

***WRITING AS INTERVENTION:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A
MULTILINGUAL WRITING CENTER
AT HOME AND ABROAD***

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OUTLINE

**Creating an intercultural writing space at home and abroad:
the Multilingual Writing Center (MWC)**

a. The Eberly Writing Center

b. The Toulouse Center

c. The study abroad (SA) learning context

d. Writing Program as Intervention

**Main thesis: The explicit programming of writing maximizes
language learners' opportunity to develop translingual and
transcultural competence during their study abroad
academic experience**

MWC ORIGINAL PROPOSAL

The Writing Program offered “to repurpose the Eberly Writing Center as a multilingual writing center where undergraduate peer writing tutors and Overseas Assistants will work with students of all levels and abilities who are seeking feedback to improve their writing skills in any language taught at Dickinson” (Lape 2/1/10 Biannual Report 23).

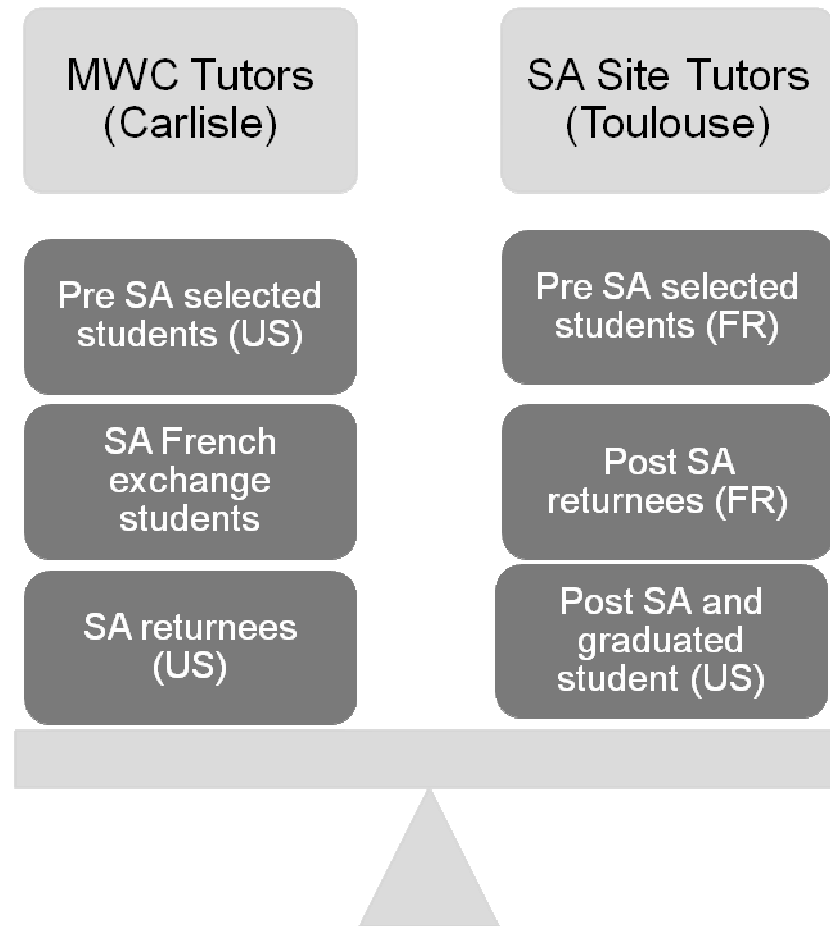
MISSION OF THE MWC

“The MWC assists writers of all levels and abilities... . Trained tutors and Overseas Assistants work one-on-one with writers on a variety of concerns, including developing ideas; understanding genres; organizing material; crafting sentences; analyzing and correcting patterns of error; and building vocabulary” (Lape, 9/1/10 Biannual Report 9-10).

We seek to help students of all levels and abilities to:

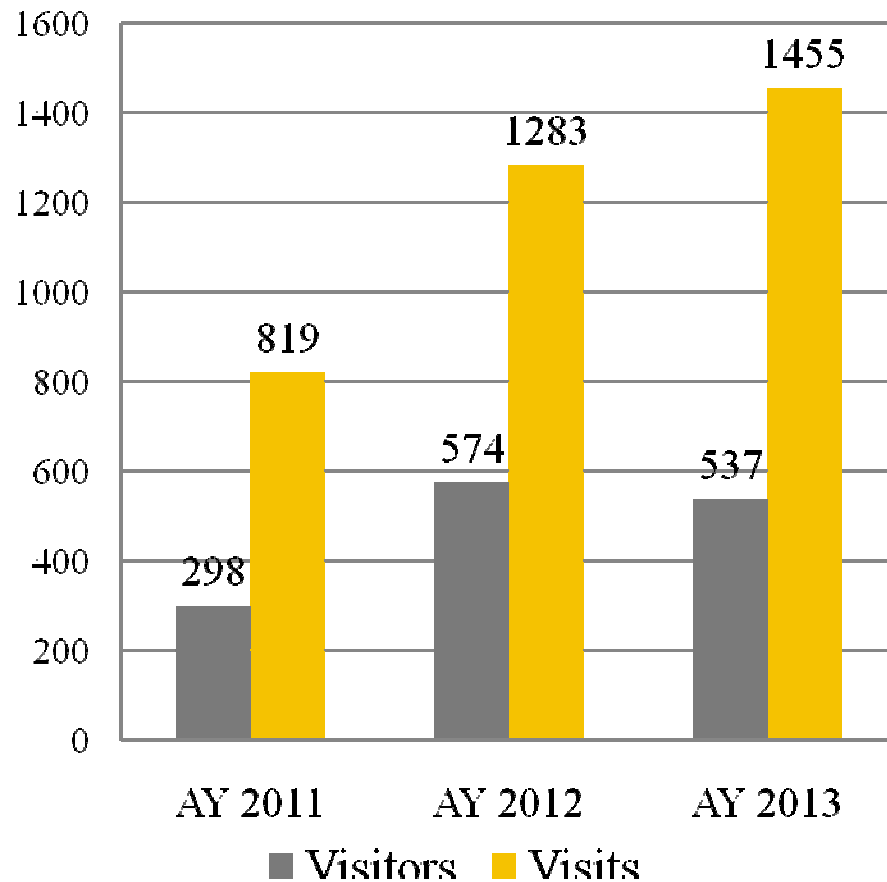
- 1.** increase their fluency and mature as writers;
- 2.** develop a writing process that works for them;
- 3.** understand the difference between composing and translating;
- 4.** understand how cultural differences manifest themselves in writing;
- 5.** enter the cultural universe constructed by the second language.

RECRUITING FOR THE MULTILINGUAL WRITING CENTER AT HOME AND ABROAD

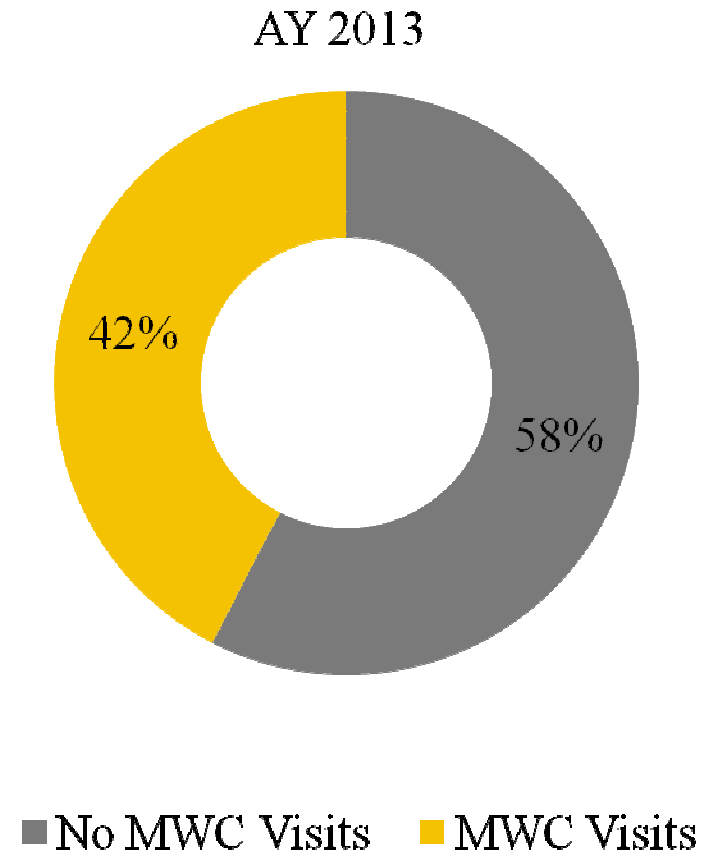


MULTILINGUAL WRITING CENTER

VISITORS AND VISITS BY YEAR



VISITS BY STUDENTS ENROLLED IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURSES



CONTEXT: THE STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM IN TOULOUSE, FRANCE

Full integration model of study
abroad:

Academic

Social



STUDY ABROAD: HOW INTERNATIONAL IS IT?

- *Reproducing at-home classroom patterns (Wilkinson, 2002)
- *Reducing interactional opportunities with local members of the community (Allen, 2010)



S. 2012 - photo by e'm company / H. GOUSSE

INTERVENTION

Allen (2010): different types of motivation lead to different results in terms of linguistic proficiency and intercultural sensitivity. A solution: Support the notion of intervention during study abroad in the following ways:

a. Differentiated instruction based on knowledge of student motivation

b. Reflective practices

Deardorff (2006): Examine the curriculum relationship with the study abroad sites to bolster intercultural competence development: More dialogue is needed with students over time at home and abroad to measure linguistic and intercultural growth.

THE MULTILINGUAL WRITING CENTER AS INTERVENTION

Creating an intentional space for intercultural negotiation

=>Training

=>Identifying intercultural issues and dialoguing



TRAINING

MWC trained supervisor

A Workshop on site for French tutors

Translation of MWC handouts: Form vs. content; the role of the tutor; running the tutoring session

Setting up a session report questionnaire to share

INTERCULTURAL ISSUES: TRANSLATING THE MWC

How does the MWC team work with the SA site team?

Negotiation of meaning: What is a “tuteur”? What is a “centre d’écriture”?

Going from a foreign language to a second language learning environment: Does the role of tutors and tutees change? (ongoing investigation)

INTERCULTURAL TUTORING PROGRAM

1. Understanding the French tutoring model:

remedial

directive

2. Adapting/shifting the MWC training philosophy:

**Understanding the second language learner and the role of
“linguaging”**

Mediating writing culture shock in the immersion context

UNDERSTANDING L2 LEARNERS

Williams (2004): WC interaction and impact on revision

- 1. Issues that are treated explicitly are more likely to be revised than those that receive implicit treatment (185)**
- 2. Text-based revisions traced to WC sessions are associated with interactional features of negotiation in the session (190): when students engage in negotiating language and meaning (linguaging), they are more likely to improve.**
- 3. There is no yes or no answer to the pervasive issue of providing information to writers vs. eliciting it: showing and explaining is what matters.**

MEDIATING WRITING CULTURE SHOCK:

French and US tutors, American tutees and instructors benefit from discussing what constitutes a potential writing culture shock:

Explaining form and content in French vs. US writing

Elucidating writing practices and conventions: What is a “problématique”?

Anticipating the issue of voice

Valuing language feedback as something more than a “low-order” concern.

CULTURE SHOCK: WHAT DO TUTORS AND TUTEES SAY?



TUTORING SESSIONS

Academic Year 2012-2013	Academic year 2013-2014
24 sessions	75 sessions
4 tutors solicited out of 10	6 tutors out 6
6 tutees out of 18 program participants	25 tutees out of 30 program participants
19 DCK writing course related (FR 260) vs. 5 university courses	Even mix of university and FR 260 courses
Commentaire composé; dissertation; plan détaillé	Commentaire composé; dissertation; plan détaillé; dossier; exercices de grammaire; feedback d'examens

SESSION REPORTS

Content and Organization:

Most reports underscore the students struggling with the formal features of French academic writing, especially structure expectations, explicit connectors and transitions.

The definition of a “problématique” is confusing for students: meaning, formulation, and position in the paper

Language:

Register and lexical repertoire

Morphology

Rules

Intercultural Negotiation:

Complimenting vs. criticizing

Heightened sensitivity to “la faute”

STUDENT INTERVIEWS

Why consult or not consult tutors in the SA context?

1. Maximizing chances to succeed in the unexpected conditions of the French immersion context

Maria: “on n’a pas autant de devoirs, donc il faut aller au centre d’écriture!”

2. Relying on a native speaker to clarify and specify language use and conventions.

Maria: “Je fais plus attention à la langue quand j’écris.”

Carmela: “L’étudiant attend plus à cause de la langue.”

3. Seeking explicit directions and feedback in an implicit academic culture.

Maria: “Les sujets sont ouverts ... c’était déroutant de travailler sans direction.”

4. Questioning French academic culture.

Marc: “ J’ai l’impression que mes idées ne sont pas respectées... Je ne peux pas exprimer mes propres idées.”

TUTOR INTERVIEWS

Tutor Role: Do you experience differences in tutoring at Dickinson vs. Toulouse?

1. Tutees may ask for unconventional help.

Eliane: “Une étudiante est venue me voir pour lire Camus à haute-voix.”

2. Tutees are more emotional and sensitive to criticism in the SA context.

Adrien: “Il faut prendre en compte la situation de fragilité qui est dans le contexte des études à l'étranger ... Le devoir en FLE a moins d'enjeux...”

“Ils font un blocage face à l'erreur.”

“Tu te sens agressé quand on critique tes mots, car ce sont tes idées.”

3. A more intimate context creates more opportunities to relate.

“tu discutes avec eux; il se passe quelque chose.”

EDUCATORS INTERVIEWS

Mixed feelings at the intersection of French and American educational philosophies.

Armelle:

“Le tutorat fausse le vrai niveau des étudiants.”

Martine:

“Je me suis sentie obligée de dire [aux étudiants] , si vous avez des questions, il faut les poser en classe, parce que je suis là pour ça.”

“J’aimerais bien un rôle plus défini, entre moi et les tuteurs... j’étais un petit peu en demande.”

Constance:

“Les tuteurs, c’est juste pour la langue.”

HOW TO MANAGE WRITING CULTURE SHOCK?

1. Familiarize learners before and during SA experience with French academic culture
2. Foster the role of L2 tutors modeling translingual competence
3. Foster the role of L1 tutors as cultural informants in a writing program that trains them for the challenges of L2 writing and identity in a second language

<http://blogs.dickinson.edu/mwc/>

WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE LAUNCH OF THE SA MWC?

1. Recruiting, training, and administering require buy-in and good communication from all parties: administrators, educators, tutees and tutors.

2. The shift from the at-home environment to the SA experience magnifies tutors and tutee relationships:

Tutor status: As reported in ESL research, L2 writers believe in the native speaker's authority (Thonus, 2002) and may devalue the importance of the "inter-cultural informant" role of experienced L2 writers.

Tutees and audience awareness: L2 learners are not only practicing (writing to learn) as may be emphasized in the at-home environment, but they also need to earn their place as writers in the immersion context (writing to learn AND learning to write). This can lead to frustration for both tutors and tutees.

CONCLUSION

L2 writing and translingual competence



DISCUSSION

To what extent should writing ability be considered in study abroad applications? Is a statement of purpose enough? What criteria of academic writing should be considered?

How can study abroad practitioners, researchers and administrators in the U.S. and Europe further integrate intervention in the pre-, during-, and post-dimensions of study abroad in the curriculum?

THANK YOU

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"The language major should be structured to produce a specific outcome: educated speakers who have deep translingual and transcultural competence. Advanced language training often seeks to replicate the competence of an educated native speaker, a goal that postadolescent learners rarely reach. The idea of translingual and transcultural competence, in contrast, places value on the ability to operate between languages. Students are educated to function as informed and capable interlocutors with educated native speakers in the target language. They are also trained to reflect on the world and themselves through the lens of another language and culture. They learn to comprehend speakers of the target language as members of foreign societies and to grasp themselves as Americans—that is, as members of a society that is foreign to others. They also learn to relate to fellow members of their own society who speak languages other than English."

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