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Literacy Education across Languages in Writing Centers

By

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for Graduation summa cum laude
and
for Graduation with Honors from the Department of English

University of Louisville

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THE QUESTION

Literacy education in writing is a practice that is not limited to one language; rather, almost every country provides some amount of instruction in foreign language composition, whether facilitated through a writing center or an L2 classroom. Many of these countries' methods for writing education have been documented in self-reported reflections, statistics, or surveys. However, this documentation of methods is only the beginning of a larger conversation. Writing institutions' methods for self-reflection have evolved beyond facts and figures into a holistic analysis of individual tutoring practices. Multilingual writing education within the same institution – that is to say an institution that facilitates learning in multiple languages – is one such topic in need of further study.

In this thesis, I investigate how tutoring methodology (either language-specific or standardized for all languages) in a multilingual writing center which tutors in multiple languages and treats *all* tutored languages equally can enhance or detract from a writer's concept of language proficiency. To complete my research, I conducted a qualitative survey at a university writing center in Germany.

Studying this topic allows researchers to observe how learners, whether already bilingual or those studying a second (third, etc.) language, can benefit from a more language-individualized approach to the writing process in their education (Lape). A better understanding of how such a process influences success in writing tutoring might allow learners of foreign languages to more easily grasp concepts in their language of study or improve already existing skills – thus causing them to perceive themselves to be more comfortable, proficient, or fluent in the target language. Furthermore, this perception of comfort could significantly contribute to our understanding of how writers acquire, process, and use language.

The key distinction to make between multilingual writing education and monolingual writing education is the difference of practice. If a tutor or instructor creates a lecture or tutoring plan for a class or tutee in German, how might that plan differ if the information were to be delivered in English? How does the delivery of the information based upon language variation appear in practice? Such a distinction is important because methods for multilingual writing education, which includes tutoring, might change from one language to another. I am speaking of a language-specific approach, a tutoring method or model which takes into account subtle differences inherent between languages (if they exist). If so, to what degree should tutors and institutions cater to that change in method in order to foster more effective tutoring or teaching? When educators who regularly tutor or teach in multiple languages sit down with writers of different languages, are they considering a differential approach, asking themselves whether to use a tutoring strategy that is language-specific or one-size-fits-all?

Structuring a Response

The thesis addresses the benefits or detriments of the variety of practice in multilingual tutoring through five sections: 1) Literature Review to situate the place of this question by focusing on three themes from existing scholarship: Translingual Literacy and Pedagogy, Practices for Tutoring ESL Writers, and Non-Ideal Multilingual Writing Centers; 2) Methodology to explain the precise rationale for using a qualitative response survey that poses eleven question sets to multilingual tutors and justify why the chosen site of study supports the research question; 3) Results to lay out the objective specifics of the site of study and responsibly convey anonymous survey answers; 4) Analysis to individually examine writing center information and particular survey responses; and 5) Conclusion to synthesize the material gathered into higher-order observations on multilingual writing education and its practices, addressing to what extent this

thesis answered the research question, discovered new information, and presented opportunities for further research and study in multilingual writing. My goal for this project is to extend the ongoing conversation about multilingual pedagogy, identifying areas of concern in existing scholarship and revealing new gaps where research has yet to be done.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Translingual literacy theory is the conceptual bedrock for any high-level discussion on situating a difference of effectiveness in practice. Since I present my own theory of multilingual writing methods in this thesis, I need to clarify which components of that theory are borrowed from existing translingual pedagogy from across its spectrum of conversations and which components expound upon current discussions or begin new topics for discussion that were previously undiscovered.

Next, I move to the Practices of Tutoring, specifically with ESL writers, to identify where the idea of language-specific or one-size-fits-all approaches might fit within real-life tutoring situations by determining how educators and tutors are instructing multilingual students in a new language. Although I am not limiting my thesis specifically to English, I feel that I can best engage with this set of the wider literature on practice because of my limitation to reading best in the English, language. As helpful as it would be to read pedagogy (in German) on instructing English speakers, I am limited by my depth of knowledge in comprehending foreign languages.

Lastly, I focus on the concept of parsing my new term The Ideal Multilingual Writing Center; specifically, I want to explain what I would consider an ideal multilingual writing center versus a non-ideal one. To accomplish this goal within the section, I am primarily describing texts that do not represent the ideal version, since I have only just invented the term, and there is precious little scholarship that might approach such an idea. Rather, I refer to texts that provide counter-

examples of what I intend to invoke when I describe an ideal multilingual writing center. These counter-examples include schools or centers that prioritize one language above another or simply view a language as a necessary evil to acquire a better or more prestigious one. However, with what little information that exists on a place where languages are institutionally equalized, I hope to paint a picture of The Ideal Multilingual Writing Center by demonstrating what it *is* and what it *is not*. Once I have an idea of where my question fits, I must have a way to test it in some observable way, thus requiring the Methodology.

This thesis focuses on a writing center which fosters a multi-lingual approach to writing instruction/tutoring where all tutored languages are given equal value in terms of resources and tutor attention. However, there is little scholarship that describes such an ideal writing center and how it relates to the overarching question of multilingual literacy practices. Therefore, I will examine the existing literature instead, inquiring how these topics might tangentially touch or approach the question before us in this thesis. Given the limited scholarship in multilingual writing tutoring practices, I will attempt to triangulate the exact gap in scholarly work presented by multilingual writing practices by dividing the relevant research into three distinct themes: Translingual Literacy and Pedagogy, Practices for Tutoring ESL Writers, and the Non-Ideal Multilingual Writing Center – writing centers where all languages are not held to an equitable standard of attention or encouragement. By assessing these themes individually and how they address – to an extent – the questions of this thesis, we, as scholars in the field, can progress knowing how exactly to situate our questions in the body of research, so we can begin to effectively address them.

Translingual Literacy and Pedagogy

Before I can grapple with the information regarding multilingual writing centers, I must first establish the broader issues at play regarding translingual pedagogy and literacy (Donahue; Lu, Horner; Royster; Trimbur). In this body of research, we see the multilingualism of students as less of a hindrance in learning a new language; rather, this quality is more of an asset to ascribing meaning to the unique differences between languages and allows these people to write “expressively, rhetorically, and communicatively” (Horner et al. 303). Furthermore, these scholars pose questions about how pedagogy should be adjusted to accommodate second-language writers in a way that embraces other languages, rather than visualizing alternative modes of communication as obstacles to overcome.

To give a representative sample of translingual work, I will look to “Translingual Literacy, Language Difference, and Matters of Agency,” by Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner. In this work, the two argue for an approach to language that is not hindered by expectations on what constitutes a “best” language or “correct” language variety. Of course, translingual theory can apply to varieties within individual languages, such as dialects that diverge from some established standard, or to the broader differences between languages themselves. While the first point is important, the second is integral to the focus of this thesis, which intends to study the effectiveness of tutoring strategies “translingually” or across (trans) language (lingual). Thus, when approaching tutoring in one language versus another, we cannot assume, as Horner and Lu argue, that any one language is “better” or more “correct” than any other. By this approach, tutoring writing in Navajo or Turkish or Belarussian is equivalent to tutoring in English or Chinese or Spanish in the sense that each is a developed language that carries meaning. Of course, some languages might be more accessible for different people or situations, but in general, one cannot be considered superior or

more-developed than another. This idea is at the cornerstone of the Ideal Multilingual Writing Center, which I discuss later in this literature review.

Furthermore, Christiane Donahue argues in her CCC article, “‘Internationalization’ and Composition Studies: Reorienting the Discourse,” that scholars must move even further beyond notions of evaluating “good” versus “bad” writing; rather, she argues that scholars should be just as wary of exalting or imposing their own writing practices/pedagogy onto multilingual writers as they are of decrying ESL or second-language writers (213-216). Horner, Lu, and Donahue all highlight the notion that “unfamiliar” does not mean ineffective (Donahue 214). To make her article analogous to “Translingual Literacy, Language Difference, and Matters of Agency,” Donahue advocates for responsible teacher and tutor attitudes towards their own pedagogy as Horner and Lu advocate for responsible teacher and tutor attitudes toward the modes of expression of ESL speakers and writers. Other scholars like Ulla Connor take this concept even further still, accounting for culture and language in her book *Intercultural Rhetoric in the Writing Classroom* in chapters like “Intercultural Rhetoric and Teaching,” which includes topics on “The ESL/EFL Writing Classroom,” “The Writing Center,” and “English as a Lingua-Franca.” These sections highlight the role of multiple languages in addition to English in a writing center a classroom. We can look at culture and practical theory further in the Horner, Lu, and Matsuda book *Cross-Language Relations in Composition* where they collect excerpts from a variety of scholars who work with rhetoric and composition across language.

Considering translingual theory when studying multilingual writing centers is necessary for maintaining the spirit of what such institutions represent. Writing centers that do not keep translingual theories in mind, such as that of language equity, work against common writing center philosophies of student-centered pedagogy; I do not intend to study any writing center contrary to

those philosophies. Rather, these centers are more akin to prescriptive institutions that attempt, without proper authority, to define “correct” practices or “good” writing. In fact, these concepts are far more circumstantial, genre-based, and subjective than these supposed authorities might lead writers to believe.

Throughout this thesis, I engage with the idea of translingual theory versus multilingual theory. While multilingual theory might engage for the discrete yet equal treatment of languages, translingual theory advocates for blurred lines between languages that can be seen as close relatives of one another. At times, this thesis may lean towards the multilingual theory that treats languages as distinct, but I do not intend to detract from translingual theory in this leaning; indeed, translingual theory and the subtle similarities and congruencies between language actually help to validate the idea of a language-specific approach. A language-specific approach can refer to either the similarities or differences between one language and another and how a tutor might capitalize on a knowledge of those subtle feature to better serve a tutee.

The limitations of this research, however, is that it does not consistently engage with specific writing centers and their practices, especially in such specialized locations as a multilingual writing center. This is why we must next look at how translingual theory and pedagogy are applied to ESL tutoring models and then apply those translingual tutoring models to the actually space of the writing center – combining pedagogy, practice, and place into the multilingual writing center.

Practices for Tutoring ESL Writers

Next, I pose the question: how are tutors presently working with second language students in the field, specifically in writing centers (Nakamaru; Ronesi; Reynolds)? First, a theme is that instructors/tutors are striving to take a measured approach to ESL writing – not with the intent to

decry ESL writing as poor but to refine writing skills without diminishing the importance of previously acquired languages (Connor 30-34). A second concept is the proliferation of varied models for ESL tutoring that break apart, rather than obfuscate, the intricacies of the target language into discrete, accessible pieces (e.g. a different model than the one used for a fluent English writer) (Reynolds 16-33). The first concept implies the notion that some writing centers and institutions are headed towards a place of mutual respect for myriad languages, implying that the same is possible in multiple languages. The second highlights the notion that a writing center which effectively operates in one or more languages approaches tutoring situations with a sense of flexibility – second language writers have unique needs, and therefore, require unique strategies. If a variable model is more effective for ESL writer comprehension, would an approach that varies by language also be more effective than a standard approach?

A work representative of this theme is *One of One with Second Language Writers* by Dudley Reynolds, which generally argues that ESL writers require a delicate, intricate approach from all parts of the writing process from punctuation to syntax to organization (51-67, 82-132). Specifically, Reynolds argues ESL teachers cannot simply teach English writing all at once, rather they must break apart the concept into smaller pieces that can be individually approached. Rather than writing being a stand-alone concept that one merely grasps all at once, writing is the sum of many individual parts like syntax and organization. Indeed, the way any one piece is done in English could be completely different from another language, such as the role of punctuation in one language versus another. Yet again, no one particular way of using punctuation or syntax is more or less correct than any other.

The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring by Paula Gillespie and Neil Learner underscores this point, making the key distinction that while many western societies value direct, to-the-point

structures and arguments, other cultures (notably Asian ones) value more indirect, circuitous organization and argumentation (118); within developing literature, this idea is contested, but the overarching spirit of inquiry remains clear, whether this particular point is valid or not, that scholars have been asking and continue to ask if inherent differences exist between languages. However, Gillespie and Learner note that, beyond these generalities, there exists room for more diverse models than just western or non-western alone, and tutors should not limit themselves to either. Rather, they should let the writer decide their own idea for the structure of the writing and adjust that based on the genre of the work at hand, analyzing its needs and conventions.

While replacing and expanding existing models might be good for some institutions, especially in the U.S., other countries have a distinct lack of ESL models altogether. For example, engineering programs in Sweden, though taught entirely in English, have no models or resources to aid students in understanding or composing in the language of their studies. In *Writing Programs Worldwide: Profiles of Academic Writing in Many Places*, Thaiss addresses this lack of supplemental instruction in English. He speaks to the intricate education of engineering students in Sweden where the university must conform to Swedish law, requiring Swedish to be promoted by institutions as the premier language of the land while also looking to the wider European and worldwide engineering community where the conversation takes place almost exclusively in English (Thaiss 377-388). In this respect, the universities have a duty to adequately prepare students to write in the engineering discipline in both Swedish and English without showing overt bias or even expressing a need for further English instructional resources.

Therefore, an ESL tutoring model is growing from the existing engineering model. Graduate TAs who have previously received instruction in English through their MSc programs are being called upon to help those in the BSc program who have had less English instruction. The

graduate TAs are not trained in ESL teaching or tutoring, but they are able to convey a discipline-specific sense of the language to its Swedish practitioners. They also might have the advantage of explaining English language concepts in Swedish, something that even trained English-speaking ESL tutors often cannot do. In this way, there is excellent coverage of how a multilingual teaching/tutoring setting can be useful to improve language skills, especially in a discipline-specific way that lacks formal training and approaches one language through the lens of another.

As I conclude with practices for tutoring ESL writers, I want to note some points of inapplicability to the question at hand. The chief limitation of this scholarship's applicability to this thesis is that these researchers address only ESL tutoring, not specific multilingual writing centers and their practices. However, the descriptions of the differences in ESL tutoring practice, as well as the benefits and limitations of examining writing or thinking in one language as inherently different from another (without taking into consideration circumstances or genre), are useful in moving forward with the inquiry of this thesis.

(Non-Ideal) Multilingual Writing Centers

Finally, we engage the idea of specific examples of multilingual writing institutions across the world (Lape; Nebel; Rafoth; Ronesi). Many of the institutions outlined in the research are not necessarily multilingual writing centers but institutions that facilitate learning and discourse in more than one language (e.g. an English school in Qatar which does not place equal emphasis on the development of Arabic and English); thus, research on these institutions is useful insofar as they are examples of unbalanced multilingual institutions, and while it is useful to study their pedagogy, their qualities do not exactly align with the interests of this thesis. In contrast, Lape's "Going Global, Becoming Translingual: The Development of a Multilingual Writing Center" is perhaps one of the only articles in the field that truly begins to address the inquiries of this thesis,

describing a limited number of writing centers which conduct their proceedings in multiple yet equally regarded languages. In particular, the article describes Dickinson College's efforts to have international and former study abroad students demystify the complexities of foreign language writing particular to the language that they have studied. This notion aligns exactly with the research interests of this thesis: is a language-specific approach beneficial?

However, to present a representative sample of *most* multilingual writing institutions, we will turn to the work of Anne Nebel in *Emerging Writing Research from the Middle East-North Africa Region*. Nebel describes an English language school in Qatar where the primary goal for students is to achieve proficiency in English in order to study or work in an English-speaking country. Unlike the definition of a multilingual writing center laid out in this thesis, the English school does not instruct, nor even encourage, students to improve their proficiency in spoken (dialectal) Arabic or written (Modern Standard) Arabic. It seems as if, to this language school, the English language is the only one that can lead Qatari students and workers to success.

While there is undeniably a tangible monetary benefit to the lingua-franca of Written Standard English (WSE) in today's ever-globalizing society, translingual scholars would argue that learning other languages and, further than that, varieties within languages can be equally as intrinsically fulfilling as other standardized lingua-franca – even if these varieties are not as financially lucrative (Ronesi 75-94). Yet, how do we situate institutions that combine instruction with ideals?

As Lape describes in “Going Global, Becoming Translingual: The Development of a Multilingual Writing Center,” a limited number of writing centers from across the U.S. are trying to put these translingual ideas into practice. However, the article, and the thematic scholarship as

a whole, stops short of addressing concrete strategies employed to convey the nuances of language to tutees.

Situating the Thesis amongst Existing Work

To fill the hole surrounding practices in multilingual writing centers, it is necessary to look at conducting research in the field to identify and document these concrete strategies. If we define multilingual writing centers cumulatively from the themes of this literature review, we might say that such a center is an institution that applies general translingual language theory in its mission while utilizing ESL (and other foreign language instruction) models in its practices. While the questions of this thesis fall within several closely related yet distinct fields of literacy and language studies, if we extend beyond theory to research how multilingual writing centers are practicing their craft, then we can begin to expand the conversation between these interrelated fields, fostering a sense of discourse about the most-effective and responsible ways that we tutor and educate writers in any language.

METHODOLOGY

Within the methodology, I describe scholarly resources that assisted me in designing the survey and the rationale I had in mind when I created the individual questions. For example, I group survey questions by theme and explain what each of those themes intends to glean or measure about the topic in order to assist in answering my overarching question.

The individual question themes are also split three ways: Background Information, Current Practice, and Reflective Insight. The Background Information questions tend to ask simple questions about where tutors are from, where they live, which languages they speak and at what level. These responses contextualize the more in-depth Current Practice and Reflective Insight categories to provide a justification for why a tutor practices the way they do and their semblance

of why. While this theme is informational, it is perhaps the least critical of the three. It is only meant to set the stage for more thoughtful, subjective responses by inquiring after objective facts.

The Current Practice section aims to determine how tutors currently use their language skills when they tutor, such as which languages and approaches they use. The intent is to use this information to evaluate the merits and prevalence of the language-specific approach versus the standardized ones. However, even though this group is more beneficial to an answer than the Background Information questions, the Reflective Insight questions are most critical.

The Reflective Insight questions aim to answer not so much “What” but “Why” and “How.” These questions ask tutors to explain their previous responses or elaborate in such a way that they are thinking critically about their practices and what motivates them. Is the practice intentional or unintentional? Are these practices developed unconsciously through interactions or studied and experimented with and changed? These questions ask tutors to evaluate to what degree they benefit or influence their tutees via their methods. These questions are the crux of what this thesis intends to examine: which approach is being used at the site of study, and is it effective?

In order to effectively study the practices of the multilingual writing center, I conducted a qualitative survey of the writing center at Viadrina University Schreibzentrum – German for writing center – in Frankfurt (Oder), Germany. This study would begin with an overall picture of the Viadrina University Schreibzentrum’s location, history, and basic operating details (especially with respect to tutoring in other languages). However, the most notable feature of the study is an anonymous online survey of administrators and tutors in the Viadrina writing center. In a set of eleven questions, the survey will gather information about how tutors and administrators perceive their language tutoring methods, whether they are natural or taught. A qualitative survey seems

like the most effective method for gathering data about the questions of this thesis, given the time and resources to complete the undergraduate thesis.

In evaluating the methodology, I will first discuss why I chose to employ a survey research project. In doing so, I will break down the individual survey questions and what I intend for them to address in the Results section. To do this, I group individual questions together into three distinct themes: Background Information, Current Practice, and Reflective Insight. Background Information questions primarily inquire after factual information from the tutor. Current Practice questions ask tutors to describe their current approaches and strategies when working with writers. Reflective Insight questions ask participants to describe why they use a particular approach or method and whether that method develops through practice or by consciously studying and changing it over time. The first two themes provide a contextual platform for the third, which is the primary point of interest for my study, evaluating which approaches are currently used in this writing center and to what degrees the tutors and writers find them effective. These themes will allow me to draw conclusions from their responses in the results section.

Next, I will discuss the site of study at Viadrina University and what this particular location has to offer. Why here? Why now? What separates this location from the numerous others I could have situated my study at? Lastly, I will describe the limitations of this survey and the boundaries of this research project, including what we can find through it and what we cannot. Particular aspects of restriction for the study were its scale, location, and form.

The Survey

Through an online survey of those in the writing center who deal with multilingual tutoring situations, we can have an idea of how institutional administration at Viadrina generally approaches tutoring in multiple languages and specific ways that approach might differ between

languages. The survey will be used to gauge the policies, institution-based agendas, and individual experiences of tutors that might affect how tutoring vary strategies from one language to another, if at all, in this writing center. The survey aims to determine if a language-specific approach is employed. The survey was designed using elements from *An Introduction to Survey Research and Data Analysis* and “Good Practice in the Conduct and Reporting of Survey Research” to ensure the academic credibility and responsibility of the thesis (Weisberg, et al.; Kelley). Survey questions are provided in Appendix A.

Drawing from *An Introduction to Survey Research and Data Analysis*, I have intentionally organized these questions in such a way that will provoke more thoughtful and thorough responses (Weisberg, et al). I begin with Background Information questions in isolation. Then, after a few of those, I begin to conjoin them with Current Practice questions for the purposes previously discussed. Then, I introduce Reflective Insight questions in the mix, at first slowly and then progressively in-depth. Observe one of the last questions, “Which approach do you think is more beneficial to the tutee — a standardized approach or a language-specific approach? Why?” No response to this question is inherently factual. Any conclusion to such a question would be empirical or anecdotal. With a few responses, I can begin to build up a database of information to begin to a conversation on drawing empirical conclusions.

While a survey study is limited to a single multilingual writing center in a single location, it is an effective means for opening a dialogue on multilingual writing center practice. Given that tutoring practices, especially regarding multiple languages, are often unique to the individual, it is hard to run an entirely objective study of tutoring practices. I could have simply asked tutors if they believed they used a language specific approach or not and then presented the number of yes answers versus the number of no answers in a table or chart; however, this objective study would

have told us little about the effectiveness of each approach and exactly how the versions differ between the standardized versus language-adaptive one. However, by incorporating a mostly qualitative survey with some factual elements, we can learn of the individual practices and their perceived effectiveness while contextualizing those decisions with resolute circumstantial information that explains why a tutor might answer in the way that they do.

Background information places individual responses into a context where scholars can draw conclusions from and critically study the trends therein. The information that marks a significant difference between these responses is factual like nationality, which languages one knows, how well one knows those languages, one's role within the writing center, how long one has been tutoring, which of these languages were learned from speaking in a home setting versus a classroom, and if there are any languages that one writes in but cannot speak.

Current practice responses are beneficial in gauging how tutors in the field are employing their skills in consultations. These questions ask tutors what strategies or methods they currently employ when they tutor. Such questions include:

Does your approach to tutoring change depending on the language in which you are tutoring? That is, do you use a single approach from one language to another, or do you use a language-specific approach? (Ex. German-specific and English-specific approaches) Please explain.

How do you determine which language(s) to speak when you tutor writing? For instance, do you usually speak English with the writer when working on a paper that is in English, or do you speak in German? Please explain.

In the case of these two questions (see Appendix A), they contain portions that are related to current practice and portions that inspire reflection. This combination of question types pairs a

factual listing or “yes/no” answer with a chance to justify or explain why. I found this useful for my research because I believe the juxtaposition prompts participants to give a more elaborate response. In the case of the first question, the first portion asks participants if they believe their tutoring approach changes between languages. This question could be answered yes or no; however, the following question goes on to slightly complicate the issues, prompting further consideration by asking about a single approach versus a language-specific one. Finally, the participant is asked to explain their answer, which functions as a request to reflect.

For this question set, the first portion asks a general question that is further specified by the second and then expanded upon by the third. However, if we view the second question, the process is reversed. The set begins with an open-ended question that is contextualized into an understandable situation by the second. Part three, per usual, asks for more reflection. The main takeaway from these examples is that Current Practice questions are intended to answer questions researchers might already have, such as “What particular interactions are happening between tutor and tutee at the Viadrina University Schreibzentrum?” Yet, they also lead us to prompt new questions: “Why do they do interact in this way?” “How are these interactions different from existing practices?” “What broader implications might these interactions have?” Thus, Current Practice questions are something of an intermediary between purely-contextual Background Information questions and Reflective Insight questions. The former is factual and mostly does not provoke new questions; rather, it simply furnishes context. The latter has no correct or factual components; these questions are opinion-based and intrinsically anecdotal. The liaison between the two is Current Practice. When the responder goes to justify their practice, they are utilizing their background information to expand upon their reflection.

Site of Study

Viadrina University's unique situation on the Polish-German border works in conjunction with European Union policy to allow Polish and German students alike to cross the border without restriction. Consequently, Viadrina University's writing center has been able to teach, employ, and train bilingual Polish students as tutors, gaining multilingual writing strategies to better cater to students who have need of Polish writing. Beyond Polish, English is also tutored at Viadrina as it becomes ever more important in academia and business. To highlight a bit more about the site of study, I would like to draw upon research I performed at the Viadrina University Writing Center during summer of 2016 when I observed the tutors for a full day for an entire week. I have documented this research in an independent study course with Dr. Bronwyn Williams.

While centers like this one trains tutors specifically using German, some programs of study at German universities other than Viadrina are exclusively taught in English, especially those in STEM fields. To the extent of my knowledge, when student tutors undergo their required courses for employment in the writing center at Viadrina, they receive no formal instruction in multilingual tutoring but only in intercultural situations. Rather, living in a linguistically diverse area serendipitously equips them to perform multilingual tutoring as the need arises. New tutors are required to take a minimum of two writing center training courses before beginning to work in the center, which are taught entirely in German. However, the writing center does offer some resources in terms of language accommodation, such as handouts translated into English from their German counterparts. Most of the writing center's administrators are fluent in English, though operate largely in German. Their English is more the result of the shift towards publishing professional academic work in that language, versus their mother tongue. However, they likely do some of both. As the European Union becomes further connected by the Schengen border-free zone, English is

becoming the lingua franca of these nations, prompting the Viadrina Writing Center to offer German and English versions of its website (Viadrina University).

Their writing center has even gone so far as to offer courses in English on what German professors expect of German writing, so there is some proof that students and professors/tutors are having an open conversation about the expectations and intricacies in one language (German) through the lens of another (English) (Voigt “Events”). Now I am seeking to understand if the same applies in reverse for expectations about English writing.

Limitations

While this study is designed to be as precise and productive as possible, like all surveys, it has its limitations. This is one brief survey conducted at one particular site and is specifically limited to a European perspective. While the scope of this research is narrow, it is a feasible way to extend a conversation into a direction that is discussed less frequently. The results of this study are limited, but that is not necessarily a negative thing. Before we can perform *good* research, we must simply perform research, so that we know the task that lies ahead of us.

Further research might include interviews and additional surveys at Viadrina and other institutions worldwide. We might look at writing centers in North America, Asia, Australia, and Africa. We should encourage as much foreign participation in the conversation as possible, so that this topic is not limited to merely a discussion of English or European languages. Furthermore, researchers could decide to move away from qualitative means. Rather, they could move beyond surveys entirely through gathering more objective data. Given the constraints of time and distance, the online survey allowed for a focused research project that would begin to explore these important questions.

RESULTS

Overview of Responses

At the conclusion of the study, I received only three responses from Viadrina University Writing Center tutors. At first glance, this seems like too small of a sample size to make any broad statements without the risk of anecdotal or sweeping generalizations. However, when we consider that there are only nine peer tutors in this writing center, a 33% response rate seems more credible. Response rate could have been affected by any variety of factors. For instance, due to my own language limitations, I had to insist that respondents give answers in English, meaning that only those comfortable enough to respond would do so. According to the online survey metrics, six began the survey while only three completed it. In spite of the quantity, the responses that I received were highly specific and in-depth, answering all parts of all questions.

In evaluating the survey responses, I can first report that we will have no definitive answers related to broader concepts of theory, only indicators of how we can begin to frame conversations about them. What I can definitively report after reading the surveys is the multilingual strategies Viadrina tutors overwhelmingly tend to utilize and the situations in which they deem them necessary. During the survey process, these results gave me a better insight into Viadrina's policies, which encourage the use of German except when absolutely necessary. Confirmed by both website information and survey responses, all the multilingual tutoring at Viadrina is ad hoc and as-needed when someone who cannot speak German needs help with their writing.

This section assesses the results in terms of three themes: background information, the standardized versus language-specific approach, and the degree to which Viadrina matches the ideal multilingual writing center. After these themes, I intend to briefly discuss the ways in which the results were limited and how I would modify the survey procedures for future studies on this

topic or at Viadrina. From there, I will transition into prepping my results for a conclusion by extracting overarching themes of research.

Background Information

Two of the three survey respondents reported that German is their “mother tongue” and that they have strong skills in English with weaker skills in other languages. Such languages include Russian and French. One respondent reported their mother tongue as Polish. In terms of describing their level of experience or comfort with language, respondents tended to use quantifiable terms or periods rather than qualitative ones. Rather than saying that their German was nearly perfect, they simply called it their “mother tongue.” Rather than saying they are comfortable with English, they would quantify their skill level with statements like “24 years of practice in use” or “mostly fluent (C1),” relying on language certification terms propagated by institutions that promote or regulate second language learning or descriptions of time periods spent learning and practicing the languages. Notably, they avoided qualitative statements that other language learners might make about their capabilities such as “pretty good,” “conversational,” “okay,” “excellent,” “understandable,” among a variety of others. These expressions can vary drastically from one person to another. For instance, one person’s “okay” might be another’s “fluent.”

However, while these terms lack in standardized objectivity, the way respondents discuss their relationship with the languages they speak or write reflects the way they use that language. For instance, when tutors in the survey claim that their language level in English was “C1” (Advanced) or “A2,” (Elementary) they are referring to the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment” standards and certifications for academic language proficiency (Council of Europe). These are assessments for university-centered

language use. The German national respondents did not describe their German as “C2”; they simply called it their mother tongue, implying that it has a place both inside and outside the university.

Languages that are described objectively might only be used for objective purposes: work, study, business, etc. For example, students who learn a language in academic settings to use for academic purposes are more likely to know technical vocabulary associated with that setting or their program of study, such as words for homework, paper, professor, or university instead of words related to food, households, popular culture, or family. Meanwhile, tutors who use terms like “perfect” or “developing” could have a more expressive relationship with the language for use in activities like poetry, socializing, or social/family interactions. Based on the survey responses, I would make an informed guess that the tutors used their available languages for vastly different purposes. For example, I would guess that the Polish tutor, based on his response, is comfortable speaking German in almost any context, including social or familial ones; however, I believe that they do not often employ the language within that context (unless circumstances demand it), as they would almost certainly use Polish to speak to family and Polish friends. At the same time, the Polish tutor might feel odd using Polish to describe their theory of tutor pedagogy. Based on this interpretation and the responses, I am led to believe that these tutors have a closer relationship with German than any of their other languages.

Reflecting upon this point in the surveys, tutors reported phrases similar to, “Whenever there is a case that someone can't speak German fluently enough I am happy to switch to English. In all other cases, I speak German.” They speak English only to accommodate a person’s lack of German. By this logic, it seems that German is the language of preference for every interaction. This is understandable considering that the reporting tutors are native speakers of German. Until

they have studied and practiced for many years in a new linguistics environment, they are much more likely to feel comfortable using German instead of English. The interesting part, however, is that they insist on speaking German, even if the assignment is not in German. Rather, they will discuss the English in German, just as they hold workshops in English to help international students with their German writing. It seems that if a student who spoke perfect German brought an English paper in for review, the tutor and the student would both discuss ways of improving that English paper in German. They would not adopt the language of the writing to assist in organizing their thoughts. When these tutors use English, it is a business-like use born out of necessity, not a use that allows them to express themselves in a more enriching way than they would in German. English is the only option for them when working with someone unable to comprehend German, however unideal they believe it might be.

For the single Polish respondent, the setting was similar yet not identical. The Polish tutor never thought that they should speak German with someone if that person also speaks Polish. They said, ‘It would not make sense to tutor Polish writing in a German way or the other way. If the person is Polish, we will speak Polish.’ It seems that tutors prefer to exclusively use their mother tongue except when absolutely necessary. For German speakers, this means occasionally compromising for an international student; however, for Polish speakers, they accommodate German speakers every day by speaking the language of the university. Although this seems to be a more ideal multilingual writing center than many, there still seems to be a German hegemony, even if that is exclusively because the majority of users only speak German. When I say hegemony, I intend to say that the evidence from the responses suggests that the Viadrina writing center is dominated by the German language, even if that domination is entirely unintentional. At a writing center in Germany, no matter how multilingual and language-inclusive that center aims to be, any

other language is unlikely to ever truly equal German in that space due to personal biases, institutional policies, and social pressures that promote the language beyond the center's control.

All tutors reported between 1.5 to 3 years of experience at this writing center. Obviously, they are experienced tutors, and this suggests that their hesitation to engage in more multilingual tutoring is not a result of unfamiliarity with general tutoring practice. There is an interesting double standard of sorts at play here. The German tutors suggest that it is best to tutor German writing in German, and the Polish tutor suggests that it is best to tutor Polish writing in Polish. However, none of the respondents from either background has said that it is best to tutor English writing in English. On the other hand, it is possible there is not a double standard and that tutors simply want to speak in a way that affords them the most accuracy, precision, and clarity in their discussions. Indeed, many multilingual people tend to avoid speaking their second (third, etc.) language in contexts where it is unnecessary. If we see practice with non-fluent speakers as a negative feedback loop, then that practice will not enhance skills in that language but only reinforces mutual mistakes. So why practice imperfect English and receive less from it when one could be speaking fluently in a shared mother tongue? My best observation from the surveys is that tutors work with their tutees to select the language that will allow everyone involved to have the maximum level of mutual intelligibility.

The Standardized or Language-Specific Approach

While the initial results from the survey seem to suggest that tutors tend to use a standardized approach, further examination reveals that the issue is more complicated: either they are unfamiliar with a language-specific approach entirely or cannot adequately describe one. The first German tutor, when referring to English, said "I don't know any language specific approaches," while the other said "I don't use a language-specific approach." However, the second

person, in reflection, said that they thought that there are language-specific approaches for English but personally did not know what they were or how to use them. When asked about which approach they thought was more beneficial to the tutee, the first again pleaded unfamiliarity while the second said that he believed a mixture of the two approaches was best. The first continued that everyone should be given the same handouts and basic information but that the tutee should direct the session by indicating which facets of their writing are presented in a way that is uniquely English because the tutor would not be able to identify those. The Polish tutor's response was similar in some ways yet also distinctly different.

The Polish tutor focused less on tutoring between English and German and more on tutoring between Polish and German. While the tutor could not specifically identify what their exact language-specific approach looks like, they claimed "It would not make sense to tutor Polish writing in a German way or the other way around." Whether the tutor is specifically referring to which language they prefer to speak when working with writing of a specific language or the manner in which they approach the writing altogether, they have indicated that a difference exists between the languages when they tutor. In addition, the Polish tutor, when asked about what their language-specific approach looks like and to provide an example, they claimed, "It is hard to explain. German university professors look for things in their writing that Polish people do not." This statement further heightens the fact that, at least within this tutor's mind, there is a formulaic difference between the needs of writing in each language. When I say formulaic, I intend to explain the notion that some students assume professorial expectations for successful writing are comprised of a set of discrete pieces that, when assembled, produce a quality assignment. For instance, a writer could believe that a thesis statement, topic sentences, and a reflective conclusion are the variables that compose the formula for an A+ paper. And to this tutor, they might believe

that the variables in the formula differ between Polish professors and German professors – that where a Polish professor might look for topic sentences, a German professor looks instead for headings to indicate topic.

While German writing (or at least German professors) look for certain features in writing, this tutor believes Polish people look for other features. Or, at the least, they search for similar features but want them presented in different ways. For example, the Polish language primarily frontloads the subject and verb at the beginning of the sentence followed by the object (SVO order), whereas German generally follows a flexible V2 word order (Tomlin). Though this is only a very general feature, significant linguistic differences do exist between these languages.

The most general observation to make is that language-specific features do exist when tutoring, they are simply hard to identify. None of the respondents denied that language-specific methods exist; they simply expressed an unfamiliarity or inability to explain those methods, even if they ultimately did believe in them. I argue that language – especially one’s mother tongue(s) – is a cultural phenomenon whose full range of implications are always present but often go unnoticed. For example, the second German tutor at first said that he did not use any language-specific approaches because he was unfamiliar with those approaches or the subtleties between the languages. However, at the end of the survey, in the last section that gives respondents the chance to provide any further information, the tutor said that they would think about how to use language-specific approaches in the future; indeed, they had no idea that a language-specific approach was something that existed. Yet, they ended the survey by saying that such approaches could be beneficial to the international students that they tutor but have never considered that there were subtle differences between languages.

Meanwhile the Polish tutor was aware of the difference in expectations between languages all along, they simply could not phrase those precise differences. Furthermore, although the Polish tutor expressed a fluency in English, they did not comment upon whether or not they thought there was a language-specific approach to English. Rather, they centered their commentary on Polish versus German, their two primary languages. To me, these results indicate that, to truly begin to recognize language specifics, one must be entrenched in those languages beyond classroom fluency alone. Or at least, one would need to have steady contact with academics and non-academics alike who conduct their daily lives in that language to have comprehensive understanding of the genres within the language from the most informal writing to the most formal. On the Polish-German border, it seems entirely possible to have regular interaction with a range of people who speak both languages. However, it seems less likely that both German and Polish people would have this routine access to English given the hegemony of German and secondarily Polish in this writing center.

Multilingual Writing Center

Earlier in this thesis, I discussed the idea of the “Ideal” multilingual writing center – a place which treats all languages as equally important. I indicated that my previous experience at the Viadrina University Schreibzentrum led me to believe that it embodied the concept of such a writing center; however, after reviewing the surveys, I recognize that it has its downfalls like any other writing center, such as the Polish-German asymmetric bilingualism or lack of handouts. During my week-long stay at Viadrina, I was never unable to communicate with anyone in English. No one spoke my idea of “perfect American English,” but I had no issues communicating with any of the tutors, and the administrators’ English was even better. However, I never saw any examples of their English writing aside from short emails from administration. Given the latest survey

information I have received, I feel that I need to reevaluate the center's status as an ideal multilingual writing center to reflect this information. This is not to say that I suddenly believe that Viadrina imposes German on all its writers, but I believe using the new information will give a more nuanced, complex view of this writing center and what it means to be multilingual.

Firstly, I must contend with the previously mentioned idea of the German language hegemony at Viadrina. Some hegemonies are the result of institutional indoctrination or force of policy, such as a government or company only listing its documentation and forms in a single language like English or French or Modern Standard Arabic in order to serve those who can understand it while excluding those who prefer different languages or language varieties. Other hegemonies are merely a product of circumstance. The responses indicated that the vast majority of tutoring at Viadrina is done in German, so one could argue that this violates the core tenet of the ideal multilingual writing center – that all languages are not treated equally. However, we must contextualize this situation by recognizing that in a German city at a German university, the vast majority of consultations are going to be in German. The best argument against this notion is the idea of accommodation when necessary.

For example, one tutor reported that during consulting for the previous year they “had spoken English and used English handouts.” The notion that the center took the time to print and restock handouts in English supports the idea of accommodation; an international writer could use the center, even if they do not speak a word of German, and receive the same experience as the national being consulted at the table next to them. Even in their digital presence, Viadrina provides accommodation. The Viadrina University Schreibzentrum makes its website available in English and Polish in addition to German, though with the caveat that the English and Polish versions are out of date and formatted less aesthetically (Henry). Again, it is no surprise that the German

components receive more frequent attention, since that is where the majority of their internet traffic goes. Efforts could be made to remedy this issue in the future, but in my opinion, it by no means disqualifies a sense of reasonable accommodation.

Next, I want to address a more pressing issue: Viadrina's accommodations for the Polish language. From both my time at Viadrina as well as the Polish tutors report, a stark presence of asymmetrical bilingualism exists in Frankfurt (Oder; this is to say that the majority of Polish tutors (and residents) speak Polish and German at relatively the same level of fluency, whereas German tutors and citizens will generally only speak German unless they pursue English for some professional or academic context. The neighboring Polish town of Słubice has historically offered less than Viadrina. For example, the first day of my stay in Frankfurt (Oder), I actually slept in the Polish town of Słubice just across the river. Though they were close in proximity, Słubice appeared much smaller and less wealthy than the German metropolis juxtaposed against it. As one Polish tutor and resident of Słubice told me during my stay, job opportunities are much better in Frankfurt (Oder), so Polish people often go there to seek work under the free movement and employment systems of the EU. Thus, seeking work in Viadrina requires, at minimum, a functional proficiency in German. The tutor continued that the practice was not the same on the other side of the Oder river; Germans rarely venture into Słubice because it has nothing to offer them in terms of commerce or employment. This asymmetric bilingualism is reflected in the writing center.

The third survey respondent (who is Polish) claimed, "If there is a Polish writer, we will speak Polish, even if the writing is not Polish." So, when Polish students come to the writing center at Viadrina, they are generally expected to speak German. After all, if they are a resident of Słubice and a student at Viadrina, they are generally expected to speak and write in German proficiently. They have the option to work with a Polish tutor, but this option is not as readily available to them.

Among the ten peer tutors at the writing center, only one is Polish (Voigt “The Writing Center Team”). As I was told by another Polish tutor during my trip who has since graduated, there are generally only one or two Polish tutors employed at any time. Viadrina uses a drop-in tutoring hours system, so if a German student stops by during any of the hours, there will always be someone there who speaks German, but if a Polish student stops by during the same hours, there is only a slight chance that someone there will speak Polish. Thus, they have the option to make an appointment, but coordinating one’s schedule with the Polish tutor could delay the session while available time might limit how long they are able to work together. Once again, reasonable accommodation has been provided for these students consistent with the number of students who are likely to use those accommodations, but I believe more could be done.

The first survey respondent (a self-reported German national) said that they had been actively trying to learn Polish for a year and a half. I do not know if this is a trend within the writing center, but I would support that all tutors should at least make an effort to acquire some Polish for their position. In this way, the Polish tutee is able to elect what the dynamic of the consultation will be: 1) the tutor can speak fluent German while the tutee speaks less fluent German or 2) the tutee can speak fluent Polish while the tutor speaks less fluent Polish. Indeed, it might even be the case that many Polish speakers, given their upbringing near Viadrina, speak German just as well as any German national; thus, rather than the tutor accommodating their lack of German, the tutee accommodates their lack of Polish. However, I believe it is important that the tutee has the ability to decide the dynamic of the session via the language. If tutors are happy to speak English upon request, they should treat Polish or any other language they know the same way.

Furthermore, at least during my visit, there were no Polish handouts, possibly because

administration considered German and English to encompass almost every visitor to the center, since many Polish in Viadrina understand German well. Although it is true that Polish people likely have no difficulty understanding the German handouts, in my opinion, it is not an assumption the center should make. Given the inexpensive cost of printing handouts, the administration could easily pay their Polish tutor their normal writing center rate to translate the handouts to Polish versions. From there, all they would have to do is restock them occasionally.

Although I understand that reasonable accommodation is given for a variety of languages and resources at the writing center, I believe that, to truly embody the ideal multilingual writing center, one must move away from reasonable accommodation to equal accommodation within one's available resources. While I still consider the Viadrina Schreibzentrum to be an example of an ideal multilingual writing center, the word "ideal" is an impossible thing, since perfection is a subjective and unattainable goal. It merely gives one the ability to continually strive towards a writing center that fosters more open and equal access and participation.

CONCLUSION

So far, I have laid out all the information of the thesis from what it investigates to the need for the investigation to its method of investigation to the results. Now I want to take that information and try to make general observations or hypotheses for future research. First, I will assess the results in terms of my two largest generalizations: multilingual tutoring as an accommodation and self-awareness of language differences. Lastly, I want to discuss complications or questions that arose during the process that prompt continuing research and how I might adjust or follow up on my study for create a more in-depth conversation. My goal for this thesis has been to start a dialogue about multilingual writing center practices that engages and encourages others to offer their ideas, whether for or against the implications.

Implications

My first implication is that those who use the multilingual writing center do so out of a need for accommodation. No evidence presented so far indicates that someone who speaks one language fluently uses the multilingual writing center to speak another. Just as the German student who uses the writing center will speak German, even if they are not working on a project in German, the results indicate that people do not depart from their mother tongue, except for reasons of accommodation. If a primarily English-speaking student who might also have a good level of French uses a writing center and works with a tutor of the same background on an assignment in French, it would seem that they are vastly more likely to use English to discuss the assignment because of the clarity of communication, even if it is only slightly better than what they could do in French. The only circumstance where I believe these two might elect to use French is if the center stipulates that consultations must be in a particular language or if both were highly self-motivated to practice the language.

In contrast, if the tutor's English was better than their French, then they would elect to use the language that is the most mutually intelligible. In this way, it is an accommodation, whether for the writer or the tutor. The alternative would be to limit the expression of either tutor or tutee and potentially limit the productivity of the consultation. While it would be great to have a center where both tutor and tutee were so well-versed in multiple languages that they would always speak in the same language that is tutored, it is simply not a reality. Some could claim that is a shame that students who might wish to speak a particular language are limited by their tutor's knowledge of it, but we must remember that writing centers are limited by funding and staffing. Most writing centers, especially those in Europe, which tend to have less institutional support than in America, simply do not have the ability – both financially and logistically – to equip their tutors with enough

language experience to tutor. We must remember that many tutors are students, not trained linguists or interpreters. Complete equality of resources between all languages is not quite so important as equal accommodation and equal respect for the dignity of these languages. The most important observation I have on this topic is that writing centers should simply be willing to help to the best of their ability, even if that is not much, rather than dismissing the language as worthless.

Further research here could help writing center tutors and director know how to better serve second language populations. It could advise them on how to provide the most effective resources for multilingual students within their means; more importantly, I hope it would lay a foundation for how writing center tutors and administrators interact with these students in a way that respects their languages and language-varieties, which puts translanguaging theory into practice through tutoring models (like ESL and ELL) and begins to embody a more ideal writing center.

In particular, I would advise writing centers like Viadrina to make every effort to print handouts in any language that it might serve, however unlikely. So beyond Polish, I encourage making handouts available in languages Viadrina has seen in the past like Russian, French, and Dutch. This does not mean that centers like Viadrina should have a handout available for every language from Japanese to Swahili; it should focus on around five from its geographic location that it would most likely encounter. Similar to when a product includes instructions or descriptions in its market's top languages, a writing center should endeavor to provide handouts in a variety of writers' mother tongues or mother varieties. While these writers might have already been able to understand an academic lingua-franca like English, the gesture of providing them materials in their own language goes a long way in developing a connection between writer and center that is based on mutual respect for language, even if the two do not share one.

Furthermore, another valuable gesture would be for a center to teach tutors how to say phrases like “Hello,” “Goodbye,” and “Sorry, I don’t speak...” in the languages they are most likely to encounter. The gesture’s learning curve is not steep, and again, it shows the tutors and the centers respect the language of the writer, even if they cannot speak more than a sentence or a phrase in that language. It shows that the language of the session is guided not by the language tutor and tutee necessarily want to speak but the language they have to speak because it is their only path to mutual intelligibility.

In the language-specific approach, I reckon with the idea that there is no single pinned target for a specific language. Rather, the target – the identity or state of that language – is constantly shifting with respect to culture. The context of culture that a language is placed into affects how one identifies that language. For instance, Polish put into a German cultural context might be considered more German and less Polish than what is spoken in Warsaw. This returns to the translingual idea that multilingualism never entirely separates languages. Rather, languages blur and bend and converge and diverge under a variety of circumstantial and cultural situations.

Last among the implications is the idea that language-specific qualities are present but difficult to observe without constant, conscious reflection on how one tutors or teaches or writes in their language(s). I would argue that, based upon the testimony given by the Polish tutor, subtle language differences in writing do exist; they are merely hard to describe between languages. However, I believe reflection is only half of the battle. One must also be so immersed in multiple languages that when they hear a sentence in language A that alerts their cognitive processing to some inconsistency in the expectation, they know that the same sentence – though inconsistent with language A – would have been perfectly correct in language B. These mental alerts could be rooted in anything from syntax to idiomatic expressions to vocabulary choice; yet often, it seems

that when tutors hear these things, they understand that there is something specific to the one language that is not present for the other, but they are unable to describe those specific things.

Beyond language alone, the mental alarm bells that go off when one might attempt to impose language A's standards onto language B's stem from cultural factors as much as linguistics ones. These could either be rooted in idiomatic expressions that express similar ideas through different phrases (e.g. "Caught between a rock and a hard place" in English is expressed in French through "Between the tree and the bark, don't place your finger.") One can see the similarity, but the manners of expression are not one-to-one. French speakers would consider the direct English to French translation vexing because there is no corresponding idiomatic meaning, and taken literally (as they have no option but to do), the phrase can create confusion.

The idea of developing a language-specific approach is to move beyond the simple internal alarm bell that tells a writer when something deviates from their language standard and actually begin to describe why one sentence variety that intends to give an identical meaning to the other actually expressed a different idea entirely due to language subtleties. I will even take this observation so far as to say that we should discuss dialect-specific tutoring approaches for those who might want to prepare writing for an audience of a particular speaking and writing style.

Research in multilingual literacy might promote understanding on which elements of written communication are inherent to all writing and which are language-specific, which could be of particular help to tutors or teachers who currently work in multiple languages but wish to make their curricula more-encompassing of the true language with less interference from any previously-learned languages. Scholars in applied linguistics or ESL teaching might find these language-specifics a compelling way to differentiate a first language from a second. On the point

of the dialect-specific tutoring varieties, translingual theorists could explore the need of such varieties for addressing specific audiences among writers.

In particular, I think studying a language-specific approach could close the gap between proficiency and fluency for second language speakers and writers. Often, a second language writer who received the bulk of their language input outside of direct immersion will perform well with grammatical structures and vocabulary, but a required element for genuine fluency is missing. That missing element is culture. If one takes a language and remove the culture from it or else swaps it for another culture, one is no longer viewing the same language variety.

Reflection

In conclusion of this thesis, I ask myself what could have been improved during the research process. If I were to perform a similar or follow up study, I would find a way to increase survey participation, such as traveling back to the site of study to individually interview tutors, so that I could ask follow up questions as the need arose; I would also look to add a more diverse body of respondents including additional Polish tutors, and beyond tutors, interview administrators, writers, and professors about their thoughts on multilingual writing practices and language-specific approaches. So far the perspective has been limited to that of the tutor, while I believe the most holistic and accurate data would come from a collection of people occupying a variety of different roles in the writing center environment.

Going further than this study alone, more research could expand beyond the Germany-Poland region and into other areas of Europe and, eventually, the world. If I were to choose another location for a study, I would seek to go to Dickinson College in the U.S. where I would have the ability to ask deep questions in English. At Dickinson College, unlike Viadrina where multilingual

tutoring is mostly impromptu, multilingual tutors are made available specifically to tutor in their chosen language, encompassing over sixteen from Arabic to Chinese.

If someone with credentials and abilities beyond mine – like a PhD in Rhet-Comp or similar field and fluency in multiple languages – they could see an issue from both language perspectives in a more in-depth way than me. They could design a precisely-focused study that encompasses concrete examples of language-specific features from their fluency and experience in them. A particular scholar I have in mind for this is Dr. Christiane Donahue who has already written extensively about differences in academic writing between English and French and has translation experience between the languages (Institute for Writing and Rhetoric). In fact, I have cited some of her works in this thesis and have met her at various conferences. Though I am currently unfamiliar with who might be up to perform the task, I would hope to find a scholar who could lend a non-European perspective to the conversation by performing a similar study in Asia or Africa.

In completing this study, I learned that while theory might suggest an ideal solution to a problem, practice demonstrates that solutions are usually far from ideal. This does not mean that theory cannot inform better decisions about practice. This is chiefly applicable to the multilingual writing center where specific actions might seem obvious or ideal in theory but prove difficult when laying into practice. Nevertheless, while certain multilingual practices seem unfeasible in our writing centers, the knowledge of these practices give us a standard to work towards to make our writing centers more ideal spaces for writers to express themselves and improve in self-identified areas of concern. Viadrina, for instance, seems promising at the outset of the study because they appear to put considerable effort into helping their tutors with multilingual situations, but even at this writing center, changes could be made. So, at the end of this study, I do not believe

that any writing center is “ideal” but that each is flawed in its own ways and cannot reach some arbitrary or shifting standard of true excellency. This evaluation on whether the writing center accomplishes a certain goal must be made by each individual writer who visits the center, not just one researcher or administrator or tutor.

To me, the most interesting part of this study was the notion that much of our understanding and processing of language, especially those we learned outside of a classroom, have a multitude of latent features. As David Foster Wallace used the parable of the fish in his “This is Water” speech, the “most obvious, ubiquitous, important realities are often the ones that are the hardest to see and talk about” (1). I believe language is no exception. It surrounds us. It is fundamental to culture, yet it is still difficult for us to study and discuss. My hope is that through this thesis, I have made it easier to talk about and observe concepts of language in multilingual writing centers and that people have a better understanding of what a multilingual writer is and that we, as scholars and writers and tutors, will continually try to foster a zone of progress, inclusivity, and practice.

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Appendix A
Survey Questions

1. Who are you? (Indicate: Tutor, Administrator, Staff, Tutee, Other)
2. What is your nationality?
3. Which languages do you speak and/or write? What is your level of proficiency and comfort for each? How long have you been speaking/studying/writing in each one? (If you speak the language at home or with family, please indicate that)
4. How long have you been tutoring and/or working at the Viadrina University Schreibzentrum?
5. Do you tutor writing or administrate in multiple languages? If so, which one(s). If not, please explain.
6. How do you determine which language(s) to speak when you tutor writing? For instance, do you usually speak English with the writer when working on a paper that is in English, or do you speak in German? Please explain.
7. Does your approach to tutoring change depending on the language in which you are tutoring? That is, do you use a single approach from one language to another, or do you use a language-specific approach? (Ex. German-specific and English-specific approaches) Please explain.
8. If your approach doesn't change, can you explain or provide an example of your approach?
9. If it does change, what do you believe constitutes a 'language-specific' approach? What would a specific example of such an approach look like in a tutoring session?
10. Which approach do you think is more beneficial to the tutee — a standardized approach or a language-specific approach? Why?

11. Is there any additional information you would like to provide regarding tutoring practices, strategies, or training in your writing center that might be helpful for research purposes?