FROM SUPPORT TO SOLIDARITY: WRITING TUTORS AS ADVOCATES FOR MULTILINGUAL WRITERS IN COLLEGE COMPOSITION COURSES

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In the last 30 years, the rise in the number of multilingual students in college has contributed to new thinking about the role of writing centers (WC)s, which provide writing remediation services as both a one-stop shop for editing and a space where developing college writers can find conversation-based support with peer tutors (Eckstein, 2014; Faigley, 2017; Rafoth, 2015). Multilingual writers—a diverse group that includes immigrant students, international students, and U.S.-born students—have different advantages and needs compared to their monolingual counterparts (Ortmeier-Hooper & Ruecker, 2017). Because of this diversity, questions of how WCs can support such students have included re-envisioning tutoring practices (Bruce & Rafoth, 2016; Williams & Severino, 2004) while navigating monolingual standards that often construct multilingual writers as inferior, problematic, or needing to be "fixed" or otherwise remedied (Olson, 2013; Witherite, 2014; Zawacki & Cox, 2014). College-based WCs have worked to build awareness about multilingual writers and how tutors can best work with them by developing staff trainings (Grimm, 1999); new ways of doing WC pedagogy (Geller, 2007; Olson, 2013); and inclusive, justice-oriented language practices for tutoring sessions (Kail & Trimbur, 1987; Suhr-Sytsma & Brown, 2011; Williams & Severino, 2004) to support these writers in their college composition courses and beyond.

These changes, however, consider only what happens within the tutoring session—likely a reflection of what college-based WCs believe is their purview and their power to change. But is this really the case? Colleges are complex ecological systems that both multilingual writers and writing tutors traverse. Indeed, writing tutors work in the interstices between multilingual writers' interactions with college composition professors, spaces of study and review outside of class, and the institutional communications that undergird all. By exploring their work not only as representatives of appropriate academic practice, but also as allies quietly probing opportunities for resistance to the marginalization multilingual writers experience, writing tutors may stand in solidarity with these students.

Tutors' work, though, like all educational practice, is not only didactic but in fact political in nature (Barton, 2003; Russell & Bell, 1996), which becomes particularly important in the case of minoritized groups such as multilingual writers. This diverse group of students has in many cases brought into higher education contexts internalized experiences of racist and xenophobic treatment (Delpit, 1988; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Kohli et al., 2017; Weis & Fine, 1993) as a result of being Othered in dominant White monolingual schooling. As these experiences accumulate over time, multilingual learners may come to perceive educational institutions and their representatives—e.g., teachers—as unseeing of these students' efforts in academic work as well as of their potential. This is all the more true in college composition

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courses, where students confront the challenges of mastering academic discourse literally writ large, discipline-based rhetorical demands, and a high-pressure schedule of writing assignments that does not always allow for the additional time and support multilingual writers may need (Ferris, 2005), let alone their desire for recognition and equitable treatment (Harklau et al., 1999). This juncture is where writing tutors can act as activists and advocates, by supporting the development of a counternarrative with their tutoring students, and by working within the system to support multilingual writing students in their struggles to be validated as well as to experience education as participants in, rather than objects of, this system.

What might this look like on the ground? Writing tutors can begin by exploring their unique role within the higher education context as liaisons between multilingual writers and college composition instructors. Writing tutors can critically engage with the reporting protocols of their particular institution of higher education and find ways to advocate for their students in small but meaningful actions. For example, there may be post-tutoring session reports that writing tutors are asked to complete, which instructors can review to see what was covered in the session. Rather than simply reporting on the grammatical, rhetorical, or diction errors that came up during the session, tutors can also comment positively on the ways a multilingual student expressed a given writing prompt, new insights that came about during the tutoring session and across sessions, and the student's potential as a strong academic thinker who has committed to mastering a new language. This can also, of course, be reinforced in the interactions between writing tutors and multilingual students during the course of the tutoring session. By emphasizing the goals of growth over progress and of burgeoning mastery over performance, writing tutors that work with multilingual students can contribute to a counternarrative that challenges deficit views of these students. This is especially important given that multilingual writers undergo a lengthy and complex process of developing their proficiency in academic written English (Canagarajah 2010) that often goes unrecognized by their teachers.

In addition to this support, writing tutors can take up a self-reflective practice in their work with multilingual writers. It is important, as already stated, to remember that education is political; writing tutors exert power in this role as arbiters of "correct" (i.e., dominant) writing style and language use. Writing tutors can provide post-tutoring reflection notes that review not only what took place during the tutoring session with multilingual writing students, but also how the tutors themselves experienced the process of working with these students, who face the daily challenge of navigating a system that advantages White monolingual people over others. Reflective practices like these can bring to the fore many insights about the role of tutors in higher education, including the fact that writing tutors may themselves benefit, monetarily as well as academically, from a system that positions nonstandard ways of doing language in academic work as inferior (Horner et al., 2011). This type of critical reflection makes real, though does not guarantee, the possibility that writing tutors may act as advocates in solidarity with multilingual writers who approach tutors for support, rather than as extensions of the very institutional culture and practices that position multilingual learners as wrong before given the chance to be right.

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