents the integrated findings from the Critical Discourse Analysis and the case study site. This chapter illuminates the responses to the research questions within the framework presented in Chapter 2 including discussions of institutional and societal features, educator role definitions, the pedagogical approaches and the outcomes of interactions in the liminal space of the OSSC. This chapter discusses the implications for theory, practice and education and provides avenues for further research.

Punctuating each of the findings chapters, this dissertation also includes interludes, which are brief narratives that act as bridges and breaks between chapters. The interludes are
composites of recurring themes identified by participants and provide narrative “snapshots” of issues that connect the thematic analyses between findings chapters.

Terminology

Advisors/Tutors- In this dissertation I frequently use the term tutor to describe those working in writing centre sites, as this is the most common terminology across writing centre contexts. However, throughout the presentation of the data from the case study within the OISE Student Success Centre I refer to advisors specifically as this is the terminology used to describe those who work in the OSSC.

International Students- In this dissertation I include international students in the broad umbrella of multilingual students (defined below). However, over half of the students who participated in this research fit the OECD’s definition of international students as “those who have crossed borders for the purpose of study” and “those who are not residents of their country of study or those who received their prior education in another country” (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2013). Thus, throughout the dissertation I also include specific information on international student enrolment and discussions on the nature of internationalisation in the case study site.

Liminality- Discussing student writing in transition Lesley Gourlay (2009) applies the concept of “liminality” to describe “a state of indeterminacy, emotional destabilization and status ambiguity in transition” (p. 184). This concept builds on Van Gennep’s (1909) description of spaces of transition inhabiting an “in-between” status for individuals at transition points.

Literacy events- Following Barton and Hamilton (2000) I define a literacy event as “activities where literacy has a role. Usually there is a written text, or texts, central to the activity and there may be talk around the text” (p. 8). The interactions in the writing centre are thus theorised as literacy events.
**Literacy practices**- Drawing on Barton and Hamilton (2000) once again literacy practices are defined as “what people do with literacy” or “the general cultural ways of utilising written languages which people draw on in their lives” (p.7).

**Multilingual(ism)**- While there are diverse, multifaceted and contested definitions of multilingualism I adopt the European Commission’s (2007) definition of multilingualism as "the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives" (p. 6). This definition is attentive to the fact that many of the individuals who took part in this research were multilingual, while also accounting for the multilingual nature of the case study site and many institutions of higher education worldwide today. In this research multilingual students includes “international students who speak English as a foreign language, visa students who speak a World English variety, recent immigrants from non-English speaking countries, and long-term residents, also known as generation 1.5 students” (Thonus, 2014, p. 201). Although I have chosen to employ the term multilingual throughout this study, the terms ESL, L2 and ELLs appear in reference to literature throughout this dissertation where scholars have adopted these terms.

**Writing centre**- While this dissertation draws on analyses from sites diversely named as “Skills Centres,” “Success Centres” and “Learning Centres” I often apply the term “Writing Centre” broadly to describe the stand-alone spaces for literacy instruction in higher education environments. I do so given the depth of research on “Writing Centres” as a recognisable feature and the dearth of research on centres adopting the diverse skills, success and learning titles. I discuss the application of the single term to diverse “Centres” in depth in Chapter 4.

Throughout this dissertation I also use Canadian spelling conventions, yet much of the literature I cite employs American spelling conventions, which are maintained in their original form.
Chapter 2: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This chapter has a dual purpose of presenting an overview of the relevant literature that informed this study and providing the theoretical and conceptual framework that aided in the analysis and presentation of the data collected. As this research aims to examine the ways literacy practices are described and enacted in writing centres with multilingual students, it first presents existing theoretical approaches to writing centre work followed by an overview of empirical research. The literature review, then, proceeds in three main sections through: 1) tracing the evolution of theory in the writing centre; 2) examining the empirical research on multilingual (often referred to as ESL or L2) writers in the writing centre; and, 3) examining the application of critical theory in the writing centre that challenges both the early theorising and the scope of empirical research.

The theoretical section examines the trajectory of writing centre theorising from its early grounding in current-traditional rhetoric, to the application of expressionistic rhetoric and social constructionism. This section demonstrates that expressionistic rhetoric and social constructionism, although epistemologically opposed, became the theoretical bases of writing centre “lore” upon which much practice is based. The second section reviews the empirical literature on multilingual students in the writing centre. The empirical work, while challenging the lore, often ultimately circles and revises lore-based mandates. Here the discussion demonstrates how despite ample empirical evidence that the lore-based mandates for writing centre work are problematic for multilingual students, the prescriptive guidelines for “good” writing centre practice often remain unchanged. The final section of the literature review examines a body of critical writing centre scholarship that has begun the process of revising, “remapping” (Carter, 2001) and indeed challenging the lore-based theories popularised in the 1980s. Within the body of critical writing centre scholarship there exists tensions with the lore-based mandates and calls for revision, reflection and reaction to the ways lore-based theory and practices marginalise and erase difference with multilingual students in the writing centre. However, much of
this critical work remains theoretical and its application to the work of writing centres is limited given the lack of empirical evidence of more critical applications.

Part two of this chapter elucidates the conceptual framework that guided this research. The matrix of history, contemporary theorising, and existing empirical research which punctuate the narratives and practices of writing centres generated the basis for the conceptual frames that are developed in the second half of this chapter. Here I draw on Cummins’ (2001) model of coercive and collaborative power relations with attention to educator role definitions, Lea and Street’s (1998, 2006) academic literacies, and Gourlay’s (2009) notion of liminality as a concept to understand students’ literacy practices in the academy.

Surveying the Evolution of Writing Centre Theory

Undertaking a description of the evolution of writing centre theory is a difficult task. While “key” publications and approaches are identifiable from the literature on writing centres, defining these key moments and articulating their places is markedly complex given their import from curriculum theory and composition theory. In this section I trace the evolution, and sometimes devolution, of writing centres and their theoretical grounding from their earliest inceptions in the late nineteen and early twentieth century to the modern centres that populate university campuses today. In so doing, this section has drawn on the work of multiple scholars who have too made attempts at “cartography” to trace writing centre theorising and the ways “ideological conditions and material conditions shape what we do in the writing center” (Carter, 2001, p. 75). Indeed, a survey of writing centre literature that “places” the theoretical foundations within broader concepts is suggestive of the challenges inherent in charting the course of the theory therein. Shannon Carter (2001) generates three “maps” of writing centre theorising as follows:

(1) the process-based map, in which the tutor works to facilitate the writing process of the student writer through questions and conversation, (2) the social-epistemic (or social constructionist) map, in which writing center workers assume that knowledge is constructed through conversation, and (3) the collaborative-theory map in which writing center workers celebrate the equalizing force of group interaction (p. 76).
The distinct frames of theorising in Carter’s (2001) map thus rely on concepts from composition theory, and writing centre theorising moves from its early process roots to the more social and critical orientations that emerge in writing centre theorising today.

Cristina Murphy (1995), on the other hand examines writing centre theorising on a trajectory from conservative, to liberal, to radical, employing terms from education and curriculum theory. Indeed, Murphy’s (1995) tracing of writing centre theory in its earliest iterations emerges in ways that conjure linkages with Bobbit’s (1924) and Durkheim’s (1956) conservative curricular orientations wherein writing centre tutors transmit knowledge to deficient, task-orientated students. The liberal response wherein the “emphasis upon the uniqueness of each student as a learner” (p.119) and the relationship between tutor and student to provide individualised instructional approaches invokes Dewey’s (1938) liberalism. Finally, the radical approach wherein writing centres serve as “advocates for literacies by encouraging multiple literacies” (p. 121-122) to transform “the rhetorical communities of college and university campuses by extending and redefining the dialogue on literacy education” (p. 152) share affinities with the radical orientations found in the work of Freire (1973) and Giroux (1985).

Andrea Lunsford (1991), on the other hand, engages metaphors of “Storehouses, Garrets and Burkean Parlors” to describe the diverse approaches or “ideas” in writing centres. For Lunsford (1991) “Storehouse centers” operate “as information stations… prescribing and handing out skills and strategies to individual learners” (p. 4). “Garret centers,” on the other hand, “see knowledge as interior, as inside the student, and the writing center’s job as helping students to get in touch with this knowledge” (p. 5). While the “Burkean Parlor” is one where knowledge is “always socially constructed” and “control, power and authority [is placed] not in the tutor or staff, not in the individual student, but in the negotiating group” (p. 8).

Finally, Nancy Grimm (2009) stories the trajectory of writing centre work through guiding her readers through her experiences working three distinct centres. Grimm’s (2009) first centre assigned “skill and drill remediation” before students could see a tutor and “English was not conceptualized as a living, changeable language” (p. 12). In this
centre “students who spoke or wrote English that was marked by other languages, neighborhood dialects, regional and class difference, cultures other than white, American, were considered illiterate” (Grimm, 2009, p. 13). In Grimm’s (2009) second centre nurturing tutors met with students who needed help and “learning to develop, focus, organize and support ideas was understood as a social activity, but learning to proofread and edit a draft was something a person had to learn on his or her own” (p. 13). Here, then, “persistent markers of racial and class identity, neighborhoods, cultures, and languages other than English were called Lower Order Concerns, and this was a Higher Order writing centre” (p. 13). In the third centre, the staff and students are culturally, racially and linguistically diverse and “communication problems are understood as emerging from competing contexts with implicit expectations about appropriate genres, styles and discourses rather than from a lack within students or from a failure of their previous schooling” (Grimm, 2009, p. 13).

The diverse accounts of writing centre theorising presented here conjure accounts of a “neat march to progress from current-traditional gradgrindianism to theoretically sophisticated nurture” (Carino, 1995, p. 104), yet the reality of writing centre theory has been recursive, complex, multifaceted and fraught with difficulty over time. Thus, in reviewing the theory and associated practice of writing centre work I organise the review in three sections using the terminology of composition theorists as follows: 1) Traditional Rhetoric, 2) Expressionistic Rhetoric, 3) Social Constructionism. These terms are used as organising concepts for diverse approaches to writing centre theorising, but I append current-traditional rhetoric to traditional rhetoric in my discussion for clarity, as traditional rhetoric was popularised and “current” in the mid-twentieth century. In each section I illuminate the theoretical/curricular approaches and their epistemologies, discuss the influential scholarly work, and review how each theoretical perspective/approach has informed writing centre practice. Table 1 presents an overview of the three sections I delineate in this review.
Table 1. Writing Centre Theory and Pedagogy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Epistemological Approach</th>
<th>Traditional Rhetoric</th>
<th>Expressionistic Rhetoric</th>
<th>Social Constructionism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge is located outside of the individual</td>
<td>Knowledge is located within the individual</td>
<td>Knowledge is created dialogically through social interaction/dialogue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedagogical Approach</th>
<th>Transmission, product-focused</th>
<th>Non-directive, Socratic, process-focused</th>
<th>Collaborative, dialogical, social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


The robust examination of the theoretical approaches that have influenced writing centres is undertaken to demonstrate the ways that foundational writing centre theory largely omitted or glossed over the ways particular curricular approaches may impact, improve or impede the development of multilingual students’ literacy practices in the writing centre. Thus, this section demonstrates that canonised writing centre theory and practice rests on monolingual foundations, which have since been challenged by empirical studies on multilingual students in the writing centre.

Where Did We Come From and How Did We Get Here?

Many trace the origins of the writing centre to the 1940s and 1950s when they were established to “address the instructional problems of weaker students” within a conservative paradigm (Murphy, 1995, p. 118) or “current traditional” paradigm (Burlaga & Costino, 2003) and claim few existed prior to the 1970s (Bower, Kiser, McMurtry, Millsaps & Vande Brake, 2000, p. 1). However, writing centres have existed as far back as the 1890s as writing laboratories and clinics throughout the early twentieth century (Lerner, 2009, p. 2).

Both Neal Lerner (2009) and Peter Carino (1995) have traced the early origins of writing centre work providing an important basis for understanding the sometimes misrepresented trajectories of writing centre practice prior to the growth of writing centre
scholarship and professional associations in the 1970s. Indeed, Carino (1995) found evidence that early writing centres were features of post-secondary institutions as early as 1915. These early writing centres espoused a “laboratory method” through which classroom time was given for students to discuss their writing one-on-one with the instructor and feedback from peers was encouraged in a manner similar to how writing centres are conceived of today. Lerner (2009) echoes these collaborative, student-centred origins of writing centres when he traces the existence of thriving “writing laboratories” in first-year English composition classes back to the 1890s through the mid-twentieth century where “laboratories seemed to have an established role as a partner with first-year composition in the enterprise of teaching students to write” (p. 2). However, it is imperative to emphasise that these laboratories were often methods used in class, rather than stand-alone composition “laboratories.”

From the 1930s to the 1970s many writing laboratories or clinics were set up as sites external to the classroom in the format they are known today, and these sites often became spaces of remediation and containment for “deficient” writers (Lerner, 2009 p. 29, emphasis mine). Thus, “laboratories” that were initially set up to mirror the classroom approach and “provide student-centered, self-paced learning that appealed to students’ interests and [supported] students’ autonomy” (Pankhurst in Lerner 2009, p.18) were changed as they became standalone sites. Indeed, by the 1930s stand-alone laboratories and clinics for writing “were often little more than holding tanks filled with drill pads” (Lerner, 2009, p. 27). Thus, by the mid twentieth century many writing centres became spaces wherein current-traditional rhetoric guided writing centre ethos and practice.

**Writing Centres “Fix” Papers: Traditional Rhetoric**

Writing instruction guided by traditional rhetoric emphasised a product-centred approach with a focus on linguistic accuracy from a teacher-centred pedagogy (Matsuda, 2003, p. 67). Indeed, Richard E. Young (1978) defined traditional rhetoric as “the emphasis on the composed product rather than the composing process; the analysis of discourse into words, sentences, and paragraphs; the strong concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity, emphasis); and so on” (p. 31).
Epistemologically, the traditionalist approach also views knowledge from a positivistic perspective, as something that exists outside of individuals; thus, knowledge can be transmitted from instructor to student. Traditionalist rhetoric in composition shares similar orientations to conservative or functionalist orientations to curriculum wherein education is viewed as the mastery of specific skills, which is accomplished through directive teaching methods. Miller and Seller (1985) refer to such curricular orientations as “transmission” to highlight how this orientation tends to focus on the transmission of skills from teacher to student wherein students are seen merely as passive repositories for teachers’ information. Thus, the conservative approach curriculum employs a rational, logical, means-ends approach (Ornstein, 1987, p. 209) in which students can and should be “manufactured” or shaped in particular ways (Bobbitt, 1924, p.11).

**Writing centre approach/praxis**

According to Murphy (1995) writing centres that embrace conservative approaches will serve to “foster the conservative agenda of having task-orientated students working to achieve the “markers” or measureable objectives by which both the intellectual progress and mastery of techniques could be measured” (p. 118-119). Thus, such writing centres will diagnose deficiencies and focus on transferring skills to students, be they grammatical, lexical or mechanical, to correct or remediate problems (Murphy, 1995, p. 119). Such centres fit into Lunsford’s (1991) description of “storehouses” that “prescribe and hand out skills and strategies to individual learners” and Grimm’s (2009) first “skill and drill” centre.

In “The Writing Clinic and the Writing Laboratory” Robert. H. Moore (1950) articulates a vision of early writing centres based upon conservative curricular orientations. In Moore’s (1950) “clinic” or “laboratory” students with “deficiencies” in composition were diagnosed and “remedial measures [were] prescribed,” often in the form of workbooks or handbooks (p. 392). While some students attended Moore’s “clinic” voluntarily, others attended under compulsion from instructors and thus were only released from the clinic once measurable evidence of their writing “satisfactorily” was demonstrated through testing or examination (p. 392). Similarly, in 1980 Lou Kelly described the writing lab at
the University of Iowa as dating back to the 1930s where at least initially the lab was not based on grammar drills but on “talking with an individual human being, face-to-face, about his or her writing” (p. 4). However, Kelly (1980) admits that by 1945 the lab’s official function was altered to provide remedial support to those students who did not meet official, departmental standards and “for two hours a week the lab was the penalty imposed on everybody who did not pass the departmental theme exam” (p. 5).

Thus, although there is evidence that some early writing labs or clinics embraced discovery-based, collaborative methods, by the mid twentieth century many enacted conservative pedagogical approaches grounded composition theory based on traditional rhetoric that transmitted knowledge to students to cure identified deficiencies. Indeed, despite seemingly collaborative or liberal roots, by the late 1960s and early 1970s traditional rhetoric informed much writing centre work placing deficiencies squarely within individual students and skill and drill techniques were prescribed to normalise “abnormal” writers. While such remedial connotations and purposes were not features of all early writing labs or clinics, the traditionalist approaches of some early labs and clinics became the “straw man” against which “new” writing centre theory rebelled as the process movement gained currency among composition scholars in the 1980s.

**Writing Centres “Fix” Writers: Expressionistic Rhetoric**

Expressionistic rhetoric is rooted in the epistemological perspective that knowledge is found within the individual and can thus be drawn out. Expressionists, as part of the process movement, emphasised that students required more than the transmission-based, product-focused pedagogy that characterised the traditional approach. The expressionistic approach advanced that composition should be understood and taught as a process, or a recursive act, and students should be supported in finding their own voice and knowledge with revision and feedback from instructors and peers (Matsuda, 2003, p. 67). Thus, the process and related expressionistic movement in composition shifted the epistemological focus from external to internal knowledge, attention from product to process and pedagogy from teacher to student-centred. While expressionism was met with detractors
and critiques in the field of composition in the 1980s, it was simultaneously gaining significant traction as a guiding theoretical and pedagogical approach in writing centres.

In 1984 Stephen North published the “Idea of a Writing Center” for an audience that included everyone that did not work in, or have anything to do with, a writing centre (433). North’s work was positioned firmly against writing centres based on traditionalist rhetoric and its “skill and drill” approaches (437). In effect, one of North’s main arguments decried the depiction of writing centres as remedial grammar “fix it shops” and instead insisted that the 1970s was a “renaissance” for writing centres as they shook off remedial approaches and worked individually with students to successfully change the writer rather than the writing (438-439). Following the expressionistic approach, writing was understood as “an art, a creative act in which the process—the discovery of the true self—is an important product” (Berlin, 1988, p. 484). From this perspective, supporting students’ writing could be accomplished through student ownership of writing and improvement of process through non-directive questioning by tutors to draw students’ knowledge out.

Importantly, in North’s writing centre, students were not to be referred; they were to attend on their own free will to benefit from the changes North’s professionals could offer. Finally, for North classroom teachers and writing centres could “co-exist” as the writing centre would “never play student-advocates in teacher-student relationships [and] would respect the teacher’s position completely” even when writers came in with “poorly designed assignments or “unwarrantedly hostile comments” (441). With the publication of “Idea” the writing centre’s first writing centre trope was born: writing centres “produce better writers, not better writing” (438).

Following North’s (1984) influential publication, Jeff Brooks (1991) brought techniques of minimalist tutoring to the writing centre through his aptly titled article “Minimalist Tutoring: Making the Students Do All the Work.” Brooks’ (1991) article begins with “a writing centre worst-case scenario” in which a student brings in a paper and a tutor offers both content and mechanical support, which the student accepts and returns to proudly share the news of an excellent grade (p. 2). However, this “nightmare” has improved the
paper, not the writer and the tutor has fallen into the “trap” of the editor (p. 2). Indeed, Brooks reminds tutors “when you improve a student’s paper, you haven’t been a tutor at all, you’ve been an editor” (Brooks, 1991, p. 1). Thus, Brooks instructs tutors avoid editing through practicing minimalist tutoring and advanced minimalist tutoring. Practices such as never writing on students’ papers, having the student read the paper aloud, providing positive feedback, and asking the student questions to encourage them to find their own mistakes are encouraged. Brooks also warns of the uncooperative student with whom tutors must “fight back” to avoid becoming the editor (p. 4). He recommends checking the clock, yawning or slumping back in a chair as signals to the student that the tutor will not edit. If students persist in asking for direct advice on what to do with a particular portion, tutors can “in a non-threatening way say, “I don’t know- It’s your paper”” (p. 4, emphasis original). The second trope of the writing centre is thus: writing centre tutors help students best with minimalist, non-directive tutoring. The most successful tutor creates an independent writer.

Therefore, both Brooks and North understood writing within the expressionistic approach wherein knowledge is internal within the student and contrasted this with the traditionalist view of knowledge as external knowledge and mastered through product and instructor centred approaches. These two scholars, then, came out strongly against editing, advanced non-directive, process-based approaches and focused squarely on improving the writer.

*Writing centre approach/praxis*

The adoption of expressionistic rhetoric and its process-orientated pedagogy has left a discernible mark on the practice of writing centres. Indeed, the expressionistic position that knowledge resides within the student has engendered a focus on the individual student and the process of drawing their knowledge out while ensuring student ownership. The non-directive pedagogy often advances Socratic questioning on the part of the tutor to aid this process.

Moreover, North’s (1984) positioning of the writing centre as a space that provided support above and beyond a focus on product and lower order concerns that characterised
the traditional paradigm also generated a sense that writing centres should focus on
global (or higher order) concerns such as ideas, organisation and structure over local (or
lower order) concerns such as grammar, punctuation and vocabulary. Similarly, Brooks’
(1991) warnings of the “editing trap” further ensconced the higher over lower order
concerns hierarchy and articulated the role of the writing tutor in opposition to the role of
an editor. Thus, the import of expressionism into writing centre contexts with its focus on
process and writers has frequently been interpreted as a moratorium on editing and
proofreading, as this neither engages the students’ voice nor develops the writer.

The import of these ideals into the practice of writing centres can be seen in numerous
publications that provide guidelines for tutors. Clark (1985) emphasised the importance
of non-directive tutoring to produce autonomous writers, as tutor dominated writing
centre interactions would produce dependent student writers “unlikely to ever assume
responsibility for their own writing” (p. 41). Thus, the value of “Socratic dialogue”
became decidedly important in the writing centre to avoid a “lapse into a “directive”
mode of tutoring” (Ashton-Jones, 1988, p. 38).

Today, despite the passage of nearly thirty years since North’s (1984) and Brooks’ (1991)
texts, the prescriptive approaches outlined by various tutor handbooks remain heavily
influenced by the axiom to “produce better writers” through non-directive approaches
(See for example: Barnett & Blumner, 2008; Gillespie & Lerner, 2004, 2008). Indeed, the
ideas of North (1984) and Brooks (1991) are echoed in the edicts to listen to (“trust”) the
writer’s voice and focus on higher over lower order concerns and ensure student
ownership, and the placement of tutors as squarely opposed to editors. These directives
can be seen Gillespie and Lerner’s (2004) juxtaposition between writing centre tutors and
editors as shown in Table 2.
Table 2. Editors versus Writing Centre Tutors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editors</th>
<th>Writing Centre Tutors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the text</td>
<td>Focus on the writer’s development and establish rapport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take ownership of the text</td>
<td>Make sure the writer takes ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proofread</td>
<td>Start with higher order concerns and worry about corrections last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give advice</td>
<td>Ask questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read silently</td>
<td>Ask the writer to read aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look mainly for things to improve</td>
<td>Comment on things that are working well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with an ideal text</td>
<td>Trust the writer’s idea of a text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make corrections on the page</td>
<td>Keep hands off and let writers make corrections, help them learn corrections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell writers what to do</td>
<td>Ask them their plan for revision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from: Gillespie and Lerner, 2004, p. 45).

Thus, it is clear that North’s (1984) “Idea” became foundations for much “subsequent writing center theory and writing tutor practice” (Lui & Mandes, 2005, p. 87), which was further supported and enacted through Brooks’ (1991) minimalist tutoring practices.

Writing Centres Collaborate with Writers: Social constructionism

While the expressionists challenged the traditionalist assumption of knowledge as external, the social constructionists challenged expressionists through advocating that knowledge creation is inherently social and dialogical. Indeed, at the same time that North’s (1984) “Idea” was resulting in a collective call for writing centres to embrace his expressionistic approaches, the post-process movement and its “social turn” (Matsuda, 2003, p. 73) was gaining currency in composition studies. The “social turn” of
composition thus found its way into the writing centre through the influential publications of Kenneth Bruffee (1985) and Andrea Lunsford (1991).

Kenneth Bruffee’s (1985) “Peer Tutoring and the “Conversation of Mankind” has long been referred to as a “must-read” for writing centre practitioners. Bruffee, described as the “father of collaborative learning” (Olson, 1984, p. 3), advanced a notion of peer tutoring that was adapted to the writing centre context. Bruffee’s (1985) work challenged the expressionistic ideal that writing centres should focus on students and rather advocated that writing centre tutors talk about writing, rather than teach writing, to collaboratively develop the student’s understanding of the writing process. Importantly Bruffee (1985) advocated that those who worked in the writing centre should be peers to the students with whom they worked in order to allow for reciprocal learning for both student and tutor, and to allow for peers with similar backgrounds and experiences to converse about writing. For Bruffee, the move to peers was important as students who were struggling in their academic studies tended to avoid supplementary instruction offered by professionals outside of the formal classroom (Olson, 1984, p. 4). Thus, by changing the social context to one of peers rather than professionals Bruffee advanced that the outcomes of student learning were unchanged, but the social context through which they learned was altered. In the peer tutoring model conversations focused on the instructor’s assignment, the “formal conventions of academic discourse and standard written English” (Bruffee, 1985, p.10). Most importantly, however, according to Bruffee the use of peers in the writing centre allowed for the negation of power dynamics as peers were placed as equals and learning was reciprocal.

Similarly, Lunsford (1991) contributed to the writing centre lore with her much-cited article “Collaboration, Control and the Idea of a Writing Center.” Lunsford (1991) placed her ideal writing centre firmly in the social constructivist paradigm wherein knowledge is understood as “always contextually bound, as always socially constructed” (p. 8). The socially constructed nature of knowledge in Lunsford’s (1991) centre is thus in opposition to thinking about the work of writing centres as “storehouses” (traditional rhetoric) wherein positivist principles assume knowledge is individualised and easily transferred, as well as writing centres that are “garrets” (expressionism) wherein
knowledge resides in individual students who are aided by thoughtful questioning (p. 4-5). However, Lunsford also warns of the dangers of collaboration wherein equal engagement and the erasure of difference may ensue as power hierarchies remain and knowledge is simply transferred from tutor to student. Thus, for Lunsford (1991) writing centres that embrace true collaboration following the social constructivist paradigm must “place control, power and authority not in the tutor or staff, not in the individual student, but in the negotiating group” (p. 8). Thus, Bruffee (1984) and Lunsford (1991) co-created the final guiding principle of writing centre lore—peer tutoring allows for collaboration and the dialogical creation of knowledge in context when interlocutors are status equals in the writing centre.

**Writing centre approach/praxis**

While the traditionalists had transmission-based approaches and expressionists embraced non-directive approaches, social constructionism has remained unable to generate and define a set of tutoring practices that are identifiable within the writing centre context (Burlaga & Costino, 2003, p. 218). Indeed, although social constructionism has certainly influenced the theory of writing centres, aside from the accepted practice of emphasising “peer-ness” in the writing centre, “there is little in the practice of teaching or tutoring writing that has changed because of social constructionist views…The social constructionist critique has broadened our understanding of the contexts of writing, but it has not found an alternative set of practices” (Shamoon & Burns, 1995, p. 228). While the next section examines literature and theory that advocates for more directive approaches that would engender apprenticeship approaches or “scaffolding” akin to Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the canonised lore explored here entrenched non-directive approaches into writing centre pedagogy, which presents challenges for the application of social constructionist approaches. Thus, as Tobin (1994) argued more than a decade ago although “the writing process movement, and particularly its emphasis on expressionism is frequently dismissed in contemporary scholarly books, journal articles and conference papers… it is still embraced by huge numbers of classroom teachers” (p. 7). I would add that today is still remains the guiding, yet widely challenged, approach in writing centres.
For many in the writing centre community, contemporary writing centre theory and practice began in the mid-1980s. During this time both process movements to composition (expressionism) and post-process movements (social constructionism or social epistemic paradigm) found their ways into the writing centre. While expressionistic approaches challenged the epistemological bases of traditional rhetoric by suggesting knowledge existed within individuals (and thus could be drawn out), social constructionism envisioned knowledge as socially constructed through dialogic exchange (Burlaga & Costino, 2003; Carter, 2001; Matsuda, 2003). Despite their epistemological differences of knowledge as internal (expressionism) and knowledge as constructed in social contexts (social constructionism), the expressionistic and social constructionist paradigms collectively became the basis of writing centre theory. Indeed, much writing centre theory still exists on the precarious border of these competing perspectives. However, while social constructivism remains an important concept in the ways writing centre practice is theorised, its actual application to writing centre spaces remains tenuous as pedagogy continues to adhere to expressionist epistemologies. Thus, the collective works of North (1984), Brooks (1991), Bruffee (1985), and Lunsford (1991) established important theoretical bases for writing centre theory (Wang, 2012), yet the expressionistic approaches provide foundations for practice. These foundational theoretical perspectives and the scholars who advanced them in the writing centre context are depicted on the timeline in Figure 2.
By the late 1990s these four publications had gained significant traction as theoretical and pedagogical foundations for writing centre work, yet they have not been without detractors. Indeed, as early as 1994 Eric Hobson suggested that the writing centre community sees the inherited ideology as “a valid (philosophically and methodologically) means of making knowledge” and remains more interested in practice than revising the theory (p.2). Nearly 20 years later Harry Denny (2010) called for writing centre scholars to look beyond the simplified storying of writing centre work. Denny (2010) urges writing centre practitioners to critically interrogate and reinvigorate writing centre scholarship through looking beyond the “received wisdom,” and more accurately infusing lived experiences in the writing centre into a new corpus of scholarship (p. 146). He says,

Too often, we turn to the larger community and want quick and dirty recipes for what to do in a pinch. Instead, we need to acknowledge that to beyond the received wisdom is a history and corpus of scholarship that needs to be engaged, riffed on, and reinvigorated with our own lived experiments, observations and critical interrogation. We need to, more directly, infuse our everyday practices with the currency of academic life: intellectual questioning and theorizing of what’s possible.” (Denny, 2010, p. 146).

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North (1984)  
"Make better writers, not better writing"

Brooks (1991)  
"Minimalist tutoring”, the writing centre creates independent writers through making students do all the work

"Collaborative tutoring”, negotiations between equals leads to success in the writing centre
The next section illuminates empirical work that has “ripped on” or undertaken critical interrogations of the foundational theory and praxis reviewed in this section with particular attention to the ways the canonised theory and practice has been challenged as unresponsive and even harmful to multilingual writers in the writing centre.

“*They* Don’t Fit! Writing Centre Lore and Empirical Research on the “ESL Problem”

Beginning in the mid-1990s that a “flurry” of publications on the topic of Second Language, ESL or multilingual writers arose from the writing centre context (Williams & Severino, 2004, p. 165). Despite the fact that writing centres have been a visible feature of university campuses in their current iterations for nearly 30 years, “empirical validation of their effectiveness is surprisingly thin” (Williams & Serverino, 2004, p. 167), and research on multilingual students and the writing centre is even thinner (Allen, 2009; Williams & Serverino, 2004; Williams, 2004). However, a growing body of scholarship examining multilingual students in the writing centres is beginning to emerge. In the recent body of empirical research, though, attention to multilingual students in the writing centre often remains firmly entrenched in the “lore” based theories outlined in the previous section. Indeed, when multilingual students began appearing in writing centres in “floods” (Ronesi, 1995, p.1) it became clear that the “ESL problem” (Allen, 2009) presented challenges for the lore-based theory and practice that informed writing centre work.

As research has continued to circle the tenants of the lore-based theory and its related praxis, it has become increasingly obvious that it is not multilingual students who are the problem in the writing centre; it is the writing centre praxis which has failed to evolve to address the needs of increasingly diverse students. Thus, this section reviews the corpus of empirical literature on multilingual students in the writing centre, and the ways in which empirical evidence suggests significant alterations, and sometimes outright dismissal, of codified approaches.
The practice of non-directive tutoring has been largely discredited by empirical research in the writing centre, and it has been found to be inappropriate, confusing and even harmful for multilingual students. Indeed, as early as 1993 Judith Powers levelled critique at the non-directive, Socratic questioning approach favoured by writing centres. Powers (1993) suggested that writing centre tutors needed to take on the role of the “cultural informant” over the collaborator with “ESL” students to explain the rhetorical and cultural expectations in the American academic context (p. 42). Powers noted that for students educated in other academic contexts or used to writing in different rhetorical patterns, the applicability of the non-directive method was negated as the students simply did not have the knowledge to “draw out” following the non-directive approach. Moreover, she suggested that rather than seeing ESL students as issues or uncooperative interlocutors in the writing centre interaction, the writing centre itself needed an “attitude adjustment” by way of revising the dominant collaborative method in the writing centre when working with ESL students (Powers, 1993, p. 44).

Similarly, Shamoon and Burns (1995) argued for the inclusion of more directive approaches to tutoring in the writing centre. The authors liken writing centre tutorials to master classes in music, or studio sessions in art wherein experts support novices arrive at near-expert practice through hierarchical, directive support that allow for “imitation as legitimate practice” (p. 145). Such directive models, Shamoon and Burns (1995) suggest, “endorse the student’s worth as an emerging professional” (p. 145) while also unmasking, explaining, and “making plain” the often implied and hidden literacy practices of disciplinary writing (p. 146).

Powers’ (1993) and Shamoon and Burns’ (1995) critiques of the collaborative, non-directive approach was soon met with a significant body of empirical evidence that supported the notion that the lore-based frames of writing centre pedagogy were problematic. Indeed, Thonus (1999) found that tutors’ non-directive, qualified approaches caused confusion and miscomprehension among multilingual students. Similarly, Carter-Tod (1995) found students expected directive feedback from tutors and became frustrated
and decreased their writing centre interactions when tutors took inflexible non-directive approaches. Blau, Hall and Strauss (1998) used linguistic analyses of recorded sessions with reflective tutor writing to examine the tutoring relationship. The authors found that tutors employed open-ended questioning, echoing and qualifying language in working towards non-directive, collaborative approaches. In some cases such methods were relatively successful, yet others demonstrated a lack of focus, which led to unproductive sessions. Thus, Blau, Hall and Strauss (1998) also suggested that a focus on non-directive, collaborative methods exclusively was problematic in the writing centre as tutors needed to provide instruction, especially for matters such as grammar and mechanics with multilingual students. Yet, after nearly a decade of empirically based findings, Thonus (2001) lamented that writing centre ethos continued to suggest that “being directive is the strongest criticism a writing tutor can levy against self or a colleague; it signals “too much” involvement in the student’s work” (p. 64).

Thus, studies challenging the non-directive edict and advocating for recognition of the need for asymmetry and the reality of directiveness in the writing centre continued to pile up in the new millennium. In 2002 Jennifer Ritter’s study used conversation analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine observed interactions between (native English speaking) tutors and their non-native English speaking (NNES) students. Ritter found asymmetry in the relationship between tutor and student, with tutors taking on directive roles of writing and/or language expert. Similarly, Vallejo (2004) found that tutors demonstrated flexibility with directive/non-directive approaches in sessions with multilingual students. Indeed, the observed session often started out in a directive manner (with lower order concerns) and moved along a continuum to a more non-directive approach with higher order concerns where questioning was productive.

Thus, drawing on the possibilities for learning opportunities and language development with more directiveness in the writing centre a number of publications began to emerge that suggested the benefits of “scaffolding” students learning in a manner akin to Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky’s (1978) ZPD concept suggests that within relationships between experts and novices “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem
solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with peers” (p. 86). In other words, learning occurs within the ZPD when an instructor (or peer in this case) provides support that takes the learning just beyond what the student can accomplish alone in order to build and bridge the student’s knowledge to perform the task.

Clark and Healy (1996) suggested that “directive tutoring consistent with Vygotsky’s concept of the zone of proximal development” wherein students are aided in the completion of a task was well-suited for the writing centre context (p. 38). Similarly, in examining the revision practices of second language writers, Jessica Williams (2004) found that “non-directive tutoring led to almost absurdly circuitous interactions, in which the writer engaged in a sort of guessing game” (p. 195) while modelling and scaffolding with directive feedback that encouraged student engagement led to productive text revision.

Finally, Chiu (2011) examined the Language Related Episodes (LREs) between five ESL writers and their native English speaking tutors and found that writing centres are productive spaces for language learning when writers are scaffolded in their ZPD. Indeed, Chui (2011) demonstrated that when tutors were able to gauge ESL students’ knowledge and undertake “a recursive calibrating process that repeats elaboration and elicitation of the writers’ responses” students’ language abilities were developed (p. 141). Thus, a number of studies have refuted the non-directive approach championed by the writing centre lore in favour of more flexible and directive approaches with multilingual students.

“This is a higher order centre.”

Empirical research also points to the problematic nature of the HOCs and LOCs hierarchy and its application to the writing centre with multilingual speakers. Heather Robinson (2009) surveyed “basic writers,” which includes “students who are native speakers of

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2 I borrow this from Nancy Grimm’s (2009) description of a writing centre wherein a hierarchy of HOCs over LOCs defined a writing centre that privileged ideas over language in ways that were problematic for multilingual learners (p.13).
non-standard varieties of English” as well as “students with different language backgrounds” such as ESL students and international students (p. 73). Robinson (2009) found that students most frequently came to the writing centre for sentence level support with grammar, punctuation, and spelling, yet students often sought support with ideas and comprehension through subsequent writing centre interactions (p. 82-83). Thus, Robinson (2009) surmises that students often initially seek support with surface features of writing, as students perceive proper form and language as a requirement from professors, but through ongoing writing centre engagement move to consider their sense of self in their academic writing (p. 85-86). She also suggests that the separation and hierarchy between LOCs and HOCs that exists in the writing centre is problematic as language and content cannot be separated, especially for basic writers. Robinson (2009) also advances that denying students support with “the writing center’s biggest attraction—help with grammar, spelling and punctuation” may act to dissuade some students from using or returning to the writing centre (p. 72).

Also challenging the HOCs/LOCs divide in much writing centre theorising Ellen Schendel (2012) surveyed writing centre tutors to gauge their perceptions of good practice providing grammatical support to students in the writing centre as well as how they felt about the provision of such support. Schendel’s (2012) sample included American and international respondents, with a much higher number responses coming from the American context. The data suggested that more than half of the nearly 300 respondents reporting spending a significant portion (more than 25%) of their time on grammar, and that they provided grammar support when it was needed/requested as well when working with non-native English speakers (p.3). More than half of the respondents noted that they provided direction in identifying and correcting errors, but encouraged the student to make corrections and develop their own proofreading strategies (p. 3). Only 5 respondents (1.7%) reported that grammar support was not provided in their centre. Interestingly, nearly 60% of respondents noted that they would never recommend a student use a proofreader to provide support with sentence-level concerns, which suggests centres do provide such support (p.4). Finally, Schendel (2012) found that many writing centre respondents lacked confidence and comfort working with grammar, given
the lack of training/preparation they had been given to do such work, which may have evolved from the perception grammar support is less important than higher order support. Schendel (2012) thus recommends flexible approaches to dealing with grammar or sentence-level features—dropping “the negative talk” (“don’t proofread, don’t make corrections on the paper”)— in favour of seeing grammar as “part of the job” for which tutors should be trained and prepared (p. 4).

The false divide between HOCs and LOCs and the problems writing centre tutors have following the prescriptive hierarchy can also be seen in Chui (2011) and Wang’s (2012) studies. While Chui (2011) found that meaningful language development occurred when tutors provided support with LOCs, the tutors’ attempts to steer students to HOCs made such development a secondary by-product of interactions and overlooked the fact that linguistic correctness and certainty are matters of “knowledge and control” for multilingual students (p. 150). Wang’s (2012) study, on the other hand, found tutors frequently worked with LOCs first, sometimes to the exclusion of HOCs with multilingual students. The tutor’s in Wang’s (2012) study noted how LOCs often become HOCs when they effect comprehension and that focusing on LOCs was often in line with what students requested and need. Thus, Wang (2012) also added to the voices that suggest a blurring of the lines between HOCs and LOCs and the need to focus on both areas equally with multilingual students.

Other “others” and empirical challenges to “lore”

Empirical evidence also suggests that the non-directive and hierarchical approaches in the writing centre present a particular set of challenges for multilingual students working at the graduate level. Over a decade ago Powers and Nelson (1995) surveyed writing centre directors in graduate departments on the use of the writing centre by L2 writers. The researchers found that most directors noted that content-specialists were needed to adequately support L2 graduate writers as the writers themselves may neither understand nor be able to articulate the expectations of their disciplines to tutors (p. 120). Moreover, the director respondents cited challenges working with L2 graduate writers within the boundaries of accepted writing centre pedagogy as these writers almost always sought
sentence-level support. Nearly a decade later Wang’s (2012) ELL graduate student participants also voiced their need for discipline-related support in conjunction with surface-level support. Additionally, Wang (2012) found that tutors frequently reverted to grammar with ELL graduate students because their lack of disciplinary-related knowledge made it challenging for them to engage with content.

In findings that echo Powers and Nelson’s (1995) and Wang’s (2012), Talinn Phillips (2013) suggested that multilingual graduate writers require tutors who can offer discipline-specific support as well as intensive sentence level correction support given graduate students’ needs to publish. Additionally, Phillips (2013) surveyed writing centre staff about their perceptions on multilingual graduate writers and found that more than half of the respondents did not provide specific training for tutors working with graduate students, while a third did not provide training for tutors working with multilingual students (p. 3). Despite the lack of training, however, most centres suggested their work with multilingual graduate students was generally effective. However, many also noted they felt challenged to implement “no editing” practices with multilingual graduate students, and experienced issues with inadequately prepared tutors when disciplinary-based support emerged as a need. For multilingual graduate students, then, support necessarily requires directiveness and attention to sentence-level features, as well as disciplinary-specific knowledge.

**Summary of empirical research**

This review has suggested that the prescriptive practices from writing centre lore that have been inscribed in tutor training manuals and “best practices” in the writing centre have been the subject of much critique. Indeed, there is ample evidence that “the boundaries between what “should” happen in a writing center and what does happen…are porous to say the least” (Simpson, 2010, p. 4). Thus, scholarly work continues to advocate for revisions to lore-based practices that inscribe non-direction, collaboration between equals, and a divide between HOCs/LOCs in writing centre interactions (Allen, 2009; Moussu, 2013; Thompson et al, 2009; Thonus, 2014; Williams & Serverino, 2004). Indeed, Thompson et al.’s (2009) study suggests that “rather than dialogic collaboration,
conferences in [their] writing center are most satisfactory [according to tutors and students] when an asymmetrical collaboration is maintained” (p. 80) and tutors are flexible with directive and non-directive approaches (p. 79). Moreover, others suggest that the influx of multilingual students means writing centre tutors should understand themselves as both “second language writing tutors and second language tutors” (Serverino & Deifell, 2011, p. 26). Thus, writing centre tutors should work with texts in ways that weave in support for sentence-level concerns with broader HOCs (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002). Indeed, based on their study Blau, Hall and Sparks (2002) offer the following revised guidelines to lore-based writing centre practices:

1. Tutors should have a practical grounding in contrastive rhetoric.
2. Tutors should be prepared to be cultural informants as well as writing consultants.
3. Tutors should be comfortable using a directive approach, especially with local concerns such as grammar, punctuation, idioms, and word usage.
4. Tutors should be comfortable working line-by-line through a paper, or a portion of a paper.
5. Tutors can interweave global and local concerns rather than prioritizing them. If the paper’s clarity is compromised by many local errors, addressing these local errors before global ones can be useful and productive (p. 42).

While the empirical evidence certainly suggests such revisions to lore-based approaches that were designed for native English speakers are imperative for productive and meaningful engagement with multilingual students in the writing centre, tutor training guidelines continue to promote the empirically unfounded practices (Thonus, 2014).

Indeed, many tutor training manuals still have short, discrete chapters dedicated to multilingual or NNS students (see for example: Barnett & Blumner, 2008; Gillespie & Lerner, 2000; McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001; Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2006), which position multilingual students as “special concerns” that challenge writing centre practices (Allen, 2009). The positioning of multilingual (or NNS) writers as “other” yet “managable” within the constellation of writing centre practices can be seen in Gillespie and Lerners’ (2000) Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring. The Guide asserts that “in many ways it’s odd to dedicate a single chapter to NNS writers- a student population whom you’ll
generally tutor just as you do native speakers!” (Gillespie & Lerner, 2000, p. 119). More recent editions of Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring (2004) repeat the familiar, if disproved, approaches to working with multilingual students which privilege higher order concerns and suggest Socratic questioning to have the writer describe the logic behind an error (p. 126). The ongoing divide between prescribed practice, theory and empirical research thus suggests that “that the gap between theory, research and practice needs to be filled quickly” (Moussu, 2013, p. 64) and “the way tutors are trained must change” (Thonus, 2014, p. 200).

Today, despite nearly two decades of research related to multilingual writers in the writing centre, the conventional non-directive tutoring protocol that focuses on the writer as the subject for improvement and prioritises HOCs over LOCs lives on (see for example Gillespie and Lerner, 2004; 2008; Capossela, 1998). Critical empirical research continues to explore how these guidelines do not make “better” multilingual writers and continues to challenge the dominant writing centre pedagogy in response (Chui, 2011; Phillips, 2013; Thompson et al., 2009; Wang, 2009). However, much of the empirical research on writing centres, although certainly critical of how to achieve their aims of making better writers, rarely levels critical questions related to conceptions of “good writers,” or the raison d’être of the writing centre. Moreover, it often fails to examine the broader power dynamics that are at play when “different” writers are “improved” in institutions of higher education. Recently, though, a rich body of critical work has challenged what is left unsaid in many existing empirical studies and the canonised ideology of writing centre practice that continues to circle around lore-based mandates.

**Writing Centres “Fix” Institutions: Critical Theory**

In the new millennium, several writing centre scholars began to employ postmodern, postcolonial and critical literacies frameworks to challenge the canonised literature that informs writing centre theory and practice. In relation to multilingual students or “non-traditional students” critical scholars illuminated how the focus on improving individual writers amounts to perpetuating and supporting the way that the hidden curricula in higher education upholds existing monocultural, monolingual power structures (Olson,
The individualist focus also places writing centre work within the popular narrative of literacy, which promises “individuals who work hard and learn to communicate in clear, correct, unaccented English” will be able to succeed by becoming more “like us” (Grimm, 2008, p. 6). Coupled with the non-directive, minimalist approach, writing centres may do harm to students by withholding important information students require to operate in complex linguistic and academic discourses. Indeed, tutors who abide by the non-directive approach may simply perpetuate “the idea that there is a body of knowledge “out there” that some people [the tutors] have access to and other people [the tutees] do not” (Boquet, 2000, p. 19). Importantly, the oft-repeated writing centre lore not only perpetuates the hidden curricula of the academy and discourses of deficit, but it also regulates and controls what can be revealed in the storying of writing centre work.

In “Rethinking Our Work with Multilingual Writers: The Ethics and Responsibility of Language Teaching in the Writing Center,” Bobbi Olson (2013) advocates for a more inclusive view of multilingual students in the writing centre. Olson suggests that the individualised instruction in the writing centre may well make for better writers, yet he suggests that doing this work well in institutions of higher education often amounts to perpetuating and supporting monocultural and monolingual power structures (p. 2). For Olson, a tutor’s job is no longer simply about pointing out textual divergences from a monolingual norm, but it is about being conscious of the ways in which language, power and identity intersect in writing centre work to support or oppose multilingual views of literacy (p. 4). In carrying out this work he suggests that writing centres adopt a “translingual approach” to value the multilingualism as a resource rather than as a deficit to be corrected. He goes on to suggest that a multilingual orientation to writing centre work would generate conversations about multiple discourses and would arm students with creative ways to negotiate these multiple discourses in diverse contexts (p. 3).

In a similar vein, Steven Bailey (2012) suggests what tutor handbooks might look like if they were conceived of from a multicultural and multilingual perspective. For Bailey, writing centres must be conceptualised as inclusive communities of practice where students and tutors accept and learn from cultural, linguistic and other forms of difference
Importantly Bailey (2012) points out the need to illuminate the important contribution of tutors who are multilingual and from diverse cultural backgrounds in writing centres, as their absence from existing tutor handbooks often invoke simple binaries of “our culture” versus “their culture” (p. 6).

In a series of publications Nancy Grimm provides a critical view of writing centre ideology, practice and research. Drawing on the concept of multiliteracies as envisioned by the New London Group, Grimm (2008, 2009, 2011, 2012) implores writing centre practitioners and researchers to examine the problematic assumptions about language, literacy and learning that inform writing centre theory and practice, ultimately working to privilege and support dominant power relations in the university. She suggests that the individualist approach to literacy that is valued in the writing centre through North’s (1984) (in)famous epigraph to create better writers encases the work of writing centres in the popular narrative of literacy, which understands success as unproblematic socialisation into the literacy practices of the academy (Grimm, 2008). The individualist focus, then, results in expectations that individual students conform, rather than challenge the social reasons for their exclusion. She adds that non-directive, minimalist approaches do harm to students by locating “problems” within the students themselves, while withholding important information students require to operate in complex cultural and academic discourses. Grimm (2008), further suggests that writing centres’ characterising of students who use their services as “needing help” privileges a restricted view of literacy and obscures the power hierarchies at work in higher education and it allows writing centres to overlook their role in perpetuating unequal systems that marginalise “different” writers (p.7-8).

Finally, in “New Conceptual Frameworks for Writing Center Work” Grimm (2009) invokes the New London Group in her description of writing centres in the twenty-first century as places wherein students are “designers of social futures” (p.21). For Grimm, a writing centre that embraces a concept of multiliteracies would engage in difference in flexible ways, value diversity and creativity over standardisation and mastering of dominant literacies, and see all students as needing explicit support to switch between literacies and contexts. Writing centres that are truly engaged in the multiliteracies project
are places where tutors also speak multiple varieties of English and lay bare the unspoken attitudes, values and belief systems in the context in which they work. Most importantly for Grimm (2009) a writing centre that embodies multiliteracies as a pedagogical guide is able to “read, critique and engage systems of power” (p. 24).

Thus, these narratives suggest writing centres that are conscious of the ways in which language, power and identity intersect to support or oppose multilingual views of literacy do not simply “correct, measure and supervise abnormal writers in order to meet the standards set by the institution” (Grimm, 1996, p. 7). In writing centres based on critical approaches, students are taught to be “designers of social futures” who can “read, critique and engage systems of power” (Grimm, 2009, p.2). However, these requirements are overlooked with the current uncontextualised and anecdotal accounts that have emerged from the critical re-storying of writing centre work. Indeed, while the critical theorising of writing centre work depicts a space for empowerment, resistance and subversion, implementing such approaches remains in the purview of theory which leaves many writing centre tutors wondering, “what exactly does this mean for me when I tutor?” (Truesdell, 2013, p. 89).

**Literature Review Summary**

This literature review has provided an overview of the evolution of writing centre theory and pedagogy as well as the empirical research on multilingual students in the writing centre. The pedagogical evolution of writing centres demonstrates movements from conservative (traditional rhetoric) approaches, to process approaches (expressionistic rhetoric), to social constructionism, and finally to the application of critical, postmodern and postcolonial theorising in the writing centre. However, as this review has demonstrated the movement from conservative to critical has not been linear, rather writing centre theory and scholarship, much like the writing process, has been recursive moving within and between theories over time.

Moreover, this review has demonstrated that empirical research on multilingual students remains in its infancy in writing centres, and that a stalemate exists as much of the empirical research circles around the lore-based mandates frequently challenging and
disproving their application with successive studies centred around critiques of monolingual theorising. Finally, although a growing body of critical scholarship has emerged from the writing centre in an attempt to push writing centre discourse out of its lore-based frames, the critical work remains theoretical and has thus broadened thinking in writing centres, but its application to practice remains largely unexplored in contemporary scholarship.

This study thus departs from much of the existing research on writing centres as it removes the conceptual lens of this research away from the monolingual lore-based frames around which much existing research rallies. However, throughout this dissertation I often recourse back to the lore-based themes given the reality that much of the existing writing centre research is in one way or another connected to the lore-based theory and practice. The next section describes the conceptual framework that informed this study, which does not set out to test, revise or support the lore-based theorising, but to re-examine writing centre interactions within new conceptual frames to depict contemporary realities in writing centres through “richly textured accounts that are concerned with the full scope of literacy studies, as benefits the richness and complexity of writing center sites and the people who populate them” (North, 1984, p. 185).

Conceptual Framework

Overview

This section describes the conceptual framework that informed the data collection and analyses in this study. In describing the integrated critical framework adopted for this study I review three main bodies of literature in order to identify and integrate the theoretical and conceptual frames adapted to this study. Throughout my description of the conceptual framework I also integrate literature from the writing centre wherein the theories I incorporate have been applied. However, through amalgamating these theories the framework developed here goes beyond the interpersonal space of the writing centre at the level of the literacy events that define writing centre interactions to consider the situated literacy practices, institutional discourses, and power relations within which they are placed. In so doing, this framework accounts for both the macro power relations and
societal and institutional discourses while undertaking micro analyses of the interactions within these frames.

As described in Chapter 1, the framework for this study is grounded in the notion of literacy as a social practice meaning literacy does not reside in individuals, but is patterned by social interactions. Once literacies are understood as social practices, then, the context or social institutions and power relations in which they are embedded must be considered (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Framed as such literacies are mediated by culture and contexts and observable through activities where literacy plays a role—literacy events (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Through understanding the interactions in writing centres as literacy events, it is not only necessary to examine the power relationships and the ways literacies are understood in context, but also the outcomes for which literacies are enacted. Indeed, “literacies are associated with different domains of life” (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8), and the interactions in the writing centre are literacy events that are distinct from other literacy events in higher education such as formal examinations and informal exchanges students may make with friends on social media. Thus, the literacy events in the writing centre are enacted to particular ends, and the academic texts that mediate the events are embedded in the literacy practices of the academy in ways that influence the production of the texts, the roles of those involved in the production of texts, as well as considerations of who can (and cannot) produce particular literacies (Barton and Hamilton, 2000, p. 12). Therefore, this perspective refutes the epistemological assumption of expressionistic rhetoric that sees knowledge, and hence literacy, as internal as well as the skills based approach of traditional rhetoric that sees knowledge as transferrable in favour of an epistemological perspective grounded in social constructionism and critical literacies.

The framework for this study draws on: a) Cummins’ (2001) framework of societal power relations; b) Lea and Street’s (1998, 2006) academic literacies; and, c) liminality perspectives (Gourlay, 2009; Sunstien, 1998). Collectively these frameworks consider: a) the societal power relations in which literacy practices and the literacy events in the writing centre are situated, and the roles negotiated therein; b) the ends for which texts are produced; and, c) the ways that the literacy events of the writing centre are enacted to
include or exclude particular actors in the production of texts. The amalgamated framework integrating these perspectives is depicted in Figure 3 and is subsequently discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Figure 3. Amalgamated Critical Framework

Power Relations

The English teacher can cooperate in her own marginalisation by seeing herself as ‘a language teacher’ with no connection to social and political issues. Or she can accept the paradox of literacy as a form of interethnic communication which often involves conflicts of values and identities, and accept her role as one who socialises students in a world view that, given its power here and abroad, must be viewed critically, comparatively, and with a constant sense of the possibilities for change (Gee, 1990, p.68).

As Gee (1990) reminds us, education is never a neutral process, rather power is always present and this may be especially true in the context of language work with multilingual speakers in anglophone academies. Jim Cummins (2001) proposes a framework that suggests relationships at the macro and micro-level in educational systems range from collaborative to coercive. In coercive power relationships, power is understood as zero-
sum, which means when historically marginalised groups are empowered it is necessarily at the expense of dominant groups. In collaborative relations of power, on the other hand, power is understood as generative and shared through interpersonal relationships. Therefore, in collaborative power relations, “the power relationship is additive rather than subtractive” (Cummins, 2003, p.49). Thus, coercive power relations reflect “power over” wherein one group constrains the choices available to another group (Allen, 1998, p. 33) while collaborative relations of power suggest “power-with” which understands power as “a collective ability based on the receptivity and reciprocity that characterizes relations among members of the collectivity” (Allen, 1998, p. 35).

Empowerment or “power to” (Allen, 1998, p. 34) is thus created within interactions and collaboration among participants in a relationship. The macro power relations influence the way micro interactions occur which

either reinforce coercive relations of power or promote collaborative relations of power. When they reinforce coercive relations of power they contribute to the disempowerment of culturally diverse students and communities. When they promote collaborative relations of power, the micro-interactions enable educators, students, and communities to challenge the operation of coercive power structures (Cummins, 2003, p. 50).

While power leveraged coercively may be done deliberately with the intention of maintaining the disempowerment of particular groups, “power over” may also include the “exercise of power without deliberately seeking to do so, in routine or unconsidered ways, without grasping the effects” (Lukes, 1986, p. 7). Thus, the power relations in macro-interactions can be reflected or refuted by micro-interactions through the way educators define their roles, which determines whether students are invited to participate in or are excluded from the learning environment.

In order to understand the ways coercive relations of power are enacted in higher education environments for multilingual students, discourse and ideology play an important role. The next section, then, contextualises the dominant institutional discourses related to literacy education in anglophone institutions of higher education within which language and language support units, such as writing centres, revolve.
“Get that paper tidied up:” Discourses of remediation and deficiency in academic writing

“When you get to the point that a student is so grammatically poor that they can’t construct a sentence that makes sense in English, it’s difficult to know where to start” (Gallagher in O’Brien, 2016, para. 19).

The quote above was taken from an Irish Times article entitled “Universities offer “literacy clinics” for students: Experts concerned over less academic students being pushed into college” wherein the “extraordinarily worrying” low literacy levels of students were being met with “literacy clinics,” ostensibly to remediate and “fix” the literacy “epidemic” that characterises the sub-standard practices of many students now entering higher education (O’Brien, 2016). The position taken in the article above is certainly not a rare one in contemporary accounts of writing in higher education. Indeed, in the United Kingdom Joan Turner (2011) recounts similar admonishments of “shock and horror” related to “literacy in decline” (p. 27) in higher education in the popular media. Similarly, Lea and Street (1998) report concerns of “falling literacy standards” from academic staff in the UK who surmise that “students can no longer write” (p. 157).

In all of these situations a chorus of “back to basics” (Lea & Street, 1998), development of key skills (Barkas, 2011; Hallet, 2010; Lillis & Turner, 2001), or remediation of “deficient” students (Turner, 2011) ring out loudly from the ivory tower. Much like the popular media and academic staff who express concern over accounts of students’ frightening literacy abilities and the need for more remediation, those charged with providing academic and literacy support in institutions of higher education are similarly concerned. However, the reasons for concern among literacy educators, academic “skills” and support units and writing centres diverge significantly from those expressed by the popular media and some members of the professoriate in higher education. Indeed, for students marked as deficient and those who support them, three concomitant effects of these “worrying” accounts above emerge in relation to students’ literacies practices.

First, these accounts of “falling standards” and the “literacy crisis” understand and position academic writing within the dominant discourse of deficiency, which often informs discussions on student writing in higher education (Hallet, 2010; Lea & Street,
This dominant discourse presumes that literacy, and by extension academic writing, entail a set of autonomous skills that can simply be “given” to students and unproblematically transferred to diverse writing and literacy activities in the academy (Lea & Street, 2006, p. 368-369). It is within this frame of “skills” that students are sent to writing centres to “learn how to write” or have unclear writing “tidied up.”

However, numerous scholars have pointed out that writing “well” in the academy is a complex, socially situated and contextually bound activity and includes contested ideologies, epistemologies, power relations, identity negotiation (Barton, 1994; Lea & Street, 1995; Gee, 1996), and even intense emotion for students (Gourlay, 2013). Thus, despite the fact that academic writing is inscribed as an essential activity in higher education and forms the basis of assessment in many instances, the features of “good writing” are rarely explicitly taught and their origins are almost never interrogated (Turner, 2011). Additionally, when academic writing is perceived as a set of skills that can be easily transmitted to students, it creates and/or positions writing centres and other supportive structures in particular ways. Indeed, “if the premise of study support in universities is of hegemonic definitions based around student deficit, or need, then it is less than surprising that support mechanisms are designed to ameliorate that deficit” (Hallet, 2013, p. 528). It is within these frames that the work of writing centres, “literacy clinics” and skills centres are frequently positioned and placed (Barkas, 2011; Turner, 2011).

Secondly, while such discourses position writing and skills centres as spaces for remediation, they also construct the students who use them as deficient or other. Indeed, students who are unable to immediately internalise and mimic the expected writing conventions of higher education are immediately marked as “deficient” or “remedial.” The response has often been to set up more extra-classroom support, be they writing centres, extra composition courses or “literacy clinics” to allow deficient students to learn the necessary skills to communicate in ways valued by the academy. While Fiona Hallett (2010) suggests that “skills focussed models of study support…to ameliorate skill deficit” have been “designed to reduce power relations between those who gain access to
academic discourse prior to entering the university sector and those who do not, in skills focussed models of study support, a clear assumption of certain learners being skill deficient loom large” (p.5). This assumption may ring particularly clear for students who are labelled as “non-traditional” as narratives of deficient communication skills and falling standards in the academy are often implied to be a result of widening access of higher education to students previously excluded (Lillis & Turner, 2001, p. 57). The effect of the “skills” discourse is thus to place the deficiency squarely on the student rather than interrogating the institutional approach to student writing, and the often implied expectations therein, that marks certain students as in need of remediation (Lea & Street, 1998). Indeed, within the deficit discourse when students’ writing matches the dominant, accepted expectations of academic writing, language is invisible. On the other hand, language becomes visible for those students whose discourse diverges from expectations and it is the students, not the expectations, which become the “problem” (Lillis & Turner, 2001, p. 65).

For multilingual students who, like many English speaking students, struggle with the expectations of academic writing, deficit discourses are intensified as language further marginalises and marks these students as “other” or different. Moreover, within the view of skills being transferrable, the assumption that there is a single, uniform and agreed upon set of skills goes unquestioned suggesting that all students, including those who are multilingual, need to simply be taught, a set of conventions that they can then adopt and apply (Lea & Street 1998; Sheridan, 2011; Turner, 2011). Joan Turner (2011) suggests that institutions of higher education have generally taken the approach that multilingual students need to be inducted into the academy following a “convergence model,” which assumes that “students will simply accommodate to (converge with) the expected norms of academic performance in English” (p. 18). Therefore, this skill-based, autonomous model tends to position multilingual students as “remedial ESL learners” who require remediation to perform at an acceptable level in written academic English (Marshall, Hayashi & Yeung, 2012, p. 49).

The autonomous approach to literacy, then, marginalises both the spaces where “remediation” is performed as well as the students who use such spaces, and it is thus not
surprising that it also obscures and minimises the work of writing centre tutors or composition instructors. Indeed, instructors of composition and English as a second language are also often looked down upon for their work with “remedial” students who fail to meet institutional expectations. Writing instructors often work on the periphery of the academy as they are charged with “cleaning up” language and writing that is problematic (Boquet, 2002, p. 21). The “euphemism of proofreading” or “housekeeping metaphors of “polishing” or “tidying up” the language…imply surface work and limited effort” (Turner, 2011, p. 33) and those who do such work are low skilled, technicians who mechanically “fix” students’ papers (Barkas, 2011). Thus, this “remedial” work is often cordoned off from other disciplines and hidden away, as illuminating the need for such support challenges strongly held notions of autonomy and self-sufficiency that circulate in higher education. Academic writing instruction is placed in the province of support services, as it is “beneath” subject lecturers who teach in “real” academic disciplines (Clughen & Connell, 2011, p. 335). Moreover, the more “elite” a university understands itself to be, the more marginalised and derided this work becomes. Indeed, McDonald suggests that, “rhetoric and composition studies…remains a somewhat despised stepchild at many universities, particularly research universities” (MacDonald, 1994. p.4).

*Role definitions*

While the discourse above certainly suggests a difficult climate for the empowerment of multilingual students, educators always have agency to interact with students in ways that generate collaborative interactions. Cummins (2009b) defines educator role definitions as “the mindset of expectations, assumptions, and goals that educators bring to the task of educating culturally diverse students,” which informs micro-interactions (p. 45). Within this definition of educator role definitions, then, even in situations where the macro power relations reflect coercive relations of power, Cummins (2003) maintains that “the interactions between educators and students (micro-interactions) [are] the most immediate determinant of student success or failure in school” (p. 48). Thus, where coercive power relations inform broader macro structures, educators may view linguistically and culturally diverse students as deficient and contribute to further
marginalisation or they may choose to counter existing macro structures providing an interpersonal space wherein collaborative power is generated. Thus, educator role definitions do not occur in a vacuum but rather

[the construct of role definition therefore indicates how teachers are defining their role in relation to students and how this aligns with or contrasts to the role definitions that are reflected by policies and practices in their schools, school systems and the wider society (Cohen, 2008, p. 37).

In the case of multilingual students in anglophone institutions of higher education, models of deficit rather than linguistic dexterity often circulate. Thus, educators may embrace a “monolingual orientation” that sees errors as deficiency and additional languages as a hindrance reflecting the coercive frames of macro orientations, or they may choose to adopt “multilingual orientations” wherein students are seen as having options, and their additional languages are resources reflecting collaborative relations (Olson, 2013, p. 3).

While much research in the writing centre has examined the ways in which writing centre tutors define their roles vis-à-vis students, and significant attention has been paid to the notion of peer-ness or symmetrical relations among interlocutors in the writing centre, little empirical evidence exists on how writing centre tutors define their roles with multilingual students have impacted their interactions. However, two existing studies shed some light on the impact educator role definitions may play in the writing centre.

Ritter (2002) employed conversation analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis to examine writing centre tutorials as a “literacy event” through undertaking observations and interviews with 9 ESL students and their native English speaking tutors. Ritter found that tutors tended to dominate interactions, creating an asymmetrical relationship wherein tutors positioned themselves as service providers or language experts, while students positioned themselves as the recipients of the writing and language support. Throughout writing centre interactions ESL students did have significant opportunity for language development in the writing centre if the tutors invited students into the interactions as active participants and provided students methods of engagement through metatalk, corrective feedback and confirmation checks. Revisions on focus, language, and
organisation also occurred when tutors took the time to discuss aspects such as the thesis statement, argument or organisation, but these occurred less frequently than language revisions. Ritter also found that tutors who positioned themselves as language experts and felt discomfort with the topic or content of a paper frequently steered discussions to language or grammar with which they were more comfortable, maintaining their expertise. Importantly, Ritter found that social processes were important in tutorial interactions in how both students and tutors positioned themselves (identities) as well as the goals the set and roles they took on. The ways tutors perceived their roles were especially important as they often set the agenda for the session. In some cases tutors assumed ESL students wanted grammar support, while more experienced tutors demonstrated flexibility, thoughtful questioning and empathy with ESL students creating more productive interactions wherein revision on aspect beyond language occurred.

Chui (2011), on the other hand, employed a case study methodology including interviews and observations of five ESL students and their native English speaking tutors to examine writing centre interactions from a sociocultural perspective. Chui (2011) found that tutors were able to scaffold students’ language learning through directedness, but some tutors’ adherence to a focus on global over local concerns minimised the language learning opportunities for students who required such support. Thus, Chui’s (2011) findings could be demonstrative of the fact that tutors in his study chose to uphold their institutionally sanctioned roles through the refusal or deemphasising of grammar and editing support to the detriment of the language learning needs of students. Within the social context of an institution of higher education, though, Chui (2011) points out the values placed on correctness and language institutionally made language about more than mere correctness for students—it was about knowledge and control.

Thus, Ritter’s (2002) and Chui’s (2011) studies demonstrate the importance of role definitions in the writing centre, although with different outcomes. In Ritter’s (2002) study tutors who defined themselves as experts choose to focus on areas that maintained their expertise (language) contrary to the expressed goals of the writing centre; however, students often expressed a desire to go beyond language revision. Therefore, the tutors may have been influenced by broader discourses of deficit in assuming ESL students only
wanted or needed grammar and language support. In Chui’s (2011) study, conversely, tutors who defined their roles within the frames of writing centre pedagogy failed to provide necessary language support to students upholding accepted practice but withholding important information that students required. Therefore, in writing centre interactions understanding how tutors define their roles vis-à-vis multilingual students, and to what ends, provides important insight into how interactions in the writing centre space create conditions for exclusion or inclusion in the literacy practices of the academy.

**Educational structures**

Educational structures include policies, programs, curriculum and assessment in the educational environment, and like educator role definitions, educational structures are often set up in ways that “reflect the values and priorities of dominant groups in society,” yet they are mutable and may be “contested by individuals and groups” (Cummins, 2009b, p. 45).

In institutions of higher education writing centres are often perceived as one of the programs set up in support of literacy development for students who come to the academy without the requisite linguistic or literacy skills required therein. Other programs that are in place for multilingual students may include specialised language (ESL) classes or other diversely named literacy courses often required of students whose literacy skills are deemed below standard through testing or course work (see for example Marshall, Hayashi & Yeung, 2012).

The policies that often impact multilingual students include mandatory scores on standardised English exams (TOEFL, IELTS) and policies that tacitly emphasise monolingualism, such as edicts for Standard English (Horner and Trimbur, 2002). Additionally, academic integrity policies and the focus on individual achievement to the detriment of collaborative learning have also frequently impacted the writing centre and the policies within centres that often advocate for non-directive approaches for multilingual students. Indeed, Burlaga and Costino (2003) suggest that non-directive tutoring approaches were adapted and promoted in writing centres for the benefit of institutions who viewed collaboration as akin to plagiarism (p. 217). Clary and Healy
(1996) also suggest that minimalist tutoring was a strategy of “self defense” (p. 245) on the part of writing centres keen “to assure suspicious colleagues in other departments that writing centre instruction did not equal plagiarism” (Clark, 2001, p. 34).

Finally, given that academic writing is one of the key forms of assessment in higher education producing academic papers that meet the linguistic and disciplinary requirements are of immense importance for all students, but may provide the most significant challenges for those students who are the least familiar with academic conventions and/or multilingual speakers (Lillis, 1999).

While curriculum also plays an important role in the literacy practice in higher education, I focus here on the way the tutor’s or “teacher’s preferred pedagogical style,” which “also shapes curriculum implementation” (Werner, 1991, p. p. 110, emphasis original) given the reality that writing centre tutors often work with curriculum that they themselves did not develop.

**Pedagogical Orientations**

Cummins (2009b) presents a nested model of pedagogical orientations that move from transmission (narrow focus on skill transfer), to social constructivist (transmission of higher order abilities through teacher/student co-construction), to transformative (transmitting knowledge in ways that demonstrate power relations in ways that allow them to be contested/challenged). The pedagogical model I adopt here is similar in its continuum from transmission to transformation and its nested or encapsulated approach; however, its focus is specifically on the literacies students require for academic writing in higher education.

Lea and Street’s (1998) academic literacies approach is “concerned with a wider institutional approach to student writing, rather than merely locating “problems” with individual students” in order to “move away from a skills-based, deficit model of student writing to consider the complexity of writing practices that are taking place at degree level in universities” (p. 157). Similar to Cummins’ (2009b) model of pedagogical orientations, Lea and Street (1998) proposed three encapsulated approaches that move
from the most narrow skills focus to a broader focus on “institutional practices, power relations and identities” (p. 158). Figure 4 depicts the encapsulated model proposed by Lea and Street (1998).

*Figure 4. Models of Student Writing in Higher Education*

Adapted from Lea and Street (1998), Appendix, p. 172.

As Figure 4 demonstrates the narrowest focus on “study skills” represents the autonomous view of literacy that often informs approaches to academic writing in the academy. At this level the assumption is that students can simply be “given” the skills to prepare successful academic writing, which is reflected in the dominant deficit discourse that suggests writing centres “tidy” papers discussed above. Writing centres based on traditional rhetoric and surface level “fixing” represent the study skills model.

At the second level, academic socialisation, the focus is on students’ acculturation to the culture of the academy. Academic socialisation takes into account the study skills model wherein students need to understand surface features, but also attends to the cultural context in which learning takes place (Lea & Street, 1998). However, by failing to
understand the discursive power of literacy practices in the academy and the ways discourses differ across disciplines it assumes a singular culture is accessible to students through exposure, which grants access to the whole academy (Jones, Turner, & Street, 1999, p. xxi). Writing centres focused on making “better writers” show affinities with this approach as they assume that with instruction students will be able to unproblematically adapt to the academic writing norms of the institution without considering the power dynamics that are at play when students are expected to simply converge with expectations.

Finally, the third approach, academic literacies, provides the broadest lens for understanding student writing as it subsumes the study skills and academic socialisation models. Here literacy is seen as revolving in a variety of genres, fields, and disciplines meaning students require a broad range of literacies to function across contexts in higher education (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 159). Moreover, the academic literacies perspective pays attention to students’ identities and affective and ideological conflicts that may accompany writing within and across disciplines (Ivanic, 1998; Lea & Street, 1998, 2006). Within such a paradigm, then, Nancy Grimm (2011) suggests writing centres might advertise that they make a “better institution” through “challeng[ing] the privileging mechanisms in literacy education” (p. 87).

In applying their academic literacies model Lea and Street (1998) examined how students understood literacy practices as well as how instructors explained and understood literacy practices in disciplines. Lea and Street (1998) found that students frequently struggled with much more than surface level features, as students were challenged by the need to “course switch” when moving across disciplines and fields (p.161). The implicit nature of requirements and expectations that were held by professors were often neither communicated nor fully understood by students, yet problems were often seen at the surface level by instructors who encouraged students to visit the “Study Centre” where they may learn about the (supposedly generic) features of essay-writing (p. 167). Thus, Lea and Street (1998) surmised that epistemology and power relations impact the communication and validation of writing norms in the academy and learning to write
academically often entails far more than surface level features or the transfer of generic knowledge across disciplines.

Zhang’s (2011) study in a Canadian institution of higher education also sheds some light on the application of an academic literacies framework to student writing practices in higher education. Zhang (2011) interviewed 10 Chinese international graduate students to decipher their views on literacy practices across disciplines. Zhang found that many students dwelled on the problematic nature of surface errors in their writing and viewed their own writing as deficient, suggesting an autonomous view of literacy was at work. Similar to the students in Lea and Street’s (1998) study, students in Zhang’s study were sent to the writing centre to have writing “fixed” and students who used the writing centre felt that the lack of disciplinary knowledge meant the centre merely provided surface-level language support (p. 46). Zhang (2011) also found evidence of socialisation approaches at work, as students were often keen to adopt “legitimate” approaches in their academic writing through pursuing “acculturation into the mainstream disciplinary and institutional discourses” (p. 52). However, traces of academic literacies also appeared in Zhang’s data as two students were encouraged to integrate their identities and perspectives into their graduate level writing in history. Moreover, the researcher also discloses that although feelings of “suffocation” in trying to erase traces of “typical Chinese logic of writing” presented significant challenges for her upon first entering the Canadian academy, with the support of professors in education her identity investment and appreciation for Chinese academic writing practices were restored (Zhang, 2011, p.54).

While both of the studies above have shed light on the ways academic literacies can be applied to students’ and staff’s understandings of literacy practices in the academy, both have placed the writing centre within the “study skills” approach. However, one study from the writing centre itself provides insight into the application of academic literacies to writing centre work.

Archer’s (2008) study from the writing centre at the University of Cape Town employed an academic literacies approach to investigate the effects of writing centre interactions.
Archer interviewed 40 students (1/3 of whom were ESL students) and their writing consultants related to both interlocutors’ perceptions of the effect of the writing centre on their work. Archer echoes many other researchers in suggesting that students often come to the writing centre on the advice of faculty for language and grammar support (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002; Lea & Street, 1998; North, 1984; Zhang, 2011), yet grammar and language support were not the central focus in most interactions. Archer (2008) did find that focus on task (how to frame writing in discipline), voice, register and organisation as well as language usage were common (p. 255). Thus, Archer (2008) surmised that the writing centre was an important dialogical space for students’ voices to emerge, yet student responses tended to suggest this was done in a way akin to academic socialisation rather than contesting the discursive and disciplinary conventions that mark certain writing as successful (p. 259). However, Archer (2008) also explains that the study did not “overtly question the extent to which the students had become critical or gained meta-awareness, and also did not engage in a systematic analysis of affective identity issues which emerged in students’ comments” (p. 261).

Thus, academic literacies may hold promise for further understanding of writing centre work, and this may be especially valuable for writing centres working within disciplines (Barkas, 2011). Moreover, the encapsulated or nested approach may also provide ways to understand how surface-level language skills or improvement of written English language may help multilingual students to better “mediate with the academic surroundings and to negotiate identities and practices of meaning-making through engagement and participation” (Zhang, 2011, p. 55). Moreover, Archer (2008) suggests that writing centres may provide inroads into helping students to adapt to the discourses and genres of writing students are asked to undertake. However, as Archer’s study demonstrates, examining academic literacies also necessitates a framework that integrates analyses of identity and emotion as they relate to academic writing practices while also examining the ability of writing centres to help students develop a meta-awareness of power structures that are at play through this emotional process of identity negotiation.
On Margins, Contact Zones and the Liminal Space of the Writing Centre

Marginality, like the lore generated to combat it, has also ascended to near hegemonic status in descriptions of writing centre work. Indeed, Jackie Grutsch McKinney (2013) suggests the concept of marginality finds its way into narratives in the writing centre in three main ways. First, some try to negate marginality by suggesting that writing centres ought to simply value and promote their integral role in institutions of higher education (see for example: Kinkhead, 1996; Simpson, 1995). The second use of the marginal label suggests writing centres have moved past marginality through becoming multiliteracy centres (Isaacs, 2011; Murphy & Hawkes, 2010), or are now more integrated and central within their institutional spaces (Harris, 2011; Pemberton, 2011). Finally, there are those who suggest marginality affords space to critique and transform (North & Brannon, 2000), “bastardize” (Boquet, 2002), or change (Denny, 2010) the institution. Thus, as Grutsch McKinney (2013) states “marginal” has become iconoclastic in the writing centre narrative. However, I would argue that marginality, however storied, has often been about the writing centre vis-à-vis the institution, yet applying such labels also suggests students are marginal by proxy. Indeed, “talking about not being marginal means talking about being marginal” (Grutsch McKinney, 2013, p. 43, emphasis mine).

Thus, in moving beyond the marginal label other scholars have theorised the writing centre as a “contact zone.” Janice Wolff (2000) employs Pratt’s “Contact Zone” to describe writing centres as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (Pratt in Wolff, 2000, p. 44). For Wolff (2000) writing centres are thus places where power is present and discomfort often arises before “comfort zones” are negotiated wherein marginalised writers can learn “risk free” in the “safe house” of the writing centre (p. 45). Similarly, Twila Papay (2002) shares her experience visiting a writing centre in South Africa where creating a “comfort zone” for students often led to conversations in the “contact zone” where “engaging students to confront the possibility of alternative readings” took place (p. 17). Finally, Kathleen Shine Cain (2011) describes
her experience in a writing centre in Belfast where students’ lived realities of colonization and oppression were met with an academy keen to “socialize” and “induct” students into the academic culture (p. 74). For Cain (2011) the experience reified the need for North American writing centres to embrace the notion of “contact zones” that embrace more fully “their responsibility in dismantling oppressive institutional practices… to transform the center from a site of collaboration with the institution to a liminal space that, while recognizing its role within the institution, celebrates collaboration with a larger community” (p. 80-81).

While the contact zone metaphor is fitting and the accounts are compelling, in writing centre work the accounts listed above provide less insight into the ways contact zones can be fully understood, articulated or created within the context of writing centre work. Thus, in understanding the writing centre as a place wherein identities are in flux, often in ways that elicit emotional responses, I draw on the concept of liminality. Writing centre scholars such as Elizabeth Boquet (2002) have pointed to the possibilities inherent in imaging the writing centre as a liminal space. Boquet (2002) suggests that writing centres that transform rather than contain, embrace chaos and order simultaneously creating a “liminal zone” wherein neat and orderly procedures are interrupted with the “here and now” of interactions (p. 84). While “chaos” certainly suggests writing centre work is complex, liminality holds promise beyond simply complicating narratives in the writing centre.

Bonnie Sunstein (1998) undertakes a comprehensive discussion on the concept of liminality and its application to the writing centre site in her article “Moveable Feasts, Liminal Spaces: Writing Centers and the State of In-Betweenness.” Sunstein (1998) describes the writing centre as existing in a liminal space wherein “a tangled tension between our students, their texts, their readers, ourselves, our texts, and our readings of their texts” characterises interactions (p. 14). Moreover, Sunstein (1998) notes how the writing centre can be a place where students may come feeling fear, even humiliation, and risks are taken that allow for moments of “teachability” (p. 14).
In her discussion on liminality, Sunstein (1998) delineates six states of liminality implicated in writing centre work. The first is textual liminality where writing centres engage in “pieces of the process of text making” and authors and readers negotiate meaning and positions (p. 15). The second is pedagogical liminality, which illuminates the intimate, one-to-one nature of writing centres in large, often impersonal academies. The third is spatial liminality, a metaphorical understanding of writing boundaries and territories, those that are set and those that can be rewritten. Fourth, cultural liminality describes writing centres as spaces where cultures and languages “meet, meld and mix” through interactions (p. 19). Fifth, writing centres are places of professional liminality where affiliations and allegiances shift and change. Finally, academic and institutional liminality begets the blurred disciplines, shifting institutional spaces and budgets, and the diversity of students and needs writing centres support.

While Sunstein’s (1998) articulations of liminality certainly provide considerable insight into the “in-betweenness” of writing centre work, liminality here still dwells on the marginality of the writing centre as a space where “not belonging” becomes celebrated as generating a space where writing centre staff “can see, listen, talk, read, write and teach” (p. 23, emphasis original). Thus, despite the multitude of ways liminality fits into Sunstein’s (1998) discussion, her emphasis is often on the writing centre vis-à-vis the institution, which still overshadows the writing centre vis-à-vis the students. Thus, in order to not dwell on the marginality of the writing centre (although there is certainly evidence of it) nor “mark” students as marginal, I turn to literature outside of the writing centre in developing the concept of liminality as a threshold practice in student academic writing.

Lesley Gourlay (2009) develops “liminality” as a threshold concept wherein students are in “a state of indeterminacy, emotional destabilization and status ambiguity in transition” (p. 184). For Gourlay (2009) the concept of liminality provides a complement to analyses of language use, which is well matched with an academic literacies model wherein literacy practices are socially situated and complex. Moreover, for Gourlay (2009) liminality also necessitates attention to, and garners recognition of, the destabilising
nature of transition, the indeterminacy of academic writing, and its effect on student identity and emotion (p. 184).

In applying this model, Gourlay (2009) studied the experiences of first year students in the UK with specific attention to the relationships between writing and transition. Gourlay (2009) found that as students enter the academy academic writing practices are often the least well explained, yet participation in the implicit norms is imperative for students to succeed. For students in Gourlay’s study intense emotion, failure, and worry surrounded academic writing, which made students feel ambiguous about their status as “students” and their abilities to transition into the identity role of “student” in higher education (Gourlay, 2009, p. 185). However, Gourlay (2009) also found that feedback and clarity on expectations produced confidence and a greater sense of belonging in institutions of higher education among students. Indeed, Gourlay (2009) suggests that for the students in her study

there was (at least a partial) resolution of confusion surrounding academic writing requirements via engagement in the process, achieved through an emotionally demanding struggle with troubling, unfamiliar and tacit practices, and resulting ultimately in an increased degree of confidence and a sense of legitimacy/belonging as students (p. 188)

Thus, Gourlay surmises that had there been opportunities for student to understand and discuss the implicit requirements, some of the emotional struggles may have been avoided for students at the onset. Additionally, the author suggests that liminality not be seen as a linear “breakthrough” that moves students from inside to outside, although these breakthroughs do happen, students will experience liminal spaces as they transverse through their degrees (Gourlay, 2009, p. 189). While Gorulay’s concept of liminality in investigating academic literacy practices is illuminating for its focus on the complex identity negotiations that beget strong emotions, I argue that it must be placed within a critical framework to examine modes of belonging beyond socialisation.

This tripartite framework is rooted in the perspective that literacy practices are always socially and contextually situated. Therefore, in drawing on Cummins’ (2001) framework of societal power relations it accounts for the ways macro interactions and discourses
effect the role definitions of writing centre tutors. Moreover, the framework developed does not see pedagogical practices as distinct and exclusive, rather the nested model positions pedagogical approaches as fluid within the literacy events of writing centre tutorials. Following Lea and Street (1998, 2006) the academic literacies model also provides a framework for understanding how students and their tutors understand literacy practices, from narrow study skills, to acculturation, to the broader academic literacies perspective. Finally, in theorising the writing centre space as one of liminality for both the tutors and the students, it is attentive to the ways emotion and identity are implicated in the interactions therein and generates a frame to understand how diverse practices may act to include or exclude the participation of multilingual students in the literacy practices of the academy. Finally, this framework is not linear but interconnected and recursive and provides lenses to view both the macro and micro relations that impact writing centre work and the tutors and students who take part in interactions.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided an overview of existing writing centre theory, and the lore-based theorising that has informed much of the work therein. It has also reviewed the growing body of empirical literature on multilingual students in the writing centre sketching out the need for more theoretically and empirically informed research on the ways writing centres support and/or impede the literacy practices of multilingual students. It has also explained the theoretical and conceptual frames that guided this study and the analyses of the data. The following chapter delineates the methodological approach undertaken in this study to investigate the main research question and related sub-questions.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to understand and illuminate the ways writing centres in the selected anglophone institutions of higher education describe the ways they support multilingual students’ literacy practices and how such interactions are enacted in a single case study site. This research engages with a growing body of critical writing centre scholarship that suggests the old, codified practices or “lore” that informs writing centre work may be implicated in institutional discourses and power relations creating ineffective and disempowering writing centre approaches with multilingual speakers (see for example: Allen, 2009; Bailey, 2012; Grimm, 2009; Wang, 2012). Through engaging in a discursive analysis of writing centre websites and publications this research first contextualises the expressed goals, mission and services of several writing centres across contexts. Once a broad understanding of the discourses that circulate among and within these contexts is reached, an in-depth case study examines the perspectives and experiences of writing centre stakeholders in a single writing centre site through interviews, focus groups, and observations. The guiding research question for this study was:

How do writing centres in select(ive) anglophone institutions describe their roles related to the development/support of multilingual students’ literacy practices and how are such roles enacted in a single case study site?

The related sub-questions were:

1. a) What does critical discourse analysis reveal about the situational discourses and expressed pedagogical approaches of select(ive) writing centres across contexts in anglophone institutions of higher education?

b) How do the situational discourses of writing centres sampled address/exclude multilingual students?
2. How do writing centre directors/leadership in the case study site hire, train, and expect writing tutors enact their roles with multilingual writers?

3. How do advisors describe their roles and what pedagogical practices do they enact when working with multilingual students in the case study site?

4. a) How do multilingual students describe their experiences and interactions in the case study site?

b) In what ways do the interactions in the case study site help/modify/subvert multilingual students’ abilities to negotiate literacies and identities?

In this chapter I will first outline the rationale for the critical discourse analysis of writing centre sites and the case study, and provide some background on both approaches. Following an overview of the overarching methods used I describe the rationale, data collection processes, sample selection/participant recruitment, and approaches to data analysis at the macro, discursive level, as well as the case study analyses at the micro-level of this study. Because this study employs multiple methods, which are analysed separately, I outline the collection methods, sample/participant selection and data analysis techniques for the website analysis and the case study separately. Finally I will discuss the ethical considerations, trustworthiness and limitations of the methodological procedures used in this study.

**Qualitative Research Design**

Given that the aim of this study was to understand the ways in which selected writing centre stakeholders across contexts in anglophone academies describe the role of the writing centre in supporting multilingual speakers, to develop an understanding of the broader writing centre “ethos” across contexts, I chose to approach the study using a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach was appropriate for this research as it allowed for “an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world” wherein it was possible to study experiences in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of “the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000,
A qualitative approach also allowed for the exploration of multiple realities that emerge from experiences of the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 16). Moreover, qualitative research is amenable to a host of data collection techniques including interactive methods, such as interviews and observations, as well as non-interactive methods, such as artefact and document analysis.

Additionally, qualitative research pays close attention to environments and contexts which give phenomenon meaning. Indeed, as Brett Sutton (1993) suggests, a central goal “that many forms of qualitative research share is the cultivation, in addition to an understanding of the data, of an understanding of the context from which the data are derived” (413). Given the importance of context and broader institutional narratives that inform not only the site of the case study, but also the approaches writing centres adopt across these contexts, this research adopted a qualitative approach that integrated two diverse research strategies.

The qualitative research design in this study departs from the use of a single qualitative approach as it integrates two separate qualitative research techniques concurrently in the data collection process. The use of two separate qualitative components, and two separate data sets is consistent with a “multimethod design” (Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015) or a “multiple method project” (Morse, 2010). The multiple method approach differs from the mixed methods approach in that “each method is complete in itself,” and the two pieces may be published separately or synthesised to inform a single project (Morse, 2009, p. 1523). The design is also a concurrent design in which the two qualitative approaches occur at roughly the same time (Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015). This project employed: 1) the collection and analysis of discourses employed on writing centre websites from writing centres across selected contexts to provide a macro context, and; 2) an in-depth case study to provide a detailed and comprehensive description of a single writing centre site.

The combination of the two qualitative methods was important to understand both the macro and micro-levels of writing centre approaches to multilingual writers. The analysis
of the macro-level context combined with the micro-level case study is consistent with
the reason one adopts a multimethod approach as one can analyse data at more than one
level in a multimethod project (Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015). Furthermore, combing the
macro and micro qualitative components is also congruent with a case study design,
which “can be used with other research strategies to address related questions in different
phases of a research project” (Hartley, 1994, p. 215).

**Critical Discourse Analysis of Writing Centre Websites: Macro-Level Analysis**

According to Saichaie (2011) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is “a means to describe,
analyse and interpret textual and visual representations at local, institutional and societal
levels” (p. 54). Indeed, through careful analysis of and between texts and artefacts, CDA
not only analyses text, but also includes analyses of “the relationship between texts,
processes and social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context
and the more remote conditions of institutions and social structures” (Fairclough, 1989, p.
26). As this research sought to understand how writing centres across the selected
contexts describe their roles, it also considered how writing centres situate themselves in
relation to students, institutions and broader dialogues related to internationalisation of
higher education environments and the ever increasing multilingualism that defines such
environments. CDA provided a useful framework to “systematically explore often opaque
relationships of causality and determination between a) discursive practices, events and
texts, and b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes” (Fairclough,
1993, p. 135).

Writing centre websites, like university websites in general, are in fact sites wherein
“discursive events” or occurrences of language use as social practice take place
(Fairclough, 1993, p. 138). As such, these sites are fertile grounds for discursive analyses
following Fairclough’s three-dimensional model. As such, several other studies have
employed Fairclough’s techniques for discursive analyses of university websites in order
to understand how universities market themselves to external and internal audiences and
how the approaches taken provide insights into individual institutions’ mores/norms
while allowing for comparisons of similarities and differences across contexts (Chiper, 2006; Saichaie, 2010, 2011).

In *Representation on College and University Websites: An Approach Using Critical Discourse Analysis*, Kem Saichaie (2011) examined the institutional websites of 12 different universities to understand the ways diverse institutions represented themselves to prospective students. Saichaie used Fairclough’s (1985, 1992) model of critical discourse analysis in order to understand and analyse the language used within and across sites. Saichaie (2011) found that despite the differences that characterised the diverse institutions, there were similar representations of “higher education” across institutions and a tendency for universities to use their websites to establish their own prestige and relevance.

In a similar study that employed CDA to analyse the discourses of Romanian universities, Sorina Chiper (2006) examined the websites of 10 private and public universities in Romania. Chiper also compared the discourses employed by Romanian universities with the discourses circulating in universities from the UK, France, Italy and Germany. Chiper’s research pays close attention to the reformation processes that Romania was undergoing as it vied for entry into the EU, a political reality that impacted universities. Chiper found that universities in Romania adopted vocabulary and language that was characteristic of their “Western” counterparts suggesting they had been “colonized by EU educational discourse” (p. 716). However, Chiper also found “instances of slippage” into local discourses that recontextualised the neo-liberal discourses borrowed from the EU educational context (p. 720). Chiper’s study also provides a valuable examination of the public discourses of universities through using critical discourse analysis to examine the linkages between discourses, social change, politics, context and history.

This thesis employs a similar approach to those of Saichaie and Chiper to examine the websites of writing centres in institutions of higher education. The aim was to analyse the differences and similarities in the ways writing centres across the chosen contexts represent themselves publically across contexts within broader social and political discourses of higher education.
Sample selection

One university and their corresponding writing centre website was chosen from each of the following four countries: Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States to generate perspectives from outside of Canada. An additional four universities and their corresponding writing centre websites were chosen from across Canada. Finally, an additional three websites from the University of Toronto were also analysed. The twelfth website in the sample was the OISE Student Success Centre (OSSC) website wherein the case study is situated.

The process of choosing the twelve websites was purposeful, but selection criteria was not overly rigid in an attempt to generate a sample that allowed for diversification. The choice of contexts was intentional and strategic. Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States in addition to the Canadian sites were chosen as they are labelled as “inner circle” states wherein “traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English” are inscribed in sociolinguistic practices (Kachru, 1985). Although it is certainly true that differences among and across institutions in these diverse contexts exist, because this thesis is concerned with language, and particularly the traditions and norms related to the conventions of academic writing in English, comparisons are possible. It is possible to posit some basic norms related to academic writing that may impact how writing centres have emerged, evolved and defined their practice and work. Indeed, as Joan Turner notes (2011) “the hegemonic assumptions that Kachru’s phraseology of “inner circle” brings with it (Kachru, 1985, 1992), constitute the mediating ground for the performance of intercultural communication,” spoken English and academic writing at the institutional level within western, anglophone universities (p.8-9).

Once the broad contexts were selected, the particular websites were selected through consulting the QS World University Rankings for 2014/2015. The overall rankings were filtered by international student ratio. Applying the international student ratio filter acted solely to provide an organising concept for understanding the placement of the comparison schools in relation to the case study site at the University of Toronto. Additionally, filtering by international student ratio was undertaken as this indicator may
indicate a larger number of multilingual students and an international recruitment agenda that also includes mechanisms for support for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds, such as writing centres. However, I emphasise that using the international student ratio filter was not intended to suggest that all international students are multilingual or that international student enrolment is necessarily indicative of the number of multilingual students at a particular institution. Rather, I sought a way to organise data and to ensure some comparable bases to undertake the analyses.

Furthermore, the QS World Rankings are by no means the only published rankings of universities, nor necessarily the most reliable, but I sought to choose institutions across contexts that had been assessed and positioned on a number of indicators in order to guide my search for comparable writing centre websites. Through the QS World Rankings site I also made efforts to choose large, public universities that were located in major urban centres with sizeable (defined as large or extra-large by QS standards) student populations.

Within the University of Toronto context, professional faculties became the focus of analysis as the disciplinary-based support provided in these centres provided an additional and useful level of comparison with the other sites in the sample as well as with the case study site. Table 3 provides a brief overview of the eight institutions outside of the University of Toronto chosen for the contextual review. Table 4 provides an overview of the faculties chosen within the University of Toronto context.
### Table 3. International and Cross-Canada Writing Centre Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>QS 2014/2015 Ranking</th>
<th>International student ranking</th>
<th>Size of Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian National University</td>
<td>Canberra, Australia</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalhousie University</td>
<td>Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill University</td>
<td>Montreal, Quebec, Canada</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University College London</td>
<td>London, England</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Extra Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Alberta</td>
<td>Edmonton, Alberta, Canada</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>Extra Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of British Columbia</td>
<td>Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>Extra Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California, Berkeley</td>
<td>Berkeley, California, United States of America</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>Extra Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Otago</td>
<td>Dunedin, New Zealand</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
<td>Toronto, Ontario, Canada</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>Extra Large</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. University of Toronto Writing Centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Centre</th>
<th>Faculty(ies) Served</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daniels Writing Centre</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OISE Student Success Centre</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Communication Centre</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Health Sciences Writing Centre             | Dentistry
Nursing
Pharmacy/Pharmaceutical Sciences
Kinesiology & Physical Education
Social Work |

Data collection and analysis: Writing centre websites

Data Collection
The study undertook a detailed analysis of writing centre websites at international, national, and institutional levels following the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The CDA of writing centre websites was undertaken to generate understandings of the ways writing centres across the selected contexts define and describe their roles and practices in order to situate the in-depth case study within broader discourses from writing centres abroad, across Canada and within the University of Toronto. As stated above, although efforts were made to select universities following broad guidelines, the sample is contextually diverse and includes variation. However, all of the institutions selected met the following criteria: a) located in “inner circle” or historically anglophone speaking nations; b) large or very large in terms of student population; c) located in an urban centre; d) rated within the top 300 universities worldwide; e) ranked within the top 300 in international student ratio worldwide; f) have an institutionally-administered centre that provided academic and/or writing support. Despite these similarities the institutions chosen necessarily varied across sites, nonetheless employing CDA to examine these sites is appropriate as such an approach
allows the researcher to compare and contrast artefacts to discover differences and similarities (Saichaie, 2011, p. 62).

Once the institutions were chosen and the appropriate student centre/writing centre website was located, I made strategic decisions related to the foci of analysis from within and across the twelve sites. Indeed, such analyses require selectivity as “in any analysis, we choose to ask certain questions” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 1) and therefore must define the scope of the data to be collected. Thus, the features of particular interest were the branding/name of the centre (multiliteracy centre, writing centre, success centre) and descriptions of services, vision, mandate, and any references to multilingual, ESL or international students. In some cases, the main “landing page” of the writing centre website contained the relevant descriptions of services and vision as well as references to particular student groups the centre served. In other cases, navigation between pages including “services,” “FAQs,” “mandate” and “book an appointment” were necessary to gather the key information that formed the data for the discursive analysis. Some sites included lengthy descriptions within several linked pages, while other sites listed all relevant information on a single page. Many sites also included links to external content including additional content related to academic success, academic writing standards and advice, and other services for student support within the institution. The types of content that were linked from the sites under analysis were noted; however, the content of the linked material was not analysed as such analyses were beyond the scope of this project which remains focused on nomenclature, services, visions/mandates and support for multilingual students across writing centre sites.

Data Analysis

Once chosen, each of the websites and its contents were analysed following Fairclough’s (1993, 1995, 2001) model of critical discourse analysis. The integrated three-dimensional model goes beyond textual analysis to include an analysis of “the relationship between texts, processes, and social conditions, both at the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutions and social structures” (p.26). Following Fairclough’s (1995) model, the researcher describes, interprets and explains
the text through the dimensions of textual analysis, process analysis and societal analysis respectively.

At the first level the focus is on the description of textual features. At this level insights from critical linguistics and textual analysis guide the researcher in systematically describing the features of the text that will later be interpreted and explained. Researchers may note the repetition of words or pay attention to the way visuals interact with or replace text where texts and visuals are present (Saichaie, 2011, p. 46). For example, the repetition of words such as “collaboration” and “tutoring” may be paired with pictures of students and tutors sitting side by side working on a text. Researchers may also describe the text through linguistic features such as transitivity, voice, mood, modality, theme lexicalisation, and pronouns, to name a few (Janks, 2005). Paying attention to features such pronouns are important for textual descriptions as the use of we/you (inclusive) versus us/them (othering) provide different cues that are important for the interpretation of the text. At this level close attention is paid to the linguistic features of the text, yet the description and cataloguing of these features provide the basis for the second, interpretive phase.

The second level of Fairclough’s model is at the process level wherein interpretations of the text are made. Fairclough (1992) describes this level as involving an examination of “discursive practice,” which is the process of production, distribution and consumption of a text (p. 78). The interpretations that take place at the process level examine the ways in which the data and its producer(s) are related and the sociocognitive aspects of production and interpretation (Fairclough, 2001). For example, a text produced for distribution on a university website will necessarily be produced in ways that anticipate audiences who will consume the text. Such texts will be produced within particular social structures and conventions and texts may retain cues related to the production process, which provide grounds for interpretation. Texts produced in sophisticated institutional environments (such as higher education institutions) may also be produced in order to anticipate audiences for consumption including “addressees (those directly addressed),” “hearers (those not addressed directly, but assumed to be part of the audience),” and
“overhearers” (those who are not part of the “official” audience yet may still consume the text) (Fairclough, 1992, p. 79-80). Thus, in the case of a writing centre website in a higher education environment the target “addressee” is likely current students, while faculty and prospective students may be “hearers” and university administration or communications teams may be “overhearers;” the text may take into account these multiple consumers in discernible ways that provide additional cues for the researcher.

Finally, the consumption of the text is also likely to differ across social contexts and with the interpretive frames one applies to understand those—words scratched on a bench in a park will likely use interpretative resources differently than questions in an examination booklet in an educational context. Thus, paying close and systematic attention to the dimensions of the functional parts and content situated in the data (or text) is the analytical approach at the process level (Saichaie, 2011, p. 133).

In order to undertake such a content analysis, Fairclough (2001) provides a useful interpretive framework to guide the analytical approach at the process level. The framework includes attention to contents, subjects, relations, and connections, each of which has questions to guide the researcher in systematic interpretation. This framework is depicted in Figure 5 below.
Figure 5. Fairclough’s Interpretive Analysis Framework


Through asking the questions suggested in the interpretive framework the researcher is able to examine the features that make up the message and decipher additional meanings within the texts (Saichaie, 2011, p. 46). However, the interpretations are placed in historical, social, cultural, and political contexts through the explanations gleaned from the third dimension of Fairclough’s model.

Within the final level of analysis, explanations are made possible through placing the language in context with wider political, social, historical, and cultural discourses. These wider discourses may come from “the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutions and social structures” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 26). Given the discernible themes and ideologies that exist in a large body of writing centre literature regarding theory and practice, writing centres may be understood as representative of particular situational contexts. Indeed, despite challenges a “relatively familiar pattern emerges” in the storying of writing centre work as a hegemonic, “grand narrative” governs what is possible, and what is omitted, in the situational discourses of
writing centre work (Grutsch McKinney, 2013, p.3). With this in mind, the research aimed to explain how such writing centre discourses are enacted on institutional websites. The inclusion of samples from within and outside of North America was important as much of the literature that coalesces around particular themes is produced within North American contexts. Thus, the immediate, situational context was framed by meta-discourses of writing centre work as produced and disseminated in scholarly literature in order to interrogate and explain if/how the websites employ writing centre “lore” and/or the more critical literacy frameworks introduced into this body of literature over the last 10 years.

At the institutional level, the themes and insights gathered were analysed within broader narratives circulating in institutions of higher education including internationalisation, positions on literacy/(ies), multiliterate/multicultural sensibilities, and deficit-based approaches to academic writing and student support. Through using these broader frames in analyses of the language employed on writing centre sites, it was possible to posit reasons for the prolific use of words such as “success” and “collaboration” as well as provide context related to the ways writing centres privilege certain types of support while admonishing others.

Importantly, CDA aims to articulate a perspective that is critical of power relationships and the hegemonic processes through which it is secured. For this reason, CDA’s attention to the wider social, cultural, historical and political structures through which texts are influenced, interpreted and altered provides a basis for exploring the ways in which power relationships are shaped, upheld and/or contested through language (Fairclough, 1993, p. 135). Paying attention to ideologies and hegemonies is important to this research project as the literature review in the previous chapter revealed that writing centre theory/practice, literacy discourses, and institutional narratives related to language, literacy(ies) and multilingualism are the subject of challenge and debate. Examining how these discourses are “being represented, respon​ken, or rewritten sheds light on the emergence of new orders of discourse, struggles over normativity, attempts at control, and resistance against regimes of power” (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 449).
Thus, the critical discourse analysis (CDA) applied to writing centre sites in this study describes, interprets and explains the language used on the selected writing centre websites through undertaking textual, process and social analyses within and across the chosen contexts. Fairclough’s three-dimensional model provided a framework to undertake the analyses within three overlapping frames while paying attention to ideology, hegemonies and power structures and struggles in broader contexts in which the language is situated. The insights gained from the analyses of writing centre websites sought to provide context at the macro-level across sites in order to situate the micro-level analyses within the case study within a broader framework of writing centre discourses.

**The Case Study: Micro-Level Analysis**

As this study sought to understand and explain how diverse interlocutors in a selected writing centre describe practices and approaches to support multilingual students’ literacy practices, the second phase of this study employed a qualitative case study design. Case studies are chosen for their ability to provide particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam, 1998). Through collecting the experiences and perceptions of writing centre stakeholders, observing interactions and analysing diverse artefacts, this study pursued holistic and descriptive accounts from within a single writing centre site to generate new insights on the interactions therein. Indeed, the descriptive and inclusive accounts recorded through cases studies provide a basis for advancing new knowledge in fields such as education (Merriam, 1998, p. 32).

Case study research can be diversely understood as a process, a unit of analysis and as an end product of a research program (Merriam, 1998). Indeed, Yin’s (2003) definition of a case study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context…” points to the process of carrying out a case study (p. 13). Meanwhile, other scholars focus on the “bounded” or “fenced in” nature of the phenomenon, context, system or social unit that is the focus of analysis in case study research (Creswell, 1994, Miles & Huberman, 1994; Merriam, 1998; Smith, 1978).
Others still provide definitions that refer to the product wherein “a case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit” and is “particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 46).

Case study designs may be chosen when “how” or “why” questions are the focus of inquiry (Yin, 2003) and when “the description of the events is blended with the analysis of events” (Scholz & Tietje, 2002, p. 182). Qualitative case study research also allows participants to provide thorough, detailed descriptions to generate a rich, inclusive body of data to understand a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 1994, p. 2.). Indeed, qualitative case studies, like qualitative research in general, permit “richness and holism” and provide “thick descriptions that are vivid, nested in a real context and have a ring of truth that has a strong impact on the reader” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10, emphasis original). A qualitative case study was appropriate for this research as it allowed for depth and detail in descriptions of peoples’ experiences and interactions, and the meanings they attach to them in their own words and settings (Patton, 1980, p.22).

A case study design was amenable to a micro-level analysis of a single writing centre site in that it allowed me to get as close to the subjectivities of participants as possible “partly by means of direct observation in natural settings” as well as through “access to subjective factors (thoughts, feelings, and desires)” through interviews and focus groups (Bromley, 1986, p. 23). The flexible, holistic and descriptive nature of the case study allowed me to employ multiple data collection techniques with embedded units of analysis in order “to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study” (Becker, 1968, p. 233). Indeed, the contextualised and participant-centred accounts achievable through case study research that focus on description and interpretation have produced valuable insights into the realities of writing centre practice.

In “Novice tutors and their ESL tutees: Three case studies of tutor roles and perceptions of tutorial success,” Sara Weigle and Gayle Nelson (2004) undertook a case study to examine how tutors enrolled in a class on second language writing worked with non-native speaking (NNS) tutees. In this case study three student/tutor dyads were the focus
of analysis to understand how they negotiated their roles in tutoring sessions and how these negotiations led to perceptions of successful writing tutorials.

Similarly, Chiu (2011) employed a sociocultural framework to undertake a multiple case study that included five dyads of Mandarin Chinese speaking students and their native English speaking writing consultants. Specifically Chiu’s research examined the use of language-related episodes (LREs) in collaborative dialogues in the writing centre, and the extent to which these LREs supported the expressed goal of the writing centre to create better writers. In both of these case studies the researchers made use of the flexible design of case study research to employ various methods of data collection including interviews, observations and document/artefact analysis.

My case study also employed “the case study’s unique strength… to deal with a full variety of evidence—documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations” (Yin, 2003, p. 8). The use of multiple sources of data for corroboration is common in case studies and contributes to the trustworthiness of the data (Merriam, 1998). The sources of data in this case study included: a) interviews with key stakeholders in the writing centre under investigation, b) non-participant or naturalistic observations, c) focus groups, d) the collection and analysis of documents and artefacts. The use of these multiple sources of evidence may be one of the most advantageous outcomes of case studies as they allow the researcher to undertake analyses which develop “converging lines of inquiry” (Yin, 2003, p. 98) or methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1984). Indeed, employing multiple data collection techniques allows for the strengths of the diverse collection methods to overcome the weaknesses of any one method. Triangulation in case study research thus permits for the findings or conclusions generated to be “much more convincing and accurate if [the findings are] based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode” (Yin, 2003, p. 98). However, an important consideration to make when designing a case study and choosing the method(s) of data collection is the type of case study to be pursued and the appropriate data collection approaches to illuminate features of interest.
According to Merriam (1988), “case studies in education can be further defined by arranging them into categories or types based on disciplinary orientation or by function, that is, whether the overall intent is to describe, interpret, or evaluate some phenomenon or to unit of analysis” (p. 34). Thus, Merriam (1988) delineates three types of case study, namely descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative, which are diversely applied based on the overall intent of the research (p. 38). Descriptive case studies are those that aim to provide in-depth descriptions of the data as it occurs (Zainal, 2007, p. 3) and are not necessarily guided by theory or motivated to produce hypotheses. Rather, descriptive case studies aim to provide useful information where prior research on the phenomena in question is scarce (Merriam, 1988, p. 38). Like their descriptive counterpart, interpretive case studies also generate thick descriptions of the data, but such case studies also aim to develop conceptual categories or demonstrate, subvert, or corroborate existing theoretical presuppositions (Merriam, 1988, p. 39). Interpretive case studies may set out to illuminate relationships or construct a theory. Finally, evaluative case studies also provide descriptions and explanations (including relationships or theory-building), while also levelling judgement or undertaking assessments of the data (Merriam, 1988, p. 40).

Merriam’s (1988) categorisations echo the types of case studies outlined by Yin (2003), which include exploratory (initial research or pilot study), descriptive (rich narrative accounts), and explanatory (explain phenomena through testing or developing a theory) (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Zainal, 2007). Despite delineating these categories, both Merriam (1988) and Yin (1984) caution researchers not to take a separate or hierarchical view of case study typologies; rather, cases may fit into more than one category necessitating a pluralistic and inclusive approach to the typologies.

As this research aimed to record and illustrate students’ and advisors’ experiences, it has a descriptive component. Indeed it is descriptive because it invites participants to “tell it like they see it” (Denzin, 1978, p. 10), and the data provides rich illustrations and records the narratives of participants’ experiences. Such an approach produces contextualised understandings of situations and interactions through allowing participants to explain what it means to “be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting” (Patton in
Merriam, 1988, p.14). However, the case is also interpretive as it also sets out to understand, explain, and/or challenge existing categorisations of writing centre work. Although the case study resisted placing experiences and descriptions within predetermined, standardised categories, a theoretical and conceptual frame guided the data collection and analysis.

Thus, this case study, like many case studies, is a combination of description and interpretation (Merriam, 1988, p. 29). In the writing centre community qualitative, empirical case studies that integrate theoretical perspectives are a valued form of practitioner research for illuminating the subjectivities and practices of participants in writing centre environments (Gillesepie, Gillam, Brown & Stay, 2009, p, xxii). Thus, it is through description and interpretation that this case study aimed to add depth to the existing body of writing centre literature allowing for the voices of tutors and students to be heard to reveal the real tensions interlocutors in the writing centre negotiate every day in the face of institutional expectations and the broader narratives of the writing centre. The theoretically informed interpretations allowed for the neat narratives that often circulate around writing centre work to be reinforced, critiqued and/or negotiated through the experiences of participants. Through the rich descriptions and theoretically-informed interpretations it aims to respond to Elizabeth Boquet’s (2002) challenge to make the “noise” from a writing centre site audible through collecting data that privileges the voices of those who populate it.

In an effort to account for the multiplicity of voices in the writing centre, this research also employed an embedded case study design to enable analysis of subunits or different participant groups in the writing centre. These subunits included the advisors and multilingual students who interact, learn and teach within writing centre and the leadership who administer, oversee and guide the objectives of the same site. In such an embedded case study design the multiplicity of evidence is investigated at least partly in subunits, which focus on different salient aspects of the case. In an organizational case study, for example, the main unit may be a company as a whole, and the smallest units may be departments or even groups of individuals, such as owners and employees (Scholz & Tietie, 2002, p. 9-10).
The subunits in this study permitted a holistic view of the practices in the writing centre in question as the diverse perspectives provided insight into the vision and pedagogy as expressed by leadership, the implementation of the vision and pedagogy by advisors, and the reception of the enacted pedagogy from the perspectives of multilingual students. In effect, in many instances the participants were asked to reflect on similar questions, topics and themes, yet the embedded approach captured diverse perspectives from the differential positioning of the participants. As Baxter and Jack (2008) suggest, this “ability to look at sub-units that are situated within a larger case is powerful when you consider that data can be analysed within the subunits separately (within case analysis), between the different subunits (between case analysis), or across all of the subunits (cross-case analysis)” (p. 550).

Having outlined the features of this case study, it is important to return to the definition of the case study, which necessitates setting boundaries for the case. The most obvious boundaries of this case are those around the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education’s Student Success Centre (OSSC), as participants were either leadership/administrators, advisors or student users within the OSSC. The OSSC site was chosen for this study as the centre is one that supports a diverse multilingual and multicultural student population in the faculty of education at the University of Toronto. The multiplicity of services offered as well as the disciplinary-focused support provided a unique case that provided useful insight related to service delivery in a writing centre that is tailored to the specific needs of a student population. Consequently, focusing on the OSSC as a single case is in many ways an examination of an atypical or unique case, which is consistent with the reasons researchers choose single case designs (Yin, 2003, p. 23). Indeed, the insights gained from unique or “atypical cases... are essential for understanding the range or variety of human experience, which is essential for understanding and appreciating the human condition” (Abramson, 1992, p. 190). However, the focus of this research was on the one-to-one academic writing support and the ways in which multilingual students and their peer advisors negotiated institutional expectations, literacy norms and interpersonal interactions in the OSSC environment, foci which are certainly pertinent to other writing
centres, language learning programs and student support services in linguistically diverse environments.

Finally, as an advisor and subsequently coordinator of the Centre I had a thorough understanding of the environment, the students and advisors who populate the centre and a keen interest in discovering how the different stakeholders experienced the diverse initiatives in the OSSC, which was most appropriately pursued through a case study research design.

This section has outlined how a single, embedded qualitative case study employed diverse data collection strategies to generate rich, descriptive data in order to understand the experiential realities of diverse stakeholders in the writing centre site. The subsequent section outlines the strategies employed to recruit participants and profiles the participants who took part in the study.

Case Study Participants

The primary participants in this case study were multilingual students who used the OSSC services and the advisors who worked with these students. Members of the OSSC leadership team with varying levels of engagement in the administration of the services were also invited to participate in this research. Participants were selected through purposive or purposeful sampling in order to pursue depth and detail in the data while maintaining a manageable sample size. Purposeful sampling is “selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth… in order learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). For this case study the broad criteria for selecting student informants included that the student was multilingual and had visited the OSSC for one-on-one writing tutorials. The overarching criteria for advisors were that they had worked in the OSSC and provided one-on-one writing support. Finally, criteria for the selection of participants identified as holding leadership roles included individuals who were diversely involved in the coordination, administration or management of the OSSC. In the cases of advisors and leadership, current and former members of the OSSC were contacted to participate.
Beyond the criteria listed above, however, I also employed maximum variation sampling in order to select participants who represented the diversity of the subunits in the case (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse, 1994). According to Patton (1990) maximum variation sampling is a purposeful sampling approach that aims at capturing and describing the central themes or principal outcomes that cut across a great deal of participant or program variation. For small samples a great deal of heterogeneity can be a problem because individual cases are so different from each other. The maximum variation sampling strategy turns that apparent weakness into a strength by applying the following logic: Any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts of a program (p. 172).

Given my understanding of the OSSC context, users, advisors and broader organisational structure I was able to identify appropriate subunits in order to recruit informants that represented variations within the case study site. The proceeding sections describe in greater detail the criteria I applied for selecting participants who participated in the semi-structured interviews from each of the subunits and profile the participants within the student, advisor and leadership groups.

Multilingual students

The ten multilingual students who took part in the semi-structured interviews were recruited in an effort to represent the diversity of programs offered at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. For this reason, students were selected from across degree programs including Bachelor of Education, Master of Education, Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy. Additionally, I consulted the usage statistics of the OSSC to understand the usage patterns across programs. The usage patterns over a three-year period are depicted in Table 6. These figures demonstrate that both graduate students and

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3 Some participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews also engaged in observations or focus groups. However, there were unique participants who took part in only the observations or a focus group.
students in the initial teacher education program use the OSSC services in comparable numbers.

*Table 5. OSSC Usage Statistics for a 3-Year Period*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Graduate: PhD</th>
<th>Graduate: MA</th>
<th>Graduate: MEd</th>
<th>Initial Teacher Education: BEd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2011/2012</strong></td>
<td>315</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2012/2013</strong></td>
<td>268</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2013/2014</strong></td>
<td>119</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An important distinction needs to be made regarding the usage patterns depicted in Table 5 above as many of the appointments used by the Bachelor of Education students are focused on career related writing during special sessions during a designated two-month period. The appointment times are shorter and the provision of openings is expanded during this time, thus the usage patterns of Bachelor of Education students for academic writing are actually much lower than the usage statistics suggest. Thus, although I took measures to recruit students from all of the programs represented at OISE, a larger number of my participants were graduate students as they are more frequent users of the academic writing services.

A second feature I was cognizant of during participant recruitment was the length of time the students had been in their particular program. I made attempts to include participants who were new to the OISE environment as well as those who had been in the program for some time. Table 6 depicts the degree program, languages spoken and year of study of the ten student participants who took part in semi-structured interviews, as well as those who attended the focus group. The table provides generalised descriptions of students’ languages in order to protect the anonymity of advisors. Additionally, the table depicts whether the student received previous degrees abroad or in Canada. More than half of the students who took part in this study were international students with previous degrees from other countries, and all of these students’ time in Canada roughly coincided with the
year of study. The other five students had already completed one degree in Canada and had been in Canada for at least 8 years.

**Table 6. Student Participants’ Background**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (Data collection activity)</th>
<th>Degree Program</th>
<th>Year of Study</th>
<th>Received Previous Degrees in Another Country</th>
<th>Languages Spoken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marcela (Interview)</td>
<td>MEd</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Romantic language (1st), English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi-yong (Interview)</td>
<td>BEd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Asian language (1st), English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alejandra (Interview, Focus Group)</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Romantic language (1st), English, French, 3 additional Romantic languages, 1 Eastern European language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eun-ah (Interview)</td>
<td>BEd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Asian language (1st), English, additional Romantic language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriela (Interview, Focus Group)</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Romantic language (1st), English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariana (Interview)</td>
<td>BEd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Romantic language (1st), English, French, additional Romantic language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navya (Interview)</td>
<td>MEd</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>South Asian language (1st), English, 2 additional South Asian languages, Eastern European language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanyu (Interview)</td>
<td>MT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Asian language (1st), English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim (Interview)</td>
<td>MEd</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Asian language (1st), English, additional Asian language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen (Interview)</td>
<td>MEd</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Asian language, (1st), English, additional Asian language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant (Data collection activity)</td>
<td>Degree Program</td>
<td>Year of Study</td>
<td>Received Previous Degrees in Another Country</td>
<td>Languages Spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian (Focus Group)</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Romantic language (1st), English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paola (Focus Group)</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Romantic language (1st), English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myriam (Focus Group)</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Middle Eastern language (1st), English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Advisors**

The ten advisors who took part in the semi-structured interviews were all graduate students given that the OSSC draws advisors from its cadre of graduate students and they are paid for their work in the Centre. The main criterion for advisors was that they had worked in the OSSC. Some of the participants were working in the OSSC at the time of the research, but some former advisors also took part in the study. I recruited advisors who were both novice (less than a year of experience in the OSSC) as well as those who were veterans (more than 3 years of experience in the OSSC). Because the OSSC also offers one-on-one writing support through in-person and online modalities, I sought to generate a group of advisors who would provide insight into both modalities.

I also paid attention to the specific student groups advisors worked with as certain advisors work with certain students based on their degree program. In effect, generally the advisors who are PhD students provide support to other PhD students and MA students while advisors in MEd or MA programs support students enrolled in MEd or BEd programs. The division of services in the manner is done in order to ensure students who come to the OSSC with questions related to writing major dissertations or theses could speak to PhD students who have experience writing such documents. However, despite the fact that students are guided to book with particular advisors based on their degree program, nothing prevents students from booking with the advisor of their choice.
During my time in the OSSC I found that many students would ignore the system’s prompts related to booking with certain advisors and book with the advisor of their choice. Thus, most advisors included in this study had experience working with a broad range of students through online and in-person modalities.

Finally, as the OSSC is situated in a very multilingual environment, I also paid attention to the languages the advisors spoke. Although I did not recruit advisors based on their linguistic backgrounds, the linguistic repertoires of advisors were also of interest to this research. Table 7 describes the degree program and years of service in the OSSC advisors. The table provides generalised descriptions in order to protect the anonymity of advisors.

*Table 7. Advisor Participants’ Background*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant (Data collection activity)</th>
<th>Degree Program</th>
<th>Number of Years in OSSC</th>
<th>Languages Spoken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nisha (Interview, Focus Group)</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>English (1st), French, 1 South Asian language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevor (Interview)</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>5 years or more</td>
<td>English (1st), French, 2 additional Romantic languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett (Interview, Focus Group)</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>English (1st), French, additional Romantic language (beginner)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidhura (Interview)</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>5 years or more</td>
<td>South Asian language (1st), English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesley (Interview)</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>English (1st), Romantic language (not fluent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica (Interview)</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>3-4 years</td>
<td>English (1st), French (not fluent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahareh (Interview)</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>Middle Eastern language (1st), English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irina (Interview, Focus Group)</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>5 years or more</td>
<td>Eastern European language (1st), English, French, 2 additional European and 2 Eastern European languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant (Data collection activity)</td>
<td>Degree Program</td>
<td>Number of Years in OSSC</td>
<td>Languages Spoken</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laleh (Interview)</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>Middle Eastern language (1st), additional Middle Eastern language, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanfen (Interview)</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>3-4 years</td>
<td>Asian language (1st), English, additional Asian language (not fluent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacey (Focus Group)</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>English (1st), French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farha (Focus Group)</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>Middle Eastern language (1st), English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Leadership**

Five members of the current and past OSSC leadership team also participated in this research. The participants in this category were diversely involved in the OSSC as coordinators, administrators or directors/overseers. Coordinators are responsible for managing the online booking system, pulling reporting statistics from the online system, generating a staff schedule, responding to student queries, complaints and feedback, and coordinating advisor meetings and professional development sessions. Administrators support the website content, take part in hiring new advisors, attend team meetings and refer students to the OSSC. Finally, director or overseers are responsible for the overall management of the OSSC. The director hires advisors, reviews advisors’ performance, manages budgets, reports on the activities and usage of the OSSC to those in leadership roles at OISE, and responds to student queries, questions and feedback regarding the OSSC should students wish to take their queries beyond the coordinators.

Participants who were categorised as leadership were both former and current members of the OSSC team and they had varying years of service at the time of the research. Many, but not all, of the participants in the group also served as advisors in the OSSC in
some capacity prior to taking on their leadership roles. In order to maintain the anonymity of the participants in this group, I did not differentiate between the roles within the “leadership” group in reporting the findings, nor do I provide any additional background information on the individual participants within this group. Additionally, quotes from leadership participants are not attributed to individual participants and are cited as LI (leadership interview) for all five participants in the findings chapters.

Recruitment

Participants were primarily recruited by email. The appropriate OSSC authority was first contacted to gain access to the OSSC site and was asked to sign the Administrative Consent (see Appendix A). Once administrative consent was granted, prospective participants who were known to me were contacted via email to invite participation in interviews and/or focus groups (see Appendix B and Appendix C for Initial Email Contact Templates). Additionally, during the initial interviews I used a snowball sampling method through which I asked interviewees to recommend other possible participants for the research according to the criteria I outlined above.

Data Collection

Case study research is amenable to a host of data collection strategies and does not necessitate the use of any particular strategy; rather any and all methods are applicable to case study research, but some are more readily applied than others (Merriam, 1998). In this case study semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, focus groups and document and artefact analysis provided the main sources of information. The multiple collection strategies that generated data from various sources and approaches allowed for converging lines of inquiry or triangulation in order to increase the trustworthiness of this research.

Data collection took place between September of 2014 and June of 2015. I began with the semi-structured interviews and continued interviewing through the duration of the data collection timeframe outlined above. The observations took place between March and April of 2015 and the focus groups were held in May of 2015. This section provides an
overview of the procedures and processes I followed in the semi-structured interviews, observations and focus groups respectively.

*Semi-Structured Interviews*
In case study research interviews are often cited as one of the most important sources of information (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2003). Furthermore, Merriam (1998) suggests that interviews are one of the most common sources of data for qualitative studies in applied fields, including education (p. 106). Interviews can range from unstructured wherein participants may be asked to answer an initial prompt and then the researcher develops further questions from their responses, to structured wherein the questions are predetermined and the interview is carried out in a manner akin to a verbal questionnaire (Gill, Stewart & Chadwick, 2008, p. 291). In between structured and unstructured interviews are those interviews that are semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews generally follow a flexible set of questions but allow the researcher to alter the wording and ordering of the questions in order to respond to the situation and participant to allow for new ideas to emerge (Merriam, 1998).

In this case study all 25 of the interviews followed the semi-structured approach. I prepared interview guides for each of the three subunits in the case study (students, advisors and leadership), but reordered the questions or added in additional prompts according to the responses I received from participants. When speaking to the leadership participants, a series of questions were asked that related to the roles and mandates of the writing centre and the types training directors/coordinators provide to tutors working with multilingual students (see Appendix G for leadership interview guide). Questions asked of the advisors related to the institutional role of the writing centre, writing centre interactions with multilingual students and the advisors’ backgrounds and training for their role in the OSSC (see Appendix H for advisor interview guide). Multilingual students were asked questions regarding the types of support they sought from writing centre tutorials, the students’ perceptions of the role of the writing centre institutionally, and students’ accounts of writing centre interactions and their effectiveness (see Appendix I for student interview guide).
I used a “slow-starting” (Merrian, 2009, p. 106) approach to my interviews in which I asked participants general questions about themselves and the OSSC first in order to build comfort and rapport with the participants. All of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in full. The interviews ranged in length from 40 minutes to 75 minutes and all participants were required to sign a formal consent document prior to the interview (see Appendix D).

Non-Participant Observation

Similar to the typologies of interviews, observations can also be categorised along a continuum from participant observations (wherein the researcher engages in the activities as a participant) to non-participant observation (wherein the researcher simply acts as an observer). Generally I tried not to engage in the sessions I observed, and strove to be a non-participant observer. However, my role during observations fits more on a continuum between complete observer and participant, and could be defined as “observer as participant” wherein my actives were known to those being observed and my role as a participant was subordinate to my role as data gatherer (Gold, 1957 in Merriam). While acting as an “observer as participant” I took part in the advising sessions on a few occasions when the advisors asked me to weigh in on questions students posed or the student and/or advisor invited me into conversations. For the most part, though, during the observations I sat removed from the participants and recorded notes of the interactions on my personal laptop. I also recorded lengthy notes and reflections following each observation.

I observed roughly 20 one-on-one in-person advising sessions. Some sessions ended before the 35-minute appointment time was over, but many more went into the advisor’s 10-minute break resulting in 45-minute sessions. During my observations some advisors also had open appointments and thus sessions continued into another 35-minute appointment. In other cases, drop-in appointments were added as students came in when openings existed, or appointments that were scheduled did not occur as students cancelled or did not come to the booked appointment. Thus, over the course of 6 weeks I spent
several full days in the OSSC observing 16 different students with four different advisors. I choose my observation times based on days when advisors who had consented to being observed had relatively full booking schedules. I clearly explained the research to each student and I secured formal consent from all of the students prior to observing the tutorials (see Appendix E for Observational Consent Forms). Interestingly, aside from one appointment, all of the appointments I observed were with multilingual students. Two of the advisors and two of the students I observed also took part in the semi-structured interviews.

Additionally, I collected email correspondence and Word documents that contained advisor comments from 11 online writing advising appointments. These appointments are also 35 minutes in length, but advisors often admit to spending longer than the 35 minutes allocated to reviewing online writing assignments. Additionally, five of the 11 online documents included in the observations were reviewed over a series of two appointments (thus representing 70 minutes of advising time). Interactions between four different advisors and four students were included in these documents. Within the 11 documents two of the advisors worked with two different students and two students worked with more than one advisor. Three of the advisors and all four of the students also took part in semi-structured interviews. Advisors shared online correspondence and documents with me, and the documents shared were from appointments with students who consented to be observed through the semi-structured interview consent form. The inclusion of the online appointment documentation and correspondence was thus a hybrid between “observation” and document analysis as these appointments were not viewed in real-time but in their written form after the fact.

The use of observations in this case study provided additional information about the interactions in the OSSC as I was able to observe the sessions as they occurred in context and reflect on the ways that they both corresponded to and challenged the information participants shared with me in the semi-structured interviews. Overall, I observed roughly 30 advising sessions through the in-person and online modalities. I chose to observe 20 in-person and 11 online sessions to roughly correspond with the OSSC usage statistics.
wherein nearly 70% of sessions took place in person during while 30% took place online during the 2014-15 fall and winter advising session. The inclusion of the online documentation also provided an interesting comparative view of advising sessions and resulted in a wealth of rich data related to advisor commentary and students’ writing and questions to advisors.

One of the unanticipated outcomes of the in-person observations that also added to the body of data collected included the informal conversations with advisors between sessions. These conversations produced many pages of reflective commentary (both from advisors’ and my own reflections), which proved to be a useful body of data during analysis. Overall the observations produced a large body of useful data. However, at times I was aware that my presence in tutorials may have altered the behaviour of the participants and as the single observer the insights are necessarily reflected through my understandings of the situation.

Focus Groups
I opted to conduct two focus groups, one with multilingual students and one with OSSC advisors in order to delve further into the themes of the role of the writing centre in the university, the interactions and practices therein and the experiences of the interlocutors (see Appendix J for advisor focus group guide and Appendix K for student focus group guide). The focus groups added to the data collected through allowing participants to draw on one-another’s feelings and experiences in an interactive setting to reveal multiple perspectives in ways that are not possible in one-on-one interviews (Gibbs, 1997). I employed focus groups in this study as their interactional nature has the ability to reveal unarticulated normative assumptions and positions and thus they lead to powerful insights (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 903).

I held both focus groups in a central location, provided light refreshments, and allowed participants to converse informally over refreshments prior to beginning each session. All of the participants signed consent forms prior to the focus groups (see Appendix F). I had intended to video record all of the focus groups, but following a discussion with two
participants who were uncomfortable with the video recording I instead opted to audio record and transcribe both focus groups.

I chose to have a co-researcher (also a graduate student and OSSC advisor) facilitate the student focus group following my focus group guide so I could concentrate on observing the interactions. During this group, I did not engage in the group in any way aside from taking notes and providing handwritten notes with additional prompts, follow up questions or instructions to my co-researcher. I chose to facilitate the advisor focus group myself, limiting my ability to record notes during the group, but this was mitigated through full transcriptions of the focus group conversations. Moreover, upon reflection the use of audio recording was preferable to the video camera as participants were very candid in both groups, which may have been negatively impacted due to the concern expressed by participants prior to the group related to the presence of the video camera. A total of five participants took part in the multilingual student group and another five participants took part in the advisor group. Two of the multilingual students and three advisors who took part in focus groups also took part in the semi-structured interviews. Each of the focus groups was roughly 90 minutes in length.

Documents and Artefacts
Yin (2003) suggests that documents are relevant and useful to nearly all case studies as they allow the researcher to augment and corroborate evidence collected through other methods (p. 85-87). My role as an active member of the OSSC provided me access to a great deal of documentation that proved very useful in contextualising, supporting and challenging the data from the interviews, observations and focus groups. Indeed, I was able to collect and analyse various documents including reports, meeting minutes, my personal notes from meetings and professional development (PD) sessions, website artefacts, and handouts available in the centre. I also took photos of the OSSC site for my own recounting of observations and for further contextual information. An interesting outcome of my sharing my research agenda with the team of advisors and students who visited the centre was that one advisor and one student also sent me email messages containing reflections, notes and ideas for inclusion in the data following interviews or
focus groups. These reflections added new perspectives to my own reflections and complemented the body of documentation I had already collected for analysis.

This section has reviewed the various data collection strategies undertaken in this case study including semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, focus groups and documentation. Figure 6 provides an overview of the data collection strategies and the evidence gathered from each strategy.

Figure 6. Data Collection Overview

Data Analysis

Data analysis “begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first document read” and is thus a simultaneous, interactive, recursive and ongoing process (Merriam, 1998, p. 151). Because data analysis is iterative, the process often does not follow a linear path and requires the researcher to constantly revisit earlier steps and analyses as the process moves forward. Accordingly, throughout several stages of analysis I began by following Miles and Huberman’s (1994) approach to analysis which includes “three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification” (p. 10). Once the data was reduced and organised and preliminary displays were created, I employed a general inductive approach to identify topics,
categories and tentative patterns and to synthesise themes and concepts (McMillan & Schumacher 1997, p. 502).

I began the process of data reduction through the transcription and review of the interview recordings. I started with the interviews as they provided a significant source of evidence in this case study. In order to familiarise myself with the data I first went over each transcript while listening to the recordings several times. After listening to the recordings numerous times, I printed all of the transcripts and began the process of undertaking a close reading of each transcript. During this process I made notes in the margins, highlighted sections of text that I felt were significant and kept a separate notebook where I recorded emerging themes and ideas for each individual transcript. In effect, I thought of myself “as having a conversation with the data, asking questions of it, making comments to it, and so on” in order to allow for patterns to emerge (Merriam, 1998, p. 205). As I had consistently recorded notes, reflections, questions and ideas after each interview I also typed up, printed, organised and re-read these notes with their corresponding interview transcript, which was an important step in generating organised binders of information that made up my case record (Patton, 1990) or case study data base (Yin, 1994).

In the early stages of analysing the individual interview transcripts one the strategies I employed in drawing out themes was to record several key “topics,” or ascribe descriptive names to particular sections of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 510) from each interview. The collection of topics could then be compiled with their related quotes into a spreadsheet wherein comparisons could be made based on duplication or overlapping meanings (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 510). For example, one student participant frequently referred to the limited amount of appointments she could access as problematic for her progress in her degree program. She frequently spoke of feeling “handicapped” by communication skills and shared that she had many pieces of unfinished writing that she was unable to publish or polish because of her lack of access to writing support. “Topics” that emerged from this segment were “access limits,” “progress” and “confidence.” For one of the advisor participants, the theme of “lack of context” came up frequently when he discussed the challenges multilingual students face
in achieving success academically. For this advisor “context” included aspects of academic literacies—citation styles, syllabi, professor expectations—that were frequently unclear, unarticulated or contrary to students’ prior learning experiences. One of the topics that emerged from this excerpt was labelled as “hidden curriculum.” The process of transcription, close reading and drawing out the key undercurrents that could be found in each individual interview was based on the understanding that the early stage of analysis “sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards and organizes data” in order for conclusions and insights to be drawn and verified later on (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11).

Once I had gone through this process for each of the 25 interviews I then began to examine data across participants within the three groups. As a first step I looked at each individual interview question in my interview guide across the 10 participants in the student group and highlighted topics, themes, ideas, quotes and trends across participants. I also looked for differences and incongruences among the responses to the same questions. Once I completed this task for the student interviews I repeated the same process with the advisor interviews and the leadership interviews (of which there were only five participants). I then revisited the topics I had identified within each interview to note any similarities, incongruences or thematic matches. This process led to the development of categories, which were often in the form of charts or visual displays that provided an overarching name for similar topics (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 513). In the early stages these displays were complex and multifaceted, but as I examined the data across the three groups I was able to compress the information in order to begin the process of “data display,” which led to drawing preliminary conclusions across the three groups (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 12).

With these early visuals in place I then moved on to the observation data. Here I also engaged in a lengthy reduction and organisation process. As many of my notes from observations were scattered with direct quotes related to the interactions observed, my reflections and thoughts on these observations, and details of what I saw this data required significant organisation. In order to generate consistent and organised observation notes I charted my notes into three categories: what was said (direct quotes), my thoughts and reflections, and what I saw. In effect, I developed a chart in which I
organised the notes by what I saw, what I thought and what I heard (see Appendix L). Once I had completed this process for the 20 in-person interviews I repeated the process with the documentation from the 11 online appointments. However, because these online “observations” were not in real time I had to leave out the category of what I saw as I was relying on what I “heard” or the correspondence between the student and advisor and my reactions to these online discussions in these cases. Once I had organised all of the observation data I again developed charts and visuals to aid in developing themes within and across cases. I was then able to compare, analyse, and reconfigure these themes based on those I had identified from the interviews. Combining the themes from the interviews and observations produced some very useful insights related to what people told me they did and experienced in interviews, and the ways those reported experiences matched or contradicted the interactions I observed.

Once the focus groups were transcribed I also undertook a close reading of each group making detailed notes and reflections. Because of the rich conversations that took place informally following the focus groups, I also had two large files of reflections for each focus group in addition to the notes I took on the interactions I observed during the groups. I again used all of this documentation to develop key topics and categories within each group. Once I had developed key thematic categories for each group, I shared the codes with a colleague who confirmed, questioned and added topics and categories to my original analyses. After reviewing the coding suggestions of my colleague I re-coded the focus groups and further condensed the themes as I compared across the student and advisor groups. Once I had developed categories and codes for these groups, I shared the final codes with the same colleague to further develop the broad themes from the focus groups.

The final collection of evidence I examined included the documents and artefacts I had collected. I found Yin’s (2003) assertion that documents are useful to augment, clarify, or confirm data to be very fitting as I reviewed the document evidence following the interviews, focus groups, and observations. The reports, website content, handouts and discussions from team meetings provided context, historical information and details on organisational structures and institutional changes that helped me to understand the data
in a dynamic context wherein staff changes, institutional policies, political agendas, and shifting educational values impacted the perceptions and experiences of participants differentially. Thus, the documents and artefacts helped me to locate particular experiences in broader organisational and institutional contexts and also provided insight into contextual realities that existed prior to my data collection. The ability to “place” this research in broader historical and contextual realities was quite important to this project, as at the time of the data collection significant organisational change was a feature of the broader environment in which the OSSC was situated.

Although the process described above is described linearly, the process of analysis is a circuitous one through which “we” as qualitative researchers find ourselves constantly moving back and forth between the phenomenon of the program and our abstractions of that program, between the descriptions of what has occurred and our analysis of those descriptions, between the complexity of reality and our simplifications of those complexities, between the circularities and interdependencies of human activity and our need for linear, ordered statements of cause-effect (Patton, 1990, p. 423-424).

As I moved through this process, returning to and refining my conceptual framework provided me with further analytical tools to explain, articulate and refine the data across the topics, categories and themes I had developed from my coding and categorisation process. Indeed, it was through the application of theory that I was able to move up “from the empirical trenches to a more conceptual overview of the landscape” wherein I was no longer “just dealing with observables, but also with unobservables and connecting the two with successive layers of inferential glue” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 261).

Moving out of “the empirical trenches” entailed a process of pattern-seeking across the evidence collected and it was here that the triangulated nature of the data sources became important for validation (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 520). Within the final stages of analysis, the process took on a decidedly more deductive approach wherein I used my conceptual framework, the frequency of certain topics and categories, and informed perceptions of the relationships between categories to develop patterns that guided the eventual presentation of the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 518).
Ethical Considerations

This research underwent an ethical review process and thus complies with the Tri Council ethical standards and the standards set out by the University of Toronto. Administrative consent was obtained to conduct research within the OSSC site and all participants who took part in interviews, focus groups and observations were required to sign individual consent forms. The consent forms notified participants of their right to refuse to answer any questions, to request copies of transcripts and redact information and to withdraw from the research at any time.

All of the data was stored in secure locations (in locked cabinets and password protected laptops) and any references to individuals or individually identifiable information was removed from the transcribed data. Participants were assured of anonymity in the interviews and observations, but those who took part in the focus groups were warned that the nature of focus groups did not allow for the assurance of anonymity (although participants were reminded not to use names or discuss the conversations outside of the group). I also maintained anonymity by assigning pseudonyms to all participants in the reporting of the data.

The macro-level critical discursive analysis of writing centre sites did not require separate ethical review processes as all of the data and content analysed came from publically accessible websites.

Validity and Trustworthiness

In addition to taking steps to ensure this research was conducted ethically, I also took several steps throughout this study in order to establish the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. Although scholarly debate continues regarding the appropriate criteria and philosophical bases for assessing validity in qualitative research, researchers in the field must still set out to justify the “goodness of their conclusions” or the legitimacy of their work (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 277). Thus, despite ongoing epistemological debates, I remained conscious that a “researcher’s knowledge of the case faces hazardous passage from writing to reading” and thus strove to find “ways of safeguarding the trip” (p. 442). Although there are a number of terms associated with quality in qualitative research, I
discuss the trustworthiness of the project with considerations of internal validity/dependability, reliability/credibility and external validity/transferability (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

*Internal Validity/ Dependability*

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe dependability as “truth value,” or the ability of the researcher to present findings that make sense, and present a credible and authentic version of the phenomenon under study (p. 278). In order to pursue internal validity in this project, I spent a considerable amount of time in the field and collected multiple sources of evidence. Indeed, it was through various approaches including interviews, observations, focus groups and documentation that I corroborated my case study findings. In the macro discursive analysis I included screenshots and language from websites, while in the case study I used the words and responses of my participants to convey the meanings they attached to the experiences where possible in order to generate “thick” descriptions in the findings. The development of a rich contextual landscape at a micro and macro-level also added depth and holism to the conclusions. Finally, I have positioned myself as a researcher, and tried to be honest about my biases, preconceptions, worldview and theoretical lenses at the outset of the study (Merriam, 1998). I have also positioned myself as an OSSC colleague, student, language learner and educator in addition to my role as a researcher.

*Reliability/Credibility*

Traditionally, reliability has referred to the extent to which a study can be replicated to produce the same findings, but this definition has given way to one that emphasises “whether the results are consistent with the data collected” rather than “whether findings will be found again” (Merriam, 2015, p. 251). Thus, reliability often turns on whether the researcher is able to show the processes, steps and techniques they employed to collect, analyse and present their data, and if another researcher using the same steps and data would draw similar conclusions. In order to establish the credibility of this study I triangulated multiple sources of evidence, employed diverse methodological techniques, and discussed the codes and emerging findings with a co-researcher and colleagues.
throughout the process. I also consistently maintained detailed notes of the steps I took in choosing participants, collecting and analysing data and framing the final report. Being explicit about these steps was thus intended to clearly describe how I arrived at my results (Dey, 1993, p. 251).

External Validity/Transferability

External validity is concerned with the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts, or the generalizability of the conclusions. Merriam (1998) suggests that generalizability has plagued qualitative researchers for some time as although the approaches and processes for undertaking qualitative research differ significantly from those of experimental and correlative designs, often the concept of generalizability has been similarly applied to qualitative and quantitative research. However, more recently scholars have challenged the concept of generalizability on the basis that “a single case or small non-random sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many” (Merriam, 1998, p. 208). Thus the traditional view of external validity is at odds with the goals of many qualitative, case study research designs.

However, more nuanced views of external validity were applied to this study. This research study at both the micro and macro levels sought to unearth “the general…in the particular” and outline how the knowledge garnered from the situations examined, in this case one-to-one writing support, can be transferred to other similar situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 255). Thus, this study aimed to “provide perspective rather than truth…and context-bound extrapolations rather than generalizations” (Patton, 1990, p. 491).

Limitations

Although every effort was made to ensure the trustworthiness of the conclusions developed from this research project, the study is not without limitations. First, the macro- level critical discourse analysis of writing centre sites examined only a few institutions that were comparable in many ways. Because the research was interested in
anglophone academies in large, urban centres, the sample does not represent the array of higher educational institutions globally but rather focuses in on a rather specific type. However, because of the in-depth nature of the analyses a small sample size was necessary (Sachaie, 2011, p. 13). Moreover, some limits had to be placed on the types of institutions chosen according to the theoretical and conceptual frames of this study and the desire to undertake comparisons. The case study also employs a relatively small group of participants. Although efforts were made to recruit a wide range of participants who represented multiple positionalities through maximum variation sampling, the experiences and subjectivities of my participants are not necessarily representative of the whole; rather they are a part or “a slice of life” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p. 377).

Secondly, both qualitative approaches employed in this multiple method study relied heavily on the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1988, p. 34). As the researcher I designed the questions that guided this study and interpreted the evidence in ways that were naturally informed by my own subjectivities. However, through using multiple sources of data and diverse methodological techniques to examine subunits of the phenomenon under study I was engaged in “constant juxtaposition of conflicting realities [which] tends to "unfreeze" thinking, and so the process has the potential to generate theory with less researcher bias than theory built from incremental studies or armchair, axiomatic deduction” (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 546-547).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the multiple method study that was employed to examine the ways writing centres support multilingual students’ literacy practices in anglophone institutions of higher education. To answer this question I conducted a broad contextual review of writing centre websites and then undertook a case study within a single site that integrated the opinions and experiences of diverse writing centre stakeholders including advisors, multilingual students and writing centre leadership. The first section described the rationale for choosing to undertake a critical discourse analysis across 12 writing centre sites and the processes through which the sample was selected, the data was collected and the procedures for data analysis. The second section of this chapter
described the qualitative case study approach that was undertaken in a single writing centre site and included descriptions of the case study participants and procedures for data collection and analyses. The chapter concluded with discussions related to the ethical considerations, trustworthiness and limitations of the study.

The proceeding chapters present the findings of this study. Chapter 4 presents the conclusions from the critical discourse analysis while Chapters 5 provides context and leadership perspectives, and Chapters 6 and 7 present the case study findings from students and advisors. Finally, chapter 8 synthesises the macro and micro levels of this study and discusses the broader implications of this research. In presenting the data in the following chapters I employ the words and narratives of participants frequently. In so doing the words and language of my participants are maintained as they were spoken to me throughout the data collection as much as possible. Additionally, each of the data chapters is also punctuated with an interlude, a narrative vignette that connects chapters. Each of the interludes is also a composite, or an amalgamation of narratives from two or more participants on closely related themes or stories to illuminate a particular reality while protecting the anonymity of the participant tellers. The interludes are bridges and breaks. They come from the spaces that inform this research and the people who contributed. They are unvarnished and true to their tellers.
Chapter 4: (Re)Writing the Centre? A Critical Discourse Analysis of Websites Across Contexts

In this chapter I present the findings from a critical discourse analysis of the expressed roles, mandates and missions of twelve diversely named writing/learning/success centre websites across contexts to develop a macro-level picture of these centres in anglophone institutions of higher education. In this analysis, the websites of the various centres are representative of a particular “genre” of texts, as “the primary criterion for classifying certain communicative events as a “genre” is a set of shared communicative purposes” (Askehave, 2007, p.727). The shared communicative purposes across websites can be broadly conceived of as communicating information and promoting the work of centres. The goal of this critical discourse analysis is thus to examine the ways shared discursive practices across centres emerge, diverge and conform to as well as subvert the body of literature that makes up writing centre scholarship as well as the broader discourses around literacy practices in higher education. Moreover, this analysis is also interested in understanding how the institutional positionality of writing centres impacts the expression and/or suppression of discourses.

While other scholars who have turned a critical eye towards the ways writing centres represent themselves to those outside “the centre” have chosen to do so without naming centres (see for example, Carino, 2002; Harris, 2010), I chose to name and locate the centres precisely because it is valuable to understand the ways discourses circulate across contexts and institutions. Thus, I posit that the enduring critiques of the inscription of singular narratives in public descriptions of writing centre work combined with a tendency of writing centres to define themselves “in a way writing centre scholarship advocates” (p. 69) necessitates an understanding of how these narratives do or do not differ across sites and contexts, which also necessitates naming and placing centres. Naming and placing the centres is in no way intended to cause “embarrassment” or forgo courtesy (Harris, 2010, p. 49) for those sites examined, rather it is undertaken to understand differences and similarities across cites within their diverse contexts. Indeed,
while the previous chapter has noted that each of the institutions from which this sample was drawn have similarities (rankings, urban, large), they are also internally diverse with different national and local realities and institutional mandates. Yet, writing centre literature has suggested these spaces face the difficult task of “representing both our students and the literacy demands of the academy” (Carter, 2009, p. 138), often in an uncomfortable and irreconcilable way. It is the way that these contextually diverse centres negotiate institutional spaces and expectations as well as draw on familiar writing centre discourses in so doing that is the focus of this analysis. Finally, similar to Carino (2002), I do not undertake this analysis as an “objective observer” but as someone who takes part in and contributes to the discourses I am examining (p. 96). Indeed, my own writing centre, and the discourses it employs to define itself to the institutions, students and faculty it works for and with are included in and reflected upon in this sample.

As described in Chapter 3, institutions in the international sample included Australian National University, the University of California, Berkeley, University College London, and the University of Otago. The four sites from the broader Canadian context (from provinces outside of Ontario) include the University of Alberta, Dalhousie University, McGill University, and the University of British Columbia. Finally, four sites from professional faculties (Architecture, Health Sciences, Education and Engineering) within the University of Toronto were included in the sample. Given the amount of content available on each of the centre websites, my analyses focused in on particular themes across sites, specifically the name of the centre, services offered, description of mandate/mission and mention of multilingual and/or ESL students.

This chapter is organised following Fairclough’s (1993, 1995, 2001) three dimensions of discourse analysis: description, interpretation and explanation. In the first section, the findings from the descriptive level analyses are presented wherein the focus is on describing the textual features across sites. At this level the names, services offered, and expressed mandates are analysed thematically. In the second section the focus is on interpretive analyses, which examines the purpose, subjects, relations and connections as outlined by Fairclough’s (2001) interpretive framework. Finally, the third section of the chapter focuses on the explanation dimension of the CDA. In this section the analyses are
undertaken through placing the texts within broader historical, political, social and cultural structures at both the immediate and remote levels to situate the texts in the broader discourses of which they are a part. This section is organised into institutional, situational and societal structures. Figure 7 presents a visual depiction of the organisation of this chapter following Fairclough’s three dimensions of discourse analysis as well as the sub-sections that guide the organisation of this analysis.
Figure 7. Three Dimensions of Discourse Analysis & Organisation of Findings

Adapted from: Fairclough, 1995, p. 9
Descriptive Analysis

The section is organised through descriptions related to the nomenclature of the diverse centres, the descriptions of services provided (as well as references to services not provided), descriptions of mandates, missions or visions and roles vis-à-vis the institution and students. In this section the themes that emerge include support for all, parameter setting and student ownership.

Nomenclature in the “Centre”

Nomenclature has played a significant role in the history of facilities that provide one-to-one support to students in higher education, and this sample suggests that naming conventions continue to be an important, although contested feature of such sites. Indeed, the 12 websites in the sample present an interesting picture related to nomenclature, as the diverse institutions demonstrate similarities as well differences in the labels they ascribe to their “centres.” Although the word “centre” is consistently present in all of the titles across the 12 sites, many have also chosen to drop the word “writing” in their official name. Table 8 presents an overview of the names of “centres” across sites.

Table 8. Naming “the Centre”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution (Faculty)</th>
<th>Centre Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>International</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian National University</td>
<td>Academic Skills and Learning Centre (ASLC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California Berkeley</td>
<td>Berkeley Student Learning Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University College London</td>
<td>Academic Writing Centre (AWC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Otago</td>
<td>Student Learning Centre (SLC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canadian</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Alberta</td>
<td>Centre for Writers (C4W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of British Columbia</td>
<td>The UBC Writing Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalhousie University</td>
<td>Writing Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill University</td>
<td>McGill Writing Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University of Toronto</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Toronto, Faculty of Architecture</td>
<td>Daniels Writing Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Toronto, Faculty of Engineering</td>
<td>Engineering Communication Program (ECP) Tutoring Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Toronto, Health Sciences</td>
<td>Health Sciences Writing Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Toronto, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education</td>
<td>OISE Student Success Centre (OSSC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As Table 8 demonstrates, seven of the centres surveyed have retained the “Writing Centre” moniker in some form in their title, with University College London adding “academic” to its title and the University of Alberta reversing the order of the words to the Centre for Writers. The sample shows that the bulk of the centres retaining the name “writing centre” in some form are from the Canadian and University of Toronto sample. On the other hand, three centres employ the term “learning” in their titles as demonstrated by Berkeley’s Student Learning Centre, Australian Nation University’s Academic Skills and Learning Centre, and the University of Otago’s Student Learning Centre. Interestingly, the centres that include “learning” in their title are all from the international sample. The final two centres that adopt unique names are from the professional faculties within University of Toronto sample with the Engineering faculty adopting “Engineering Communication Program Tutoring Centre” and the Education faculty adopting “OISE Student Success Centre” as titles.

The choice of name and the expectations such labels elicit have held importance for writing centres historically, and ongoing debates about the labelling of such facilities have been a feature of the literature on writing centres since the literature and professional associations began cropping up on these spaces in the 1970s. The debates and the historical referents, which explain the evolution of names in one-to-one writing facilities are rich and contested, and the choice of metaphor to describe such work is a political undertaking. Elizabeth Boquet (2002) suggests the writing centre may be “the default term” (p.8), but the sample suggests that it is the notion of “centeredness” (emphasis original, p. 25) that endures as an important, if contested, label in contemporary nomenclature. Thus, despite the fact that “writing centres” have gained a degree of “legibility” (Gruntsh McKinney in Balester et al., p. 3) in higher education environments in the last 30 years, the sample also suggests that “learning, communication and success” centres may indeed speak to the future of such facilities. The names may also represent a broadening of traditional mandates of writing centres as “calling a thing a thing somehow matters” and how work is characterised and categorised by a name should reveal something about that work (Boquet, 2000, p. 8). The next section examines what the websites reveal about their work as well as the work that is deemed beyond the purview of the “centre.”
Support for “All”

Across sites the most obvious content relates to the services each centre provides, and three main themes emerged from the analyses of description of websites across contexts. These themes include: a supportive mandate for all students, parameter-setting, and student ownership. Overall, despite differences among the 12 centres surveyed in this analysis in services provision, all 12 provide one-to-one writing support for students, with some also providing broader academic support for time management, critical thinking, and brainstorming, among others. Furthermore, nearly all of the websites have links to a number of online resources. Additionally, all twelve centres facilitate or provide access to workshops on a variety of topics related to academic writing, study skills, time management, and thesis writing. Table 9 provides an overview of services across centres.
Table 9. Services Across Centres: An Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre Name</th>
<th>One-to-One writing and/or academic support for students</th>
<th>Drop-in Support</th>
<th>Workshops and Non Credit Courses</th>
<th>Online Resources</th>
<th>Peer Groups</th>
<th>For Credit Courses</th>
<th>English Language Support</th>
<th>Support for Faculty</th>
<th>Discipline-based support (math, science, statistics, languages other than English)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Skills and Learning Centre (ANU)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>** Berkeley has a language exchange program specifically for international students; home students who are multilingual are not mentioned. UCL notes it supports home and international students, but does not specifically mention English language support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley Student Learning Center (UCB)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>** These centres do not mention their own workshops, but the central writing centre network encompassing the 14 writing centres (including the four in this sample) at the University of Toronto provides workshops through the office of English Language and Writing Support (graduate students) and the Academic Success Centre (undergraduate students).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Writing Centre (UCL)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Learning Centre (UO)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Writers (UofA)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UBC Writing Centre (UBC)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Centre (DU)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill Writing Centre (MU)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniels Writing Centre (UofT, Arch.)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Communication Centre (UofT, Eng.)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences Writing Centre (UofT, Health Sci)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OISE Student Success Centre (UofT, Ed.)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In describing the role of the centre verbs such as “help,” “support,” “guide,” and “assist” are commonly used across sites. In fact, in an analysis across all 12 sites “support” is the third most commonly used word following “writing” and “students.” For example, the Berkeley Student Learning Centre states, “Our mission to support students to become stronger writers is both a professional responsibility and a social justice endeavor” (University of California Berkeley, Student Learning Center, “Writing,” para. 2, 2015). The supportive mandate is evident across institutions with many of the centres surveyed employing the term in their main description of their role or raison d’être. The excerpts depicted in Figure 8 below provide examples of the similar “supportive” roles of centres across contexts.
The Academic Writing Centre provides support for IOE students in the form of short courses, one-to-one tutorials and Skype or phone tutorials (University College London, 2015).

The Student Learning Centre provides free and confidential academic support to students studying at Otago. Whether you are working hard to get a pass mark, seeking to gain a top result, or catching up after a break away from study, all students can benefit from our services (University of Otago, n.d.).

We offer free, one-on-one writing support to all students, instructors, staff, and alumni at the Ucfa – in any subject, discipline, program, or faculty, and at all levels of study and with any type of assignment (research papers, reports, theses, reflections, creative writing, grant proposals, résumés, presentations, articles, etc.) (University of Alberta, 2015).

We offer support in all subjects—from academic assignments to dissertations—for both undergraduate and graduate students (Dalhousie University, n.d., emphasis original).

The McGill Writing Centre Tutorial Service provides writing support for all students… Our tutors will work with you at any stage of the writing process, from outlining to final revision, providing guidance…(McGill University, 2015).

The UBC Writing Centre offers writing support for all UBC students. Come and meet with one of our tutors for feedback, to get questions answered, or just to brainstorm (University of British Columbia, n.d.).

Figure 8. Supportive Mandates Across Contexts
All of the other sites examined provide a nod to their supportive or assistive function, specifically as it relates to students in the institution on their main landing page. This supportive mandate often carries onto secondary pages wherein the specifics of the support students can access are described. Otago’s Student Learning Centre lists ten things students can talk to learning advisors about, in this list the term “help” is used five times, while the terms “support” and “assist” are used three times each (University of Otago, SLC, “Talk to an Advisor,” n.d.). Furthermore, while visuals are not widely used on many of the sites analysed, many sites that do include visuals often do so in a way that confirms the supportive nature. Figure 9 depicts visuals from three sites wherein students and advisors/tutors are shown as sitting closely together in a relaxed environment/position.

![Berkeley Student Learning Centre](image1)

![UBC Writing Centre](image2)

![University of Otago](image3)

**Figure 9. "Supportive" Visuals**

Along with the supportive function that emerges from these centres, another common theme related to the supportive function is that of the centres’ expressed goal to support all students through all levels and phases of writing. In some cases the supportive goals in the excerpts above use students as a broad, catch-all term (UCB, UO), while others expressly state that they support “graduate and undergraduate students” (DU), “all students” (UofA, MU, UBC), or “IOE [Institute of Education] students” in the case of UCL’s postgraduate education writing centre. Furthermore, the sample shows that most of the centres also suggest they can help with all stages of the writing process, from brainstorming and planning to revising and polishing (see for example, UBC in excerpt above). As the Engineering Communication Program Tutoring Centre states, they support “all aspects of academic writing and oral presenting in engineering and elective courses and beyond” (University of Toronto, ECP, “Appointments” para. 1, 2015, emphasis mine).
Many centres (aside from those in discipline-specific faculties) also note their willingness to work within and across all disciplines with all types of writing (see for example University of Alberta in except above). Such a position can also be found on UCB’s Student Learning Centre site as they state, “Our services are designed to support writers at all stages of the writing process. Whatever written assignments you have - a response paper, a report, a literary essay, or a research project - we encourage you start early and come visit us often” (UCB, SLC, “Writing,” para. 3, 2015). The positioning of the work of these centres as helpful to all students and all types of writing is also consistent with the “shared practices” of writing centres as identified by Harris (1988) and confirmed by Grutsch McKinney’s (2013) survey of writing centre practices.

Although the centres surveyed aim to support “all” students, some also signal their attention to specific groups of students including first year students, transfer students, international students and, of particular interest to this study, multilingual students or English language learners. For example, the University of Alberta’s Centre for Writers suggests,

Multilingual students who want to improve their writing skills in English should come in every week so that the tutor can help at each stage of a writing assignment or spend time focusing on more specific questions and concerns like grammar and word choice (University of Alberta, “FAQs,” para. 9, 2015).

The OISE Student Success Centre (UofT) notes its provision of English language development support, and the Engineering Communication Program Tutoring Centre (UofT) has a “Professional Language Development” program which “supports students who use English to study engineering, rather than studying the English language” (University of Toronto, ECP, “Appointments,” para. 8, 2015). Yet, despite the fact that language support for multilingual (or ESL, ELL) students is mentioned by eight of the 12 sites, supporting multilingual students does not feature centrally in most of the sites’ descriptions of services. Indeed the only sites that make reference to English language support on their main landing page are the Writing Centre at Dalhousie and OISE Student Success Centre, while navigation through a number of pages was necessary to find references to English language support in the other five centres (UBC, UO, UofA, MU, UofT, Engineering) and University College London simply mentions it supports international students on its main landing page.

Thus, the sample shows a consistent theme of support across centres. Moreover, the support is often expressed as student-centred, comprehensive and flexible with the use of multiple
modalities (in-person, telephone and online modalities). However, despite the open, welcoming and flexible “support for all” mandate, seven of the 12 centres surveyed also describe services that are expressly beyond their mandate or not offered in the centre. It is the second emergent theme of parameter setting that is described in the next section.

Centres Support “All,” BUT….: Parameter Setting

Although all of the centres suggested they support all students and all aspects of the writing process, many qualify the “all” when it comes to particular types of support. Seven of the 12 centres analysed also included clear guidelines on types of support that is beyond their mandate, or not provided at their centre. Indeed, clear parameters are set by the bulk of the centres surveyed. Furthermore, all of those centres that outlined certain services as being beyond the purview of their centre included both editing and proofreading in the list of services not offered. In fact, the Academic Skills and Learning Centre (ANU), the Centre for Writers (UofA), the Writing Centre (DU), the McGill Writing Centre (MU), the UBC Writing Centre (UBC), the Engineering Communication Centre (UofT, ECP) and the OISE Student Success Centre (UofT, OSSC) all describe proofreading and editing as services that are not available in their centres.

The exclusion of editing and proofreading in seven of the 12 sites is not surprising given the long-enduring maxim of “we do not edit” that has informed writing centre praxis since the early 1980s following the publication Steven North’s (1984) writing centre manifesto. Indeed as discussed in Chapter 2, North (1984) decried the depiction of writing centres as remedial skill and drill grammar “fix it shops” and suggested writing centres should be conceived of as student-centred spaces where success was measured by changes in the writer, not immediate changes in the writing, which was the outcome of editing and proofreading (438-439). The University of Alberta’s Centre for Writers signals its adherence to North’s “Idea” on its website when it provides advice to faculty asking them to remember that “the C4W is not a remedial, "fix-it" shop and that our tutors won't edit or write papers for students” (University of Alberta, “Instructors and TAs,” para. 3, C4W, 2015). Table 10 presents the types of support that the centres in the sample expressly exclude. Most centres also use qualifying language when outlining the exclusion of particular services, which is the thematic focus in the next section.
Table 10. Services not Offered Across Centres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre Name</th>
<th>Services not Offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>International</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Skills and Learning Centre (ANU)</td>
<td>Editing, proofreading or grammar-checking, support/assistance with academic content, estimates/commentary on likely grades, take-home exams, IELTS tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley Student Learning Center (UCB)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Writing Centre (UCL)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Learning Centre (UO)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canadian</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Writers (UofA)</td>
<td>Editing, proofreading, take-home exams, legal documents, or assignments written in a language other than English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UBC Writing Centre (UBC)</td>
<td>Editing, proofreading, content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Centre (DU)</td>
<td>Editing, proofreading, “correcting” service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill Writing Centre (MU)</td>
<td>Editing, proofreading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*<strong>University of Toronto</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniels Writing Centre (UofT, Arch)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Communication Centre (UofT, Eng)</td>
<td>Editing, proofreading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences Writing Centre (UofT, Health Sci)</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OISE Student Success Centre (UofT, Ed.)</td>
<td>Editing, proofreading</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The central University of Toronto Writing Centre website that provides the umbrella for all University of Toronto writing centres states: “Instructors will help you develop your own skills in revising and editing, and will help you identify patterns of language errors and work to overcome them. But don’t ask us to do your proofreading for you!” (University of Toronto, Writing Centres, “How we Work,” para. 4, n.d.).

**Centres “Support,” Students “Own”**

The final theme that emerged across all twelve of the websites in this sample was that of student ownership for learning and ultimately academic success. Across the diverse sites students are positioned as needing to take ownership and control of their own learning through leveraging and integrating the support from the centre. Thus, the supportive role of the centres is to foster student’s empowerment, independence and autonomy in order to allow them to develop the necessary skills for their own academic success. The theme of ownership is particularly clear within centres that have articulated a mission, mandate or guiding/goals and principles.
Examples of the student ownership theme can be found in the international sample through the expressed mission statements of Australian National University’s Academic Skills and Learning Centre and University of California, Berkeley’s Student Learning Centre. ANU’s Mission Statement is guided by three goals the first of which is to “inspire students to take control of their learning”… and the second includes the goal of students “[becoming] drivers of their own discovery” (Australian National University, “About Us,” para. 1, 2015). Similarly, Berkeley’s Student Learning Centre suggests the writing program supports Cal undergraduates in their journeys to become more persuasive and more purposeful writers. Via student-initiated conferences and peer-facilitated workshops, our services seek to embolden students to take ownership of their growth as writers and scholars (University of California, Berkeley, SLC, para. 1, 2015).

Moreover, Berkeley’s Student Learning Centre also posits that its philosophy is that “writing is both a tool for intellectual discoveries and a means to social and personal empowerment” (University of California, Berkeley, SLC, para. 2, 2015).

From the Canadian sample, discourses of ownership and self-sufficiency are evident in language used by the University of Alberta’s Centre for Writers, Dalhousie’s Writing Centre, and the University of British Columbia’s Writing Centre. UofA’s Centre for Writers suggests that “writers provided with appropriate resources will become self-sufficient,” which it promotes through “involvement and self-direction in the session” (University of Alberta, C4W, “Tutor Guiding Principles,” para. 14, 2015). Students visiting the Centre for Writers are expected to make their own decisions and “take ownership of their work” through the questions and guidance of tutors (University of Alberta, C4W, “Tutor Guiding Principles,” para. 18, 2015). Dalhousie’s Writing Centre expresses its focus in individual sessions as always focused, “on training you to be your own writer and editor” (Dalhousie University, “Make an Appointment,” para. 6, n.d.). While UBC’s Writing Centre defines tutoring as an activity which has the goal of offering support and guidance for writers to become independent and able to develop their own writing process for independence in future writing projects (University of British Columbia, n.d.).

Within the University of Toronto sample, the Engineering Communication Program (ECP) also illuminates student independence and empowerment as anticipated outcomes for those who use their services. Indeed, in their mission statement the ECP states that they “empower” students’ communicative practices. However, the ECP also links their empowerment and
independence agenda to students’ ultimate professional careers through suggesting that confident and independent communicators will also be lead students to become “top contributing professionals in their fields” (University of Toronto, ECP, para. 1, 2015).

While the theme of student ownership and independence as a writer is certainly discernible in the mandates and visions of the centres analysed, this trend can also be traced through to the justifications for the provision of some services and the lack of provision of other services across centres. Indeed, most of the centres in the sample use the language of student ownership of learning to qualify statements about non-provision. For example, in the Canadian sample Dalhousie’s Writing Centre states that they are “not a proofreading or editing service. We’re here to discuss your writing and help you develop strategies to write more effectively—our goal is to teach you to write independently” (Dalhousie University, Writing Centre, para. 1, n.d.). McGill’s Writing Centre also uses the goal of empowerment to politely inform students of the parameters of their service. The website states,

Please note that the Tutorial Service is not a drop-off proofreading and editing service. Accordingly, tutors will not “correct” your draft assignments. Rather, tutors will model structurally and grammatically coherent sentences and paragraphs with a view to empowering you to learn how to write clear, concise, and engaging prose (McGill University, Writing Centre, “Tutorial Service,” para. 2, 2015, emphasis original).

The University of British Columbia’s Writing Centre takes a different approach through defining their understanding of the terms editing and proofreading to explain and justify why such services are not provided. The UBC Writing Centre suggests that editing includes having a tutor correct errors rather than teach students how to find their own errors and such an approach would not achieve the goal of creating “independent, confident writer[s]”(University of British Columbia, Writing Centre, “Defining Terms,” para. 2, n.d.). The UBC website also defines editing a process through which tutors “rewrite” a piece of writing for “clarity, development, strong organization, and other higher order concerns” (University of British Columbia, Writing Centre, “Defining Terms,” para. 2, n.d.). Editing understood as such is also contrary to the goal of creating self-reliant and confident writers, while also conflicting with UBC’s academic integrity policy, and thus is not offered.

Within the University of Toronto sample both the Engineering Communication Program Tutorial Centre and the OISE Student Success Centre also focus on the development of the individual writer to justify the unavailability of editing and proofreading support. While the
ECP Tutorial Centre suggests that they can support students in finding and revising the errors themselves, the student must make the corrections in order to develop their own editing and proofreading skills (University of Toronto, ECP, 2015). The OISE Student Success Centre, on the other hand, defines itself as an “instructional writing centre” that aims to offer “all…students an opportunity to learn about the writing process and improve their ability to edit their own writing,” and therefore the centre will “NOT edit or proofread assignments for students” (University of Toronto, OSSC, para. 1, 2014).

Thus, across the 12 sites in this sample the theme of student ownership emerges frequently. Interestingly, using language to construct students as “owners” or “active agents” in their interactions with the centres is also familiar in the broader landscape of discourses that circulate around the work of writing centres that aim to create “better writers” rather than “better writing” (North, 1984, p. 438), and broader narratives in academia in general that focus on individualist approaches to success. In this sample at the descriptive, surface level these discourses appear to be leveraged in order to qualify the negative, parameter-setting aspects of service provision. However, these discursive features also provide insight into institutional positionality and power hierarchies, which is discussed in detail in the societal analysis.

The descriptive analyses following Fairclough’s (1993, 1995, 2001) approach illuminated three main themes across the centres including: 1) centres support all students and all writing; 2) parameter-setting; and, 3) student ownership. It is interesting to note that despite some diversity in the names ascribed to the respective centres, a host of similarities in relation to roles, services and themes emerged in the texts across contexts. Furthermore, the themes that emerged show a number of affinities with “writing centre” literature and theory despite the fact that some centres have eschewed the writing centre moniker. However, the sample also shows that the centres from the international sample tend to depart from the somewhat codified writing centre “lore” more than their counterparts from the Canadian and University of Toronto samples. Explanations of inconsistencies and outliers, and the broader social practices that may account for differences are further explored in the proceeding sections.

Process Analysis

In this section I undertake the second stage of Fairclough’s (1993, 1995, 2001) critical discourse analysis model through focusing on four stages of interpretive or process-level
analysis: purpose, subjects, relations and connections. In analysing the process level features of the websites I first examine the activity and topic to arrive at the ultimate purpose of the texts across the websites. Second, interpretations consider the subjects evident in each of texts under analysis. In this section, students, “the Centre,” tutors/advisors/instructors/staff, faculty and institutions emerge as subjects in the texts. Third, the relationships evident in the textual data are analysed. In this phase the consistent use of the pronouns “we” and “you” provide important interpretive cues in the critical reading of texts. Finally, the insights garnered from the interpretive framework are used to generate broader understandings of the role of language in and among texts (Fairclough, 2001) in order to inform the final analyses undertaken within institutional, situational and societal practices in which the texts circulate (Fairclough, 1995).

**Purpose**

In describing the purpose of the websites, I use three sub-terms to describe the broader purpose across the websites following Fairclough (1989). The sub-terms include: activity (most general description of what’s going on based on situational context), topics (constrained by activity, the main message of the text) and purpose (the ultimate goal of the text).

The broadest interpretations of activity related to the messages on the various websites are descriptions of the centres and what the centres do and/or offer. Indeed, an analysis of the main landing page and textual information that appears at the top of each page shows a consistent message of “purpose” as the main topic addressed on the websites across contexts.

For example, the ASLC at Australian National University states, the “Academic Skills and Learning Centre (ASLC) offers ANU students of all levels free and confidential help with their academic work through individual tutorials, workshops, courses and handouts (Australian National University, 2015). The text on the landing page of the University College London Academic Writing Centre (AWC) website echoes that of the ASCL by stating “[t]he Academic Writing Centre provides support for IOE students in the form of short courses, one-to-one tutorials and Skype or phone tutorials” (University College London, AWC, para. 1, 2015). In fact, the Berkeley Student Learning Center, the Student Learning Centre at the University of Otago, the Centre for Writers at the University of Alberta, the Dalhousie Writing Centre, the McGill Writing Centre, and the UBC Writing Centre, all “support” students and provide nearly identical statements to suggest their supportive
mandate for students’ writing (and in some cases academic) endeavours. While support is by far the most common verb used to describe their purpose, the Engineering Communication Program Tutorial Centre “helps,” the Daniels Writing Centre in the faculty of Architecture is a “resource” and the OISE Student Success Centre “offers learning opportunities.”

Thus, the main activity across sites is a description of the centre’s purpose and the programs the centre provides in order to achieve their purpose. The topic of the websites, however, is more relational and includes the addressees of the site. Indeed, as noted in the previous section and the examples above the use of verbs such as “support,” “help,” “assist,” “provide,” “offer,” “teach” and “collaborate” are ascribed to centre in relation to their purposes. Yet, the topic is about both the centre and the reader of the website. Therefore, the discourse also addresses how the centres interact with (and of course support) students (and faculty in some cases). Where students are concerned, consistent use of verbs such as “improve,” “access,” “learn,” “develop,” “inquire,” “talk,” and “visit” are employed to describe the activities students may undertake in the centre. In other words, the topic of the websites is how they can help, which includes language that brings in the addressee of the text.

At a final level, the purpose of the websites is broadly to invite/entice students to take part in the activities offered by the centre. Indeed the activities across sites related to description of purpose and the topic of how centres “support” is enacted in hopes of encouraging students to engage in the programs and offerings at each of the centres. The texts throughout the websites foreground title or name of centre, contact information, locations, and information on the people that work in and visit the sites in hopes of encouraging students to visit, connect with or take part in the programs described. In achieving the purpose of enticing students to take part in their programs, many of the websites also enact promotional discourse through language such as “services,” “mission statement,” and the positioning students as “clients.”

Within the frames of promotional discourse, Otago University’s Student Learning Centre includes testimonials from students, while the University of Alberta has branded the Centre for Writers “C4W” and includes the slogan “You can write. We can help” (University of Alberta, C4W, 2015, emphasis original). The use of this promotional discourse in a higher education environment will be discussed further in the final section of this chapter. Figure 10 depicts the three sub-themes examined within the broader purpose theme.
In order to achieve these informational, relational and promotional purposes the centre also depicts and positions a number of subjects: students, staff (tutors, advisors, etc.), and institutions, which also provides discursive cues.

**Subjects**

The primary subjects identifiable across sites include those who work in or administer the centre (directors, coordinators, staff, tutors/advisors who become “the centre” as a unified speaker), students, faculty, and at times the broader institution.

“**The centre**”

Each of the websites positions “the centre” writ large as the speaker throughout the text with the exception of one brief use of quotations including student testimonials on the University of Otago SLC website mentioned above. Aside from the testimonial exception, the speaker consistently identifies as the “centre,” but does so as a member of a group or a collective who speaks for all those affiliated with “the centre.” For example, many websites include links to “what we do,” “our goals,” and “how we work with students.” Here the pronoun represents a collective, and as such is granted authority to speak for all of those who work at the centre. Furthermore an authoritative voice is employed with the “we” when “the centre” is outlining...
the parameters of service as “We do not provide an editing, proofreading or grammar-checking service” (Australian National University, ASLC, “Appointments,” para. 5, 2015) or “We do NOT edit or proofread assignments for students” (University of Toronto, OSSC, para. 1, 2015). “The Centre” also speaks in a facilitatory fashion when it invites students to come “visit us often” (University of California, Berkeley, SLC, para. 2, 2015) or “we can work with you via Skype, Otago Connect, email or telephone, whichever suits” (University of Otago, SLC, “Talk to a Learning Advisor,” para. 4, n.d.).

Additionally, as a subject and speaker “the centres” often affiliate themselves with the institution through positioning themselves as agents and their work as sanctioned by their respective institutions. While Fairclough (2001) suggest that it is the institution that “ascribes social identities to the subjects who function within it,” as speakers the centres also use their institutional identities to validate and promote their work (p. 123). For example ANU’s Academic Skills and Learning Centre states it provides “student-centred academic skills and learning assistance, consistent with the University’s strategic plan” and provides support in an environment “organised along institutional lines, structured into degree programs within the ANU Colleges, and mediated by assessment requirements” (Australian National University, ASLC, “About Us,” para. 1, 2012). While the Student Learning Center at Berkeley positions itself as a mediator between the student and institution when it states the “SLC supports a global community of learners as they transition into the academic and cultural environment of UC Berkeley; facilitates students’ translation of the university’s way(s) of knowing, academic practices and structures…” (University of California, Berkeley, SLC, “About,” para. 1, 2015).

Students

While “the centre” is the speaker, “the student” is almost always positioned as the addressee across websites. In many instances the websites use “students” as a broad term when describing who can access their services and in what ways, yet the use of “students” is often also replaced with the pronoun “you” when addressing specific aspects of programs or services. For example, UCB’s Student Learning Centre uses “students” in describing its philosophy and role, but then recourses to “you” when describing formats of services and addresses students directly through saying “we will work with you…” (University of California, Berkeley, SLC, para. 3, 2015). This pattern is consistent across websites with many websites employing language that could address multiple addressees in statements
related to the centres’ main purpose and/or mandate statement and then switching to “you” when describing the specifics of using the services or booking an appointment.

These linguistic choices are also connected to promotional discourse, which constructs students as consumers or clients. For example, the University of Alberta C4W has a tab entitled “client policies” on its website which instructs students how to change and cancel appointments and also re-iterates the no editing and proofreading policy. While on other websites the use of the terms “services,” which are primarily aimed at students, also acts to position students as consumers. Thus, across sites students are the primary addressees or “consumers” of the texts and are rarely (almost never) constructed of speakers unless sanctioned by “the centre” as speaker as in the Otago case.

Tutors, advisors, instructors (staff)

The tutors, advisors, instructors or staff (diversely named across centres), also appear as subjects on many sites. Often tutors/advisors/instructors are the implied subjects supporting the students although not explicitly named through the use of “we” or “our.” Such is the case on the Dalhousie website, which states “we meet with you individually to discuss your work and we also offer events and seminars” (Dalhousie University, Writing Centre, para. 1, n.d.). In other cases, tutors/advisors are expressly named as the subjects providing support as McGill’s Writing Centre states “our tutors will work with you at any stage of the writing process” (McGill University, Writing Centre, para. 1, 2015), while the ECP Tutorial Centre indicates that “a Communication Instructor (CI) will read your work-in-progress and can help you…” (University of Toronto, ECP, “Appointments,” para. 2, 2015). Thus, in some instances tutors, advisors or instructors are subsumed within the “we,” while in others they are constructed primarily as separate from the speaker. When they are constructed as separate from the speaker they are frequently described as “capable” (University of Otago, SLC, n.d.), “specially trained” (University of Alberta, C4W, 2015) “service providers” within the promotional discourse.

However, an interesting trend across several sites is the inclusion of tutor profiles, bios, pictures and/or credentials in a separate link off of the main webpage. While Australian National University’s ASLC, Dalhousie’s Writing Centre, and McGill’s Writing Centre all provide names and contact information for their tutors/staff, many other centres provide full profiles on the tutors/staff who work in the centre. Indeed, the SLC at Berkeley, the AWC at
University College London, the SLC at the University of Otago, the C4W at the University of Alberta, and both the ECP Tutorial Centre (Engineering) and the OSSC (Education) at the University of Toronto all have dedicated pages that provide names, photos and short bios of each tutor/staff member. Interestingly of the seven websites listed above that provide photos and bios, all of the tutor/advisor bios are written in the third person with the exception of the tutors at the SLC at Berkeley who have written first person accounts of why they love writing and working in the SLC. The connected webpages with photos and bios are thus interesting as in many cases the act to professionalise and credentialise tutors/staff, while on the other hand the bios and pictures also construct tutors/advisors as relatable, accessible, and “friendly” (University of California, Berkeley, 2015; University of Otago, n.d.).

Faculty

Faculty appear diversely on the sites as addressees, “hearers,” collaborators, and authorities. In cases where faculty are directly addressed they are generally also positioned as having access to the support and are addressed with the pronoun “you.” For example, the University of Alberta’s C4W states that tutors will come to “your” class and “We hope you will mention the C4W on your syllabus and encourage ALL your students to visit us and try our services at least once…” (University of Alberta, C4W, “Instructors and TAs,” para. 3, 2015). While in other cases faculty is constructed as a collaborator. Such is the case in the ASLC at Australian National University where faculty are informed of the reasons they may refer a student (support is couched in slightly different terms than are used for students), and they are also informed about the research and academic endeavours of the centre.

In other cases, faculty are positioned as “hearers (those not addressed directly, but assumed to be part of the audience)” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 79) and carry authority on the centre’s programs and services. This is the case for the UBC Writing Centre when they state that “since we are focused on helping students improve their writing overall, content help is outside of our mandate. If you need assistance with content, ask your instructor” (University of British Columbia, “Preparing” para. 1, n.d.). The positioning of faculty as “hearers” is perhaps the most common across sites as faculty/instructors are infrequently mentioned when students are the clear addressees, yet they have a stake in the programs and services of the centres.
The broader institution is present across the websites in constructions of students as members of the institution as in “ANU students,” “Cal students” as well as the Centres’ clear affiliation with the broader institution. However, the institution is also included as an authority as UBC suggests they do not edit as such as practice is contrary to UBC’s academic integrity policy. While the ASCL aligns its programs with the ANU’s strategic plan, the SLC “facilitates students’ translation of the university’s way(s) of knowing, academic practices and structures…” (University of California, Berkeley, SLC, “About,” para. 1, 2015). Thus, the institution is certainly present across sites, yet as subjects consuming the discourse they are largely “overhearers (those who are not part of the “official” audience yet may still consume the text)” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 80).

Relations

Closely related to subjects are relations wherein the subject positions are examined for the ways they enact, maintain or position subjects in power relations (Fairclough, 1989, p.148). These relations can often be unpacked through examining how pronouns are utilised in the texts, which is the focus of this section.

Through analysing the use of pronouns across sites, the data shows that “the centres” are often positioned as agents—the ones providing the support, help, assistance, while students are the beneficiaries of the support. Such constructions can be found throughout the websites in the sample, Figure 11 below depicts screenshots taken from the main landing page purpose statements across sites:
Figure 11. Agents and Beneficiaries in the Centre

Academic Skills & Learning Centre

Academic Skills and Learning Centre (ASLC) offers ANU students of all levels free and confidential help with their academic work through individual tutorials, workshops, courses and handouts. Our aim is to assist students to develop their academic, critical thinking and communication strategies.

Our Philosophy

Our program operates on the premise that writing is both a tool for intellectual discoveries and a means to social and personal empowerment. A writer, we believe, is someone who writes, and the act of writing itself is a fundamental human right. Our mission to support students to become stronger writers is both a professional responsibility and a social justice endeavor. Our praxis builds on the strengths of collaborative peer pedagogy. We leverage the tremendous drive, resourcefulness, and talents that our tutors and writers bring to the SLC to enhance the collective success and sense of community for all Cal students. By engaging in critical writing-center praxis and innovative peer pedagogy, we take pride in being a community where staff and students support one another to become independent thinkers, thoughtful writers, and positive agents for change.

WRITING CENTRE
A free service to students who want to improve their writing skills

We offer support in all subjects—from academic assignments to dissertations—for both undergraduate and graduate students. We meet with you individually to discuss your work and we also offer events and seminars. We are not a proofreading or editing service—our goal is to teach you to write independently.

Tutoring

To us, tutoring refers to a session where a tutor and student meet to talk about the student’s writing and writing process. We see tutoring as an opportunity to offer support and guidance to students who are working towards becoming independent writers. To us, the goal of tutoring is not to have students rely on tutors to perfect every piece of writing they do, but to use tutors to help them develop their own writing process and approach to creating and revising every piece of writing they do on their own. This often takes many sessions with a tutor, and that’s fine—we just want to ensure that every session is another step towards independence for the student.
As these excerpts depicted in Figure 11 demonstrate the centre, not the student, is the main agent through providing the support and programs, and often also defining the anticipated results for students. Such constructions are consistent with Askehave’s (2007) study of prospectuses for international students across diverse national contexts. Askehave (2007) found that

the university (including university-related activities, facilities, and staff) almost exclusively appears as subject (agent) in clauses, performing “actions” of 1) a strong supporting or service-providing nature, or of 2) an “enabling” nature (p. 732).

The outcome of such a construction, according to Askehave (2007), is that the student’s ability to learn, develop and improve are also constructed as a result of “the centre’s” actions, despite the fact that the student is the actual “doer” (p. 733). In other words, the construction of the “centre” or institution as the agent and provider of support, means any benefits realised by the student are due to the actions of “the centre.” These constructions also echo Saichaie’s (2011) findings from a critical discourse analysis of main “About” pages across higher education institutions where “[t]he institutions position themselves as the primary conduit for success” and such positioning also uses “highly relational student-centered discourse” (p. 78).

This highly relational discourse that positions the student as “doer,” however, also complicates the ascription of agency through positioning students as individuals with choices. Indeed, in many instances the use of the pronoun “you” is enacted to show a range of options for student addressees. Berkeley’s SLC offers in-person, online and workshop formats for their services and they suggest students read each section to “see which format is for you” (University of California, Berkeley, SLC, para. 1, 2015). Similarly, the C4W at the University of Alberta states “you can book up to two appointments per week or drop in during our hours of operation as many times as you like” (University of Alberta, C4W, “Tutoring,” para. 1, 2015). These more informal statements with the pronoun “you” are evident across many of the websites where students’ choices are concerned, they also act to construct a welcoming, relaxed environment for students.

The use of the pronoun “you” is certainly used to generate a sense of openness or accessibility in constructions such as “We look forward to working with you!” (McGill University, 2015) and “The team here at the UBC Writing Centre is excited to begin the new fall semester with you” (University of British Columbia, Writing Centre, para. 1, n.d.). According to Fairclough
(2001) such statements with the use of the “you” pronoun are examples of “synthetic personalization.” This approach

is constructed for the consumer...But it is also in part a matter of the personalized relationship between the producer and consumer, as evidenced in textual features which are widespread in advertising discourse – direct address of audience members with you, and imperative sentences. (p 168, emphasis original)

Thus, the use of the pronoun “you” across sites has a three-fold effect on the sites in the sample: 1) it attempts to use language to situate students as agents, despite the earlier constructions of “the centre” (“we”) as the agent; 2) it places the onus on the individual student to “make good on” the support they receive, and; 3) it aims to personalise the discourses in line with promotional discourses. Such constructions work together with other parts of language to construct overall messages, and it is these overall messages that are the focus of the next section and final stage of the analysis.

Connections

Language certainly plays an important role in the construction of messages across the websites in this sample. The interpretive analysis has illuminated a number of characteristics inherent in the texts across sites. While the primary activity on the websites is to describe the centres raison d’être, the topic is support, and the overall purpose is to encourage students to use the services and programs implemented by the various centres. Given that the purpose of the sites is to encourage usage, students are commonly the main addressees of the messages on all of the websites, with faculty also being positioned as addressees from time to time. The texts also show that “the centre” is the speaker the majority of the time and the sheer number of “we” and “our” across sites supports this finding. However, all of the websites also directly address their readers (usually students) through the use of “you” to personalise the provision of specific information, demonstrate the agency of the addressee, and attempt to generate a relational exchange between the reader and the text. Thus, overall there is a clear tendency to use relational, promotional and student-centred, “supportive” discourses across the websites in the sample. The emergence of these discourses is consistent with discourse practices within the larger institutional, situational and societal structures in which these centres operate and their existence can be explained through analyses at the sociocultural level, to which this analysis now turns.
Societal Analysis

This section describes the findings from the final stage of analysis following Fairclough’s (1993, 1995, 2001) three dimensions of discourse analysis. The results from the societal analysis discussed in this section places the texts in context—the contexts are various and include situational, institutional and societal levels in order to permit explanations. These explanations are made possible through examining the texts in their social contexts and the “more durable social structures which shape and are shaped by” discursive events (Fairclough, 1989, p. 27). Here examinations are dialectical to illuminate how texts are influenced by social structures as well as how social structures are influenced by texts. In what follows I examine the texts within discourses that circulate in higher educational institutions, situational writing centre discourses, and wider societal discourses on literacy.

Discourses in (Pro)motion: The Marketization of Higher Education

In 1993 Norman Fairclough began a dialogue on the “marketization of higher education” wherein a discernible trend among institutions of higher education increasingly adopting business practices where discourses “sell” products to “consumers” was illuminated (p. 143). The general marketization trend has since continued to sweep institutions of higher education with the adoption of managerial approaches including private-source funding, strategic planning, and advertising. In the twenty years since Fairclough (1993) published his analysis of the marketization trend, it is increasingly fair to say that higher education discourse has been “colonized” by promotional discourse, which uses discourse as a “vehicle for “selling” goods, services, organizations, ideas or people” (Fairclough, 1993, p. 141).

While Fairclough’s (1993) early work examined job advertisements and prospectuses to demonstrate the influence of promotional discourse in higher education, many other scholars have continued to apply critical discourse analysis to examine a diversity of texts produced by higher education institutions. For example, Askehave (2007) looked at international student prospectuses, Kheovichai (2014) compared business and academic job advertisements, Connell and Galasiński (1998) examined mission statements, and Chiper (2006) and Saichaie (2011) both analysed university websites. Each of these scholars demonstrated the discernible influence or even “dominance” (Saichaie, 2011, p.173) of promotional discourses in the discursive practices of higher education environments. Certainly, the analyses of the websites included in this sample show a similar trend across websites for writing/learning/success
centres in diverse contexts, and confirm existing research that suggesting marketized or promotional discourses “are far from exceptional in higher education genres” (Askehave, 2007, p. 724).

The most obvious examples of promotional discourse appear within the “support for all” theme identified in the textual analyses. Here, the descriptions of “services” are clearly designed to “sell” the services to potential student clients (Fairclough, 1993, p.156). As eluded in the previous sections, the language used across sites provides innumerable cues of the promotional nature of the texts. The bulk of the websites describe their activities as “services” (ANU, UCB, OU, UofA, UD, MU, UBC, UofT (ECP), UofT (OSSC), or describe themselves as a “service provider” (University of Toronto, OSSC, para. 1, 2014) with many noting that their services are “free” (ANU, UO). Furthermore the use of slogans, “You can write. We can help” (University of Alberta, C4W, 2015, emphasis original) and student testimonials (University of Otago, n.d.) demonstrate a clear nod to promotional discourse. While the use of relational, inviting, informal and conversational language with “synthetic personalization” (Fairclough, 2001, p.168) is also indicative of promotional discourse and is evident in statements such as “New! Students can now use the tutorial service up to 7 hours per semester!” (McGill University, Writing Centre, para. 1, 2015) and “We’re here for you” (University of Toronto, ECP, para. 3, 2015). However, despite these clear examples, the websites included in this sample also show some uncomfortable negotiations with the promotional discourses that have increasingly informed other genres of texts produced by universities.

The promotional discourse is negotiated and punctuated with “interdiscursivity” in the theme identified as parameter-setting in the textual analysis. Within this theme evidence of “interdiscursivity,” or texts that are made up of varied genres and discourses, appear as the centres attempt to negotiate their authority with the promotional nature of the texts—a common dilemma for promotional texts produced by higher educational institutions (Fairclough, 1993, p. 138). Thus, although the “support for all” theme uses language in a way to construct the student or “client” as the agent, the parameter setting requires that the centres use language to impose requirements and conditions related to use of their services, which necessitates a departure from promotional discourse (Fairclough, 1993, p. 157). Thus, in mediating these two genres, the texts often state parameters in a way that employ “politeness
strategies” (Kheovichai, 2014, p. 386) or do so by avoiding language that is “overtly obligational” (Fairclough, 1993, p. 157).

For example, politeness strategies are clear when the McGill Writing Centre states, “Please note that the Tutorial Service is not a drop-off proofreading and editing service” (McGill University, Writing Centre, para. 1, 2015). Here the student is not addressed directly as “you” and the language reads as informative rather than obligatory. While the University of Alberta’s C4W reminds faculty to “Please remind your students that the C4W is not a remedial, "fix-it" shop” (University of Alberta, C4W, “Instructors and TAs,” para. 3, 2015), which acts to politely disperse authority over parameters. In other cases, the centres displace the authority to an unknown agent (presumably the institution) when describing services not offered as in “We are not allowed to comment on take-home exams” (Australian National University, ASLC, “Appointments,” para. 5, 2015).

However, more commonly when describing services not offered, the centres tend to soften the limitations through the use of qualifying language or they offer substitute services. An identifiable approach used by many centres is to “hedge” the parameters through language such as we do not offer X, but in place offer Y. For example, ANU’s ASLC states, “We do not provide an editing, proofreading or grammar-checking service, but we can help you with strategies to address both language and writing issues” (Australian National University, ASLC, “Appointments” para. 5, 2015, emphasis mine). While the Engineering Communication Program Tutoring Centre states, “We don’t serve as a proofreading and editing service, but we can help you learn to identify and correct grammatical errors yourself” (University of Toronto, ECP, “Appointments,” para. 8, 2015, emphasis mine). In other cases, the parameter setting is undertaken through suggesting that the inability to provide a certain service is advantageous to the “client.” Here, the third theme of student ownership is also leveraged for promotional purposes in constructing the student as the benefactor of the service. The UBC Writing Centre takes this approach when it states that editing is not available “because it does not support you in becoming an independent, confident writer” (University of British Columbia, Writing Centre, para. 3, 2015). Similarly, the McGill Writing Centre suggests editing and proofreading are not available but “tutors will model structurally and grammatically coherent sentences and paragraphs with a view to empowering you to learn how to write clear, concise, and engaging prose” (McGill University, Writing Centre, “Tutorial Service,” para. 2, 2015, emphasis original). Here the services that lead to
empowerment, the ability to produce engaging prose and independent, confident writers are positioned as services more valuable to students than the simple editing or proofreading services that students might have initially been looking for.

The websites in this sample demonstrably engage in, and are influenced by, the promotional discourses that have ascended to nearly hegemonic status in institutions of higher education. However, the sample also demonstrates an uncomfortable negotiation with the promotional discourses of the broader institution in the centres’ refusal of certain “services” to its “clients.” In order to unpack the source of the interdiscursive negotiations made in the setting of parameters a discussion of the discourses that circulate at the situational level of writing centre history, theory and praxis is necessary.

What’s in a Name? Ongoing Inscription of Situational Discourse

Scholarship on writing centre practice and theory has long admonished the “marginalised” status of writing centres (Mauriello, Macauley & Koch, 2011; Perdue & James, 1990; Murphy & Law, 1995; Cooper, 1994), celebrated the emancipatory capacity of writing centres’ marginality (Boquet, 2002; Davis, 1995; North & Brannon; Riley, 1994) or considered the duality of marginalisation and emancipatory potential for writing centres in institutions of higher education (Carter, 2009; Carino, 2002; Grimm, 1996; North, 1984). These competing visions of both the place and role of writing centres in institutions of higher education have led to complicated articulations of writing centre discourses that not only function to “sell” the work of the writing centre to students, but also to faculty and administration. Indeed in this section, I place the themes illuminated in the textual analysis into the broader discourse of writing centres. Through so doing, the multiple perceived consumers of writing centre texts and the lingering binary of being marginal and/or emancipatory spaces in universities explains the sometimes contradictory narratives writing centres weave about their work, and the stability of these contradictory narratives across contexts.

More than ten years ago Peter Carino (2002) undertook a rhetorical analysis of the internal documents and external promotional materials produced by 20 different writing centres from diverse institutions (2 year colleges, private institutions, comprehensive and research-intensive universities) in the United States. Despite the fact that Carino’s analysis was undertaken with an American sample and from sites clearly identified as “writing centres,” his findings show striking similarities with the discourses that circulated across websites in this
cross-context sample wherein naming conventions did not always prefer the “writing centre” moniker. Indeed, Carino (2002) identified the following four discourses across the 20 institutions in his sample:

1. The Center and Grammar Instruction: We are not the grammar garage!
2. Tutorial Ethics: We don’t do students’ work
3. Center Clientele: We are here for everybody
4. Staff Qualifications: We are competent and kind

Carino’s (2002) first discursive theme related to grammar instruction aligns with North’s (1984) “fix-it shop” maxim and the theme identified in this sample as parameter setting. Here the historical marginalisation of the writing centre inscribes the “dirty work” of grammar as equally marginal and the discourses employed by the centres aim to place their work squarely in the purview of supporting the broader writing process, rather than the tedious line-by-line correcting work. The second discourse of “we don’t do students’ work” aligns with the student ownership theme identified in my sample. This emphatic discourse of student ownership emerged across all 12 sites in my sample and has clear links to the historical and contemporary realities that writing centres “are struggling against Western culture's conceptions of individual authorship and American [Western] education's ideas of ethics—both of which are culturally ingrained in many faculty and students” (Carino, 2002, p. 100). The third discourse of helping everyone is a clear reflection of the “support for all” theme identified in my sample. Finally, the fourth category of staff qualifications and kindness also emerged through the process analysis of subjects in the credentialising and personalising of tutors/staff on the websites included in this sample. Thus, despite diverse naming conventions and cross-contextual comparisons the discourses employed by (writing) centres across contexts are strikingly similar despite ongoing calls for re-storying (Grutsch McKinney, 2013) or retheorisng (Grimm, 2011) writing centre work. Indeed, nearly a decade after Carino (2002) undertook his rhetorical analysis, Harris (2010) also found that the four categories identified by Carino continued to “dominate the content of what [writing centres] write for institutional consumption” (p. 48).

The enduring nature of these discourses is related to the paradox of marginalisation and emancipation that has continued to drive (writing) centre discourses. Here, Carino’s (2002) work provides a helpful explanation of the complicated discourses weaved by writing centres, and provides insight into the reasons writing centres occupy a challenging position with the promotional discourses circulating in the academy. Indeed, as Carino (2002) suggests,
center directors must represent center work as integral to the institution's academic mission while simultaneously resisting the marginality that almost automatically adheres to any academic initiative not set in a classroom. Inhabiting such a difficult rhetorical space, directors must inform without confusing, must educate without condescending, must promise without bluffing, must assert without offending, and must offer help without promising servility. The rhetoric that directors produce tells much about how centers, individually and communally, have constructed themselves in the academy for themselves and others in light of their marginal status and innovative pedagogy (p. 92).

In addition to innovation/emancipation and marginalisation frames of centre discourse, I would posit that the promotional discourse of the broader academy also contributes to the discourses of writing centres. Indeed, the need to attract student “clients” while appeasing faculty “hearers” and administrative “overhearers” has demonstrably complicated the discourses of (writing) centres as they seek integration and resist marginalisation in their broader institutional environments. However, I would also posit that the assimilation of promotional discourses into the academy have also had an effect on the ways these discursive features of writing centres are communicated to addressees. Carino’s (2002) sample reveals statements that are emphatic, sometimes boarding on “belligerence” (p. 98) and reveal a rhetorical “chip on the shoulder” of writing centres. In my sample, however, the bulk of the websites analysed tend to adopt more apologetic, soft and qualified language when setting the parameters of their services, which may be a result of the influence of the broader acceptance of promotional discourse institutionally.

While the discourses of writing centres are discernible, historically inscribed, and enduring as illuminated across websites in this sample, as well as across contexts in Carino’s (2002) and Harris’ (2010) samples, the websites also demonstrate more opaque, complex and at times incongruent relationships with broader literacy discourses to which this analysis now turns.

**Deficits, Skills, Acculturation and Empowerment: (Inter)discursive Literacies**

Just as writing centres occupy complex places in institutional environments and discourses, they also express complicated relationships with discourses related to literacy(ies) and the development of students’ writing and academic abilities within these broader discourses. In Chapter 2 I described Lea and Street’s (1998, 2006) model of academic literacies. At the first level of study skills, literacy is seen as an individual skill that can simply be “given” to students. In effect, at this first level student “deficits” can simply be remediated with attention
to surface-level features of language. At the second level of academic socialisation, students may be taught disciplinary discourses and genres that they can then adopt. Academic socialisation assumes a sociocultural approach, but does not engage with larger power structures in which literacy education is imbued, and ultimately results in acculturation. Finally at the level of academic literacies, discussions include epistemological issues and the way that literacies interact with identity and power. Thus, the academic literacies approach is context-dependent and “foregrounds the institutional nature of what counts as knowledge in any particular academic context” (Lea and Street, 2006, p. 369).

Across the websites included in this sample, various levels of engagement with these literacy discourses are evident in the language and frames the centres use to describe their work. Indeed, there is a clear attempt to foreground that the work of these centres is not simply to adjust “deficits” located in struggling students, or support the “autonomous model of literacy” (Lea & Street, 1998, 1999, 2006) as all of the centres describe their work as being beneficial to all students. It is within this frame of resisting the prominence of the study skills approach of thinking about literacy education in the academy that results in the centres’ assertions that they are not “fix-it shops” (University of Alberta, C4W, 2015) or grammar correction, editing or proofreading services. Indeed, the centres suggest that it is their goal to develop, support, improve, help writers rather than improve texts, which is another remnant of writing centre “lore” that makes its way into the “vast majority of writing center mission statements and training and promotional materials” (Carter, 2009, p. 140). Thus, these parameter setting discourses, although often directed at students, may be equally aimed at educating faculty, staff and administration to rethink the “dominant overall rhetoric” that writing centres are sites of literacy instruction where “mastery of surface features…is the foundation of all academic prose” (Carter, 2009, p. 134). Furthermore, the tendency to avoid positioning services for multilingual students prominently on most sites may also be a result of avoiding marking these students as deficient, despite the fact that many writing centre directors consistently report that multilingual students make a major portion of their student users (Powers & Nelson, 1995; Moussu, 2013; Phillips, 2013; Thonus, 2014) and many of the sites offer specific services for these students.

Looking closely at the way literacy and learning is framed across websites, then, illuminates that the centres eschew the study skills, deficit-based approach to literacy development, and on the surface it appears that the centres’ discourses often demonstrate allegiance with the
more critical academic literacies approach. Indeed, for many centres the central goal articulated is to support/develop/empower/improve writers, and language indicative of critical frameworks is infused across many of the websites. For example the Berkeley Student Learning Center defines itself as a space that engages in “critical writing-center praxis and innovative peer pedagogy, we take pride in being a community where staff and students support one another to become independent thinkers, thoughtful writers, and positive agents for change” (University of California, Berkeley, SLC, para. 1, 2015). Similarly, the C4W at the University of Alberta notes the importance of maintaining “the writer’s voice” throughout the writing process (University of Alberta, C4W, “Guiding Principles,” para. 1, 2015), and both the McGill Writing Centre and the ECP Tutoring Centre suggest they “empower” students through their programs.

On the surface, the goal of improving, developing and empowering writers certainly seems well-intentioned and student-centred. However, through systematically exploring the “often opaque relationships of causality and determination between a) discursive practices, events and texts, and b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes” (Fairclough, 1993, p. 135), the discourses on the websites in this sample fall short of critical mandates. In effect, examining what is left unsaid in the discourses of the centres provides the clearest indication of the way centres are constructed or construct themselves within uncritical approaches to literacy development and the ways, and in whose vision, students are “improved,” “developed,” and “empowered.”

The lack of reflexive definition of whose vision of empowerment or improvement is being pursued in these centres suggest that definitions of what it means to write well in the academy are uncontested, singular and common-sense. Indeed, by unproblematically focusing on individual writers as in need of development, writing centres “locate the problem of literacy in individuals and the solution in institutional practices” (Grimm, 1996, p. 8) rather than engaging with how the broader institutional literacy frameworks may act to marginalise or discount ways of knowing and writing that differ from the institutional norm. In other words, in efforts to curtail the marginality of writing centres while negating the ubiquitous, hegemonic autonomous approach to literacy, writing centre work is shaped as “valuable to those in power by articulating its identity as a place where marginalised writers learn to mimic more "legitimate" (read "more powerful") ways of knowing by parroting the dominant cultural codes” (Carter, 2009, p. 142). Thus, although some of the websites include language
borrowed from more critical literacy approaches that may align with the goals of understanding literacy work is ensconced in political, cultural, epistemological struggles, it is the centres (as agents of the institution) who define empowerment, development and improvement and do so along institutionally valued lines. Therefore, despite the fact that “much of the rhetoric…used to articulate the value of writing centers is infused with an intensely democratic spirit…” it ultimately “advocates the rights of the individual foremost with respect to equalising access to all that is valued within the current system: democratic values such as freedom, individuality, and equity” (Carter, 2009, p. 144). Yet, these are promotional discourses and are subject to the approval of “hearers” and “overhearers” for whom the writing centre is also accountable beyond the student addressees. Indeed, while it is certainly true that there are many “material, cultural, and institutional constraints that both define and confine all learning situations” in the academy (Miller, 1998, p.7), I would suggest that there are also a number of confines related to what is discursively and rhetorically possible “in a system so profoundly shaped by and dependent on the status quo” (Carter, 2009, p. 137).

Thus, the complex, multifaceted and at times contradictory messages on the websites analysed across context can in many ways be explained by the ways writing centres seek to position and reposition themselves within a number of broader discourses, power structures and shifting alliances. Although five of the 12 sites analysed in this sample do not employ the name “writing centre,” the literature on writing centre is of broad importance in explaining the relatively static nature of the discourses across sites. Indeed, the uncomfortable positioning of these centres as spaces for students that are sanctioned by institutions engages writing centres in a complex discursive negotiation. While centres are keen to admonish and challenge the autonomous approach to literacy and discourses of deficit that are often ascribed to their work and the students who use their services, it is these very conceptions of literacy that are responsible for the existence of such centres in institutions of higher education in the first place (Carter, 2009, p. 143). Moreover, where centres may wish to vocally and actively challenge, subvert and widen the hegemonic frames of literacy that inform higher educational institutions, these same centres also depend on institutions for their own legitimacy and survival (Carter, 2009). Thus, writing centres often promulgate discourses that attempt to attract student “clients,” subvert institutional marginalisation, and “sell” their services as legitimate in the academy, while also navigating highly contested, yet often hegemonic conceptions about literacy that act to uphold existing power relations. With the conflicting
discourses that inform texts produced on the centre websites in this sample it is clear that the societal influences produce a writing/learning/support centre discourse that is “perfectly at odds with itself” (Boquet, 1999, p. 43).

Chapter Summary

This chapter examined 12 writing/learning/support centres across contexts following Fairclough’s (1993, 1995, 2001) tripartite model of critical discourse analysis. Themes of “support for all” and student ownership emerged across sites. While the theme of parameter setting was not a feature on all of the websites, it was found on the majority of the websites sampled. Furthermore, in the process analysis a pervasive trend to construct the student as the “agent” in the texts emerged despite the fact that the centres are actually the “agent” in offering services. Additionally, although students were often the main addresses of the texts, there was evidence of attempts to engage and “sell” faculty and the broader institution on the services described across sites.

When the texts on these websites were placed in the broader societal discourses, it becomes clear that the texts “arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power” according to institutional, situation and societal practices (Fairclough, 1993, p. 135). Indeed, given the competing ideologies embodied in the discourses that inform the work of these centres it is not surprising that the discourses of the centres are inherently paradoxical. The societal analysis revealed widespread disagreement among the discourse practices of the broader institutional, situational and societal levels “about the world the people in it, and the ways in which goods are or ought to be distributed among them” (Gee, 1996, p. 191).

Although the websites analysed in this chapter suggest that the language diversely named writing/learning/success centres use act to uphold and legitimise acculturation approaches to literacy, this analysis also demonstrated that these texts are inherently promotional in nature. Thus, the proceeding chapters refocuses the question of how writing centres support, impede, or socialise the literacy practices of multilingual students in one anglophone academy through describing the results of an in-depth case study undertaken in at a single site. The focus in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 is on how the services of a single centre are described and enacted according to the main interlocutors in that site. The final chapter brings the emergent findings from this chapter together with the case study findings. Here the amalgamation findings from
this multiple method study are combined to undertake an interrogation of the ways in which multilingual students are important stakeholders in the enacted pedagogies of the case study site, yet remain notably marginal in the promotional materials on websites surveyed in this chapter.
Interlude

Personal Reflections on “The Centre”

As a student in my undergraduate degree I accessed the writing centre at my small, rural, primarily undergraduate university. Reflecting back on my interactions therein it’s striking to me how little I thought about what a writing centre was, who it served, or how its “supportive” nature might place me as a student. I discovered and accessed the writing centre because my sister, who is five years older and had attended the institution, told me to. It was that simple for me, I didn’t interrogate the role, investigate the structures or have any predilections that I was accessing the service because I was somehow deficit. I didn’t visit a website and read about “dos and don’ts,” I signed up on a clipboard posted outside of a non-descript office.

Only two people were employed in this writing centre, they were employees of the university, on what terms or contracts I don’t know. However, the room was as one would expect—cosy and it had plants and other comforts that seemed inviting in comparison to the other spaces one went to conduct administrative duties in the university. My interactions therein were supportive, the staff would go through my paper circling odd language, noting my overly long paragraphs and pointing out my capacity to write fantastically complex run-on sentences. I remember one occasion when I had an early morning appointment throughout which my stomach growled so loudly that the woman I was meeting with gave me an orange from her lunch. I sat there with a churning stomach and told her I didn’t want circles or rewords, my paper didn’t make sense - I was an impostor! She validated me, she never told me what the centre didn’t do. That was my introduction to the writing centre, it was a space that just **was**. It was what I need it to be. It was a safe space. But it wasn’t the language for me; I know that I went there for validation and I got it.

I revisited that place online when I began to work “on the other side of the table” when I became imbued in what I thought such places represent and what these places ought to say about what they represent. The simple search from the institutional homepage led me to the website, its continuity with what I have now grown to expect from writing centres amazed me. The “Writing Skills” branch of the “Academic Skills Centre” website is checkbox consistent—what we do (we “assist”), workshops, what we don’t do—visit us in person or by telephone, contact us!
When I used to visit what was then the “Writing Centre” I don’t recall that it had a website, I certainly never visited it if it did. Looking at it now, though, I feel like I’ve seen it a million times.

Source: Brandon University (2016) https://www.brandonu.ca/student-services/academic-skills/writing-skills/
Chapter 5: Context, Contradictions and Challenges

In this chapter I contextualise the site of the case study building on the themes developed in Chapter 4. This chapter explores the sub-question related to the ways leadership in the case study site hire and train staff, promote their services, and envision tutorial interactions between advisors and students. In tackling this question, the chapter is broken up into three sections. The first section describes the University of Toronto context including enrolment data, demographics, broader institutional mandate, and the centralised writing centre network. The faculty of education, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), is also described. The overview of the OISE environment describes an environment that has undergone significant changes over the course of this study, providing a crucial contextual background for the data collected in this study.

The second section of this chapter focuses in on the case study site, with a description of the OISE Student Success Centre (OSSC), within the University of Toronto and OISE context. Importantly in contextualising the case study site, this chapter also draws on both the interview data from five participants in leadership roles in the OSSC as well as document artefacts including reports, meeting minutes, my personal notes from meetings and professional development (PD) sessions, website artefacts, and handouts available in the centre. The voices of participants in leadership roles provide fulsome accounts of the services offered by the OSSC, the structure of the OSSC, including hiring practices, the peer support model as well as descriptions of services not offered in the OSSC.

In the final section of this chapter emergent themes from the leadership interviews and document artefacts are discussed. The emergent themes include ongoing resource challenges, ambivalence or lack of awareness of the OSSC site among administrative, faculty and student stakeholders, and the broader institutional deficit discourses that engender ambivalence and ambiguity around the work of the OSSC. The final theme illuminates the leadership participants’ vision of the centre as a space that supports academic identities and scholarly growth for a largely multilingual student body in their academic journeys. Throughout this chapter I weave the voices of participants together with theoretical insights from the literature to provide a robust description of the case study site and the expressed challenges and successes of the OISE Student Success Centre. Figure 13 depicts the organisation of this chapter.
The University of Toronto is Canada’s largest university with a student population of 84,556 spread over three campuses. In 2014-15 the University of Toronto offered roughly 700 undergraduate programs for its undergraduate population of 68,114 and another 222 graduate level (Masters and PhD) programs for a graduate population of 16,442 (University of Toronto, “About” n.d.). The university has seven colleges and roughly 20 faculties and departments. The University of Toronto frequently ranks highly across a number of international ranking indexes, and often holds the top spot among Canadian Universities.\(^4\) With a strong domestic and international reputation, the University of Toronto attracts students from across Canada and abroad.

The student population at the University of Toronto includes students from all over the globe with 161 countries and regions represented by the student population in 2014 (University of Toronto, “About,” n.d.). Among the 68,114 members of the undergraduate student population, 11,894 or 17.5% of undergraduate students are international students. The graduate student population of 16,442 includes 2,515 international students, representing 15.3% of the graduate student population (University of Toronto, Facts and Figures: Students, n.d.). The largest proportions of international students are from China, with India, the United States, \(^4\)The Academic Rankings of World Universities places the University of Toronto 25\(^{th}\) internationally and 1\(^{st}\) in Canada (Academic Ranking of World Universities, 2015). The University of Toronto ranked 34\(^{th}\) internationally and 2\(^{nd}\) in Canada in the QS World University Rankings in 2015 (QS World University Rankings). While according to the Times Higher Education Rankings, the University of Toronto ranks 20\(^{th}\) in the world and 1\(^{st}\) in Canada (Times Higher Education Rankings, 2015).
Brazil and South Korea rounding out the top five home countries of international students (University of Toronto, Facts and Figures: Students, n.d.). Additionally, 58.7% of undergraduate students and 54.4% of graduate students come from the Greater Toronto Area, which is one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse area in Canada. According to the most recent Canadian Census, 45% of Toronto residents reporting a mother tongue other than English or French, and many Toronto residents speak languages other than English on a regular basis (Statistics Canada, 2011).

The University of Toronto’s statement of institutional purpose succinctly describes the university’s commitment to being “an internationally significant research university, with undergraduate, graduate and professional programs of excellent quality” (University of Toronto, 1992, p. 3). The university also has research, teaching, undergraduate and graduate objectives outlined in its mission statement. Among the objectives, the university demonstrates its clear intention to continue to be an “internationally significant research university” (University of Toronto, 1992, p. 3). In achieving these objectives, the university signals its value of academic freedom, freedom of speech and freedom of research within its main objectives. Within its teaching objectives, the University of Toronto also includes its goal to respond “to the needs of a diverse student population” (University of Toronto, 1992, p. 4). As the highest ranked institution in Canada for total research dollars (Macleans, 2015), the University of Toronto’s emphasis on research throughout its mission and objectives seems well placed. Furthermore, in meeting its objectives of teaching, the university ranks well with comparator universities on faculty student engagement and effective teaching practices (University of Toronto, NSSE, n.d.). Although the university also includes an expressed goal of assisting students “in the realization of their educational goals… their physical and emotional growth and well-being, their needs, including special or temporary ones, and their cultural and recreational activities” (University of Toronto, 1992, p. 4), the University of Toronto ranks lower than comparator universities on Quality Interactions and Supportive Environment on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Despite its lower score

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5 The NSSE survey includes questions related to interactions with students, academic advisors, faculty, student services staff (career services, student activities, housing, etc.), other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.) in the Quality of Interactions indicator. While Supportive Environment includes the following questions related to the provision of support to help students succeed academically using learning support services (tutoring services, writing centre, etc.), encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.), providing opportunities to be involved socially, providing support for students’ overall well-being (recreation, health care, counselling, etc.), helping students manage non-academic
on the Quality of Interactions and Supportive Environment indicators on the National Survey of Student Engagement, the university has a well-developed network of writing centres that allow students to engage with academic advisors across faculties and departments. The next section provides a brief overview of the assemblage of writing centres in the University of Toronto context.

The Writing Centre Context: University of Toronto

The University of Toronto has 14 diversely named writing, success, support centres across campus with seven centres in each of the seven colleges, four centres in the professional faculties (Architecture, Engineering, Education, Health Sciences), one centre on each of the suburban campuses (Mississauga and Scarborough), and a central Office of English Language and Writing Support (ELWS) for Graduate Students. The campus also has a centralised Academic Success Centre staffed with learning strategists who provide individualised support and workshops for undergraduate and graduate students across faculties, programs and departments. However, the Academic Success Centre is not affiliated with the broader writing centre network and operates independently from the centralised writing centres despite mandate overlap. Figure 14 presents an overview of the constellation of writing centres at the University of Toronto by campus and faculty.
Figure 14. The University of Toronto Writing Centre Network

*Centres on the St. George Campus share online booking system
The constellation of writing centres at the University of Toronto are loosely connected through a webpage that provides an overview of writing centre work at the university, links to each of the individual centre’s websites and links to writing resources (University of Toronto, Writing Centres, n.d.). The director and/or coordinator from the various writing centres may also participate in a centralised writing centre directors group, which engages in resource sharing and professional development and all of the writing centres (aside from those on the Scarborough and Mississauga campuses) share a central online booking and records system (Leadership Interview (LI)).

The central writing centres webpage on the University of Toronto website includes a number of links, including a document addressed to students entitled “WRITING CENTRES: How We Work and How to Work with Us” (University of Toronto, Writing Centres, n.d.). The document is addressed to students and describes the centres as places where trained instructors “work individually with you, using your course assignments in any subject at any level, to help you develop your capacity to plan, organize, write, and revise academic papers” (University of Toronto, Writing Centres, “How we Work,” para. 1, n.d.). Using language reflective of the parameter setting theme identified in Chapter 4, the document outlines that writing centres will provide support to students looking to improve their abilities to recognise errors and improve their own editing and proofreading abilities, but that instructors will not proofread papers for students. The guidelines in the document also note that instructors will provide support in understanding assignments and refining ideas, but that students should not look to the writing centre for support “design[ing] research strategies or provid[ing] ideas” (University of Toronto, “How we Work,” para. 4, n.d.).

Additionally, the webpage includes links to resources for faculty. The links include content related to effective instruction practices, assignment design and presentation, preventing plagiarism, providing instruction on reading comprehension and support for multilingual students. The page on multilingual students provides resources and tips for teaching and grading multilingual students and some of the issues instructors and teaching assistants may face with this group of students. The tips include having students prepare drafts, undertake writing projects that are not graded, grading holistically and paying attention to “degree of depth, complexity, and sophistication in the analysis; overall organization,” rather than simply focusing on language errors (University of Toronto, Writing Centres, “Teaching Multilingual,” para. 12, n.d.).
As the website suggests, the resources are in place as a reflection of “the recognition at U of T that most of our students know and use more than one language. They also reflect the fact that—for all students—academic language is very different from ordinary language and requires deliberate learning” (University of Toronto, Writing Centres, para. 1, n.d.). Worded as such, the inclusion of these resources and the conception of multilingual students included in the quote above is consistent with understandings of “multilingualism and bidialecticalism… as norms rather than aberrations” and writing centres as spaces where students are supported in “[shuttling] among discourses” rather than remediated for deficits (Grimm, 2009, p. 15). Indeed, the resources for faculty include a discussion on the notion of multilingualism wherein the notion of “ESL student” is questioned as applicable for students who are born in Canada but speak other languages at home, while multilingual is expanded to also include students who are first generation university students and may be unfamiliar with the academic language of the academy (University of Toronto, Writing Centres, “Grading,” n.d.). With such conceptions in mind the resources for faculty aim to remind instructors that multilingual students defined as such “may be writing in the patterns taken from another language,” they may not be well-versed in preparing critical papers, they may struggle to discern appropriate registers for papers, and they may take an indirect approach to building an argument in a paper given their unfamiliarity “with the way academic paragraphs and essays are commonly structured in English” (University of Toronto, writing, Writing Centres, “Grading,” para. 5, n.d.).

Using such conceptions of multilingual students, the central writing centre documents remind faculty to grade holistically focusing on content and argument as well as language, provide students ample opportunity to write, assign non-graded writing activities, and connect students with language resources for speaking support and writing centres for individualised academic writing support. The resources also include common practices such as focusing more on content, differentiating between surface level errors and those that obscure content, providing commentary and discussion related to the arguments and content and merely circling or identifying common errors in English. Thus, the guidelines for faculty attempt to provide best practices for supporting multilingual students’ writing success while realising that “language learning as a long process, and it’s important to keep the student’s location in this process in perspective” (University of Toronto, Writing Centres, “Grading,” para. 3, n.d., emphasis original). The depth, breadth and content of these resources are reflective of what Nancy Grimm (2009) considers to be conceptions of writing centres based on a multiliteracies
perspective. Indeed, Grimm (2009) exhorts writing centres to draw on multiliteracies pedagogy as outlined by the New London Group to “represent writing centers as site of learning for all, including faculty members who are interested in revising teaching practices and curricula to take into account the domestic and international diversity of twenty-first century students” (p. 21).

Despite the fact that the stance taken by the central writing centres shows some affinity with approaches to literacy as defined by a pedagogy of multiliteracies, internal contradictions related to conceptions of how multilingual students should “fit” into broader narratives on literacy in the institutional environment exist. Most of the tips focus on supporting students while they adapt to the writing processes, registers, discourses and expectations of academic writing in the institution with no discussion related to the ways that these writing conventions may be reflective of certain ways of knowing and writing, and the power dimensions therein. While the advice certainly suggests that students may be unfamiliar with the conventions, the conventions are taken as common sense for faculty and the need for interrogation or revision of such conventions are not mentioned. In fact, the resources state that faculty need not “apologize for the fact that English is the language of instruction at U of T and that students must write very well in English in order to get an “A” and “and there is a logical justification for the highest marks being reserved for those who can communicate their ideas effectively in English” (University of Toronto, Writing Centres, “Teaching,” para. 12, n.d.).

Thus, such approaches promulgated by the central writing centres in the broader institution fall short of calling “into question… learned distaste toward nonidiomatic English lexicons and grammar” (Lu, 2006, p. 613), which may be increasingly necessary in multilingual academies. While these documents are clearly addressed to faculty and are aimed at providing them support, they also provide insight into the literacy approaches the central writing centre leadership at the institution assume publicly. The production of such documents by the leadership of writing centre directors generate ideologies among the umbrella organisation for writing centres across the institution, which also sets the tone for the literacy approaches that may find their way into the work of the individual centres within departments and faculties. The way that these ideologies are enacted, discussed and received in the case study site are discussed following a brief contextual overview of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education context.
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Context

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) is one of the largest faculties at the University of Toronto. In 2014, 3,542 students were enrolled across graduate and undergraduate programs at OISE, with 1091 undergraduate (Bachelor of Education) students and 2451 graduate students (University of Toronto, Facts and Figures, 2014). In 2014 roughly 10% of OISE’s newly admitted students were international students and 59% of new Bachelor of Education students and 54% of new graduate students came from the GTA (University of Toronto, Facts and Figures, 2014). In its Strategic Plan for 2011-2014 OISE included an expressed goal of establishing “an explicit internationalization strategy for OISE in all areas including recruitment and retention, teaching and research, continuing and professional learning” to further diversify its student body, faculty, and research (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), n.d.).

In language reflective of the broader University of Toronto institutional mandate OISE describes itself as

the largest and most research-intensive faculty of education in Canada and one of the largest in North America. A unique academic environment supporting a scholarly community second-to-none, OISE addresses today’s challenges with intellectual freedom, academic excellence and collaborative energy that few institutions in the world can claim (OISE, n.d.).

The antecedents of OISE were a teachers college formed by the Ontario government in 1907 and a small institute for educational research at the University of Toronto that emerged in 1965 and operated independently of the teachers college until the mid 1990s (Millar & Hildyard, 2007). In 1996 the teacher’s college and research institute merged to form the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education within the University of Toronto. From 1996 until 2014 OISE continued to build an international reputation as a faculty that both prepared initial teacher education candidates and trained graduate students in education. More recently, in 2010 OISE restructured its departments “around distinct scholarly/conceptual cores” (OISE, 2014). The restructuring resulted in four core departments including: applied psychology and human development; curriculum, teaching and learning; leadership, adult and higher education; and, social justice education (OISE, 2014). During the departmental reorganisation the Bachelor of Education program with both concurrent and consecutive streams remained in place, and OISE continued to graduate a large cohort of primary and secondary school teachers each year. Figure 15 depicts the degree programs for initial teacher education
including the two Masters level teacher education programs. Figure 16 illustrates the academic departments for graduate level (Masters and Doctoral) programs.

**Figure 15. Initial Teacher Education Programs 2014**

- Bachelor of Education (BEd)
- Master of Teaching (MT)
- Master of Child Study and Education

**Figure 16. Graduate Degree Programs and Academic Departments 2014**

The departmental restructuring that took place in 2010 began a series of changes to OISE that culminated in September of 2015 with the discontinuation of the Bachelor of Education program at OISE. In June of 2014 OISE announced its decision to move its teacher education program to focus on the graduate level due to the Ontario provincial government’s decision to cut funding to education faculties by 33% and change the Bachelor of Education (BEd) program from two to four semesters effective September 2015 (OISE, June 2014). Thus, OISE converted its 1,167 BEd spaces into approximately 500 graduate level Master of Teaching (MT) spaces, and the changes were pursued to remain “consistent with OISE’s strategic plan which was developed following consultations with over 500 OISE faculty, staff, students, and alumni along with representatives from other units at the university” (OISE, June 2014). However, despite restructuring the initial teacher education program, OISE continued to face a $3 million dollar budget shortfall as a result of the Ontario government’s funding reductions and cuts to 25-30 support and administrative staff began in the summer of 2014 (OISE, June 2014).
During the data collection period for this study, the reorganisation was ongoing, morale was low and faculty eventually called for the removal of the dean in what was described as a tenure that reflected “a five-year state of siege, with programs torn apart, a forced restructuring that left us much worse than we were before, (and) lack of faculty renewal” (Anonymous OISE faculty member cited in Cribb, 2015). The reorganisation and job cuts resulted in internal turmoil and an eventual change in the leadership at OISE with an appointment of a new dean in July 2015. However, a number of the job cuts affected the Student Services unit, which provided leadership and support to the OISE Student Success Centre. It was within this time of great organisational change that the interviews with students, OSSC advisors and OSSC leadership were undertaken. The next section provides an in-depth contextual overview of the OSSC as described by diverse members (current and former) of the leadership team within the contextual environment described above.

The OISE Student Success Centre (OSSC)

In this section I provide a detailed overview of the OISE Student Success Centre as described by those who hold (or formerly held) leadership roles in the OSSC. I focus on descriptions of the OSSC and its roles, the parameters set on services, as well as the hiring and training practices enacted by leadership for staffing the OSSC. Following the descriptive overview of the OSSC, the final section discusses the three main themes that emerged from the leadership interviews.

*Mandate and Services*

Originally named the Academic and Cultural Support Centre, the OISE Student Success Centre was initially introduced to “address OISE’s initiative to increase the number of international students” and the recognition that “international students were going to have some additional needs” (LI). With an initial mandate of providing academic and cultural support to international students, the centre was created with an expressed intention to support English Language Learners (ELLs) (LI). However, as students found their way into the centre in the early years of its being established, advisors providing support in the centre began to recognise that it was not only international students and ELLs that were seeking access to the services, but domestic students who felt they “weren’t writing at the level that was expected” were also keen to access the centre (LI). Thus, in the early years of the Centre’s mandate, the services expanded and the centre became a full service academic support centre shortly after
its creation. In 2011, the name of the centre was officially changed from the Academic and Cultural Support Centre (ACSC) to the OISE Student Success Centre (OSSC) to reflect the broad mandate of supporting all OISE students in their academic endeavours.

Given the breadth of its mandate, in describing the OSSC most of the leadership participants described the centre by outlining the numerous services offered to meet the needs of diverse graduate students in research programs as well as services geared towards teacher candidates. In describing the OSSC one participant emphasised that the breadth of services resulted in the centre being “not just a writing centre” (LI), while another noted that they describe the centre as “an academic writing centre” (LI). While the services have undergone some changes over the last four years with some services being discontinued in the wake of funding challenges the OSSC still offers workshops, online resources and a number of specialised one-to-one appointments. The one-to-one appointments provide support for academic writing, presentation skills support for in-class assignments and conferences, cover letter and resume support and mathematics and French language support for teacher candidates. Finally, the OSSC offers individualised English language support to students looking to enhance their speaking, reading and writing skills. Figure 17 depicts the services offered by the OSSC in 2015 as described on the Centre’s website. During data collection in 2014 the OSSC also offered email advising; however, in 2015 email advising was replaced with advising via Skype to ensure efficiency and assuage concerns that email appointments led to editing.
OISE Student Success Centre (OSSC)

Formerly named the Academic and Cultural Support Centre (ACSC), the OISE Student Success Centre (OSSC) began as an academic writing centre at OISE, but has quickly developed into an integrated service provider for graduate students and teacher candidates studying at OISE. The OSSC is a full-service academic and cultural communication resource and support centre. We are an instructional writing centre and offer all of our students an opportunity to learn about the writing process and improve their ability to edit their own writing. We do NOT edit or proofread assignments for students.

Overview of Services

1. **Academic writing** - OSSC advisors offer one-on-one support with the writing process through working with students to understand their needs and develop strategies that students can use to improve their own writing throughout their academic journey, including:
   - Planning
   - Organizing
   - Writing, and
   - Revising
   Sessions will focus on students’ current academic papers such as essays, MRPs, theses, dissertations, manuscripts for publication, funding applications, lesson plans, portfolios, personal journal entries, etc.

2. **Presentation skills** - in-class presentations, conference presentations, lesson delivery, etc.

3. **Resume and Cover letter Support** - individualized support with resumes/CVs, cover letters and interviewing skills. Consult the Teacher Employment Handbook before your appointment.

4. **Math support** - Students may book one-on-one appointments with the math advisor to further develop their skills. There are also ongoing workshops for teacher candidates that provide new teachers with the tools to create a learning environment where children can develop and master mathematical concepts. Register for math workshops.

5. **English language development** - Students may book one-on-one appointments with advisors trained in second language instruction. Advisors will provide instructional support to enhance students’ grammar, oral communication, listening, reading and pronunciation skills.

6. **French language support** - One-on-one and group appointments are available to teacher candidates to support their development of French language skills.

7. **Teacher Skill Development Support** - One-on-one appointments with an experienced teacher to understand discuss and develop skills related to the lesson planning process. Teacher candidates may also book appointments to deliver a mock lesson and receive feedback from an experienced advisor.

8. **Graduate Student Writing Groups** - To be confirmed.

Figure 17. Services Listed on the OSSC Website September 2015

Figure 17 shows a clear affinity with the themes identified in Chapter 4, including a focus on a supportive mandate, student ownership and even parameter setting, which were also echoed in the interviews with leadership participants. However, most of the participants also discussed outcomes beyond those described on the website or through promotional discourses
related to the OSSC. The leadership participants noted that the OSSC provided an important space for students to receive “support, guidance and mentorship” while developing personal and academic confidence (LI). Leadership felt that advisors provided particularly supportive guidance to “students who were frustrated and stressed out with the academic experience” (LI). Additionally, leadership participants noted the “impactful relationship between the OSSC and other support services at OISE through the Student Services referral process” (LI). The referral process allow centralised Student Services to refer students to the OSSC to meet with advisors to provide ongoing academic and personal support. The cross-referrals between the OSSC and Student Services allows team members in each unit to connect students to academic support in the OSSC as well as personal counselling and financial support in Student Services. Finally, the peer support model was cited as beneficial as it allows for mentoring opportunities that benefit both students and advisors. One leadership participant noted that the OSSC is a “peer ancillary support” service that provides advisors “authentic teaching and advising experience” while also supporting students (LI).

The Peer Support Model and Hiring Practices

The leadership participants also provided insight into the peer support model and the hiring practices employed in the OSSC. The advisors who staff the OSSC are drawn from the cadre of graduate students enrolled at OISE and work in the OSSC as paid employees, with many holding the position as a part of their graduate funding. For many of the leadership participants, the peer model was an appropriate structure for the OSSC as it allows for “graduate students with outstanding skills and capacities” to support their fellow students (LI). Structured as a peer model, the interactions allow for connections and a “kindred-ness” through which students can talk “with a peer who they feel that they can confide in and connect with somebody who has a frame of reference that is very similar” (LI). Additionally, another leadership participant discussed the ways the peer model results in advisors being “somebody that [the students] can relate to kind of socially,” as both are students reducing the pressure on students visiting the centre when feedback comes from a peer rather than a professor (LI).

Furthermore, the benefits of “students helping students” were an important “political priority” to discuss with the broader administrative leadership at OISE to both “reduce the pressure [on faculty], [and to] provide some teaching opportunities for [OSSC] staff” (LI). Indeed, this leadership participant suggested that a key talking point with administrative leadership was to
shift the discussion from “financial sheets and usage statistics” to the ways in which the peer support model provided opportunities for students, decreased pressure on faculty, and created a mechanism for ongoing student support (LI). While the bulk of the leadership participants spoke about the benefits of the peer model for both students and advisors, one leadership participant thought fulltime staff with the ability to provide ongoing training, development and resources for part time graduate staff would be preferable (LI). Another noted that the ongoing turnover of advisors in the OSSC as students graduated led to challenges as the centre “evolves very quickly because it kind of gets completely reinvented every time there is a new crop of advisors” (LI). While the peer support model means advisors are graduate students, the leadership participants also provided significant insights into their hiring practices in choosing which students staffed the centre, and a clear mandate of supporting multilingual students emerged.

Nearly all of the leadership participants discussed the importance of advisors’ prior backgrounds in hiring decisions. While it was certainly important to hire advisors with strong writing, presentation, and comprehension skills, leadership also noted the importance of advisors being able to explain and articulate instructions for students in order to help them understand concepts, conventions, and expectations (LI). For this reason, there was a clear tendency of leadership to articulate that advisors were often chosen among students who had strong teaching backgrounds, specifically those who had taught English as a second or foreign language and could provide thoughtful support to create a learning environment wherein instruction was scaffolded for students visiting the OSSC (LI). Moreover, leadership participants also noted that with prior English language teaching experience, advisors were more likely to be understanding and patient with students who were working to develop the English language skills in tandem with adjusting to scholarly writing practices and new academic identities. Indeed, as one participant noted,

The most recent rounds of selections we made for candidates to work at our centre, we looked deliberately for students who had multicultural and/or trans-linguistic experience. We looked for people who had previous experience in mentorship or coaching or teaching kinds of roles. We looked for people who express and evinced a sincere commitment to student support in a broad variety of ways so personal, academic, cultural (LI).

The importance of prior experience provided a jumping off point for the training of new advisors as previous experiences with multilingual speakers meant advisors “didn’t necessarily need to be directed toward a certain stance in supporting English language
learners” yet it was still emphasised in training that supporting multilingual students requires “understanding, compassion, non-judgmental approaches and seeing the person and the intelligence behind the English language difficulties that were being presented” (LI).

**We Don’t Edit! Training and Orientation in the OSSC**

While the prior experiences of advisors with multilingual learners were clearly important to leadership in hiring decisions, all of the participants also noted the importance of training programs and ongoing professional development for advisors to ensure interactions in the OSSC did not simply amount to editing. For example, one leadership participant noted the importance of continually having PD [professional development] that is reminding [advisors] that they’re not an editing service. It’s so easy to resort to editing because it’s just fast, easy and, you know, it’s like, someone with your job, it’s so hard to train someone to do it. It’s just easy to sometimes just do it yourself, and that’s what editing is and so I fear when time gets in to a crunch or people get lazy or pressed with time, they just edit. So having PD to constantly remind people, reminders around what we’re actually doing, casting the vision at regular intervals for the OSSC (LI).

While another leadership participant noted that advisors are always trained to avoid editing student papers, the participant noted that not editing is “tricky” given that “if you are helping a student who’s struggling in English, even if you doing it verbally, on some level you are helping them edit their paper, not word by word but you are giving them ideas and suggestions” (LI).

Despite the difficulty of not editing in practice, the training and professional development devised by leadership was based on “the right types or approaches and strategies for teaching ESL where you don't edit, where you try to point [students] towards their own errors” (LI). Thus, while most of the leadership participants noted that prior teaching experience with multilingual learners provided an important base for their training program, explicit training on providing instruction rather than an editing service was cited as a primary goal of training for OSSC advisors. Thus, leadership evinced a common approach that the work of the OSSC was not “proofing in the sense of catching mistakes but more so looking at larger picture of proofing so, you know, what's the intent and is it coming across?” (LI). However, if in some cases there may be “a regular grammatical mistake or something that just doesn't seem right”
advisors are trained to point it out “but it is never really editing service in that sense, it's truly to actually help teach” (LI).

Thus, leadership participants described the mandate of the OSSC in ways that were consistent with the descriptions on the website shown in Figure 17 through pointing to the instructional mandate of the OSSC. The OSSC’s wide range of services also led many leadership participants to posit that the centre’s mandate reaches beyond that of a tightly defined “writing centre” that focuses primarily on academic writing. In the next section, leadership perspectives on the envisioned pedagogy that take place with interpersonal interactions in the OSSC show the importance of providing instructional support for emerging scholarly identities, especially where multilingual students are concerned. However, at the institutional level enduring deficit discourses, a general attitude of ambivalence towards the work of the OSSC and ongoing resource shortages emerged as barriers for the OSSC leadership. It is to these emergent themes that the next section turns.

Institutional Interactions

Two main themes related to institutional interactions emerged from the leadership interviews. The first was ongoing resource shortages, which presents challenges for the OSSC in maintaining its broad range of services and full cadre of staff. The second theme that emerged related to the institutional environment included discussions of pervasive deficit discourses and general ambivalence related to academic support and the role of the OSSC in the broader OISE environment.

Resources

The experience of budgetary constraints, resource shortages, and the concomitant reduction such constraints entail to programs and staff are familiar in higher education environments, and are certainly a well-documented experience in writing centres. Initially situated in a “windowless storage room” the OSSC has certainly experienced ebbs and flows in its funding as budgetary allotments fluctuated and leadership and political priorities shifted in the broader OISE environment (LI). Despite its humble beginnings in a back storage room, the OSSC did experience nearly 10 years of progressive funding increases to establish its breadth of services and retain experienced staff from its inception in 2002 until 2012. However, in the fall of 2012 the progressive growth that had characterised the OSSC in its first decade of existence began to experience significant decline. Indeed as one leadership participant stated,
there was a time when the OISE Student Success Centre was supported by the institution’s leadership to a very great level with approximately 25 graduate students involved in delivering that peer to peer support model for students. Even at that level of investment in support for students the schedule of appointments was almost fully booked. Then there were some difficult decisions that needed to be made by the OISE administration and in those difficult decisions the graduate student funding [to hire advisors] was reduced significantly to the OSSC (LI).

With funding shortages pressing OSSC leadership the availability to hire staff and continue programs began to erode the depth of services the centre offered, the diversity of advisors it employed, and the ability to provide support to the large student body the centre serves.

While leadership certainly realised that the cuts in funding were a part of the “big picture of what was happening at OISE” and not exclusive to the OSSC (LI), by 2014 the OSSC was forced to shorten appointments and cancel important services such as the dedicated support to for teacher candidates producing e-portfolios, an electronic record of their teaching documents, artefacts, and evaluations for their future teaching. Additionally, a program for teacher candidates entitled the Pre-Field Experience Program (PREP) was discontinued in 2014 due to resource shortages. PREP had historically provided valuable support for Internationally Educated Teacher Candidates (IETCs) to orient IETCs to the Ontario education system prior to practicum. Figure 18 provides an overview of the services offered in the OSSC in 2011 prior to the resource shortfalls compared to the services offered in 2014 following budgetary constraints.
The difficult decisions to discontinue the aforementioned programs for teacher candidates and shorten appointments were a direct result of the inability of the OSSC to maintain its staffing levels, which also limited opportunities for graduate students to benefit from the rich experience of working in the OSSC (LI). Furthermore, as the number of full time advisors in the OSSC has continued to decline, the available hours for student consultation also suffered and the OSSC’s mandate to of accessibility for all students deteriorated (LI).

In an effort to prioritise the needs of students at strategic points of their degrees, the OSSC found itself unable to support the cyclical needs of graduate and undergraduate students with its current cadre of advisors. Therefore, the OSSC reduced its advertising and outreach campaigns due to lack of resources to do so, and inability to meet the demand that followed such endeavours (LI). The lack of funds and manpower to both market the services and then meet the demand that resulted from such marketing efforts made the OSSC one of the “best kept secrets” at OISE as even students who knew about the services were “reticent to tell their classmates due to the limited number of appointments available” (LI). Furthermore, as
students graduated out of their programs leadership was unable to hire new advisors into vacant positions, long-serving advisors, mostly doctoral students who could serve in the OSSC for the duration of their four year degree, declined significantly creating gaps in service provision, specialised skills and institutional memory. Table 11 displays the total number of full time, part time and quarter time staff over the 4-year period from 2011/12 to 2014/15.

Table 11. Number of OSSC Graduate Student Advisors

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Time Advisors</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half Time Advisors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarter Time Advisors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL # of Advisors</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the number of full time graduate student staff declined, the OSSC was able to recruit mentors and volunteer advisors from the undergraduate and graduate population at OISE. Indeed, each year from 2012 to 2014 the OSSC secured several former advisors who had taken on other roles as research assistants or teaching assistants willingly volunteered their time to support their peers and contribute to what they perceived to be valuable work at the OSSC (LI). The OSSC also hired Masters level students on flexible contracts to provide mentorship to Bachelor of Education and Masters’ students in order to meet service demands in the OSSC (LI). Table 12 provides an overview of the number of mentors or volunteers the OSSC employed from 2011-2014.

Table 12. Numbers of Mentors/Volunteers in the OSSC 2011-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Mentor/Volunteer Positions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011/2012</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/2013</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/2014</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/2015</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the mentor and volunteer staff in the OSSC certainly provided much needed support for students at the Bachelors and Masters levels, the declining number of doctoral students available to support the needs of other doctoral students at OISE presented ongoing challenges. Indeed, long-serving doctoral student advisors were frequently booked weeks in advance in 2014 (LI) leading some doctoral students unable to access the OSSC.

Additionally, funding challenges contributed to outdated computer systems, which compromised the OSSC’s ability to provide frequent usage data and timely reports to OISE administration further compounding the funding issues. It also presented ongoing challenges for the OSSC to monitor and adjust services, as the data generated by the system was complex and time consuming to analyse beyond basic reporting requirements. Throughout the period of data collection the ongoing funding challenges led to cobbled together services, low morale among staff who felt their work was being devalued and frustration among students who were unable to access services (LI). As the morale of the OSSC team was demonstrably low, turn out at team meetings declined and the ability of the OSSC to provide consistent professional development for advisors was also compromised. Moreover, given that declining resources were a key feature of the broader environment at the time, some of the key stakeholders who held leadership roles took other roles and a number of staff in the Student Services unit, which oversaw the OSSC, took on new roles or left the institution altogether. Thus, resource issues led to a myriad of challenges in the OSSC that weighed heavily on the minds of all of the leadership participants as they discussed their experiences in administering and leading the OSSC.

The sense that the OSSC was in a downward spiral as it struggled to cobble together a team of advisors to provide sufficient services for the large student body left advisors with the feeling that the Centre was just barely holding on (LI). This tenuous and compromised existence even began to appear in the physical space. Figure 19 is a snapshot of the main advising area in the OSSC in January of 2015 depicting damage to the ceiling in two places. Advisors and students working in the Centre when the Health and Safety team came in were forced to move to the other side of the room and share a small table with another advisor/student duo. As one advisor recounted that the space had become a physical manifestation of the broader state of the OSSC and its uncertain future as changes continued to impact the resources, morale and existence of the Centre. If fact, one advisor described that even in the safe, cordoned off space of the OSSC there was a lingering sense that the “the sky is falling,” which weighed heavily
on the minds of advisors who worked there. Many months later the OSSC remained in this semi unusable state, and the advising table was simply moved back under the crumbling ceiling, the Health and Safety note disappeared and advisors and students who work there continue to hope that the “sky” will not eventually come tumbling down.

Figure 19. The Physical State of the OSSC 2015

The challenges faced by the OSSC with regard to resource shortages are not exclusive to the OISE context. Certainly funding shortfalls and budgetary constraints feature prominently in writing centre literature with stories of uncertain budgets (Perdue and James, 1990), streamlining and staff reductions (Harkavy, 2011), the allocation of unfurnished spaces (Geller & Denny, 2013), “ancient and unusable” computers and equipment (Grutsch
McKinney, 2013, p. 5) and overall conceptions in the broader institution of the writing centre as expendable (Murphy & Law, 1995, p. xi). Indeed, in his landmark essay on writing centres Stephen North (1984) warned that writing centres, like other facilities that do not provide instruction that leads to credits, are “the first to be cut” when budgets get tight (p. 446). Thus, a clear and enduring theme of places that run on “soft money, in soft positions, in soft spaces” (Boquet, 2002, p. 21) reverberates through the literature on writing centres. This theme echoes loudly in the interview transcripts from leadership participants charged with administering the OSSC. However, as one leadership participant suggested “even though there are many financial pressures on leaders in post-secondary education … when the leadership has as its core objective supporting student’s success and an overall positive student experience those investments will be reflected on the supports that students can access” (LI). Thus, while resource shortages were a key concern, for leadership participants the sources of budgetary scarcity spoke to institutional (mis)conceptions related to the OSSC, its role vis-à-vis “struggling” students and indeed questions related to the very existence of the OSSC in an elite research university.

“Traditional Academic Mindset” and Institutional Ambivalence

I think that there is a lot of ambiguity or/and ambivalence within the institution about what the writing centre is, whether it should be there, what it should do, who should use it, who should support it…so this academic community is not of one mind about the centre (LI).

For the leadership participants the resource shortages that plagued the OSSC were a feature of the broader institutional environment during a time of financial austerity, but many participants also attributed the ongoing shortages to (mis)conceptions and even resistance to the work of the OSSC among some faculty and administration at OISE. All of the leadership participants noted that there was a lack of awareness of the OSSC and its services among faculty, and that ongoing outreach was needed to engage faculty in the work of the OSSC. However, several leadership participants noted that engaging faculty in thorough and descriptive conversations about the OSSC was difficult without access to faculty meetings, classrooms and broader OISE leadership planning meetings. Thus, when OSSC leadership were able to have conversations with faculty about the OSSC they were often rushed and informal and one leadership participant admitted that sometimes the service was “pitched to the faculty members in such a way they saw it as a good thing, as something that is going to help them, not an additional thing that they have to know about or remember or incorporate”
This participant noted that simply getting the word out to faculty about the OSSC often entails discussions that focus on provisions of support for students who are struggling, which frequently leaves faculty with the conception that the OSSC is a remedial support service. Thus, another leadership participant noted how in some cases faculty send students with complex challenges to the OSSC “with a very fuzzy mandate for remediation” while others “hand [students] off to the OSSC because they don’t want to spend the time themselves to provide more robust input and guidance” (LI).

While the OSSC leadership spoke of working to stem the remedial label that is often attached to the work of the Centre, many also suggested that such a label was in many ways unavoidable in the broader institutional environment. Indeed, one participant described the prevalence of a “traditional academic mindset” wherein there is an expectation that students should be prepared to take on the challenges of an academic environment upon arrival and those who cannot, simply should not be in the environment (LI). Indeed, the participant described such as stance “the kind of demerit talk version of the university which says you have to be darn good to get in here and you have to be darn good to get out of here and if you’re not darn good the heck with you” (LI). Another participant echoed the challenges that arise from sentiments that students shouldn’t require additional support. That at this level of study, a student should be able to come in write well, research well, prepare a defensible thesis, present it in conferences without any mentorship or support whatsoever. And if they can’t then they are not in the right place. And if they fail that’s a failure of the individual rather than a failure of the institution to provide adequate support (LI).

Thus, leadership participants intimated that in some cases the existence of the OSSC was questioned in the institutional environment as a “crutch” (LI) for underprepared students leaving “the administration tend[ing] to see it as an unnecessary financial expenditure…” (LI).

Thus, the leadership participants all spoke about the need for institutional-wide efforts to understand the diverse experiences, literacies, and educational abilities students bring to the university. All of the participants suggested that the mandate of the OSSC was to support all students and that the services were certainly not in place to support those identified as “underprepared,” even though the role of the OSSC is often understood as such. Indeed, one participant explained that the OSSC was supporting all students in adjusting to the
institutional environment, but that this work really needed to be an institution-wide effort. The participant suggested that countering remediation labels could only be fully undertaken at the institutional level, and the enduring deficit discourses for students who do not fit the “cookie cutter” mould of ideal student are

about the institution and I think it’s very much tied to the access mandate and the institution has got to a point now where we acknowledge yes we want everybody, bring everybody, come on in but we haven’t really thought through what that means. So we are saying yes bring everybody, but there is some kind of magical thinking going on that sort of implies that the moment people step across the threshold of the institution they will suddenly magically conform to some bizarre ideal student who may have existed once in 1920. I don’t think that that’s deliberate. I don’t think its wilful blindness. I think it’s just a question of catching up to ourselves. I think that the intention to be inclusive in education is a real one and that the process is still just very awkward and imperfect, but yes it definitely does create a scenario where students are being admitted to the institution and then almost instantly being made to feel completely inadequate to achieving their objectives (LI).

Thus, the OSSC certainly supported students in finding their way in a new academic environment, but the individualised, cordoned-off support did little to alter the broader institutional culture that questioned the need for provision of such support.

While one leadership participant felt that “an open acknowledgement, a de-cloaking of the mystery, a recognition that this academia that we’re in is a culture that has expectations and norms that are not self-evident to everybody” (LI) was desirable at the institutional level, another suggested this is “not really a writing centre solution” (LI). However, many leadership participants spoke of the interpersonal space of the OSSC as a space that did support students in “de-cloaking the mystery” and “making it okay to ask” about the often unspoken rules that organise the academy and OISE environment (LI). The next section describes how leadership participants envisioned the interpersonal interactions in the OSSC and the ways in which, at an individual level, the OSSC provided a forum for students to ask questions that supported their transitions into the institutional, disciplinary and contextual culture in the OISE environment.

Interpersonal Interactions: Nurturing Scholarly Identities in Context

Throughout the leadership interviews all of the participants pointed to the ways in which the OSSC nurtured academic identities and supported students in transitioning into the broader culture of the academy and OISE environment. For many participants the OSSC was an
important source of information and support for international students as they adapted to the Canadian academic culture, and the often unarticulated expectations within the academy that may differ from those of students’ previous learning environments. As one participant suggested, “teaching and learning is a cultural activity and a student who has engaged in undergraduate study in any other world, any other part of the world requires an opportunity to be mentored into the culture of post-secondary education in Canada” (LI). Here participants discussed the ways in which students are expected to be autonomous, critical and in charge of their own learning. One participant provided a particularly clear example of the ways in which the OSSC supports multilingual students in writing but also adapting to the Canadian academic culture in general. The participant stated,

I want to be careful about cultural assumptions but there are different writing conventions around the world in terms of how you even start a paper so there are certain cultures where you kind of circle in to your topic and eventually you will get in to it, whereas in North America generally we have the thesis statement, right? Many times I talked to multilingual learners what a thesis statement was. It’s virtually unheard of in some countries so that kind of cultural barrier in writing is a huge piece. Cultural barriers and how we learn and how we as Canadian students interact with our fellow classmates and our professors. I know from many conversations that these were real challenges for multilingual learners who are not from… whose first language isn’t English or who were not educated in Canada. They will go “really you call your prof by their first name?” That’s a trite example but it’s an example of something bigger. It’s the cultural adaptation process to learning in North America, which affects writing, speaking and all different language skills (LI).

While this participant alludes to research that suggests international students may have been trained to write differently than their Canadian peers, the participant also demonstrates an awareness that generalisations of particular students in writing centres may lead to “reductive notions about the rhetorics of different languages and cultures” within the writing centre and thus assuming particular students have been trained to write in particular ways must be approached carefully (Severino, 1993, p. 45).

However, the notion that the OSSC has an important role to play in providing a source of information for diverse students as they adapt to the structures, systems and relationships in the OISE learning environment was echoed by most of the leadership participants. Understanding the role of the OSSC as providing important contextual information for students is consistent with how Judith Powers (1993) described writing centre tutors as taking on the role of “cultural informants” for international students adjusting to writing for a
Canadian audience (Powers, 1993). Thus, all of the leadership participants described the benefits of supporting international students as they adapt to the Canadian higher educational environment with some noting that this was a primary reason for the creation of the Academic and Cultural Support Centre, the predecessor to the OSSC.

However, the participants did not describe the teaching and learning “culture” narrowly as affecting students coming from different countries or languages, although different national and linguistic backgrounds certainly play a part, but culture as being inscribed in the daily activities of the broader University of Toronto environment, the OISE environment and the writing practices, expectations for teaching, learning and assessment that pervade both graduate programs and teacher education. Indeed, as one leadership participant described,

By and large students who come to OISE are coming from any type of field. It’s not just culture. It’s not just language but it’s any type of field. OISE really has its own specific culture, in the areas, in the programs... It’s not just OISE as a whole, I think that would be naive to say, it’s just one language at OISE. Writing for an educational journal for instance is a vastly different thing than business writing, you know, some are writing for geography or math. It's a very, very different way of articulating yourself and professors come to expect that. Even the psychology writing is very, very different from the education writing (LI).

Thus, there was a broad understanding that the OSSC was not simply supporting international students or English language learners, but it was supporting diverse literacies where multilingualism was broadly defined. In discussions with leadership participants, they articulated the OSSC as a support for international students, English language learners, generation 1.5 students, mature students who had been away from an academic environment for some time, and students coming from diverse disciplines within the frame of supporting multilingual students. Such conceptions touch on the ways in which multilingual students are not only students for whom English is an additional language, but also students who come to the learning environment “with different subjectivities, and with their attendant languages, discourses and registers” (NLG, 1996, p. 70). Therefore, the OSSC was not “fixing” poor writers and certainly was not in place to edit papers, but was a source of support for students adapting to a new “discourse community” (Porter, 1986) that informed preferred ways of writing in the academy, the field of education, as well as sub-fields such as educational psychology and science education.

The interactions leadership participants envisioned in the OSSC were often described in ways that demonstrated the OSSC’s role in extending inclusion to multilingual students. Indeed, for
leadership, the OSSC provided a space for students to develop their academic voice, and discuss ways of “being” in the academy. The responses of leadership participants reflected an understanding that all students “whether of home students or international students” require time and support to be “inducted into disciplinary discourses specifically, and the expectations of the academic culture at large” (Turner, 2011, p.9). In order to be successfully inducted into the expectations of the academy, students often needed to be introduced to the ways that the hidden curriculum operates in higher education in writing conventions and classroom interactions. One participant reported describing the role of the OSSC as “helping to bridge the cultural competencies that students come in with to those that are recognised within the academic culture that they’ve entered” which is accomplished when OSSC advisors support “students to kind of unpack the unspoken assumptions that may go on within the academic context” (LI). Another used the metaphor of advisors as guides who are able to “draw a map” to help students navigate their way through their academic journey (LI).

Thus, the OSSC was envisioned as a supportive “learning community” for students to “nurture their scholarly identities” as they adjusted, sometimes in a unidirectional way, to the expectations of the academy (LI). Indeed, more than half of the leadership participants posited that literacy support in the OSSC operated on a convergence model, and the lack of criticality related to the political nature of OSSC work meant students were simply expected to conform to the norms and expectations of the academic environment. On the other hand, two participants adopted more critical, bidirectional perspectives by suggesting that the academy itself also needed to adjust to the greater diversity students bring to the environment. While “fitting in” (LI) to the environment is certainly important for students, it may be equally important for the environment to embrace the unique languages, discourses and registers students bring as resources for learning (NLG, 1996, p. 70). While none of the leadership participants suggested that students requiring support at the OSSC were deficient, the emphasis on the student as the participant that needed to adapt does little to challenge existing structures that position students as deficient in the academy. However, one leadership participant discussed the idea of mismatches in a way that also placed an onus on the academy to embrace the ways of knowing and speaking students bring with them through discussing the notion of mismatches as follows,

I recently tripped over and have become an emirate of the notion of just mismatches. It’s a mismatch. It’s not a deficit, it’s a mismatch. Whether what’s being remediated is on the student’s side or on the institution’s side, the objective
is to bring the two together. So the institution, we collectively, can be clear and explicit about what we think and what we expect and what we want. We can be equally clear about what students bring and what they have and what they need. Then we can be involved in the conversation that talks about getting from A to B rather than, you know, rather than requiring that everybody be like a little cookie cutter conforming (LI).

The notion of mismatches does challenge the pervasive deficit discourse that exists around the work of the OSSC, writing centres in general and students who occupy such spaces. Understanding that communication problems are the result of “competing contexts with implicit expectations about appropriate genres, styles, and discourses rather than from a lack within students or from a failure of their previous schooling” (Grimm, 2009, p.14) may begin a fruitful conversation beyond the writing centre about the negotiating identities, voice and nurturing scholarly identities that endeavour to embrace rather than erase difference. However for such conversations to begin, the broader deficit discourses that circulate around non-traditional registers, dialects and discourses and the role of the writing centre requires significant redress for the OSSC and writing centres to move beyond academic socialisation to enacting pedagogical approaches that embrace the tenants of academic literacies and pedagogies informed by new literacy studies.

Discussion of Key Themes from Leadership Participants

The emergent themes from the leadership interviews illuminate ongoing and seemingly difficult to overcome challenges for the OSSC related to mandate ambiguity, lack of resources and even ambivalence about the very existence of the centre. Indeed, a demonstrable connection exists between all of these issues within the broader institutional environment as deficit discourses or the “traditional academic mindset” continues to hold sway in the minds of faculty, administration and even students. Importantly as the leadership interviews illuminated, the remedial label also engenders an interdependent set of challenges for writing centres, and certainly the OSSC, that function in a co-dependent fashion in such a way that it is difficult to trace whether the remedial label, perilousness, or “soft” funding is the root challenge that exacerbates the others. The interconnected challenges that emerged from the leadership interviews are depicted in Figure 20.
Figure 20. Interrelated Challenges in the OSSC

The circular depiction of challenges represented in Figure 20 demonstrates the ways that the leadership interviews demonstrated that institutional discourses of remediation, ambivalence, resource shortages, poor equipment and spaces, and lack of manpower to report on and market the services all operated in co-dependent ways to continue a cycle of misinformation, lack of funding and a perilous existence. Indeed, institutional (mis)conceptions about the work of the OSSC impact funding, while funding impacts institutional positioning through staffing shortages that impact services, the reach of the OSSC, the ability to make staff available to visit classrooms and market the OSSC, and reporting capabilities. Given that marketing and reporting is compromised, producing institutionally valued accounts of the work of the OSSC is compromised and the cycle of ongoing funding challenges continue to plague the OSSC.

These challenges described throughout the leadership participants’ comments are certainly not exclusive to the OSSC, but are documented in the broader writing centre literature. According to Grutsch McKinney (2013), the positioning of writing centres as remedial presents challenges that mirror some of those outlined by the OSSC leadership participants’ responses. First, such positioning leads to “perilousness” as such services for students are then
understood as being in place for “those who do not meet the expectations upon entering,” which may lead to the services being “put on the chopping block when the university or college wants to assert a level of excellence or ‘standards’” (Grutsch McKinnney, 2013, p. 68). Second, the writing centre becomes a place for those who are deemed to be unprepared to be “contained” (Coogan, 1999, xv), which acts to individualise “issues” “making the problem of difference an individual concern, not an institutional one” (Grutsch McKinney, 2013, p. 69).

With the complex and interrelated nature of challenges remediation labels generate for writing centres, it is easy to see why writing centres may be keen to subvert such labels. However, as Shannon Carter (2009) has suggested, and the websites examined in Chapter 4 demonstrate, the legitimacy and indeed existence of writing centres often must be validated “according to the terms already considered valuable among the more powerful members involved in the rhetorical spaces concerned” (p. 149). Thus, as much as writing centres may wish to shed the remedial label, such labelling secures the existence of centres in higher education environments, however marginal that existence may be. For writing centres, then, making use of “legitimate value-sets” wherein writing centres are understood as “a place where marginalised writers learn to mimic more “legitimate” (read “more powerful”) ways of knowing by parroting the dominant cultural codes” (Carter, 2009, p. 142) becomes part of the discourse that ensures ongoing existence for many writing centres. Thus, the OSSC leadership did intimate that in order to be seen as legitimate or functioning within the value systems of the academy, the OSSC leadership did in some ways they permit understanding of the OSSC as remedial. While only one of the leadership participants suggested actually “pitching” the OSSC as “a sort of remedial service when speaking to faculty” (LI), others relied on explanations of the OSSC that drew on its helping or supportive mandate. Yet, each of these mandates—remediation, support, help—fit into the broader status quo institutionally, positioning writing centres as neutral spaces for literacy work in ways reflective of the discursive patterns identified across sites in Chapter 4.

Yet, in another paradox or contradiction, the leadership sometimes envisioned an entirely different approach and outcome as a result of the actual interpersonal interactions in the centre. Here many of the leadership participants provided insight into the interpersonal spaces where some students, but not all students, “learn, develop, grasp a different order of magnitude of challenge than the one they had thought they are wrestling with, and sort of
undergo this radical transformative learning” (LI). Descriptions of the interpersonal interactions wherein leadership envisioned students and advisors working through the complexities of the academic, cultural and disciplinary codes with which students (and advisors) were grappling are certainly a departure from the remedial label. Thus, there exists an ongoing paradox for leadership in applying and rejecting the remedial label as illuminating the role the OSSC may play in questioning the unquestioned assumptions of the academy would alter conceptions of writing centres, but such positions may also subvert necessary strategic positions writing centres take in validating their existence in their institutional environment. Thus, while the remedial label is implicated in many challenges for the OSSC, it also legitimates the role of the OSSC in terms that the institution values despite the fact that the actual interactions may look considerably different.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a broad contextual overview of the case study site. Situated in Canada’s largest and arguably most prominent university, the University of Toronto boasts a large network of 15 diversely named writing and success centres to support its equally large student population 84,556 in 2014. While a centralised network exists to provide a broad umbrella and ethos for writing centres at the university, the individual centres operate in a relatively autonomous fashion within the colleges, departments and faculties they serve. The immediate case study environment, the Ontario Institute for Education, can be characterised as an environment that experienced significant changes and challenges over the course of the case study. Indeed, ongoing departmental reorganisations, funding shortfalls, and fractures between faculty and administration, namely the dean of OISE, formed the backdrop of the study and impacted the work of the OISE Student Success Centre. While the OSSC continued to offer a broad range of services in the wake of these contextual realities, it did so with fewer resources than in previous years.

Thus, it is not surprising that resource shortfalls and the concomitant effects of such shortfalls emerged as a key theme in the leadership interviews. The resource shortages coalesced with perceptions of the work of the OSSC to generate a sense of institutional marginalisation for the OSSC, and the students who used its services, within the OISE environment. While occupying a marginal place is not an enviable position, the leadership interviews illuminated the very real paradox the leadership of the OSSC face in describing and legitimating its services in an environment that could be described as embodying a “traditional academic
mindset.” Such a mindset expects that students who are admitted to the academy should simply be able to navigate through their degree programs without extra-classroom support, and if they cannot they are simply underprepared.

However, leadership also evinced beliefs that the interactions in the OSSC amounted to much more than remedial support for struggling students. Indeed, many spoke thoughtfully of multilingual students as a broad group of students with diverse ways of knowing, speaking, writing, and interacting in the academy who benefitted from interactions in the OSSC. Thus, the leadership interviews illuminated a very real paradox between the institutional descriptions and understandings of the OSSC and the perceived interpersonal interactions that take place between advisors and students within the walls of the centre. While this chapter has provided insight on how leadership interacts with the institution to carry out the work of the OSSC, Chapter 6 illuminates how advisors and students interact with the OSSC in the same institutional environment. Conversely, while the leadership participants outlined how they perceive and envision tutorial interactions, Chapter 7 describes the enacted and received pedagogical interactions that take place in the interpersonal space according to advisors and students respectively.
They sat in the OSSC office and pondered the space, the walls with old posters from the 1980s, relics of donated items that seem to invade the OSSC. The furniture bears a similar feeling of being mismatched, borrowed, old. The sloping ceiling hangs with its spots and forebodes of things unseen, it stays in place, but no one knows for how long. They sit across from each other at the small round table in their mismatched chairs and chat about the future, theirs and the OSSC’s. Scott is a seasoned advisor, he’s worked in the centre for many years and has seen it through several changes and has also weathered the institutional shifts that have led to the current juncture in the OSSC. He’s just finished a shift on a snowy Friday afternoon and had one of those appointments that requires a collegial discussion or “unpacking” afterwards.

The student who has just left Scott came in to seek support on APA guidelines but began the appointment by partaking in a discussion that included two rather disconcerting things. First, the student required Scott to credentialise himself. What was his background? Why was he here? How was he qualified to help her? Once Scott had described his background and it was satisfactory to the student she launched into a complaint about another OSSC colleague who she had met with the week before who, in her opinion, knew less about the APA guidelines than she did and would not edit her references. She wondered how this person had secured a position in the OSSC and why proper training had not been undertaken. She felt frustrated that the OSSC didn’t have fulltime staff and was certain that “real” employees would give more attention to her work than people who “just did some hours to get paid while they study.” Once the student had got her complaints off her chest she demanded that Scott support her through his 15-minute break to make up for the previous dissatisfactory appointment, and she also insisted on getting the contact information for the director of the OSSC and was perturbed that this information wasn’t available online.

Relaying this account to Nethmi was important for Scott, the interaction had soured his day and was bothering him as he prepared to go back to the library to tackle his own graduate work. Interested in the quality of his response to the student as well as the validity of his frustration, he wanted Nethmi’s “take” on the situation and how she might respond. Nethmi’s consideration was met with an awkward pause, which was disturbed by the loud SQUEEEEEK of her chair as she shifted in discomfort. Her eventual response went to a safe and commonly used refrain that the OSSC is meant to support the writing process, not necessarily to “edit” work, including APA references. She also mentioned that she would send the student on to one of the administrative coordinators. While Scott admitted that he had responded as such they began a conversation that circled uncomfortably around things they weren’t sure they should talk about.

One of the topics was how certain people “landed” in the centre. To Scott it was a mystery, to which Nethmi could only add that resumes were somehow received and interviews conducted. This line of conversation went to the turnover, the “newbies” and the differential skills of those who staffed the centre and the reality that for some people the work was just a means to earn a bit of money through grad school. Scott spoke about how
he had a “go to” advisor who he sent his students to when he was booked but wondered how students navigate finding the “right” advisor among a differentially skilled group of people. “Not all advisors are created equal” he mused. He wondered how many students and/or faculty the dissatisfied student told that she had received what was in her opinion poor support.

They talked about times where they too felt inadequate, students came in with things that they felt were outside of our expertise. Nethmi recounted once having a student bring in a theory paper that was so complex that she wanted to hide under the table, as she felt entirely unable to engage with the ideas. They wondered if they should lobby for training, but on what? To whom? How do you train for this role and how do you do it when it’s somebody's job to prepare those trainings and no one has time and there’s no money... Humph.

As they sat there in their discontent they realised that the water cooler was nearly empty and the drip, drip, drip of its dwindling resources brought them back to the OSSC and filled the silence in the now evacuated building late on a Friday afternoon.
Chapter 6: Macro-Level Themes: Positionality and Language(s)

The interactions and experiences of advisors and students in the OISE Student Success Centre are mediated through the centre’s positionality in the macro context, which also impacts the positionality of students and advisors themselves. Furthermore, the role of language, including both the use of Standard English and academic English, impacts perceptions of the purpose of the OSSC and the interactions therein. This chapter builds on the macro-level societal and situational context developed in Chapter 4 as well as the more contextual, institutional context illuminated in Chapter 5 to examine how advisors and students discuss the macro-level features that impact the OSSC. The proceeding chapter, Chapter 7, will examine the micro-level interactions in the interpersonal space of the OSSC as described by advisors and students. Thus, the emergent themes from the data are organised thematically with discussions progressing from themes at the macro, structural level to the micro, interpersonal level.

The chapter is organised thematically and integrates the voices of advisors and students as well as the scholarly literature throughout. Each section begins with a narrative vignette; a story or account that is derived from the observations undertaken in the OSSC or from the stories that were shared in the interviews and focus groups. It is particularly interesting to note that much of the data revolved around stories. Indeed, all of the participants engaged in story telling or the production of vignettes rather than abstract descriptions in responding to the questions posed in both the interviews and focus groups, while the observations lent themselves naturally to storying. Thus, “vignettes,” which can be described as “short stories, scenarios, depictions of situations, accounts using imagery and recollection of actions” (Hunter, 2012, p. 92), were amassed throughout the data collection, and these vignettes also form important frames for discussing the data. Indeed, the vignettes employed throughout the proceeding chapters are a means to “bring life to research [and] bring research to life” (Ellis, 1998, p. 4).

While “storying” of writing centre work is common too, there has been a tendency for writing centre leadership to be the purveyors, disseminators and protectors of stories from the writing centre. As writing centre leadership work to provide a legible “frame for seeing and
evaluating writing center work” their stories also often coalesce around a “grand
narrative” that makes up a familiar writing centre narrative (Gruntsch Mckinney, 2013, p. 4-5). However, calls to challenge, subvert and complicate the story of the writing centre were indeed one of the key goals of this project. The stories presented here, then, come from interlocutors that have historically been the subjects, rather than the creators of stories. Thus, these are the stories of the advisors and the students that are often told without reference or awareness of the writing centre grand narrative. Removed from the promotional frame and the discursive community of writing centre leadership, these accounts act to expand, support, reframe and disrupt the stories writing centre leadership choose to tell.

The data is presented by mirroring the accounts from advisors with those from students on each of the main emergent themes. In generating the vignettes I sought to stay true to the words of participants while capturing the broad picture. Thus, I generated composites that integrated singular conceptions across participants. In presenting these narratives I have chosen to portray participant accounts in a fashion that physically depicted the respective perceptions of the student/advisor participants and thus columns that juxtapose the two positions were employed. While some of the themes demonstrate congruent perspectives, others show tensions, and others still demonstrate ambiguity and compromise across respondents in the advisor and student participant groups respectively. Thus, in organising discussions within the conceptual and thematic orientations outlined above, I also sketch out the congruencies, tensions and ambiguities among and across participant groups within thematic discussions.

As outlined in Chapter 3, the sources of data are diverse and triangulated to present multiple points of entry into the realities of the advisors and students who populate the OSSC. Data is drawn from 20 participant interviews (10 advisors and 10 students), 2 focus groups (1 advisor focus group and 1 student focus group), roughly 30 hours of observation (20 hours in person in the OSSC and 11 online appointment correspondence) as well as documents, artefacts, post-interview correspondence and my own personal reflections. Figure 21 presents an overview of the sources of data that were used to develop the themes presented in the proceeding chapters.
The multiple and triangulated sources of data produced four main themes and a number of sub-themes. At the macro-level the themes of positionality and correction, conventions, culture and curriculum were identified. At the more micro, interpersonal level themes related to emotion and affect and product versus process emerged. The following chapters weave together the voices and experiences of participants and scholarly literature to provide a thick description of the OSSC site, while also illuminating insights that may provide valuable information for other sites of literacy instruction and academic writing support.
**Student Narrative:** Referrals, refusals and resources

When I first started at OISE many people sent me to the OSSC - I was sent by my supervisor to have some help there. She said “go to the OSSC, there is help for you. Your English needs improvement, it is not enough.” Then when I submitted my first reaction to a reading in a class as a coursework, and my instructor said, “Have you been on the eighth floor? There’s a writing centre there.” “Yes, I’ve been there.” So I was encouraged to go to the OSSC from many different people. It made me aware of the fact that my English isn’t good so I felt shameful about the idea of presenting my writing and all of the mistakes.

So it was early on that I looked at the website for the OSSC. I was supposed to go to get help with making my writing more acceptable here but I also needed some help with basic editing. My supervisor told me that she would accept “nothing but perfect” for my dissertation. So I need to write perfect papers with no mistakes, clear, neat. I obviously needed editing help but the centre says it doesn’t do that right on its website. I didn’t get why I would go here if they didn’t do that. Really from the website the first impression was like “whoa.” I felt disappointed even before I got in there as I couldn’t understand why they wouldn’t provide support with editing. Although, now that I’ve been there I can say I get more than editing, but sometimes I just need someone to edit my work. But the manner of telling someone that the centre is not going to do this or not going to do that upfront, that’s probably not the best approach to someone coming for help.

Anyways, when I did finally try the place out I thought it was a really respected and good place because I did get good support and so many people had sent me there. I told people about it too at first. But recently the issue I keep encountering in this centre is so little time. At best I can get two 35-minute sessions once a week but it’s often so much less because it’s always really busy now. I know I have talked to other people and it seems like the centre is

**Advisor Narrative:** The In-Between

When I think about the OSSC, it’s interesting. I sort of have two distinct eras, if you will, in the OSSC. One as a student who used the service and another as an advisor, who still uses the service actually. When I started coming to the OSSC it was because I was really feeling like the program I was in was totally wrong for me. I really didn’t know how to write a graduate level paper, I felt it wasn’t explained well and I was really out of my element and considering leaving the program. When I found my way to the OSSC after I discovered it through looking around online. I found it to be a really helpful place to have the kind of academic discussions we are supposed to have about our work, it’s like an in person version of peer review. It really helped me and it built my confidence, I told everyone about it and realised that a lot of my classmates had no idea there was such a service.

Two years into my program I applied for a job in the OSSC and then found myself sort of “on the other side of the table” advising students. From my experience as a student in the centre I always talked about the value of the centre in my classes but I felt different about this as an advisor. It was strange, but as soon as I started to work here I didn’t feel like I was empowered to talk about the place, like I saw the other side of it and understood the strange in-between place the centre occupies.

For example, I was helping students with a particular type of assignment that is really common in this field. I guess word got out that the help I was giving was useful so a lot of students started coming to me for support. It came to a head one day when a student who had a scheduled appointment came and asked if he could invite some of his classmates into our
getting undermined in the institution. In the beginning I found one advisor who was really good and she really “got” my writing. I just kept booking with her and we would start each appointment where we had left off. But then it seemed like there was so few advisors and my advisor was always booked and so it was hard to have any consistency as I just had to book when there were openings so I didn’t see the same person and always had to start from the beginning each session.

Now, I just really started to feel like the centre couldn’t handle all the students anymore and its just not as good as it was a couple of years ago. I mean we used to have at least 45 minutes and there were lots more openings and now it’s so difficult to meet anyone there. I keep wondering why this is, I mean I still pay the same amount of tuition so what is happening?

I think as I have been here longer though I have tried to just be brave and submit my work and go to the OSSC when I can. Sometimes when I can afford it I use an editor too. I think people don’t say it but if you write with an accent, you’re expected to hire an editor to manage your accent. You can’t rely just on the academic writing centre you have to buy the services of someone to help you meet the English expectations. But these things are not talked about.

So for me, what I have learned at this place and from getting sent to the writing centre all of the time is that I don’t speak English as they expect me to here, and I realise that. I am comfortable with that now. You can understand me but I am not easy with those expressions, with ways of phrasing, with idioms that I still don’t understand, and ways that make your flow very beautiful. This is very challenging...so what happened to me at the beginning of this year is that I forgave myself because I don’t speak English. I said, “Okay, my English is very specific.” I can’t go to the doctor without a dictionary. I can’t go shopping or to the grocery store without a dictionary. I always need to have this language that I don’t have. But that’s ok. It’s me and that’s it. I will never write the way a native speaker writes and I forgave myself for that.

By this point I had seen a lot of students and thought maybe it would be best to actually run a workshop instead of having these pseudo workshops with groups of students crammed into the centre. I contacted a colleague here in the OSSC to co-facilitate, we had some great ideas for a couple of sessions and were willing to do it on our own time. The idea was filtered up through the chain here, I don’t know where it ended up or who made the decision but we were eventually told that we were not to run this workshop as it was a “program responsibility.” That was the most transparent example of the way the OSSC is really viewed by some here. We’re here to “fix” the mechanical stuff but not to take part in the actual curriculum stuff.

After that I still had students coming to me for the support that I had offered to run workshops on and I taught them the stuff one by one but then I felt like I was sneaking around or stepping on toes but students weren’t learning the stuff in class. I had nowhere to take it though so I just kept supporting the students as much as I could in the sessions. I guess before I worked in the OSSC I saw it as extra-classroom support but after I had an insider perspective I saw the strange hierarchy that it fits on and it’s not equal to the classroom but we have to work with stuff from the classroom. We’re not supposed to edit students’ work but then some say we can’t do content. I sometimes don’t know what we do, so that adds to the feeling of being disempowered or unsure about how to talk about the work we do in the OSSC around the building now.
The narratives above demonstrate a number of interrelated themes that emerged related to the theme of positionality from the data collected from the advisor and student participants in this study. This section breaks up the larger theme of positionality into sub themes of institutional positionality, multilingual student positionality, advisor positionality and the positionality or perceived legitimacy of the OSSC in the institutional environment. Within institutional positionality discussions revolve around participants’ understandings of the institutional policies that impacted the existence of, and created challenges for, the OSSC. The second theme of student positionality examines how participants understood the way discourses around language, language learning and edicts for Standard English impacted multilingual students. Similarly, the subtheme of advisor positionality engages with the way advisors situate themselves institutionally as they negotiate their roles in the OSSC. Finally, the last theme tackles the way participants viewed the OSSC and it’s perceived legitimacy in the institutional environment. Figure 22 depicts the themes and sub-themes discussed in this chapter.

Figure 22. Positionality Subthemes

I first examine each of these topics in turn and the final section foregrounds the data from students and advisors in a discussion with scholarly research and literature. The discussion also illuminates the congruencies, ambiguities and tensions that exist between the student and advisor participants related to the theme of positionality.
Institutional Positionality

Policies and practices

The OISE and University of Toronto environments are governed a number of institutional policies, which contribute to practices that inform the work of students, staff, and faculty in the broader University of Toronto and more immediate OISE environments. While Chapter 5 provided a broad overview of some of the features of the University of Toronto and OISE contexts that have a broad impact on the OSSC, student and advisor participants focused in on particular policies and practices that they felt were the most impactful on the OSSC and their interactions therein. The policies and practices students and advisors referred to included internationalisation agendas or international recruitment and/or diversity initiatives, admissions policies, and language practices or expectations.

Both students and advisors signalled an awareness of the existence of a diverse multilingual and multicultural student body on campus and noted that the ongoing diversification of the student body is likely to continue as the institution persists with recruitment campaigns for international students. Thus, all of the participants made note of the diverse nature of OISE students and the ways in which students with various languages, backgrounds and educational histories require support services that demonstrate that the institution is not only interested in recruiting diverse students, but also supporting them. For student participants, recruitment policies and the local diversity of the city of Toronto generated an expectation that the institution would provide appropriate support services to meet needs of the student body, including a writing centre. Indeed, many student participants noted that the institution had a responsibility to recognise student needs and provide supports such as the writing centre that matched up with the diversity engendered by international recruitment policies.

For example, one student suggested that in an institution where “the students’ experiences are different, where they’re international students or students of multilingual backgrounds, the institution needs to be prepared for that and students need to see that they are protected and supported by the institution” (Gabriela). Another student suggested that it’s “an expectation that students get the best help and best quality support at this competitive university,” which is particularly the case for international students who “pay three times more to come to this school” (Marcela). Several students also noted the responsibility of the institution to inform students of the types of resources available and how students may access them, and this is
especially true for multilingual and international students who may be unfamiliar with support provisions. Two students even suggested that for international students who are going through various adjustments with academic, personal and cultural expectations that a number of initial visits to the OSSC should be mandatory (Marcela, Yanyu).

For advisors the internationalisation policies of the institution also generate a need for the provision of supports such as those encountered in the OSSC. Several of the advisors tied the OSSC’s existence to diversity and equity mandates. One advisor suggested that diversity means “[students] might be immigrants, newcomers, ESL students, or those people who have come to this country or university as mature students. They need the kind of support that is given in the writing centre…it’s an equity matter” (Bahareh). While another advisor tied the OSSC directly to “more recent initiatives of internationalisation, which is increasing the international student enrolments” through suggesting that “the OSSC is one of the mechanisms that should theoretically help in addressing the influx of multilingual students into OISE as other writing centres that are set up across the university do” (Trevor, emphasis mine). For this advisor “theoretically” was meant to qualify that the OSSC’s (and other centres’) abilities to support students is constrained in an environment where “funding is lacking” (Trevor), which is taken up later in this chapter.

While internationalisation and diversity initiatives were mentioned across participants, several of the advisor and student participants also noted links between admissions policies and the OSSC. While students felt that the OSSC was there to support them in arriving at the appropriate level of language and writing to be successful in their academic pursuits, advisors pondered whether the expectations were too demanding at times. In effect, both advisors and students suggested that disparities exist between admissions requirements and the demands students face upon commencing their degrees.

More than half of the advisors mentioned concerns related to “vetting processes” (Brett), measures of “academic readiness” (Nisha) and other requirements that are connected to the way admissions are conducted. For advisors it was clear that some students would struggle through their programs and the OSSC became their “lifeline” as they worked through the demands of their program while adjusting to the OISE environment (Nisha). However, despite advisors’ desire to see students through the difficulties they encounter once admitted, the depth of needs displayed by some students combined with the sheer number of students made
it “unrealistic” (Irina) or “overreaching” (Brett) to think the OSSC could provide adequate support. As one advisor admitted,

I was a few times really shocked at the level some of the students who came in and their needs went beyond what the OSSC could do, in terms of really being able to help them out of the mire. And I was shocked that I don't know how they got into OISE, and not because they're not smart people, it has nothing to do with that, it has a lot to do with the language and it has to do with differing expectations of what they thought they would need to do and what the academic or degree program requires them to do, but there are people who were really struggling (Lesley).

Thus, for advisors admissions policies produced situations where students were admitted and then immediately made aware of the challenges they would face in completing the program. For advisors the level of need of some students was beyond what could be offered in the purview of one or two 35-minute appointments each week leaving some students in precarious situations early in their programs.

For more than half of the student participants, admissions policies were also a source of discussion and disconcertion. Students also felt that admissions policies should assess students’ abilities to successfully complete their programs and the fact that they were accepted led them to believe that they were performing at an acceptable level, and this was particularly true for academic writing. As one student suggested, “the moment I got accepted here, I was assuming that my levels of writing and English was acceptable but then you’re surprised to learn you were not up to the level” (Mi-yong). Another student stated “if it wasn’t for my teacher telling me that I need it, I would never seek help…I was assuming that my writing was okay because I scored the TOEFL, I got accepted and then boom I am not doing well” (Mariana). Many students echoed their frustration at being admitted and then struggling with the requirements of their program, which for some felt like “taking ten steps back” to work on writing and language while trying to keep up with their degree program requirements (Yanyu). Furthermore, for nearly all of the student participants the depth of support and time investment required to enhance their English and academic writing abilities was rarely met through the OSSC given the time and personnel shortages the centre faced.

Thus, the students and advisors in this study demonstrated an awareness of policies at the institutional level that aimed to “increase the proportion of international students at the University” (University of Toronto, 2014) as well as admissions policies that resulted in a diverse student body at OISE. While both students and advisors described successful
recruitment and admissions campaigns that diversified the student body, they refuted that
the university has lived up to its goal of the provision of additional support or that ample
attention was given to programming focused on retention. Indeed, several of the advisors
shared the feeling that recruitment and admissions policies were pursued without the
concomitant support mechanisms for students, leaving some participants with the feeling that
“the institution has taken their money and left them outside and threw away the key” (Nisha).

Capital and compromise

I know that for some people this [resourcing the OSSC] is just moving things
around but for me it’s about my work, it’s my writing, it’s my grade, it’s my
degree. I can’t fail… it’s my everything (Gabriela).

The theme of insufficient resources, staffing shortages and time pressures emerged from the
responses from nearly all participants across the advisor and student participant groups. The
data from students and advisors complements the findings from the leadership that resource
shortages were indeed one of the major contemporary challenges facing the OSSC at the time
of the data collection. In Chapter 5 leadership participants discussed the complexity of
resource shortfalls and compromises necessary in order to maintain a fair degree of access to
a breadth of services in the OSSC in the wake of declining resource availability within the
broader OISE environment. Contrary to leadership, students spent less time on conjectures
about institutional politics and rather focused on the detrimental effects the lack of resource
provision for the OSSC had on them.

For students the length of the appointments and the paucity of openings were perhaps the
most commonly mentioned complaint about the OSSC. Indeed, nearly all of the students
decried the short time allocated for each appointment (35 minutes) and noted that the time
allocations were shorter than the 45-minute allocations in previous years at OISE and the
length of appointments in other University of Toronto departments or their former
institutions. Many students felt that the shortened appointment times were constraining as one
student suggested “[advisors] can just read a page in that time. That doesn’t make sense,
that’s not being supportive, you know?” (Gabriela). Moreover, despite the fact that the
appointments during the 2014-1015 academic year were shortened to allow for more sessions
with the intention of serving more students, student participants still reported that securing
appointments was challenging and required significant pre-planning. As one student reported
“I have on quite a few occasions found that even though I am looking for an appointment two
weeks in advance I haven’t been able to book one” (Navya) while another simply stated that “[the OSSC] needs more slots because … you are really lucky if you get an appointment” (Eun-ah).

The short appointment times and lack of openings overall left students feeling unsupported and frustrated and led some students to seek out expensive editing support on a private basis. The use of outside editors placed additional financial burdens on students, resulting in papers being “fixed” (Alejandra) rather than providing instructional editing, and contributed to the erosion of relationships and a sense of community among advisors and students in the OSSC. Indeed, many of the student participants in both focus groups and interviews reported their preference to work with a single advisor who was familiar with their work and with whom they had already developed a rapport. Navya described continuity in terms of efficiency for both the students and the centre, she suggested

If I am writing a really big paper I want to make sure that the same person is helping me with the paper … like if I am booking three appointments for a twenty five page paper and I have three different people look at it, I don’t think that’s fair to me or to the other person because every appointment is 35 minutes now and you spent 10 minutes explaining what the paper is about. I think that’s just a waste of time, not just my time but the writing centre’s time as well.

Thus, although all of the students noted the beneficial nature of the OSSC’s services the data certainly suggests that the lack of available appointments and the short time frame allocated for each appointment were problematic for all of the student participants.

The advisors also echoed the challenges they faced in providing support to a large student body with a small team of advisors, the short sessions, as well as the expectations they felt were placed on them by the institution. The advisors noted that the high demand and scarce supply of appointments available at the OSSC caused anxiety and at times a sense of isolation among some students who felt they had nowhere else to turn for support (Brett). Moreover, another advisor noted that the recruitment campaigns that promoted the university as a supportive environment but also charged very high fees for some programs engendered very high expectations for the OSSC in the minds of students, which is hard to navigate for advisors when budget shortfalls are the reality (Irina).

The challenges students faced with time constraints and the small cadre of advisors caused many advisors to feel overwhelmed, frustrated and even guilty with their limited time and
ability to help students, many who were struggling with their degree requirements. Indeed, such feelings are evident in the following statement from Lesley, she said:

"Sometimes you walk away kind of exhausted from a couple at the appointments, right?... I really see where more support for the advisors need to come into place. It’s not just about what the students need, it’s about what the advisors need as well, and the expectations that are placed on the centre in terms of providing support for the students and I think it's unrealistic for what we have, for the resources and for the people. It's just, it's not enough…you feel badly when you can't help a student, and some of the students I knew this was not going to end well for them in terms of where I could see this going because I don’t know how they’re going to get through it with what support is out there.

Thus, while the way resource shortages affected students certainly emerged in discussions with advisors, many advisor participants also noted the challenges they face in carrying out their roles in the OSSC. Indeed, echoing the participant above another advisor explained the concern advisors feel when a student displays a high level of need that simply cannot be addressed in the allotted time in the OSSC. The advisor suggested, “I feel like sometimes students come and it’s like a flood and we have like a napkin to try and stop it” (Jessica).

The reality that advisors are also balancing their roles as students themselves also emerged as a feature of working in the OSSC that caused strain for advisors. Many advisors noted that they too are often busy, stressed and under pressure at the same times as students visiting the centre require the most support for final papers and assignments. The ongoing resource challenges and high volume of students and need prompted one advisor to describe being constantly “maxed out” and question whether advisors get sufficiently supported in the work that they do with the expectations they navigate (Nisha). For many advisors simply managing the daily requirements of their work left no time for reflection, discussion with other advisors or advisor-led training sessions that would provide advisor-to-advisor support and skill building for the challenges of the role. The lack of time and resources for consistent team meetings, professional development and discussion among advisors also impacted the camaraderie and sense of community among advisors (Nisha, Trevor, Irina) and “lowered the status of the centre” according to Irina.

While both students and advisors agreed that a strengthened budget and larger team of advisors were clear solutions to the challenges they identified befalling them in the current configuration of the OSSC, awareness that expanding the budget was much easier said than done prevailed among participants. While students focused on the provision of more advisors
being hired in the centre, many advisors suggested leveraging the community of graduate students at OISE to provide workshops, study groups or informal collections of students that could “drop in” to help assuage the ongoing challenges in the OSSC. However, as one advisor noted, the community empowerment approach should be pursued with care. As Nisha stated, we can kind of promote some of those communities so that we don’t have to do it all. We can use our capital to be able to offer support and solidarity with those kinds of things that are already taking place that students can benefit from. But we need to challenge this as an excuse to underfund the centre because it’s a very neoliberal to do, and it’s happening. I’m sorry that’s not a cop out to cut funding to a centre.

Thus, resources weighed heavily in responses related to challenges or difficulties for both students and advisors in the OSSC and left both students and advisors feeling as though they were not adequately supported. The lack of support for multilingual students was particularly felt as both students and advisors perceived the command of English to be important for academic success. Indeed, as Nisha continued,

I know some of the people that I’ve advised and I’m looking at them and I’m like I know English is not your first language, but how are you here doing a PhD program and now do I take on the guilt of feeling I need to see you through this? That is a very real struggle because they’re sitting in front of me and doing PhD theses. I don’t know. The institution is not willing to support them adequately and we are their lifeline. As much as we are saying that we don’t take that on how can you not?

Thus, advisors often faced challenges themselves as they tried to support students in a resource challenged environment. Furthermore, as students most advisors eschewed the role of “little professor” (Trevor), yet often negotiated their positionality as students’ and faculty expectations emerged in sessions in the OSSC. These negotiations are the focus within the next theme of advisor positionality.

Advisor Positionality: Lack of Supportive Structures and the In-Between

Advisors vis-à-vis faculty and the institution

The perceived positionality of advisors institutionally and in relation to faculty was a topic of discussion among the advisors that did not emerge from the data with the student participants. Certainly for advisors the ongoing resource challenges coloured their perceptions of how they were situated and appreciated in the environment. However, a number of advisor participants suggested that “confusion” surrounded their roles among faculty and other institutional actors
and that they felt silenced, disempowered or improperly placed to negotiate that confusion in the OISE environment. One advisor reported having the terms “advisors, tutors, mentors, counsellors, editors” ascribed to her role in the OSSC in a single week (Nisha). Thus, among advisors the need for advocacy and clarity related to their role was paramount, but that advocacy needed to be undertaken by actors who were “better placed in the OISE faculty than graduate students” (Brett). As one advisor stated, it’s important to have advocates institutionally, it has to be someone who “has chutzpah, you know someone who asks hard questions, maintains and develops authority with faculty, who is a team-player but also a game-player but aware of the strategic, you know, shifting of power but that can’t come from us obviously…” (Stacey). Thus, the notion of connections, communication and alliances with the broader OISE environment including the chairs of the departments, the administrative leadership at OISE, faculty members (tenured or otherwise), other administrative and support staff and writing centre professionals across campus were emphasised as important although lacking for advisors. Institutionally, then, across all of the advisors was a sense of being misunderstood yet powerless to redress the misconceptions.

Advisors viewed the lack of communication and connection with faculty as particularly problematic as it engendered confusion and expectations that advisors were then forced to negotiate in sessions with students. A clear sense that faculty who referred students to the OSSC did so to redress “deficiencies” in language or academic writing emerged from discussions with advisors. Many of the advisors noted that faculty “mark” certain students as needing to be shuffled off to the writing centre to “learn how to write” (Brett), “teach themselves how to write properly” (Jessica) or “polish up the paper” (Lesley), and such referrals place the services of the OSSC firmly in the remedial category.

On the other hand, advisors also felt constrained and uncomfortable when they were placed in positions that forced them to provide significant feedback and support where students had received little or none from faculty. Indeed, several of the advisors questioned if it was appropriate for professors to send students to the OSSC for feedback in place or in lieu of faculty (Stacey, Brett, Nisha,). For advisors supporting students, especially graduate students, as the primary source of feedback was beyond their role and put them in the uncomfortable position of needing to act like “a little professor” (Trevor). Such expectations from faculty placed a heavy burden on OSSC advisors who felt ethically responsible for providing support where there was none. This was problematic for advisors who “don’t get paid big bucks”
(Nisha) but felt obligated to help students who relied on the OSSC and advisors to provide ongoing feedback. Nisha summed up the expectations, confusion and funding challenges that complicate the relationship between advisors and faculty as such,

what we do have is the fact that some faculty members believe that they just need to peripherally mark a paper, the student gets concerned, “oh go to this academic success centre or the OSSC.” They come here because we’re grossly underfunded, there’s only so many things we can do, right? So there’s expectations, there’s misconceptions, and there’s a disconnect. But you know, faculty are on hollowed grounds and nobody questions them. So who gets the short end of the stick, right? So yeah, so I think the confusion is real, the struggle is real, and it just seems that as advisors we are caught in the middle of having to negotiate that for the students just because we happen to care and we are here.

Despite questioning the level of expectations that some faculty demonstrated, all of the advisors accepted that they held a subordinate role to faculty and they understood the authority of faculty in interactions with students. One advisor described her role as supporting both students and faculty and noted that it was imperative that faculty know about the OSSC and familiarise themselves with the advisor role therein (Laleh). Indeed, all of the advisors noted the importance of helping students to understand and meet faculty expectations, and did so even if they disagreed with or were critical of the faculty member’s requirements. Thus, despite the fact that advisors felt that their role was not always particularly well understood or appreciated by faculty, all of the advisors emphasised their deference to the authority of faculty as the assessors of the materials that students brought in to the OSSC. Therefore, although advisors frequently felt that some faculty members’ expectations of them as a support service were unreasonable and at times underappreciated (Brett), advisors acknowledged the hierarchy and accepted their subordinate role.

Advisors vis-à-vis students

While advisors reported that their dual status of advisor and student made it difficult for them to demonstrate agency in clarifying their role to faculty, many felt that their student status was beneficial when working with students in the OSSC. Student participants also tended to view the fact that advisors were also students as a factor that positively impacted their interactions and perceptions of the relationship. However, there were differences on the perceived positionality of the interlocutors in interactions between advisor and student within and across groups. Table 13 presents an overview of how each participant group described the advisor-student relationship in the OSSC.
Table 13. Perceptions of Positionality: The Advisor-Student Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Relationship</th>
<th>Advisors</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hybrid (both peer and instructor-student)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor-student</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 13 suggests, only students described their interactions in the OSSC as instructor-student, with three students characterising interactions as such. For those students who described advisors as teachers or instructors, they positioned advisors as such because the advisors are “providing information” (Eun-ah), are there to “support and teach…and to give feedback” (Gabriela) or because students learn from advisors and follow their suggestions (Yanyu). While all of the students who described the positionality of advisors as teachers or instructors implied that advisors had a degree of status as feedback or information providers, only one explicitly suggested that students and advisors “are not in the same position, [advisors] are higher and I am lower” (Yanyu).

The two students who described advisors as simultaneously occupying positions of peers and instructors/teachers spoke of advisors’ abilities to relate to them as students or understand their perspective while also providing instruction and information. One of the students described advisors as “having both sides of the story” because “advisors know what the teacher is looking for but understands where the student is coming from” (Mariana). The other student who described advisors as both a peer and instructor echoed this sentiment in suggesting that most advisors “have a lot more experience with writing and graduate school” but they provide information in a way that allows the student to relate while also identifying with the student’s experience (Kim).

Finally, for those students who felt that advisors were peers or colleagues many simply said so because the advisors continually position themselves as such through reminding the students of their own student status (Alejandra, Navya). Indeed, students reported that advisors often introduced themselves as a fellow student and made it clear that they were “on the same level” (Navya) or “colleagues” (Alejandra) who were there to help. Similar to the students who describe the relationship as a hybrid, the students who perceived advisors as peers also generally agreed that the peer-ness was beneficial for generating understanding and empathy for the student. However, one student felt that a combination of fulltime writing
instructors and peers would improve the centre as “it’s likely not a top priority for people who are also students, I wouldn’t do full justice to it if I was working part time or I didn’t have a guaranteed fulltime job” (Navya). Finally, one student suggested that because advisors have “superior English language skills” they should traditionally take on an instructor role, but she perceived them as peers because she was a mature student (Ellen).

Similar to the student sample, half of the advisors positioned themselves as peers to the students who visited the OSSC. However, none of the advisors saw themselves as taking on a teacher/instructor role at all times. For those advisors who defined their role as a peer, the peer aspect was “critically important” (Nisha) or “instrumental” (Brett) for successful interactions. Advisors understood that their positioning as peers allowed for rapport-building, empathy, cooperative problem solving and at times commiserating with the student’s experience. Advisors employed terms such as “collaborating” (Brett), “consulting” (Laleh), “facilitating” (Nisha), “feeding off one another” (Vidhura), and “sharing” (Bahareh). Such notions were repeated by advisor participants in the focus group, wherein one advisor noted that while “advisors have no power as a graduate student with [faculty], we are uniquely qualified to be a devolved power, so it’s not hierarchical, its accompaniment, walking students through the journey” (Stacey). Finally, one advisor noted the value of modelling collaboration and peer-ness by admitting uncertainty and asking other advisors in the OSSC to weigh in on students’ questions when necessary or possible (Brett).

Advisors who suggested that they oscillated between peer/instructor roles identified taking on instructor roles with those in the Bachelor program (Trevor, Jessica) or with multilingual students (Trevor, Irina), while others still simply reported that their roles shifted from peer to instructor across students (Lesley, Lanfen). While some advisors identified undergraduate students or multilingual students as those with whom they more frequently took on instructor roles, all of the advisors suggested that this was not static and differed from student to student. Advisors reported that they took their cues from students in an effort to generate interactions that were comfortable, productive, and aligned with student expectations. Indeed, comfort levels and expectations were key for advisors who moved between roles, as they understood that some students did not want to talk to a peer (Trevor, Lesley, Irina).

The role of OSSC advisor, then, paints a complex picture where hierarchies and power dynamics in the institutional environment result in vastly different positionalities for advisors as they negotiate interactions with the institution, faculty and diverse groups of students who
use the OSSC. While the data certainly suggests that advisors feel subordinate and harbour some feelings of inferiority in relation to faculty, the data also points out that advisors are positioned as peers, instructors or a mixture of the two in relation to the multilingual students who seek out their support in the OSSC. The next section thus examines the positionality of the multilingual students from both their own and advisors’ perspectives.

**Multilingual Student Positionality: Perceptions of Language**

While the University of Toronto and OISE environments are certainly characterised as diverse and multilingual, having a strong command of the English language and written communication emerged as important for the participants in this study. For the multilingual student participants language, and specifically the use of English, featured prominently in their experiences in the University of Toronto and OISE environments. The student focus group participants suggested that different professors approached expectations to communicate in Standard English differently. While most of the focus group participants agreed that professors generally “value ideas and do not just get focused on the weird or awkward language” (Paola) some reported receiving comments that suggested their writing was “awkward” (Alejandra) or “exotic” due to their use of the English language (Julian).

Similarly, more than half of the student participants interviewed suggested that they felt that professors paid more attention to content than language and mechanics when grading academic writing. One student described a course early on in her degree where the professor valued her ideas and did not dwell on language mistakes. She said, “I felt that this professor was experienced enough that she didn’t like grab on my awkwardness in my English, which was amazing because I really felt that she valued my ideas” (Paola). However, the proper use of English in academic writing was still a concern and this was particularly true when professors used rubrics that included marks for grammar and language use (Mi-yong, Eun-ah). While the majority of the multilingual students suggested that content was more important for faculty, several also noted that this means that they do not receive feedback from faculty on language and thus cannot improve, which limits their potential (Mi-yong, Gabriela, Yanyu, Myriam). As Gabriela described,

The thing that I’ve learned is that you need to communicate in order to be where you want to be… I feel a disconnect, it’s not about building students to communicate, it’s about doing the research but what about communicating the research? I really have to seek out other resources to get better on my
writing…because there is no one telling me that’s not how you say this or that’s how you write that. Professors, they look at the essay and they just mark “okay” and they focus on the content and there’s no learning process for the English language.

Additionally, while more than half of the students suggested that their professors and peers knew that English was not their first language, none of the students reported using languages other than English in their work or interactions at OISE. Furthermore, all of the student participants expressed in one way or another that not having English as a first language was a “handicap” (Marcela), “challenge” (Alejandra), “problem” (Eun-ah), “deficiency” (Gabriela) or “issue” (Ellen). While another student reported hating feeling “tongue tied” as she moved between her three languages and felt that her multilingualism was a “syndrome” that she needed to “battle” (Kim). Indeed, it was clear to the students that “the language of instruction at U of T is English, and there is a logical justification for the highest marks being reserved for those who can communicate their ideas effectively in English” (University of Toronto, “Writing Centres,” para. 3, n.d.), which made knowledge and command of English paramount for success.

Thus, for multilingual students their command of more than one language was not perceived as beneficial and they tended to focus on what they perceived as their English language deficiency. For one student who was fluent or functional in five languages, “not being good enough in English” was problematic (Alejandra). Alejandra continued by describing struggling as she “[doesn’t] speak English” but relies on the usage of “Global English” or “Globish,” which falls short of meeting expectations for the use of Standard English in academic writing institutionally. Other students reported that they were “judged based on speaking and writing” (Gabriela) and feared that “the person on the other side of the table” in the OSSC would similarly “judge” them based on their use of the English language (Marcela). Analogous to feeling judged, many of the multilingual students interviewed expressed feelings of embarrassment or shame related to their use of the English language. As one student stated, “I feel very embarrassed to share my writing with other people because English is not my first language… but I decided to just embarrass myself in one situation [at the OSSC] rather than to my professor” (Mi-yong). Other multilingual students confirmed that feelings of embarrassment or shame related to their command of written English prevented them from seeking help with their writing from professors or peers, and made them wary or shy to share their work with the advisors in the OSSC (Eun-ah, Yanyu, Kim).
Similarly, advisors affirmed the importance of writing, and writing done in Standard English, as the main form of assessment (Nisha, Lesley, Lanfen). Trevor also acknowledged that often students do not come prepared with the knowledge that “writing and written communication in general can make or break them here.” Another advisor added that support for language is imperative for inclusive education as “language is a matter of privilege when you’re in a community where the dominant language is not your first language” (Bahareh). Interestingly, despite the awareness among all of the advisors that most of the students who frequent the OSSC are multilingual, more than half of the advisor participants noted that English language support receives little notice on the OSSC website, specific strategies for working with multilingual writers are not a key focus in training sessions or professional development activities, and a refusal to edit remains the overall guiding policy of the OSSC (Vidhura). However, all of the advisors who took part in the study also had experience learning additional language(s) or were fully multilingual themselves and three of the advisors noted using a language other than English in interactions with some students in the OSSC.

While advisors certainly understood the challenges multilingual students faced in preparing academic writing in English, all of the advisors eschewed the deficit approach to language and viewed multilingual students as able communicators in many languages rather than less than perfect English speakers. One advisor spoke of mentioning that he too uses the centre, which surprised multilingual students who thought the centre was “just for students who speak different languages… Since I’m a native English speaker, they think I don’t have that deficit, which is clearly not a deficit, but that’s how it’s discussed” (Brett). Thus, advisors often worked to alter perceptions that the OSSC was a space where students struggling with language came. Rather, they often spoke of working to advance that the OSSC was in place to support all students in a way congruent with academic best practice. Indeed, as Brett stated,

I too use the writing centre and that always blows them away. “Like really? You’re an advisor but you also use this centre and see other advisors?” I always say “but everybody should because everybody needs another set of eyes on their work and everybody can benefit from talking through their work.” That often amazes them but I think it also puts them at ease that they are doing best practice. They are not doing something because they are deficient at something. They are doing something because it’s the smart thing to do, to seek out somebody else to talk to about their work with.

While the advisors worked to subvert the tendency to measure multilingual students against a monolingual English standard, the privileging of English still seeped into the narratives of
advisors whose first language was not English. Indeed one advisor expressed gratitude for native English speaking students who “have to work with me as a non-native speaker and tolerate me to write or speak in a different accent” (Bahareh). Thus, the discourses of students and advisors in this study demonstrated a clear privileging of English institutionally despite “the recognition at U of T that most of our students know and use more than one language” (University of Toronto, “Writing Centres,” para. 1, n.d.).

**OSSC Positionality and Legitimacy**

The discussions undertaken above paint a complex picture of how the OSSC is positioned within the University of Toronto and OISE environments. Certainly for participants recruitment agendas and admissions policies make the OSSC a necessary and legitimate support in the OISE environment. However, the ongoing resource shortages generate challenges for legitimacy and capabilities of the OSSC in the minds of students and advisors, and in the opinion of advisors, also make it difficult for the centre to live up to the expectations of faculty. Moreover, advisor positionality as subordinate to faculty and the tendency to view multilingual students against a monolingual English standard also suggests that power dynamics affect those who work in and visit the OSSC. This final section examines the OSSC’s positionality with these features in mind. While students infrequently commented directly on positionality of the centre, cues can be taken from how they arrived in the OSSC and their willingness to recommend it to others. For advisors, on the other hand, a theme of student support, or lack thereof, in the institutional environment provided evidence that the OSSC is positioned as a legitimate but isolated source of student support.

For students the fact that the OSSC was advertised at orientation and recommended by other students and faculty meant that it was a respected space institutionally. Indeed, none of the students reported seeking out the support of the OSSC on their own fruition, rather all of the students found their way to the OSSC through word of mouth. More than half of the students came to the OSSC through hearing about it from their instructors or faculty, either the faculty member recommended it to the class or students were referred individually. Others came to the OSSC through hearing about it from other students, and two students heard about it through an orientation event or brochure. One student who had heard about the centre at orientation did not attend until her professor urged her to visit. Figure 23 shows how the 10 student participants found their way to the OSSC, with the student who heard about it at orientation but attended on the advice of a professor depicted in grey.
From the students’ perspectives, then, faculty had positive perceptions of the OSSC as they sent students there for support. As one student suggested, “I think the faculty members perceive it very positively because they do recommend it to students” (Kim).

Additionally, all of the students said they recommend the OSSC to their classmates and peers. One student described how she showed other students how to access the services and recommended a particular advisor and was pleased to see other students benefit from using the OSSC when they had not known about it before. She noted that it was important for her to share the benefits of the OSSC with the community of international students she had connected with at OISE who also could not afford expensive tutoring fees outside of the institution (Yanyu). While all ten of the student participants were unanimous that they recommend the service, one student qualified that she did so with a warning that appointments were difficult to secure. Thus, although she recommended it she suggested that students may not perceive the service well or may not seek out help at all when “they have to wait like two weeks to get a tutor” (Marcela). For students, then, the OSSC was a well-positioned space for student support that was endorsed by faculty. However, it lacked the resources to fully carry out its role, which was both frustrating and concerning for students, especially those who had been told they were required to access the services by their professors and instructors.

For advisors, the OSSC was positioned as a legitimate support in the OISE environment as it was consistently busy and the supports were well received by the students who used the service. However, advisors often referred to the singularity of the OSSC as a support service.
in the OISE environment, which made it legitimate but isolated. As Nisha described the situation,

Aside from the OSSC there is no culture of support that you can speak of that has any legitimacy. I think the OSSC is seen as having a legitimate... representing OISE as a legitimate and credible body of support...I feel like, yeah the OSSC represents a certain sense of legitimacy, but it does so in a very isolating way, it's the only sense of support that folks have when they have nowhere to turn.

Thus, for advisors the OSSC is the support mechanism for students at OISE in the absence of other services. While advisors suggested that the lack of supportive structures were a feature of the immediate environment, they also suggested that insufficient support was a feature of the broader institution and indeed higher education in general. For one advisor, at the institutional level it was about vision and making policy, programming and hiring decisions in a way that was informed by how students would be “taken care of” in the institution (Farha). While most of the advisors felt that a lack of support characterised the institutional environment, several also admitted that student support, or lack thereof, was not unique to the OISE or University of Toronto environments. Indeed, Stacey felt strongly that

the [student support] problem is much bigger and it is a problem and it’s multi-pronged, multi-layered and it’s a huge problem in higher education. Higher education has written themselves out the conversation about student success… and it’s going to take another decade I think in order to kick at the darkness until it bleeds daylight and make some holes in the wall so the light can get in because…we’ve got some work to do.

The sentiment that policies, programs and services to support students in their educational journeys were lacking left advisors feeling as though there was a lack of respect for those who provided support (Brett). Advisors often also felt stuck in-between as they worked with students, faculty or instructors were unwilling to support, but were prevented from providing certain types of support deemed in the purview of “the program” as the opening narrative illuminated. These misunderstandings and mishaps resulted in the OSSC to being positioned as extra-classroom support for those who are deficient, rather than a respected partner in the programs and with the curriculum with which it works. For advisors, then, alliances and positive interactions were considered necessary to stem feelings that professors neither understand nor appreciate the work of both administration in higher education and those people who work to improve the student experience, such as OSSC advisors (Irina). Advisors
consistently called for more collaborative, considerate, holistic, and robust services to both sustain and inspire all students. For advisors, until such alliances and structures are put in place, spaces like the OSSC will continue to operate in isolation as a kind of no man's land, a fix all and...it shouldn't be only the OSSC that has to carry that responsibility of supporting students, that culture of support should be everywhere, every wall should breathe it, every faculty member should breathe it, every person should breathe it, and I don't think that's the reality (Nisha).

**Positionality: Summary and Discussion**

The theme of positionality illuminated a number of congruencies between advisor and student participants. However, tensions and ambiguities also emerged. At the institutional level students and advisors agreed internationalisation agendas and attention to diversity in recruitment and admissions policies have diversified the student population, yet have not necessarily resulted in similar attention to retention or support initiatives. While none of the participants explicitly defined what they mean by “internationalisation,” the discourse of students and advisors points to the intercultural and policy levels of internationalisation.

Jane Knight (2003) defines internationalisation as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 2), she also defines the “at home” dimension of internationalisation and policies that institutions might adopt to support the process. In fact, for Knight (2004) the intercultural aspect of the definition of internationalisation gets to the heart of the diversity that now characterises institutions of higher education “at home,” and it was this aspect of internationalisation to which participants referred (p. 11). Additionally, in the purview of this study, participants defined internationalisation policies as those that diversified the student population, mainly through recruitment programs that impacted the global nature of the student body. According to Knight (2004) this is a narrow definition of institutional policies which focuses on policies and programs that add international elements to the institution such as study abroad or the recruitment policies mentioned in this study, while a broader definition includes planning or programming that is meant to attend to the effects of internationalisation (p.16, emphasis mine). Both participant groups felt that although the university appeared successful in the narrow interpretation of internationalisation through study abroad programs, policies that diversified the student population, and the creation of an institution rich in intercultural exchanges. However, the responses of participants suggest that in their opinions,
the institution was less successful at implementing policies at a broader level that addressed the concomitant outcomes of internationalisation, such as student support.

While a narrow definition of internationalisation policies that neglected to consider the policies that must be implemented to address the success of internationalisation strategies may have contributed to the under resourcing of the OSSC, the institutions positionality in the broader constellation of higher education institutions may have also had an impact. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 5 as an elite, research-intensive university, the University of Toronto frequently scores well on domestic and international university ranking schemes and often bills itself as “Canada’s top university” (University of Toronto, Quick Facts, n.d.). Thus, the University of Toronto’s positioning as a “top,” research intensive university may impact its approach to student support initiatives. As Gair and Mullins (2001) suggest, the values and mission of the institution are important in understanding the socialising practices therein. In their research, which engaged in interviews with deans, administrators and faculty in institutions of higher education, Gair and Mullins (2001) found that respondents identified unique socialisation mechanisms in different institutions. The researchers discovered that those institutions that see themselves as “selective” will adopt policies and discourses that reproduce social stratification, while institutions that define themselves as “access expanders” may generate socialisation agendas that provide support for “non-traditional” students (Gair & Mullins, 2001, p. 34-35). Thus, the elite nature of the University of Toronto may also generate the “assumption that everybody can pull themselves up by their bootstraps,” which often reproduces inequities as it assumes that “everybody is starting at the same place” (Nisha).

Thus, institutional positionality appears to have played a role in the provision of support, but the positionality of multilingual students may also contribute to participants’ feelings that supportive services such as the OSSC are under resourced. Interestingly, although students suggested that they expected supports to be in place for them to succeed, their discourse seemed to accept that the under resourcing of supportive spaces such as the OSSC was “just how it is.” Indeed, none of the multilingual students criticised the institution for failing to provide adequate support or made note of the ways that spaces such as the OSSC are part and parcel of “equity” mandates; rather, they simply noted the challenges that befall them when these services are scarce and advanced that more advisors and time in the OSSC would improve the service.
Additionally, and perhaps related, the multilingual student participants often expressed feelings of shame, inferiority, and inadequacy related to their language abilities. Marshall, Hayashi and Yeung (2012) found that the prevalence of deficit discourses surrounding multilingualism and language learning in a metro Vancouver university positioned multilingual students as “remedial ESL learners,” which was set against the “educated Native English speaker” norm (p. 49-50). Similarly, Zhang’s (2011) study which focused on Chinese international graduate students’ view of literacy practices in a Canadian university found that multilingual students consistently felt deficient for being unable to master “perfect” English. Thus, as deficit discourses around language learning and academic writing circulate institutionally it is possible that multilingual students have internalised narratives of deficit or adopted identities of “remedial ESL learner” (Marshall, Hayashi & Yeung, 2012). These internalised discourses paired with narratives of individual achievement, “the pulling up by the bootstraps,” may go some way towards explaining why many multilingual students did not critique or challenge the institutional policies that on the one hand recruited and admitted diverse students, while on the other fell short of providing sufficient supports to ensure their success.

While the responses and discourse of students could be described as demonstrating acceptance, advisors’ responses related to the positioning of multilingual students and the services that support them betrayed feelings of frustration, anger, and guilt that they were unable to provide adequate support. The advisor participants’ responses were often critical of the institution and suggested that the lack of provision of comprehensive support services institutionally left students, and the advisors themselves, feeling overwhelmed and unsupported. For advisors, the failure of the institution to provide adequate budgets and services for multilingual students as well as training for those who worked with multilingual students generated a sense that the institution was undermining its own rhetoric of inclusion and diversity, findings that echo Nowacki’s (2012) case study of a writing centre in an American institution. Thus, advisors were not only critical of the lack of support for students, but they also noted how they too felt isolated, marginalised and at times silenced in advocating for themselves and the students who used the OSSC. Feelings of marginalisation, “subjugation” (Barkas, 2011, p. 280) and the sense of being cordoned off or hidden away from the real work of the academy is a common theme in the scholarly literature on composition and rhetoric and writing centre work in other higher education environments (Boquet, 2002; Clughen & Connell, 2011; MacDonald, 1994). Thus, for advisors the lack of
support provision was unacceptable as advisors responded in ways that demonstrated that to them “this [lack of funding and support] is not how it should be. This is an education school for heavens’ sake, this is not what we should be in the business of doing. We are better than this and I am better than this” (Nisha). Another advisor echoed the problematic nature of the lack of support provisions on the part of the institution and reflected on how those individuals that seek out extra-classroom supports are not only treated as deficient, but are also burdened with taking the initiative to “fix” and improve to meet the “standards” of the institution. As Jessica stated,

I often wonder if the major reaction from faculty is to be like, “oh your writing is not up to snuff. Don’t forget to go to the writing centre.” Then it puts the sort of gap in knowledge or the gap in education back on the student and I have to do something to augment it and I struggle with this from like a sociological perspective because often the folks who are struggling in school, and again not everyone, but some people who are English language learners or who are studying abroad, they are already negotiating so much and then to add the extra responsibility of “don’t forget to actively go and teach yourself how to write a paper.” I think that’s really problematic and I often wonder if the writing centre is being used to kind of allay the academic responsibility of the faculty because I think we need to, especially if we are going to admit folks from abroad and if we’re going to commit ourselves to supporting students with disabilities, we need to start thinking about inclusive pedagogy, inclusive of education as opposed to constantly putting the onus back to the overwhelmed individual to get themselves up to a hypothetical like “normative student” and I question if that’s not problematic.

Thus, advisors were often quite critical of the institution and the (lack of) supports it made available to students who frequented the OSSC as well as the advisors who worked there.

While the command of the English language and strong English academic writing skills were deemed to be paramount for success according to students and advisors, the two participant groups positioned multilingual students differently. The multilingual students themselves felt inferior and were apologetic and embarrassed about their language skills where the advisor participants appreciated their linguistic dexterity and saw their ability to function in multiple languages as an asset. Thus, the multilingual students who visited the OSSC took on monolingual orientations related to their identities as writers whose first language is a problem or hindrance, while the advisors more often adopted multilingual orientations that saw additional languages as a resource or advantage (Olson, 2013, p. 3). While the advisors certainly “recognized the constitutive nature of language” and acknowledged “the integral role of language in academic performance” (Turner, 2011, p.4), they worked to stem notions
that only language learners use the OSSC to address “deficiencies,” language or otherwise. In fact, the responses from advisors often acknowledged that the deficit was in institutional discourses, not the students to whom such notions were attached.

These differences in conceptions of multilingual students’ positionality between the participant groups is particularly interesting given that the bulk of the advisor participants were themselves multilingual students. In fact, half of the advisor participants’ first language was a language other than English. While the other five advisors’ first language was English they were all also fluent or functional in at least one other language. The linguistic diversity and dexterity among advisors is itself noteworthy in a field where, at least in the USA most, “composition theorists and teachers are often monolingual” (Donahue, 2009, p.227), and the expectation and reality in writing centres are no exception (Bailey, 2012; Thonus, 2015). Thus, although it is interesting to note that the multilingual advisors (who are also multilingual students) eschew remediation labels, it is also necessary to point out that the advisors have likely proven themselves as “skilled negotiators of cultural and linguistic differences” (Bailey, 2002, p.5) in their own language learning experiences as well as capable navigators of the institutional environment within which they have been given the power to “advise.” Indeed, their positioning as advisors ascribes a certain level of power and ability as leaders and guides to their peers.

For this reason, it is not surprising that the data on the student-advisor relationship or advisor positionality demonstrated some ambiguity as roughly half of the participants in both groups positioned advisors as peers, while others in each participant group noted a hybridity existed within the advisor role that oscillated between peer and teacher/instructor. The ambiguity on the advisor-student relationship is not surprising as much of the literature from the writing centre suggests that this relationship is fluid and is negotiated in each tutorial by the interlocutors, and thus differs across interactions with diverse students and tutors. Certainly, as Chapter 2 demonstrated several writing centre scholars have suggested that writing centre advisors may be required take a more directive, instructor-like role with multilingual students in order to meet the students’ needs and expectations (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002; Harris, 1997; Thonus, 1999; Williams & Severino, 2004). Yet, the acknowledgement that more directive advising may be necessary for multilingual or second language students has only come about in writing centre literature in the last decade, as the canonised scholarship (which was developed with Native English speakers in mind) often clings to the notion of
collaboration achieved through Socratic questioning. Indeed, according to this early and still much referenced writing centre scholarship, tutorials that are able to accomplish the difficult task of harnessing a true sense of peer-ness and collaboration characterise the most successful pedagogical approach in the writing centre (Bruffee, 1985; Kail & Trimbur, 1987; Lundsford, 1991).

Thus, it is not surprising that some advisors noted that students simply did not want to speak to a peer, as research has shown that in writing centre interactions with some multilingual students such a relationship is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve due to the student’s expectations (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002). However, it is interesting to note that while half of the advisors reported hybridity in their role (being both an instructor and a peer fluidly), three students characterised advisors as instructors at all times. Additionally, of interest was one student participant who suggested OSSC advisors were peers but compared the peer-ness of the OSSC to another writing centre she had visited on campus, which was more directive, and noted that the directedness allowed for faster improvement and left her with the feeling that the directive support was “more expert help” (Marcela). Thus, it seems advisors that reported hybridity in their roles were often reacting to the expectations of students, yet it is interesting to note that none of the advisors described their roles as purely in the purview of instructor. It is possible that the lingering best practice of collaboration in writing centre scholarship and pedagogy made advisors less willing to admit their positionality was more akin to an instructor. Moreover, a real sense of peer-ness may have been developed between interlocutors when the student was a graduate student, as graduate students are often themselves experienced experts in their area of research, which impacts their interactions in the writing centre (Phillips, 2013). Indeed, many of the advisor participants noted that they felt a real sense of peer-ness with other graduate students, a feeling that was echoed by four of the five students who defined advisors as peers (one mature student defined advisors as peers because of her age and status as a mature student). In explaining the way that expertise and language mixed in the OSSC to generate a sense of peer-ness with multilingual graduate students one advisor suggested “because very often they [students] know the literature and field they are talking about well but don’t have the language to do it. I have the language, but I don’t know the content” (Vidhura). Thus, the responses from participants combined with the scholarly literature suggest that the positionality of advisors vis-à-vis students is fluid and dependent on who is advising and who is being advised.
Additionally, although advisors seemed wary to ascribe the power of instructor to themselves with students in OSSC interactions and many suggested that issues of unequal power were not central to interactions in tutorials, advisors recognised the power dynamics at play in their positionality vis-à-vis faculty and the institution. Throughout the discussion with advisors, there was acknowledgment and acceptance that their roles were supportive but subordinate to faculty. Most of the discussions with advisors demonstrated that they respected the authority of faculty and were not desirous to challenge it, yet they expressed concern when faculty expectations exceeded the roles advisors felt comfortable taking on and created expectations from students for which advisors were neither properly compensated nor trained. Moreover, this concern on the part of advisors was magnified when they felt that they were neither appreciated as support providers, nor capable partners in “program” or curriculum work that went beyond remediation. Concern for the way advisors themselves were positioned institutionally came out in comments related to whether their work in the writing centre will be as beneficial as a Teaching Assistant position (Jessica), whether student services work will receive its due respect in the future (Stacey) or whether administrators at universities will be able to connect productively with faculty to stem faculty’s beliefs that administrators just “move papers around and get paid a salary” (Irina).

Finally, students viewed the OSSC as respected and well positioned because professors and instructors recommended the service and their interactions therein were positive making them willing to suggest it to their peers. Advisors, however, positioned the OSSC as a legitimate support because it was the only extra-classroom support available for students at OISE. Furthermore, while they suggested it had legitimacy, they also expressed concerns related to respect, which made them question if the OSSC was well positioned institutionally or simply a “no man’s land” that is “existing in isolation on a shoestring” (Nisha). Furthermore, the positioning of language work and multilingualism and remediation also colours the perceptions of the OSSC as when the prevailing institutional discourse around language is one of deficit, language work is also frequently also marginalised (Turner, 2011, p. 3). Indeed, as the literature suggests it is not uncommon that “the role of “language units” or “writing centres” is seen as a remedial “service,” peripheral rather than central, to the mainstream operation of the university” (Turner, 2011, p. 34).

Thus, while a number of congruencies between students and advisors emerged on the theme of positionality there were also tensions and ambiguities. Figure 24 provides is a depiction of
these findings related to the theme of positionality. The congruencies are depicted in green in the middle column while the tensions are depicted on the outside columns under the advisor and student headings in red and the ambiguity related to advisor positionality is represented in blue.

Figure 24. Positionality Findings: Advisors and Students

This section has provided an overview of how people and places are positioned in and around the OSSC. The next section delves into the perceived purpose of the OSSC, or the types of support provided therein and the descriptions of that support from the perspectives of the two participant groups.
Student Narrative: I felt like I learned “crap” before coming here...

When I first came here, for me there was not a lot of support, or any, in the class on transitions in understanding the academic environment here and the structures and expectations in terms of ways to do an academic paper from APA, to searching for resources, to what does an essay look like here? What are the expectations here? I am not necessarily talking about the syllabus the professors gives us, I mean the expectations are different from the expectations of the academic environment we came from, right? So I know what those are in Spanish, we write longer sentences and we are more descriptive. I mean it was like long, descriptive, captivating the reader and I kind of learned to write that way. So coming here it was like re-learning all these structures and all these new values on what is important and what the, I don’t know, “normative” style is for English. And that’s very contrasting and very opposite of what was valued in Spanish. So it was like, it was not only learning different content things, it was also a personal struggle knowing that I was good at academic writing before. And it’s the same thing, it’s academic writing. But it’s a whole new world to learn, so it was tough. So basically whatever you write in two pages in Spanish, you would write it in one paragraph in English. So people who don’t understand the changes I’m working through say I don’t understand English. It’s okay that I don’t follow. I will understand English eventually. But it’s not just the English, it’s a re-learning thing. What I, and others like me, have to understand is the discourse and that it’s managing the English language and general writing, right?

Really, to me it’s very graphic. Here if you want to give something to someone, it happens sometimes in formal settings like this: [the student picks up the Kleenex box between us] “Can you pass me this? [the student throws the box on the table in front of me]. While, in my country, this, it is so disrespectful... [the student picks up two pens] “You need these? [Threw pens across the table at me carelessly]. Writing in short sentences in Spanish, it is in my sense, it is an insult to intelligence. Insulting the reader, saying you’re not allowed or

Advisor Narrative: Clarity in context

For me whether the student is multilingual or a native English speaker what we do is give them clarity. We need to explain something in a way that they can understand and relate to, in a way a faculty member could not or would not think to do either one-on-one or in a group environment. The real problem is often lack of context. I think a lack of the larger picture of like writing and assessment and evaluation and expectations. I think we are so used to telling... we are so used to hearing from faculty that expectations are in the syllabus and the syllabus is a contract. I never assumed a syllabus should be understood like this from my previous [international] educational background, so I don’t understand, that’s a very, in my opinion, is a “hands off” approach—if it’s not in the syllabus, it’s not in, and if it’s in the syllabus, it’s in. But that’s not everyone’s experience and expectation, and the syllabus... it’s overwhelming. I mean it’s overwhelming when you’re not used to getting a syllabus and you get a 20 page document, what do you mean about readings and when do I need to get readings completed by and what is this? There is a hidden curriculum here, like its hidden, you’re supposed to know this stuff, like multilingual students are supposed to just know it and we refer to that as common sense, like you should know this, well no, they shouldn’t because that’s not their experience, that’s not their narrative...It’s reductive to say “What do you mean you don’t know how to write a reflective paper?”

I think for me not only having used the OSSC as a student but working in the OSSC and then simultaneously teaching, has informed how I approach the idea of academic writing. So in my classes now I intentionally have a writing process structured into term papers that teaches students how to write because I don’t believe they always know how to write nor do we always explain what we want. If we are expecting them to adhere to our
you’re not able to read this long sentence— it’s throwing the thoughts at the reader. It’s also doing what one advisor in the OSSC told me—a “spoiler alert” from the beginning; you’re going to tell the reader everything you will do at the beginning. So “read this and these three aspects, and finally you’ll learn that part.” And, yeah so what’s the purpose of reading the paper? I already “spoiled” it for the reader. So, I will know all the final conclusions. And this is, I still don’t understand that. Where is the passion, the creativity, the capturing the interest to read something through. It’s just form-fill here. It’s hard to me. And one time, someone told me; “You know, you wanted to come here. These are the rules here.”

So you know when I meet advisors are they challenging this? No, actually it’s perpetrating it because, I mean that’s how it is, right? There is English academic writing and this is how you do it, and they’re helping you here to do it this way. Because if you don’t do it this way, what is the purpose of you being here at OISE in a Western academic place? Right, so it is perpetrating it in a good sense, in the sense that I am helping you to do this because if you don’t do it like this—you say “okay, write it the way you do in Spanish with longer sentences”—what’s going to happen is you go back with your writing to the professor or to a journal, then you’re going to fail! The OSSC doesn’t want you to fail in this new field that you are doing so they are going to help you through perpetrating this. But I know that I have found this very difficult. It’s not English so much as how to put those words into the academic paper. You know when I first got here I felt like I only learned crap before coming here. I’m sorry for the word. But it took time for me to understand that it’s not that I learned crap in the past, but that it’s new knowledge and a different way of presenting knowledge.

I’ve decided that it is accepting. You have to open your mind to be colonised. Colonised I mean in the way of writing that is very specific and it comes from a way of looking at the world. That’s the problem of the English, Anglo-Saxon point of view in understanding the work. Umberto Eco said once, “you are inhabited by your language.” I have learned that I have to take this [Spanish] language out and I let another language come in.

standards of assessment, which are based on writing, but then we don’t make our expectations clear it’s really a problem. It’s a different kind of writing that they will encounter in our program and we are doing them a disservice because we are not walking the walk and taking the talk, we expect them to become thoughtful educators when they get into classrooms and to be culturally responsive, but when we are preparing our own educators to get there we aren’t. So let’s put our money where our mouths are and actually figure out ways to do that.

Now, I don’t know if that’s fixed through orientation, I don’t know whether it’s like the discussions those of us in the OSSC have had about whether we do some focused workshops, orientation workshops targeted to certain demographics and populations so that folks are much more receptive or we can deal with the context and hidden curriculum thing early on. I don’t know, but I think the important aspect is to shed light on what the Centre does for students and the institution. Like how it’s useful for them, and I think for me it comes down to what I’m calling context, which is really finding ways to sit down with students and sketch out an understanding that “okay you’re at OISE and these are the expectations,” and because so many of them are unspoken, that is really, really important.

In the end for me if I can give students clarity and they walk away with some clarity of the work before them, of the task before them, and they contextualise that task within the context of their academic career or their goals, then to me that’s a victory, that’s a win. We may not get through the entire assignment, but if I can give them a road map, like this is what you need to do, and they can walk away with clarity of knowing what they need to do next, maybe they’ll continue to struggle a bit, but the conversation is started and it has become okay to ask—then for me that’s a real victory.
Categorising “Support” in the OSSC

While the previous section examined how participants positioned themselves and the OSSC, this section examines the way that multilingual students describe the types of support they seek from the OSSC as well as the types of support advisors suggest students most often require. I begin by providing a broad overview of the types of support both participants describe multilingual students access and then delve into more detail on what this support looks like to both participant groups and how they describe it in their own words. In developing an overview of how students and advisors describe the services that drew them to the OSSC or that they deliver in the OSSC, respectively, it became evident that what first brought the students to the OSSC often changed and adapted with subsequent OSSC visits. For advisors, however, the support provisions were often described as being “whatever the student needs” (Lesley), yet despite this, clear themes of what those needs were developed throughout the data collection.

In order to gain a broad understanding of how students came to access and use the OSSC, I asked the multilingual students to describe what made them decide to seek out support in the OSSC and if they were aware of any boundaries of support or types of support that were not provided in the centre. The responses to what drew students to the OSSC differ across participants, as do their understandings of what the OSSC does not do. Interestingly, some students reported coming in for support that other students reported is not offered in the OSSC. Table 14 provides an overview of multilingual student responses.
### Table 14. Multilingual Students’ Perceptions of Supports and Boundaries in the OSSC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Why did you seek out support at the OSSC?</th>
<th>Are there any types of support that you need that you cannot get at the OSSC?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marcela</td>
<td>To find out how English was written (guidelines, ways of writing)</td>
<td>Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi-yong</td>
<td>Grammar, terminology/vocabulary, sentence clarity</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alejandra</td>
<td>How to produce more understandable and “acceptable” academic writing</td>
<td>Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eun-ah</td>
<td>Grammar, prepositions, articles, editing, critical thinking</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriela</td>
<td>English is a second language help, required correction support to learn and develop</td>
<td>Grammar (it’s the last consideration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariana</td>
<td>Unsure of how or where to begin writing an academic paper, unfamiliar with structure and process</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navya</td>
<td>New to the Canadian education system and no experience writing academic papers</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanyu</td>
<td>Did not understand professor’s commentary on work that was submitted for review</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Unsure of how to write an academic paper</td>
<td>Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Grammar correction and “confirmation on content”</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In examining the responses outlined in Table 14, three key areas of support emerge from the multilingual students’ responses to what drew them to the OSSC. I employ the terms Lower Order Concerns (LOCs) and Higher Order Concerns (HOCs) for the first two categories adopting the typology employed by composition and rhetoric scholars, and as demonstrated in Chapter 2 often referred to in writing centre contexts (in the writing centre see for example: Capossela, 1998; Gillespie and Learner, 2008). In understanding the differentiation and hierarchy of these two levels of concerns, OWL Purdue (a website frequently provided as a resource to students in the OSSC) suggests, “not every element of your work should have equal priority.” It continues by stating,
The most important parts of your paper, often called "Higher Order Concerns (HOCs)," are the "big picture" elements such as thesis or focus, audience and purpose, organization, and development. After you have addressed these important elements, you can then turn your attention to the "Lower Order Concerns (LOCs)," such as sentence structure and grammar (OWL Purdue, 2016).

Thus, students who suggested they came for sentence-level, grammar or editing support can be characterised as seeking support on the LOCs. On the other hand, students who were looking for broader support on organisation, structure and themes can be characterised as seeking support for the HOCs. However, a third category is also needed for those students who suggested they were seeking support with culture (academic, institutional, and little “c” culture) as well as curriculum or expectations. Thus, in order to capture these identified needs I include a category called culture and curriculum.

The hierarchy between LOCs and HOCs is also evident in students’ responses related to what the OSSC does not do. Although half of the students responded that they did not feel that there was any type of support they required that was not available at the OSSC, the other half responded that those types of support that would fit into the LOCs category were not offered or were attended to last. Indeed, two students suggested that grammar support was either not available (Kim) or was the last consideration (Gabriela). Additionally, three students responded that line-by-line editing was not a service offered in the OSSC (Marcela, Alejandra, Ellen) and all of the students who took part in the focus group also bemoaned the fact that the OSSC would not provide editing support.

Examining the responses from advisors related to the types of support they feel are most commonly required for students in the OSSC is also consistent with the LOCs, HOCs and culture and curriculum categories identified in student responses. The conversations with advisor participants evolved around the needs of multilingual students, as they make up the bulk of OSSC users, and although neither the researcher nor the advisors wanted to generalise, thematic consistencies appeared across advisor participants related to the types of support advisors most frequently reported providing to multilingual students. Table 15 depicts the responses of advisors.
Table 15. Advisors’ Perceptions of Support and Boundaries in the OSSC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>In what ways do you think the OSSC supports multilingual students?</th>
<th>Is there any kind of support the OSSC does not offer?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nisha</td>
<td>“Context,” expectations</td>
<td>Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevor</td>
<td>“Clarity,” expectations, navigation, confidence</td>
<td>Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett</td>
<td>Language and personal support</td>
<td>Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidhura</td>
<td>“Functioning academically in another language”</td>
<td>Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesley</td>
<td>English language, writing, moral support</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Understanding the academic environment (applies to all students, not just multilingual students)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahareh</td>
<td>Academic writing expectations, sharing experiences</td>
<td>Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irina</td>
<td>Writing and academic support</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laleh</td>
<td>Academic writing, cultural support, personal support</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanfen</td>
<td>Academic writing, cultural support, personal support</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 15 demonstrates, advisors’ responses also include references to language support and general writing support, but more commonly point to the need for support with expectations as well as cultural and academic support in context. Additionally, a fourth category of personal or moral support emerged from the advisor responses, but these are discussed in more detail in the proceeding chapter.

Interestingly, while the OSSC website clearly outlines that editing is a service that is not provided in the OSSC, only half of the advisor participants responded that this was a type of support that was beyond the purview of the OSSC (Nisha, Trevor, Brett, Vidhura, Bahareh). Additionally, there was no mention of grammar support not being offered among the advisor participants.
This broad overview has situated the broader types of support sought and provided in the OSSC according to the responses of the multilingual student and advisor participants. However, the actualities of the types of support sought and offered demonstrate a number of nuances when discussed in greater detail. The next section thus examines the three support categories—LOCs, HOCs, and culture and curriculum depicted in Figure 25—in more detail drawing on insights from the focus groups, interviews and observation data.

**Lower Order Concerns (LOCs)**

Students were certainly more likely to report seeking out support for LOCs than advisors reported providing it. While the responses in Table 14 show that four out of ten, or 40% of students reported visiting the OSSC for support on correcting grammar, sentence level correction or proofreading, many of these same students also described receiving support that fit into the HOCs or culture and curriculum types of support discussed later. For the students who responded that it was grammar or sentence level support that first drew them to the OSSC, they also noted that the support they received and appreciated was that which explained the errors rather than simply fixed them. Indeed, one student noted that the advisor explained the grammar, the ways it works and provided helpful explanations on things like idioms, singular/plural agreements or even commas and dashes (Gabriela). For this student the explanations were essential as it “allowed [her] to learn,” understand, and continuously build her skills. For Gabriela English grammar was “something that takes practice and
someone to tell you, someone to help you along the way.” Another student echoed the importance of explanation at the grammatical and vocabulary level by responding that working with advisors helped her to identify proper word usage, identify common grammatical error patterns, and “understand my weaknesses and improve them” (Mi-yong).

Interestingly, for the other two students who reported seeking out support for LOCs initially, consistently using the OSSC altered the type of support they valued the most. For one student who suggested that editing, grammar and sentence level clarity drew her to the OSSC, it was the support on critical thinking and clarity that was the most helpful (Eun-ah). She said, “my professor really wanted critical thinking questions and the advisor was really helpful. [The advisor] challenged my questions so I could rewrite them in a better way” (Eun-ah). This student reported that she brought a culminating assignment in over a month long period and through the four appointments worked on developing a critical eye for her own work and was able to ask herself questions to clarify and improve her own writing by the end of the sessions.

Finally, the fourth student who suggested grammar support was what drew her to the OSSC quickly added that the OSSC does not provide this support, and that it turned out that this support was not valuable to her when compared with her desire for content support (Kim). Indeed, this student initially responded that it was “mainly to correct my grammar and then style, but I also wanted to get confirmed with the content aspect” when asked why she decided to come to the OSSC the first time (Kim). However, later in the interview, when asked if she had ever had an unsatisfying interaction in the OSSC the student described receiving support that was solely focused on correcting her grammar or style when she really wanted substantive feedback and to “talk to that person about my topic of interest and what I intended to write… and that’s what I really want to do when I walk in to gain support” (Kim). Interestingly, other students also replied that they had had unsuccessful sessions in the OSSC because the advisor focused on LOCs. One student described a session where the advisors “literally read through my paper and put in full stops and commas… she was correcting my little nit picky grammar stuff, which I didn’t really care about. I was there to get her opinion on whether she thought my paper makes sense” (Navya). Another student echoed this sentiment and felt frustrated when an advisor focused on grammar rather than content, as he knew the grammar but really wanted to ensure the content flowed and made sense (Julian). Thus across student participants only two interview participants primarily went to the OSSC
for support that fits into the category of LOCs, while other students reported valuing HOCs support more through successive sessions, and others still dislike when advisors focus solely on LOCs.

With advisors there were fewer discussions regarding the ways LOCs appear, or are supported in the OSSC. However, advisor participants did reference LOCs, or the lack of provision of some LOCs feedback, by stating that the OSSC is not an editing service and that often students who are new to the service need to be informed or reminded that “drop off” editing is not something advisors are willing or able to do (Nisha, Trevor, Lesley). Yet aside from not editing, advisors did refer to providing language support, which included the provision of sentence level or grammatical support. Additionally, most of the advisors noted that they simply provided whatever type of support students asked for, and discussing sentence level or grammar concerns naturally arose in the purview of OSSC appointments (Trevor, Brett, Vidhura, Lesley, Lanfen). Therefore, advisors responses demonstrated that LOCs were important and dealt with, and that patience and ongoing instruction on LOCs, even reoccurring ones, were as important as other features of the work. Irina described the needs based agenda in tutorials as follows,

> With the students just because they come with very specific things …I think we were just doing what they would ask for right? I notice the students sometimes they don’t necessarily want us to identify patterns and say “hey this is an issue you’ve got. You tend to miss the indefinite articles. Why don’t you go through the paper and identify all the places that you’ve done so.” So they tend to ask us to actually go through the entire paper and work together and find those mistakes or errors. They may not be ready to take the pattern and look at it at home and apply the changes. So I think in this case we work on it together within our sessions …but this was easier with 45-minute appointments compared to 35 this year.

Thus, the responses of advisors often did not distinguish between LOCs and HOCs but tended to focus on the whole paper, which naturally meant both HOCs and LOCs were addressed.

While none of the advisors reported not providing support with LOCs when students asked, they did note that when they provided sentence level support it was instructional and not just editing or “fixing,” and that active engagement, not passivity, was necessary from the student (Nisha, Vidhura, Lesley, Bahareh, Irina). However, the parameters of “not editing” were not necessarily clear to students and left some with the impression that sentence level instruction was not offered at all, or that students would be turned away if they sought language support. In fact, a student interview participant found the assertion that the OSSC does not edit to be
“disappointing” and likely to turn some international students away (Kim) and the students in the focus group felt that it was problematic for the OSSC to delineate certain support (primarily editing) as unavailable, as such parameters “are probably not the best approach to use when someone is coming for help” (Julian). Therefore, even though none of the advisors said they believed in privileging HOCs over LOCs, some students felt that asking for support with LOCs was beyond the purview of the OSSC because of the assertion on the OSSC website that the centre does not edit. In fact, some students believed that because the OSSC did not edit, that meant grammar and sentence level support was also an area of support not available in the OSSC. Whereas advisors felt comfortable providing this support if it was instructional, and the student was engaged in the process. A more in-depth discussion on editing and how students and advisor negotiate expectations within tutorial interactions is undertaken in the proceeding chapter.

Finally, there was some congruency between advisors and students that support for LOCs is often the starting point for students in the OSSC, but this support often progresses into support for HOCs or cultural or curricular support with repeat visits to the OSSC. In fact, advisors who spoke about working with students on LOCs suggested that this occurred in initial OSSC visits but when comfort levels both between the student and advisor as well as the students’ skills improved, other concerns such as HOCs or culture and curriculum became more pressing. One advisor noted that sessions that began with sentence level features move to organisation and writing within the bounds of the academic culture as a natural progression as the mechanics of writing improves and students feel more comfortable with writing in English. Vidhura suggested, for multilingual students often the number one concern is language, which includes

sentence level, verb tenses, sentence structure you know very basic sentence level. Then, once they work on that they need help with organising because North American academic writing culture may be very different than the culture that they’re coming from…so it’s a natural progression from sentence level to understanding the expectations of this whole academic environment.

While Vidhura suggested that the progression was from LOCs to academic culture, other advisors and multilingual students noted that sessions oscillated between LOCS, HOCs and culture and curriculum depending on both the student and advisor. As one student suggested the focus in sessions depends on “how bad the paper is written” and that it was necessary to look at the singular/plurals, synonyms, grammatical mistakes to make sure that students
“won’t make basic mistakes that are awful to have in an academic paper” first (Marcela). However, Marcela continued that once the foundational grammar and sentence level work was complete or students have “reach[ed] the level of improvement [with grammar]…it’s really about the context so when you want to talk about what the content is, what are the weaknesses of your paper or the strengths, and it’s great to get to that expert level with the tutor.” Finally, another advisor described a focus on LOCs as not being the best use of time within the short time allotted to appointments in the OSSC. He said,

we can spend all day on grammar …we could address grammar, punctuation, etcetera, but it’s something that’s an extremely slow learning curve and there are many features that really are not going to be improved in the time students have here so addressing that in appointments and sort of focusing on that is not the most helpful thing (Trevor).

The advisor went on to suggest that lack of clarity was a common issue among students who visit the OSSC. For this advisor surface level features may impact clarity, but lack of clarity often came from misunderstandings related to genre, expectations, and organisation and providing support on these may prove more useful in the purview of an OSSC appointment (Trevor). Another advisor echoed the sentiment that focusing on LOCs often was not productive and suggested that she supported students with reoccurring concerns, but often referred the student to other resources for grammar support as it was not helpful to spend a session “teaching them how to use definite and indefinite articles,” for example (Irina). Thus, these sentiments echo those of students cited above who come to value support for HOCs over LOCs within the purview of the OSSC sessions.

The observation data also demonstrates that support for LOCs appeared in most, but not all, of the sessions observed both in person and online. Indeed, congruent with the data from the focus groups and interviews, LOCs were dealt with throughout the session as they arose; however, none of the tutorials focused solely on LOCs. For example, during one session the student and advisor are working through a critical reflection paper and the advisor notes the student’s overuse of a particular word. The student and advisor look up synonyms in a thesaurus and the advisor explains why one word works better than the others and notes that using a thesaurus should be done in conjunction with a dictionary to ensure consistency in meaning (Observation 2). In another session a student the advisor and student engage in a conversation about the words passion and obsession. While the advisor notes that both words are grammatically correct in the sentence, the meaning of the two words is quite different.
Following the discussion the student decides that passion a more appropriate term to express the meaning she intends (Observation 6).

In another session, a student comes in and suggests that she has come for support with grammar, but it is clear within five minutes of the appointment beginning the student is more concerned with the genre of a literature review than the grammar and mechanics of what she has written. Throughout this session little to no conversation takes place around LOCs or grammar and mechanics. In fact, aside from the advisor noting that the student frequently leaves out “to” in her writing, which the student is apologetic about and the advisor simply states “Don’t worry, we all have patterns and it’s good to know what they are,” LOCs do not feature prominently in the interaction. Indeed, for the rest of the session the advisor simply pauses where a “to” should be and the student writes in a “to” before they continue (Observation 4 & 5). In another session, the student suggests she needs help with grammar and flow, but most of the interaction is focused on whether her assignment meets the criteria outlined by the professor. However, throughout the interaction the advisor notes that the student has missing articles. The student affirms that she still struggles with articles and the advisor responds that English articles are “weird” and he “gives them away for free.” Throughout the session the advisor notes places where articles are used incorrectly and explains why or how to use them differently but emphasises that the student need not feel bad about articles (Observation 7).

While these observations arose from in person interactions, the online observations also show attention to LOCs. Indeed, the online sessions show the most attention to LOCs, although the attention to LOCs did not exclude other types of feedback. In the online observations different advisors took different approaches to LOCs with some merely noting grammatical errors “missing article here” (Observation 21), and others corrected and briefly explained grammatical suggestions, “this is past tense so “is” should be “was” in this sentence” (Observation 25). Thus, while nearly half of the in person sessions (and presumably many of the online sessions) followed a format where the advisor read the student’s writing line-by-line, LOCs were certainly not the focus but were simply addressed as they came up interspersed with other feedback relating to HOCs or context and curriculum (or expectations).
Higher Order Concerns (HOCs)

There was a high degree of consistency within and across the advisor and student participant groups related to HOCs. Indeed, two clear areas of support within the category of HOCs emerged from both participant groups. The first was that multilingual students often required or asked for support with the structure and organisation of their academic writing, which was confirmed by advisor responses. The second main area of support was related to content or idea feedback, as mentioned in the students’ words above related to LOCs. For many students the desire for content or idea feedback often demonstrated that students were seeking validation that what they had written was acceptable and “made sense.”

Students often reported seeking support on organisation and structure. Some students were daunted by the length of papers and struggled to understand the content and structure of the longer documents assigned by faculty (Navya). Other students did not reference length but lack of awareness of how things should be structured, and what information should be placed in which sections of the paper (Mariana). For one student writing a thesis, the support she received in the OSSC helped her to understand the content that should be included in each chapter. This student described how an advisor went through each of the key chapters of her thesis and explained how different chapters should discuss different aspects of the work: theory, methods, findings and the types of information these discussions should include (Yanyu). For Yanyu the advisor’s support was essential, as although her program had provided some exemplars of theses, she was not sure how to translate her content into the structure and found having a conversation that provided clear explanations transformative in her understanding of the structure of a thesis. Another student noted that the advisors in the OSSC were successful in helping her to organise her ideas and develop transitions between them to improve the flow of her papers (Ellen). Finally, several students reported attending the OSSC just to talk out ideas, brainstorm and develop an outline to move forward with their writing.

Advisors often also reported providing “roadmaps” to students to help them to organise and structure their writing for thoughtful and coherent flow (Brett). For some advisors these “roadmaps” included an overview of key things students should include in research papers. One advisor’s explanation of this process was reflective of the student’s description above as she described a series of sessions with a student where she worked through a draft section by section explaining how a research paper often moves from an introduction to a literature
review, methodology, results and conclusions and the content that fit within each section (Laleh). Similarly, Vidhura mentioned that often her feedback helped students to understand “where things should be.” Vidhura described helping students to identify the sections of an essay (introduction, thesis, methods) that they had already written and providing support in reorganising content that was out of place, while ensuring elements such as thesis statements were clear and placed early in the paper. Other advisors referred to providing students with support on the ways diverse types of writing are structured from proposals to theses and literature reviews (Lesley).

For many of the advisors outlining support was also a key request from students and something they reported providing frequently, which was accomplished by asking questions to fully understand what the student was trying to say. Once advisors were able to understand the arguments and ideas that the students were using to support their main ideas they then supported the student to generate an outline that connected and transitioned ideas (Bahareh). In providing support with thinking through and organising ideas, one advisor talked about writing notes with the student where both parties drew arrows between ideas on scrap paper or co-developed a mind map to help the student to develop a clear plan how to approach the actual writing task (Irina).

For both students and advisors discussions on structure and organisation were also intrinsically related to ideas—how they fit together, how the argument flowed and whether the “right stuff” was in the paper. Such discussions led to content feedback and support that focused on whether the paper “makes sense” (Kim) or if the content and ideas were “coherent or not” (Navya). For one student going to the OSSC to brainstorm with an advisor and being able to leave the appointment with an outline was a key benefit of visiting the OSSC (Paola). For another student, discussing organisation and threading ideas together was essential in making good ideas “flow,” and the OSSC was a useful space to work through this aspect of her writing. This student, Alejandra, said,

I know there are people whose writing is full of great ideas. But they don’t have a thread to put all of these beans together. Sometimes they are very good beans. What they need is the thread to string them together. Sometimes a writing tutor can really help in doing that.
The data revealed that for both the advisor and student participants, discussions in the OSSC around ideas or content were often cited as the most successful, enjoyable, and productive interactions therein.

Indeed, one advisor talked about how “thrashing out ideas” and then mapping those ideas out with a student was “one of the most amazing things I’ve been able to do [in the OSSC]” (Nisha). Another advisor described an interaction in the OSSC wherein a student brought in “a napkin with scribbles on it” and the advisor and student spent the session transferring the ideas on the napkin to a piece of paper wherein connections were made (Brett). Another advisor described a particularly successful appointment as one where the student brought in a grant application and through discussion with him was able to engage with and “flesh out” her own ideas more (Trevor). For Trevor the fact that the student left with “a clearer idea of how she wanted to go about doing her research” from their discussion was far more beneficial in the long run than whether or not the student received the grant.

While advisors clearly enjoyed the process of working through content and ideas, students responded that working through content or ideas in the OSSC was tremendously valuable for the validation and motivation it gave them. For many students the OSSC was a useful place to “try out” ideas and get feedback on whether the ideas are “proper” (Marcela) before handing a piece of writing into a professor for assessment (Mi-yong, Alejandra, Eun-ah, Kim). One student described advisors as “fortune tellers” who in an academic sense would provide the student with feedback on the “future of the paper…whether they see a very good paper in my future or whether it still needs miles of work, because I don’t know” (Alejandra). Similarly, another student described how the OSSC helped her to assess whether her paper met “a certain standard, the standard of a quality paper with good structure and a valid argument that is well supported” (Navya).

Another student spoke directly to how working with advisors in the OSSC “validated” her as the advisor took the time to thoughtfully read the paper, engage with the ideas and provide positive feedback (Kim). For Kim the advisor’s positive feedback acknowledged the work and effort she had expended on the paper, which was a “super positive experience” that made her feel good about herself. Another student reported that the way an advisor engaged with her ideas reminded her of why she was passionate about her topic, and helped motivate her to keep moving her writing forward despite the challenges she faced in putting her ideas into words in her writing (Gabriela). Advisors also mentioned the validation or “sounding board”
The observation data also reflects the value students and advisor place on HOCs and demonstrates how these are discussed within the purview of the OSSC. Sessions that focused around HOCs were thus common in the in-person observation data. In one session a student comes in with a half-written paper and expresses concern that the paper is not complete as she is “stuck.” The advisor and the student then spend the duration of the session working through ideas, connecting those ideas and discussing what is to come in the second half of the paper. At the end of the session the advisor hands a piece of paper to the student with the main themes written out with arrows connecting topics and ideas that she has prepared while the student speaks. She calls it a “roadmap” and the student responds by saying she is grateful to have “a guide” to help her move forward (Observation 16). The bulk of this session has revolved around ideas and discussion and no conversation around LOCs took place.

In another session a student comes in with a critical review and asks for help understanding what headings and subheadings are and their purpose. The advisor asks the student to describe the main ideas of the paper. As he does so she makes notes on a piece of paper and when the student has finished explaining her ideas the advisor hands him an outline based on what he has said, and they talk through it to see if the main ideas she identified from his description would be viable headings. The advisor describes headings and subheadings as “goal posts, they help to direct the reader through the paper and signal main ideas.” The student and advisor talk through the outline and decide some ideas the advisor wrote down are not key headings and others need to be added. Once the student has refined the outline he asks if it makes sense and bounces ideas for the guiding questions off the advisor. This session has also largely centred around ideas and organisation (Observation 8).

In another online session an advisor provides feedback on organisation suggests moving some content around to allow for the argument to “build” and the advisor provides an outline at the end of the paper to depict the re-organised format (Observation 20). Similarly, in another online session the advisor makes comments related to word choice but the bulk of the commentary points where the student could “expand” on ideas (and comment boxes throughout ask guiding questions for the student to do so) and suggests a way to “reorganise” the students’ writing. The advisors’ overall commentary (a sum up of the comments in boxes throughout the paper) is depicted in Figure 26.
In another online session the advisor affirms the value of the student’s ideas but suggests that one paragraph “deals with too many key themes” and encourages the student to “unpack” the ideas and create three separate paragraphs to deal with them. The advisor also writes a number of questions that engage with the ideas in the margins to guide the student in “unpacking” (Observation 25). Several other sessions, including those online, also include comments related to content, ideas and organisation and provide commentary that engages with and validates students’ writing.

Thus, Higher Order Concerns (HOCs) including content and structure and Lower Order Concerns (LOCs), including grammar and sentence level features, were important features of tutorial interactions in the OSSC. However, the data demonstrated that the success of these types of support was necessarily mitigated by how students understood the culture and (hidden) curriculum of the academic environment. Indeed as one advisor stated, providing guidance on how to structure a critical review, where to put a thesis statement and how to integrate citations was only helpful for students if the student understood what was expected from a critical review, what a thesis statement entailed and the way citations function in academic writing (Vidhura). Thus, the next section unpacks the category of culture and curriculum and the important role in plays in interactions in the OSSC.

“culture” and the (hidden) curriculum

The final category of support that emerged from the interviews and focus groups with both students and advisors was related to support with “culture,” both academic and contextual,
and support with the hidden curriculum or expectations in context that are often implied but not explicit. Throughout the data the lines between cultural and curricular support are often blurred, and thus this section examines the ways that students and advisors describe support with expectations, which includes the expectations of the academic environment, disciplinary conventions and professors’ expectations.

Nearly all of the student participants spoke about how the OSSC was a place that supported them in writing academically in English. The understanding that writing academically may be different in an English environment was especially well understood among the graduate student participants. Indeed, when asked what was particularly useful support in the OSSC, one student responded that it was because she spoke another language and “knew that [as a Spanish speaker] we have different ways of writing than in English” she continued to explain how she has learned that English academic writing differs from Spanish and “to do a proper job in the university, you kind of need to understand what is expected from you” (Marcela). Another student suggested that the OSSC was a place she went to make her writing fit “academically into the pattern” of English writing conventions (Alejandra). For this student, the English academic conventions were contrary to writing conventions in her own language, which permitted more poetic, emergent writing. She suggested that the OSSC was “very helpful in the way of explaining to me how to write within the conventions here” as she learned how to “watch [her] voice” and that “all of [her] poetry was not very suitable for these kinds of papers,” nor were certain types of imagery or metaphors appropriate within academic discourse (Alejandra). Similarly, other students referred to the importance of improving not only their English, but also learning “the language inside academia” (Gabriela) or understanding the academic conventions (Yanyu) as reasons the OSSC was a valuable resource for them.

Thus, for many of the students learning what was expected of them when producing academic writing in English was important, and this learning required explicit instruction. Indeed, participants in the focus group discussed the need for concision, the requirement to clearly state the intentions of the paper upfront, the need for transitions, and consistent use of “signposts” to guide the reader throughout the piece of writing. Similarly, the interviews demonstrated that students found the OSSC a valuable space to learn about “ordering your thoughts in a tidy manner” (Marcela), using APA citations (Navya, Ellen), and adapting language to that of an academic voice (Alejandra, Eun-ah). While most of the students
described struggling to understand the academic writing conventions as being related to writing in English, some also struggled with academic writing as mature students who had been away from educational environments for some time (Yanyu, Ellen). Others still came from a science background wherein writing was not the main form of assessment (Navya, Ellen).

For most of the students these conventions were simply something to be learned, but as the opening narrative that was adapted from the student focus group demonstrates, these conventions did challenge students’ identities and prior learning experiences. While discussing the need to adapt their writing to English writing conventions, most of the student focus group participants felt that learning these conventions was helpful and necessary for success. However, the process of learning the conventions made students question their prior knowledge and the value of the writing traditions they had learned in different languages and different academic contexts (Paola, Alejandra, Julian, Myriam). It was this thread of discussion that led the students to discuss the idea of willingly being “colonised” by the structure of English academic writing. While most students accepted doing so was part of working in a North American institution, one student felt that the “form fill” way of writing in English took away some of the creativity and passion that should characterise writing (Alejandra). Yet despite this student’s concerns, all of the students ultimately agreed that they needed to adopt these conventions without complaint to “legitimate [their] knowledge” (Julian) as English “is the language of knowledge construction” (Alejandra). Thus, the multilingual student participants valued the OSSC as a place that laid bare the expectations of clarity, brevity and purpose that were identified as characteristic of academic writing in English.

Similar to the student responses on the conventions of academic writing, the advisors also suggested that the OSSC was a place wherein the “implicit was made explicit” (Trevor) or the aspects of the “hidden curriculum” were revealed (Nisha). Certainly for advisors this included what it meant to write “academically” (Brett, Lesley), as well as helping students to understand the genre of writing they were being asked to undertake (Nisha, Trevor, Irina). However, for advisors writing support often came down to helping students understand the expectations—including those of the genre of writing, the degree program and especially the professor. Vidhura described how students needed to understand “academic culture and the academic expectations of a discipline” through the following examples,
When you have to write a 15-page term paper you don’t deal with a global issue. You talk about something very tiny. I mean doing a literature review requires knowing how to narrow things down. Writing in general is also about being very specific about certain things. That’s part of North American writing as well. You need to be very specific about what you’re saying and you need to be upfront. You need to say what you’re talking about early, readers shouldn’t have to read five-six pages to get to the main point.

Another advisor noted how students sometimes needed guidance in understanding the parameters of their program, how much reading they should do, whether their work was up to par and who to ask for help (Lesley). Many advisors noted providing support with understanding specific genres or writing whether it be reflective writing or research papers (Nisha, Trevor, Brett, Bahareh, Irina). Moreover, many of the advisors described being touchstones for students on questions they were simply too afraid or unable to ask anyone else (Trevor, Jessica). Thus, because “OSSC advisors are sort of well versed in how to do things around OISE” the types of support advisors offer went beyond writing support to include “how to navigate course work, interactions with others, as well as writing of different sorts. It’s sort of a safe space for them to ask questions and answers that they’re uncomfortable asking either their peers or their professors in class” (Trevor). Another advisor echoed the general adaptation support theme by noting how sometimes sessions in the OSSC simply revolved around helping students “adapt to OISE” and the expectations therein (Brett).

Therefore, among advisors a clear theme of providing support in understanding expectations emerged, and this was particularly true when it came to faculty expectations. Indeed, nearly all of the advisors who took part in the interviews emphasised the importance of providing support to students in understanding what professors wanted. For some this support was simply reading through assignments to decipher what the professor’s requirements were (Brett, Lesley, Bahareh). For others it also included helping students to unpack the information and requirements on a syllabus (Nisha, Brett), while for others still students required support in understanding interactions with faculty. Indeed, one advisor described providing support to a student who had received an email from an instructor in response to a question about an assignment and the student needed help deciphering the response. While the message from the instructor was short, it had not really addressed the student’s question leaving the student to “extrapolate a little bit… and doing that in multiple languages was challenging and a little bit scary [for the student]” (Lesley). For this advisor working with the student to try to understand what the professor was suggesting as well as encouraging the student to seek out more information became the focus of the session in the OSSC.
In a similar manner, several advisors noted providing support to students to understand faculty feedback or help the student to understand areas for improvement following a faculty referral to the OSSC. Indeed, three advisors described situations where students came in with feedback from an instructor on a paper that suggested the instructors could not understand the writing and the advisors needed to work with the student to “address what’s causing the lack of clarity” (Trevor). Working through clarity issues with students was described as a challenging task as students often came into the OSSC assuming the lack of clarity was due to surface level errors “because that is what most professors would probably point to,” yet as Trevor suggested “in reality the lack of clarity was more complex than surface level features.” Thus, in some instances advisors had to both unpack what “unclear” meant while also undoing misconceptions related to the reasons students’ writing was deemed difficult to understand (Brett). Brett described working through professor feedback that suggests writing is “unclear” in the following way,

So a lot of times multilingual students are coming to me with papers where professors have highlighted or underlined sentences and they just write “unclear,” but students don’t know what unclear means. Unclear is a very hefty idea to start unpacking because things can be unclear for a number of reasons. So sometimes it’s just one word that is part of a common phrase in English but it doesn’t really match the meaning of the sentence. And other times it’s their sentence structure, they basically pack three different ideas into one sentence. The first part might be coherent, but the rest is not. So I would say that’s what I see most often is these unclear sentences and we have to unpack what that means. Sometimes it’s knowing what common phrases that they’ve learned in English language classes really mean and whether they are applicable to writing academically. Sometimes those kinds of cliché phrases don’t translate to academic writing. So it’s taking their papers that have “unclear” written all over them and supporting students with the seemingly overwhelming task of figuring out what that means.

Thus, while students referenced expectations in regards to simply meeting them with content and ideas within the purview of HOCs, advisors often understood expectations as multifaceted and related to implied or hidden aspects of the curriculum and academic culture with which students were unfamiliar.

The observation data also supports the focus group and interview data related to the OSSC as a support for culture and curriculum; however, the findings here demonstrate some tensions exist with the in person and online modalities. The in person observations showed a high incidence of support on curriculum and academic culture. Indeed as mentioned above, one student expressly came to the OSSC for “grammar” but then opened the discussion in the
session by asking the advisor what “a gap in the literature means.” In this session the student and advisor worked through the assignment description, which referenced identifying “gaps in the literature” and the advisor spent several minutes describing how “the gap” is “the holes in the research, things that are not explained by existing data or areas where certain pieces of research contradict or allow you to poke holes in the arguments of other pieces of research” (Observation 4 & 5). Similarly, in another observation the student also begins the session by asking for support on “grammar,” but as the session moves past the first few minutes the student also asks about the genre of a literature review and asks if it is appropriate for her to include her own opinions therein. The advisor responds with an interesting analogy, he says,

Imagine you invite a bunch of experts to a tea party, you are the host. You have to facilitate the discussion. You keep the people talking, compare their ideas and note areas where they agree with one another. However, you’re a host that likes conversation so you also note where they disagree and you add your own voice to help everyone figure out what was said at the end of the conversation (Observation 13).

Other in-person sessions demonstrated congruency in the prevalence of cultural or curricular support. One student brought in professor’s feedback for deciphering, and the advisor noted the positive nature of the comments and helped the student to integrate the professor’s comments on the proposal into an outline for the final paper (Observation 1). In another session, the advisor unpacks what a theoretical lens or conceptual framework entails (Observation 3). While other sessions help students to develop a critical voice (Observation 2, Observation 7, Observation 15), or encourage students to use their own voice in reflections (Observation 14, Observation 11). Additionally, most of the sessions include a review of the assignment parameters and a discussion around how students can meet those parameters. These discussions often refer to diverse genres of writing, and one session included a great deal of discussion and deciphering of a “memo” assignment that was a genre unfamiliar to both interlocutors, and the assignment sheet was unclear to both student and advisor (Observation 6). The advisor helped the student to identify a set of questions to ask the professor for clarity and encouraged her to approach faculty when confusion arises in the future (Observation 6).

Thus, while the in person observations demonstrated that support with academic culture and curriculum was indeed a key activity in face-to-face appointments, the observations of the online appointments show that cultural and curricular commentary occurs less often. Indeed,
aside from a few references to voice and audience (Observation 20, Observation 24) or the genre of the writing and the related expectations (Observation 22, Observation 25), the discourse in online appointments focused more heavily on HOCs and LOCs. Indeed, the online appointments showed the highest level of attention to LOCs, yet marginal comments, questions, and organisational notes also showed significant attention to HOCs.

This section has demonstrated that the OSSC certainly engages with the curriculum and is a place where students can go to ask questions to illuminate some of the implied or hidden aspects of the academic environment and curriculum. While students appreciated the support they received on writing in academic English, advisors often focused on the importance of providing students with clear information on expectations, especially those of professors. While the observation data broadly supports the role the OSSC plays in illuminating cultural and curricular norms, the online data provides some nuance as these issues arise less within the observations from the online modalities.

Summary and Discussion: Correction, conventions, culture and curriculum

This section has illuminated a number of congruencies between student and advisor participants related to the types of support students seek in the OSSC. The data demonstrates that students and advisors report that multilingual students visit the OSSC for support with LOCs, HOCs and the cultural and curricular expectations of the educational environment. However, the data also suggests that these types of support are not weighted as being of equal importance, and that multilingual students often require and value support that goes beyond simple sentence-level and language support.

While students and advisors both discussed how support for Lower Order Concerns (LOCs) was certainly part of the work in the OSSC, their discourse on LOCs differed somewhat. For students LOCs were more likely to be reason they felt the need to seek out support in the OSSC in the first place, and for some of those students the instructional grammar and sentence level support they received in the OSSC was a valued part of their language learning and development (Mi-yong, Gabriela). However, sentence level grammatical support, “editing” and language support certainly were not the only types of support students sought out in the OSSC, which is congruent with other writing centre scholarship on multilingual students (see for example, Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002; Phillips, 2013; Thonus, 2014). While
other students did report visiting the OSSC for grammar support, they came to the conclusion that the OSSC was “not the best place” for sentence level feedback (Kim). For these students the OSSC became a helpful place to work through ideas or learn to negotiate academic writing conventions with which they are unfamiliar. Thus, the findings from the multilingual student writers in this study are reflective of other studies on L2 writers that suggest that “linguistic accuracy may not be a priority for all L2 writers” but that is fundamental for others and thus deserving of attention and consideration (Hartshorn & Evans, 2012, p. 219).

Advisors too reported supporting students with LOCs, yet the discussions with advisors tended to talk about how LOCs were simply a part of a larger support agenda that included understanding the conventions and expectations of the academic environment, and thus LOCs were rarely the sole focus of the tutorial. While it is possible advisors may have been wary to talk about providing support for LOCs given the ubiquity of tutor handbooks that suggest HOCs must be prioritised over LOCs (see for example: Bell & Elledge, 2008; Caposela, 1998; Gillespie & Learner, 2008), none of the advisors referred to feeling tensions related to training or writing centre philosophy in supporting LOCs. Moreover, advisors never spoke about having an agenda in their sessions wherein they expressed intentionality in “interweaving global and local concerns [to ensure] clients feel that their agendas are being met at the tutor can still bring up larger issues…” (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002, p.41), rather advisors simply worked to provide whatever support the student asked for and required for success. Indeed, none of the advisors suggested they used the lingering tactic of Socratic questioning or non-directive feedback ensconced in the writing centre lore by Brooks (1991) when providing support with LOCs. Rather, most advisors demonstrated awareness that students may not be ready to identify their grammatical error problems on their own (Trevor, Irina, Observation 7). Thus, the advisor data suggested that some attention need to be given to sentence-level errors and that non-directive questioning on such errors is frequently unhelpful for students (Allen, 2009), and becomes an act of withholding important information that students require (Boquet, 2002). Furthermore, the responses of most of the advisors and some of the students note that a high incidence of LOCs can impact the clarity of the writing through interfering with ideas and meaning. As such, LOCs may be a priority in some cases (Trevor, Lesley, Irina, Marcela), which is supported by research that suggests that in some cases LOCs interfere with content and thus require attention before HOCs (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002; Robinson, 2009). These findings are consistent with “new” writing centre
theory which challenges the non-directive, HOCs over LOCs model popularised in early writing centre theory. Indeed, more contemporary approaches understand that global and local concerns can be addressed concurrently and that in some cases it is necessary and productive to work through LOCs before HOCs (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002, p.42).

Additionally, some advisors suggested that the frequency with which students visited the OSSC for support with sentence-level concerns was often the result of faculty referrals for such support or due to lack of clarity on feedback that left students assuming it was LOCs that were impacting their grades on writing. While advisors often suggested that it was not LOCs that caused the greatest problems for students’ writing, advisor participants mentioned faculty frequently refer multilingual students to the OSSC for sentence level support. Thus, there is evidence that understandings of writing centres as simply “grammar garages” (Waldo, 1993, p.415) or “fix it shops” (North, 1984, p. 438) endure, and this may be particularly true among faculty where referrals to the writing centre are done to have sentence level errors “fixed” (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002, North, 194, Boquet, 2002). Moreover, such referrals also point to the endurance of deficit models of language use and multilingualism that position spaces such as writing or skills centres as remediation shops that teach “generic writing skills” whilst faculty are content experts who are in place to “teach the subject” (Barkas, 2011, p. 280).

Despite the writing and content divide, both student and advisor participants noted receiving and providing support for HOCs including organisation, ideas and content in general. Furthermore, both participant groups found this support to be more productive and beneficial than the sentence-level LOCs support, even if challenges with LOCs were what drew them to the OSSC. Indeed, research also shows that multilingual students often find their way to the writing centre in seek of support with LOCs, yet they often end up seeking and receiving support with HOCs as the interaction progresses (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002; Vallejo, 2004). The beneficial nature of working on HOCs may point to the fact that faculty have indeed embraced the notion that “a particularly creative thought and perceptive absorption of the course material” may take precedent over “some language errors in…assessment,” which leaves students keen to validate content over form (Freedman, 2012, p.4). However, the tendency of students and advisors to respectively value and provide content and idea feedback in the OSSC may also be due to the unique nature of the OSSC being positioned in a faculty of education wherein the advisors are able and willing to provide useful disciplinary-specific feedback (Phillips, 2013, p. 2). In fact, just as Phillips (2013) and Wang (2012) found that
multilingual graduate student writers preferred tutors who possessed disciplinary-specific knowledge, students in this study thought the “expert” (Marcela) advisors were those who provided content feedback. Moreover, students tended to report returning to advisors who worked with HOCs, while unsuccessful experiences were those that focussed on LOCs (Navya, Kim).

Thus, students and advisors alike valued discussion on ideas and content. However, as mentioned in the previous section, some advisors felt overwhelmed with the amount of feedback they had to provide students in cases where faculty provided little or no feedback on written work. For the most part, however, advisors described working through ideas, brainstorming, and outlining as enjoyable and productive in the OSSC. Students’ responses suggested they too found OSSC discussions on HOCs more useful than LOCs, and for students these discussions often made them feel validated and more confident in their writing. It is important to note that the appreciation or HOCs feedback on the part of students may also be particularly acute in instances were a professor has provided scant or non-existent feedback to students, as arose in two observations and several interview responses.

The final category of support that emerged from the data spoke to the importance of the OSSC in providing support with culture and curriculum. Advisors frequently spoke of expectations and the need to help students to understand the parameters of assignments and the expectations of faculty. Indeed for several of the advisors, the need for students to understand faculty expectations was one of the most important roles the OSSC played in providing support that supported students’ successes in the academic environment. For advisors, then, it was important to help students understand what their audience (faculty) “will expect, need and find convincing,” a role Judith Powers (1993) suggests the writing centre can take on when those in the writing centre view themselves as “cultural informants about American academic expectations” (p. 41).

For advisors, this role of informing students on expectations in many ways go to the heart of the “hidden curriculum” (Nisha) in higher education and academic writing. Advisors frequently reported illuminating the “common sense” features of academic writing that are often neither visible, nor taught by faculty or instructors in the classroom. The invisibility of these conventions to those students who visited the OSSC is certainly not exclusive to the OISE or University of Toronto environments. In fact, the “hidden” nature of academic writing traditions is well supported in the literature on student writing in higher education. Lillis
(2001) discusses “essayist literacy” as common sense academic essay writing conventions that are not made visible to students (p. 37). Lillis found that because instructors rarely explain the conventions of academic writing, students are often unable to understand, follow or challenge them. Turner’s (1999) findings echo Lillis’ as she also found that academic writing conventions were neither transparent nor accessible to many students in her study. Given the invisibility of academic writing conventions for students, Lillis (1999) describes academic writing and its “common sense” conventions as an “institutional practice of mystery” (p.127). For Lillis, the conventions of academic writing are ideologically inscribed and configured in ways that impose detrimental limits on those students who are the least familiar with academic conventions and/or multilingual speakers (Lillis, 1999).

While OSSC advisors became key “informants” for students on academic writing conventions, it is also clear that advisors supported students in reading and deciphering assignments and feedback provided by faculty. While the writing centre lore of old, admonishes writing centre tutors to “never play student-advocates in teacher-student relationships” and maintain a subordinate position to faculty, even when students come in with “poorly designed assignments” (North, 1984, p. 441), the advisors in this study engaged with assignments (sometimes critically) and encouraged students to ask questions when assignments were “poorly designed” or instructions were unclear. However, as illuminated in the previous section advisors frequently positioned themselves as supportive of and subordinate to faculty, yet they certainly did engage with the curriculum and the feedback of faculty.

Therefore, advisor engagement with assignments and feedback was not necessarily done to subvert authority; rather, advisors simply felt that it was essential for them to “make the implicit, explicit” (Trevor). In this sense, advisors seemed to signal an awareness that faculty as content and disciplinary specialists may be unable or unwilling to make the expectations of academic writing clear to students. Indeed, as Sheridan (2011) demonstrated in her study, despite the fact that long essays were the most frequently assigned form of assessment, faculty expectations were often unclear to students. Moreover, Lea and Street (1998) found that academic staff tended to agree that “structure” and “argument” were key elements of successful academic writing, yet when asked to describe what went into well-structured or aptly argued papers, the same staff had a difficult time unpacking what these valued features actually entailed. In this research a telling parallel can be found in Brett’s example of
unpacking the “hefty” concept of “unclear” wherein working through the often hidden nature of what constitutes “good” and “bad” academic writing in context is exceptionally complex.

Students too demonstrated that interactions in the OSSC unearthed the conventions of English academic writing, which helped them to prepare written work that they felt “legitimated” their knowledge in the academy (Julian). Indeed, discussions on conventions and expectations were evident throughout the observations of in person tutorials wherein students and advisors worked through assignments to develop a critical voice, understand a genre of writing (as in the literature review in Observation 4 & 5), and understand commentary and interactions with faculty. Moreover throughout the interviews and focus groups, students mentioned the importance of understanding the conventions of writing in academic English. Students identified learning how to put the most important information in the front of the paper and guide the reader through the main points to be discussed, the importance of clarity and concision (Marcela, Yanyu, Paola, Julian), as well as how to integrate quotes and examples, and prepare assignments that met the guidelines set out by faculty. Thus, the values of clarity, “logical concision and linguistic brevity” that students have learned to value are reflective of those that are privileged and “deeply rooted in western academic traditions” (Turner, 2011, p. 79).

While most students demonstrated a keen desire to adapt to these conventions, their early struggles with these same conventions made them devalue their former educational experiences. As one student said, the difference in conventions between English academic writing and those of her prior learning environment made her feel as though she had “learned crap” in her previous educational environments that privileged forms of writing different from those of the English academic conventions (Alejandra). The tendency to devalue conventions of writing that differ from those of Western academic conventions is reflective of Zhang’s (2011) Chinese students’ experiences. Zhang’s student participants deemed their former experiences in Chinese academia to be less valuable and rigorous than their North American experiences, and they worked hard to adopt the latter traditions to minimise their writing “deficiencies.” Given the desire to “fit” into English academic writing standards, many of the students suggested that in order to be successful, it was necessary for them to accept being “colonised” (Alejandra) by English academic writing conventions. This acceptance maintains these oft-unquestioned conventions and requires students to adhere to a “convergence model,”
which assumes that “students will simply accommodate to (converge with) the expected norms of academic performance in English” (Turner, 2011, p. 18).

Thus, this section has illuminated a number of congruencies between the student and advisor participants on the theme of correction, conventions, culture and curriculum. Interestingly, in examining and discussing the theme of correction, conventions, culture and curriculum a number of congruencies emerged with the notions outlined in Chapter 2 related to “new” writing centre theory, while a great deal of divergence with the “old” writing centre lore that was based on native English speakers was also evident. The Venn diagram in Figure 27 depicts the areas of congruency and tension while also illuminating some ambiguity across participants in this study and the “old” and “new” writing centre literature.

Figure 27. Correction, Conventions, Culture and Curriculum, Writing Centre Theory & OSSC Participants

As Figure 27 demonstrates, for students and advisors LOCs are worthy of consideration in the OSSC, which is also supported by “new” writing centre theory that does not suggest an
automatic privileging of HOCs over LOCs. Moreover more directive support on LOCs is appropriate with multilingual students from the data presented here and within more recent writing centre scholarship. Additionally, both students and advisors see the benefits of discussions on HOCs, which may come from the disciplinary positioning of the OSSC, yet is considered a productive activity across writing centre theory and literature. However, for students support with HOCs is validating while advisors find themselves in the “in-between” when they are asked to provide feedback in lieu of faculty and comment on assignments and faculty feedback. Thus, advisors do have to navigate tensions in the OSSC related to legitimate functions vis-à-vis faculty and the academic programs, which may stem from the expectation that the OSSC is an extra-classroom space wherein “generic writing skills” are unproblematically taught to students and faculty authority is consistently maintained. Finally, support with culture and curriculum illuminated the ways that students valued learning the conventions of English academic writing. Advisors felt strongly that exposing the hidden curriculum of academic writing and the broader learning environment was an important function of the OSSC. While these conventions are certainly contested, this section maintains a focus on how these conventions come into the OSSC, while Chapter 8 examines their negotiation and the ways the advisors may be both “cultural informants” (Powers, 1993, p.41) and “designers of social futures” who can “read, critique and engage systems of power” (Grimm, 2009, p.2).

Chapter Summary

The discussions in this chapter have focused on the institutional space in which the OSSC, multilingual students, and advisors are imbued. While the first section of this chapter illuminated the positionality of the OSSC institutionally and the ways that multilingual students and their advisors are positioned therein, the second section examined categorisations of interactions between students and advisors in the OSSC. This chapter has illuminated that ongoing assumptions related to multilingual writers as deficient and the remediation role of the OSSC may engender assumptions that the OSSC is a space that multilingual students go to have their papers “edited” or polished prior to real assessment by faculty. However, the data here supports the assertion that multilingual students attend writing centres for much more than sentence-level editing support and the interactions therein go far beyond language remediation (see for example Thonus, 2014). Instead students seek feedback on content, and students and advisors engage in conversations that are akin to peer review models so heavily valued in academia. Finally, a great deal of discussion in the OSSC centres around
conventions and the ways that students may produce writing that “fits” the patterns of Western, academic writing. While these discussions were valued and important, they are not simply discussions on style or format and tend to engender strong emotions.

Thus, emotional dimensions are present for students working to change their identities as “ESL writers” to that of a competent knowledge producer in a North American academy, and it is to the personal and affective nature of interactions in the interpersonal space of the OSSC that the first section of the next chapter turns. Secondly, while this chapter has discussed how students value instructional support for LOCs, HOCs and culture and curriculum in the OSSC, they also value interactions that produce tangible improvements to the work that brings them to the centre in the first place. While advisors want to ensure students’ concerns are addressed they also want to provide support that is sustainable and transferrable to improve not just the product, but also students’ processes for academic writing. Finally, while this chapter has touched on the ways “editing” comes into or is refused in the OSSC and the ways such approaches push some students to hire external editors, the next chapter discusses the editing challenge as it occurs and is negotiated in the OSSC by the two participant groups.
Interlude

Observation Vignette: Unpacking “Awkward”

It’s late in the day on a rainy Tuesday in March. The end of the term is drawing near and trepidation and anxiety linger in the building as final paper and exam deadlines loom. I’ve sat through two sessions with Jill, a friendly, thoughtful and engaged advisor in the OSSC. Jill is one of those people who connects—she can find pathways to build rapport with students quickly as I have seen in the previous two sessions I observed. We sit together waiting for her next appointment, a Master’s student who has suggested via the online booking system that she is coming in for thesis writing support, and she has specified “organisation and flow” as well as “grammar” are the concerns that will bring her into the centre on this rainy Tuesday. As we wait, Jill and I chat about the tick box options in the online booking system— we laugh as Jill says “organisation and flow” are the catch-all responses to the mandatory box that asks “Please describe anything else that you specifically want help with (e.g. grammar, organisation).” We muse over other “options” that may be more descriptive of the types of support students often ask for, “Academics 101” suggests Jill, I retort with “Reading dense literature and writing dense papers in response” we’re chuckling as the student walks in.

The student is known to me, I have worked with her on a resume so we chat briefly before she sits down with Jill. As she pulls her laptop out of her backpack (a no, no in the OSSC rules as paper copies are requested) it is obvious that the student is upset. Jill does not comment on the laptop and simply begins the session by asking the student what she would like to work on today. The student sighs and opens up her laptop to show Jill a fully written thesis that is over 50 pages in length and an accompanying email from the student’s supervisor which reads: “Your writing is awkward. Please seek writing support and re-write.” I flinch, and Jill draws a deep breath and turns the computer towards herself. The student begins to cry as she explains that she has family obligations, a job and is unable to finance an additional term, she needs to have this done—now. She continues to sob as she explains that English is her third language and she says she knows her “English is very bad.”

Jill provides a reassuring smile and apologises to the student on behalf of the professor, commentary such as “awkward” she says “is not very helpful but let’s work through this together.” Jill begins to read the document aloud, and by page two it becomes clear to her that “language is not the problem.” Indeed, the student’s writing demonstrates some grammatical errors but these do not distract from the content, they are minor surface-level errors and for Jill it is not these errors that have incited the “awkward” moniker that makes up the entirety of the feedback in the supervisor’s email. Instead, the student has subverted many of the expectations of the document. The chapters are not ordered with a clear introduction that outlines main points, the methodology is woven throughout and citations
are used sparingly. It is clear that language is not the main issue at play with the professor’s critique.

I sit through a double session of appointments (an hour and a half in total) as Jill painstakingly describes introductions, thesis statements, method chapters and proper citations. Jill uses different notations in the margins to work through the first chapter to show the student where a citation is needed, where a connection needs to be made clearer, and content that is more appropriate for the chapters that will follow. Once she has read through the introduction Jill asks the student to verbally describe the main idea of the research as she writes notes and provides encouragement through both body language and verbal affirmations. Once the student has completed the synopsis of the research Jill affirms its value, engages with the ideas and begins to draw a roadmap for what should be included in the following chapters.

Throughout this interaction I watch as the student relaxes, engages and begins to accept her expertise in the subject upon which she has written. I have been sitting in the corner but have also been brought into the conversation by Jill and the student. I affirm the student’s ideas and agree with Jill’s assertion that although the professor’s comments were not entirely helpful, that the student needs to attend to organisation and structure rather than the mechanics of language and grammar. Jill suggests the student revise the introduction and schedules another 4 appointments (the maximum allowed) over the next two weeks with her to continue working on the document.

The student leaves the appointment with a discernible degree of confidence and resolve to move her thesis forward. Jill and I look at each other and silently shake our heads at the disservice that thoughtless feedback such as “awkward” creates, yet the clock has run out and its time for the next student...
Chapter 7: Micro-Level Themes: The Interpersonal Space of the OSSC

This chapter focuses on the interpersonal space of the OSSC and the ways that students and advisors described their interactions therein. Two main themes emerged from the data at the interpersonal level. First, the OSSC is a highly affective space wherein emotions play a significant role in the success or failure of interactions. Indeed, both students and advisors noted the importance of rapport and the significance of affective dimensions in the OSSC. Subthemes of the importance of care, listening, and empathy emerged from the data across participant groups related to affective advising.

Secondly, the data suggests that the interpersonal space is one of negotiation; and these negotiations often wrestle between a focus on product or process. In effect, the data shows that students are naturally focused on the discrete piece of work or assignment that they bring to the OSSC. The written work or assignment they bring with them is their “ticket” into the OSSC and in an environment where assessment of written work is paramount, focusing on how to improve the writing not the writer often prevails for students. For advisors, on the other hand, a focus on process and supporting students to develop diverse skill sets to manage their writing and degree programs emerged. Advisors spoke of “empowerment” and self-advocacy and were thus keen to develop the writer (North, 1984, p. 483). This chapter develops these two themes and each thematic section culminates with a discussion that integrates the scholarly literature. Following the format of Chapter 6, this chapter also illuminates the congruencies, ambiguities and tensions that exist between the participant groups.
Effective Feedback and Affective Advising

**Student Narrative:** “You’re going to be okay”

I have realised that psychological tact to boost, I mean to improve my writing and yet create a sense a comfort is the key thing that has drawn me to certain advisors. I had one who knew me and was able to tell me how I was improving and what still needed work. Without this ongoing relationship, there is no sense. This is about you and your writing.

So for me I would say this comes down to my academic confidence and my writing confidence. I came to this one person who I booked a lot of sessions with. When I first came [to the OSSC] it was my first semester in graduate school. I came here and I think the first session was to organise my ideas and to understand what the expectations for this kind of piece was.

The second appointment I brought an essay I wrote last year, I really just wanted to know what my weaknesses were and if I was writing at the level of this place. I remember after I showed it to the advisors she said, “You’re going to do fine.” Like “this sample that you brought today gave me the idea that you’re going to be fine in your program. You shouldn’t be worried.” I was like “okay, I’m going to be fine!” I mean, she didn’t just say I was going to fine, it came from a thoughtful review. She reviewed the sample and she changed things and told me some things that were unclear, but at the end she didn’t say to me “oh you have a long way to go. You have a long way to struggle. It’s going to be so hard for you.” It was like, “don’t worry, you’re going to be fine. You just showed me that you’re going to be fine.” So that was like a weight gone... this confidence grows as long as someone who knows helps you.

I think part of this for me and this advisor in particular was that this person didn’t make me feel stupid. I feel like, yeah, it’s not me, it’s my ideas and my writing but my ideas are mine so please don’t treat them bad! A piece of advice I received from one of the faculty members here is that you have to create this “crocodile skin” because this is not about you, it’s your writing. Okay, I agree it’s my writing but my writing is me. It’s about me. It’s about my concerns and if they say my concerns are hard to understand, well, am I hard to understand? This is a very important thing that someone working here has this psychological, very tactful approach to the. That’s why I always thanked my

**Advisor Narrative:** Rapport Matters

I think the most significant thing I have learned working with all students, but especially multilingual students, has been taking a few minutes at the beginning of an appointment to get to know the person that you are advising. Because oftentimes people come in and jump right in to the academics and are kind of fuelled by the stress of needing to meet a deadline.

This is often the norm and I always just take those few minutes to talk about what program they’re in? Who are their professors? Where are they coming from? What languages do they speak? It’s hugely important. I think that was the best tip that I received in training.

I think also not trying to tackle an entire paper but trying to figure out what specific skills can you teach the student that will not only benefit what they’re working on currently, but all of their other work as well and kind of like narrowing it down to three to five things that they can be working on that are concrete that we both know that we can achieve. I think for me it’s also helpful to know what the languages they speak and a little bit about how their languages work.

For example, one appointment the individual was coming from Tajikistan and I really needed to understand because he was structuring his sentence in a very specific way. So then I started to talk to him about Tajik, how it’s framed and how it’s written and how it’s similar to Russian and what other languages it’s fused with. Having that conversation made him laugh
advisors very much for the help they gave me that was tactful.

So I guess the difference is that this personal connection makes it easier for you to share. One person at the OSSC who I never went back to was like, “Oh yeah, I’m just doing this because I have to be here.” I just tried advisors like this once and didn’t go back to them. Whereas, the advisor I usually go to is really more concerned about let me see your writing, let me see how I can help you, and on top of that the person also wanted to know a little bit more about me as a person...what are you doing? What’s your background? Tell me a little bit about where you’re coming from. All those things I think are important for a writing centre like if you guys were to hire more people, supportive people, I think one of the most of important things has to be a person who really is concerned for, who cares about the multilingual writers, right? I want to feel like they are concerned and really want to help. And the second thing that could be something really useful could be if the person has experience dealing with multilingual people so the person feels how the person on the other side is. This is very different from dealing with a person that’s coming here just because they’re being paid by the hour and just want to finish here and then go home. It would probably be good for the prospective workers here to read a little paper or something that is related to how to support these people and help them a little bit better with their writing.

Overall the advisor I kept going back to always told me like “Everything is going to be fine. Don’t worry.” I go [to the OSSC] now not just because of the academic support. It’s because of this piece that is like the more personal connection—we’ve become colleagues, even friends. I think that it builds through the sessions, right, not necessarily the first time you come, you will get that, but it really helps when you do.

The narratives above and the categories of support identified in Chapter 6 demonstrate that the OSSC is essentially a space wherein discussions and interactions include the provision of feedback or advice. As discussed in Chapter 2, far from being a detached, autonomous activity, academic writing is a social practice (Aitchison & Lee, 2006; Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Kubota & Lehner, 2004), and thus feedback is also inherently social in nature (Can & Walker, 2011). Therefore, the process of giving and receiving feedback is fundamentally interpersonal and emotions are often at play as advisors and students provide and obtain feedback, respectively. The participants in this study certainly pointed to the affective dimension of giving and receiving feedback in the OSSC. Thus, this section examines
feedback practices and the related social and interpersonal relations in the OSSC.

However, the discussions of advisor and student responses related to the interpersonal space of the OSSC begins by examining how students and advisors describe some of the feedback practices in the broader OISE environment, and the impact such practices have on students (and advisors) in the OSSC. Indeed, the feedback practices of some faculty and instructors emerged as important foundations for students’ access to the OSSC and advisors’ empathy for students negotiating performance in the OISE environment. Following an examination of some of the broader feedback practices in the OISE environment and their impact on students and advisors, the discussion turns to the importance of care, active listening and empathy in OSSC interactions.

**Feedback Matters: Caring about the Writer to Care about Writing**

While advisors certainly discussed approaches to feedback within the OSSC, the data also demonstrated that advisors were aware of, and sensitive to, the feedback students had received outside of the OSSC. Indeed, for advisors many of the students’ entry into the OSSC and their first visit was prompted by difficult or negative feedback from faculty or instructors. Moreover, advisors were aware that many of these students who had experienced negative feedback outside of the OSSC had not yet succeeded in the development of “crocodile skin,” and were thus unable to disassociate negative feedback on their academic writing with their identity as a competent student. Therefore, for many advisors initial interactions included rapport-building, which including providing care to create an interpersonal space that restored confidence or undid harm caused by difficult feedback.

The emotional and at times complicated initial interactions between students and advisors following negative feedback emerged throughout both the interview and focus group data with advisors, but a particularly rich discussion on feedback practices and the emotional work in the OSSC thereafter emerged from the focus group. Indeed, a difficult and emotional discussion on the effects of negative feedback, the personalisation of such feedback, and the resultant initial interaction in the OSSC emerged following one advisor’s recounting of the following story depicted in Figure 28 with the OSSC space in the background.
When I came here to this center I learned about other students as well and one of the experiences here was meeting a graduate student who was new to the country, she came from Korea, was accepted into a graduate program and she was really struggling with English. She’s been on a great professional path in Korea and suddenly she started seeing herself as a failure. So she came to me with a paper and there was a very, very painful comment on it about her as a person, not about her work. But sometimes also we relate the work to who we are, right? We are the work, at times. So the first session she just, she was full of shame and she said to me “I’m just, I’m very ashamed of myself, I’m just a failure.” So we spent the first session working on that notion about herself and where is the shame coming from because she couldn’t navigate. Her ideas were great when she communicated them, but she was so ashamed of herself to the extent where she couldn’t verbalise herself clearly the first session. So what I tried to do is to talk about my own experience a little bit, about how I navigated and how the support system helped me move forward. So the second session she came back she could verbalise, she was good at verbalising, but she believed that she is not good enough through the experiences she had. That broke my heart; the woman is in her fifties. She had a great profession in Korea. She came here because she really wanted to go into education and I just looked at her, she was just a shattered person because of the comments she got from her professor or teacher at the time. So it’s a very... it’s a very sensitive path (Farha).

Figure 28. Finding the OSSC through Negative Feedback

The advisor’s divulging of this story in the focus group led to several similar accounts of how students found their way to the OSSC, and the challenging nature of initial interactions when this was the case. Indeed, another advisor recounted a session wherein he gave the student what was in his opinion very “normal feedback from the point of view of a teacher, it wasn’t anything extraordinary,” yet the feedback immediately made the student break out in tears. The advisor recounted having a “heart to heart” where the student admitted that “she had not yet heard a positive word in this building from any professor, any TA, no positive feedback in writing, no positive feedback orally and that her entire experience had just crushed her spirit” (Brett). For Brett the experience was completely demoralising for the student and for himself
as an advisor. An additional narrative that echoed the way in which students find their ways to the OSSC through difficult or hurtful feedback experiences came from an advisor who recounted working with a student who had come with a paper with a poor grade and feedback that simply said “And you want to be a teacher?!” This advisor’s story shared numerous similarities with the other two recounted above. Stacey noted how

it took [the student] ten minutes to pull that out of her bag and when I saw it, she burst into tears. Of course she did, and I knew I just needed to be there, so I sat there. The next ten minutes of the appointment was about me looking at her and making a connection with her and saying, “This is fixable, okay and I’m not looking at the mark, I’m looking at the travesty of what happened to you as a student. No teacher should ever write that on any student’s paper and I’m sorry that happened to you, okay?” And sitting there for ten minutes while she calms herself enough to breathe and then we start working.

While the narratives recounted in the advisor focus groups on the harm that negative feedback can have on students prior to arriving in the OSSC were the most vivid, the interview data also reaffirmed this theme. Indeed, during the one-on-one interview Brett shared a story of a student who came to the OSSC after being informed that she did not know how to write academically, and the student had no idea what that meant. For Brett it was clear that the student’s confidence “had been shot with that very first assignment” leaving the student faltering, anxious and unable to decipher the steps to take to move forward.

The interactions recounted above suggest that advisors are aware many students are “subjected to some challenging tasks to get [to the OSSC],” and these difficult paths have informed the approaches of advisors in the OSSC (Brett). Indeed, commitments to building connection, creating a space where care and active listening guided the interactions were mentioned as important pedagogical approaches of advisors in this study. The desire to build connections and care for students was expressed by Stacey who quoted Paulo Freire in saying advisors needed to “read the world before reading the word” with students who came to the OSSC via difficult feedback. Stacey recounted, “I have to read their world, and that involves inviting them into reading their world as well, but I would say we’re on the frontlines of reading that world first, students cannot go there alone.”

The notion of caring for students and attending to their experiences was affirmed throughout the interviews and focus groups with advisors. While providing care for students was essential when they came to the OSSC in distress, it was also valued as part of the advisor role and teaching in general. One advisor suggested that students do not expect advisors to simply
“deliver content,” rather students should “feel that [advisors] are indeed interested in what they do and how and how to help them” (Farha). Another advisor affirmed that compassion and care for the student and their experiences “makes or breaks” the experience in the OSSC for students (Brett). Several advisors noted that caring was an essential component of the teaching and learning process and referred to previous teaching experiences to affirm the value of providing care to students (Brett, Stacey, Bahareh, Laleh). Indeed, as one advisor stated, “real teaching” comes from an emotional relationship and developing rapport early is essential, a fact that may be especially true when teaching writing as it can be a “strict and rigid thing to do” (Laleh).

Thus, approaching students with care and developing rapport was understood as one of the most important aspects of a successful tutorial, which allowed students to express emotion, share their challenges with advisors as well as learn and develop (Trevor, Brett, Lesley, Irina). Indeed, all of the advisors in both the interviews and focus group mentioned the importance of attending to the affective or emotional needs of students in the OSSC, with some advisors describing their role as akin to a counsellor given that many students required personal and moral support in tandem with academic and writing support (Vidhura, Lesley). While the advisors certainly understood that their role was not always to be that of a counsellor, many also knew that students who came to the OSSC for personal support did so because they had not yet found that support from professors, peers, or the institution in general (Nisha, Brett, Lesley). Thus, advisors understood the OSSC as a place that could create community for students through “reminding them that they are not alone” (Nisha), and affirming that “imposter syndrome” is an affliction many students face as they navigate the demands of higher education (Jessica). For advisors, then, developing connections, understanding where students were coming from, which languages they spoke, and responding to the needs they expressed was often part of the provision of care and a necessary first step to providing academic support in the OSSC.

Student responses also affirmed the importance of care, connection and attention to affective needs in the OSSC. Moreover, roughly half of the students who took part in the interviews and focus groups found their way or were “sent” to the OSSC through faculty referrals, and many of the students also revealed that their first visit to the OSSC was the result of feedback that shook their confidence in the academic writing abilities. Similar to the narratives from advisors recounted above, one student recounted coming to the OSSC “almost crying” after
being told her writing was “awkward” and being given no substantive feedback on how to mitigate the “awkwardness” of her writing (Yanyu). For other students commentary that their writing was also “awkward” (Paola), “not academic” (Alejandra) or “exotic” (Julian) or that they should “use a professional” to produce proper academic papers (Myriam) led them to the OSSC. While for others still, a faculty referral combined with a large amount of feedback that was difficult to understand and address became the impetus for seeking out the support of advisors in the OSSC (Gabriela, Mariana). Thus, many of the students expressed that they felt “shy” (Eun-ah), “embarrassed” (Alejandra), “upset” (Yanyu), “ready to break down” (Kim), or “stupid” (Myriam) when they first visited the OSSC.

For this reason, the affective nature of sharing writing emerged from the narratives of all of the students, many of whom had experience receiving difficult feedback elsewhere and went to the OSSC for support rather than another unemotional or unreflexive critique of their work. One student described an interaction in the OSSC where she received “good” feedback but felt like the advisor way doing her a favour and “taking a big seat” and neglected to do the necessary affective work before providing critical feedback (Alejandra). Thus, for students their writing was personal and opening up their writing to critique, also opened them up to critique and affective support went hand in hand with writing and academic support. Alejandra described the passionate nature of writing and how emotions come into play when receiving feedback. She stated,

> when you’re writing, people tend to say it’s nothing personal. It’s not about you. It’s your writing. The writing comes from my heart. It’s from my guts… I mean I put passion in this. Otherwise, I would be cooking at home or I’d be baking bread or selling insurance but I’m doing this. I put passion in my writing so don’t tell me not to feel passionate. You know what I mean? There’s an affective area of sharing writing that needs to be cared for as well, which is not the same case when you present a paper in a journal. Those guys can be absolutely filthy nasty. This is not the case here. People here are learning how to write. We don’t need to have this ironic feedback, which I haven’t felt [in the OSSC], but I have felt in feedback from some professors (Alejandra).

Thus, students did not want advisors to provide feedback in the same way that a professor or journal reviewer would, they felt that being met by an advisor who cared made a difference in the OSSC and their ability to learn from the interactions therein, which was particularly true for their first visit. Kim came to the OSSC feeling very overwhelmed and anxious but was met with an advisor who she described as warm, supportive and encouraging, which gave her a positive image of the OSSC and made her willing to continue to seek support. On the other
hand, students who felt that their first interaction in the OSSC was not warm or supportive or lacked a personal connection chose not to return for some time (Marcela, Myriam), or sought out other advisors for subsequent appointments and did not return to the advisor with whom they struggled to connect (Alejandra, Gabriela, Kim).

While students acknowledged that personal relationship takes time to build, many felt that “caring” was as simple as advisors taking a few minutes to really ask them how they were doing while actually listening to their answers (Julian, Paola). However, students across the interviews and focus groups reported that once they built a personal connection with an advisor or advisors, they continued to return to those advisors to the exclusion of others whenever possible. Moreover, students also noted being more open to suggestions, support, and referrals from advisors with whom they were connected. One student mentioned that she had visited a centralised university office to ask about writing support and that the staff member at the desk had been dismissive and gave her a number for counselling services. The student felt immensely disrespected and disregarded, but suggested that the personal support that was embedded within academic and writing support in the OSSC was helpful and valuable to her (Myriam). Thus, throughout interviews and focus groups students employed words such as “caring” (Gabriela, Yanyu), “open” (Mi-yong, Ellen), and “warm” (Mariana, Kim) to describe the attributes of “good” advisors.

Interestingly, Gabriela, a student who exclusively used the online advising option also mentioned the importance of care, and felt that she received that through interactions with two advisors online. She described the two advisors as caring in that they engaged with her ideas, worked to understand her writing, shared knowledge, and sent thoughtful commentary in response to her work. For Gabriela, these two advisors became “friends online” as the student could sense that the advisors were invested in her work as well as her progress and growth.

While recognition and validation made for positive, caring interactions, an interesting trend emerged from the student data wherein validation without substantiation was understood as not caring. Indeed, several students described meetings in the OSSC as unsuccessful when the advisor simply made a few surface-level suggestions and sent the students on their way. Students perceived this as careless and felt that the advisor was not interested in providing feedback and simply wanted to complete the appointment rather than help the student. One student said that an advisor read her resume and simply said it was “good” and failed to provide any descriptions of why it was good or identify any areas for improvement. The
student was then unsure about the content and felt frustrated when she could not see another advisor to get more feedback (Eun-ah). Another student echoed this when she described an “unsupportive” session as one where an advisor was “unwilling to share their thoughts” and simply looked over the work and said it was “okay” and ended the session. The student did not return to that advisor (Kim). Similarly, another student felt as though lack of feedback amounted to withholding, she described advisors who did not provide feedback as uninterested in her work and her growth and felt that receiving work back “blank with no feedback” was dismissive and disappointing. She explained that if the advisor “cares about the student that will affect the feedback they will give…if they are just giving me no feedback or nonsense feedback it’s about them not caring about what they are doing and about the student” (Gabriela).

Thus, feedback was valued and the provision of feedback was seen as a process of sharing knowledge and caring for the student. Interestingly, one student valued feedback so highly that she affirmed that attention to affective needs was important, but felt that too much attention to the student’s emotions took away from critical feedback that she desired. For this student an unsuccessful appointment was described as one wherein rich feedback was not received, as she perceived the advisor as “afraid to go forward and criticise the paper more” (Marcela). For this student the preference was for honest opinions on how to improve, as such feedback helps the student to learn faster and get better grades, and she felt that advisors sometimes held back in an effort to not hurt the student.

Professor feedback also factors into the observation data as three students found their way to the OSSC with feedback in hand. In one session a student confesses she has done a “horrible job” as she received a lot of feedback from a professor, the advisor responded that that is “an opportunity” as they began to review the document. Interestingly, the student did not share the feedback that led her to the conclusion that she has done a horrible job, so the advisor worked through the sections of the document noting non-academic language, helping the student to identify more appropriate language and identifying a number of areas that “need to backed up with research or citations” (Observation 14). In another session a student brought in a proposal that had already been graded to work through the paper that was to be written based on the proposal with the professor’s feedback. The advisor noted how substantive, helpful, and positive the feedback was and the student was pleased that feedback was positive, as she remained “overwhelmed with how to go about the paper.” The advisor engaged with the ways
forward suggested by the professor, and discovered that the professor’s suggestions for ways forward were not the intended meanings of the student. They spent the bulk of the session designing a “roadmap” that was true to the student’s meaning while working to satisfy the parameters outlined by the professor’s assignment (Observation 1).

Finally, in another session a student came in with a final assignment, which she noted she is “freaked out by” as she had yet to receive any grades or feedback from the professor for the first part of the assignment handed in several weeks earlier. The student explained that the lack of feedback had the whole class is “confused” and at a loss about how to move forward. The advisor apologised on behalf of the professor and commiserated with the student about how difficult it is to move forward without instructor feedback (Observation 9).

The observation data also shows a similar attention to care between advisor and student. Interestingly, most of the observed sessions had a similar start. The advisor and student would meet, and introduce themselves if they were not already known to one another. Following introductions a clear trend of some sort of conversational ice-breakers endured across sessions wherein small talk took place on matters as benign as the weather or events around the university or within the OISE environment. In sessions where the student and advisor were known to one another these ice-breakers were frequently more personal and the conversations showed familiarity, “How did the proposal go?” (Observation 1), “Did you hear back about the job?” (Observation 8). While these markers of care and connection were observed at the beginning of sessions, they also continued throughout interactions.

Indeed, the observation data is full of positive and supportive feedback, “you’re on the right track!” (Observation 1), “this reads well” (Observation 2), “you’ve made so much progress since last time!” (Observation 9). Throughout the sessions advisors make positive comments, inter-spliced with areas for improvement, listen intently and ask questions. A noticeable trend of laughter (sometimes nervous laughter) emerged from the observations as students and advisors worked to negotiate meaning and develop rapport. In one session the advisor and student engaged in a lengthy discussion about the student’s previous teaching experiences and the advisor noted the impact this has on the reflective writing she has done. The student noted how “fantastic” the advisor was, and a demonstrative level of mutual respect and rapport could be seen in the interaction as the advisor and student worked through the student’s writing. Even the non-verbal cues between students and advisors demonstrate an attempt to equalise the relationship, they sit side-by-side, make eye contact, the paper (or laptop) is
almost always strategically placed between the two, and both parties make notes on the document or laptop throughout the sessions.

While markers of care and connection were more difficult to point out in the online observations, evidence of rapport and connection could be found. An interesting trend of cumulative feedback type messages with personal referents and informal language were common in the online appointments. Indeed, returning to the figure that depicted an advisor’s overall feedback in Chapter 6, Figure 29 shows markers of connection and care.

This is well-written and thoughtful. I was being really tough (so don’t be alarmed by the size/amount of comments) as I know you want this to be great! I think you have done a good job of assessing the article and giving readers something to think about.

Most of my comments are word choice/organisation comments. I did note a place or two where I thought you could expand upon your ideas or clarify points. I wonder if (space permitting) you could start with a brief overview of the article or a short summary to situate your comments. After this I would organise the comments as what you thought was good about the article and then what you thought needed more explanation (or what was missing) followed by the conclusion. I think you have all of the writing needed to do this and a little reorganisation may make this work… what do you think?

I think you have done a really good job of looking at the article and also situating it in contemporary times while still making it clear that this is a follow up piece. I’ve loved seeing the progress of this piece, it’s really come along!

**Figure 29. Advisor Commentary (Observation 29)**

The advisor’s feedback starts by addressing the student by name (not depicted here) and also provides positive feedback upfront “well-written and thoughtful.” The advisor also works to connect with the student, “what do you think?” and refers to the student’s progress “I’ve loved seeing the progress of this piece!” The advisor signs off on the email message with their first name followed by “©” (Observation 29). In another online session the advisor also interspersed positive and critical feedback throughout the paper and wrote a thoughtful response to the student validating ideas and attached an article that she has recently read that may be of interest to the student. The advisor said, “the section on quick news was so interesting and timely, it made me think of an article I just read—check it out!” (Observation 22). Both the informal nature of the messages and the engagement therein denote a connection and familiarity between advisor and student that also helps to balance critical feedback that may have been delivered in the comments attached to the work. Despite this, some of the online appointments included directive comments as advisors simply reverted to
“unclear,” “reword,” or “wrong tense” and sent brief and formal email messages with the reviewed work as an attachment. Given the asynchronous nature of the online appointments advisors often reported feeling as though work went into a “black hole” (Vidhura) unless students responded positively to feedback, which was not always the case meaning advisors were not always sure how feedback was received.

Thus, the data from students and advisors suggests that the provision of feedback is certainly a “sensitive path” (Farha) wherein advisors need to gauge how much feedback is helpful, how to deliver the message, and how to ensure that the student feels as though the advisor is helping rather than harming the student’s academic and writing confidence. Thus the provision of feedback and the interactions in the OSSC often relied on the advisor’s ability to empathise with both the positionality of the student and writer in order to provide constructive feedback in the OSSC.

**Empathy: I am the Writing and the Writing is Me**

Advisors’ abilities to empathise with the experiences of students were partially facilitated by their positionality as students as discussed in Chapter 6, and all of the advisors referred to sharing their own experiences with students in the OSSC. In fact, the advisors’ own student experiences and strategies they employed navigating the OISE environment were commonly referred to connectors or sources of empathy when working with students (Trevor, Brett, Lesley, Bahareh, Irina, Laleh). These experiences included advisors’ own experiences receiving difficult feedback wherein assignments were returned, “bleeding with the red ink of a professor” (Stacey), or navigating the expectations of written assessments when disciplinary expectations were unclear (Brett). Additionally some advisors also shared an “international narrative” (Nisha) or the struggle of negotiating the cultural, linguistic and discursive norms of the academy with students (Brett, Vidhura, Irina, Laleh, Lanfen). Another advisor shared a poignant example of how her own learning style resulted in her “having to learn inorganically how to write,” which allowed her to understand and support others in the writing process given that her “journey is very much a parallel of what I think it’s like to be in English language learner” (Jessica). Thus advisors’ own experiences as students, language learners and struggling writers were often referred to as important bases for their practices and ability to empathise with the students who visited the OSSC.
Additionally, a very interesting trend of advisors as users of the OSSC also emerged from the data. Indeed, eight of the advisors who took part in the interviews and three who took part in the focus groups used the OSSC themselves, while two other advisor interview participants used a different writing centre in previous degree (one of whom also used the OSSC). Thus, nine of the 12 advisor participants also had experience as the student or recipient of feedback in the OSSC or another writing centre as depicted in Figure 30.

* 1 participant used another writing centre and the OSSC

**Figure 30. Advisors' Use of the OSSC/Writing Centres**

Therefore for many advisors, their own experiences in the OSSC or another writing centre generated awareness of the vulnerability of asking for help and sharing written work (Nisha), the uncertainty that comes with meeting an advisor for the first time (Brett), and the value of creating an inviting and comfortable environment (Irina, Laleh). Moreover, being a student in the OSSC also affirmed the value of patience (Nisha, Irina) and reminded advisors that feedback that generated strategies and engaged with ideas was far more beneficial than feedback that unilaterally “fixed” surface level errors in papers (Brett, Vidhura, Jessica).

Thus, in addition to having experience learning and negotiating languages, advisors also knew the struggles students encountered as many advisors themselves had navigated challenges in their own educational journeys. Many of the advisors truly understood what it meant to be “on the other side” of the feedback in a writing centre and drew on positive experiences that affirmed confidence, motivated them to complete their own degrees, and improved their
student experience while eschewing negative experiences that did not help them develop abilities to improve their own work or made them feel deficient or disregarded or unheard.

The concept of empathy was also expressed as important by students, who felt that advisors needed to empathise with them as writers, as multilingual speakers and as students. As mentioned in Chapter 6, the fact that advisors were also students was recognised and appreciated by students who felt that advisors generally understood the challenges and pressures they faced as students. For students, the reality that advisors were also students helped the advisors to provide guidance, share experiences, and at times commiserate with difficult experiences. Students recalled advisors sharing the sense of vulnerability when submitting written work to peers or professors for review (Yanyu), the sense of feeling overwhelmed with the tasks of their program (Marcela, Myriam, Alejandra), the anxiety that goes into the process of preparing a presentation for a class or a conference (Kim), and the emotions that result from the receipt of difficult feedback from a professor (Mariana). In all of these cases the fact that the advisor had been there too helped the student to feel comfortable in the interaction and confident with the advice.

Additionally, students felt advisors needed to be empathetic to the position of the writer. Students did not view themselves as removed from their work and saw themselves reflected in their work. Thus, the provision of care and an advisor who is “empathetic with the position of the writer,” and developed thoughtful and constructive ways to respond to the writing was valued (Alejandra). While most of the students reiterated throughout the interviews that they valued critical feedback, it was also clear that such feedback needed to be expressed in a way that took the students’ feelings into account. This was certainly true for students who sought out support with ideas or conventions—they appreciated advisors who provided support thoughtfully and did not make them feel “stupid” (Alejandra, Kim, Julian, Myriam). Certainly, when students sought support with LOCs the need for empathy remained, but students were more comfortable with advisors “destroying the mistakes” if surface level errors were the only concern (Marcela).

Students also expressed valuing advisors who empathised with their struggles as multilingual speakers or as writers who were navigating new normative conventions writing for an academic audience in English. For some students, advisors who were empathetic were those who understood the struggles of a non-native speaker (Eun-ah) and provided language and writing support in a way that did not make students feel “looked down upon” because of their
language skills (Ellen). While students felt that advisors’ language skills were stronger than theirs, they also felt that advisors who were “equipped with empathy” (Ellen), recognised students’ differential language abilities, and worked to provide appropriate support to strengthen the students’ skills without making them feel lesser were the most successful (Ellen, Kim, Myriam). Given the high population of multilingual students in the OISE environment, students suggested that hiring initiatives for the OSSC should privilege those who have experience working with multilingual students so that “the person feels how the person on the other side feels” (Julian). Interestingly, while students valued advisors who could empathise with multilingual students and who had experience in the provision of language support, none of them mentioned that advisors themselves needed to be multilingual nor did they refer to the many multilingual advisors in the OSSC when discussing the concept of empathy. Thus, empathy for those learning language and academic writing conventions was tied to advisors’ open-mindedness and awareness of diversity rather than direct experience with navigating the academy as a multilingual student in student responses.

The student participants also valued advisors who understood the types of writing conventions that were accepted elsewhere and were able to relate to the different forms of academic writing traditions across contexts. Advisors who were able to identify the different traditions of writing and understand where students were coming from were also adept at identifying the gaps between the writing students were used to and the expectations in a Western academic community without seeing students as “disadvantaged” (Alejandra). Additionally, if advisors were not aware of these conventions students were appreciative of those who asked and exhibited interest and openness in understanding the students’ previous writing experiences in order to help them to bridge their writing style with that which was valued in the OISE environment (Alejandra, Julian, Myriam).

Finally, students reported feeling turned away or discouraged by advisors who did not demonstrate sensitivity or empathy towards the demands on students. Indeed, while most of the students expressed awareness of the “no editing” policy, they felt rebuffed and unsupported by advisors who began appointments by repeating this edict. As Marcela recalled,

The first time when I went [to the OSSC] the first thing that person told me was like we’re not here to edit…That kind of created a distance and right away because it’s like if you’re looking for help, if you’re going there is because you need help and then first thing you get is like and “by the way don’t do this, don’t
do that.” It’s kind of like closes doors so the first impression I got of the place was that it wasn’t going to be helpful at all because if you go there and if you start listening and all the things you cannot do and then you say well maybe I’ll look for help somewhere else … because when you look for help you don’t always know what your needs are. So the first impression was I wasn't going to get the help I needed there and that as a result I didn’t book more appointments for quite a while…so that will reject people, like people won’t feel welcome that way. I think that they will lose people that way.

Several other students echoed that advisors who placed parameters on their support created a distance and positioned themselves as gatekeepers to the writing process rather than fellow students who understood the experience and the sometimes challenging nature of asking for help and navigating the places to find it (Julian, Myriam, Kim). Thus, students felt advisors who listened to their needs rather than listed off unavailable supports were far more empathetic and helpful than those who remained inflexible in their roles as advisors in the OSSC.

The observation data also shows instances of advisors working to empathise with the position of the students. In one observation a student comes in and says he is “dumb about writing papers” and feels as though he is learning nothing about it in class. The advisor asks about his background and learns that he has come from a degree in literature, she discusses the parallels between literature essays and the critical review the student has been asked to write—engage with the text, integrate quotes, discuss. The advisor also notes how “she was in exactly the same position” when she began at OISE and how she used the OSSC to help her navigate the expectations of written assignments (Observation 3). In another session the student has written many of her notes in Mandarin on the paper. The advisor notes the skill with which the student moves between languages, and describes it as “amazing.” The advisor and student laugh frequently as the advisor pauses in places where notes are written in Mandarin to let the student explain (Observation 4 & 5). Finally, in another observed session the student comes in seeking support on grammar. Throughout this interaction, as the advisor explains rules and helps the student to make adjustments to sentences that are unclear, the student is apologetic and embarrassed by her mistakes. The advisor notes that he too is working in his second language and confirms the challenges. He asks the student to tell him about the sentence structure in Japanese and they discuss how different languages take different approaches, the advisor explains how French is different from English and admits that he still makes mistakes in English as they laugh (Observation 10 & 11).
Thus, there is certainly evidence that personal connections and interactions that employ empathy occur in the OSSC as students and advisors share common experiences with difficult or sparse feedback, challenging writing conventions, and navigation between multiple languages. While markers of connection and empathy were observed in the in-person observations and emerged from the responses of students and advisors in the interviews and focus groups, these features were harder to see in the online observations as the asynchronous nature of such interactions meant dialogical discussion between student and advisor did not occur.

**Listening and Patience**

The importance of active listening, patience and “meeting the student where he or she is” (Hall, 2002) was also essential to the provision of successful and caring support in the OSSC for advisors. Listening had two related aspects in the narratives of advisors: 1) listening to understand what the student needed, and 2) listening to understand what the student was trying to say. For advisors listening, patience, and the value of silence were discussed as useful tactics when working with multilingual students.

The goal of active listening for needs was commonly mentioned as a key to guide the appointment to “get to the root of what the student needs” and ensure the student felt their concerns were heard and dealt with (Lesley). While Chapter 6 discussed how many advisors described providing whatever support students requested, advisors were only able to understand these needs with ongoing and active listening throughout interactions in the OSSC. Indeed, as one advisor stated “first I need to ask and listen to what they need, that’s the jumping off point and then my job is to work with what they’re saying to help them to figure out a course of action to take in order to support their needs” (Brett). All of the advisors who took part in interviews suggested that the initial few minutes were critical for understanding students’ needs, which was accomplished thoughtful questioning and effective listening in order to set the goals for the advising session.

However, many advisors also learned that students often require time to fully articulate what it is they need. Thus for some advisors, experience in the OSSC altered their approach to students as they learned the value of listening before simply jumping in and trying to solve the student’s expressed concern at the onset of the appointment (Nisha, Trevor). Moreover, three of the advisors noted how being consistently present and patient often resulted in students
farther divulging support needs well into appointments once comfort levels with the
advisor increased (Farha, Lesley, Brett). Indeed, advisors explained that active and patient
listening was the most important thing that they learned from working with multilingual
students. One advisor noted that she was keen to not make students feel rushed or anxious
about trying to express what they need, so ensuring that she was listening intently let the
student know that they can take their time to articulate their needs (Lesley). The notion of
waiting and at times embracing silence was useful for advisors in understanding the breadth
of student needs and one advisor suggested the most important thing she learned working with
multilingual students was

patience and waiting and listening until they tell me what they really need because
I realised most of the people who come to me have something else in addition to
what they initially say they want, in addition to the writing issues they have. They
have something else (Farha).

Another advisor echoed these sentiments by stating that through active listening it was much
easier to “get to the bottom of what’s really the issue… I learned to wait for as long as it takes
for the student to get out what they really need and what’s really bothering them” as what
they say initially is frequently just scratching the surface of what they really need (Trevor).

The second type of active listening that emerged from advisors was related to the product and
writing that students brought with them to the OSSC. For advisors the desire to rewrite or
“fix” sometimes emerged where language problems existed, yet awareness of the way that
linguistic edits can alter meaning prevented advisors from simply fixing or revising without
student input. Advisors showed awareness students knew what they were trying to say and
often thought the writing conveyed that message, meaning it was necessary to ask thoughtful
questions when working through writing to make sure the suggestions stayed true to the
meaning students intended (Farha). Here some advisors drew on their own language learning
experiences and remembered the difficulty they had writing in a language different than the
one in which their thoughts had occurred (Brett). Many advisors also recalled going through
papers slowly and explaining what they understood and then having students confirm or
challenge the understandings (Lesley, Jessica, Irina). As one advisor described listening to
content meant that students not only had a sounding board but “also that you've taken the time
to really listen to what their ideas are before you go through and try and start to help them do
any kind of editing or any kind of substantial changes because it's one thing to do it quickly
based on timelines” but it really takes time to “as clearly as possible, understand what it is they're trying to say” (Lesley).

While active listening was understood as important for those advisors who worked with students in person, the data from advisors who supported students online differed. Given that the online modality is asynchronous, listening and negotiating needs was not possible throughout the session. Thus, for online appointments advisors did note that they took the students’ instructions or goals for the appointment (usually written in an email) as their jumping off point, and provided the expressed support for the duration of the appointment (Vidhura, Lanfen). Thus, the value of the in-person appointments to allow needs to emerge and be continuously negotiated perhaps provides a breadth of support and room for discussion that is not possible through online modalities. Additionally, the negotiation of meaning was difficult through the online modality and the risk of misunderstanding the meaning was thus greater (Trevor). While advisors did note providing diverse readings of sentences or passages in notes in the margins—“Did you mean X or did you mean Y?”—the non-interactive nature of these sessions meant that the advisors often had to simply point out sections that were unclear and continue to work through the paper without student input given the nature of the online sessions (Trevor, Vidhura).

Student narratives on the importance of listening to decipher needs as well as to ensure clarity with content were strikingly similar to those of advisors. Indeed, active listening and patience were mentioned numerous times as characteristics of “good advisors.” For students successful interactions began with listening on the part of advisors—listening to what students need, what professors required and sometimes reading between the lines to decipher those needs that students could not yet articulate (Marcela, Kim). Students valued patient and thoughtful listening at the onset of the appointment and indeed throughout the interaction and felt that a good use of time often meant that advisors “heard” what they needed and provided that support. Indeed, for many students the most frustrating and unfulfilling interactions were those wherein the support advisors provided did not align with their expressed needs, whether those needs were expressed explicitly or implicitly (Gabriela, Julian, Myriam). For students listening was perceived as a “responsibility” (Gabriela) and advisors who spent time listening as well as speaking or helping to solve identified problems were valued by students (Marcela). Thus, advisors were often “sounding boards” or empathetic ears for students who were uncomfortable or unwilling to approach peers or professors for support. Therefore, time
and patience was valued among students who often felt rushed in divulging their needs in other spaces in the academy (Mariana, Yanyu).

Additionally, similar to advisors, students reported valuing interactions that worked to tease out the meaning of language that was “unclear” or writing that grew out of thoughts that occurred in another language. For some students the tendency for their thoughts to be “lost” or changed in translation made it beneficial to engage with advisors who consistently asked questions, negotiated meanings and provided thoughtful guidance in ensuring the content remained true to the students’ meaning. Marcela provided a thoughtful account of the challenges multilingual students face in not only transmitting meaning on paper in writing, but also to the advisor. As such, patience and attentive listening became paramount to a successful interaction. She stated,

> It’s tough when you have another language you have to organise the word, saying things the way English speakers say it, its extra work because trying to let the tutor know what you’re trying to say… and write it down in an English way. I guess that’s a challenge when trying to transmit what are your thoughts to that tutor and them understanding well what you mean and helping you. So yeah, I guess it’s a challenge because what could happen is that they switch [the meaning] and kind of understand something else. So they really need to listen to really understand well what your thoughts are and so those thoughts will not to be lost are shaped or changed in a way you don’t mean them to be.

Mariana similarly emphasised that advisors’ willingness to listen and be patient was essential as students are often “trying to explain something but it won’t be translated. You won’t find proper terms or proper explanations just because you think differently and the culture is different” (Mariana). For other students active listening and questioning on the part of advisors helped students to identify gaps or pieces of knowledge that they took for granted. Indeed, many of the students spoke about writing that discussed their home contexts or contexts that differed from those of the advisors. Here active listening and engagement with the writer helped the students to clarify ideas, add examples and “read [their] own papers like someone who doesn’t understand the context” about which they are writing (Myriam). While students sometimes expressed feeling frustrated or challenged to express their needs and clarify their thoughts, they unanimously agreed that the intellectual labour to do so was worth it when the advisor listened, engaged, and guided them in response.

The observation data also points to the importance of active listening, and the need for advisors to do so throughout the interactions. Indeed, “hearing” what students need is
important as often those needs that are expressed initially, for example “grammar,” lead into other needs, such as the genre of a literature review as a session progresses (Observation 4 & 5, Observation 13). In other cases, advisors listen as fellow students and commiserate about lack of feedback (Observation 9) or the challenges of writing within new disciplinary parameters (Observation 3).

Listening for meaning and attending to the intended message was also evident in the observations. Advisors often engaged in active questioning, in fact questions and the negotiation of meaning were key activities in the observed sessions. Often advisors would ask the students to verbally explain a section and then provide support in clarifying the written work to match those meanings. In other sessions, students described their goals while advisors made notes to create a “roadmap” and then the headings and main themes were negotiated dialogically (Observation 1, Observation 8). Interestingly, attention to meaning and “listening” to what the student was saying is also evident in the online feedback. In response to one student’s work the advisor writes a message in return and notes,

I did include quite a few comment boxes to explain the suggested edits or flag places where I wasn’t sure exactly what you meant. Please do read through all of the edits carefully as I have tried very hard to both pay close attention to the meaning of your words and not alter those meanings with my language suggestions. However, despite my greatest efforts, my linguistic edits may have in some cases altered what you were trying to say. I did add comments if changing the meaning through my edits was of concern to me, so please pay special attention to those sections (Observation 29).

In the document returned to the student there were numerous comments that asked whether the student meant “x” or “y” and made suggestions on how to clarify those meanings while drawing attention to the advisor’s attempt to stay true to the meaning intended by the student.

Therefore, active listening, “hearing,” and patience proved to be important on the part of advisors in the OSSC. The necessity of paying close attention to students’ expressed and emergent needs was evident to both advisors and students to ensure that the appointment provided the support that the student needed. Additionally, as students (and sometimes advisors) navigated multiple languages listening for intended and expressed meaning in writing was important to ensure that advisors did not inadvertently alter the student’s intended meaning or take the writing in directions that were untrue to the student’s intentions.
Guilt

“I call the discourse of power any discourse that engenders blame, hence guilt, in its recipient.” Roland Gérard Barthes

A final emotion that appeared in the advisor data but not in the student data was that of guilt. While the advisor data in chapter 6 demonstrated advisors’ feelings of frustration with the institution, advisors expressed strong feelings of guilt in interactions with students. Expressions of guilt—guilt about the structures of the academy, guilt about inability to provide enough support, guilt for lack of time, guilt for the harm done by previous negative feedback, guilt for inability to “fix” everything for students and even guilt for being monolingual—were evident throughout the discussions with the advisor participants. Indeed, as Chapter 6 demonstrated advisors often felt isolated, unsupported and unable to manage the needs of students that visited the OSSC. As much as they tried “not to take that all on” (Nisha), as they sat there with students in distress they questioned, “how can you not?” (Stacey). The vivid accounts of the challenges advisors faced often betrayed feelings of guilt and the narrative of Stacey depicts these feelings as she states,

The institution is taking their money and yet there’s not enough support for them, certainly not in the classroom. Absolutely zero instruction on academic writing coming from the professor and so how can I not care about that? How can I not? How can we not? You know, it’s like an ethical; it’s like a moral imperative. When the student walks through the door and my name is on that appointment, success in that moment means me seeing what is needed in that moment and me doing that. Whatever the student thinks they need or don’t need help with. But I, we, need to remind ourselves that we can’t do it all (Stacey).

Other advisors shared the challenges of trying to provide support when students had none in the time allotted as difficult in that there was a need to manage “my own anxiety and stress and be mindful of the expectations I’m putting on myself in taking on everything in the advisor role” (Brett). For others blame emerged as they struggled to cram in sufficient support for students in the time allotted and felt their own “weaknesses” left them unable to do it all (Bahareh). Guilt endured for those who had to turn students away who came for support when appointments were full for two weeks (Brett), or for those advisors who tried to support students who were the recipients of negative or non-existent support from their graduate supervisors (Nisha, Brett, Stacey). For others still, being monolingual left them feeling “self-conscious” and questioning their ability to provide adequate support when they cannot
possibly truly understand the reality of a student who is “completing a degree in their second, third or fourth language” (Lesley).

Finally advisors consistently struggled to provide the supports students needed when often those supports went far beyond the purview of the OSSC. Advisors were wary or resistant to turn students away and often provided support on areas that went far beyond writing. Indeed, students came to advisors to work through issues as diverse as housing (Jessica), family (Laleh) and finances (Laleh, Jessica), and social inclusion (Brett), and advisors did the best they could to support them but often realised that referrals were necessary. While referrals are disused in detail in the next section, the act of referring also engendered guilt for advisors as they sometimes feared shuffling students off to another service (if one existed) may do more harm than good (Nisha). Thus, many advisors intimated that the OSSC was a space that provided support for students writ large. Yet, the tendency for the OSSC to become an “academic hub” that “takes care of the student experience on multiple at OISE” comes with perils as

that's not its mandate, its mandate is very narrowly defined, that's where we get into problems, we would like to do more but we don't get paid enough to do more and we don't have time...but then we feel like we're not good enough when we can’t do it all and the students have nowhere else to go. That’s a real struggle (Nisha).

Thus, as advisors were also students who had learned to navigate the academy, the OISE environment, their own language learning experiences, and the expectations of academic writing they often became sources of support and information for students in ways that went far beyond the narrowly defined parameters of academic support. While most advisors signalled that supporting students with diverse needs emerged as they provided personalised and caring academic support, the inability to do more, do enough, or do everything well left many feeling anxious or guilty about the levels of support that they could realistically deliver in the OSSC.

Summary and Discussion: Effective Feedback and Affective Advising

The students and advisors in this study demonstrated a number of congruencies related to the interpersonal and affective nature of giving and receiving feedback in the OSSC. Writing, much like the research that it conveys was understood by all as neither dispassionate nor neutral but as “a flashpoint for emotion precisely because it is bound up with who [they] are
and what [they] know” as scholars (Graue, 2006, p. 38). The affective nature of feedback and the disservice careless, destructive, or vague feedback had on students was a fact well understood by the participants in this study. Indeed, both advisors and students frequently mentioned the affective work of the OSSC and the importance the provision of care and empathy had on their interactions therein, as well as the value of listening and patience on the part of advisors in the OSSC. While a number of themes related to the provision of feedback inside of the OSSC emerged, for many advisors feedback practices outside of the OSSC influenced and impacted their interactions in the OSSC and the approaches they took as feedback providers therein.

For advisors, the emotional and difficult nature of the provision of feedback in the OSSC was often further complicated by the fact that many students who find their way to writing centres have done so because they have already received feedback (Boquet, 2002, p. 61) and that prior feedback is often difficult, vague or even painful—“You want to be a teacher?!?” (Stacey), “Learn how to write.” (Boquet, 2002, p. 61). The advisors in this study are also students who understand and experience the emotions that students feel as they gingerly place a crumpled paper on the table to begin the work of supporting a student for whom feedback has proven to be an exclusionary, demeaning and hurtful experience. Indeed, it is often from this place that advisors take their cues on feedback practices and the work of “real teaching” (Bahareh) in the OSSC and also developed conceptions of negative feedback practices in the OISE environment.

The descriptions of the feedback practices in the OSSC as including a caring, rather than exclusionary practice are reflective of the diverse way feedback practices in the scholarly community can be understood. Indeed, in her article “The Transformative Power of Reviewing” Beth Graue (2006) develops a metaphor based on the playground to examine the process of peer review, through which some of the “players” and the positions they take can be identified. For Graue (2006) among the players on her academic playground exist “bullies” as well as “teachers.” A scholarly playground bully is one who “picks on someone less powerful using the invitation to provide feedback as an opening for name-calling, insults and general abuse” (p.38), while a teacher is “a coach or facilitator who sees talent on the playground and works to develop it” (p. 39). Advisors were certainly in agreement that negative feedback practices included those that were akin to Graue’s “bullies” where commentary was disparaging, hurtful and generally unhelpful. Indeed, advisors felt strongly
that feedback that simply attacked the work (and sometimes the student) was a “travesty” (Stacey) that left the recipient students “shattered” (Farha) and “faltering” (Brett), and they worked hard to provide feedback that counted these negative emotions and created ways forward for those students who came to the OSSC. For advisors, then, the need to provide care and affective support for students in the OSSC led to descriptions of their work as “teaching,” which naturally included a component of care to promote the development of students (Brett, Stacey, Bahareh, Laleh).

Students too had conceptions of negative feedback practices within the OISE environment that may have preceded their interactions in the OSSC. While students were less vocal and less critical regarding the (negative) feedback practices of some faculty, their paths to the OSSC and narratives demonstrate congruency with some of the advisors’ narratives. Indeed, several students did recall finding their way to the OSSC through feedback that deemed their work “awkward” (Julian, Yanyu) or in need of professional help (Myriam), and another admitted that she had received that she called “ironic” feedback wherein a professor somewhat mockingly reviewed the work and deemed it to be “not good enough” (Alejandra). Despite this, students seemed to accept that faculty were too busy to provide adequate feedback or preferred to “try out” ideas in the OSSC to submit more polished drafts for faculty feedback (Eun-ah, Gabriela, Paola). Student responses often suggested that they felt requesting faculty feedback on early drafts was burdensome to busy professors, and much like the participants in Can and Walker’s (2011) study, “wanted to feel comfortable soliciting feedback and did not want to feel like a burden to feedback providers” (p. 525). For this reason, advisors who were perceived as “putting in time” or “taking a big seat and doing me a favour” (Alejandra) made students feel uncomfortable and embarrassed about seeking support. Thus, similar to Can and Walker’s (2011) findings, students in this study too “valued feedback when they perceived that the feedback providers believed in their potential, cared about their improvement of skills, and tried to be helpful (p. 511).

Certainly the findings here demonstrate how “feedback practices occur in the broader content of an academic community, discipline and as a part of an institution’s practices” (Can & Walker, 2011, p. 510). However, this researcher does not pretend to imply that academe, the discipline of education or OISE are spaces wherein difficult feedback is dispersed unfettered; rather, it demonstrates that those who support students in writing centres such as the OSSC often have a front row seat to the impact and outcomes of negative feedback precisely
because that is how many students find their way to the “safe space” of the writing centre in the first place (Trachsel, 1995, p. 41). Indeed, one only needs to look at 30 years of writing centre scholarship to understand how these spaces often find themselves working with far “too [many] writers whose writing has received caustic, hostile, or otherwise unconstructive commentary” (North, 1984, p. 440), and while such commentary may only be reflective of a small portion of feedback practices, it is frequently a catalyst for students’ visits to writing centres. Yet, it is often from these difficult interactions that “good” feedback practices in the OSSC emerged.

The provision of care and the development of connection and rapport within the OSSC was thus frequently mentioned by both participant groups in this study. Certainly narratives of “care” are never far removed from writing centre stories. Indeed, the expressed mandates of “support” and “help” that emerged so pervasively in Chapter 4 paint a caring portrait of writing centre work across contexts. Furthermore, depictions of writing centres as “cozy” (Grutsch McKinney, 2013), “nurturing” (Grumet, 1988), and “caregiving” (Harris, 1990) are well situated in the writing centre lore. While the effects of these narratives have impacted discussions on the raison d’être of the writing centre and the tendency to view interactions therein as always helpful and neutral (Grimm, 1996, 2009), there certainly remains a need and a place for care in the writing centre.

For advisors the provision of care was ascribed to the act of “good” teaching; care and “good” teaching were inextricably related and inseparable. Thus, care played an integral role in the provision of support in the OSSC and was often described as being achieved through developing connection and rapport with students. In fact, advisors often described connection, care and rapport as the crucial factors in successful interactions, which is congruent with McInerney’s (1998) findings that relationship is the most important aspect of the tutorial interaction to generate learning and dialogue. Cultivating a comfortable relationship was often achieved through simple small talk at the beginning of a session to generate comfort prior to the delivery of feedback. Existing personal relationships cultivated through ongoing interactions within and outside the OSSC were reflective of other writing centre sites wherein “personal discourse in tutorials” resulted (Moser, 2002). While the literature from writing centres demonstrates that small talk is not a consistent feature of all tutorials, often sessions that engage in small talk do permit relationship building (Hass, 1986), and generate comfort to offset the difficult revision process (Hunter, 1993), and create a “friendly and interactive
environment” (Cardenas, 2000, p. 113). Finally, three of the advisors who were themselves multilingual students recalled sessions wherein theirs and the students’ first languages were the same, and discussion in the L1 was often used as a rapport-building tool or to explain complex concepts (Bahareh, Laleh, Lanfen). While the literature on multilingual tutors is minimal, multilingual tutors’ use of students’ L1 for rapport building and complex concepts is consistent with existing empirical evidence (Wang, 2012).

Generating a comfortable environment for students, then, was essential to allowing students to “open up” but also learn and develop where critique was met with support. The creation of a comfortable environment for students has emerged as imperative for successful writing interactions from both the students’ and tutors’ perspectives in other writing centre research (Thompson et al., 2009; Thonus, 2002). In the provision of a comfortable, supportive environment, advisors also worked to provide both positive and critical feedback in tandem. For example, one advisor described the “comment sandwich” wherein positive feedback is presented at the beginning and end of the session with critical feedback in the middle (Lanfen). The observations, and the notes sent to students online, also demonstrated an approach that interspersed the positive and negative feedback in order to encourage students while facilitating improvement. Weaving positive, encouraging feedback together with constructive criticism, or providing “balanced comments,” is indeed a well-suited approach for students new to the academy or discipline as well as for those developing language skills in English (Eryres, Hatch, Turner & West, 2001, p. 151). The importance of the provision of positive and encouraging feedback also emerges from the empirical data within writing centre environments (Mackiewicz, 2004; Thompson et al., 2009). The online appointments also demonstrated markers of connectedness akin to the tutors in Moser’s (2002) study as their emails demonstrated informal language or tone, the use of emoticons, and even personal anecdotes in an effort to connect with the student recipients of their message.

Students too drew connection as an important feature of their levels of comfort and saw advisors’ levels of engagement with them and their work as demonstrative of care. For students “personal connection” made it easier to share their writing with advisors (Alejandra, Paola). Furthermore, students described the most effective advisors as warm, supportive and caring, and students choose to return to these advisors for repeat sessions while avoiding advisors who did not demonstrate these qualities. Indeed, students appreciated supportive and positive interactions in the OSSC, yet they intimated awareness that other academic spaces
did not adhere to such approaches. One student juxtaposed the feedback practices in the OSSC with journal reviewers who can be “absolutely filthy nasty,” which does not create conditions for learning (Alejandra). While students eschewed interactions that were not supportive or advisors who they did not perceive as warm, they also suggested that too much affective concern or positivity was similarly unhelpful for their learning processes.

Indeed, similar to the doctoral students in Can and Walker’s (2011) study, students in this study also gravitated towards those people who demonstrated a willingness to help the student through the provision of feedback that was both encouraging and critical. Thus while students certainly agreed with advisors that effective feedback in the OSSC included the development of connection and care, they also described careless feedback practices in the OSSC environment. For students “blank” or “nonsense” feedback or commentary that expressed approval without rationale for that approval was deemed to be unhelpful, careless, and frustrating (Eun-ah, Gabriela, Kim). Indeed, students spoke of valuing feedback, any feedback, and wanted critique and comments that would help them improve and grow. These findings are in line with Eryes, Hatch, Turner and West’s (2001) findings from a study conducted with nursing doctoral students related to critique. Indeed, the findings from the students in this study converge with Eryes et al.’s in two main ways. First, the students in this study also found complimentary comments without explanation, “empty good comments,” unhelpful and pointless (p.151). Second, students in both studies valued critique and saw limited commentary as indicative of a lack of care, and concluded that “critique= care, and conversely, lack of critique= the teacher doesn’t care” (p.151). Thus, while students eschewed feedback in the OSSC that was characteristic of a “bully” who takes an authoritative stance and provides negative or even hurtful feedback, they also avoided advisors who provided unsubstantiated positive feedback and gravitated towards “teachers” who appeared interested in “scaffolding individuals and their intellectual work” through positive and critical feedback (Graue, 2006, p. 40).

The concept of empathy was also present in the narratives of both advisors and students. Indeed, both groups were well aware of the ways that sharing writing engendered vulnerability and entailed “risks” (Can & Walker, 2011, p. 526). As students themselves, advisors often suggested that had too felt what many students who visit the OSSC feel, they too had “been there.” Indeed, the challenges of navigating the educational and sometimes larger societal environments, moving between languages, negotiating a new discipline,
interacting with faculty, and being students in the OSSC themselves all generated empathy for students among the advisors in the OSSC.

Students too appreciated empathy from advisors and felt most supported by those advisors who understood how to work with multilingual students. However, the students often did not seem to “recognise” that advisors were often navigating similar challenges, even if advisors explicitly expressed that they were. While the advisors and students in this research were not dyads (with the exception of observations) it is interesting to note that students valued advisors who understood their multilingualism but never referred to advisors themselves as multilingual despite the fact that the majority of advisors who worked in the OSSC were multilingual. Students’ lack of recognition of the advisors’ multilingual statuses could also be the result of lingering assumptions that all writing centre tutors are native English speakers (Bailey, 2002) and/or the myth that writing centre tutors need be Native English speakers (Thonus, 2014).

Finally, students perceived advisors as lacking in empathy or sensitivity for the student’s position when they began sessions by setting parameters on the services of the OSSC. For students such parameter setting demonstrated inflexibility on the part of the advisor and created a “distance” and made students feel “rejected” (Marcela, Kim, Julian). The strict adherence to prescribed roles sometimes resulted in failed sessions wherein advisors were perceived as insensitive or unresponsive to students’ needs, similar to the interactions observed in Cardenas’ (2000) writing centre research. Moreover, other research has demonstrated how beginning sessions with a lack of “openness” (McInerey, 1998) or non-negotiable parameters made it difficult for students and advisors to establish an environment wherein the student’s needs could be expressed and understood (p. 157).

Both advisors and students mentioned listening as a necessity for needs to be expressed and heard in the interactions in the OSSC. However, students and advisors both pointed to the ways in which advisors needed to not only listen carefully to students’ needs, but also to writers’ voices and ask questions to ensure that voice was not altered by advisors’ suggestions. Therefore, active listening, thoughtful questioning, and patience also emerged as important for effective advising and communication to occur in the OSSC. The importance of listening is also reflected in the literature from writing centres wherein Cardenas (2000) found that tutors who failed to listen often created frustrating sessions for students whose needs were not met as the tutor took authority in directing the session. In the same study, Cardenas
(2000) also found tutors that partook in “active listening” and questioning were able to support students to express themselves and their needs (p. 98).

Thoughtful questioning that encourages students to engage with their ideas and elaborate on their needs have also been found to be beneficial in several other writing centre studies (see for example: Bell, 1989; Hass, 1986; Nicolas, 2002). Moreover, Socratic questioning remains well ensconced the writing centre literature as a key component of collaborative learning, yet more recent literature has suggested its benefits for HOCs while support LOCs should be more directive with multilingual students (Blau, Hall and Sparks, 2002). However, often in an attempt to be non-directive following writing centre lore, other studies have noted the use of close-ended or leading questions – those for which the tutor’s knew the answer and were perceived as “testing” student responses—were found to be less productive, even ineffective (Fletcher, 1993; Stachera, 2003; Thonus, 1999). Thus, questioning should be thoughtful and engage with student’s work when working on HOCs, but becomes tedious or time-consuming or “testing” for LOCs, especially with multilingual writers.

Finally, feelings of guilt emerged from the narratives of the advisors in this study. While guilt is not an unfamiliar emotion in the writing centre, the way it appeared in this research differs from previous research. In “Guilt-Free Tutoring: Rethinking How we Tutor Non-Native English Speaking Students” Blau, Hall and Sparks (2002) found that tutors felt “frustration and guilt about violating the received notions of writing center practice” (p. 23). In their study tutors consistently tried to conform to non-directive approaches through questioning and sought to privilege of HOCs over LOCs, yet felt guilt when they were unable to do so. The advisor participants in this study did not show similar adherence to writing centre lore nor did they express guilt for subverting it. Rather, the advisors in this study consistently felt guilt for the lack of supports that were available to the students they advised. Indeed, advisors in this study were frequently frustrated with the institutional supports available and oftentimes felt guilty turning students away, ending appointments on time, or simply on being able to scratch the surface of students’ needs in the short sessions.

This section has reviewed the highly affective nature of the interpersonal interactions within the OSSC. Figure 31 presents an overview of the main sub-themes discussed in this section. A number of congruencies emerged as students and advisors both described how students often find their ways to the OSSC due to previous feedback that has been negative, difficult or unclear to students. Thus, both advisors and students understand the importance of care and
connection in generating interactions wherein feedback can be both supportive and critical. In so doing, students and advisors noted the importance of empathy on the part of advisors related to students’ writing and language abilities as well as the challenges and pressures they face in the academic environment. Successful tutorials were described as those that included active listening for students’ needs and meanings, and often patient and thoughtful questioning created an environment where this was possible.

Tensions or differences emerged between participant groups as students viewed little or no feedback as careless and found positive feedback without explanation equally careless. Students also felt that advisors who clung to their “advisor role” and outlined parameters of support at the beginning of sessions were not empathetic or sympathetic, which made students feel rebuffed or refused. Advisors, on the other hand, demonstrated feelings of guilt when they were unable to provide sufficient support or were asked to provide support that was beyond the purview of their abilities to provide in the time allocated. In order to provide support where they could not, advisors often acted as referrers and directed students to other extra classroom supports, student groups, and university services and offices for additional help. In so doing advisors hoped to contribute to students’ empowerment and confidence to advocate for themselves and find resources where needed. Thus, the goals of building successful writers and academics versus making “good” papers sometimes emerge dichotomously for advisors and students in the OSSC and other writing centre environments—it is to these negotiations that the next section turns.
Figure 31. Effective Feedback and Affective Advising
**Product and Process**

**Student Narrative: Product Matters:**
“*I need an A+*”

I stopped coming to the OSSC for a while, not because I didn’t get any help, obviously the help is really good, but the help that I really needed, which was editing, was not coming from them. Also, my first semester I went to the Writing Centre and I reviewed half of my paper and the second part there was no opportunity, no time. You know the consultant had just left and I was like, “okay, just get brave and submit it.” I got an A- and the professor’s feedback said that I had to have someone help me with my writing and I felt so bad. After that semester, I found I couldn’t get enough hours at the OSSC, and I believe that the Writing Centre couldn’t handle it because they have few advisors. Also, before we used to have 45 minutes and now it’s like 35 minutes and I’m saying “why all this?” We still pay the same amount of money from our tuition so what’s happening, right?

That’s why my best solution in the end was paying a professional editor. You just go “here you go” and in two days they give it back to me. I just click send and then I’m guaranteed an A+. The person already knows my work so I don’t have to sit down and explain all the things that I know, they don’t focus on where the period should be. I know that already. I need help with my transitioning and my run on sentences. I can’t work through the whole paper in a 35-minute session and only getting through a few pages isn’t enough when my grades are on

**Advisor Narrative: Process, ‘Teachable Moments’ and Support Networks**

Goal mismatches are tricky in the OSSC. I mean I always want to support student with what they need, but I won’t just do it for them. Sometimes students come in with an hour to spare before they are to hand something in. They really just want me to fix it and the conditions in cases like those make it very difficult to engage them or make anything we do lasting in terms of impacting their broader purpose. In those cases it’s not always easy to explain to someone that you are not there to fix their papers for them and that they need to be more introspective and self-aware and take greater steps outside of this one, and it’s a big step in itself that they are coming to the OSSC, but it’s often through a series of appointments that I can help them to find other resources to help them through this process while still building their confidence and making them feel like they have the ability to do this.

The other really complex reality about what students want and think that they need is that faculty often send students to the writing centre with the expectation that we are here to clean up students’ paper. We’re not supplying editing help, it’s so much more crucial and fundamental than that. Meetings with students often go into a greater breadth but also way deeper interaction than an editing appointment, but that doesn’t mean that students are always ready for the teachable moments because they are just so overwhelmed and someone has said, “you need to get your work edited.” That’s what often brings them here the first time.

So we do need to be careful about how we try to tell them that what we do and don’t do. I once went to a professional development session with writing centre people at central campus. One of the facilitators said that when students ask for editing support that we should see it as in invitation to discuss their paper and we shouldn’t get all caught up in saying what we don’t do, we should just start that conversation from what they need. I learned early on that it’s better to just start
the line. I still need help with those connections and my professional editor already knows me and how I write. So he already knows how to make those connections. So the professional editor gets my ideas and he puts these connectors and I say, “Oh, that’s beautiful! It looks beautiful now.” Those are my ideas but you helped me to put them into the right format. I wouldn’t be able to do it on my own just because when I read I understand but I won’t be able to come up with that specific sentence to connect ideas. Now though I just feel like “oh can I send it like this? Oh, this is an important person, I can’t send it like this!” I need someone to edit it because I don’t feel there is room to just present yourself.

Another time with a course I didn’t get professional editing and the professor returned it and said use a professional. I was like “what, I got an A-?!” It’s really difficult because when I came to the OSSC with my final paper and I told [the advisor], “I feel this is my final paper, I just want some final tricks.” And I explicitly told her “if you are able to edit, that’s what I really need help with,” and she said she couldn’t do that. She said she could comment on general ideas and how they are flowing. I was a bit disappointed of course with that particular rule of not editing the work that the students bring because professors keep sending me to the OSSC for this and then they won’t do it. If I can’t afford to have an editor review it for me then it’s my grades that suffer.

with the first line and find those teachable moments and remind myself that I’m here to provide some kind of learning opportunity. So now I don’t respond with the “we don’t edit,” I just do what I know works and that is to focus on the process and the instruction that will go beyond this one assignment. But I mean I do know that a lot of advisors take a hard line on the no editing thing, and are really upfront about that with students. When I’m looking at the big picture and they’re looking at the assignment our goals don’t match, but I think for those students that engage with advisors for multiple appointments these goals become really similar. Sometimes this can happen on one-off appointments but not always, I mean you can’t make someone learn if they’re just too overwhelmed to do it. But usually I focus on what I can do to help them on a broader scale while I focus on the paper that they are simply wanting to improve. This usually works—they feel like they made improvements to the paper but it’s wasn’t because I marked it all up while they played on their phone. We marked it up together and they engaged, and hopefully they learned something transferrable. So in essence I mean we are helping them to improve their work and that involves editing, but usually I get them to actually make their own corrections and I love when they grab a pen and say “Can I put that in so I remember?” I love that it becomes an engagement and they start to take ownership over their work.

Part of the process too is helping them to advocate for themselves. I find a lot of students come in and just don’t know about resources, don’t know how to approach professors when they’re struggling, or sometimes come here for things that are way beyond writing. I mean the diversity of requests we get... it’s important that we know what the university has to support students to connect them. And, well, I can grandstand for a while about why it is that somebody who needs support as diverse as housing and or finance is finding it at the writing centre and not a more holistic space within the institution, but the reality is that I just need to help them to find those spaces. That’s part of the process.
Product and Process

The previous section examined the importance of attending to affective dimensions with the provision of feedback in the OSSC. While listening to students’ needs and meanings were illuminated as essential, this section examines the different ways those needs were expressed and addressed by students and advisors in the study. Certainly, both students and advisors were keen to partake in interactions that provided the student with productive ways forward in their academic journeys. However, tensions exist between participant groups’ descriptions of successful outcomes in the OSSC with students focusing on individual assignments and advisors privileging the longer-term impacts of OSSC interactions. Indeed, advisors often referred to the process of writing and the development of skills and strategies that were transferrable. Students, on the other hand, were more frequently focused on the product that motivated their visit to the OSSC and improvements to process were a fortunate by-product of ongoing interactions. Thus, responses from students and advisors in this study sometimes demonstrated tensions between a focus on a discrete assignment, editing support and a successful grade, versus a focus on broader goals of empowerment, self-advocacy and students’ needs to leverage other resources of support outside of the OSSC.

Negotiating (Mis) Matched Agendas?

The maxim to “make better writers, not better writing” (North, 1984, p. 483) has endured in writing centre lore for the last thirty years, which was evidenced in Chapter 4 as many of the writing centre websites analysed expressed a mandate to create independent, empowered writers rather than improved papers. The data from the OSSC also demonstrates that improving writers is the expressed goal of the centre and those who work there. However, students often come to the OSSC in the hopes of improving a piece of writing. While the long-term goals of making better writers are not lost on students, the urgency of turning in assignments for assessment generates a desire to focus on the product or the text in opposition to advisors’ hopes to improve the process or develop the writer. Therefore, these sometimes divergent agendas generated expectations that were not always congruent between students and advisors in the OSSC.

While evidence of mismatched agendas appeared throughout the responses between the two participant groups, differences were particularly evident in students’ and advisors’ descriptions of
a successful OSSC interaction. Indeed, each of the student and advisor participants who took part in interviews were asked to describe a successful interaction in the OSSC during the one-on-one interviews. The advisor responses are paraphrased in Table 16 and student responses are depicted in Table 17.

Table 16. Descriptions of Successful Interactions in the OSSC: Advisors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advisor Participant</th>
<th>Successful Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nisha</td>
<td>Worked with a student to find a way to represent her language and voice in writing while still maintaining awareness of contextual writing expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevor</td>
<td>Worked with a student to flesh out ideas in a grant proposal. While the proposal was not successful, the student left with a clearer idea about how to go about the research process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett</td>
<td>Supported a student to understand feedback that was unclear, developed rapport with the student and generated strategies the student could apply to her ongoing writing practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidhura</td>
<td>Worked with a student throughout his degree program to provide English writing support. Scaffolded learning to help the student identify errors independently. The student completed the program and secured an academic job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesley</td>
<td>Worked with a student for two sessions to help identify common language errors. The student was then able to identify errors on her own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>Provided ongoing grammar and vocabulary support to a student throughout a single term. Experienced the student’s ability to incorporate feedback and bring in questions to continue the learning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahareh</td>
<td>Provided a detailed template for a student to use as a guide to write research papers. The student returned several times with papers that followed key elements of the template.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irina</td>
<td>Through ongoing sessions helped a student to independently identify common errors and refine her writing process throughout her program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laleh</td>
<td>Developed a strong rapport with a student who spoke the same first language. Connected the student with several resources to provide ongoing support in addition to the OSSC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanfen</td>
<td>Developed a rapport with a student who spoke the same language. Provided ongoing support to the student in adapting to OISE, the University of Toronto, and the culture in Canada.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17. Descriptions of Successful Interactions in the OSSC: Multilingual Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Participant</th>
<th>Successful Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marcela</td>
<td>Read the professor’s assignment, provided support with clarity, organisation, and ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi-yong</td>
<td>Improved English and received a successful grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alejandra</td>
<td>Received “A”s in classes and aligned work to academic ways of writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eun-ah</td>
<td>Improved critical thinking to create a better final assignment in line with professor’s expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriela</td>
<td>Ongoing appointments that allowed for growth through line-by-line support that explained errors and improved clarity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariana</td>
<td>Received clear instructions/rationales for suggested changes to an assignment in a supportive and encouraging interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navya</td>
<td>Received clear instructions for necessary changes, felt confident upon leaving that the paper was better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanyu</td>
<td>Worked through a thesis draft that had received difficult feedback from a professor and developed ways forward to improve the draft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>Ongoing sessions that provided line-by-line support to clarify ideas and improve grammar. Led to better self-editing and increased confidence with writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>Received positive and encouraging feedback on a piece of writing from a supportive advisor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses in Tables 16 and 17 are demonstrative of the different foci of advisors or students. Advisor responses show that successful interactions were defined as those that enabled the writer’s voice (Nisha), engendered clarity in the research process (Trevor), provided strategies that related to the writing process and independent error-identification (Brett, Vidhura, Lesley, Jessica, Irina), provided a template for research papers (Bahareh), and aided the student in securing connections and adapting to the institutional environment (Laleh, Lanfen). Advisor responses tended to refer to interactions that occurred on an ongoing basis rather than singular interactions and they discussed summative outcomes of these interactions as a measure of success. Students, on the other hand, demonstrated the importance of product in defining successful interactions as those resulted in improved grades (Mi-yong, Alejandra), aligned assignments to faculty expectations (Alejandra, Eun-ah), and undertook revisions that improved a paper (Marcela, Mariana, Navya, Yanyu). Contrary to advisors’ descriptions many of the students thus focused on immediate outcomes for a specific assignment, yet a focus on product did not usurp benefits to students’ processes. Indeed, similar to advisors, some students also demonstrated attention to process in valuing explanations that improved their writing over time.
(Gabriela, Ellen), illuminated academic writing conventions (Alejandra), or aided in the development of critical thinking (Eun-ah).

While there were certainly differences within and between the participant groups, the overview provided in Tables 16 and 17 is demonstrative of the emergent theme throughout the data of students’ focus on revising a product and advisors’ focus on process and ongoing development. These divergent agendas were not lost on students and advisors, in fact as one advisor suggested dualities related to expectations were commonplace in the OSSC. Jessica stated,

I think students are often coming with the expectation that I am just going to review the paper that they have and they are hoping that my review will yield them a higher grade. My expectation is that I want to provide them with ongoing strategies that they can use to better improve their craft of writing and be some sort of tool of emancipation from systemic marginalisation. So I feel like I understand the appointment as being like quite transformative and quite political, whereas I feel for the most part that students really just want me to read their work.

In supporting students to become independent and successful writers through OSSC interactions advisors often remarked that while attention to product was important, developing “strategies” (Nisha, Brett, Jessica), a “plan of attack” (Trevor), “next steps” (Bahareh), and resources that would support students in their subsequent writing projects and academic endeavours were the desired outcomes. As Jessica noted “I want to cultivate someone who is a better writer as opposed to improving this one standalone assignment.” Nisha echoed this sentiment by suggesting,

I see my role in not only giving them the immediate relief of what they are looking for in their paper but also, in a way, transmitting to them the logic of the context in which they’re doing their program and what they need to be aware of to be better writers in general, not just for that class and not just for that course…For me my role is to make them aware that, yes they operate at the micro-level within the context of needing to turn in an assignment for a particular class, but their success is ultimately determined on how they perform at a macro-level as one of many teachers, or as one of many PhDs, or one of many people doing work in education.

This notion of providing support that would translate beyond a single assignment rang true throughout the advisor interviews. Advisors noted how working through vocabulary, making lists of transition words or helping students to develop editing checklists were useful strategies (Jessica). Other advisors noted the importance of developing “concrete steps” students could take
to manage their own writing processes including revisiting previously graded and revised papers, reading aloud (Brett), using online resources and writer’s handbooks (Irina), and seeking out feedback and support from various sources (Trevor, Irina, Lesley). Therefore advisors agreed that it was important to not only work on the students’ assignment but also “to drop the pieces of advice that will enable them to do better, organise better, apply themselves better. Whether or not they take that and apply it is a different story, and that takes time” (Nisha).

However, in addition to devising strategies and ways forward for students to become more independent, and by extension better writers, advisors did work with students to improve papers through identifying errors or problems. Indeed, as one advisor noted students often had the impression that a piece of writing was their “ticket” into the OSSC and thus rarely came without a paper or assignment to guide the focus of the tutorial (Nisha). Thus, advisors did work through assignments and their feedback and review also improved students’ papers (Nisha, Brett).

Moreover, some advisors demonstrated awareness that for some students the pressures of the academy and the immense importance of writing for assessment engendered some students’ singular focus on improving the product (Nisha, Jessica, Laleh). Therefore, advisors understood that helping students to improve a paper was a central part of their role, although all advisors unanimously privileged instructional approaches to improvements. Thus, as demonstrated in Chapter 6 advisors willing worked line-by-line through papers delivering instruction on LOCs, HOCs and academic writing conventions in hopes that their instructional guidance would translate to the students’ next paper or assignment. For advisors, then, the most transformative and successful interactions were those that were sustained throughout the students’ degree program to allow for scaffolding and ongoing development of the writer. Conversely, the least successful sessions were those in which students came in hoping for a quick review that would yield a better grade. Jessica described the difference between ongoing engagement and students in “survival mode” the following way,

If a student is willing to do multiple appointments and really wants to take this as a learning opportunity and really wants to maximise the resource, that’s the most successful. But if a student shows up with something that is to be handed in in an hour obviously that appointment won’t be to my standard of political transformation, but I can do what that student wants and that’s fine. I just feel like if the conditions had been better for that student I would be able to offer them so much more, but I can work within the confines of the student just not having the time to learn.
For advisors, then, interactions in the OSSC did revolve around product and the improvement of that product, but for them the focus on product was aimed at improving the process or writer.

As part of a process approach to creating independent writers, the notion of supporting students to become comfortable advocating for themselves emerged in the narratives of many advisors. The advisors spoke of encouraging students to clarify assignments and feedback with professors (Brett, Lesley, Irina), asking professors for extensions in cases where students had run into personal issues or struggled to understand the parameters of the assignment in time to complete it (Jessica), or even revise and request to re-submit papers that received difficult feedback or poor assessments from faculty (Brett). Moreover, in creating independent and confident writers and students, advisors often did share stories of support that went beyond the writing process. Indeed, as identified earlier in the previous chapter advisors noted that students often came in with questions pertaining to matters as diverse as how to approach professors and navigating paperwork and bureaucracy in the institutional environment, to seeking community and finding housing. Advisors certainly supported students by providing support for these inquiries, but many also noted the importance of referring students to other resources to allow them to have multiple sources of advice and help.

Although advisors showed a willingness to help students with inquiries that went beyond the writing process, they were also aware that connecting students with other supports was necessary as the ongoing resource shortages created perils to positioning the OSSC as the panacea for all student issues. Thus, part of a process approach to support included the reality that many advisors often acted as referrers, directing students to diverse sources of support in the university and broader community to build independence. Indeed, as Brett noted “the University of Toronto has a support system in place for students—offices, clubs, counsellors, wellness initiatives—it’s just that students often don’t know about them and often students stay in the OISE bubble where the OSSC is the support outside of the classroom.” Advisors were therefore willing to admit that they could not always provide the necessary support, but they could help students to find those resources (Jessica). For some advisors this meant helping students to connect with central services that provided English language support (Brett, Lesley), career and housing services on campus (Jessica), counselling and personal support (Laleh), financial aid and accessibility
services (Irina), and even groups of students in the OISE environment who came from the same international context as a student (Brett).

Advisors took on the role of referrers at the OSSC as it was often the first place students sought out extra classroom support, which also often occurred from a referral (from faculty). Within the sessions in the OSSC through rapport and listening advisors were then often privy to a number of additional supports beyond writing support that would benefit students. Thus, the process of “social and connective linking” (Jessica) was an important feature of the OSSC in illuminating other resources for students who were often unaware of other supports available to them, which was particularly the case for international students (Jessica, Laleh). Moreover, the relationships built between students and advisors in the OSSC made referrals to certain offices such as counselling or financial aid more palatable to students who may be wary to seek out such support on their own or through a referral from someone with whom they have not yet developed a relationship (Brett, Vidhura).

Students, on the other hand, remained largely focused on the product that prompted their visit to the OSSC. This focus on improving the product led some students to express frustration with the pace at which reviews of their work progressed when advisors took instructional rather than directive approaches to sentence level errors (Marcela, Julian). For many students successful interactions in the OSSC did engender confidence, but this confidence was often contained within a single assignment and the assumption that the revisions made in the OSSC would garner a higher grade (Alejandra, Navya, Ellen). Moreover, in the context of high-stakes assessments and tight deadlines students felt relief and appreciation for those advisors who did work with them line-by-line to make better papers (Alejandra, Eun-ah, Julian, Paola, Yanyu). Additionally, some students did recall advisors providing referrals, but found attending English language classes advisors recommended on campus reviewed content they already knew and that the classroom structure was less helpful to them than the one-on-one, targeted support they received in the OSSC (Alejandra, Julian).

However, some students who used the OSSC frequently noted the ongoing learning and the development of self-revision strategies from their interactions therein such as providing editing guidelines and support with writing genres (Gabriela, Ellen). Others also reported receiving
support navigating the academy through learning about applying to graduate programs (Eun-ah, Yanyu), or developing and delivering presentations for academic conferences (Kim).

However, the bulk of student narratives related to support in the OSSC focused on how it helped them to improve individual assignments or papers. Indeed, across student participants the value of concrete, fulsome and directive feedback was cited as the most beneficial aspect of visiting the OSSC as this allowed students to improve the work that brought them to the centre. Conversely, lack of feedback or interactions that did not address the paper at hand were most likely to be deemed unsuccessful interactions as students left the OSSC without suggestions or tangible improvements to their work.

However, despite their differential foci on product and process, advisor and student narratives demonstrated that these two goals were largely negotiable and reconcilable. Indeed, for advisors student confidence was demonstrated through self-advocacy and leveraging multiple supports, while students found confidence from the successful completion of individual assignments. Moreover, students were appreciative of thoughtful, personalised feedback on their work, which often translated into strategies that could be used in other academic or writing endeavours later on. Advisors, on the other hand, were happy to provide line-by-line support as long as it was instructional and developed both the paper and the student. However, as the next section demonstrates focus on solely “fixing” the product by way of editing that was not instructional or did not engage students was deemed to be beyond compromise in the OSSC by advisors, despite the fact that students often, at least initially, sought this support.

**Editing**

Given the importance of developing writers and generating independence in the OSSC, advisors almost unanimously eschewed editing that was not instructional as a viable approach to supporting students. Indeed, more than half of the advisors who took part in the interviews suggested that expectation mismatches that were challenging to negotiate in the OSSC were almost always related to students’ desires for editing, where editing was defined as unilateral fixing on the part of the advisor. For advisors, challenges often arise when students come too late and simply want the advisor to polish up the paper or “cut them some slack and line edit their paper” (Nisha) as instructional support is too time-consuming in the face of a looming deadline.
For others, challenges emerged as students often “expect things to be fixed” and advisors must work through the “hard sell” that the OSSC is one support mechanism that often requires consistent effort and ongoing engagement over time to support the writing process (Trevor, Irina). For others still, challenges came with students who came to the OSSC without any intention of engaging in the review process and advisors struggled to support students who demonstrated an unwillingness or inability to learn or take part in the instructional approach favoured by advisors (Brett, Lesley, Jessica). Yet, despite these challenges advisor narratives demonstrated that they remained steadfast in their commitment that disengaged editing or the advisor “doing the work” was neither an available service nor was it beneficial to students.

While many advisors noted the OSSC’s policy of not editing, the policy was not the main impetus for the process approach, rather they refused to edit as they understood students’ learning was not supported by advisors undertaking unilateral fixing and editing. As Brett noted.

Well I kind of thought it was funny at the beginning that we are told not to edit so often… then once I started I realised that actually not editing students work is quite difficult to do because you see those little mistakes and you just want to… you just naturally correct them. I have to remind myself that it’s not as effective as discussing their work with them and coming up with the common errors. So it actually was something I had to actively think not to do and to do what is harder, which is to come up with ways for them to edit their own work.

Therefore, advisors often suggested that interactions in the OSSC did include helping students to improve their work, which involved editing but that engagement and ownership on the part of the student was essential (Nisha, Brett, Vidhura, Lesley). Indeed, advisors avoided marking up student papers (Nisha), unreflexively revising errors (Brett, Jessica), and becoming “yet another person writing all over their work, sometimes correcting and editing, but not explaining what’s wrong” (Brett). Across advisor participants, then, a clear understanding that such approaches were not conducive to student learning emerged.

For some advisors, their own experiences using writing centres in their undergraduate programs informed their unwillingness to edit and their ongoing commitment to instructional support. Brett suggested attending a writing centre in his undergraduate program improved his grades on papers, but he felt that the experience did not extend his learning or provide him with strategies to employ on his own outside of the writing centre. Jessica echoed this sentiment by describing her
previous experiences in writing centres that “polished the paper” and led to improvements in grades, yet in the absence of strategies to improve her writing independently she felt that she did not emerge as a “a better more competent writer,” but rather “as someone who knew that [she] needed three extra days to have [her] paper reviewed.” For both of Jessica and Brett their previous writing centre experiences and the resultant lack of growth generated an agenda that privileged process over “fixing” in order to develop writers rather than improve standalone assignments. Thus, advisors frequently mentioned explaining that it was not their role to edit or “fix everything,” but rather to provide students with strategies and ways forward to empower their writing and learning processes (Nisha, Trevor, Brett, Jessica, Irina).

While students largely demonstrated awareness that editing support was not within the purview of the OSSC, their narratives demonstrated that editing was a service many students felt was necessary and beneficial to their writing process. Indeed, for students the most mentioned supports that were lacking in the OSSC were: 1) resources/time/advisors, and 2) editing support. Therefore, students expressed feeling frustrated, disappointed and rebuffed when their requests for editing were denied in the OSSC or advisors began sessions by explicitly outlining the “no editing” policy (Marcela, Paola, Julian, Alejandra, Navya, Kim). Indeed, one student challenged the policy of not editing by suggesting that the OSSC’s mandate is to help with the writing process, of which editing is a part, and expressed a desire to be able to choose to spend the time editing. Julian stated “if I want to spend my time editing, even if it’s only one page or one paragraph that should be my choice. Why is that the choice of the centre?” Other students expressed similar feelings noting how editing was an integral part of successful writing and that academics/professors always had their work edited for publication in books or journals (Paola, Myriam). Indeed, for some students a “culture” (Julian) of editing was discernible in the academic environment as professors all employed editors and encouraged students to do the same (Alejandra, Myriam).

While some students spoke of receiving editing support from the OSSC, they were aware that advisors who did so were “going against the rules” (Paola). Alejandra shared an instance where she felt great relief following an interaction in the OSSC which provided “in-depth hints” to improve aspects of the paper in a manner akin to editing. Others recalled interactions wherein an advisor explicitly stated that they would edit the student’s paper despite the policy not to do so
(Paola), or editing help was received but the “forbidden” nature of this support was implied to the student (Alejandra). For the students who did receive editing support from some advisors and not others, those interactions wherein they brought final papers to be “reviewed” but were met with support that discussed “flow” or “ideas” were disappointing and left students feeling confused and ashamed for asking for editing support. One student recalled the diverse ways a request for editing support was met in the OSSC with three advisors. Julian said,

> I had this advisor and she said I am doing it against the rules. Then I had the other experience of I’m not doing it, I’m following the rules. And I had a third experience where the advisor edited. But he wasn’t explicit that I’m breaking the rules, but he went line-by-line.

For some students the “hit and miss” nature of advisors’ willingness to edit made them seek editing support elsewhere (if possible financially) and attend the OSSC for support with ideas and writing genres and/or conventions (Alejandra, Kim, Julian, Ellen).

The use of private or for-profit editing services to supplement, and sometimes replace the support provided in the OSSC was mentioned by several students in this research. For one student upon finishing a paper, the OSSC was the first line of support to ensure it met the professor’s guidelines and to discuss ideas and organisation. After the OSSC tutorial, the paper was sent to a professional editor for a final review, without which the student “guaranteed” that the paper would fail (Julian). Other students also admitted paying professionals to provide editing support prior to submitting high-stakes assignments, and doing so earned them “A”s and “A+”s, while neglecting to pay for editing resulted in poor grades and faculty admonishments that they should seek editing support (Alejandra, Paola, Myriam). Other students suggested that professional editing was a service they sought out and needed but the expense of doing so made it impossible for them to do so (Eun-ah, Ellen, Kim), which created barriers for them as multilingual students who were expected to write at the level of native English speakers (Ellen). Thus, for many students editing support was necessary and the provision of such support in the OSSC was seen as a matter of equity for those who could not pay for costly private editing services. Indeed, Alejandra suggested that the one support she wished he could access in the OSSC was editing. She stated,
I would ask for the writing centre to support editing. Straight forward. People need good editors and there’s a big business out there charging money people don’t have for producing fairly well written papers. I don’t mean that the centre will re-write or say words that are not said but make things easier or people who don’t have access that that, to paying an accurate editor to produce a fair piece of paper to be read with some level of flow and ideas. It’d be a big help for many.

Thus, while negotiations were largely possible between advisors and students related to product versus process, editing was an oft-cited irreconcilable tension between students and advisors in the OSSC.

**Summary and Discussion: Product and Process**

This section has illuminated that differences between a focus on product and a focus on process endure between interlocutors in the OSSC. Advisors felt that the most successful interactions in the OSSC were those that developed independence, confidence, and students’ abilities to advocate for themselves and leverage multiple supports for their own academic development. On the other hand, students remained keen to improve their papers, and by extension, improve their grades. The voices of students and advisors demonstrated the enduring push and pull between the success or a text or the success of a student. These differing foci seem almost inherent in writing centre interactions, as Steven North’s influential publication on the writing centre suggested 30 years ago, a particular text, its success or failure, is what brings [students] to talk to us in the first place. In the center, though, we look beyond or through that particular project, that particular text, and see it as an occasion for our primary concern, that process by which it is produced (North, 1984, p. 438).

However, the students and advisors in this study demonstrated that “looking beyond” the singular text does not necessarily circumvent or disregard the desire to improve the text when such improvement is instructional or includes the “teachable moments.” Indeed, these findings are reflected in Wang’s (2012) comparative study in two US institutions wherein mismatches between the expressed role of the writing centre and those who work there is to improve writers, while students remain keen to improve their writing. However similar to the understandings of advisors in this research, supporting students’ writing over time leads to more confident, competent writers. Wang (2012) suggests,
the goal of the WC [writing centre] is to assist ELLs to become better writers, although some tutors admitted that this is a continual process for ELLs to become better writers. ELLs, however, believe that the primary WC goal is to help them produce better writing so that they can confidently turn in their papers to professors. Producing comprehensible writing and getting a better grade are viewed extremely significant for ELLs… The dichotomous perceptions of the WC goal between tutors and ELLs were obvious. I believe that the ultimate goal of a WC is to produce better writers, but for ELLs, it is a step-by-step rather than a one-leap process. To be specific, it is unrealistic to expect ELLs to become better writers automatically; but rather, tutors will have to offer assistance to ELLs so that they gradually can reach that ultimate goal (p. 277).

Certainly these same tensions between improving papers and writing endured throughout the interactions discussed in this research. The focus on writers also engendered the commitment to instructional approaches over “editing,” which forms an integral basis for the accepted and venerated approach of “improving writers” in the writing centre as was evidenced in Chapter 4.

The notion of editing on the other hand, remains a difficult negotiation in the OSSC, and in writing centres in general. Indeed, the moratorium on “editing” remains so firmly entrenched in writing centres that those who work in centres often define their work as entailing the absence of editing as demonstrated in Chapters 2 and 4, while students familiar with the ethos of the writing centre are often reticent to ask for any support akin to editing lest they be rebuffed for making such a request. Given the prominence of the editing issue, it is instructive to return to the descriptions of what “editing” entails among the writing centres as well as definitions of editing outside of the writing centre discourse community. Table 18 delineates four types of editing that may be relevant to the writing centre context from the 12 types of editing described by the Editor’s Association of Canada. Table 19, on the other hand, provides an overview of the ways editing is defined (or not defined) by the centres included in the discursive analysis undertaken in Chapter 4.
Table 18. Types of Editing, Editor’s Association of Canada

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Editing</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantive or Structural Editing</td>
<td>Clarifying and/or reorganizing a manuscript for content and structure. Changes may be suggested to or drafted for the author. May include negotiating changes with author.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stylistic Editing</td>
<td>Clarifying meaning, eliminating jargon, smoothing language and other non-mechanical line-by-line editing. May include checking or correcting reading level; creating or recasting tables and/or figures; negotiating changes with author.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewriting</td>
<td>Creating a new manuscript or parts of a manuscript on the basis of content and research supplied by an author. May include some research and writing of original material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy Editing</td>
<td>Editing for grammar, spelling, punctuation and other mechanics of style; checking for consistency of mechanics and internal consistency of facts; marking head levels and approximate placement of art; notifying designer of any unusual production requirements. May include Canadianizing; metrification; providing or changing system of citations; writing or editing captions and/or credit lines; writing running heads; listing permissions needed and/or obtaining them; providing or editing preludes, back matter, cover copy and/or CIP data. May also include negotiating changes with author.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. "Copy editing" is often loosely used to include stylistic and even structural editing, fact checking and mark-up. It is not so used by the Editors’ Association of Canada.

Adapted from: Editor’s Association of Canada, n.d.

As Table 18 demonstrates, “editing” is not a singular activity and may include several diverse processes and approaches with varying levels of author engagement. Indeed, the Editor’s Association of Canada’s concept of “Substantive or Structural Editing” is akin to the support described by many OSSC advisors and students, and although this support is offered dialogically with the student being involved in the interaction, such support would be considered well within the purview of the OSSC. The definition of “Substantive or Structural Editing” can be aligned with OWL Purdue’s definition of “revision” which focuses topics, ideas, audience, and conventions (OWL Purdue, 2016, para. 7) and is also permitted and valued in the OSSC.

Moreover, student and advisor interactions that fit within “stylistic editing” where meaning was discussed, negotiated and clarified was cited as one of the most common subjects of discussion in the OSSC. The notion of stylistic editing is consistent with OWL Purdue’s definition of “editing”
wherein grammar, minor writing errors or phrasing is addressed to ensure clarity for the reader (OWL Purdue, 2016, para. 8). Additionally, “copy editing” where features of LOCs were attended to and addressed also occurred in the OSSC where students and advisors worked together to identify “errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation,” which is a form of “polishing” writing (OWL Purdue, 2016, para. 9). However, in turning to Table 19 it is clear that “rewriting” is beyond the purview of the OSSC and indeed a much-eschewed practice across writing centres.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre Name</th>
<th>Definition of Editing or Implied Meaning of Editing/Proofreading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Academy Skills and</td>
<td>Proofreading tends to focus on accidental, grammatical or other errors in a completed document including areas of consistency and accuracy. Editing may include proofreading but goes beyond these issues to look at improving the argument, structure, and expression of the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Centre (ANU)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian Centre for Writers (UofA)</td>
<td>The Centre for Writers is not an editing service. Your tutor will not proofread or edit your paper for you or make corrections on your paper. You are responsible for marking edits on your paper and for writing down your tutor’s comments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The UBC Writing Centre (UBC)      | *Proofreading*  
To us, proofreading means that tutors go through a piece of writing and correct all of the errors in grammar, mechanics, and spelling. Our tutors do not provide this service, since our goal is to help you become an independent, confident writer. What our tutors can do, however, is look over your paper with you and teach you what to look for and how to find and correct errors and patterns of error in your own writing. We are happy to provide support for proofreading, but we cannot complete the proofreading itself.  

*Editing*  
To us, editing means that tutors go through a piece of writing and rewrite it as needed to ensure clarity, development, strong organization, and other higher order concerns. We cannot provide this service because it does not support you in becoming an independent, confident writer, nor does it work with UBC’s academic integrity policy. What our tutors can do, however, is to let you know how they are reacting to your paper as readers. They can also offer feedback on your work and give you strategies for strengthening anything from your thesis/argument to organization. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre Name</th>
<th>Definition of Editing or Implied Meaning of Editing/Proofreading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Centre (DU)</td>
<td>We are <strong>not a proofreading or editing service</strong>—our goal is to teach you to write independently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill Writing Centre (MU)</td>
<td>Please note that the Tutorial Service is not a drop-off proofreading and editing service. Accordingly, tutors will not “correct” your draft assignments. Rather, tutors will model structurally and grammatically coherent sentences and paragraphs with a view to <strong>empowering you</strong> to learn how to write clear, concise, and engaging prose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering Communication Centre (UofT, Eng)</td>
<td>We don’t serve as a proofreading and editing service, but we can help you learn to identify and correct grammatical errors yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OISE Student Success Centre (UofT, Ed.)</td>
<td>We are an instructional writing centre and offer all of our students an opportunity to learn about the writing process and improve their ability to edit their own writing. We do <strong>NOT</strong> edit or proofread assignments for students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As discussed in Chapter 4, and as demonstrated in Table 19, many writing centres define editing and/or proofreading as services that are not provided. However, keeping the definitions discussed above in mind, what is also discernible is a lack of clarity related to what editing and proofreading actually entails. Indeed, only Australian National University and the University of British Columbia’s centres provide definitions of what they consider editing and proofreading to include. Both centres’ definitions suggest proofreading is the correction of sentence-level errors or LOCs, while editing is a “bigger picture” review that includes organisation, argument, ideas or HOCs in general. However, for the other centres in the sample independence, empowerment, and student ownership are used to justify the lack of editing services, with the suggestion being that editing and proofreading does not require student engagement and is akin to a “drop-off service” (McGill). Thus, “not editing” often simply equates to the provision of support that is instructional and process-orientated rather than rewriting or “writing students’ papers for them” (North, 1984, p. 441).

Therefore, the writing centres in the website sample in Chapter 4, the responses of leadership in Chapter 5, and the narratives of advisors in this chapter all point to the instructional nature of interactions in the OSSC that are not achieved by “editing.” However, as Chapter 6 demonstrated advisors do support students on everything from LOCs, to HOCs, to the conventions of academic writing. Thus, the OSSC does engage in many forms of “editing” described above from outside the writing centre context, although through an instructional approach. Indeed, the interactions described by advisors and students in the OSSC suggests that a “request for “editing” can be turned into an “educating opportunity” (Min, n.d., para. 2), an opportunity that may be lost for students who are turned away by the articulation (and sometimes in relatively opaque terms) of a strict “no editing” policy. In fact, students suggested that the “no editing” policy articulated clearly on the website may turn some students away before they even visit the OSSC and come to understand the educative nature of the process (Marcela, Julian, Myriam). Moreover, students in this research understood the “no editing” policy diversely as a policy that precluded or disparaged “grammar support” (Gabriela, Kim) or sentence level corrections (Alejandra, Julian), meaning the *instructional* caveat or simple unwillingness to “rewrite” without student engagement was not always understood by students.
While the focus on student engagement and ownership and the learning process that improves writers is certainly appropriate for writing centres operating in institutions of higher education, the narratives from students in this research and the absence of clarity related to what it means to “not edit” suggest that it may be worthwhile to revisit strict no editing or proofreading policies in writing centres. For Rebecca Day Babcock (2008) such policies may need to be revisited as they can be “exclusionary to certain groups, and may even create outlaw tutors set up for guilt and failure” from “breaking the law” (p. 63). While none of the advisors specifically mentioned guilt related to editing in this research, students suggested that advisors did at times edit and either explicitly or implicitly admit to breaking the rules (Paola, Alejandra, Julian). While the data shows that multilingual students do not come to the OSSC exclusively for editing, many are still concerned with the accuracy of their language (Hartshorn & Evans, 2012). Despite this, many more students appreciated feedback on HOCs and conventions, similar to the multilingual graduate students in Phillips (2013) and Wang’s (2012) study. Despite this, editing is still a valued service and the uncertainty students experience from differential approaches to editing in the OSSC often results in students seeking support outside of the writing centre for a fee that completely negates the instructional approach.

The value of editing has thus not gone unnoticed by some institutions of higher education in the Canadian context. The writing centre at Royal Roads University states that it does not provide editing support; however, the institution demonstrates awareness that students may still have cause to employ an academic editor during their studies. Given this awareness, the university has developed a policy on the use of editors within its policy on academic integrity and as such provides clear guidelines on the appropriate approaches students, and the editors they choose to work with, must take to satisfy the integrity policy. Royal Roads describes the “role and responsibilities of an academic editor” in the following way,

When editing a document for an RRU learner, editors should consider that the learner will be graded upon the quality of his/her writing, which means that the editor should not be a contributor to the document. Rather than correcting errors within the document or suggesting a correction, editors should instead indicate the error, be prepared to direct the learner to more information when appropriate, and leave the actual correction of the error to the learner. Maintaining the authorial separation between author and editor will support the academic integrity of the document and ensure that the author avoids any charges of plagiarism stemming from the use of an editor (Royal Roads University, Using an Academic Editor, para. 5, 2007).
The university further suggests that students inform thesis supervisors of their use of an editor and the scope of the edit being undertaken and/or indicate sections of documents that were edited (Royal Roads, Using, para. 7, 2016). Moreover, Royal Roads has a list of editors who have agreed to abide by the policies for academic editing set out by the institution available on their website for students to access.

Similarly, the University of Alberta has an Academic Copy Editing (ACE) service that for a modest fee supports graduate students with theses and dissertations, final capstone projects, and career and publication documents; this service does not provide support for graded, course assignments or undergraduate students (Waldman, 2015, p. 64). The Academic Copy Editing service notes that it is not a service that “rewrites” documents, but one that will “make revisions and corrections, transparently tracking them in the document for [students’] acceptance or rejection” (University of Alberta, ACE, para. 3, 2016). Associate Director of Writing Resources, Stephen Kuntz explains the creation of the program was mainly initiated to meet the needs of an increasing number of international graduate students who required editing support at the behest of faculty and found themselves turned away from the central Student Success Centre where, like many writing centres, editing is not offered (Waldman, 2015, p. 64). For Kuntz, the policy of not editing in writing centres and the lack of provision for other avenues of editing support for those students who required it “didn’t make pedagogic sense,” and editing was part of a continuum of services that graduate students required in completing their degrees (Kuntz in Waldman, 2015, p. 64). Interestingly, this service was not mentioned on the Centre for Writers website at the University of Alberta that was analysed in Chapter 4.

Outside of the Canadian context, in their research within a writing centre in a Japanese institution, Elton LaClare and Tracy Franz (2013) admit (without guilt) that “a great preponderance of tutorial sessions (nearly 84%) were dedicated to assisting users with issues related to editing” (p.11). For LaClare and Franz (2013) the high incidence of editing support provided in their context was understandable given that the emphasis “undergraduate users place on grammar correction likely stems from previous EFL writing experiences” and graduate students seek editing support to meet the “rigorous standards of academic publishing [in English]” (p. 12). While the authors certainly acknowledge that the prevalence and indeed performance of editing may be prohibited in other contexts and met with disapproval for those
writing centre scholars in a North American context, they also ask if “in circumstances where
the vast majority of users are coming in search of a particular service, is it desirable or even
feasible to deny it?” (LaClare & Franz, 2013, p.11). While the data from the OSSC does not
suggest that the vast majority of students are seeking editing support, it is a service many
students, particularly those in graduate programs, suggest they value and require. Moreover,
depending on the definition of editing one consults, editing is a service that many writing centres
already provide.

Chapter Summary
This chapter has discussed the affective nature of OSSC interactions as well as the negotiations
that occur in the OSSC space related to product and process. While a high degree of consistency
existed between participant groups related to affective advising, the goals of product and process
required negotiation while (non-instructional) editing was a major source of tension.

Within the theme of effective feedback and affective advising a clear preference for interactions
that were warm, caring and empathetic emerged across both participant groups. Additionally,
both advisors and students noted the importance of active listening on the part of advisors to help
students negotiate meaning and to understand the needs students bring with them.

While listening for student needs were important, advisors and students in this study
demonstrated differing overall goals for their interactions in the OSSC. Indeed, advisors focused
on instruction, growth, empowerment and resource building for students who visited the OSSC.
Students, conversely, valued interactions that resulted in tangible improvements to the products
that brought them to the OSSC. However, despite these agenda mismatches, students and
advisors generally felt satisfied with interactions in the OSSC when support focused on a product
in ways that improved students’ process. Where tensions did arise they often grew from requests
for editing, which advisors refused due to the lack of instructional or educational benefits of such
processes. For students the lack of editing support seemed to counter the OSSC’s resolve to
support all aspects of student writing and often drove those students who required editing to
outside editing support when finances permitted.
The next chapter integrates the findings from the critical discourse analysis, the leadership data and the student and advisor data illuminated here to summarise the key findings. It also discusses lingering tensions and challenges for the OSSC and broader writing centre discourse and practice, and considers the implications of this research as well as avenues for future research.
Interlude

Advisor Narrative: Resisting Imposition

I think for me the way I kind of support [multilingual students] is a process that starts with always asking them what they are trying to say and not telling them how to say it. Then I take what they’re trying to say and I have the teachable moment where I’m trying to understand why they want to say something. Then I try to present what this context is and how they need to be able to say it so that they understand and so that what we finally arrive at is something that still stays true to what they were trying to say, because I think that one of the things that we have is students that are coming to the OSSC writing in English but all of their thoughts have occurred in another language, so often the writing reflects literal translations of what that thought process has been. One way to approach it is to turn around and mark it up and turn back to the student and be like, “here you go you need to work on your grammar.” You’ve got to be able to turn around and say “I understand that this is what you’re trying to say, is this really what are you trying to say?” And then it’s important to kind of talk about the patterns that I’m seeing and try to work with them. So I think the support beneficial because it’s on an individual basis.

I was able to support one doctoral student doing a proposal and we talked about ways for her to keep using Spanish words in her work. She explained, that she just couldn’t find another English word for a key term, and I was like, “why do you think you need to? Can you not just use the Spanish word and let's work on a disclaimer that'll go at the start of your proposal that says if my research is focused on an Argentinian context, then I'm going to use certain words with an English footnote to indicate what that means. Why should your language and your culture be represented as a footnote when it could be the other way around?”

So I feel like my way is to be able to support them on an individual level and really ask them what their story is and really ask them what they're trying to say and communicate without imposing what I think they're trying to say...

So then we started to go through this student’s work and very much contextualised stuff and gave her alternative ways of thinking about it, stuff that she could do and she was receptive and I felt like it was a real victory for me because even in trying to understand where she was coming from. There was a struggle for her labour of love that she had come up with and there was a real interest in wanting to make it better, but not her kind of better, it was OISE's kind of better, “credible” better. So knowing the critical person that I am, I suggested “okay let's make it OISE better but also not compromise who you are and the cultures you represent and the languages that are, that are your life.” So I suggested that, she put a disclaimer so that these words that in her opinion are not transferable or not translatable, could be used. I wanted to
find a way to use the words that she familiar with and actually get the English put into a footnote or a parenthesis, and she was like, “I can do that?” And I was like, “yes you can, and it's only about... it's about being consistent and it's about setting that up right at the front of you proposal,” and she was interested to know what that would look like. And so I walked her through it, and the different ways to do it. We decided she could start up with her initial lines about what her project is about to turn around and say, “because this is contextualised to a particular country and a very particular time I'm going to be using these words...” and I think for the first time she, we got through only about a page and a half, but for the first time I think her eyes opened and I think she realised that it wasn't just her way or my way, there was a way to work in the common ground, and I think that's some, that's the responsibility for the OSSC, is not to just impose, but to find a way whereby students’ cultural experiences and languages are honoured within the writing they bring to us to work through working to find a sort of third space. That’s our mandate I think, and it matters.
Chapter 8: Discussion, Implications and Contributions

Introduction

This study sought to examine how writing centres in the universities selected for consideration describe and enact their roles in supporting multilingual students’ literacy practices in elite, anglophone institutions of higher education. Data was derived from a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of 12 writing centre websites across contexts with a focus on the nomenclature of the diverse centres, the descriptions of services provided (as well as references to services not provided), descriptions of mandates, missions or visions, and roles vis-à-vis the institution and students. Secondly, data was collected from a case study within a single site, the OISE Student Success Centre (OSSC). The case study included 5 interviews with leadership from the OSSC, 10 interviews with multilingual students, 10 interviews with OSSC advisors, two focus groups (one with students and one with advisors), and roughly 30 hours of observations (20 in person observations and documentation from 11 online sessions).

While writing centres are increasingly spaces where multilingual students seek out support in navigating the literacy practices of the academy, research and scholarship on the ways writing centres work with multilingual students remains limited. Moreover, much of the existing research relies on narrow interpretations of writing centre work within the boundaries of best practices that grew out of early writing centre scholarship, which was focused on native English speakers (Allen, 2009). As the empirical research has demonstrated that writing centres often diverge from espoused practices, generating scholarship that explores the ways writing centre tutors and multilingual students provide and receive support, respectively, is imperative. Additionally, while the micro-level interactions provide important insights into the literacy events in writing centres, these interactions cannot be considered apart from the macro-level structures and discourses of which they are apart. Indeed, as writing centre scholars increasingly apply critical approaches to the work of writing centres through new literacy studies or multiliteracies, the social and institutional discourses and practices related to literacies in the academy must not be overlooked in examinations of writing centre discourse, pedagogy and practice.
Thus, this research adopted a framework that examined both the macro situational discourses of select writing centres along with the accounts of enacted practices within one writing centre site. Through adopting a framework that considered collaborative and coercive relations of power at the macro-level it places the discourses of writing centres within broader literacy discourses in higher education. Moreover by applying Cummins’ (2001) framework of collaborative and coercive power relations, an examination of educator role definitions and the outcomes of those interactions at a micro-level was also necessary. In understanding the interactions at the micro-level a nested pedagogical framework guided this research in understanding the encompassing, yet hierarchical, pedagogical approaches that move from narrow skills-based approaches to more critical, socially informed and transformative approaches. Finally, in accounting for the “betwixt” or “in-between” space of the writing centre vis-à-vis the classroom, advisors vis-à-vis professors, and students and students vis-à-vis the literacy practices of the academy the concept of liminality engendered a focus on identities in flux, and the emotions that accompany such processes.

The data revealed a number of tensions, paradoxes, and congruencies at the macro and micro levels as well as within and between participant groups. In the proceeding section I illuminate the major findings of this study in light of the literature reviewed and the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2. I also discuss implications for writing centre promotional narratives, implications for policy and practice in the OSSC, and implications for the OISE site as well as broader implications for writing centre theory and practice. This chapter concludes by outlining the limitations of the research and avenues for future research based on the findings of this study.

Summary of Major Findings

*Participating from the periphery and pursuing legitimacy: Compromising discourse and institutional socialisation*

Given the social nature of literacy practices, the critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the selected writing centre sites departed from the understanding that the language writing centres use to describe their purpose and advertise their services “is socially shaped but is also socially shaping, or constitutive” (Fairclough, 1993, p. 134). Therefore, the CDA of the selected writing centre sites sought to understand both the wider societal discourses that impact writing centre discourses
as well as how the discourses writing centres espouse, challenge, uphold and/or subvert such discourses.

The findings from the sample in this research do not support the perspectives of writing centre scholars who suggest writing centres are increasingly adopting the name “multiliteracies centre,” and broadening their discourses and descriptions of practice to include multimodal and critical literacies (see for example Balester et. al., 2012; Grimm, 2009; Grutsch McKinney, 2013; Murphy & Hawkes, 2010; Sheridan & Inman, 2010). In fact, the findings from the centres surveyed in this sample demonstrate an enduring and relatively consistent “public” narrative that is neither particularly critical nor focused on multimodality. Rather, the findings across the websites in my sample are reflective of existing accounts of writing centre work wherein centres position themselves as supportive spaces for all students’ literacy development, student ownership of texts is emphasised, and interactions in writing centres are not “fixing,” editing or “doing” students’ work (Carino, 2002). Thus, the centres surveyed in this study certainly demonstrated an affinity with existing accounts of the “storying” of writing centre work (Boquet, 2002) or the writing centre “grand narrative” (Grutsch McKinney, 2013) in public or promotional descriptions.

While there is evidence of an ongoing inscription of writing centre situational discourse within the promotional narratives of writing centres, these narratives of writing centre work do not exist in isolation from broader institutional and societal discourses and ideologies. Indeed, the findings suggest the situational discourses on the writing centre websites sampled “are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power” within broader social and cultural structures (Fairclough, 1993, p. 135). Thus, the similarities identified across writing centre websites examined in Chapter 4 certainly demonstrate particular ideologies are at work in institutions of higher education related to literacy practices. Moreover, the situational discourses across writing centre sites emerge from particular historical, political and social struggles related to literacy and language, and the positioning of those who provide “language” support.

In Chapter 2 I discussed the dominance of the autonomous view of literacy that circulates in institutions of higher education to the detriment of diverse, multilingual students and writing centres (Hallett, 2010; Lea & Street, 1998, 2006; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Turner, 2011).
The discourses of writing centres that describe their work as supporting all students and maintaining student ownership through parameter setting are leveraged in response to this dominant skills-based frame of literacy. Indeed, such discourses attempt to counter the notion that students with literacy “problems” use writing centres, and that the challenges students face in academic writing are easily addressed through the transmission of basic skills. Examined within these broader frames, then, findings suggest that the marginal mention of multilingual students on the writing centre websites acts to avoid further “marking” multilingual students as deficient within the dominant literacy discourses of the academy, rather than a reflection of the fact that writing centre research has demonstrated a rather “jarring” lack of the “experiences and voices of Others,” including multilingual students, in conversations and debates (Denny, 2010, p. 5).

While the desire to counter the autonomous approach to literacy is discernible and admirable, the “negative talk” (Schendel, 2012, p. 4) or parameter setting (“we don’t edit,” “we don’t fix”) may be leveraged to meet “the needs of the institution at the expense of multilingual writers” (Olson, 2013, p. 2) who may value and require editing support (Babcock, 2008; Grimm, 2009). Indeed, considerable evidence exists that many, but not all, multilingual writers require sentence level support and that writing centres provide such support (Snively, 2008, Schendel, 2012, Robinson, 2009). However, the findings demonstrate that the majority of websites still articulate the emphatic denial of editing or grammar, suggesting the import of “hearers” and “overhearers” in institutional contexts outside of the writing centre in discursive negotiations. Thus, while writing centres are charged with “representing both… students and the literacy demands of the academy” (Carter, 2009, p. 138), findings suggest that writing centres leverage narratives in ways that attempt to engender legitimacy and belonging rather than exclusion and indeterminacy for the writing centre within the institutional environment, sometimes to the detriment of multilingual students.

Given that not all of the websites engaged in parameter setting, the findings from this study also provide evidence of the ways local or institutional power relations influence the discourses of diverse writing centres. While the selection criteria for the websites included in the CDA was not overly rigid, all of the institutions included in the sample were large, urban, research intensive universities that were rather diversely ranked within the top 300 internationally, yet all could be characterised as “elite” within their respective national contexts. Indeed, as Table 20
demonstrates, all of the universities included in the sample were ranked among the top 15 in their respective national contexts, with most ranking within the top four nationally.

**Table 20. Rankings of Institutions Included in the CDA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>QS 2014/2015 International Ranking</th>
<th>QS 2014/2015 National Ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian National University</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California Berkeley</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University College London</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Otago</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Alberta</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of British Columbia</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalhousie University</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGill University</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings of this study demonstrate that the socialisation practices of the academies in which these institutions are imbued may thus also play a role in the ways writing centres describe and promote their practice publically in their respective institutions. Indeed, returning to Gair and Mullins’ (2001) descriptions of socialisation mechanisms in diverse institutions, differences may be explained through the ways social stratification is reproduced via discourse in those institutions that see themselves as “selective,” while institutional mandates of access expansion generate less coercive discourses related to support for “non-traditional” students.

In selective institutions the existence of writing centres may be perilous, marginalised and tied to remedial services charged with “cleaning up” of language deemed below institutional expectations (Boquet, 2002, p. 2). This remedial work is often cordoned off from other disciplines and hidden away, as illuminating the need for such support challenges strongly held notions of autonomy and self-sufficiency that circulate in the hidden curricula in higher education. Thus, the emphatic “no editing” and “proofreading” edicts that were evident in all but three centres may be interpreted as countering the marginality of writing centres to position them as “more than” remedial support, while simultaneously attempting to assuage fears that writing centres transgress values of individual ownership that may be strongly held in selective institutions (Carino, 2002). The existence of defensive discourse in the public narratives of writing centres, then, may provide very real insights into the socialisation processes and power
relations of the institutions in which they are constituted and the extent of access mandates within diverse environments.

The case study site provides evidence of the ways selective socialisation mechanisms or coercive power relations impacted the public discourse of the OSSC, including its website. Indeed, the findings from leadership demonstrate the OSSC website’s parameter setting discourse was a result of leadership taking “defensive position” in response to “attacks” on the mandate of the OSSC on the “local front” (Carino, 2002, p. 101) wherein remedial frames were often applied to OSSC work. Thus, the OSSC navigated the complex terrain by subversively countering “traditional academic mindset” expressed by some institutional actors outside of the OSSC in its defensive discourse. However, given the fact that OSSC leadership demonstrated awareness of the way the OSSC was viewed as an “unnecessary financial expenditure” (LI) by some institutional actors, leveraging discourses that expressed criticality or demanded legitimacy for the OSSC on its “own terms” in the broader institution was “unwise” or even impossible (Carter, 2009, p. 149) within the selective and reproductive socialisation mechanisms in context.

Conversely, then, writing centre websites that demonstrate discursive flexibility and lack defensiveness may arise from institutions wherein access expansion is valued in the broader institutional environment. Indeed, the discourse of the Berkeley Learning Centre demonstrates the most critical narratives across the sites surveyed in its description of its approach as including “critical writing-center praxis” and its goal to create “thoughtful writers, and positive agents for change” (University of California, Berkeley, SLC, para. 1, 2015). The language employed on the Berkeley site is an outlier from the other sites in its criticality, which may be aided by Berkeley’s wider institutional position as an “access expander.” Indeed, a cursory look at Berkeley’s history demonstrates an institution that has long been politically active, liberal and or left-leaning and even “radical” (Collier & Horowitz, 1989), and has demonstrated commitment to expanding access to various underrepresented groups throughout its history (University of California Berkeley, “history,” 2016; Ula, 2010). The institutional socialisation mechanisms in this case may have allowed the Berkeley Learning Centre to leverage more critical narratives than the other institutions where more “selective” socialisation mechanisms were at play.
Additionally, findings demonstrate that the Academic Writing Centre at University College London and the University of Otago refrain from parameter setting and present services positively, which may suggest institutional environments where writing centre directors neither feel the need to “educate” faculty on the role of the centre, nor deflect labels of marginality that are often implicated in the insecurity and perilousness of writing centres (Carino, 2002). Thus findings suggest that public discourses on writing centre websites are often leveraged to validate and legitimate the writing centre in ways that are purposefully palatable to those in power in the rhetorical spaces in which they operate (Carter, 2009, p. 149). Thus, institutional socialisation practices are constituted in and by writing centres’ public discourses. The findings from this study therefore demonstrate that the narratives of the writing centres were constituted within institutional power relations that ranged on a continuum from coercive (where parameter setting is emphatic and in service of writing centre legitimacy), to permissive (where services are presented positively without parameter setting, as in the cases of UCL and UO) to collaborative (where criticality and a mandate of access expansion is expressed, as in UCB).

**Power and Inclusion/Exclusion: Role Definitions in the Case Study Site**

*Educator role definitions in the OISE environment*

The advisor participants who took part in this study consistently expressed awareness of the power relations that impacted multilingual students in the OISE environment. Findings from advisors illuminated how faculty often sent multilingual students to the OSSC for remediation of “deficiencies” that were categorised as “fixable” through “the euphemism of proofreading,” which diminishes the complexity of rewriting, idea checking, and clarification work that is often involved in one-to-one writing tutorials (Turner, 2011, p. 33-34). These findings suggest that a tendency to locate “‘problems’ within individual students” (Lea & Street, 1998, p.157) endures in the OISE environment where some instructors may view problems as “fixable” through generic instruction to academic essay writing. Moreover, the findings suggest that the OSSC is viewed as a space were such “fixing” occurs, despite attempts made by the OSSC website to educate “hearers” otherwise. Finally, advisor findings suggest when the autonomous view of literacy is operative, those who provide “remedial” support are similarly marginalised institutionally
(Boquet, 2002; Clughen & Connell, 2011; MacDonald, 1994, Turner, 2011), a sentiment expressed by many of the advisor participants in this study.

Multilingual students in this study demonstrated a clear awareness of the ways power relations impacted the literacy practices of the academy and their positionality therein. Student responses demonstrated that they experienced both collaborative and coercive relations of power in the broader OISE environment. Students reported collaborative relations that generated a sense of inclusion wherein faculty provided formative feedback and guidance, focused on content over language, encouraged their voice and knowledge, showed interest in the diverse contexts about which they wrote, and devised thoughtful assignments that allowed for reflection and innovation in writing practices. However, findings also revealed that coercive power relations were a feature of the broader OISE environment wherein feelings of exclusion resulted from narratives that situated multilingualism within discourses of deficit and remediation, and faculty took on roles of gatekeepers by providing unclear, unhelpful or hurtful feedback, or failed to provide feedback at all. Findings suggest that coercive power relations and feelings of exclusion resulted from negative, gatekeeping feedback and students internalised the feedback as a result of their deficiency and took on identities of “remedial ESL learners” (Marshall, Hayashi and Yeung, 2012) or outsiders in relation to the literacy practices of the academy. Finally, student findings suggest that the emphatically stated “no editing” policy articulated by the OSSC also engendered a sense of exclusion and punctuated coercive power relations for multilingual students. In fact, the findings from students demonstrated how the articulation of such policies accentuated students’ feelings of deficiency if they did indeed require editing and proofreading support (Babcock, 2008; Grimm, 2009; Robinson, 2009), causing them to delay seeking support or pay for language support outside of the OSSC where possible.

Performing peers and (almost) professors: Roles in the OSSC’s liminal space

The findings suggest advisors were keenly aware of the affective nature of feedback, and the ways that some feedback prior to students’ arrival in the OSSC had often left students feeling marginalised and deficient, and advisors often defined their roles in opposition to exclusionary practices. Therefore the advisors described their roles collaboratively, saw power as generative, and leveraged interactions in the OSSC to generate inclusion, redress students’ negative
conceptions of their writing abilities, and enhance belonging in the institutional environment. While advisor responses suggested the OSSC was a space wherein collaborative relations of power drove interactions, student responses suggested they encountered both collaborative relations that engendered a sense of belonging, and coercive relations that withheld information maintaining indeterminacy in the liminal space of the OSSC.

The findings from this study demonstrate that the roles advisors and students negotiated often fell on a continuum between the directive instructor and non-directive peer with multilingual students in line with much writing centre research (see for example Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002; Harris, 1997; Thonus, 1999; Williams & Severino, 2004), yet the roles often demonstrated nuances beyond the peer and/or instructor roles frequently applied in writing centre literature. Indeed, advisor roles in the OSSC were diversely defined as educators, advocates, supporters, collaborators, counsellors, referrers, mentors, linguistic and cultural informants, and friends to the students they worked with in the OSSC.

Advisor roles often did emerge in ways that were congruent with the role of “tutor” defined by Muriel Harris (1995) wherein advisors engaged in collaborative discussion and active listening to act as sounding boards for students; provided affective support and validation; and interpreted academic assignments and faculty expectations. In carrying out these “tutor” roles, findings from advisors demonstrated how advisors often negotiated their own diverse identities in the OSSC in order to generate comfortable, collaborative interactions. In fact, advisor responses sometimes demonstrated “performativity” (Butler, 2006) wherein advisors used their mutable identities in context to generate comfortable interactions and share their own experiences to empathise with students.

Indeed, findings suggest advisors foregrounded their student status as a measure of peer-ness with students to generate interactions that allowed for mutual input and collaborative discussion on student work. Other advisors shared their own experiences learning languages and adapting to the linguistic and discursive norms of the anglophone academy with students to counter student feelings of deficiency. While others still shared “international narratives” (Nisha) or openly discussed their own challenges with navigating disciplinary expectations with students struggling to bridge their competencies with those desired in context. The openness and empathy
engendered by such sharing often resulted in advisors taking on roles that were more akin to counsellors and friends through successive interactions as familiarity grew, similar to the dyad in Brigg’s (1991) study. The findings from this study also demonstrated that advisors placed immense importance on the affective nature of their roles and the provision of feedback reflecting nurturing roles of writing centres as safe spaces to ask questions (Harris, 1990; Traschel, 1995).

Student findings suggest that advisors who took on the role of “tutor” as defined by Harris (1995) in OSSC interactions created exchanges where expectations were explained, ideas were “heard” and validated, and tacit conventions were made clear. Such interactions engendered confidence, developed a sense of inclusion in the literacy practices of the academy, and affirmed student identities and roles as knowledgeable and competent students. However, much like Snively’s (2008) findings from the Writing, Research and Teaching Centre at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the findings from this study also situated in a writing centre in a faculty of education demonstrate how advisors took on roles as “highly skilled peer tutors” (p. 92). In this role advisors not only listened, but also had disciplinary knowledge to engage deeply in conversations about a topic as a “very informed audience” (Snively, 2008). Students demonstrated appreciation for advisors with whom they could discuss ideas, work through theories, and devise research projects prior to students’ sending work to faculty for assessment or feedback. Advisors suggested that their discipline and content knowledge also engendered productive interactions that moved discussions beyond surface level “fixing,” provided information on tacit disciplinary expectations, and aided advisors’ abilities to decode faculty expectations. Thus, advisors often took on roles of “faculty surrogate” providing support to graduate students with the research process, proposals, dissertation and theses write-ups, “big ideas,” and methodology (Snively, 2008, p. 96). While students often sought out such support in the OSSC, advisors expressed discomfort with the role of “faculty surrogate” in situations where students had received very little or no feedback from professors.

Moreover, student and advisor findings suggest that the role of “cultural informant” (Powers, 1993) was reciprocal in the OSSC wherein the mutual exchanges of information on languages, academic conventions, and audience expectations between student and advisor took place. Such interactions were important rapport building exercises when students took on the role of cultural informant, and provided necessary contextual information for students when advisors acted as
cultural informant. These findings reflect Blau, Hall and Sparks’ (2002) assertion that cultural informing in the writing centre should be mutual and reciprocal.

Additionally, students frequently ascribed identities as “language experts” to advisors in relation their status as a “NNES student” (Ritter, 2002, p. 265). Thus, where language was concerned students often intimated an increased degree of asymmetry wherein advisors were understood as having greater control over linguistic features of texts with which students required support. While all of the advisors reported taking on roles as “language informants” in the OSSC, students often ascribed such roles to advisors as native English speakers. Indeed, the construction of advisors as “language experts” was evident in student findings as students either perceived multilingual advisors as native English speakers, or chose to interact with advisors who were indeed native English speakers. While only one student expressed a preference for advisors who were native English speakers, even though she noted that they may not have the meta-language to explain English (Eun-ah), others suggested that multilingual advisors would be acceptable as long as they could provide the linguistic and disciplinary support students needed (Marcela, Navya, Kim). Thus, the findings suggest that students may ascribe the identity of native English speaker to advisors in contrast to their roles as language learners, even if advisors choose to identify otherwise, and hierarchies of advisors may exist for students when advisors are diversely identified as native English speakers or non-native English speakers.

The advisor data also demonstrated that advisors’ perceived status as native or non-native English speaker may impact interactions in the OSSC. Indeed, three of the multilingual advisors shared accounts of difficult and marginalising interactions between themselves and native English speaking students. In each case advisors’ expertise was challenged and students either questioned or were not receptive to feedback. Advisors reported responding in a manner that both credentialised themselves as competent advisors and also acted to foreground their identities as institutional actors selected to “advise” in the OSSC space. While native English speaking advisors also reported difficult interactions, they did not report similar needs to credentialise themselves and enact “professionalism” in the face of students who approached them in marginalising ways (Denny, 2010, p. 37). Thus, the identities performed by advisors are also mediated and legitimated by the environment and its broader power structures, and in some cases multilingual advisors’ performed identities may not have been recognised nor legitimated in the
“community’s existing categories of identities” (Ballingall, 2013, p. 3) wherein hierarchies based on language may continue to inform conceptions of expertise.

Finally an enduring tension emerged wherein students discussed the ways that advisors maintained institutionally sanctioned roles as “non-editors” in the OSSC. For students such interactions were often perceived of as coercive as they felt advisors were withholding knowledge (Boquet, 2000), which maintained a sense of indeterminacy or exclusion for students. However, the advisor findings suggest that advisors did provide editing support to multilingual students, yet this support was consistently described as instructional, scaffolded, and requiring active student engagement. Indeed, here advisors became expert guides that supported students through directive feedback (Shamoon & Burns, 1995) within the student’s Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) wherein modelling and scaffolding led to productive text revision within the writing centre interactions (Chiu, 2011; Williams & Severino, 2004). Thus, in extending membership or pursing inclusion in the writing centre liminal space findings demonstrate advisors did provide editing support where required, yet such support did not amount to unilateral fixing but “teachable moments” that provided the student with strategies and tools to improve their own writing independently. Thus, for advisors the refusal of the “editor” role simply amounted to an unwillingness to partake in support that was akin to a drop-off editing service. However, the enduring “no editing” maxim expressed on the OSSC website, and upheld by some advisors according to student data, engendered an ongoing tension related to the role of editor in the OSSC.

Therefore, findings suggest that the roles of advisors were multiple, fluid, “fragmented, discontinuous, and constantly open to being reconstructed, to being transformed by way of a variety of discursive practices” (Ballingall, 2013, p. 3). The advisors demonstrated dexterity in their roles when interacting with students, and findings demonstrate identity role constructions in the OSSC were often relational and negotiated with students in order to generate comfortable and productive interactions. However, in some cases the same deficit discourses that the public discourse of the OSSC subverted institutionally may have also impacted students’ perceptions of the range of possible performed identities for advisors in context, which had material implications for multilingual advisors in the centre.
Therefore, both micro and macro power relations found their way into OSSC interactions. Indeed, the same macro power structures that act to position the OSSC as a “fix it shop” also engender difficult power negotiations between students and advisors who choose to uphold roles as “non-editors” to the detriment of students who require language support. Moreover, in the presence of macro discourses and ideologies of multilingualism as deficient, multilingual advisors also found themselves subjected to coercive relations of power in the interpersonal interactions in OSSC with native English speakers who questioned their expertise. However, the role definitions enacted also demonstrate how even when ideologies of deficiency circulate in the societal and institutional environment, advisors always have agency in their interpersonal interactions to enact collaborative relations and challenge or resist harmful “policies and practices in their schools, school systems and the wider society (Cohen, 2008, p. 37)” that position multilingual students as “remedial ESL learners.”

**Attending to the Change Potential of Writing Centres**: Pedagogies of Resistance and Negotiations for Legitimacy

The findings of this study demonstrate that advisors who work in the OSSC employ a number of strategies and pedagogical approaches to support the literacy practices of multilingual students, including support with LOCs, HOCs and providing insight into the culture and (writing) conventions of the academy. This section examines the pedagogical approaches employed in the OSSC as well as findings that speak to the “critical narrative” elucidated in critical writing centre theory and often discussed in anecdote as demonstrated in Chapter 2. Thus, drawing on the academic literacies approach that sees literacy as “complex, dynamic, nuanced, situational and involving both epistemological issues and social processes” (Lea & Street, 2006, p. 369), the findings of this study demonstrate equally complex, nuanced and dynamic pedagogical approaches employed by advisors to support students in adopting and adapting the literacy practices in the OISE environment.

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6 Here I play on Grimm’s (2009) words in her article entitled “Attending to the conceptual change potential of writing center narratives”
Advisors: Using the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house?

The findings related to the pedagogical approaches adopted by advisors demonstrate fluidity and movement between transmission-based approaches, socialisation or acculturation support, as well as attention to epistemological bases of literacy and the power structures that mediate such activities. The findings of this study depart from other studies wherein pedagogical approaches are seen as distinct through understanding these approaches as nested or encapsulated with the epistemological academic literacies approach as the broadest pedagogical frame (Lea & Street, 1998). Indeed, the advisor data demonstrates advisors’ attempts to support students to both meet the academic writing criteria of the educational environment through transmission and acculturation approaches, while also working to ensure students’ meanings, voices and cultures were represented in the writing rather than subsumed by the frameworks privileged in the academy.

The findings of this study do suggest that writing centres work with students on Lower Order Concerns (LOCs) and surface level features of writing, sometimes through transmission-based approaches. However, the findings demonstrate that surface level support is certainly not the sole or even primary focus of support in the OSSC, contrary to findings of the types of support provided in writing centres circulating outside of writing centre research (see for example, Grabke, 2012; Zhang, 2011). Indeed, while many students come (or are sent) to the writing centre for surface level support initially, the support provided often goes beyond grammar and language to work through ideas, discuss genre, voice, and expectations over time as reflected in Robinson’s (2009) study of interactions with basic writers.

The findings from this study demonstrate that many advisors adopted pedagogical approaches that helped students to bridge their former writing experiences with those within the context and culture of OISE. Indeed, the findings demonstrate that advisors saw the OSSC as a space where “implicit was made explicit” (Trevor), aspects of the “hidden curriculum” were revealed (Nisha), learning what meant to write “academically” occurred (Brett, Lesley), or genres of writing were “unpacked” (Nisha, Trevor, Irina). These finding lend support to Grimm’s (2012) assertion that

7 Adapted from Lorde’s (1983) stated that “the mater’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”
“a writing centre is an essential site for learning the explicit and implicit understandings of histories, conventions, values and meaning systems of new discourses” (p. 95).

Thus, findings suggest that through laying bare the conventions of academic writing advisors supported socialisation and inclusion for diverse, multilingual students, yet findings also demonstrated how advisors worked to challenge, broaden and even critique the taken for granted and hegemonic frames within which students were expected to write. Indeed, findings demonstrate that advisors did not view disciplinary and subject-based discourses as ahistorical, uncontextualised or neutral, and students’ acculturation to them as a linear learning process wherein discourses could be reproduced following a socialisation model. Rather, advisors understood acquiring literacy as engaging in discourses of power and illuminating conventions included discussions wherein students were invited to “read between the lines of societal discourses” (Cummins, 2006, p. 55) in context. Indeed, the findings suggest many advisors saw the power implicated in learning to partake in the literacy practices of the academy and the political and contested nature of supporting such practices. Advisors’ understandings of contestations, then, illuminated findings that demonstrated the ways advisors sought to create what Nancy Welch (1995) calls “the third space” that negotiates the tension of “resistance and assimilation” for student writers (p.5).

The findings thus demonstrated how advisors sought to both illuminate privileged conventions while generating small challenges to them, whether it be language, maintaining voice, integrating “other” knowledge or question-posing, and even critiquing faculty assignments to encourage students to think critically about expectations and what it means to meet them. The findings suggest how subversion came into play in the OSSC when both tutors and students collaborate with one another about ways of leveraging personal experience in occasions where professors might not otherwise allow it; or when they work together in developing appropriate, respectful ways to question, even challenge, faculty to re-imagine or refine assignments, projects or readings (Denny, 2010, p. 55).

Indeed, advisors demonstrated efforts to find inroads for students to subvert powerful literacy norms that acted to stifle or “colonise” their voices where it was beneficial and viable and would
not preclude inclusion. Thus instances where advisors often sought ways to broaden, however carefully, the expectations of “good” academic writing in context did emerge from the data.

For example, the interlude wherein the advisor aided the student to integrate key concepts in Spanish into her thesis proposal is one such instance where subversion or careful resistance to dominant Standard English edicts was engendered through an OSSC interaction. While seemingly benign, this advisor’s desire to work with the student to subtly subvert and concurrently accept writing conventions demonstrates ways that the OSSC may act to both teach and challenge privileged ways of writing. The focus on ensuring that the student met the expectations of the assignment, but in a way that did not subsume her culture or voice, engenders an inherently critical perspective that sees literacies as implicated in power and impinging on identity. Moreover, contrary to writing centre “best practice” that discourages tutors to “criticize or in any way try to subvert teachers’ assignments” (Cooper, 1994, p. 102), observations and advisor interview responses demonstrated that advisors critiqued the lack of clarity that accompanied some of the assignments students were given, as well as the feedback (or lack thereof) students received from faculty, and supported students in devising questions to pose to faculty in such cases. These interactions create the possibility for a “third space” for student writing wherein the writing process they bring with them to the OSSC is negotiated with those privileged institutionally in way that alters both the students’ original perspective and the institution’s privileged one. Nisha described the “third space” as follows,

> It’s understanding where [students] are coming from and what OISE privileges, it privileges a certain kind of third space, right so it privileges a third space that is organised, privileges a third space that is coherent, privileges a third space that is consistent, and that you can dismantle and problematize as well, but I think that sometimes the OSSC can be a space that brings their writing into OISE without subsuming it.

The findings from advisors, then, demonstrate that engaging with systems of power does not necessarily amount to rejection or transformation of power structures (Denny, 2010); rather, resistance is always nuanced and complex. Indeed, writing centres have often set up a binary of "false choices of assimilation and separation" (Denny, 2010, p.15), or “rescue or repudiation” (Welch, 2001, p. 205) that are imagined as zero sum. However, the “third space” Nisha describes and other advisors point to is one that may be facilitated through thoughtful and informed
negotiations between advisors who are well-versed in the literacy practices in context and are also attuned to the intended meanings, backgrounds and goals of the diverse students with whom they work closely in the OSSC. The narratives of advisors in this research demonstrate a keen sense of the importance of attending to the meanings, ideas, and histories of students while also consistently considering the institutional and disciplinary expectations in which those students are operating and being assessed.

Thus, Denny’s (2010) notion of subversion also provides insight into how the division between assimilation and resistance is not always clear. Therefore, a third space may be created wherein institutional expectations are foregrounded, yet negotiations that allow for the manipulation of “discourse and populations in ways that advance individual needs while undermining the status quo” (Denny, 2010, p. 53) are possible. Conceived of as such writing centres can be spaces that grant access to powerful literacy discourses, sometimes in assimilating ways, while also finding inroads to carefully subvert existing norms where subversion or difference will not be met with further marginalisation or exclusion for the student. Such approaches, then, do not subvert the needs of the individual, which frequently require some conformity, nor do they focus solely on critiquing the system to the detriment of the student, but they navigate the space between where transgressions are beneficial to the student while simultaneously challenging the system.

Advisors in the OSSC demonstrated that through knowing and teaching the “rules” to students, they also created spaces where those same rules could be creatively bent or even broken (Truesdell, 2013, p. 92). Thus, advisor findings suggest pedagogical approaches often attempted to use the “master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house,” suggesting students who understood the requirements could challenge the system thoughtfully, and the binary of assimilation and resistance was blurred.

However, findings also demonstrate that advisors were aware that in some cases students’ intentions and the agendas they set in the OSSC mediated the degree of subversion and criticality possible. Indeed, advisor findings demonstrated a keen awareness that their role was to support students according to the needs articulated by students, thus not all interactions in the OSSC met advisors’ standards of “political transformation” (Jessica). Moreover, findings demonstrate that advisors also understood that for students it was often necessary and materially beneficial to perform within discourses and routines of dominance, meaning supporting students’ acculturation
was not necessarily understood as a negative outcome of writing centre interactions (Grimm, 1999).

**Students: “Colonised” writing and inclusion in the monolingual academy**

The findings from student participants suggest that the desire for “legitimacy” and inclusion drove the students’ interactions in the writing centre and often were expressed through students’ desire to acculturate, to remove accents from writing, and to adopt and mimic the conventions by which their writing was assessed in context. Indeed, students frequently expressed the value of aligning their work with the conventions of writing in English, even if doing so represented a “colonising” of their writing to fit “academically into the pattern” (Alejandra). Findings from students in this research demonstrated that acculturation to the conventions of academic writing in English was deemed to be valuable and necessary to produce products that were legitimate and acceptable in the OISE environment. Thus, much like Welch’s (1995) students, the findings suggest the multilingual students who took part in this research, despite their differences, often perceived “a strict choice between resistance or assimilation” (p. 5).

Thus, for many students the OSSC was an instructional support for the conventions of writing in the academy and they often sought this instruction in ways that would reinscribe, through acculturation, the prevailing norms of privileged ways of writing academically. The findings from the multilingual student data demonstrate a “drive to fit-in” and write in a “standard code of English” given that “multilingual writers face real material consequences for failing to gain facility with the dominant code—lowered grades, diminished access to graduate programs, barriers to employment” (Denny, 2010, p.128). Student findings demonstrate how high stakes assessment and monolingual standards made the OSSC a valuable site for students to “normalise” their writing that had been deemed “abnormal” within autonomous frames of literacy that set the standards in the institution (Grimm, 1996, p.7).

In fact, the findings show a propensity for students to describe the benefit of the OSSC as a place that provides instruction for alignment or “convergence” with “expected norms of academic performance in English” (Turner, 2011, p. 18). Thus, the findings from students present a less subversive and critical role for the OSSC than those from advisors, and students suggested their appreciation of acculturation support. Such a position was made clear during the student focus
group when students discussed the fact that they had accepted that their writing needed to be “colonised” in order to be perceived as legitimate. When asked if they saw space for writing centres to challenge such conventions, the following discussion ensued:

**R1:** I don’t think [the OSSC] is challenging, actually it’s perpetrating [norms of academic writing] because, I mean that’s how it is, right? There is English academic writing and this is how you do it, and they’re helping you here to do it this way. Because if you don’t do it this way, what is the purpose of you being here at OISE in a Western academic place? Right, so it is perpetrating it, in a good sense, in the sense that I am helping you to do this because if you don’t do it like this, you say “ok, write it the way you do in your language with longer sentences,” what’s going to happen is you go back with your writing to the professor or submit to a journal, then you’re going to fail! The OSSC doesn’t want you to fail in this new field that you are doing so they are going to help you through perpetrating this.

**R2:** So, I am thinking about the possible ways the counsellors at the Writing Centre could challenge those since the purpose at the end is helping the student go through the process that is very normative. So, is there room to challenge? No. “Don’t follow those headings that the APA suggests. No, don’t! You create your own headings!” It doesn’t work like that.

**R3:** I don’t think there is room to challenge. Because the professors and the whole academia out there in the planet is going to require you to write in this way, so there is no way to challenge. But you guys do your very best to support us and we need to recognise that as students

(Student Focus Group)

Thus, while advisors may have seen their work as “quite political” (Jessica) or subversive, students often strove to “to blend in with English-majority students” (Denny, 2010, p.129), to be included and legitimated in the academic environment. Indeed, it is here that the liminal space of the OSSC provides a sense of inclusion through thoughtful, caring and directive feedback on students’ work from more experienced peers. Thus, students often came to the writing centre with an interest in “becoming more like their tutors, in that they want to internalize the discourse of this academic culture, to no longer be “other”” (Robinson, 2009, p. 76). Therefore those interactions that fail to provide feedback, or diminish the importance of linguistic accuracy, or approach feedback without attention to affective concerns act to maintain a sense of exclusion and indeterminacy. The findings from students suggest prevailing goals of legitimacy and inclusion, then, explain the somewhat complex articulations of the desire for both editing support
and support with understanding the broader conventional and discursive features of academic writing that occurred in the OSSC.

Indeed, the findings demonstrated that students found support with ideas, critical thinking, structure, expectations and academic voice to be valuable support, but they consistently noted their need for sentence-level correction throughout the writing process. Although students reported that faculty often valued ideas and content over form, when multilingual students had produced papers that met content requirements the familiar rejoinder from faculty for students to seek out editing support ensued. Thus, while the advisor findings suggest that they understood support as operating on a hierarchy from narrow skills to academic literacies, student findings demonstrate that content and form were blurred when students were carrying “the burden of learning to write and learning English at the same time” (Hyland, 2003, p. 34), which flattened the hierarchies of support from students’ perspectives.

Indeed, student findings revealed how most students used the OSSC in the ways the academy values—they went to talk through ideas, discuss disciplinary conventions, align their work to the expectations of professors—but the need for linguistic accuracy, which students felt was either a secondary focus in the OSSC or too time consuming to pursue with instructional approaches, drove students (where finances permitted) to hire editors to “clean up” lingering traces of linguistic negotiation. For multilingual students “to perform—to speak, to write, to be—like the often-monolingual majority” (Denny, 2010, p.136) was the desired outcome of the OSSC interactions meaning language and form were indistinguishable parts of the process. Thus, findings demonstrate how multilingual students “internalize and seek to perform language in ways that minimize their cultural difference because they understand quickly the price that [they] pay for not identifying with the majority monolingual culture” (Denny, 2010, p.130), and they view the OSSC as a place to provide academic and emotional support in that performance. Thus, findings demonstrate how multilingual students were keenly aware that “they are not owners of their texts” (Cooper, 1994, p. 339), meaning the OSSC was most valued by multilingual students when it supported students’ abilities to produce “legitimate” writing as defined by assignments and faculty expectations (the “real” owners of texts) through making the implicit expectations explicit and granting access to academic writing expectations in context.
Thus, the power relations and structures that existed in the broader environment created a dual challenge for multilingual students. First, like many students the multilingual students in this study were negotiating new disciplinary and contextual expectations that often required explicit explanation and required students to negotiate or nurture new scholarly identities. However, unlike their native English-speaking peers, the multilingual students in this study also demonstrated ongoing challenges with learning and producing “Standard English” in tandem with adapting to (and ultimately adopting) the expectations for academic writing in context.

Implications

This section discusses the implications emerging from this study related to the ways writing centres engage with the literacy practices of multilingual students. The implications are organised within the frames of the research project including implications for the situational or “public” discourses of writing centres, implications for the OISE Student Success Centre and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, as well as broader implications for writing centre practice and theory. While many of the findings from which these implications emerge are necessarily context-specific, the findings also suggest many avenues for ongoing discussion and future research for writing centres and those supporting multilingual students’ literacy practices in higher education.

Talking in-between? (Un)Contextualised “Public” Discourse

Given the findings that suggest that writing centres are at once influenced by localised spaces in the descriptions of their work and purveyors of the familiar storying of writing centre narrative, it may be necessarily for writing centres to describe their work in frames that are recognised and validated in the institutional spaces in which they operate (Carino, 2002; Carter, 2009). While working to support all students through one-to-one tutorials with their academic writing through (kind, friendly, caring) peer guidance may be a narrow description of writing centre work (Grutsch McKinney, 2013), it is certainly a common (and perhaps accepted) one. Thus, the findings demonstrate that leveraging frames that have currency among practitioners inside and outside of the writing centre may benefit writing centres institutionally. Indeed, writing centre directors are commonly the producers of the critical literature in scholarship, yet continue to weave these narrow narratives in promotional texts, suggesting that such compromises in public
discourses may be necessary. According to Carino (2002), articulating the full “complexity of writing centre work] is beyond the scope of a promotional memo or brochure, yet these materials suggest that the expectations of the center's constituents require such definition” (p. 101). Thus, writing centre directors may be wise to compromise where necessary. Certainly the application of more critical frames to writing centre work is necessary in writing centre theory and practice, but public websites may be neither profitable nor prudent places for criticality in many locales.

Moreover, the import of more critical frames into the promotional discourse arguably may not say much more about the pedagogical practices to those not well versed in writing centre scholarship. Indeed, critical praxis may mean little to those students who come to the centre to understand the parameters of a literature review. Rather, writing (centres) that colour outside of the lines of this narrative on public websites may be saying more about the socialisation mechanisms of their contexts than their work. Thus, this study adds to others that suggest writing centres must ultimately negotiate the localised spaces in promotional definitions and descriptions of their work (Carino, 2002; Harris, 1995).

*Drop the negative talk*

The findings from the CDA combined with those from the case study site suggest implications related to the parameter setting discourses of writing centres, especially those related to (not) editing and proofreading. While on the surface, the “negative talk” (Schendel, 2012, p. 4), “we don’t edit” “we don’t proofread,” found on the majority of the websites may be seen in opposition to “the technicist model of language” wherein sentence level errors are simply revised (Turner, 2011, p. 32), within highly multilingual contexts the emphatic denial of such services may reinscribe multilingualism as different and deficient. Indeed, in “selective” institutions where socialisation mechanisms are reproductive, the emphatic “no editing” policies also engender narratives that place language support as inferior to the “real” work of the writing centre and marginalise students who may rightfully value such support. Nancy Grimm (1999) illuminates how policies of not editing and proofreading may act to exclude, marginalise and further mark nonmainstream students who truly require the support of writing centres, while simultaneously privileging those who already know and are able to produce texts that meet the
requirements of standard edited English. Thus, such positions “may actually harm the very
groups they intend to help” (Babcock, 2008, p. 66) while denying sentence level support that both
draws students to the writing centre and keeps them coming back (Robinson, 2009, p. 72). The
findings from this study suggest that writing centres face complex negotiations and seek to
educate a number of hearers, overhearers and addressees in their public discourses, and editing
entails a difficult compromise that often attends to the “hearers” and “overhearers” rather than
multilingual student addressees.

The findings from the case study site provided evidence that such parameter setting did indeed
have negative impacts on multilingual student addressees. Even though evidence existed that
advisors did provide instructional editing support, the student findings suggested students read
such policies on the website negatively causing them to feel marginalised, delay writing centre
interactions, demonstrate hesitation about asking for sentence-level support, or simply surmise
such support was not available. Moreover, the case study site demonstrated that faculty “hearers”
perceived the OSSC as a place for editing and sent students to the centre for such support
frequently despite website messages outlining the unavailability of such support. For students,
then, editing and attention to surface level concerns may be perceived as “a gatekeeper for
satisfying their instructors” (Robinson, 2009, p. 86), yet the findings suggest that students who
came in for grammar frequently requested other “higher order” support as the interaction
progressed. Therefore, the findings are similar to Robinson’s (2009) in that those who used the
centre more frequently also reported seeking more “higher order” support over time, although it
was editing and surface support that initially drew them in. Finally, the message of not providing
editing support drove some students elsewhere to paid, non-instructional support when possible.

Thus, the findings from this study suggest that thoughtful reconsiderations of the parameter
setting discourses may be necessary and the inclusion of negative talk on websites may hinder
students while also failing to educate faculty and the broader institution about the practices of the
centre. While the desire to distance the remedial label from writing centres is understandable
when “soft funding” impacts the writing centre (Boquet, 2002; Grimm, 1996; Robinson, 2009),
negative discourses may not be achieving greater inclusion for writing centres or multilingual
students. Thus, writing centres need not “do” students work, nor proudly tout their work as
remedial by removing the “no editing” parameter (Babcock, 2008), yet public discourse may be
more productive through positively explaining the provision of services as instructional editing or simply adopting positive language to describe support that helps students develop editing skills (Harris, 2010, p. 56). The application of more positive frames may provide more inviting spaces for all students to come to converse about the writing process in its entirety, including editing.

**Implications for the OISE Student Success Centre**

The findings point to a number of implications for the OISE Student Success Centre in supporting multilingual students beyond reconsidering the negative parameter setting discourse on its website. The implications included in this section are drawn both from the broader findings of this study, insights from the literature, and recommendations provided by participants in this study.

**Leadership**

The findings suggest that the most common area for improvement among all of the participant groups was the increased allocation of advisors and time for students in the OSSC. While lack of funding is certainly an enduring challenge, and not one that is easily redressed, ongoing advocacy on the part of leadership for resources is imperative to continue to ensure appropriate supports are in place for a large and diverse student body. While leadership is required to produce usage reports on the OSSC, the inclusion of more qualitative data beyond the statistical usage patterns may encourage increased supports for the OSSC.

Indeed, including the voices of students and advisors in describing the outcomes of interactions in the OSSC may allow for broader frames of OSSC work beyond remediation to be perceived by administration in the OISE environment. Moreover, broader frames may provide insight into the ways the OSSC may provide a sense of community and a site for retention for students and advisors. Indeed, Jeanne Simpson (1991) suggests that “writing centers and retention are a natural combination” (p. 108), while Poziwilko (1997) adds that the core activities of writing centres contribute to campus activities that “research has shown to be… significant factor[s] in retention" (p. 3). Thus, leveraging student and advisor narratives to demonstrate how the writing centre contributes to students’ campus interactions, including those with campus representatives, and
provides academic support outside of the formal classroom through peer tutoring (Griswold, 2003) may help administration to perceive this connection. Moreover, including the advisor narratives from the OSSC may also illuminate how these same interactions also contribute to the retention of students who work in the OSSC, as nearly half of the advisors in this study stated that the OSSC was one of the key reasons they persevered with their programs.

Additionally, communicating the range of supports students receive in the OSSC in qualitative terms to faculty and administration may engender more support for the complementary and collaborative role the OSSC plays vis-à-vis faculty related to student writing practices. Indeed, similar to many higher education environments faculty are often busy and overburdened and the OSSC provides an important “in-between” for students navigating expectations in context. Communicating the ways the OSSC may alleviate some of the burden faculty face providing ongoing support to students adjusting to the academic writing practices in context may also garner increased support for the role of writing centres such as the OSSC (Snively, 2008, p. 96).

Secondly, recruiting and retaining a diverse group of advisors with a range of skills is important for the OSSC’s support mandate. Similar to findings from other writing centre research, leadership in this study discussed the challenges of staff turnover (Boquet, 2002; Grutsch McKinney, 2013). Research demonstrates, as this study found, that advisors (tutors) with more experience demonstrate greater flexibility and confidence in their roles allowing them to provide higher-level support (Ritter, 2002). While the reality that advisors are drawn from the cadre of current graduate students necessitates that advisors relinquish their role in the OSSC upon graduation, incentives for graduate students to stay in the OSSC for the duration of their programs may allow for more continuity, community and the retention of institutional knowledge and expertise over time. Moreover the findings from advisors suggested they require more support in the provision of their roles, which may be provided through increased opportunities for advisors to collaborate with one another, faculty, and other support services to improve the support provisions for students and themselves with more enduring roles in the OSSC.

The findings from this study also demonstrate that recruiting diverse advisors, including advisors who speak and negotiate multiple languages and have navigated the challenges of new disciplinary expectations, should continue to be a priority for the OSSC. The ability of advisors
to provide support to students transitioning into the OISE space with empathy and care was often developed from advisors’ own experiences navigating the diverse education environments, including the OISE and University of Toronto environments and the expectations therein themselves. Indeed, the advisors in the OSSC fit Grimm’s (2009) description of “students who used the writing centre…when they were negotiating transitions between home literacies and academic literacies” (p. 14) meaning they often had a strong, often experiential understanding of the power relations and the ways they impact negotiations in the OISE environment. The findings suggest advisors’ experiences learning languages and negotiating disciplinary conventions permitted understandings of how students in the OSSC were shuttling among different literacies, discourses and registers, which negated narrow conceptions of students as deficient English speakers (Grimm, 2012, p. 21). Thus, such experiences have import for the roles advisors take on collaborating with, and extending inclusion to, a diverse body of students. Moreover, findings contribute to other studies on the benefit of multilingual tutors who are able to use their additional language to build rapport and scaffold certain students’ learning in their L1 (Wang, 2012).

However, the findings from this study demonstrate that awareness among both leadership and advisors that “students might logically reason that the most efficient way to acquire “codes of power” is to seek those who might seem to purvey them the best, tutors whose bodies at least signify their proximity to the majority” – that is white, native English speaking tutors (Denny, 2010, p. 49). Thus, thoughtful discussions with all advisors must be undertaken about the ways identities advisors ascribe to themselves and perform in the OSSC generate negotiations and (mis)understandings that may lead to affirmation or negation between advisor and student in the OSSC space.

The findings also suggest the importance of thoughtful training for advisors. The findings from this study add to the cacophony of voices advocating for revisions to the standard tutor training roles in writing centres based on the lore-based practices (Allen, 2009; Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002; Moussu, 2013; Thompson et al, 2009; Thonus, 2014; Williams & Serverino, 2004). Indeed, the findings of this study suggest that flexibility and a focus on engendering inclusion and control for students over the linguistic and conventional features of writing should be the end goal of writing centre work. Moreover, the findings suggest that advisors very quickly become aware that
no two sessions are alike and that learned responses or mastered pedagogical approaches will often fail to yield successful writing centre interactions (Boquet, 2002, p. 78). Thus, advisor training may need to be similarly flexible and open, with reference to experiences advisors may encounter and plausible responses, but also encouraging advisors to be open to providing the personalised attention the student requires at that moment. Boquet (2002) likens writing centre work to improvisation in music suggesting that improvisation is about repetition but also about mastery and risk wherein “improvisation is not anything goes [but] a skilful demonstration performed by someone who knows the tones of her instrument, the rhythms of her musical traditions, so well that she can both transgress and exceed them” (p. 76). However, training that encourages some improvisation need not mean advisors are not prepared; rather, training should be undertaken wherein conversations can generate experience about types of sessions and possible responses with an understanding that expertise is developed through doing the actual work (Boquet, 2002). Thus, just as “talk” is the main medium of writing centre interactions and pedagogy (North, 1984), “talk” among experienced and novice tutors, leadership and even students may provide fruitful avenues for training flexible, thoughtful and reflexive advisors.

Additionally, given the finding of the importance of affective support in the OSSC that emerged from this study training may do well to integrate discussions and approaches for providing personal support and working with students who feel vulnerable, marginalised and excluded in the OISE context.

Finally, given the importance of linguistic and grammatical accuracy for students, advisors should be given support and training “to feel confident about grammar and mechanics” and their roles engaging in support with students on such features of the writing process (Schendel, 2012, p. 5). With such training the emphasis may be on the instructional nature of such support, yet the findings demonstrate that grammar and mechanics need to be considered as part of the process of writing for students and an important provision in writing centres (Schendel, 2012; Snively, 2008; Robinson, 2009). Therefore, similar to the findings that negative talk should be reconsidered in promotional discourse, the negative talk related to grammar and mechanics in tutor training also requires redress—it should simply be understood as “part of the job” (Schendel, 2012, p. 5).
Advisors

The findings related to the emotional and affective nature of feedback demonstrate the need for care, empathy and active listening in the OSSC, which was well understood by advisors. Such awareness should be sustained among advisors in the OSSC in both the provision of feedback, but also in the agenda-setting activities that often occur at the onset of appointments. Indeed, the findings from students present the negative effects of advisor parameter setting, especially at the beginning of appointments in the OSSC. Similar to the implications for websites, then, parameter setting should be done with care. Perhaps a productive approach would include seeing “an invitation to edit as an invitation to discuss a paper” (Brett), as one advisor suggested. Advisors need not revert to “fixing” or doing students’ work (Babcock, 2008); however, providing sentence level support allows for other needs emerge (Robinson, 2009). Moreover, surface level support should not be seen as “lower” level support, as linguistic accuracy is a matter of “knowledge and control” (Chiu, 2011, p. 150) for multilingual students who do indeed require such support (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002; Grimm, 1999, 2009).

Students

Findings point to a shortfall of support services for multilingual students’ literacy practices in the OISE environment. Given the immense importance of academic writing for assessment and inclusion in the OISE environment, OSSC leadership, advisors and students themselves should advocate for sustainable, accessible and ongoing supports. The findings suggest that the personalised nature of the OSSC interactions provided students helpful and targeted support on their academic writing in ways that both classroom instruction (writing courses) and professors could not attend to within time and resource constraints. Additionally, the findings suggest that the short timeframes allocated to students were particularly problematic for graduate students, suggesting the need for advocacy for longer intervals in the OSSC for students preparing major dissertations and theses. While such advocacy will necessarily be met with ongoing challenges given the reality of limited resources in the OISE environment, the pressures to write, publish, present and research in English provide very real barriers for multilingual students that require attention in internationalised academies such as the University of Toronto. Paying attention to both the process of internationalisation and attending to the effects of internationalisation
(Knight, 2004, p.16, emphasis mine) through support is indeed an equity matter worth advocating for on the part of OSSC leadership, advisors and students.

Thus, the findings suggest a number of implications for leadership, advisors and students, many of which overlap and may require collaboration among actors to achieve. Figure 32 presents the implications derived from the findings for each of the participant groups with the need for advocacy impacting each of the groups.

![Figure 32. Implications for OSSC Actors](image)

**Implications for the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education**

While many of the findings speak directly to the OSSC as embedded in the OISE environment and the implications discussed above have import for the wider institutional environment, participants also pointed to recommendations that go beyond the OSSC.

First, the findings suggest that more holistic, integrated and accessible supports need to be made for the diverse student body learning in the OISE environment. Dialogues on how to generate more avenues for all students to engage academically, socially and personally with institutional actors are necessary in an environment that many participants described as isolating or impersonal. While the OISE environment does have a number of supports, clubs, formal and informal student groups and associations, students and advisors alike viewed the OSSC as the extra classroom academic support. Thus, the centre was frequently overbooked and the student
findings demonstrated that students felt unable or uncomfortable to approach peers and/or professors for the type of writing support they received in the OSSC. Thus, findings suggest that when students could not secure OSSC appointments they felt they had no other avenues for writing support aside from paying expensive editors outside of the OISE environment where possible.

Moreover, the findings suggest that many students found their way to the OSSC needing support beyond the purview of academic writing support, which implies that supports for international students, students in financial and personal distress, and even housing require continuous communication and promotion to ensure students are aware such supports are available in the broader campus environment. While the findings suggest referrals from advisors in the OSSC often helped students navigate the environment and seek out broader services to meet their needs, there are likely a number of students not accessing the OSSC who would also benefit from broader communication of supports in the OISE and University of Toronto environments.

Secondly, the findings suggest that existing assessments of English academic writing abilities are not currently accurately measuring the level of English proficiency students require to be successful in their programs. Indeed, findings from all of the participant groups in this study demonstrate that students are often admitted assuming their writing and language abilities were sufficient, only to encounter significant challenges upon commencing their degree. Students who face such realities are often ill prepared for the difficult process of developing the content and disciplinary knowledge along with the language skills to successfully navigate expectations in context. While critiques of standardised tests and their effectiveness are beyond the scope of this research, the findings of this study suggest that more accurate measures of academic readiness may be necessary to ensure students are not admitted to programs with which they will face significant struggles to complete.

Additionally, the findings of this study suggest that ongoing support, thoughtful discussions and professional development for faculty related to the provision of feedback on multilingual students’ writing is imperative. While the OSSC can certainly play a role in supporting faculty, institution-wide efforts to provide support and actionable guidelines for faculty may allow for more generative, supportive feedback practices for all student writing, not just those who are
navigating additional languages in the production of academic writing. Indeed, while it may be a small number of faculty that need such support, and this research does not purport to suggest that negative feedback is the norm in the environment, the tendency of students to find their way to the OSSC through such feedback demonstrates how certain comments may be harmful. Indeed, difficult commentary may be provided in hopes that students will seek support or may emerge from time constraints, but students nonetheless perceive it as negative and hurtful. Certainly the data suggests generative and thoughtful approaches to writing exist within the environment wherein collaborative relations are engendered, but the negative feedback as a route to the OSSC also necessitates dialogue on approaches to multilingual writers in the academy. Such findings are consistent with existing literature from writing centres that demonstrate students often come to writing centres via “caustic, hostile, or otherwise unconstructive commentary” (North, 1984, p. 440), suggesting that 30 years of writing centre admonishments for thoughtful engagement with student writing across contexts must be heeded in contemporary academies.

Finally, the findings from this study demonstrate that editing is a significant aspect of the academic writing process that both faculty and students value. If such support is not to be provided by writing centres, OISE, the University of Toronto and indeed institutions of higher education in general will need to address the ways editing (done for profit on a non-instructional basis) is, or is not, permitted within academic integrity guidelines. The findings from this study point to the ways other Canadian institutions of higher education have addressed students’ needs for editing support either through the provision of such supports for reasonable fees institutionally (University of Alberta), or through integrating guidelines for using editors into academic integrity statements (Royal Roads University). Considerations related to the use of editors may be especially relevant for graduate students struggling to publish and produce high quality research projects as a matter of necessity for success in their academic endeavours and future careers.

**Implications for Writing Centre Theory and Practice**

The findings of this research contributes to a large and growing body of writing centre scholarship that implores those in the writing centre to generate broader frames, theories and
narratives for the work of writing centres outside of the familiar lore-based theories (see for example: Boquet, 2002; Grimm, 1996, 1999, 2008, 2009, 2012; Grutsch McKinney, 2013). Indeed, the findings of this study demonstrate that writing centre work is indeed complex (Grutsch McKinney, 2013) and multifaceted. However, despite the complexity communicating and conceiving of writing centre work has frequently relied on binaries—Higher Order Concerns/Lower Order Concerns, product/process, tutor/editor, instructor/student, improving the writing/improving the writer, directive/non-directive, language/content, and assimilation/rejection. The findings of this study suggest that binary thinking does not serve the complexity of writing centre sites well. Indeed, writing centres may be best understood as liminal spaces that dwell in the “hyphen” where binaries are blurred (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 60).

Thus, writing centre work should be understood as supporting students on higher and lower order concerns, focusing on product to build process, improving the writing and the writer, moving between directive and non-directive approaches, tutoring and editing, and taking part in discussions that blur the language and content divide. Moreover, in the liminal space of the writing centre rejection and assimilation, convergence and empowerment, and collaboration and coercion occur as part of the negotiation in context. Resisting binaries and dwelling in the either-or hyphen means resistance is “ambiguous” (Giroux, 1983, p. 290), contextual and negotiated. Indeed understood as such, ambiguous acts of resistance require one to “either link the behavior under analysis with an interpretation provided by the subjects themselves, or dig deeply into the historical and relational conditions from which the behavior develops” (Giroux, 1983, p. 291). Thus, living in the “hyphen” rejects zero sum thinking that, similar to the tutor/editor divide, may cause guilt for transgressors in the writing centre that end up on the wrong side of the "false choices of assimilation and separation" (Denny, 2010, p.15).

Moreover, the findings from this study also concur with Archer (2008) that the academic literacies approach may provide a useful conceptual lens for investigating writing centre interactions. Indeed, the application of academic literacies means addressing specific skills issues around student writing (such as how to open or close an essay or whether to use the first person) takes on entirely different meanings if the content is solely that of study skills, if the process is seen as part of academic
socialisation, or if it is viewed more broadly as an aspect of the whole institutional and epistemological context (Lea & Street, 1998, p. 158).

Applying broader frames and looking to the field of literacy studies may thus provide fruitful avenues for re-framing and re-imagining writing centre work beyond the lore-based theories that have outlived their usefulness (Grutsch McKinney, 2013). However, such work will necessitate empirical research and engaged scholarship to continue expanding the discussion, theorising and scholarship of writing centre work. Indeed, while debates have arisen related to the benefits of renaming writing centres multiliteracy centres (see Balester et al, 2013), without “richly textured accounts that are concerned with the full scope of literacy studies, as benefits the richness and complexity of writing center sites and the people who populate them” (North, 1984, p. 185) such moves may generate change in semantics only. In fact, replacing the existing theoretical model or lore, which is increasingly unsubstantiated by research (Allen, 2009, p. 4), with a new title without capturing the perspectives of those in the writing centre may result in nomenclature and theorising that is similarly out of sync with modern writing centre realities. Thus, this study does not suggest forgoing the writing centre moniker or rejecting the multiliteracies centre name, nor does it portend to suggest writing centres should become “academic literacies centres.” Rather, it finds value in new frames, the application of diverse theories and theoretical and conceptual frames deserving of the multifariousness of writing centre work.

Finally, the findings of this study also add to the literature that suggests writing centres are not well understood by those outside of “the centre” (Boquet, 2002; Carino, 2002; North, 1984). While the findings suggest that articulating the role of writing centres and explaining the interactions therein is complex and multifaceted, similar to Grimm (1996) “I am going to take an unhappy approach to writing center work” (p. 5) and suggest that writing centres contribute to the misunderstandings that abound related to their work. Indeed, the propensity of writing centre scholars to talk amongst themselves harbouring a critical narrative in scholarship while promoting a liberal, assimilationist narrative in public engenders a difficult terrain to navigate. While the public narrative is about inclusion (and survival) in academic institutions and the parameter setting discourse attempts to counter marginalisation, the findings from this study suggest writing centre websites are not the appropriate places to engender revisions to the (marginal) positioning of writing centres or those who use them—but I advance that scholarship is.
Thus, writing centre scholarship has inspired, nourished, and sustained this project and provided a sense of belonging in a community of scholars through the “we,” “our,” or “us” that punctuate nearly all of the published works in the field. However, attention to the production of writing centre work that reaches out instead of focusing in is increasingly necessary. In effect, if writing centres are to become places that bring “cultural and linguistic issues to the forefront of research, training and institutional dialogues on academic support” (Nowacki, 2012, p. 1), scholarship must reach beyond the writing centre community to whom it is frequently addressed. Indeed, North’s (1984) “Idea” may remain the most influential piece of writing centre scholarship because it was published for an audience that included everyone that did not work in, or have anything to do with, a writing centre (p. 433), generating reach and legitimacy for writing centres outside of writing centres.

Therefore, marginality does not have to be a permanent state for writing centres, just as writing centres encourage students to take risks, subvert and challenge the bounds of the expected, writing centres too must find inroads and allies across fields and disciplines and beyond the writing centre community. Furthermore, through resisting the “we” and the “universally shared truths about writing centres” that go with such pronouns, writing centre scholarship may help to dislodge the writing centre grand narrative which has acted to frame, constrain and simplify accounts of writing centre work that is anything but simple (Grutsch McKinney, 2013, p. 89).

**Contribution and Limitations**

This multiple method case study contributes the research on writing centres in several ways. First, this research adds depth to writing centre scholarship through examining the interactions of macro and micro structures that engender “compromises” (Carter, 2009), possibilities and constraints for writing centres working with multilingual scholars in anglophone academies. Additionally, it adds depth to existing accounts of critical writing centre theory through examining the subversive possibilities as well as the exigent limitations of the “change potential” (Grimm, 2009) of writing centres (Boquet, 2002; Denny, 2010; Grimm, 2008, 2011; Grutch McKinney, 2013, Truesdell, 2013), and the ways writing centres may help multilingual students to “to negotiate literacies” (Carter, 2001, p. 208).
Secondly, it privileges the often overlooked voices of writing centre tutors (Boquet, 2002) as key stakeholders in the writing centre and illuminates the ways that advisors define their roles vis-à-vis multilingual students to produce collaborative and inclusive relations in the writing centre. Importantly, it also responds to calls to privilege the voices of multilingual students as key stakeholders in the writing centre “story” (Boquet, 2002; Denny, 2010; Wang, 2012). Moreover, it provides insight into the often under theorised ways writing centres may (or may not) create inclusive spaces for students in the academy from the perspective of student interlocutors (Senese, 2011) with specific attention to multilingual students as an important and growing proportion of writing centre users (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002; Olson, 2013; Powers & Nelson, 1995; Ronesi, 1995; Thonus, 2014). The findings and the related implications also add to studies on multilingual graduate students (Phillips, 2008, 2013; Powers & Nelson, 1995; Wang, 2012) and contribute to research on disciplinary-specific writing centres and their impact on student learning and tutor practices (Kiedaisch & Dinitz, 1993; Mackiewcz, 2004; Snively, 2008).

Finally, the findings and implications of this research extend beyond the writing centre to provide insight into the ways students approach, decode and negotiate expectations of academic writing in higher education (see for example Itua, Coffey, Merryweather, Norton & Foxcroft, 2014; Lea & Street, 1998, 2006; Lillis, 2001; Marshall, Hayashi & Yeung, 2012) and the often uncertain and emotional ways such adjustments are experienced (Gourlay, 2009).

Thus, this multiple methods study generated rich, comprehensive descriptions rooted in context and participants’ perspectives, yet the contextual and specific nature of the findings present several limitations. Indeed, the institutions included in the CDA were all relatively elite, research-intensive institutions in large, urban centres in anglophone nations. Thus, the findings from the CDA are from a specific type of institution and the results are not widely generalizable to institutions outside of the sample.

Secondly, the case study data emerges from a single case design within a specific institutional environment with contextual influences that may not be generalizable to other contexts. Indeed, the case study site is in many ways an atypical or “unique case” (Yin, 2003, p. 23) as the OSSC operates in faculty of education providing disciplinary-specific support to a cohort of students made up largely of graduate students or undergraduate students already experienced in higher
education (as Bachelor of Education students require several years of prior university study to be eligible for the program). While not generalizable to all writing centre contexts, the findings related to the ways the one-to-one academic writing support aided students negotiating institutional expectations, literacy norms, and language are insights that are pertinent to other writing centres, language learning programs and student support services in linguistically diverse, higher education environments.

Suggestions for Further Research

The findings from this study present several avenues for future research related to writing centres and students’ literacy practices in institutions of higher education. First, further research could examine the discourses of writing centres in institutions that express mandates of access expansion. Such research could add depth to this study through further examining how socialisation mechanisms impact the frames through which writing centres represent and promote their work.

Secondly, given the paucity of research including multilingual students’ experiences more fulsome account of their interactions in writing centre research is necessary. Replicating similar case studies in diverse environments would add to the limited data from the perspectives of multilingual students in writing centre scholarship. Moreover, studies examining the experiences of multilingual tutors are increasingly imperative to continue to understand the positionality and role definitions of advisors in writing centres.

Additionally, because this study took place in a faculty of education, the support provided was of a disciplinary specific nature. The fact that both students and advisors were studying within the discipline of education may have had an impact on the nature of the interactions and the findings that demonstrated a great deal of support occurred on disciplinary conventions and expectations. Studies of a similar nature with generalist tutors may provide further insight into the ways writing centres in disciplinary-based faculties may differ from writing centres that provide cross-disciplinary support through generalist approaches.

Another avenue for additional research could include studies that engage with students who do not use the writing centre. The majority participants in this research were repeat OSSC users, yet
they intimated that long wait times, parameter setting discourses ("no editing" in particular), and negative interactions led them to decrease writing centre interactions. Understanding why students choose not to use the services at all may also help writing centres to develop or describe the work of writing centres in more inclusive, inviting ways. However, broadening or changing writing centre discourses or programming to include more students as a result of such studies would necessarily need to consider the perennial challenge of resources that constrain the reach of writing centres across contexts.

Additionally, participants’ perceptions of faculty understandings of writing centre work made frequent appearances in the data in this study. A thoughtful study examining faculty expectations, perceptions and understandings of writing centre work may provide significant information for writing centres to develop stronger relationships with faculty, build mutually supportive relations, and communicate the breadth of writing centre work more clearly to multiple stakeholders in higher educational environments. While many point to the localised nature of writing centre work (Carino, 2002; Harris, 2002), this study found that at least discursively the writing centres examined in this study present themselves in similar frames. Thus, a multiple case study across diverse institutions aimed at understanding how faculty (mis)interpret those frames could provide important preliminarily steps for writing centres to rethink descriptions of their work and the related tactics employed to educate faculty on such work.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this study adds to a growing body of critical scholarship that views literacy as social practices (see for example: Barton & Hamilton, 2001; Gee, 1996; Lea & Street, 1998, 2006; Street, 1995) in contrast to the dominant deficit model that circulates in higher education. The findings from this study suggest that “other” language is highly “visible” (Turner, 2011) in higher education and that “discursive violence” (Denny, 2010, p. 136) continues to befall those who transgress accepted codes of academic English. Indeed, this study provides evidence that “[l]inguistic bigotry”—”learn how to write”— “is among the last publically expressible prejudices left of members of the western intelligentsia” (Cameron, 1995, p. 12). These findings point to the necessity of ongoing research to develop and advocate for more inclusive and empowering approaches to educating linguistically and culturally diverse students. In our globalised and internationalised academies it is increasingly urgent to reconsider discourses that engender feelings of deficiency and inferiority related to the knowledge and
languages of large portions of students. The findings from this study lead me to strongly encourage those of us invested in inclusive and thoughtful education to continue to think about the academic communities we are creating when we need to carve out “safe spaces” in places like writing centres. Indeed, there is need for reflection and change in academies wherein “the ‘safe space’ pedagogy characteristic of many writing centres implies an unsafe and hostile world beyond” (Trachsel, 1995, p. 41).
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Appendices

Appendix A. Administrative Consent Letter- Tutorial Observations

Dear [OSSC Director/Administrator],

My name is Megan McIntosh. I am a Ph.D. Candidate and researcher in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at University of Toronto. This letter is to request your consent to conduct interviews, facilitate focus groups and observe tutorials in the OISE Student Success Centre for a study entitled “The Centre Will (Not) Hold: Multiliterate Academies and the Writing Centre.” My supervisor is Professor Antoinette Gagné (Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning), and my committee members are Professor Jim Cummins (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning), and Professor Julie Kerekes (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning). I am conducting this research project on writing centres as part of the requirement for the completion of my Ph.D. program.

The purpose of this research is to understand the changing nature of writing centre work as multilingual speakers become the norm, not the exception, in anglophone institutions of higher education. This research engages with a growing body of writing centre scholarship that suggests the old, codified practices or ‘lore’ that often informs writing centre work may be ineffective and disempowering for multilingual speakers. The ultimate goal of this study is to understand the ways writing centre practices are evolving, adapting and shifting in the wake ‘new’ writing centre theory that critiques the established ‘best practices’ that have dominated writing centre scholarship since the 1970s. Importantly, by engaging with ‘new’ conceptions of writing centre work this research is interested in the ways writing centres engage with socially and contextually privileged notions of literacy in institutions of higher education.

In order to investigate this topic I am seeking your consent to contact tutors and students who work in and visit your writing centre to participate in interviews, focus groups and observations. The interviews will be semi-structured and one-on-one. The duration of the interview will be approximately one hour and will be scheduled at a time and location of the participants’ choosing. Participants may also elect to conduct the interview via Skype. Participants will be informed that they may decline to answer any of the questions or terminate the interview at any time. The interview will be audio taped and later transcribed. The participants’ names will not be recorded at any time and no direct identifiers will be recorded on the transcripts.

The focus group will be informal and a set of questions will be posed related to the topic of writing centres and multilingual students. Five to ten participants will take part in each focus group to reflect on writing centre practices with multilingual students. Each focus group will last approximately one hour to one hour and a half in duration. The focus group will be scheduled at a central location at a time convenient for all participants. Light refreshments will be served. Prior to the focus group, participants will sign a consent form, which outlines that they may decline to answer any of the questions and may participate as much or as little as they like. Participants may also choose to leave the focus group at any time without penalty or judgment.
The focus groups will be video recorded to ensure accuracy with participants’ permission. Participants may request that the recording be paused or stopped at any time during the focus group. During the focus group participants will be encouraged against using names or any direct identifiers related to persons or organizations within or outside of the group. Although every effort will be made to ensure strict confidentiality, participants will be advised that the nature of focus groups prevents the researcher from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researcher will remind participants to respect the privacy of fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others. Following the completion of the focus groups, the recordings will be transcribed in full or in part to supplement the researcher’s notes. Following the transcription, all video recordings will be destroyed immediately.

Some of the topics that will be discussed in interviews and focus groups include questions related to students’ and tutors’ experiences in writing centre interactions, their perceptions of the role of the writing centre in the institution and the challenges they believe multilingual students face with academic writing in higher education.

Finally, the proposed observations will take place at the OISE Student Success Centre at a time of participants’ choosing. Prior to the observation all participants will be informed of the purposes, procedures, benefits and risks of participating in this observation. Participants will also be informed that they may terminate the observation at any time. The tutorial will proceed as it routinely would and will not differ from standard tutorials. The observation will take place for the 45-minute duration of the appointment. This observation does not require direct participation on the part of participants, and the researcher will not participate in the tutorial in any way.

The researcher will record personal notes on the dialogues, setting and perceptions of the tutorial interactions. Any references to external parties (professors, instructors, other students or tutors) will not be recorded and no direct identifiers will be included in the observation notes. With participants’ permission, the researcher will use a personal, password protected laptop to take notes during the observations. Participants may request that the researcher not record any notes and may choose to terminate the observation at any time. Observations will not be video or audio recorded at any time. All participants will be required to sign a Letter of Informed Consent, which outlines these conditions.

Participants will be informed that all of the data collected through focus groups, interviews and observations including recordings and transcripts will be stored on encrypted flash drives, locked in cabinets in my personal office and only accessed on secure, password protected computers. Only myself and my supervisor, Professor Antoinette Gagné, will have access to the original recordings and transcripts. Participants’ names will not be recorded on the data at any time, and any other references to directly identifiable people, places or organizations will be systematically removed from the transcripts. Once all identifiable names and organizational references are removed, this data may be used for future academic publications. The identity of the participants will never appear in the publication of this study or any future work.

There are no known risks associated with participation in this research. Any information participants share is strictly confidential, will not be attributed to them, is not subject to evaluation and will not affect their position or access to services at the university at any time. Although participating in this observation may not directly benefit participants, the insights
gained from discussing and observing the interactions and pedagogical practices employed during the tutorial will contribute to a better understanding of writing centre practices with multilingual students.

Because this research has undergone an Ethical Review at the University of Toronto, this document is a form letter, which requests that you confirm that you agree to allow the researcher to conduct interview, focus groups and observations under the terms outlined in this letter.

At the end of the letter, you will find a place to indicate whether or not you will grant permission for the researcher to observe tutorials in the OISE Student Success Centre. Please return one signed copy to me and keep the other for your reference.

If you have any questions regarding participants’ rights in research, or about the responsibilities of researchers, or any concerns or complaints about this study, please feel free to contact the Office of Research Ethics by email at email@utoronto.ca or by telephone at (xxx)xxx-xxxx.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact myself, Megan McIntosh at (xxx)xxx-xxxx or email@utoronto.ca, or you can also contact my academic supervisor, Professor Antoinette Gagné at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or at email@utoronto.ca.

Thank you in advance for your participation.
Administrative Consent Letter for Observations

Please initial if you agree to the following:

1. I agree to allow the researcher to contact tutors and students who take part in tutorials in the OISE Student Success Centre to participate in this research. 

2. I agree to allow the research to conduct interviews with writing centre tutors and students at a time and place of the participants’ choosing.

3. I agree to allow the researcher to conduct focus groups with a) writing centre tutors, and b) writing centre students.

4. I agree to allow the researcher to observe writing centre tutorials in the OISE Student Success Centre at a time of participants’ choosing:

5. I understand that all participants will be informed of the terms of the observation, focus group and interview participation, and will sign Informed Consent Letters prior to taking part in any aspect of the study:

Please note the collected data will be used for the completion of the Ph.D. dissertation, for future publications and public presentations but your identity will always remain anonymous and confidential. The completed dissertation will be publically accessible and will be located in the OISE/UT thesis collection, which can be accessed electronically in the University of Toronto Research Repository (T Space) at https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/9944

By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name: ________________________________
Signed: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________

Please keep a copy of this form for your records. Thank you!
Appendix B. Sample Invitation Email to Invite Writing Centre Tutors and Multilingual Students to take part in an Interview and/or Focus Group

[Date]

Dear Tutor/Student

My name is Megan McIntosh. I am a Ph.D. Candidate and researcher in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at University of Toronto. This letter is to request your voluntary participation in a study entitled “The Centre Will (Not) Hold: Multiliterate Academies and the Writing Centre.” I am conducting this research project on writing centres as part of the requirement for completion of my Ph.D. program.

The purpose of this research is to understand the changing nature of writing centre work as multilingual speakers become the norm, not the exception, in anglophone institutions of higher education. This research engages with a growing body of writing centre scholarship that suggests the old, codified practices or ‘lore’ that often informs writing centre work may be ineffective and disempowering for multilingual speakers. The ultimate goal of this study is to understand the ways writing centre practices are evolving, adapting and shifting in the wake ‘new’ writing centre theory that critiques the established ‘best practices’ that have dominated writing centre scholarship since the 1970s. Importantly, by engaging with ‘new’ conceptions of writing centre work this research is interested in the ways writing centres engage with socially and contextually privileged notions of literacy in institutions of higher education.

You have been asked to participate in this case study as you are an important stakeholder in the writing centre. Your participation and the insights you share will provide important information to better understand writing centre interactions in increasingly multilingual higher education environments. Your participation will contribute to an important body of scholarship on writing centres that seeks to understand best practices as well as challenges that interlocutors in writing centres face in multilingual environments.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview with myself. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded. Should you agree to take part in the interview you will receive a $20 Starbucks gift card as a small token of my appreciation for your participation.

You are also invited to take part in a focus group that will last one hour to one and a half hours. You may choose to participate in only one or both of these activities. Some of the topics that will be discussed in interviews and focus groups include questions related to your experiences in writing centre interactions, your perception of the role of the writing centre in your institution and the challenges you believe multilingual students face with academic writing in higher education.

Participation is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or judgment. Should you choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from you will be destroyed immediately. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential and will be
stored securely. The transcribed data will not include your name or any other identifying information, and only myself and my supervisor will have access to the data. The insights you share will not be subject to evaluation and will have no impact on your standing in the university or the writing centre.

If you would like more information about the research, please feel free to contact me via email: email@utoronto.ca or phone (xxx)-xxx-xxxx at any time. Your involvement would be greatly appreciated. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Megan McIntosh
Ph.D. Candidate,
OISE/University of Toronto
email@utoronto.ca
Appendix C. Sample Invitation Email to Invite Writing Centre Directors and Coordinator to take part in an Interview

Dear [Name of Writing Centre Director/Coordinator],

My name is Megan McIntosh. I am a Ph.D. Candidate and researcher in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at University of Toronto. This letter is to request your voluntary participation in a study entitled “The Centre Will (Not) Hold: Multiliterate Academies and the Writing Centre.” I am conducting this research project on writing centres as part of the requirement for completion of my Ph.D. program.

The purpose of this research is to understand the changing nature of writing centre work as multilingual speakers become the norm, not the exception, in anglophone institutions of higher education. This research engages with a growing body of writing centre scholarship that suggests the old, codified practices or ‘lore’ that often informs writing centre work may be ineffective and disempowering for multilingual speakers. The ultimate goal of this study is to understand the ways writing centre practices are evolving, adapting and shifting in the wake ‘new’ writing centre theory that critiques the established ‘best practices’ that have dominated writing centre scholarship since the 1970s.

Importantly, by engaging with ‘new’ conceptions of writing centre work this research is interested in the ways writing centres engage with socially and contextually privileged notions of literacy in institutions of higher education.

Your writing centre has been chosen to participate in this case study as it has been identified as one that functions in a large, urban university wherein a diverse multilingual speaking student population accesses your services. Your insights, as well as those of your students and tutors are sought to provide important information to better understand writing centre interactions in increasingly multilingual higher education environments. Your participation will contribute to an important body of scholarship on writing centres that seeks to understand best practices as well as challenges that interlocutors in writing centres face in multilingual environments.

If you agree to allow your writing centre to be included in the study, tutors and students who work in and visit your writing centre will be contacted to take part in interviews, focus groups and observations. Some of the topics that will be discussed in interviews and focus groups with students and tutors include questions related to their experiences in writing centre interactions, their perceptions of the role of the writing centre in your institution and the challenges they believe multilingual students face with academic writing in higher education. The observations will be naturalistic and I will not participate in any way. With the consent of participants I will observe the 45-minute session and record notes on the interactions therein.

Your own participation in a one-on-one interview with myself would also contribute to this study. The interview will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded. Some of the topics that will be discussed in our interview will include questions related to your experiences leading a writing centre (including hiring and training), your perception of the role of the writing centre in your institution and the challenges you believe multilingual students face with academic
writing in higher education. All participants who take part in this study will be informed of the nature of the study, the processes the data collection will take and their rights as participants in the study. Each participant will sign consent forms prior to each interview, focus group and observation.

Participation is voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or judgment. Should participants choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from them will be destroyed immediately upon their request. The information provided will be kept strictly confidential and will be stored securely. The data will not include participants’ names or any other identifying information, and only myself and my supervisor will have access to the data.

If you would like more information about the research, please feel free to contact me via email: email@utoronto.ca or phone (xxx)-xxx-xxxx at any time. Your involvement would be greatly appreciated, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Appendix D. Information Consent Letter- Interviews

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project. I am currently enrolled in the Ph.D. program in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). My supervisor is Professor Antoinette Gagné (Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning), and my committee members are Professor Jim Cummins (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning), and Professor Julie Kerekes (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning). I am conducting this research project on writing centres as part of the requirement for the completion of my Ph.D. program.

The purpose of this research is to understand the changing nature of writing centre work as multilingual speakers become the norm, not the exception, in anglophone institutions of higher education. This research engages with a growing body of writing centre scholarship that suggests the old, codified practices or ‘lore’ that often informs writing centre work may be ineffective and disempowering for multilingual speakers. The ultimate goal of this study is to understand the ways writing centre practices are evolving, adapting and shifting in the wake ‘new’ writing centre theory that critiques the established ‘best practices’ that have dominated writing centre scholarship since the 1970s. Importantly, by engaging with ‘new’ conceptions of writing centre work this research is interested in the ways writing centres engage with socially and contextually privileged notions of literacy in institutions of higher education.

The interview will be semi-structured and one-on-one. The duration of the interview will be approximately one hour and will be scheduled at a time and location of your choosing. You may also elect to conduct the interview via Skype. If you choose this option I will contact you via Skype for the interview and will immediately delete your Skype ID following the interview. You will receive a $20 Starbucks gift card as a small token of appreciation for your participation.

During the interview, you may decline to answer any of the questions or choose to terminate the interview. Some of the topics that will be discussed in interviews and focus groups include questions related to your experiences in writing centre interactions, your perception of the role of the writing centre in your institution and the challenges you believe multilingual students face with academic writing in higher education.

The interview will be audio recorded with your permission. You may request that the recording be paused or stopped at any time during the interview. The recordings will later be transcribed. Following transcription, all audio files will be deleted immediately. All of the data including recordings and transcripts will be stored on encrypted flash drives, locked in cabinets in my personal office and only accessed on secure, password protected computers. Only myself and my supervisor, Professor Antoinette Gagné will have access to the original recordings and transcripts. Your name will not be recorded on the data at any time, and any other references to directly identifiable people will be systematically removed from the transcripts. Once all identifiable names are removed, this data will be used in this dissertation and may be used for future academic publications. Your name will never appear in the publication of this study or any future work.
As a participant you may request to review the transcript of the interview and may choose to delete any or all of the contents upon review without judgment or penalty. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence, penalty or judgment, and may request to have your transcript deleted from the data.

There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research. Any information you share is will not be attributed to you, is not subject to evaluation and will not affect your position or access to services at the university at any time. The benefits of participating in this research are that it will allow you, as an important writing centre stakeholder, to reflect on your interactions and the pedagogical practices in writing centres in multilingual environments. Through discussing and reflecting on the practices of the writing centre, and the way the writing centre is positioned within the broader institution, you will provide important information related to student support outside of the formal classroom and the ways in which notions of literacy are changing and adapting (or remaining static) as multilingual students become the norm in institutions of higher education.

Because this research has undergone an Ethical Review at the University of Toronto, this document is a form letter which requires you confirm that you understand and agree to participate in the research according to the terms set out above. At the end of the letter, you will find a place to indicate whether or not you wish to participate. You will also find a place where you can indicate if you would be willing to take part in a tutorial observation at a separate time following the interview. Please check the appropriate box, sign, and provide the date. Return one signed copy to me and keep the other for your reference.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in research, or about the responsibilities of researchers, or any concerns or complaints about this study, please feel free to contact the Office of Research Ethics at email@utoronto.ca or (xxx)-xxx-xxxx.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact myself, Megan McIntosh at (xxx)xxx-xxxx or email@utoronto.ca, or you can also contact my academic supervisor, Professor Antoinette Gagné at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or at email@utoronto.ca.

Thank you in advance for your participation.
Interview Consent

Please initial if you agree to the following:

1. I agree to have my interview audio taped: ______

2. I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without consequence and that I may choose not to answer any questions with which I am uncomfortable: ______

3. I have read this document and any enclosed documents. I understand what is being asked and the accompanying conditions and promises. I understand the nature and limitations of the research: ______

4. I am willing to take part in a 45 minute observation of a writing tutorial at a later date: ______

Please note the collected data will be used for the completion of the Ph.D. dissertation, for future publications and public presentations but your identity will always remain anonymous and confidential. The completed dissertation will be publicly accessible and will be located in the OISE/UT thesis collection, which can be accessed electronically in the University of Toronto Research Repository (T Space) at https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/9944

By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name____________________________

Signed___________________________

Date____________________________

Please keep a copy of this form for your records. Thank you!
Appendix E. Information Consent Letter- Tutorial Observation

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project. I am currently enrolled in the Ph.D. program in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). My supervisor is Professor Antoinette Gagné (Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning), and my committee members are Professor Jim Cummins (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning), and Professor Julie Kerekes (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning). I am conducting this research project on writing centres as part of the requirement for the completion of my Ph.D. program.

The purpose of this research is to understand the changing nature of writing centre work as multilingual speakers become the norm, not the exception, in anglophone institutions of higher education. This research engages with a growing body of writing centre scholarship that suggests the old, codified practices or ‘lore’ that often informs writing centre work may be ineffective and disempowering for multilingual speakers.

The ultimate goal of this study is to understand the ways writing centre practices are evolving, adapting and shifting in the wake ‘new’ writing centre theory that critiques the established ‘best practices’ that have dominated writing centre scholarship since the 1970s. Importantly, by engaging with ‘new’ conceptions of writing centre work this research is interested in the ways writing centres engage with socially and contextually privileged notions of literacy in institutions of higher education.

This observation will take place at the OISE Student Success Centre at a time of your choosing. Your tutorial will proceed as it routinely would and will not differ from standard tutorials. The observation will take place for the 45 minute duration of your appointment. This observation does not require your direct participation, and the researcher will not participate in the tutorial in any way.

The researcher will record personal notes on the dialogues, setting and perceptions of the tutorial interactions. Any references to external parties (professors, instructors, other students or tutors) will not be recorded and no direct identifiers will be included in the observation notes. With your permission, the researcher will use a personal, password protected laptop to take notes during the observations. You may request that the researcher not record any notes and you may choose to terminate the observation at any time. The observations will not be video or audio recorded at any time.

There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research. Any information you share is strictly confidential, will not be attributed to you, is not subject to evaluation and will not affect your position or access to services at the university at any time. Although participating in this observation may not directly benefit you, the insights gained from observing your interactions and the pedagogical practices observed will contribute to a better understanding of writing centre practices with multilingual students.

Because this research has undergone an Ethical Review at the University of Toronto, this document is a form letter which requires you confirm that you understand and agree to
participate in the research according to the terms set out above. At the end of the letter, you will find a place to indicate whether or not you wish to participate. Please return one signed copy to me and keep the other for your reference.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in research, or about the responsibilities of researchers, or any concerns or complaints about this study, please feel free to contact the Office of Research Ethics at email@utoronto.ca or (xxx)-xxx-xxxx.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact myself, Megan McIntosh at (xxx)xxx-xxxx or email@utoronto.ca, or you can also contact my academic supervisor, Professor Antoinette Gagné at (xxx) xxx-xxxx or at email@utoronto.ca.

Thank you in advance for your participation.
Observation Consent

Please initial if you agree to the following:

1. I agree allow the researcher to observe a writing centre tutorial at a time of my choosing: ___
2. I understand that I am free to terminate the observation at any time without consequence: ___
3. I consent to the researcher using a personal laptop to record notes during the observation: ___
4. I have read this document and any enclosed documents. I understand what is being asked and the accompanying conditions and promises. I understand the nature and limitations of the research: ___

*Please note the collected data will be used for the completion of the Ph.D. dissertation, for future publications and public presentations but your identity will always remain anonymous and confidential. The completed dissertation will be publically accessible and will be located in the OISE/UT thesis collection, which can be accessed electronically in the University of Toronto Research Repository (T Space) at [https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/9944](https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/9944)*

By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name_________________________

Signed_______________________

Date_________________________

*Please keep a copy of this form for your records. Thank you!*
Appendix F. Information Consent Letter - Focus Group

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research project. I am currently enrolled in the Ph.D. program in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). My supervisor is Professor Antoinette Gagné (Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning), and my committee members are Professor Jim Cummins (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning), and Professor Julie Kerekes (Curriculum, Teaching and Learning). I am conducting this research project on writing centres as part of the requirement for the completion of my Ph.D. program.

The purpose of this research is to understand the changing nature of writing centre work as multilingual speakers become the norm, not the exception, in anglophone institutions of higher education. This research engages with a growing body of writing centre scholarship that suggests the old, codified practices or ‘lore’ that often informs writing centre work may be ineffective and disempowering for multilingual speakers. The ultimate goal of this study is to understand the ways writing centre practices are evolving, adapting and shifting in the wake ‘new’ writing centre theory that critiques the established ‘best practices’ that have dominated writing centre scholarship since the 1970s. Importantly, by engaging with ‘new’ conceptions of writing centre work this research is interested in the ways writing centres engage with socially and contextually privileged notions of literacy in institutions of higher education.

The focus group will be informal and a set of questions will be posed related to the topic of writing centres and multilingual students. Five to ten other participants will be part of the group to reflect on writing centre practices with multilingual students. The focus group will take approximately one hour to one hour and a half. The focus group will be scheduled at a central location at a time convenient for all participants. Light refreshments will be served.

During the focus group, you may decline to answer any of the questions and you may participate as much or as little as you like. You may also choose to leave the focus group at any time without penalty or judgment. Some of the topics that will be discussed in the focus group include questions related to your experiences in writing centre interactions, your perception of the role of the writing centre in your institution and the challenges you believe multilingual students face with academic writing in higher education.

The focus group will be video recorded to ensure accuracy with your permission. You may request that the recording be paused or stopped at any time during the focus group. The recordings and any records of conversations therein will be stored on encrypted flash drives, locked in cabinets in my personal office and only accessed on secure, password protected computers. Only myself and my supervisor, Professor Antoinette Gagné will have access to the original recordings. Following the focus groups, the recordings will be transcribed in full or in part to supplement the researcher’s notes. The focus group recordings will be destroyed immediately following transcription. Your name will not be recorded on the data at any time, and any other references to directly identifiable people will be systematically removed from any transcripts and/or notes produced from the focus group. Once all identifiable names are removed, this data may be used for future academic publications.
Participants are encouraged against using names or any direct identifiers related to persons or organizations within or outside of the group, should identities be revealed in the discussions they will not be recorded in the transcriptions. Although every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality, please be advised that the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researcher will remind participants to respect the privacy of fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.

There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research. Any information you share is not subject to evaluation and will not affect your position or access to services at the university at any time. The benefits of participating in this research are that it will allow you, as an important writing centre stakeholder, to reflect on your interactions and the pedagogical practices in writing centres in multilingual environments. Through discussing and reflecting on the practices of the writing centre, and the way the writing centre is positioned within the broader institution, you will provide important information related to student support outside of the formal classroom and the ways in which notions of literacy are changing and adapting (or remaining static) as multilingual students become the norm in institutions of higher education.

Because this research has undergone an Ethical Review at the University of Toronto, this document is a form letter, which requires you confirm that you understand and agree to participate in the research according to the terms set out above. At the end of the letter, you will find a place to indicate whether or not you wish to participate. Please return one signed copy to me and keep the other for your reference.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in research, or about the responsibilities of researchers, or any concerns or complaints about this study, please feel free to contact the Office of Research Ethics at email@utoronto.ca or (xxx)-xxx-zxxx.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact myself, Megan McIntosh at (xxx)xxx-zxxx or email@utoronto.ca, or you can also contact my academic supervisor, Professor Antoinette Gagné at (xxx) xxx-zxxx or at email@utoronto.ca.

Thank you in advance for your participation.
Focus Group Consent

Please initial if you agree to the following:

1. I agree to take part in a focus group that will be video taped: __

2. I understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without consequence and that I may choose not to answer any questions with which I am uncomfortable: _____

3. I understand that while every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality: __

4. I have read this document and any enclosed documents. I understand what is being asked and the accompanying conditions and promises. I understand the nature and limitations of the research: _____

Please note the collected data will be used for the completion of the Ph.D. dissertation, for future publications and public presentations but your identity will always remain anonymous and confidential. The completed dissertation will be publicly accessible and will be located in the OISE/UT thesis collection, which can be accessed electronically in the University of Toronto Research Repository (T Space) at https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/9944

By signing below, you are indicating that you are willing to participate in the study, you have received a copy of this letter, and you are fully aware of the conditions above.

Name__________________________________________

Signed________________________________________

Date___________________________________________

Please keep a copy of this form for your records. Thank you
Appendix G. Writing Centre Leadership - Semi-Structured Interview Guide

This interview will be broken up into three categories: the writing centre and the institution, the writing centre and students and tutorial interactions. Each section includes 3-5 questions and the interview should take roughly 60 minutes.

**The Writing Centre and the Institution:**
1. How do you describe the role of your Centre/Office to students at the university?
2. How do you describe the role of your Centre/Office/Service to faculty? To administration?
3. What services do you provide?
4. How do you think your services support the institution?

**The Writing Centre and Students:**
5. How do you think your services support students?
6. What are some of the challenges you face in providing writing support in your university?
7. How do you advertise and describe your services to multilingual writers and international students?

**Leadership, Staffing, Training and Tutorial Interactions:**
8. From where do you draw your staff? Are your staff peers to students who use your services, why or why not?
9. What type of training do you provide for tutors/advisors/staff? What types of literature do you include in training activities if applicable?
10. How do you instruct/encourage staff to work with multilingual writers?
11. What challenges do you think your staff encounters in supporting multilingual writers? How do you instruct staff to mitigate/address these possible challenges in tutorials?
12. Do you have any additional questions, comments or thoughts?
Appendix H. Writing Centre Advisors- Semi-Structured Interview Guide:

This interview will be broken up into five categories: personal/demographic questions, the writing centre and the institution, the writing centre and students, training and tutorial interactions and comparisons across contexts. Each section includes 2-8 questions and the interview should take roughly 90 minutes.

General Demographic Questions:
1. What is your current degree program (undergraduate, graduate)?
2. How long have you worked in the writing centre?
3. Why did you want to work in the writing centre?
4. Which languages do you speak?
5. Have you ever used your writing centre or another writing centre for your own work? Why did you use the writing centre and how has that informed your practice as a writing tutor?

The Writing Centre and the Institution:
6. How would you describe your role as a writing tutor/advisor in your institution/faculty?
7. How do you think your writing centre interacts with the broader goals of the university? The Writing Centre and Students:
8. In what ways do you think the writing centre supports multilingual students?
9. Tell me about a time you had a successful writing centre tutorial with a multilingual writer. What happened and why do you think it was successful?
10. Tell me about a time when you had a difficult or unsuccessful tutorial with a multilingual writer. What happened and why was the interaction difficult for you? How do you think that particular tutorial may have been difficult/challenging for the student?
11. When you work with multilingual students what do you think are the most pressing challenges they face in their writing? How do you work to support them in meeting these challenges?
12. What do you find to be the most rewarding part of working with multilingual writers? What is the most difficult part?
13. Do you feel as though your expectations of tutorial interactions are more or less often congruent with the expectations of multilingual writers? Where there is a mismatch, what do you think the multilingual writer expects? How do you mitigate this mismatch?
14. How is working with multilingual students different from working with Native English speakers?
15. Do you see yourself as a peer to the students you work with? Why or why not? How do you navigate this relationship in tutorials?

Experience, Training and Tutorial Interactions:
16. Describe the training you received to work with multilingual students. What aspects of your tutor training have you learned or adapted over the course of your work?
17. What are some of the practices you have been encouraged to adopt when working with multilingual writers? What are some of the practices you have been discouraged from adopting?

Comparisons- Writing Centres Across Context
18. Have you worked in more than one writing centre? If so, in what ways have the experiences differed?
19. What do you think was the most important factor that accounts for these differences (leadership, institution, students, colleagues, etc)?
Appendix I. Writing Centre Multilingual Students- Semi-Structured Interview Guide:

This interview will be broken up into four categories: personal/demographic questions, the writing centre and the institution, tutorial interactions and comparisons across contexts. Each section includes 3-6 questions and the interview should take roughly 60 minutes.

General Demographic Questions:
1. What is your degree program?
2. Have you received previous degrees in another country? Which country (ies)?
3. How long have you been at this university?
4. Which languages do you speak?

The Writing Centre, Academic Writing and the University:
1. How did you find out about the writing services offered by your institution?
2. Why did you decide to seek out writing support?
3. What are the main challenges you face in academic writing? In what ways, if at all, do writing tutorials help you to overcome these challenges?

Experiences and Interactions in Faculty of Ed Writing Centre:
4. What type of support do you usually seek in writing tutorials (editing, discussing ideas, organization, planning, etc.)?
5. How are your needs supported by the writing services offered? In your opinion what supports are lacking in the writing centre?
6. Tell me about a time that you had a successful interaction in a writing tutorial.
7. Tell me about a time that you had an unsuccessful/unsatisfying interaction in a writing tutorial.
8. How would you describe the relationship between yourself and writing tutors (ie. Peers, teacher- student)?
9. If a writing tutor makes a suggestion/provides feedback that you disagree with, how would you/do you respond?

Comparisons: Tutors and Writing Centres Across Contexts:
10. Have you visited other writing centres in this university? In other universities? Please describe how your experiences differed in diverse contexts.
11. Have you worked with diverse tutors? If so, how have different tutors changed your experiences in the Writing Centre?
12. What characteristics do you feel a good writing tutor possesses?
Advisors:
This focus group will engage 5-10 writing tutors in a discussion on themes related to writing centre interactions with multilingual speakers and will also consider the writing centre within the broader institutional environment. Each participant will be given an opportunity to respond to all of the questions and once everyone has had a chance to respond, participants are invited to add additional thoughts/ideas based on the input from other participants. The focus group should last roughly 60 minutes.

Advisor Questions

The Writing Centre Role:
1. What is the first thing you think of when you hear the words “Writing Centre?” Does the OSSC and its role and mandate match with your notions of what a writing centre is and does? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever had to address misconceptions about the writing centre role with faculty, administration or students? What were the misconceptions and did you respond to them?
3. On a continuum from influential to marginal, describe the position of your writing centre institutionally. Why do you position your writing centre as such?
4. How do you think your writing centre upholds Western, academic writing norms? How, if at all, does your writing centre challenge/critique/change or broaden such norms?

Interactions in the Writing Centre:
5. In your experience, what is the most common type of support multilingual students seek in writing tutorials?
6. What have you learned from working with multilingual students in the writing centre?
7. Have multilingual students expressed feelings of inferiority/inadequacy related to their academic endeavours because of their written abilities in English? How do you react and respond if/when multilingual students express such feelings?
8. Have you ever had an opportunity to speak a language other than English in a writing centre tutorial? Why did you do so and what was the outcome?

The ‘Dos and don’ts’ of Writing Centre Training and Tutorial Interactions:
9. Does your writing centre have any limitations or explicit descriptions of things it does not do? What are they?
10. Have you ever done something in a tutorial with a multilingual writer that you felt was at odds with your training or beyond your role as a writing tutor/advisor? What did you do and why did you do it?
11. If a student brings you a paper with comments you disagree with or an assignment that you feel is poorly developed from a professor, how do you react/respond? How do you respond if a student has received advice from another advisor or peer that is at odds with your advice?
Appendix K. Focus Group Guide, Multilingual Students

This focus group will engage 5-10 writing multilingual students in a discussion on themes related to writing centre interactions within the broader institutional environment. Each participant will be given an opportunity to respond to all of the questions and once everyone has had a chance to respond, participants are invited to add additional thoughts/ideas based on the input from other participants. The focus group should last roughly 60 minutes.

The Writing Centre Role:
1. What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the words ‘Writing Centre’?
2. How, if at all, does the support you receive in writing centre interactions help you in your academic endeavours? Has visiting the writing centre helped you in any other way?
3. What types of support would you recommend other multilingual students visit the writing centre for? What types of support would you warn other writers against seeking in the writing centre?

Interactions in the Writing Centre:
4. Has a writing centre tutor disagreed with or challenged comments, an assignment, course expectations or course content given by a professor? How did you feel about these comments?
5. Has a writing tutor even challenged or disagreed with institutional policies (i.e. editing, ‘Standard’ language use, academic writing conventions, advice to seek a professional editor)? What did they challenge and how did this make you feel?
6. Can you tell me about a time when a writing centre tutor did not provide you with the support you were hoping to get? What type of support were you looking for and what did you receive instead?
7. Tell me about a time when a visit to the writing centre improved your academic writing confidence. What did the tutor do and say and how did this help you?
8. Tell me about a time when a visit to the writing centre negatively affected your academic writing confidence. What did the tutor do and say and how did this help you?

Prior Experiences and Comparisons:
9. How has your previous education impacted your expectations related to academic writing and academic writing support? In what ways has visiting the writing centre helped you to navigate the expectations for academic writing in this university?
10. Compare the support you receive in the writing centre with other academic writing support received at other institutions or other writing centres. What are the main similarities and differences across the contexts in your experience?
11. In the absence of the OSSC, where would you go for writing support?
12. On a continuum from successful to struggling where do you perceive you fit in terms of your academic writing abilities? How do you feel you are positioned by your professors and writing advisors?
Appendix L. Observation Guide

Date:  
Time:  
Location:  

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<th>What do I see</th>
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Notes and Reflections