

Tutoring for Better Writers/Writing? A Case Study of the UPRM Writing Center

by

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Abstract

This thesis places the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez English Writing Center (UPRMEWC) within the larger context of the histories, debates and research that have influenced writing center theories, methods and practices in the United States since the beginning of the 20th century. The research methods employed included: (1) a historical review of writing center literature to provide a context for the study; (2) a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of past and present historical documents of the UPRMEWC to identify and examine its ideologies and principles and the extent to which these have differed from those that have permeated US Writing Centers in terms of training and learning, as well as the cultural and affective needs of tutees and tutors; and, (3) an exploratory case study based on interviews with predominantly ESL/ELL tutors and ESL/ELL tutees at the UPRMEWC in order to examine and make recommendations to the tutoring principles, guidelines, and methods currently guiding UPRMEWC practices. The findings suggest revisions to certain policies and methods currently in place at the UPRMEWC to better fit the unique identities of our bilingual ESL/ELL tutors and tutees, specifically the non-directive method of not writing on students' papers.

Resumen

Esta tesis sitúa al Centro de Redacción en Inglés de la Universidad de Puerto Rico- Recinto de Mayagüez (CRIUPRM) en el contexto histórico de los debates e investigaciones que han informado las teorías, métodos y prácticas de centros de redacción en inglés en Estados Unidos desde el principio del siglo 20. La metodología de investigación empleada consistió de tres métodos: (1) revisión de literatura a fin de proveer un contexto y marco histórico para el proyecto; (2) análisis crítico del discurso (ACD) de documentos históricos recientes y previos del CRIUPRM para identificar y examinar sus ideologías, principios subyacentes y evaluar hasta qué punto estos han divergido del modelo imperante establecido por los centros de redacción en inglés en Estados Unidos en términos de entrenamiento de tutores, aprendizaje de tutorando/as y las particulares necesidades culturales y afectivas de ambos; (3) estudio de caso exploratorio basado en entrevistas con tutore/as y tutorando/as a fin de encaminar posibles revisiones de los principios, las guías, los métodos de tutoría y los resultados esperados en el CRIUPRM, tomando en cuenta el contexto particular de tutores/as y tutorando/as para quienes el inglés es, en su mayoría, su segundo idioma. Los hallazgos de la investigación proponen la revisión de algunas políticas y métodos actualmente en práctica en el CRIUPRM, específicamente aquellas atinentes a prohibir a los/as tutores escribir correcciones en los trabajos de sus tutorando/as.

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Dedication

To all my friends, from Ceiba to Mayagüez, from Puerto Rico to the US. You all played an integral in my development as a person, and I am happy to say that I am proud of who I've become. Thank you.

To the Ovalle and Nuñez family; for our continued love and support.

To my late Uncle Carlos Ovalle. The last words you ever shared with me and your youthful spirit will forever be engraved in my memory. May you rest in peace.

To my big brother Steven Santos, mother Victoria Santos and father Victor Santos; thank you for your undying patience, love, and support, for holding my hand firm through hard times, and for constantly pushing me to grow into a compassionate, dedicated human being. The words within these pages are a testament to the values you have taught me throughout the years, and, God willing, a testament for things to come. I love you.

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Chapter 1: Tutoring for Better Writers/Writing

Objective

The purpose of this thesis is to place the English Writing Center at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez (UPRMEWC) within the larger context of the histories, debates and research that have influenced writing center theories, methods and practices in the United States since the beginning of the 20th century. The project takes into consideration a unique population of predominantly English as a Second Language/English Language Learning students (ESL/ELL) served primarily by ESL/ELL peer tutors in order to examine pertinent concerns raised by writing center scholarship. In this introductory chapter, I validate the UPRMEWC as a pertinent site of research for this emergent area of study, define and justify the focus of my project, discuss the research questions that guide it and describe the research methods that were utilized to address these questions.

The genealogy of the contemporary writing center has been traced as far back as the late 1800s (Bouquet, 1999). Writing center scholars Elizabeth Boquet (1999) and Peter Carino (1995) disagree on a definite origin but generally concur on the motivation that gave rise to writing centers in the United States: the desire to address student writing needs at an individual level, to reach institutional standards and to do so in an efficient and effective manner. In their inception, writing centers set out to “address the instructional problems of weaker students by strengthening their writing and critical thinking skills” (Murphy, cited in Carino, 1995, p.104). Before the 1980s, this objective slowly snowballed throughout the decades into a mission to develop the potential of students by facilitating their intellectual growth, which led to the creation of writing labs within classrooms that “utilized an individualized approach designed to help students master a specific content... [which] focused on grammar and surface correctness” (Clark & Healy, 1996,

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p. 32). The development of writing centers from teaching method to physical site and their eventual popularization in the US education system faced an eventful period of growth and transition between the 1920s and the 1980s which would concretize writing centers' presence in the eyes of faculty and administration (Boquet, 1999).

The early stages of what is today known as a “writing center” developed within the traditional era of research (1900-1950s), which was closely associated with positivist foundations that postulated knowledge and reality as something “out there to be studied, captured and understood” (Guba as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 8). Its epistemological tenets encouraged knowledge seekers to adopt distant, non-interactive postures towards the subject of interest to maintain as much objectivity as possible through the use of propositional questions and hypotheses that could be verified by empirical tests (Guba, 1990). Positivism would influence the way early writing center policy was created and applied, as evidenced by the early emphasis on remedial education and grammar based content that promoted a “skill and drill” pedagogical approach (Clark & Healy, 1996; Carino, 1995). A case in point is the Armed Forces English program of the 1940s which was designed to prepare officers for World War II by focusing on contextualized military style communication.

However, after the war, these programs “developed a communications emphasis, a pedagogy integrating writing, speaking and reading and listening skills” (Carino, 1995, p.107). As the writing center distanced itself from institutional standards, it also veered off from traditional era positivism and the empirical, hard-science sentiment that came with it. In turn, the post-war 1940s period would see writing center policy and pedagogy become more student centered and context based (Carino, 1995). Accordingly, the way writing was understood took a more context based approach, deviating from the strict concrete rules. Writing center instruction would change as well, focusing more on dialogic, collaborative instruction than routine drills

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(Hobson 1994; Bruffee 1984; Harris 1986). Bruffee (1984) highlights this change of research and educative paradigm, declaring that peer tutoring and its individualist approach allow students to join the “conversation of mankind,” (p. 96) a continual conversation and negotiation of knowledge and learning within a community of knowledgeable peers. Separation from the prescriptive, positivistic approach, however, would leave the writing center in flux due to the lack of an underlying, universal guiding theory. Hobson (1994) notes that the loss of the prescriptive task of the writing center distanced it from objectivist epistemology that once dominated its daily interactions with visitors. Thus, the writing center would begin to rely on more collaborative and individualized learning strategies--not theory--to guide the way tutor-tutee relationships would be structured. Consequently, lack of a concrete theory for writing center pedagogy would eventually lead to vagueness between the dyad of theory and practice. Nevertheless, various writing center scholars, Hobson claims, would propose that “no single theory can dictate writing center instruction” (1994, p. 8).

The cold-war of the 1950s hindered the progress of the writing labs¹ and writing lab research due to the redirected focus of education primarily on math and science rather than English composition. The launch of Sputnik, Russia’s first satellite, in 1957 led the US government to create the National Defense Education Act which would strengthen “critical subjects” (p. 135) (science, technology and math), excluding English and the social sciences (Boquet, 1999; Kitzhaber, 1967). However, as writing centers found themselves increasingly more present in educational spaces of secondary and post-secondary education, the movement from method to site solidified their presence on university campuses, specifically in relation to the canon of English composition academia.

¹ Carino (1995) points out that writing centers were known as writing labs or clinics until the 1970s.

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From teaching method to physical site, the development of the writing center since the turn of the 20th century has provided much insight into the learning, affective and cultural needs of students on an individual level. Its history has demonstrated the complex relationships between tutors and tutees in historically changing institutional contexts; from graduate students to English professors, to peer-tutors, discovering the most efficient and effective ways for building communication between educator and student has been a topic of research that does not preclude its humble, grassroots beginning in Philo Buck's classroom². As historical transformations impact population changes, educational strategies become much more multifarious in addressing the teaching of language and language acquisition.

A century of writing center history would find one of its many culminations on the island of Puerto Rico, at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez's English Writing Center. Its unique placement outside of the borders of the United States, as well as its unique visitors, makes for a pertinent research site that can fill the gaps of writing center literature that revolve around second language acquisition and teaching.

Research Site: An Institutional and Personal History

At the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez, where the research project that informs this thesis was conducted, the UPRM English Writing Center (UPRMEWC) was initially established in the 2004-2005 academic year³ as a pilot project spearheaded by two English Department faculty members. Within one year it was, along with the Spanish Writing Center, absorbed by the Center for Resources in General Education to form the Bilingual Writing Center to make up for the lack of interdisciplinary resources that restricted the education of UPRM students ("Towards

² The earliest form of the writing center, according to Carino (1995), was designed in 1907 by St. Louis high school teacher Philo Buck who instructed students to write "together on topics of their own choosing while he himself spent time with each individually before having them read and critique one another's paper."

³ There has been an English Writing Center at the UPRM before this iteration, but any evidence of their history is lost

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Student Success in General and STEM” 2006) and their improvement in both the written and verbal communication skills UPRM faculty and prospective employers alike expected from undergraduate and graduate students at the institution.

My proposal to conduct research at the UPRMEWC does not come from a distant outsider; I have been a tutor at the Center since the first semester of the 2012-2013 academic year. Over the years, I have tutored a variety of students and have gained respect for the individualized methods we employ to serve UPRM tutees. This non-positivistic approach that considers the learning, affective and cultural needs of our students on an individual level has led my fellow tutors and I to prepare a multitude of supplementary materials and workshops, both for the UPRM community and UPRMEWC staff, consistently updating these materials to best serve the populations that visit us. This experience, along with my experience as a student at UPRM, has given me insight into the relationships between writing instruction and peer tutoring at the university level in the context of the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez. As my experience and skills as a peer tutor grew, I was able to witness how students with varying degrees of English language proficiency, and who were enrolled in a plurality of English courses, mainly at the undergraduate but also at the graduate level, handled the English language in an officially bilingual academic context. My personal reflections on these dynamics eventually blossomed into a desire to examine and research different factors related to English tutoring and English learning contexts, especially in relation to tutoring ESL/ELL students, both problematic terms in Puerto Rico due to the complex historical, social, political and personal relationships Puerto Rican residents have with the English language in the context of the country’s colonial history as a US territory⁴ (Schmidt, 2014), an issue I will address in further depth in Chapter 2 .

⁴Due to the fact that English language policies in Puerto Rico have changed from 1898 to the present, it is not always accurate to refer to Puerto Rican students in general as English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. These are problematic terms in Puerto Rico due to the complex relationship Puerto

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My five years of experience tutoring in the UPRMEWC can be described as a Socratic exchange: the intention is to pool knowledge and spark an intellectual conversation for both tutor and tutee. Writing center scholar Stephen M. North's often quoted maxim, "our job is to produce better writers, not better writing" (1984, p. 438), is a foundational tenet of most contemporary college writing centers, including UPRM's. The UPRMEWC's general mission, as stated in its website, reads as follows:

[The EWC is] a safe haven for writers and English language learners regardless of their level of proficiency or stage in the writing process. The Center's fully bilingual and academically-diverse peer tutors conduct one-on-one tutoring conferences, conversational English sessions, and a variety of workshops targeting typical areas of writing difficulty. Their main goal is to help writers, from any academic discipline and level, become better writers ("English Writing Center" 2014).

In tandem with North's perspective, the EWC at UPRM is dedicated to helping our students embrace what Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 970) call "their writing agency"⁵ by helping them access the tools needed to fully understand and put into use the writing process when it comes to composing English language texts for academic and professional purposes. However, this promising premise merits critical attention to the specific academic and cultural contexts in which it is deployed in order to reassess the principles, methods and practices that have guided the UPRMEWC since its inception in 2004.

For over a decade the UPRMEWC has offered valuable opportunities to a diverse

Rican residents share socially and politically with the English language (Pousada, 2006).

⁵ Emirbayer and Mische define agency as "the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal-relational contexts of action – which, through interplay of habit, imagination and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical structures (p. 970)

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population of students who face differing levels of difficulty using English at an academic level.

After a graduate period of growth both in terms of staff and in terms of services, over the past three years the UPRMEWC has maintained a record of close to 5000 visits each year, a figure that attests to the substantial needs it serves for the UPRM student population. Incoming students' In this institutional context, English proficiency is measured primarily based on the results of students' scores of the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) of Puerto Rico. Students entering the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) system are required to take a standardized test administered by the College Board (an organization that prepares and administers standardized tests that are used in college admission and placement). CEEB English scores illustrate the diversity of skills incoming students at UPRM possess; however, certain patterns can be observed when considering data from 2005-2016 compiled by the UPRM's Office of Institutional Research and Planning ("Datos Estadísticos"). During this period:

- 1) Average scores in the English section of the CEEB test have increased across all four colleges (Agricultural Sciences, Arts & Sciences, Business Administration and Engineering).
- 2) This increase has been most notable for science students in the College of Arts and Sciences (+26), the College of Engineering (+11) and the College of Business Administration (+11).
- 3) College of Engineering students have consistently ranked at the top average score in English in the period under consideration.
- 4) However, when averaging scores for the period under consideration, only science students in the College of Arts and Sciences and students in the College of Engineering average above 70% on the English part of the CEEB (Arts and Sciences - Science = 75%, Engineering = 77%).

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As can be observed, despite an improvement over the last decade, the overall average for incoming students of every college in the UPRM is below 80%, averaging in the 70% mark.

This data supports the results reported by the principal investigators of the Center for Resources in General Education (CIVIS⁶) initiative and that is cited above regarding the gaps in English instruction throughout elementary, middle, and high school education in Puerto Rico.

The preceding discussion informs this thesis project's objective to closely and critically examine factors related to English tutoring and English learning contexts, especially in reference to tutoring students at UPRM, most of whom would be considered ESL/ELL students.

Writing center research is described by Lil Brannon and Steve North, as the last "frontier" due to the "opportunity this practice offers to observe writers' processes more fully and naturalistically" (Gilliam, 2001). This frontier currently affords scholars an in-depth view of the writing center as a comfortable space in which cultures meet and "constitute themselves as horizontal, homogenous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, shared understanding and temporary protection from shared legacies" (Pratt, 1999, p.7). Moreover, various social and academic factors influence the perception and overall function of the writing center relative to students and faculty. This thesis project makes inroads in the exploration of these dynamics in reference to the UPRMEWC.

Justification

Writing center scholarship has set the pace for research into theory and practice (Babcock & Thonus, 2012). Publications that have evolved into major journals focused on writing center

⁶ According to its website, CIVIS "was established at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayaguez to provide a new perspective in general and STEM education. CIVIS, which means "citizen" in Latin, brings together faculty from Business Administration, Arts and Sciences, Agriculture and Engineering in order to develop interdisciplinary activities that further UPRM's mission of shaping productive and committed citizens. The Center challenges the traditional classification of "technical skills" and "soft skills", substituting these with an emphasis on the development of the professional and global skills described in UPRM's student learning outcomes." ("Welcome to CIVIS"). The Bilingual Writing Center, of which the UPRMEWC is a critical component, is headed by CIVIS.

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research include the *Writing Lab Newsletter* and the *Writing Center Journal*, both of which have provided audiences with “in-depth writing center research and scholarship” along with promoting even further research into theory and practice. For decades, these journals have offered writing center scholars a space for publishing pertinent research on the field of writing center study, and, in the process, for legitimizing and expanding it. Unfortunately, while there exists a wealth of research on writing centers in the US, there is a lack of research on writing centers in Puerto Rico, save for Shanti Bruce’s “El Centro de Competencias de la Comunicación and the Fraught Status of English,” which details her experience at the University of Puerto Rico’s Humacao campus writing center; María Quintero’s “Life at the University of Puerto Rico’s Art’s and Sciences English Writing Center,” which details her experience as ethnographer at the UPRMEWC; and Maltide García-Arroyo and Hilda E. Quintana’s “The Ups and Downs of the Interdisciplinary Writing Center of the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico, Metropolitan Campus,” a profile which details the opening, closing and reopening of the first writing center in Puerto Rico.

Although publications on writing centers in Puerto Rico exist, they are not widely available or generally influential on writing center philosophies and practices. This thesis therefore contributes to filling gaps and silences on research on English writing centers on three fronts: (1) writing centers working primarily, if not exclusively, with ESL/ELL students; (2) writing centers located in Puerto Rican colleges and universities; and, (3) the English Writing Center at UPRM, where previous research has been mainly based on assessments of satisfaction and records of visit. This thesis project situates the UPRMEWC as a pertinent site of research to contribute to the emerging scholarship on ESL/ELL students and tutors in writing centers; critically examines UPRMEWC’s philosophies, methodologies and practices in order to inscribe them within the larger framework of writing center scholarship; and seeks to fill gaps in the

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literature by working locally, with transparency and by creating connections to the ongoing conversations in the field.

Alice Gilliam's analysis of Stephen North and Lil Brannon's *Writing Center Journal* suggests that publications should focus on theoretical texts which explore "the *whys* of writing center instruction," texts which connect theory with practice and offer insight and advice on writing center teaching and administration. In light of this, at UPRM it is essential to critically examine the UPRMEWC's guiding principles and practices as well as how these are perceived and represented by tutors and tutees engaged in the Socratic exchange our model supports in order to better understand how the relationships between tutors, tutees, the writing center and the institution shape tutoring productiveness, effectiveness and impact in a situated context involving ESL/ELL student populations.

The proposed research project intends, first and foremost, to contribute to filling the need for research in Puerto Rico about post-secondary institutions and their respective writing centers as sites that are ideally suited to examine the particularities of multilingual writers in relation to English writing centers, a line of inquiry persuasively established by Ben Rafoth (2015).

Secondly, this research intends to fill the gap in the literature centered on the philosophical, cultural and institutional ideologies that influence the configuration, development, practices and services of the UPRMEWC. These factors will contribute to revising writing center methods at UPRM, amplifying the writing center's influence on its academic surroundings, and encouraging those looking from the outside to perceive the center as a valuable place to research the frontier of writing composition.

Moreover, this thesis stands to make a substantial contribution to the currently scant scholarship on writing center histories, philosophies, methods, practices and challenges in Puerto Rico and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean islands. On the basis of my exploratory research I will

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provide scholarly-research based recommendations for the revision of policies, practices, methods and expectations pertaining to the services offered by and for students at the UPRMEWC as well as to the revision of tutoring training policies, guidelines and evaluations at the EWC.

Research Design

The proposed research includes three sequential and mutually-informing components:

- 1) Contextual research: Literature review of existing writing center research in terms of the philosophical, ideological and pedagogical factors that have shaped EWCs philosophies, tutoring methods and tutoring practices as these are informed by US-based researchers and practitioners.
- 2) Site research: Critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be used to examine the explicit and implicit ideologies and principles that have guided the tutoring of ESL students at the UPRMEWC based on an analysis of documents for the foundation and institutionalization of the center as well as those used in the training of tutors.
- 3) Case study: An exploratory case study will be conducted to examine the perspectives of a small sample of current peer tutors and current tutees at the UPRMEWC regarding the methods, practices and perceived outcomes of ESL tutoring in our campus with the intention of better understanding the relationship between English learning tutoring and English learning contexts at UPRM.

Research Questions

My proposed study sets out to answer these three main research questions:

1. What are the dominant ideologies, principles and methods that have guided the tutoring of ESL/ELL students in US writing centers over the past 3 decades?
 - a. How are ESL/ELL learning needs conceptualized in this scholarship?

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- b. How are cultural/affective needs of ESL/ELL conceptualized in this scholarship?
2. What are the explicit and implicit ideologies and principles that have guided the tutoring of students at the UPRMEWC? To what extent have these differed from those that have permeated in US Writing Centers in terms of:
 - a. tutor training content and methods
 - b. tutee learning, cultural, and affective needs
 - c. tutee/tutoring outcomes
3. Based on the analyses conducted in response to questions #1 and #2: How could the UPRMEWC revise/adapt its principles, tutoring guidelines, tutoring methods and tutee/tutoring outcomes based on our particular context of predominantly ESL/ELL tutors serving predominantly ESL/ELL students?

To address the first question, I will closely analyze English Writing Center scholarship that has been published over the last three decades to appropriately identify ideologies and philosophies that have been used when it comes to tutoring ESL students in the United States. Academic culture plays a crucial role in the construction of an institutional ideology, and how it is approached by ESL/ELL students. Both the languages and identities of an ESL/ELL writer play important roles which writing centers take into account given these are spaces where both are negotiated through writing instruction.

Furthermore, this negotiation does not only stay within the academic context, but also spans into cultural realms. Tutees are obliged to reconcile the stylistic demands of American academic prose, with cultural values specific to their home countries (Robinson, 2009). Over 15 years ago, Alicia Pousada (2000), shed light on the proficiency of ESL learners entering the public university system of Puerto Rico noting the common trait of students lacking sufficient

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English proficiency despite taking 12 years of mandatory English in school. She noted, however, that a “small but significant group of students” were “amazingly quite adept in English.” More recent data from UPRM student scores in the English component of the CEEB over the past 11 years shows that average scores have increased across all faculties from 4 points (Arts and Sciences, Art) to 26 points (Arts and Sciences, Science). Nevertheless, as was mentioned above, the average score of students in this English proficiency test is 76%.

Discovering the ideologies and philosophies of US universities is aimed at benefitting ESL populations who are constantly at odds with academic writing and writing center philosophy (Moussu, 2013). Moussu observes how ESL students are more worried with lower order concerns (grammar and form) than with higher order concerns (content), which develops a desire for authoritative linguistic feedback (2013). The analysis entailed in addressing this research question addresses Moussu’s call for research on the theory and practice of writing centers across the US (and beyond) in order to “further our collective goal: to examine the variables that affect our students’ second-language learning and academic success” (2013). Understanding and critically analyzing what has been done in the past as well as what is presently being done renders multiple contexts of reference for the subsequent analysis of UPRMEWC principles and practices.

In light of the unique history of the UPRMEWC predominantly serving an ESL/ELL population with ESL/ELL staff, the second research question seeks to critically examine the discourses iterated in the founding philosophies, policies and practices that have guided UPRMEWC protocols over the past decade. The sub-questions seek to itemize and channel analytical focus on the implications of tutoring in this context. They enable me to chart the history of the UPRMEWC and to discuss it in the larger context of the history of WCs in the US. I analyze various documents that have circulated within the UPRMEWC such as EWC training

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manual, supplementary documents and artifacts for tutoring sessions, evidence of pedagogical strategies that are suggested for use in tutoring sessions, institutional documents filed with the Title V grant⁷ that led to the institutionalization of the EWC, and foundational documents submitted by the EWC founders to the College of Arts & Sciences at UPRM in the 2004-2005 academic year. These documents help pinpoint how the institution, from an administrative perspective, sought to handle English language learning support services through the UPRMEWC. This critical discourse analysis, as addressed further below, will eventually be informed by the conclusions derived in response to research question #1.

The third research question pursues research validity and depth. Selected tutors and tutees were interviewed to discuss their experience at the UPRMEWC. These interviews shed light on possible proposals for the revision of policies, methods and practices pertaining to the UPRMEWC and for the benefit of UPRM's institutional commitment to general education support under CIVIS and/or other parallel existing or future initiatives.

Methodology

In order to address the research questions cited above, a combination of methods was employed:

Literature Review. John Creswell defines literature review research as “a framework for establishing the importance of the study as well as benchmark for comparing the results with other findings” (2014, p. 60). Literature focused on the theoretical, philosophical and ideological input pertaining to different university English writing centers across the United States was surveyed in order to address my first research question. This entailed critical readings of research conducted over the past three decades on tutoring both first and second language students and

⁷ According to the US Department of Education, Title V “provides grants to assist HSIs [Hispanic serving institutions] to expand educational opportunities for, and improve the attainment of, Hispanic students. These grants also enable HSIs to expand and enhance their academic offerings, program quality, and institutional stability” (“Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions”, 2017).

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how these processes are affected by institutional forces and academic and social cultures. These readings inform my analysis of the situated research I conducted in the subsequent phases of my project.

Critical Discourse Analysis. “Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of analytical research that primarily studies the way the abuse of social power, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (Van Dijk, p.352). I will employ CDA to address my second research question in order to analyze the explicit and implicit ideologies and principles that have guided the tutoring of students at the UPRMEWC and the extent to which these differ from those that have permeated US writing centers. Understanding how the balance of power shifts in each of these dynamics is crucial in CDA methodology in order to understand implicit and explicit guiding ideologies. Some of the texts submitted to critical discourse analysis in this study include: the UPRMEWC Tutor Manual

1. Training/Workshop presentations
2. Tutor Evaluation Forms
3. UPRMEWC Policies
4. UPRMEWC Mission
5. Record of visit form
6. Tutor Evaluation worksheet

Exploratory Case Study. Creswell defines case study research as “a detailed description of the setting or individuals, followed by analysis of data for themes or issues.” (p. 246). I conducted an exploratory case study “to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes” (Baxter & Jack). Personal interviews with four current tutors and four recent tutees were conducted in order to address research question #3. As McNamara (1999) notes, interviews are a suitable method to understand what the interviewees

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are saying, and provide accurate, real life experiences in real time.

Significance of Study

Conducting this research will provide much needed insight and perspective on the content-deficient body of literature on writing centers that currently exists in the Puerto Rican and Caribbean context. In exploring and addressing the aforementioned research questions, peer tutors, tutor trainers, university administrators and researchers in general will be able to analyze, deconstruct, reconstruct and reinterpret the ways in which the UPRMEWC functions in relation to their own institutional contexts. Writing center policies publicly represent how we work and how accessible our services are to the communities we serve; therefore, writing center scholarship within the archipelago, given that it potentially informs the way pedagogies are examined and adopted for use, point to possible changes in writing center procedures and provides evidence for supporting and/or revising policies. This research can encourage policy-makers to take into consideration the philosophical frameworks used to create writing center policy and how these might be adapted to foment a productive relationship between a center and its visitors. Subsequently, this will open the door for changes in procedure that are dependent on – and developed based on - the visitors and the work they bring to writing centers. This will offer insights on how such revisions may strengthen the tutor-tutee relationship. Finally, this research has the potential to impact the way pedagogies are examined and adopted for use within the writing center. These centers, as sites of innovation and evolution in composition research, are characterized by a chaotic sense of growth given all the possible opportunities for pedagogical investigation and innovation that have not yet been developed (Gilliam, 2001). To establish direction within the chaos, contextualizing the writing center relative to the community that surrounds it will enable writing center staff to consider how pedagogy already in use can be revised and adapted to be more effective. Furthermore, a critical examination of pedagogies can

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bring to light explanations and concrete reasons for why they do or do not work. Understanding pedagogical functionality will motivate further questioning of individualized and/or collaborative tutoring session methodology and offer space for ELL/ESL tutoring reformation at the UPRMEWC and in other contexts with similar populations of tutors and tutees.

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Chapter 2: Writing Centers across the US

This chapter surveys the dominant ideologies, principles and methods of WCs across the US by reviewing their history since the turn of the 20th century. This survey then examines how, past and current WC methodologies have conceptualized and made space for ESL/ELL students. Finally, it concludes by exploring how specific ideologies, principles and methods meet, or fail to meet, the needs of ESL/ELL students.

The history of the Writing Center (WC) in the United States, beginning in its conception as the writing lab method to more current forms of theory and practice represents an idea that was in constant change and revision for more than a century. Just like the students who visited, the history has proven the idea of the writing center to be sensitive to the social and political forces of its time. Neal Lerner (2005) provides a brief breakdown of the history of the writing center over the last century:

In the 1890s, the classroom was a laboratory for close teacher-student contact; in the 1930s, the laboratory was an out-of-class solution; in 1950s, the laboratory represented a technocratic threat to the humanities soul of composition and a reminder of the need to deal with underprepared students; and in the 1970s, the laboratory was a peer-centered, teacherless place to counter the authoritarian classroom instructor (p. 187).

This trajectory preceded and created the foundation for the philosophies and ideologies which we deal with today. From peerless to peer tutoring, methods limited to classroom walls to methods performed out of sight of authority, the writing center has been the site of polemic argument on how writing instruction should be accomplished.

The incorporation of Second language (L2)⁸ writing and language learning in the WC and

⁸ Second language writing, is defined by Diane R. Ferris (2009) as “[s]tudents whose first language (the language to which they were exposed in the home as young children) is not English” (p.4).

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with its research and publications on the topic has been fairly sparse in the past three decades (William, 2002). Since then, researchers have produced publications that advise and guide peer tutors and writing center directors to appropriately assist this growing population, to access cross cultural differences, to identify typical error profiles, to develop reading strategies to nurture instruction, and to analyze how this population might approach writing and texts (Williams & Serevino, 2004). The rise of ESL/ELL writers and their use of the writing center has motivated WC staff and scholars across the USA to reassess how tutoring is typically carried out, exchanging traditional methods for more context based styles of tutoring (Robinson, 2009). Fortunately, more context based approaches to WC ideology and instruction have moved research away from perceiving ESL/ELL as remedial or deficient and more as its own area of research. Thonus (2004) affirms that typical tutoring strategies assume that ESL/ELL tutees know and understand a great deal of English writing conventions, but this not the case. Tutoring L2 writers of English, what it is now, and where this body of research is to go, is framed by the history that paved the way for it. To appropriately evaluate what can be done in the UPRMEWC, it is necessary to construct a social and academic history of English Writing Centers (EWCs) and the ideologies, principles and methods that guided them.

Early Writing Center History in the USA

One of the earliest and most notable conceptions of the WC in the United States can be found as far back as in 1904, coined as ‘the laboratory method’ by St. Louis high school teacher Philo Buck. The laboratory method was a classroom approach that took advantage of student attendance by holding a writing lab one hour per week which would require the teacher of the English composition class to spend time with each student reviewing their writing before having them review the papers of their students (Carino, 1995). Neal Learner (2006) points out that upon bringing this form of English composition instruction to the National Education

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Association, Buck called it the “laboratory methods in English composition,” which would be the first evidence of classroom instruction that supported the idea of teaching writing as a process of “drafting, feedback, and revision” using a one-on-one format (p. 4) and would eventually proliferate itself amongst the American education system.

Subsequently, E.F. Lindquist supported and expanded upon Buck’s idea, focusing more on the supervisor of the writing, and how the supervision was administered, suggesting that all the writing of the student be done under the watchful eye of a trained aid to correct compositional mistakes. Continued success of the writing lab method and the idea of individualized instruction began to spread across the United States, gaining popularity as it found itself in the academic work of various scholars and educators like Francis Ingold Walker who wrote an article in 1917 describing a classroom similar to Buck’s laboratory method; it set two days a week aside for revision and correction. By the end of the 1920s this method had become common enough to find itself as the subject of West Virginia high school teacher Warren B. Horner’s master’s thesis, which provided evidence of this method being beneficial and efficient for student writing (Carino, 1995). In 1929, Horner published research (“The Economy of the Laboratory Method”) which compared individualized methods of teaching English composition (i.e. laboratory method) to group methods of instruction with high school students. His results demonstrated the advantages of the laboratory method, grounded on the teacher’s ability to understand the pupil’s “habits of study, English weaknesses, and personal temperament” (p. 218). Horner concluded that the laboratory method was much more time efficient; the group that used this method attained more progress towards the English composition goal in about half the time of the group that used the group method instruction. This would add to the multitude of research during the time that supported the laboratory method as a useful tool for teaching English writing; the student would no longer be a passive receptacle, but an entity involved in

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the production of English composition (Boquet, 1999).

One documented precedent of the writing laboratory method moving from secondary school to post-secondary education occurred at University of Minnesota General College (UMGC) in 1932. This institution, dedicated to serving students considered “deficient,” organized a writing lab that required enrollment and provided credits. This writing laboratory offered instruction that was similar to strategies in place today, encouraging students to bring assignments from other courses for individual revision and suggestion (Lerner, 2006). The goals of this writing lab were outlined by JM Thomas in 1934 (cited in Grandy, 1936, p. 372):

1. The student should have a definite period each week in which he should become accustomed to writing, in the hope that writing might become habitual with him as it is with professional writers.
2. The period should be reasonably long and should be free from the interruptions and distractions which are naturally incidental to work in his own room or in the library.
3. The student should be given definite instructions and help in the planning of his work before he undertakes the writing of it.
4. The student should have pointed out to him immediately any error or defect in his writing rather than by being allowed to make these errors and afterward have attention called to them by means of written correction upon his themes.

These goals demonstrated a strict, directive form of writing instruction which was backed by the institutionalization of the writing center. Instructors, who performed the role of tutors in this scenario, would be hard on visiting students but this did come without the occasional appearance of non-directive teaching behavior; they instructed to stand back when attention was not necessary. Grandy (1936), describes the space provided for this particular writing lab,

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fascinatingly sharing common qualities and descriptions with writing centers today:

A large room which afforded good light and proper ventilation and which had the added advantage of a small anteroom was set apart as the laboratory. The equipment was simple, consisting chiefly of tablet arm chairs (pending the completion of tables and chairs built expressly for the purpose), a bookcase, and the beginning of a reference library.

This description reflected the theories and approach towards what academic authorities considered to be an appropriate setting for writing instruction. Comparatively, more contemporary WCs retain the same format as can be seen by Grandy's (1936) description of the UMGC's writing laboratory; clean, well-lighted area with tables with chairs, tables and reference books for both tutor and tutee.

However, as opposed to more contemporary policy, UMGC's writing lab was strictly appointment based; students were assigned to enter at a specific time and go through one round of instruction. Afterward, if necessary, more instruction would be provided if the student was not capable of continuing alone. Instructors would then simply check in every now and then to make sure minor grammatical details were resolved (Grandy, 1936).

During the 1930s, "egalitarian" mass education initiatives played a part in increasing the population of immigrant and first-generation students who began to attend educational state secondary and post-secondary institutions. This sudden boom in students, coupled with John Dewey's growing and influential emphasis on pragmatic education at the time, set the stage for writing labs to become an increasingly more popular option to supplement English language instruction (Carino, 1995). While the University of Minnesota utilized an institutionalized version of the laboratory method as a necessary ancillary to the classroom, the University of Iowa adopted an approach that was independent from the classroom and much less limited by

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institutional standards and guidelines. This writing lab, thanks in part by then Director Carrie Stanley's humanizing inclusive approach, would mark the onset of the contemporary teacher-less writing center. Stanley's approach to English writing supported the idea of the writing laboratory as targeting not only students deemed remedial, but anyone who desired to improve their writing ability. She observed that "even when there is no question of passing or failing many keep on coming, hoping eventually to gain for themselves that complete freedom of a person who can thing what he wishes to think and can express what he wishes to express..." (Stanley, 1943, p.428). This would support her strong stance on the writing center and individualized instruction "coming very close to meeting the ends of true education" (p. 428).

In light of Stanley's inclusive, humanizing approach, the University of Denver adopted a similar counter-hegemonic stance which would disrupt institutional standards (Boquet, 1999). Levette J. Davidson and Frederick Sorenson, professor and chairman of English and associate professor of English at the University of Denver at the time, respectively, would encourage a psychotherapeutic approach to writing lab work known as the Rogerian nondirective method of counseling (Boquet, 1999; Davidson and Sorenson, 1946). Developed by renowned psychoanalyst Carl Rogers, the Rogerian nondirective method, in the context of education, is a student centered approach which provides teaching in the form of questions that facilitates self-direction and self-responsibility on behalf of the student. Its primary objective is "that students learn to think for themselves" rather than have the teacher or tutor think for them (Heim, 2012, p.292). Davidson and Sorenson (1946) would utilize this method of teaching in their writing laboratory with particular emphasis on teaching students to help themselves. Nevertheless, they were aware that this method of tutoring would make difficult the testing of results since the Rogerian method was more concerned with the individual rather than the standards of the institution. Consequently, this would possibly serve as a precedent to the comparative lack of

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RAD research (replicable methods, aggregative results and data driven conclusions) in writing center discourse. Conversely, this would help inspire the ideal that writing laboratories were not solely for remediation but a place where any student can get help with English composition.

Returning to the University of Iowa, upon institutionalization, Stanley's writing laboratory would gain official recognition in 1945, with its official function "to provide instruction for students whose placement themes did not meet departmental standards" (Kelly, 1980, p.5), obligating "sub-freshmen," and later, "remedial students" who enrolled in the university to attend the writing lab. Interestingly, the coordinator (no longer Carrie Stanley) of the Iowa University Writing Lab would provide a form for professors that demonstrated what the institution required from its students. Below I reproduce the content of the form:

THE WRITING IN THIS PAPER IS UNACCEPTABLE

() It appears to suffer from carelessness. In the future, edit your papers carefully before you submit them.

() It is so poor that your grade has been affected. In the future, plan your papers before you begin writing, take more time to word them precisely, and edit them with care.

() Apparently you do not understand the process of writing well enough to improve your writing by yourself. Take this paper to your present or former instructor in Rhetoric and discuss it with him. If your former Rhetoric instructor is no longer available or if you had your writing instruction at some other institution, see the secretary in Room 4, OAT, who will arrange an appointment for you. Do this within the next week then return this paper to me. (Kelly, 1980, p. 5)

Evidently, institutional standards were heavily imposed in writing lab instruction. Before institutionalization, Stanley's approach to writing center ideology and rhetoric was heavily based on forming an empathetic relationship with visitors as opposed to the less generous policy

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implemented by the institution. Kelly also mentions how attendance to the writing lab was compulsory for anyone who did not pass the departmental themed exam. As opposed to today's strategies, one of the first independent writing labs in the University of Iowa took more to drilling and directive styles of instruction in the 1940s.

World War II and the US military played an important role in spreading writing centers across universities and high schools. Many campuses began developing and implementing Armed Forces English, an on-campus program which offered students an intense workshop that featured a pedagogy designed to integrate writing, speaking and listening skills (Carino, 1995). The goal of this program, as delineated by Frederic H. Weigle (1944), were as follows:

- (1) Development of speech techniques used in military situations
- (2) Development of the ability to write military reports, instructions, directions and surveys
- (3) Development of correct grammatical usage in writing and speaking
- (4) Development of reading skill and comprehension
- (5) Development of vocabularies in all phases of preflight training
- (6) Development of note-taking techniques (p.271)

Students enrolled in this program were taught original material and were encouraged to learn two years' worth of English instruction, albeit at their own pace, rather than mastering a semester's worth of material under the strict timetable of an instructor, proving to be "natural for the laboratory, both as a classroom technique and in a tutorial setting" (1995, p.107). This method would spread in the 1940s; the US armed forces would prove instrumental in normalizing this type of instruction, having been tested and subsequently implemented in writing laboratory pedagogy. The areas of instruction emphasized by this program would continue on to the next decade, building off the practical methods applied by the US military. The focus of this program

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would be adapted from military context to more social and affective domains, suggesting a more humanizing approach that served to improve self-esteem and conquer fears of English composition (Carino, 1995).

Writing Centers in the 1950s

By the early 1950s, higher education began to normalize and embrace the idea of a writing laboratory, further motivating the transition from laboratory method (in class) to stand alone sites (Lerner, 2006). Robert Moore, former writing lab director of the University of Illinois in 1948, administered a survey to 120 American universities, designed to determine “the incidence, methods and effectiveness” (p. 388) of writing laboratories during the time. Of those 55, 49 institutions provided remedial methods for English composition, 24 of those already having a writing laboratory or clinic and 11 others considering opening one (Moore, 1950). The methodologies and philosophies described in Moore’s article distinguished between the writing lab and the writing clinic: the former was primarily concerned with the “diagnosis and prescription” of a student’s writing and the latter with “the direct and continuing supervision of the remedial efforts of the individual student” (p.389). Furthermore, the writing clinic would provide more individualized tutoring while the laboratory worked with the individual as part of a larger group with various deficiencies. Moore observes that both the clinic and the laboratory were devices used to assist students to reach required institutional standards; thus, students would be required by their course instructors to visit the writing clinic under the threat of course credits being withheld if deficiencies were not resolved and improved upon (1950). Moore goes on to note that most laboratories and clinics would actually provide methods to diagnose student deficiencies via preliminary interviews and diagnostic essay prompts.

With the increasing use of writing labs in the US during the 1950s, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) would begin vetting this method of English

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composition instruction used by writing centers in an attempt to identify and discuss issues that would consolidate center policies as well as methodologies. One of the first instances of this is recorded in “The Organization and Use of the Writing Laboratory: The Report of Workshop No. 9, published in the CCCC’s journal, *College Composition and Communication* in 1950. The report described two types of writing laboratories that functioned on a remedial and supplementary basis. On one hand, “a writing laboratory that is part of the regular freshman English course,” and on the other hand, “a writing laboratory where a student may obtain help in order pass a standardized English test” (p. 31). The report also highlights questions which interestingly reflect the philosophies that framed writing laboratories and their movement from method to site within an institution: “...who shall be allowed to use the laboratory? (Freshmen, all students, town people?) ... What techniques are most valuable? ... Shall credit be given for attendance if the laboratory is a part of the writing course?” (p. 32).

Other authors contributed to this discussion in the 1950s. In her article “Facing the Problem in Upper class English,” Stevenson (1951) discusses the need of remedial forms of education to help students who are deficient in multiple areas of English composition; she advocates for a conveniently placed “Service Center” designed to “attract the passing student for a few minutes or an hour... [For] securing information ranging from fine points in letters of application up to the organization and presentation of formal talks and reports” and goes on to recommend offering support for graduate students as well (pp. 36-37).

Writing laboratories during the decade were shaping up, slowly shedding the identity as an auxiliary to the English classroom to a standalone site for, as Stevenson puts it, “passing students” (p. 37). It is worth noting that besides wanting to create a center to help deficient students, Stevenson was also aware of many other challenges students may face when it comes to learning to read and write in English, which included physical impairment, early speech and

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hearing impairment, and “students who came from non-English speaking homes” (p. 37). Millet and Morton (1956) described the University of Indiana’s writing lab approach, which was constant with Stevenson’s service center notion in so far as it provided contextualized assistance to individual students (remedial or otherwise) and offered the help that instructors cannot provide during class time, namely immediate feedback of student writing obviating the amount of time it takes an instructor to respond to a student’s work (a key motivator to maintain students interested in their writing abilities).

Writing center⁹ research becomes scarce after the mid-1950s. Boquet (1999) and Carino (1995) speculate that this was due, in part, to the post-sputnik era of education, which came via President Eisenhower’s National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958. The post-sputnik era of education represented the “scientific, technological, and engineering superiority” of the Soviet Union and in turn, exposed the mediocrity of the American education system at the time (Steeves, Bernhardt, Burns, & Lombard, 2009). This translated to NDEA funneling resources, revising education programs and providing funding incentives for post-secondary education to focus on the growth of science, technology, engineering and mathematics programs which were deemed critical. Kitzhaber (1967) points out that neither the social sciences nor English were considered critical under the NDEA. Funding for these areas was reduced which led to these programs falling behind and ultimately to an imbalance in the American education system. Furthermore, the promise of linguistics as a broad solution to writing instruction during the time also served to shift the focus of research away from writing centers (Carino, 1995). Linguistics promised a method that would offer “equal promise to both strongest and weakest student” (Boquet, 1999).

⁹ The term Writing Center (WC) will be used to refer to the undertakings of writing labs and writing clinics

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From the 1960s to Today's Writing Center

Beginning in the mid-1960s through the early 1970s, the creation of open admissions programs¹⁰ in post-secondary education (Lavin & Crook, 1990) would provide a boost in the number of writing centers that already existed. This is due in part to the immense diversity which the US post-secondary education system was faced with during the time due to the open admissions:

With the unprecedentedly large generation of baby boomers approaching college age, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 affording African American increased societal participation, more woman forsaking home making for careers and large numbers of working-class males returning from Vietnam with educational funding guaranteed by the GI bill, open admissions policies were designed to address the needs of the nation's most diverse group ever of rising adults (Lavin & Cook, 1990, p. 32).

As a result, students in need of remediation to achieve institutional standards, motivated English programs to develop writing labs which from the outset acted as spaces to remediate grammar and syntax concerns (Waller, 2002). These remedial centers were not born independently, but as an extension of the English classroom providing extra assistance for students who were having trouble with English language composition.

Since the open admissions program provided access to higher education to those who couldn't access it before, Carino and Russell note how the pressure for programs that provided "job-related skills instructions and educational accountability" intensified (as cited in Mullin, 2001, p. 179). These political forces would force the discipline of composition to grow and

¹⁰ According to Lavin and Crook, Open Admission programs were created to make college more accessible to minorities and disadvantaged communities in the United States by offering "grant and loan programs at the federal and state levels, expansion in the number of postsecondary institutions, and special admission programs" (1990, p. 390).

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adapt to the social context that surrounded it, bringing about supplementation via writing across the curriculum programs¹¹ (WAC) (Mullin, 2001). Russell (1991) maintains that WAC programs ran parallel with the budding, student-centered, progressive methods of writing center instruction and pedagogy. As a result, WAC and WC philosophies would agree upon one-on-one or small-group instruction as the most ideal way to teach composition, and most notably, that “no discipline can effectively act alone” (Mullin, 2001, p. 185). The partnership between WAC and WCs would persist and be embraced by colleges and universities across the US (Thasiss & Porter, 2010).

The idea and testing of computer program technology as a replacement for tutor personnel would also arise during the 1970s. Epes (as cited in Lerner, 1998) describes the advantages of the Comp-Lab project of York College of the City University of New York; it was much cheaper, more reliable, avoided unethical intrusion to student writing and was less distracting. However, the Comp-Lab could only assist students with sentence level concerns, reducing the dialogic one-to-one collaborative learning that would encompass both lower order and higher order concerns.

According to Matsuda (2003), process pedagogy arose “in the late 1960s and the early 1970s in reaction to the dominance of a product centered pedagogy” (p. 67). The writing as process movement significantly influenced the way composition was understood and taught in educational institutions throughout the US. Vandenburg, Hum and Clary-Lemon (2006) discuss the shift in the way educators would look at the process of teaching compositions: “Maxine Hairston, in 1982, declared a ‘a paradigm shift’ in writing about and teaching college writing – a

¹¹ Chris Thasiss and Tara Porter (2010) describe WAC programs as being created by a “community of writing teachers from colleges and universities to design assignments and methods of response to writing that would help students learn and apply disciplinary ways of knowing...these teachers understood that writing instruction would continue as genres and demands became more specialized” (p. 535).

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change in focus from product to circumstances of production” (p. 1). Consequently, this shift in focus would be motivated by a resurgence of interest in rhetorical theory, as established by Young, Becker and Pike (1970) “[m]astering rhetoric means not only mastering a theory of how and why one communicates, but mastering the process of communication as well” (p. 9). The process movement then motivated researchers to produce a plethora of research which critically observed more qualitative forms of producing writing, as opposed to traditional empirical methods. As a result, this paradigm shift would influence writing center philosophy, and continue to encourage more collaborative methods that emphasized improving the writer’s writing process, rather than the writer’s paper, and contribute to the creation of North’s (1984) poignant maxim of the WC being a place to create better writers rather than better writing.

Despite the notable growth in writing/composition related research, the writing center was still generally considered as a space for remediation until the early 1980s. At this juncture, however, empirical methods of research (much of which influenced the skill and drill, remediation approach to writing centers at the time) came into question. Emergent poststructuralist theories would encourage new research questions and perspectives to the study of composition which were influenced by various social sciences (Smagorinsky, 2006). Consequently, writing center and writing researchers were slowly being discouraged from using empirical forms of research in favor of using more contextualized approaches (Driscoll & Perdue, 2012). This shift in research influenced Stephen North’s (1984) landmark essay “The Idea of the Writing Center,” which would express his frustrations on the perception of the writing center as a “grammar and drill center” (p. 437) rather than a place to “produce better writers” (p. 438). In light of this, North refutes Hairston’s (1982) remedial, “first aid” perception of the writing center, providing a more accurate “new” perspective of how writing centers function. According to North, “the new writing center... represents the marriage of what are

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arguably the two most powerful contemporary perspectives of teaching writing: first, that writing is most usefully viewed as a process; and second, that writing curricula need to be student-centered” (1984, p. 438). North’s reaction to the positivistic approach of teaching and education would represent the concretization of new methodologies and philosophies that were qualitative, inclusive and separate from the classroom and would, as a result, define the purpose of writing centers across the US.

It is important to note that the very name of what is now known as the writing center would reflect how it was perceived at this crucial point in its development. As the philosophical, methodological and physical placement of what is now known as the writing center changed, so did the name. The “writing clinic” would fall out because it implied that student writing was “sick”, “deficient” or otherwise “impaired.” Consequently, this would lead students and faculty to believe that visiting would result in a “cure” for their writing illness (Waller, 2002). On the other hand, the term “lab” lost currency due to its scientific connotations, and for being viewed as a punishment rather than a supplement because only students taking remedial classes were obligated to visit. As a result, and in contrast to the aforementioned, Waller (2002) notes the term “writing center” has had longevity due to the word ‘center’ discursively conveying an image of humane collaboration and face to face interaction. It assists in expressing a philosophy and vision of helpfulness and humanization, inviting a diversity of students to seek out its services (Carino, 1995).

Robinson (2009) insists that writing center philosophies are significantly affected by the center’s position in the college community, due in part to its search for a balance between serving students and faculty effectively while maintaining its own tutoring pedagogy. Furthermore, Robinson notes that a challenge for any writing center is to move away from the demands of the instructor and help students move beyond surface concerns to help them

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understand their own relationship to their work (2009). This perspective points towards general writing center philosophy, understood through a bifurcation of writing instruction that includes two orders. On one hand, higher order concerns (HOCs) are defined as “the feature piece of writing that exist beyond the sentence level; they include clarity of thesis or focus, adequate development of information and, effective structure or organization and appropriate voice and tone” (McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001, p. 21). On the other hand, lower order concerns (LOCs) defined as “features within a sentence, at the level of individual words and punctuation; they include sentence structure and variety, punctuation, grammar and usage, and spelling” (p.21). The inclination towards focus on function (HOCs) rather than form (LOCs) in tutoring sessions is supported by the idea that a tutor’s goal is not necessarily to change the writing on the paper, but the approach of the person who wrote it (North, 1984). Working with texts on a purely syntactic and grammatical level rather than from a content based perspective promotes the idea of the writing center being a “drop-off” service, rather than a collaborative space of learning and improvement.

However, even though “writing as process” emphasizes content over form and regards content as a crucial part of the writing process, it is worth mentioning that grammar and syntax is also heavily associated with knowledge making and properly bringing about a message to the audience. Understanding grammar and syntax helps writers understand the connections between grammatical choice and audience, and more importantly, they can begin to understand what these choices say about themselves as writers and human beings (Glover & Stay, 1995). The tension between a focus on HOCs vs. as focus on LOCs has been raised in the literature with particular reference to adequately addressing the needs of ESL/EFL and ELL students, and is thus a highly relevant debate for this project based on the UPRMEWC. According to Moussu (2013), the discrepancy between both principles reveals how ESL students may possess “a set of

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learning skills and expectations that are often at odds with academic writing and writing center philosophy” (p. 2). Robinson (2009) argues that writing center staff should move away from this division of writing instruction and focus more on the intrinsic motivation of ESL tutees because it does not focus on any part of writing in particular and allows them to tackle specific language issues rather than being steered by policy and higher-order writing activities.

The history of the writing center, as well as the ideologies and philosophies that characterize it, has been increasingly studied and researched as the populations which it serves have become more diverse. From Positivistic methods of instruction to process composition theory, the writing center has slowly adapted itself to more efficiently serve the writers that look for its guidance. Furthermore, there has been much research and recent innovations in the areas of the second language acquisition and these are being considered and developed within the writing center to better educate ESL/ELL writers. The next section will present how writing center theory and research has accommodated the growing group of ESL writers that visit its centers, as well as an examination of these strategies.

Charting a Path for ESL/ELL Students in Writing Center History

A Framework for Peer Tutoring in the Writing Center. Writing Center scholarship is currently based primarily in US contexts of reference, where college and university writing centers have proliferated over the past sixty years. Establishing a conceptual framework for writing center and peer tutoring is essential towards understanding the theories and philosophies that have been used, and to understand the aforementioned, one must take note of the ever-evolving population which writing centers serve on a daily basis. Peer tutoring itself is meant to be collaborative, an idea that was born from the refusal of both well prepared and underprepared English students to visit the writing center, owed to the belief that it was “merely an extension of the work.” Gary A. Olson, editor of *Writing Centers: Theory and Administration* (1984) observes

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that today's tutoring centers can serve a diverse community of students and talk about writing in various disciplines, not solely English composition. Given this organic quality of writing centers throughout the USA, it is worth mentioning the intention of the university in preparing its students to reach "normal discourse" defined by Kenneth Bruffee (1984) as a conversation that takes place within a community of knowledgeable peers who share and accept the same code of values and assumptions and utilize the same paradigms. Higher education institutions seek to prepare students to enter an academic conversation and be able to defend themselves from within, utilizing the idea of normal discourse. By the nature of its definition, normal discourse varies depending on context, a crucial consideration when it comes to tutoring ESL/ELL students. Bruffee elaborates further on its utility, planting a general foundation for normal discourse: "[normal discourse] is pointed, explanatory, and argumentative. Its purpose is to justify belief to the satisfaction of other people within the author's community of knowledgeable peers" (1984, p. 92).

Neither writing center peer tutors nor visiting tutees are masters of normal discourse. Both parties play an essential role in constructing a collaborative tutoring session. As detailed by Bruffee for the specific context of US writing centers, tutors bring in knowledge of standard English and discourse, while the tutee brings in conversational knowledge of the topic being handled within his or her document (1984). These two roles fit together and produce an atmosphere of collaboration which harkens back to the title of "peer tutor." A peer tutor's role is to assist the student or tutee in developing understanding of his or her constructed reality (Dabkowski, 2000). Most contemporary writing centers underline the usefulness of peer tutors because of their ability to effectively communicate with tutees. Sanford (2012) identifies the advantage of peer tutors as peer consultants who downplay their own authority in order to act as a co-learner in the enterprise of writing. By changing the social context in which tutees learn,

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they become more comfortable, and as a result, more open to the learning process by entering a conversation they have control over. The idea of peer tutoring is not to enter a directive tutoring style, but to create a non-directive space where tutees can express their doubts and concerns without the anxiety of being graded and quantified based on performance. Applying the concept of scaffolding to tutoring sessions allows peer tutors to use scaffolding to help tutees achieve what they could not on their own (Nordlif, 2014). The creation of such an environment for comfortable, meaningful learning is substantiated by the UPRMEWC's Tutoring manual, "peer-tutoring offers a collegial environment where writers feel comfortable working; tutors do not judge the writer" (2016, p. 4). When they are situated with a tutor, students are more compelled to relieve themselves from the pressure of meeting standards, and begin to discuss thought, rather than nervously enter into proofreading and editing.

The institutional philosophy of organizing writing centers with the purpose of teaching students to use their own writing to become better writers provides a frame in which different pedagogical philosophies can establish themselves. North (1984) encourages writing center faculty to become participant observers in tutoring sessions with the purpose of making sense of what is being done to make subsequent sessions increasingly more effective. Each student that seeks the services of a writing center carries with him or her a set of needs or values that can be best tended to by having an arsenal of pedagogical strategies that accommodate the student and his or her writing process. The importance of the writing process and understanding it is instrumental in producing an efficient and effective tutoring session.

Tutees commonly seek tutors with the intention of internalizing the discourse of academic culture in the given institution in which they are located—a plea for the kind of situated research that is pursued in this project. Even though writing tutors are not masters of "normal discourse" themselves, they are indeed exemplars of the academic culture who have internalized the

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ideology of the institution (Robinson, 2009).

Addressing the Needs of ESL/ELL Students in the Writing Center

As mentioned previously, the need for an English Writing Center at the UPRM was motivated by number of students who enter the institution without the standardized credentials that officially qualify them as “proficient” in English. As mentioned in Chapter 1, a study published by Alicia Pousada (2000) at the turn of the century revealed that a great number of students who entered the UPR were unable to proficiently communicate in the English language. Despite the expressed goal of the public education system to produce bilingual speakers by the time they graduate from high school (Schmidt, 2014), Pousada attributes this inconsistency and, in her terms, “resistance” to English acquisition to the imposed nature of the language, provoked by the desire to resist what is forced upon them (Pousada, 2000).

UPRM students are faced with the challenge of mastering both Spanish a (predominantly) native language, and English. This emphasis on academic bilingualism could possibly provoke students to form a sense of insecurity in both languages. Moreover, students that who have been enrolling in the UPRM have demonstrated a decline in their writing abilities, identified by pre-college testing such as the College board, SAT and the Puerto Rican Achievement test (O'Neill-Carrillo, Collins, Garriga, Macchiavelli, & Cruz, 2009). Consequently, UPRMEWC tutors are faced with tending to students who identify as second language writers, and nonnative speakers (NNS). Second language writers are tasked with having to write in a language they are not wholly prepared to use, making the writing center utile tool for student and faculty alike.

A variety of language policies implemented by the Puerto Rican government over the past several decades impacted English education in the archipelago (Rodríguez-Arroyo, 2013). Despite the implementation of various language policies designed by the Puerto Rican government to improve English on the archipelago, census data from 2010 reveals that only 15%

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of Puerto Ricans report English “very well” (2013). Pousada’s research previously explained the comparatively low-levels of English proficiency with reference to national identity. In 2008 Pousada argued that this “deficiency” was due in part to the symbolic significance that Spanish has for Puerto Ricans “because it represents their ethnicity, or sense of belonging to the Hispanic world, as opposed to their official nationality as U.S. citizens” (Pousada, 2008, p. 701). These attitudes, combined with socio-economic factors and the continued creation of new language policies in the Puerto Rican public school system help contextualize the UPRM and the varying degrees of English proficiency of those who choose to enroll in the institution.

Though the idea of collaborative tutoring remains the same, it is worth mentioning that the archipelago of Puerto Rico and its geographical location provides us with a unique context. ESL students face particular challenges in the process of acquiring academic writing abilities in English. This, in turn, results in a challenge for UPRMEWC tutors, most of whom are also ESL students, in the process of tending to tutees’ needs. Understanding these particular, local and contextual dynamics is essential to informing the principles, policies and politics that guide the UPRMEWC. The proposed research seeks to pose critical look into these phenomena in order to provide insights beyond frequency of use and satisfaction assessments and make informed scholarly recommendations for UPRMEWC tutoring and tutoring training methods and practices.

Writing Center Methodologies and Their Consideration of ESL/ELL Students

Methodologies that are applied in the writing center are derived from the description of the roles attributed to each participant in the tutoring session. Non-directive (also known as Socratic) and directive tutoring function in a spectrum rather than a scale, adopting a highly contextual characteristic, rather than presenting itself in outright fashion. While these are not all the methodologies that are derived from peer tutoring at the writing center, they indeed serve as

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umbrella terms that cover those that exist. ESL/ELL tutors and tutees walk a thin line between both methodologies, revealing an urgency to not only define non-directive and directive tutoring, but to contextualize both strategies considering the tools within their immediate reach.

The UPRM serves such a population, offering English language tutoring serves to those who wish to visit the English Writing Center. Day in and day out, tutor staff is constantly challenged to assist these students with their writing, while adhering to writing center and institutional policy. Properly defining the relationship between tutor and tutee allows for sessions to be more context sensitive and ultimately more productive. While North (1984) suggests that tutors take the roles of teachers, interveners and experts, further research suggests that flexibility is important to consider when dealing with novice writers or ESL students (Clark and Healy; Corbett 2013; Powers 1993). Common methodologies in peer tutoring center around both directive and non-directive styles of tutoring, both which have displayed particular strengths and weakness when dealing with ESL students in the US.

Paul and Elder (2007) define Socratic questioning as “disciplined questioning that can be used to pursue thought in many directions and many purposes: To explore complex ideas, to get to the truth of things, to open up issues and problems, to uncover assumptions... and to follow out logical implications of thought” (p. 36). This method, commonly known as the non-directive tutoring style in writing center discourse, assists tutors in producing sessions that actively take advantage of the tutee’s capacities for creating knowledge, and the tutor’s abilities to draw out that knowledge out. Stephen North ostensibly supports the idea of non-directive tutoring, encouraging readers to move away from the “old” grammar concerned methodologies that found its purpose in correcting finished products, and rather have the tutor form part of the writing process itself to take advantage of the opportunities of actually teaching writing (North, 1984). Non-interventionist methods of tutoring afford a collaborative, peer role between both tutor and

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tutee, a methodology.

As opposed to directive styles of tutoring, non-directive strategies inspire tutees to take ownership of their text. Tutors are careful not to trespass the boundaries of their tutees' work, ensuring as little interference possible. This is symbolized by writing center policies that discourage tutors from having a pen in their hand during sessions (Corbett, 2013 p. 85). Consequently, this tutoring method is commonly used in many secondary and post-secondary English writing centers because of its effective ability to pool. Furthermore, it downplays the hierarchical relationship; as Shamoon and Burns (1995) note, "in order for a student to improve in their writing, they must attribute their success to their own efforts and abilities (Clark, 1998)" rather than rely on the tutor for complete guidance (p. 135). If a tutor guides a student throughout tutoring, without encouraging interaction and collaboration from the tutee, they are amputating the peer component from their title of peer tutors, leaving the tutee (rather than the tutor) limp and seeking assistance for compositional mobility in murky academic waters.

Judith K. Powers's (1993) research in the University of Wyoming noted that the collaborative tutoring strategies she and the university's writing center staff usually employed, much to their surprise, had little effectiveness: "more typically, though, we intended to lead writers to discover good solutions that were theirs, or the tutor's. Unfortunately, this process...was often ineffective for our second-language writers, especially those confronting college-level writing in English for the first time" (p. 369). If it is lack of experience of writing academic English which characterizes ESL students, Powers notes, then it is what leads non-directive tutoring strategies to fail.

Powers continues to elaborate how even a cultural distance between tutor and tutee can contribute to the failure of collaborative strategies: "Collaborative techniques depend so heavily on shared basic assumptions or patterns, conferences that attempt merely to take techniques we

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use with native-speaking writers and apply them to ESL writers may fail to assist the writers we intend to help” (p. 370). It is important to consider that ESL tutees may enter the tutor session with a separate set of writing processes that may conflict with the training tutors had received formally. A remedy to this would go against general writing center orthodoxy: directive tutoring. Directive tutoring, modestly defined, is the adoption of a mentor like role of a tutor towards a tutee (Corbett, 2013). Tutors, rather than draw out solutions and constantly question a tutee about the work under consideration to create new knowledge, take to suggesting and correcting. University writing center policies encourage tutors to adapt to a more collaborative, unobtrusive strategy at the expense of utilizing modeling and imitation as legit pedagogical tools (Shamoon and Burns, 1995). As mentioned previously, the non-directive tutoring model does not take into consideration cultural and social distance of ESL tutees, which can possibly take its toll in the overall effectiveness of the tutoring style. Furthermore, Shamoon and Burns (1995) argue that maintaining a purely non-directive stance in tutoring can isolate students at different stages of their education and their responsiveness to different types of information. Simply put, “one tutoring approach does not fit all” (pp. 230).

Directive intervention “might be more effective – as well as easily defensible” according to Clark and Healy (pp. 249). While not commonly used, it has been evidenced to be more inclusive in producing more productive tutoring sessions. Clark and Healy endorse the importance of being flexible when it comes to tutoring strategies because it inadvertently takes a multitude of cultural and social variable into consideration. Maintaining a pure non-directive approach to tutoring “can be counterproductive to student learning because it precludes other instructional possibilities” (pp. 251). The context at the UPRM shows that most of our students are indeed ESL students that, before entering the institution, have had little or no experience dealing with English on an academic level. Shamoon and Burns agree with Clark and Healy,

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asserting that when writing instruction is “transmitted in ways that are intrusive, directive, and product-oriented” there exist a strong possibility that tutees will be receptive and learn practices that had “remained unspoken or opaque” (pp. 139).

Carving a Space for ESL/ELL Writers in Writing Center History and Research

Tutoring ESL/ELL writers carries with it its own dynamic. Tutoring becomes a much more comprehensive and eventful process. Babcock and Thonus (2012) present a list of how interactions between ESL and monolingual speakers differ when it comes to writing instruction, notably “linguistic proficiencies and intuitions about language, learning experiences and classroom expectations ...[and] writing processes” (p. 97). Williams (2004) suggests similar issues and advises tutor staff on cross-cultural differences, typical ESL error profiles, approaches for assisting ESL readers and how “contrastive rhetoric affects students’ approaches to text” (p. 166).

First, it is important to discover why ESL students visit the writing center. On the surface level, it may be to reinforce their English writing and speaking skills, but the evidence indicates the urgency of the situation. Williams (2002) contends that “the extra time and attention that second language writers need to complete assignments are often not available in class or from their teachers, and that writing centers by nature, focused on the individual” (p. 73). ESL students visit the writing in hopes of avoiding the more critical and hostile teacher, for a more friendly, collaborative tutor and tutoring session. Furthermore, Williams (2002) introduces Tassoni and Harris’s (1998) argument that the writing center may very well be the site of primary learning for second language writers. Harris and Silva (1993) agree with this idea, expressing that writing classrooms are simply not enough for ESL writers to become proficient writers. The complex process of not only writing a new language, but also learning a new language must be nurtured closely and exhaustively; a process that can be done satisfactorily in

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the kind of one-to-one format contemporary writing centers afford.

In light of this argument, ESL writers have a tendency to hierarchize their relationship with peer-tutors, seeing them as authority figures and knowledge holders rather than fellow students and collaborators (Babcock and Thonus, 2012). Furthermore, tutors themselves are exposed to believing their roles, rather than that of collaborators, as that of grammar instructors, usually without consent of the tutee. To combat these common pitfalls in the tutoring process, Thonus (2004) advises that tutor preparation “include specific instruction on asking questions, prompting writer reflection, and ensuring that the writer remain in charge of their revision process” (p. 228). However, this suggestion caters more towards the dynamic between tutors and native speakers of English rather than the former and non-native speakers. Subsequently, Thonus (2004) mentions tensions that tutors face when attending ESL students and their writing come from strategies that are derived from tutoring native speakers; first, when tutoring native speakers, it is implied that they carry an already implicit knowledge of writing that simply need be drawn out, and second, the tendency to be indirect when pointing out mistakes rather than offering the appropriate amount of nurturing.

Thaiss and Kurylo’s (1981) article “Working with the ESL Student: Learning Patience, Making Progress” describes a string of tutoring sessions with students described as second language learners of English. Research reveals various pressures which ESL students go through in relation to meeting institutional and classroom standards and how Basic English courses can prove to be the gatekeeper to academic goals. Throughout various sessions, the tutor and tutee conversation would involve sentence level (in this case: idioms, grammar, sentence clarification) to overall structure. Thaiss and Kurylo use the example of Margarita, an ESL student at their institution who had taken a Basic English course, who is quoted saying, “I can’t do anything I want if I can’t write English” (p. 41). This is a clear expression of the importance of learning

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English for social mobility. In light of this, Robinson (2009) outlines the need for writing center staff to take extrinsic and intrinsic motivation into account when tutoring ESL writers. In the aforementioned example, Margarita goes through a string of sessions, which she ultimately cuts short; her desire to turn in a decent paper to her professor curtailed her desire to continue improving her skills as a writer at the writing center. Through this example, we can observe how extrinsic and intrinsic motivations are at odds with each other when English language learning students are placed in an institution that requires them to succeed for academic and professional advancement.

The increased number of diverse, bilingual students in college classrooms in the US has led the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) to recommend US writing teachers to see themselves as teachers of second language writing. In the very same way, writing center tutors should see themselves as second language tutors as well (Severino & Deifell, 2011). The necessity of employing tutors that are capable of providing second language writing and speaking instruction in the writing center has consolidated in recent years due to the increased accessibility of higher education, among other reasons. Severino and Deifell argue the writing center's environment and Socratic, collaborative form of instruction, "provides opportunities for negotiation of meaning, opportunities for comprehensible input...and opportunities for learners to practice 'push' output or production in both speaking and writing" (p. 26). However, it is important to mention that these advantages are framed by, according to Lucie Moussu (2013), two educational frameworks commonly utilized for teaching writing: a "focus on form before content" (p. 56) which lead ESL students to believe that the proper mastery of a language is defined by the mastery of its grammar. In contrast, the other educational framework coincided with common philosophical frameworks informing the practices and methods of many writing centers: "to look at texts globally and to verify that

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students understand the broader components of their assignments before repairing grammatical errors” (p. 58) which, consequently, leads to ESL/ELL students’ expectations and writing center philosophies to be constantly at odds with each other, bringing to attention the cultural gap between ESL programs and writing centers (Moussu, 2013; North, 1984).

The relationship between ESL students and WCs has been as productive as it has been complicated. Popularized by Stephen North’s “Idea of a Writing Center” (1984), the underlying philosophy of writing centers across the US is to “produce better writers, not better writing” (p. 34). Writing center scholars commonly agree that tutors should focus on content rather than form, especially as a means of emphasizing the ownership of the writer and his or her paper, as well as to maximize learning outcomes. However, Judith Powers’ (1993) research on ESL writers and her institution’s WC provides evidence that challenges this view. Powers’ research concludes that ESL writers do not benefit from traditional collaborative Socratic tutoring strategies. This research comes during a time in her institution, the University of Wyoming, did not have educational strategies in place to teach international ESL students how to write Academic English prose, mostly due in part to the sudden boom of ESL students due to Writing Across the Curriculum and Open Admissions programs. Thus, the mass spike in ESL students would leave her writing center busy and desperate to implement new strategies for tutoring students who had little to no experience writing academically in English. Traditional collaborative tutoring strategies would be used (Socratic questioning, primarily) but would ultimately fail due to ESL writers not sharing the same rhetorical, cultural and educational context as typical native speaking writers do, provoking faculty to take a second look at the philosophy of guiding rather than telling, and the policy of teaching editing skills rather than editing for students. In light of this situated research involving ESL writers, social aspects of peer tutoring become troubling for ESL writers who find themselves on the outside of normal

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discourse communities¹² (Bruffee, 1984) and could, unwillingly and consequently, remove the label of “peer” from the nowadays widely accepted “peer tutor” figure. Notwithstanding the above, Powers offers a preemptive and lasting solution to the conflict between ESL students, tutors and writing centers: “we will increase the effectiveness of ESL conferencing only when we understand, accept, and respond to the differences between the needs of ESL and native speaking writers. Attempts to reform or reshape participants in the conference are unlikely to prove ineffectual; we must reexamine and revise the method itself” (p. 46).

The dynamic between ESL tutees and ESL tutors, beyond methodological strategies, is susceptible to implicit role setting; tutors can exercise dominance in forms that are not constructive nor collaborative towards philosophical and methodological policies. Bell and Elledge (2008) expand upon the concept of dominance and the relationship between peer-tutor and tutee, acknowledging the perception of tutees towards tutors as “authority figures” (p. 18) due to preconceived, cultural notions of tutors and teachers. Furthermore, the contradictory position of peer tutors in the WC complicates this relationship even further; “peer versus tutor, supporter of the student versus representative of the university, advocate of the writing process versus expert on the written product” (Cogie as cited in Bell and Elledge, 2008, p. 19) are all titles that can indirectly or directly influence the outcome of tutoring sessions with non-native speakers of English. Thonus (1999) describes peer tutors as institutional representatives who, when entering institutional discourse¹³, find themselves on an unequal playing field; “tak[ing] the role of the questioner, controlling both topic and interaction” (p. 226).

¹² Kevin Bruffee uses Richard Rorty’s definition of normal discourse, described as “a set of conventions about what counts as a relevant contribution, what counts as a question, what counts as having a good argument for the answer or a good criticism of it” (p. 92). In the context of the field of English Composition, he describes it as the wedding between “facts and the relevancies: discourse on the established contexts of knowledge in a field that makes effective reference to facts and ideas defined within those contexts” (p. 93).

¹³ Sarangi and Roberts (1999) define institutional discourse as “rational and legitimate accounting practices which are authoritatively backed up by a set of rules and regulations governing and institution” (p. 15)

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As mentioned previously, tutors are usually directed to provide assistance with content concerns before dealing with sentence level mistakes (grammar, spelling, etc.). However, herein lies the issue that fuels the conflict between WC philosophy, tutor methodology, and tutee expectations. The product usually leads to an unwarranted amount of tutor dominance in the session, which, according to Thonus (2004), “reside ... in speech situations that confer status and authority on institutional representatives... [a]s lower status discourse participants, both [native speaker] and [nonnative speaker] tutees are invariably less dominant than their tutors and more likely than not to accept their evaluations and suggestions” (p 229). Characteristics of this interactional dominance by tutors include “longer turn length, less mitigation, or softening of face-threatening acts, less use of negotiation in favor of greater use of directives, and a general ‘take-charge’ approach to the tutorial in which tutors direct the course of the session and make the major decisions” (p. 230). Negotiating power while remaining faithful to Socratic methodologies has caused frustration in tutors (Moussu, 2013; Thonus, 2004; Bell & Elledge, 2008; Powers 1993) because they claim to be moving away from tutor training principles, going as far as to deem sessions as failures, or unproductive. In light of this, William and Severino (2004) and Powers (1993) suggest that tutors become cultural informants “by analyzing academic assignments from an outside perspective...and learning to ask questions in conferences that will allow ESL writers to understand more about idea generation and the presentation of evidence” (Powers, 1993, p. 46).

Moreover, Moussu (2013) advises WCs to hire “trained ESL/Multilingual/multicultural tutors, as well as skilled tutors of various ages and educational, linguistic, racial, socioeconomic, religious, and sexual backgrounds to thoroughly represent the diversity of their clients.” Fascinatingly, a study conducted by Shanti Bruce (2016) on the University of Puerto Rico-Humacao’s writing center, revealed Puerto Rico’s complex, sometimes conflictive, political

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relationship with the English language and how it impacts on faculty management of tutoring ESL students in a predominantly Spanish speaking context. Bruce notes that the UPRH writing center is a place for tutors to challenge the writers they serve to broaden their perspectives towards English language writing as well as being a safe, private, respectful, multicultural space. As for the EWCUPRM, Maria Quintero (2008) describes the challenges of meeting tutee needs in a primarily Spanish-speaking environment; “[t]he island’s socio-political status has deeply instilled a series of biased presuppositions towards the English language and its ‘colonizing role.’ As a result, the Writing Center has to exist in a country where English is not the subject of choice” (p. 14-15). Moving forward, it is essential that writing center research begin to diversify as much as its visitors have in the past decade. This thesis will contribute to filling a gap in writing center literature based on the unique context and language identity of writers that visit the UPRMEWC, hopefully invigorating and motivating writing center researchers to view Puerto Rico and its wealth of educative institutions as a place for developing innovative insight and knowledge in the ESL writing center scholarship.

Findings

In the review of the literature that looks at writing centers over the last 100 years there are a number of important issues that come to light. The first is the role of the WC: It always has had as its main goal to help students improve writing, but the ways to go about it have differed. Early centers focused on the direct method and focused on improving grammar with emphasis on correction and revision. WCs moved from secondary schools to universities in the 30s and were seen as primarily remedial, helping students who were termed deficient. WCs were called clinics and they would diagnose and prescribe. Calls to humanize the writing clinic sometimes put WCs at odds with their institutions, a conflict that has continued in many WCs situations where WCs feel they must defend their position in the university as well as their tutors and tutees (Kelly,

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1980; Moore, 1950).

With the move away from positivistic world views and methodology, and the shift to poststructuralist and social views on writing, the “writing as process” movement came into being about the same time as the open enrollment in colleges, forcing colleges to find new ways to help students become better academic writers. Centers were still looking at students as deficient but began using writing as process theory and pedagogy to work individually with students. North (1984) and McAndrew and Reigstad (1984) come out of that period and it is this philosophy that still permeates WC philosophy today. The role of the WC stays the same but the methodology is non-directive instead of directive.

A host of methodologies are described in the literature that show the importance of being non-directive and at the same time training tutors to be supportive and work in collaboration with tutees, for example by using the Socratic questioning method. Of most importance here is the idea that there is respect for the student’s ideas and therefore the tutor does not write on the student’s paper because the tutee must take ownership of his/her work. The explanation of HOCs and LOCs which also comes directly out of the process movement and is a justification for not correcting student grammar on a paper brought to the WC. Process movement emphasized ideas over structure, believing that magically student writers would find form after working on meaning.

Given that these philosophies and methodologies all come from the USA and are based on native English speaker writers, it is imperative to know how they might need to be calibrated, revised, reconsidered and challenged by situated research in contexts in which both tutors and tutees are non-native speakers of English and where English is not the dominant language. Some of the research on ESL students in WCs shows that the indirect method does not work and that ESL writers do not have the necessary rhetorical knowledge to be successful in this type of

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tutoring situation (Thonus. 2004; Moussu, 2013). It is also important to note that although there has been an increased consideration of ESL writers in recent writing center scholarship, there is no mention of bilingual writing centers and what their role if any, might be in the field. In fact, there is still little research that shows how ESL writers improve in situations where English is not the native language of the country such as Puerto Rico, where students go home every day to hear Spanish. In the US and other English speaking countries ESL learners can rely on the environment as well as their schooling. It is with this historical knowledge of writing centers that we turn to the idea and development of the UPRMWC.

Chapter 3: Critical Discourse Analysis of UPRMEWC

In this chapter I employ critical discourse analysis (CDA) as defined by Norman Fairclough¹⁴ (1992) and Teun A. van Dijk¹⁵ (1993) to analyze the explicit and implicit ideologies and principles that have guided the tutoring of students at the UPRM English Writing Center (EWC). To observe the relations of power within the EWC and its place in the UPRM, the objects of analysis include training manuals, tutor evaluation forms, EWC policies/mission (past and present), record of visit forms, in-house memos, proposals, annual reports among other documents. Since the UPRMEWC has not been systematically historicized in previous research, this analysis attempts to do so through looking at these documents with the purpose of enriching our understanding of the center's origins, purpose and its transformation over time. This analytical exercise will reveal the structures that were and are in place that have influenced its policies, methodologies and administrative decisions over the past twelve years. Furthermore, the aforementioned documents were critically read and analyzed to contextualize the socio-historical conditions that influenced the way in which the UPRMEWC has interacted with the populations it has served and the staff that has operated it in the period under consideration. In light of the discussion presented in Chapter 2, I will then proceed to compare the ideologies and practices that have shaped writing centers in the US, which will shed light on how balances of power have been negotiated between the UPRMEWC and the ESL/ELL populations it serves on a daily basis.

¹⁴ Norman Fairclough (1992) defines CDA as “discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often the opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor secure power and hegemony” (p. 135)

¹⁵ Van Dijk (1993) defines CDA “as a study of the relations between discourse, power, dominance, social inequality and the position of the discourse analyst in such social relationships” (p. 250). CD Analysts critically examine dominance and the way text, talk and verbal interaction or communicative events play a role in this concept.

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CDA is a promising method for analyzing UPRMEWC guiding principles and practices because it provides insight into the different and competing discourses informing day to day practices at the UPRMEWC and shed light on its particularities vis-à-vis writing centers in the United States. Examining the various relationships between the UPRMEWC, its tutors, and the institution it is situated in using CDA is contributory towards understanding how these relationships have affected the development of the center to present day. Since its establishment more than 10 years ago, the UPRMEWC has been led by various groups that have affected its policy and operations, and subsequently, the services it provides to the UPRM community.

The EWCUPRM provides English tutoring to UPRM students (and to a lesser degree, to teaching staff and community members) with a staff of graduate and undergraduate students from a diversity of fields and disciplines who are bilingual (English/Spanish) and include both so-called “native” and “non-native” speakers of English. Herein lies an interesting difference from the dominant models in US writing centers: non-native speakers of English tutoring non-native speakers of English. On the surface, this seems to be the answer to the following questions that have been discussed, answered and discussed again by WCs since their creation: Who are our tutors? Who are our tutees? Rafoth (2016) argues that the answer to these questions must go far enough to understand what unseen influences are present, as well as draw out the human potential which is all precluded in agency of tutors/tutee and the social contexts in which they exist. Thus, the critical analysis of texts and policies that have influenced the implicit and explicit ideologies of the UPRMEWC will assist in the examination of tutor training content and methods, cultural, affective and learning of tutees as well as tutee and tutoring outcomes.

Analysis of Historical Documents Pertaining to the UPRMEWC

The UPRMEWC as a Pilot Project. A dossier written by Professor Judith Casey on September 5, 2005 for Professor Beth Virtanen, both of whom were professors of English in the

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UPRM and eventually became founders/co-directors of the EWC, reveals the inspiration behind the creation of the writing center in the UPRM in Fall 2003 (J. Casey, personal communication, September 5, 2005). Casey envisioned the Center as a means to address the lack of a formal tutoring service at the Department of English at the time. Furthermore, a presentation prepared by both Dr. Virtanen and Dr. Casey (personal communication, September 15, 2005) further justifies the need for a writing center in the UPRM by presenting statistical data based on the English language proficiency of students who entered the UPRM in 2003; the university required a minimum of 12 credits in English while 50 percent of first year students who enrolled in the UPRM at the time were placed in the “basic” sequence of English course which are designed for students who scored 470-579 on the ESLAT (English as a second language achievement test) prior to entering the UPRM.

According to the first annual report submitted by Virtanen sent to director of the Department of English and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences on May 9, 2005, the writing center was piloted in the spring semester of the 2004-2005 academic year, and was located in a small office with an equally small staff. The Coordinator described the space designated to the EWC, Chardón 010, as a “very small office space on the ground floor that formerly housed a single-faculty office” (p. 2), which, she notes, hindered smooth operations. The report reveals that the UPRMEWC would be moved the following academic semester to Chardón 050, a larger space.

Howard & Schendel (2009) emphasize the importance of writing centers providing a comfortable space for writers and collaborative environments, specifically noting that it should be “conducive to the act of learning”(p. 2) by providing adequate space, materials and furnishing that it feels like an extension of home. It seems that Virtanen was aware of this, evidenced by her original proposal for the writing center (2004) which called for a space large enough to contain

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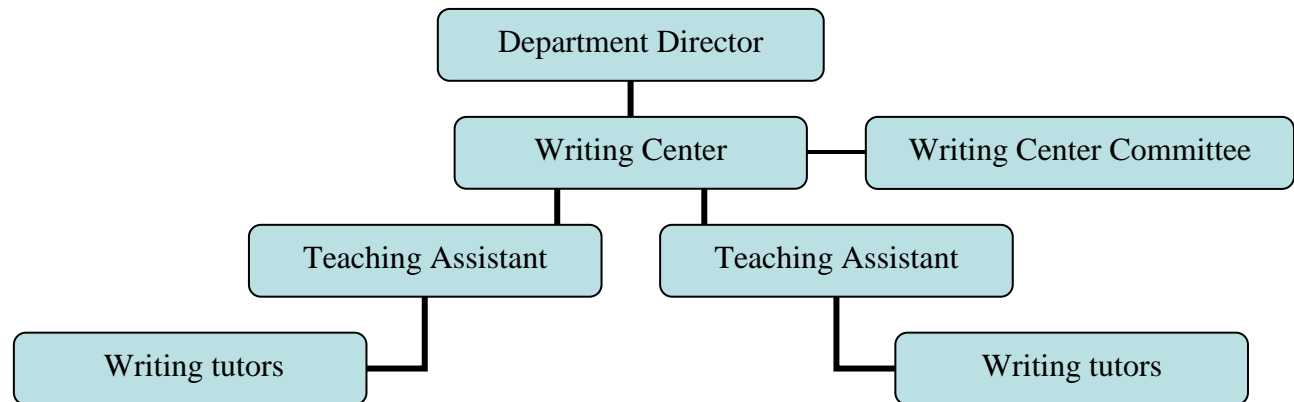
furnishing and up to date resources to supplement day to day tutoring activities, situated in the Chardon building for the sake of being in close proximity to the English Department and its faculty, as well as other departments (p. 6).

Her desire to make sure the center was well equipped and up-to-date with the latest software (at the time Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat Reader and Flash player) as well as access to any and all reference materials provided by the UPRM was indicative of an understanding of what it needed to supplement English writing, learning and support. However, the pilot writing center was far from equipped with the latest materials, as evidenced in the first annual report. This report further indicates that through the efforts of Dr. Virtanen and her staff, the Dean of Arts and Sciences approved \$2,000 for furnishing, as well as computer equipment. Reference and other office materials were donated by the staff and faculty, which included various publications on tutor training and writing reference, ESL composition texts and others. This collaborative effort by the English Department to make the UPRMEWC a place for learning was indicative of the apprehensive attitude the institution took towards its initial development. The organizational structure of the pilot project for the UPRMWEC tied the Center to the English Department at UPRM. Figure 1 below depicts the first organizational structure proposed

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by Dr. Virtanen in June, 2004.

Figure 1: Proposed English Department Writing Center Personnel Structure



This plan would eventually be implemented during the subsequent academic year of the center, and would be overseen by a faculty advisory committee comprised of the administrator of the EWC, and associate administrator, and a graduate student member enrolled in the Master of Arts in English Education (MAEE) at UPRM. Tutoring activities would be overseen by two MAEE teaching assistants who were responsible for “provid[ing] advice and counsel for students as well as for tutors” (p. 3, Virtanen, 2005). Teaching assistant training would take place each Tuesday supplemented by a syllabus developed by the Writing Center Administrator. The syllabus would be designed with several explicit learning objectives in mind which include tutors understanding composition as a process of discovery, investigation and communication, as well as the unique problems created ESL writers when using their own native non-English dialect or language and the need to learn specific tutoring strategies to meet the needs of these writers. The Tutor and Teaching Assistant Training Master syllabus was divided into a ten-week course with special emphasis on ESL students and tutoring done by ESL Students (any remaining weeks would be for topic specific meetings that addressed worries, doubts and trouble spots for tutors).

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The tutoring principles that were to be taught via this syllabus were described as follows:

Tutoring must be seen as a kind of instructional practice that works in conjunction with what occurs in the classroom. It may be said to be an intervention into the individual writing process of a student in order to assist them in maximizing their effectiveness in writing. It involves helping students define what good writing is to identify and create the components necessary in the various genres to create a document that conforms to good standards of writing.

In this early pilot stage, the UPRMEWC's syllabus and principles were geared towards complementing the Basic English courses. According to the annual report for 2004-2005, the EWC served students from two sections of INGL 3201 English Composition and Reading I and one section of INGL 3202 English Composition and Reading II, which were "chosen because their courses were taught by members of the Writing Center Pilot Advisory Committee... [and] were determined to have the pedagogical orientation amenable to the use of writing tutors in support of student learning" (p. 4). Training sessions would be attended by the Faculty Advisory Committee which "actively participated in the training of the teaching assistants and the tutors to ensure their understanding of tutoring best practices as demonstrated in the literature" (p. 3).

The tutor staff included two teaching assistants, five undergraduate students and one work-study student, each contracted to work 10 hours per week. Tutor staff would meet on Thursdays for training. Virtanen notes the peculiar case of the EWC, and what seems to justify the need for such consistent training: "[g]iven the fact that very few resources exist that explore the implications of the best practice guidelines for the use of L2 ESL tutors who are undergraduates, the Writing Center staff realized both the hardship and the opportunity the lack of published literature on this topic afforded" (p. 3). This would cause training to be reflexive

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due to the lack of a defined theory or practice to supplement this unique language identity. The original writing center coordinator would expect this lack of research be conducive to research and publication of ESL/bilingual tutoring of ESL students.

Analysis of the UPRMEWC as a Pilot Project. The various relationships at play, as indicated by the annual report, demonstrate a clear relationship between the EWC and the English Department. While resources were limited, the relationship it had with the Arts and Sciences administration of the UPRM was clear - Dr. Virtanen would communicate directly with the Dean of Arts of Sciences for reasons that concerned physical space and funding. More funding was justified by the EWC's success. At the time of its pilot semester, it would only serve students enrolled in two sections of INGL 3201, and one section of INGL 3202 because they were taught by members of the Writing Center Pilot Advisory Committee and "were determined to have the pedagogical orientation amenable to the use of writing tutors in support of student learning" (p. 4). Consequently, the writing center pilot semester would prove to be successful thus allowing Dr. Virtanen to hire more tutors after asking the Dean of Arts and Sciences for more space and funding for the following Academic 2005-2006 semester. The interim report dated November 14, 2007 would detail changes made in light of the previous year's results. Operation hours would be reduced to 9:00 am to 4:00 pm from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, a move that would allow the hiring of more tutors. Also, the outreach activities were being made in the form of classroom visits at the beginning of the semester, as well as informational pamphlets distributed to graduate teaching assistants and professors of the English department.

This period can be characterized as a grassroots effort to rear the UPRMEWC and legitimize it to the UPRM administration. It saw the introduction of the UPRMEWC and its goals, as well as a recognition of the unique dynamic of ESL tutors of English instructing ESL writers. The pilot period of UPRMEWC would serve to tell what was working, what wasn't and

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what should be changed for future operations. The explicit and implicit ideologies revealed by the critical discourse analysis indicate that tutoring strategies were indeed influenced by what was being done in WCs in the US. Policy at that time indicated that tutors had to be trained in ways that emphasized Socratic, collaborative learning to move away from the editing and fix-it up shop stigma that WCs in the US were so careful in avoiding. Implicitly, the pilot semester of the UPRMEWC was regulated to only serve basic courses of English and was indicative of a need to understand the population tutors were being asked to serve. What came from these tutoring sessions led to suggestions that would influence future operations and policy. Since this project proved to be successful during its pilot year, the need for more space and more resources became pertinent for its continued operation. The Title V Grant would provide the infrastructure necessary for the UPRMEWC to expand its tutoring services to a wider population of students at the UPRM.

The Title V Grant: CIVIS Phase. The UPRMEWC underwent a significant transformation in the 2008-2009 academic year due to its incorporation in a campus wide project funded by the US Department of Education Title V Grant Developing Hispanic Serving Institutions program (Title V grant). As described in the US Department of Education website its purpose is to:

Expand education opportunities for, and improve the academic attainment of Hispanic students; and expand and enhance the academic offerings, program quality, and institutional stability of colleges and universities that are education the majority of Hispanic college students and helping large numbers of Hispanic students and other low-income individuals complete post-secondary education (www.ed.gov/hsi)

This grant led to the creation of the Center for Resources in General Education (CIVIS, for its Spanish acronym) program. This center was tasked with researching, assessing and improving

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various academic areas, and providing resources to help supplement, coordinate and expand student and faculty achievement. In light of this, CIVIS would help “develop tools, services and process that lead to a more integrated perspective of General Education with communication skills, interdisciplinary work...to a create a General Education program which emphasizes the necessary links between areas instead of the competition of “hard” vs. “soft skills” (p. 4, Center for Resources in General Education, 2013).

A comprehensive development plan (CDP) was implemented in concert with CIVIS to “identify and analyze the strengths, weaknesses and significant problems of the academic programs” (p. 5). This revealed weakness in student’s verbal and written Spanish and English abilities, a notion supported by various studies and agencies that noted these deficiencies. The proposal for institutionalization supported this claim by noting the subpar writing skills of K-12 teachers, as well as the 1995-2005 results of the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) and PR Achievement Exams, which demonstrated a lack to steady proficiency of language skills. Under those circumstances, the first Key UPRM Title V Goal would be “to improve the UPRM’s student’s communication skills by expanding the English and Spanish Writing Centers.” This denotes a clear awareness of the importance of communication skills, an alignment with UPRM student learning outcomes and a desire to create better prepared individuals for future employment.

The Title V Grant dramatically altered the composition, mission and institutional organization of the UPRMEWC. The 2008-2009 academic year would see the EWC absorbed into the Center for Resources in General Education (CIVIS) program, implemented to provide “students and professors a new integrated perspective (focused on General and STEM skills) of the curriculum, and by enabling student academic success through various learning opportunities”, (O’Neill-Carillo, Collins, Garriga, Macchiavelli, Cruz, 2009, p. 1). Furthermore,

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CIVIS would combine both the English and the already existing Spanish writing centers to form the Bilingual Language Resource Center to supplement the unique, common multilingual cultures that existed in the UPRM. As noted in its proposed mission statement, CIVIS would diversify its services by offering tutorial services to faculty, graduate students, undergraduate students, and those at the pre-college level in both languages (Virtanen & Collins, p. 2). This was a much more developed plan in comparison to the original mission statement which was limited to serving undergraduate students, at times in conjunction with faculty, who were taking major and service courses offered by the English Department (Virtanen, 2004). In contrast, the CIVIS Language Resource Center imagined its operations working independently and in collaboration with classes pertaining to English and beyond, willing to collaborate with the UPRM's Writing in the Disciplines Program, as well as becoming a "regional center for language support and instruction in both English and Spanish" while "striving to be a cutting edge institution whose research and support programs in a multilingual education setting will contribute to the development of language-learning theory and practice" (personal communication, Virtanen & Collins, 2005, p. 2). Clearly, this was an indication of the expectations and investment CIVIS was to deposit into the formerly independent Spanish and English Writing Centers, as reflected by a five-year plan that was meant to integrate the BWC into the fabric of the community by becoming increasingly more present for the student community and faculty. As planned, each year the BWC would increase its hours of operations, create digital spaces, train tutors, offer workshops, design and implement a 1-credit writing course all while seeking and obtaining accreditation.

As synthesized in Figure 2, the originally proposed organizational structure demonstrated a holistic effort to transform the Language Resource Center into a hub for language instruction and research. The Administrator position would serve as the leader of the center, charged with

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securing federal and private funding, representing regional and local interests and hiring staff, among other tasks. Notable tasks assigned to the associate administrator included leading efforts to implement short writing courses as well collaborating with departments to contextualize tutoring services under their jurisdiction. Among other stand-out services that were proposed include an Online Writing Lab (OWL) for answering of correctness and style via electronic email and a BWC webpage.

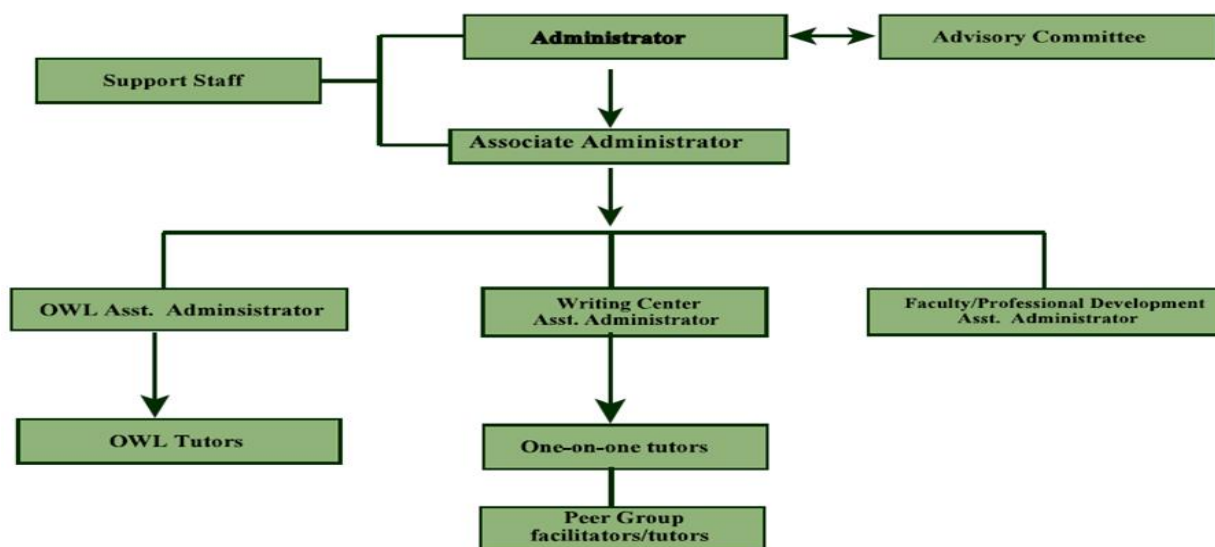


Figure 2: Administrative Personnel Structure (as in Proposal for Language Resource Center)

By the year 2012, the UPRMEWC had finally found itself a space that was not on the outskirts of the UPRM, but localized in a building that housed various administrative offices, including the UPRM Registrar's office. The space was much larger than any previous space, and housed all the resources and materials needed to carry out day to day activities without hindrances or discomfort. The space would be divided into 5 rooms; an office for the CIVIS secretary and a waiting room where students would be registered for tutoring which would lead to 2 spacious rooms, divided by a wall and door where tutoring sessions were carried out, and finally a private room for carrying appointments made by graduate students. The space utilized for tutoring included various round tables, each equipped with a laptop, writing utensils, note

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paper and record of visit and tutor evaluation forms. Various bookshelves containing books on English composition and tutoring guides, as well as mini-lessons created by the tutors themselves and a desktop computer lined the shelves. Laptops provided easy access to the internet, electronic documents and presentations used for resolving doubts and questions during tutoring (which not only came from the tutee, but the tutor as well). Interestingly, a clear albeit informal boundary (which composed of a door and a wall) separated the Spanish and English writing center tutors.

This set up provided an appropriate amount of space for tutoring sessions to be held, as well as sufficient access to information and supplementary material. The desktop computer served as a central hub for all of the files pertaining to the UPRMEWC, including flyers and promotional material for community outreach and in house training workshops. There were spacious, round tables with enough space for tutees in their work, and for tutors to add in any material they might feel was pertinent to the sessions, aside from holding laptops and writing materials. All in all, materials were rapidly accessible and were designed in way that was not overwhelming to the tutee, but rather efficient, and straightforward.

The shared space of the Spanish and English Writing Center created an interesting dynamic between staff from both centers. Even though the main tutoring rooms were not regulated to a specific language, it would eventually end up that way, serving to isolate both English and Spanish tutors. Furthermore, there were few to no collaborative projects between both centers, which calls into questions the overall reason for naming this center a Bilingual Writing Center.

Analysis of the Title V Grant: CIVIS Phase. Despite the fact that this original proposal did not materialize, during the first five years of the CIVIS project both Writing Centers steadily experienced an increase in activities, services and training for students and tutors. The BWC, as a

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component of CIVIS, dissolved the direct relationship between the English Department and the EWC. Annual reports directed to the Director of the English Department and the Dean of Arts & Sciences were replaced by annual performance reports addressed to the US Department of Education Grant Program. Thus, the influx of funds, while increasing the functionality and outreach of the UPRMEWC (the particular site that concerns this project) severely limited its relationship to its foundations. In light of this, the EWC Coordinator was no longer tasked with creating annual reports, steering the position description toward responsibility for “training and supervising tutors, scheduling the appointments, collaborating the research projects associated with the Center, and designing and implementing mini-workshops on writing elements” (Tutor Training manual, 2012-13). The coordinators of CIVIS were now in charge of collecting data and writing reports that would be tabulated and summarized to follow up on the five-year plan towards institutionalization. This shift in hierarchy and organizational positioning would transform the BWC into a component of the Arts and Sciences, as opposed to its original placement as a component of the English Department. Consequently, day to day activities would be managed in a more institutionally-responsive program concerned with standard measures of accountability heavily dependent on quantitative data.

The Title V Grant would also provoke a change in location for the UPRMEWC. The UPRMEWC was moved from the Carlos Chardón building (where the English Department is based) to the Sánchez Hidalgo Building, which also hosts the Teacher Preparation Program at UPRM. Whether the move responded to the availability of spaces, to the desire to separate the UPRMEWC from the English Department or to other motives, is unknown but it is indicative of the UPRMEWC revamping its mission and objectives to more adequately fit the goal statement of the CIVIS program. The EWC and its counterpart the SWC were tasked to continually help improve the communications skill level of the UPRM student body, and were under constant

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pressure to do so. A well-lighted space, equipped with thousands of dollars of office materials which included laptops, programs, writing utensils, dry erase boards, paper and a photocopy machine served staff well, but was possibly symbolic of the need to render results in the form of increased student visits, community outreach workshops and more comprehensive tutor training. By 2013, the end of the Title V five-year plan, the BWC employed 40 student tutors who worked five days a week (Mondays through Fridays) from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The “Proposal for the Development of the Language Resource Center,” drafted in 2003, included a mission statement for a grand scale project that was in tandem with a presentation made by the Center for Resources in General Education (CIVIS) at the UPRM. The authors of this report were aware of the complex identity of the BWC, and the challenge it presented to students enrolled in the UPRM. They rightly noted that UPRM students are “faced with a unique language challenge that expects them to master two languages: Spanish, their native language, and English.” In light of this, the authors noted that “this bilingual emphasis often leads to insecurity in both languages which causes a drop in UPRM’s major programs” (O’Neill-Carrillo, Collins, Garriga, Macchiavelli & Cruz, 2009, p. 2), a statement that would follow the EWC administrator’s awareness of the language resource center “serv[ing] the complex language needs of faculty and students in the College of Arts and Sciences” (B. Virtanen, personal communication, 2003). However, this statement was not described or developed enough to fully outline the contours, complications and collaborations entailed in the development of a truly bilingual writing center.

The primary difference between the UPRMEWC’s time as a component of the English Department and CIVIS that emerges pertains to the UPRMEWC’s target population and to its justification. According to the 2009 CIVIS report, it justified and described the need of the BWC (much more empirical in fashion), in an “internal UPRM need-assessment report that

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demonstrated that many students have difficulties in creating substantive or coherent work in English or Spanish” (O’Neill-Carrillo, Collins, Garriga, Macchiavelli & Cruz, 2009, p. 2). This points towards a possibility that the continued operations of the Bilingual Writing Center under the CIVIS umbrella was motivated by a functional view of the purpose of higher education: to prepare better communicators for the companies that hire them post-graduation despite the original goal of producing bilingual writers and communicators.

The EWC, whether functioning under the English Department or CIVIS, maintained similar philosophical goals and policies. The “Proposal for a Language Resource Center”, written by Virtanen and Collins in 2005, was aware of the multilingual identity of students in the UPRM and explicitly included this fact within the proposed mission statement. Similarly, the 2012-2013 training manual was aware of this, stating “our current mission is to serve the complex language needs of our students... We believe the writing shapes thinking, and thus the ability to write proficiently is the goal of every student at RUM” (p. 1). This echoes Bruffee’s argument on thought, conversations and writing; “If thought is internalized public and social talk, then writing of all kinds is internalized social talk made public and social again. If thought is internalized conversation, then writing is internalized conversation re-externalized.” (1984, p. 641). Bruffee’s argument is relevant to understand the complex context in which students in Puerto Rico exist. Public and social talk, away from the English classroom, is usually a hybrid mix between Spanish and common instances of English. Puerto Rico’s political history lends itself to having created this complex language identity, thus students who are assigned to write and speak in English find themselves to be apprehensive to this fact for political, personal and social reasons which could, in part, evidence why the idea of bilingual writing center did not take shape. Even though 12 years of English language instruction are given to students by law before entering the UPRM, students are faced with the dilemma of writing academically in English and

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frequently encounter difficulties and frustration trying to reproduce English with the normal discourse of academic composition. Documentation of the writing center through its history is aware of this, and works towards supplementing this complex and fluctuating language identity.

In light of the complex context the UPRMEWC finds itself, tutor training manuals would be developed to supplement tutor training and day to day activities. The first manual dates back to the 2012-2014 academic year and contained the principles of tutoring similar to those used in educational institutions of the US. The EWC focused its philosophy on a Socratic, non-directive tutoring approach that would encourage the ownership of the writer over their own paper, supported by policy that prohibits tutors to write on the tutee's paper. Moreover, tutors were instructed to focus on higher order concerns before lower concerns which emphasized students to focus on compositional organization rather than sentence level mistakes. Bearing this in mind, papers translated by translation programs, popular amongst visitors due to lack of confidence in English writing skills (or deficiencies), were prohibited for tutoring; tutors were instructed to not revise these papers and to encourage the tutee to begin a brainstorming session.

However, the beginning of the 2013-2014 academic year saw the implementation of a new EWC coordinator, and with her, a more comprehensive tutoring manual. While much did not change as opposed to the previous manual, this one had a clear emphasis on tutors being 'peers' to their fellow students, a word that was seldom used previously. The new coordinator included a completely new section in the 2014-2015 tutor training manual which carefully explained what process the peer tutor was to take "[t]he process of collaborating on a same level, avoiding a position of power. This process allows the tutee to create and learn from his or her own. Peer-to-peer refers to the relation of a student to another in which each learns from the other" (p. 5, Training Manual 2014-2015). This section encourages tutors to view themselves more as collaborators rather than instructors with the intention of eliminating the worries and

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insecurities that a tutee would have as second language writers and speakers of English, and serving to “demystify the writing process by making use of the culture and discourse that students share as students. They are all in ‘the same boat’ and speak out of the same academic needs and experiences” (p. 5). As a result, tutoring would form an inclusive, welcoming space supplemented by scaffolding, nondirective tutoring strategies, and would prove to be ideal environment for ESL/ELL writers and speakers.

The Institutionalization Phase. The year 2013 marked the end of the five-year funding plan as stipulated by the Title V grant discussed above. The funding proposal approved by the US Department of Education expressed the commitment of the University of Puerto Rico to institutionalize the different components that functioned under the CIVIS umbrella, which include the Bilingual Writing Center. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a comprehensive development plan (CDP) was implemented to identify the strengths and weakness of various academic services in the university to assess what economic, structural and administrative solutions should be employed to improve these areas. Effective communication, critical examination and synthetization of knowledge, ethical standards among other UPRM learning outcomes were meant to be addressed by the BWC component of CIVIS. According to the Use and Assessments Ratings for Major Components Table, there has been a consistent increase of the use of the BWC since the Title V grant was in effect through CIVIS (individual statistics for the English Writing Center were not made available in this report). Beginning in the academic 2009-2010 year the BWC served 4,779, the following year 5,128, then 8,898, 2011-12; 8,734 and estimated results of 7,000 (statistics were ranged throughout five-year plan). A total of 34,539 student visits were registered during the years of the Title V grant, a number which helped justify its institutionalization and a very far cry from the (approximate) 500 student visits made in its pilot year in 2004. This consistent increase resulted from different outreach

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strategies and the strengthening of different relationships between the BWC and faculties of the UPRM. As the years went by, more and more English Department teachers, specifically those of the basic and intermediate course, began to deposit their confidence in the English Writing Center, and began to see it as a resource to help supplement their classrooms, evidenced by obligatory evidence under their behest. Tutoring help for technical documents like résumés, cover-letters, curriculum vitae, lab reports, personal statements and others attracted more attention towards the EWC.

Surveys conducted from 2007 to 2010 of students that attended both the EWC and SWC show “that two-thirds [of those students who completed the survey] reported that their writing skills had improved, and 30% found that they had improved skills in English after only one semester of using the EWC” (Plan for Institutionalization, p. 10). The mission the original creators meant for the EWC had come to fruition on a much more expansive scale. Students and faculty from all colleges within the UPRM were welcomed to use the BWC as resource to help improve their English and Spanish verbal and written communication abilities.

The UPRMEWC was asked to move again and during the spring semester of 2016, both The English and Spanish Writing Centers (BWC) were moved to its most central location to date – the UPRM Library. While it was not transparent physically (it is in a room that is found at back of the library), it is the biggest space that was given to the BWC as well as being the most accessible to students due to the libraries location being in the central area of the university. More space was made available, and the dividing walls between the EWC and SWC would be replaced by a large hall where tutoring services from both centers would be carried out. Moreover, an extra room would also be made available to the BWC to carry out in-house training activities as opposed to the past, where a room outside the center had to be reserved and separated ahead of time. Resources would be maintained and set up in similar manner as it was

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in Celis, one of the previous locations.

Tutoring services would continue as usual, however, the lack of a boundary between the English and Spanish writing centers would serve to place tutors face to face with sessions of the opposite center they worked for. While this was seemingly beneficial for the sake of encompassing the ideal of a Bilingual Writing Center, the amount of noise coming from tutoring sessions occurring in two different languages could possibly cause the tutees to feel confused or uncomfortable. Also, the EWC has yet to begin any collaborative projects with the SWC, which again brings into question of the center being referred to as “bilingual.”

UPRMEWC policy and ideology would remain relatively the same between the Title V Grant and Institutionalization period of the BWC. Educative resources (mini-lessons focused on various higher-order and lower-order concern areas and power point presentations) would be made available online on the UPRMEWC blog (ewcuprm.weebly.com). Furthermore, descriptive information of the UPRMEWC including its philosophy, mission and vision, as well as brief description of administrative and tutoring staff both past and present has been made available. Thus, this online, electronic presence serves to give students who wish to visit the UPRMEWC as sense of familiarity before actually visiting the center. An appointment form for graduate students can also be filled out electronically. The UPRMEWC blog serves as way of consolidating the relationship between the center and the students that visit by providing materials and resources, as well as background information of what is done at the center. Furthermore, it works in concert with this increasing trend of using digital communication and media to interact with possible clients, which in this case, would be our visiting students. Figure 3 provides a chronological summary of the history of the UPRMEWC.

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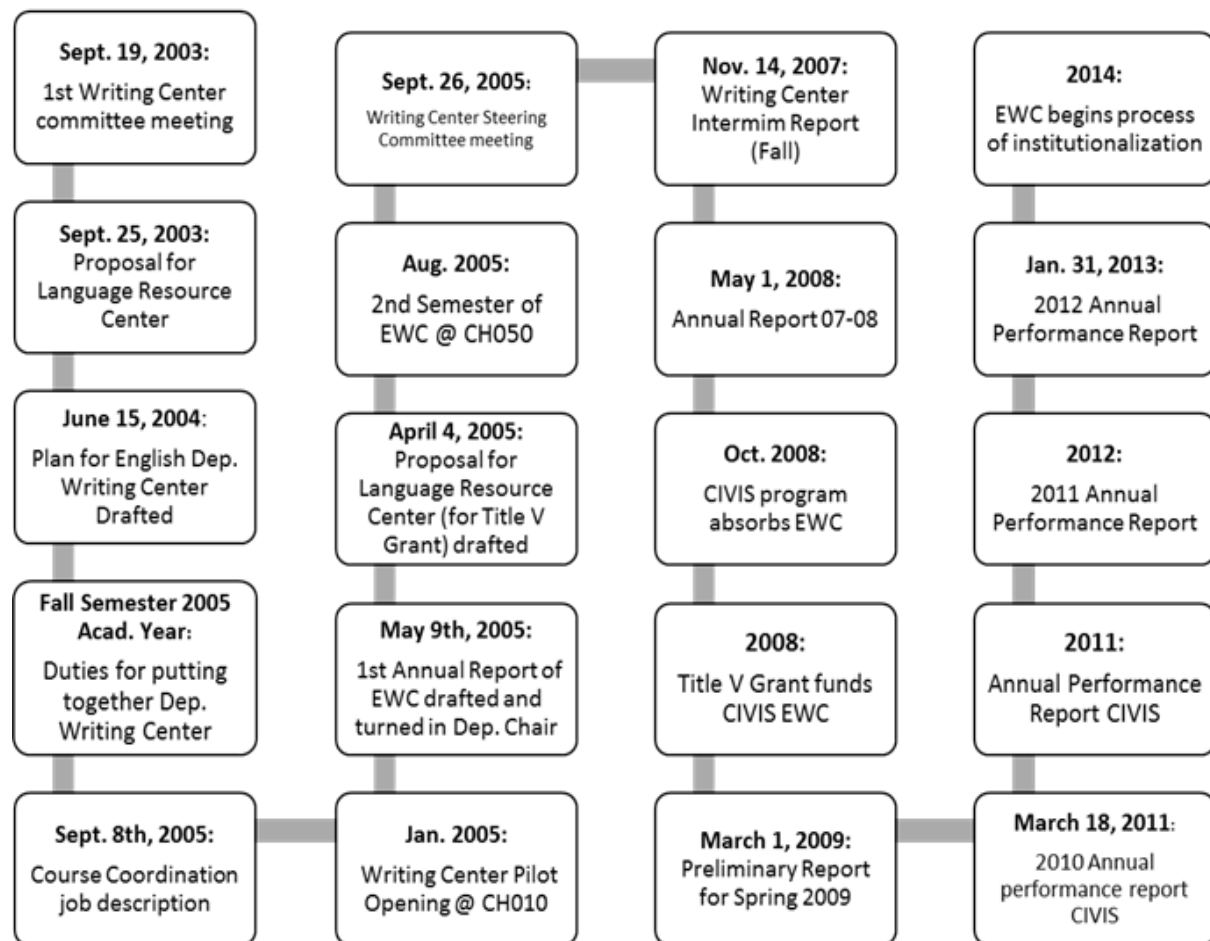


Figure 3 Timeline of the history of the UPRMEWC according to internal documents

Preliminary Conclusions Regarding Research Question #2

As can be observed, since its creation, the EWC has been managed and led in a top down format. This is essential within the context of the EWC and its relation to the UPRM, because its tutors are not professionals, rather they must train consistently to better their services, which, in its inception, was provided by administrators who were informed by an advisory committee board composed of professors from the English department. Below these positions were two graduate teaching assistants who oversaw day to day tutoring operations and were tasked with providing counsel for the 5 undergraduate tutors who were employed at the time. This would demonstrate the hierarchy within the writing center, which can be observed in Figure 1.

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While the original proposal for the EWC was extensive, the application was not as complete, perhaps due in part to limited funds and lack of confidence in a writing center staffed by in its majority ESL/ELL English users. However, despite the fact that there was a clear hierarchical structure in place during its pilot semester, the language conveyed in the annual reports denotes respect and satisfaction with tutoring instruction that was given, “sound principles for tutoring were developed in these collaborative sessions” (B.Virtanen, personal communication, 2005). Words like “collaborative”, “participated” “practices” and “resources” signify a strong sense of inclusion, fruitful productivity and healthy progression, which is extremely representative of its grassroots beginnings. Notwithstanding the above, during the spring 2005 pilot semester of the EWC, a proposal for a Language Resource Center was drafted on April, 2005 by Dr. Virtanen (then coordinator of the EWC), Dr. Collins (assistant professor of Humanities), Dr. Ortiz (professor of English) and Dr. Morales (associate professor of English) and was submitted to Dr. Moisés Orengo Avilés, then Dean of Arts and Sciences at UPRM. This language resource center, as mentioned previously in this chapter, was for the Title V grant and an attempt to justify the need of a bilingual language resource center. This document displays an institutionalized language, going as far as to provide a brief summary of a five-year plan. This proposal called for “a strong leader and advocate to represent its [The Language Resource Center] interest within it[sic], across the university and to external entities and thus needs to be headed by a single administrator, assisted by an associate administrator” (p. 4, Virtanen & Collins, 2005). While the proposed structure (see figure 2) was never put into place, it did maintain a hierarchy that has the writing center administrator holding power (albeit not to purposefully dominate) to lead tutors in this still budding project. Upon absorption into CIVIS during the Title V Grant stage, leadership transferred from the English Department Director to the CIVIS committee comprised of professor representatives from each college (Arts and

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Sciences, Engineering, Business Administration and Agricultural Sciences. A professor of Humanities took charge of the day to day activities and policies of the EWC (one of two components of the Bilingual Writing Center), followed by the EWC coordinator (in this case a professor from the English Department). Each was tasked with interviewing and hiring tutor personnel, conducting tutor trainings, overseeing tabulation of visits, conducting tutor evaluations throughout the semester and upholding the rules and regulations set forth by the laws binding employees of the UPRM, among other tasks (English Writing Center Tutor Training Manual, 2011-2012).

The inclusion and description of “EWC coordinator” implies a reduction of power; previously the administrator’s (coordinator in this case) responsibility was to run the center according to a more (personal) and less institutional form, while working in direct collaboration with a committee. Under the Title V grant, since the writing center became a component under a larger program (CIVIS), responsibilities were shifted in a way that the EWC coordinator responded to a committee of superiors, rather than directly to a Department director (under whom the coordinator formerly worked for in her capacity as a professor) accentuating power differences that were not previously there.

Tutor staff were under supervision by more experienced, graduate students who would report to the Coordinator in the case of any issues or problems within the day to day activities of the center. Before the implementation of CIVIS/Title V, graduate TAs were given the power to refer students to acting administrators if bad behavior was displayed from tutors, evidenced by various referral reports, some of which went as far as to propose the dismissal of certain, allegedly disruptive tutors. This policy has since evolved; tutors are encouraged to speak directly to the EWC coordinator via email, private media or social media. It also seems from early reports that tutors, especially graduate students, were not sure of the power hierarchy and did not know

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who to turn to for these types of problems. The creation of the tutor manual and stronger administration has brought these issues into place.

The centralization of the physical space and services has grown since 2005. Beginning in a space originally meant to house an individual professor, it has slowly grown as more attention and funds were obtained. The movement from the first small office space to the larger space in the library makes its presence more central and therefore more important as a resource for students. Its greater presence runs parallel to its growth in numbers.

The most recent tutor manual (2016-2017) outlines the implementation of a coordinating team, currently composed of two undergraduate students of English, and a graduate student enrolled in the Master of Arts in English Education. It is important to note that textually, there was a clear effort made within the manual, as well as verbally in staff meetings to eliminate the hierarchical emphasis on leadership between coordinator and coordinator assistants (supervisors). Within the manual, these positions would be named the ‘coordinating team’;

The Coordinator, in collaboration with her assistants, will be responsible for training and supervising the tutors, scheduling graduate appointments, collaborating in the research projects associated with the Center, designing and implementing mini-workshops on writing elements, and coordinating monthly staff meetings (p. 3)

Coordinator assistants are chosen because of their extensive experience working with various writing center functions including tutoring, providing outreach and in-house training workshops. The inclusive language utilized in this section highlights a sense of collaboration and teamwork, rather than a “list of tasks” approach which was used in previous versions of the EWC tutor manual. The most recent version of this manual produces an overall feel of humanization. Rather than perceiving tutor staff as employees with designated tasks, their primary goal is described to be the “active intervention into students’ writing process to empower them to be able to create

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academically and intellectually sound documents of all kinds” (p. 2). This goal statement removes itself from the argument that a language resource center was needed to merely create better employees for the agencies and companies who hired students at the UPRM (O’Neill-Carrillo, Collins, Garriga, Macchiavelli & Cruz, 2009). This new structure reframes the concept of peer into Paolo’s Freire’s (1968) concept of co-intentional education, “Teacher and student (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of recreating that knowledge” (p. 69). Similarly, peer-tutor and student work together to move away from the oppressive pressure of having to meet institutional standard in the classroom, and thus inviting them into a welcoming, accessible and inclusive place that stimulates language learning via familiarity. Rather than just depositing knowledge into the student visitors, both the student and peer tutor pool their knowledge. Ben Rafoth expands upon this relationship between tutor and tutee and the space where this interaction occurs, “...writing centers remain places where peers form relationships around their field of study. When these relationships are created, the opportunities for learning are magnified because students learn from one another” (p. 37).

The discourses of power within the EWC and its surrounding institution have fluctuated since its opening in 2005. The struggle to find a placement within the university set into motion a variety of changes that would influence the way the center was run, staffed and represented to the UPRM community in efforts to attract its participation.

Legitimizing the UPRMEWC has resulted as a central issue in the struggle for its placement and longevity. One of the main issues that have come from this instance of critical discourse analysis is the lack of concretization of the center. The existence of the writing center requires an ample amount of money to carry out its services and provide material, and since it has been institutionalized, there have been obstacles funding the center and its staff. Evaluations

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of tutors by visiting students have been overwhelmingly positive, which gives credence to the productive strategy of ESL/ELL English students tutoring ESL/ELL students. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the relationship between tutor and tutees, and how they view their interactions with policy, institution, tutor methodology and philosophy in order to further substantiate its continued presence in the institution. It will give a more in depth view of what can be improved and adjusted as told from the point of view of those who frequent the center the most: tutors and tutees.

The UPRMEWC in the context of US Writing Centers

According to the findings from this chapter, the role of the UPRM writing center is similar to those in the US, which can be summed up as a place to produce better writing, not writers (North, 1984). However, the geographical context of the UPRM as opposed to WCs in the US is what begins to reveal the differences. As indicated in the founding proposals of the UPRMEWC, the founding directors were well aware of the unique challenge the UPRMEWC would face: tutoring ESL writers with ESL tutors. Like other writing centers, this one would serve as a safe area between learning English composition in the classroom, and learning composition away from it. The methodologies used would also be similar to those currently employed in most US writing centers: non-directive strategies that emphasized the writer's ownership over their paper as well as a prioritization of HOCs over LOCs was common in day to day tutoring sessions.

The role of the institution was essential in securing funding for the UPRMEWC. The Title V grant was key in promoting the expansion and hiring of more tutors, as well as the introduction of a larger space and more resources. However, it also played a part in diminishing the role of the English Department in the UPRMEWC, due to its intention of being a campus wide service that involved all majors and fields of study.

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The UPRMEWC is similar to WCs that work with ESL students in that they are aware they need more time, or even new strategies to help supplement their learning. However, as opposed to most WCs in the US, the UPRMEWC primarily hires ESL tutors rather than just native language speakers of English. Hiring tutors who are aware of the needs of ESL students creates a stronger bond of communication where tutors can empathize with their tutees because the similar needs both parties share.

The UPRMEWC documentation that was reviewed in this chapter indicates that since its earliest beginnings, tutor staff was aware of the unique concept of ESL/ELL tutors serving ESL/ELL students. Furthermore, the writing center administrator was also aware of the lack of resources (published literature) to supplement this unique situation. This problem was addressed by the writing center administrator who developed a syllabus for teaching assistant training, which instructed teaching assistants to develop and implement a syllabus for tutor training. As described in the annual report (B.Virtanen, personal communication, May 9, 2005), this obliged tutoring services provided by ESL/ELL tutors to be a more of a reflexive practice which was planned to eventually lead to the development and publication of the best practice results. Despite this, further UPRMEWC documentation does not indicate any publication having to do with ESL/ELL students tutoring ESL/ELL tutees, nor do policies and guidelines outlined since the earliest known tutoring manual (2012-2013) to the latest (2016-2017). The particular difference of ESL tutors staffing the UPRMEWC is not addressed, but rather replaced by the emphasis put on by the Title V grant for the center to be a bilingual resource.

Consequently, the lack of emphasis on the ESL tutor/ESL student concept in UPRMEWC documentation would extend itself to how these documents figure tutors. Although early writing center administrators were aware of the challenge this unique situation created by supplementing tutor staff with guidance from a faculty advisory committee composed of professors from the

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English department, this would slowly fade out (Annual Report May 9, 2005). From the Title V Grant period, on to institutionalization would not see any particular differences between tutor training at the UPRMEWC and tutor training in the US writing centers. Common tutoring principles that included supplementing process based pedagogy (these including not writing on the tutees' paper, using the non-directive method of guiding tutees through problem areas) were used to conceive tutors, with little to no mention of the particularity of being ESL writers/speakers themselves.

Regarding tutor training practices and methods, again, there is little evidence pointing toward a sense of awareness that most tutors were ESL speakers and writers, besides what it is indicated in the May 9th 2005 annual report. As mentioned previously, at the time this annual report was written, the UPRMEWC was still a component of the English Department and was guided by a faculty advisory committee that was completely composed of English professors. They were aware of the ESL/ELL tutor serving ESL/ELL students paradigm, and were put in a position to help tutors maneuver in this relatively unknown area of study. Furthermore, graduate teaching assistants that worked in the UPRMEWC were tasked with reading writing center research to prepare to a syllabus that would be used to train undergraduate tutors throughout the semester. The UPRMEWC's absorption into the CIVIS program saw these training policies change, and replaced by a workshop format based on presentations, collaborative thinking and role play. Consequently, it seems that the removal of the UPRMEWC as a component of the English Department moved it away from more comprehensive methods of training that involved studying published literature and research articles specifically related to tutoring ESL students (however, even before its removal there was little to no material that addressed ESL tutors serving ESL students). Beyond this point in the history of the UPRMEWC, the way learning cultural and affective needs of tutors and tutees would not be particularly addressed beyond the

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need for the tutors to adhere to policy and rules which were designed around a non-directive philosophy.

This center was planned and created based on an understanding of the language identity and proficiency of the students it was expected to serve. The idea behind the creation of the EWC follows the same principles of most writing centers in the USA with the added dimension of ESL writers in Puerto Rico and their unique language identities.

The critical analysis of the various, and sometimes conflicting, discourses and ideologies that informed the creation of the UPRMEWC and its development over the past thirteen years enlightens our understanding of its particularities vis-à-vis the English Writing Center's history, ideologies, methodologies and practices in the US. In light of this analysis, in the following chapter I discuss an exploratory case study conducted at the UPRMEWC in Fall 2016 in order to address Research Question #3: How could the UPRMEWC revise/adapt its principles, tutoring guidelines, tutoring methods and tutee/tutoring outcomes based on our particular context of predominantly ESL/ELL tutors serving predominantly ESL/ELL students?

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Chapter 4: Exploratory Case Study of Tutors & Tutees

Introduction

This chapter describes an exploratory case study based on a selective sample of four current tutors and four recent who were interviewed individually from October 1 to October 31, 2016 at the UPRMEWC. As stated in Chapter 1, case study research aims to create “a detailed description of the setting or individuals, followed by analysis of data for themes or issues.” (Creswell, 2014, p. 246).

It is safe to say that the UPRM English Writing Center functions as most US writing centers do, which is timelessly described by North (1984): “our job is to produce better writers, not better writing” (p. 438). We follow most of the standard tenets of contemporary writing centers housed in US universities; we are not a drop-off service but offer individualized and occasionally small group face-to-face tutoring sessions; we hold no ownership over the tutee’s written work; our tutor staff is composed entirely of undergraduate and graduate UPRM students; and we use non-directional rather than directional tutoring methods. However, as this exploratory study suggests, the adaptation of these practices and philosophies to our tutoring context have caused frictions. The unique identity of the UPRMEWC finds itself within the identity of the people that work there on a daily basis, as well as the people who use its services (primarily undergraduate and graduate students of the UPRM). The interviews conducted with tutors and tutees in this particular context will allow me to inductively address research question #3: How could the UPRMEWC revise/adapt its principles, tutoring guidelines, tutoring methods and expectations of tutoring outcomes based on our particular context of predominantly ESL/ELL tutors and predominantly ESL/ELL students?

As the question implies, the UPRMEWC stands out from other writing centers in the United States because it is primarily staffed by ESL/ELL tutors who serve peers who are

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generally ESL/ELL students and both coexist in an institutional and cultural context in which Spanish is the predominant language. Contrary to the UPRM, these writing centers are located in areas that are primarily English speaking contexts; writers who visit the center do not only use English within the WC, but also outside. In turn, the UPRMEWC functions in the Spanish speaking context of Puerto Rico; students receive English instruction in class or at the UPRMEWC, yet social settings and beyond are dominated by the Spanish language. The exploratory case study discussed in this chapter draws from the perceptions of a convenience sample of UPRMEWC tutors and tutees in order to examine the extent to which the particularities of this context might require a reconsideration of tutoring principles, practices and methods that have been adapted from US-based scholarship to the UPRMEWC.

The Exploratory Case Study

To more fully understand the perceptions of the EWC by those who use the UPRMEWC and those who work in it, personal interviews were conducted with four current UPRMEWC tutors and four tutees who had visited the Center in Fall 2016, when the interviews were conducted.¹⁶ Of the four tutors, two were native language speakers of English, and two were native speakers of Spanish. The four tutees included in the sample had each been recently tutored by one of the tutors included in the sample. Tutor participants were originally contacted via email and asked if they were interested in participating to send a return email. In turn, the process for selecting the tutee subsample entailed asking the tutor participants if they were aware of any students who they had worked with who were willing to participate. The student would provide their email via their tutors, and then be contacted to see if they were willing to take part

¹⁶ The case study component of this thesis project was approved by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (CPSHI, for its Spanish acronym) of the UPRM on May 16, 2016.

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in this study.

The interviews were scheduled at the participants' convenience and took place in a private, closed room at the UPRMEWC (B-107 in the UPRM library). Prior to the interviews, a list of specific questions was prepared, designed to record the participants' thoughts on the UPRMEWC and their usage of it. It also identified their biographical information to have a further understanding of their language profiles, and the various factors that influence them.

All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and coded using the program NVIVO 10. The codes that were used to categorize and analyze the answers provided by participants were created with the research questions in mind; they primarily observe information that relates to the different needs tutors and tutees articulated, their recommendations and their insights into their experiences as staff members or users of the UPRMEWC (see Appendix A for a list of the codes).

While these interviews covered a broad range of topics, after coding was carried out, the most salient issues discussed by tutors and tutees are divided into three categories: tutor/tutee policy, tutor/tutee identity, and tutor/tutee language issues. Based on this exploratory case study, there is evidence for the need to revise and readapt UPRMEWC writing center policies, procedures and practices to our specific language context for the benefit of the student community it serves and that of the tutoring staff. Before delving into this discussion, it is pertinent to provide a brief profile of the participants in this case study¹⁷.

Tutor Participants

Arnold is a 22 year old, 5th year animal sciences major who has been working as a peer tutor at the UPRMEWC for two years and is a native speaker of English. Prior to moving to

¹⁷ Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants of this study

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Puerto Rico to pursue his college education, he was a resident of a state in the western US for 18 years where he primarily spoke English at home and in social interactions. However, this would change upon arriving to Puerto Rico, where English is a language he uses much less in comparison to Spanish. He was mistakenly placed in INGL 3201 Reading and Composition but was immediately to the INGL 3211 Advanced English when the professor of the first-year English course he was enrolled in noticed that he was a native speaker of English. He applied to work at the English Writing Center as an economic incentive, and because of prior experiences helping friends to revise their essays. He also mentioned as part of his motivation that “being a help to someone makes you feel gratified.”

Clarrisa is a 5th year English student who was born and raised on the west side of Puerto Rico and is a native Spanish speaker. During her childhood at home she recalled that with her brother she would “speak in Spanglish, mostly English... when I was a small child and I spoke English, my mother would respond to me in English.” In most of the social settings she encountered, English was the primary language of communication, but she used Spanish primarily in school. Before entering UPRM, she attended three private schools throughout her elementary and secondary education, in which she predominately used Spanish, except for one school which she noted was bilingual, “the school of *la Inter* was a bilingual school, every single subject was in English except history and Spanish.” Interestingly, while teachers would give their classes in Spanish language, all materials (textbooks, worksheets) would be English, as well as assignments which had to be done and submitted in English as well. Currently, she only speaks Spanish at home, as well as in social and curricular activities. Upon enrolling into the UPRM, she was placed on the intermediate English track. Shortly after enrollment, she began working for the Mayawest Writing Project (a component of CIVIS) for two years. She applied for a tutor position at the UPRMEWC for Fall 2014, and has been a peer tutor for 2 academic

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school years. Her motivations for joining the UPRMEWC were a desire to change her job setting and the enjoyment she sought to derive from offering her tutoring services and from the sense of community the Center provides.

Ronald is a 22 year-old, 5th year, Chemical Engineering student born in Arecibo, Puerto Rico. He considers himself a non-native speaker of English, but was raised in a home where both English and Spanish were spoken, although Spanish was more commonly used. He attended a private bilingual elementary school, which he notes was carefully balanced between English and Spanish. Upon enrollment into the UPRM, Ronald was placed in the Advanced English track. In social interactions at the UPRM he speaks just as much Spanish as he does English. As an Engineering major, in curricular activities, English is the most used language. Ronald joined the UPRMEWC in spring 2014 and has worked a total of three years at the Center. He learned about the UPRMEWC through a friend who had worked there and was motivated by the economic support he could obtain as a tutor. He was confident that the UPRMEWC would be a good fit for him because he, like Arnold, had always helped his friends with their essays. Furthermore, having the opportunity to be an educator motivated him to become a peer tutor because of his goals of becoming a professor in the future. He mentions that becoming a peer tutor would introduce him to “different styles of learning.”

Julia is a native speaker of English and a 6th year Sociology major of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent. She was born in Illinois and raised in various states in the southwest United States before moving to the east coast of the US. At the age of 19 she would make the decision to move to Puerto Rico to live with her father, and has been living here for the past five years. Before entering the UPRM, she spoke English the majority of the time, despite both parents speaking Spanish most of the time at home. She attended middle and high school at an all-girls private school which primarily used English in both curricular and social activities. Upon enrollment in

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the UPRM, she was originally placed in the intermediate English track but, in light of her native English speaking abilities, was promptly removed from this course and enrolled in an English elective course. Julia has been working as a peer tutor in the UPRMEWC since August 2015.

Her motivation to become a tutor, like that of the peers mentioned above, was the need to earn an income. Moreover, she pursued the opportunity because of her familiarity with written and spoken English and her past experiences correcting and revising English documents in academic contexts.

Tutee Participants

Dana is a 24 year-old graduate student of chemistry who is from the Dominican Republic. Before moving to Puerto Rico to pursue her master's degree at UPRM, she lived in the major city of Santiago, DR. She speaks three languages (Spanish, French and English), however, she only speaks Spanish with native proficiency. Before enrolling in post-secondary studies, she studied in a large private school. Upon enrollment at her university (where she was enrolled and completed undergraduate studies), she was placed in intermediate English-level program. From that point onward she uses Spanish, almost exclusively, in both social and curricular activities. The first time she visited the UPRMEWC was in 2015 to practice an interview in English for a job opportunity.

Sonia is a 19 year-old second-year undergraduate student of Animal Sciences from Vega Baja, Puerto Rico. She has lived in Puerto Rico since she was born and attended public schools throughout her elementary, middle and high school education. She uses Spanish, her first language and rarely uses English. She visited the UPRMEWC for the first time in the fall semester of 2016 to revise an essay as per instruction of her professor at the time, and has continued to visit for speaking logs and technical documents since.

Giselle is a 21 year-old 4th year undergraduate psychology major who was born in the

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western town of Moca, and raised in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. At home, Spanish has always been the language of choice. She completed her secondary education in a large private school in which all the classes were given in Spanish except for English class. Upon enrolling in the University of Puerto Rico-Aguadilla in 2013 she was placed in the Basic English track. She transferred to UPRM in 2015. At UPRM, all of her curricular activities have been in Spanish, as well as any social interactions she participates in. She first visited the UPRMEWC in fall 2016.

Elizabeth is a 22 year-old 6th year mathematics major at UPRM. She was born in Arecibo, Puerto Rico where she lived for 15 years until she moved to Mayagüez to complete her high-school education in a small public institution. Since she was a child, her home, social, and curricular language of interaction has been Spanish; as a non-native speaker of English, she first began learning and speaking English when she enrolled at UPRM, where she was placed in the intermediate English track. Her motivation to learn English is primarily based in her desire to pursue doctoral studies, a desire which has led her to visit the UPRMEWC various times over her years in college. She remembers her first visit to be for an essay, and that she would be rewarded bonus points for visiting the center. Most curricular activities she mentions are carried out in English, which has been the source of various problems she has experienced throughout her academic journey at UPRM.

The profiles of both tutor and tutee participants is an adequate sample to understand the perceptions of the UPRMEWC from the standpoint of those that use it on a daily basis. The salient findings produced from the interviews of this case study point towards various changes in the way policy, ideology and methodology function within the UPRMEWC on a day to day basis. The following section summarizes findings that came on behalf of tutors and tutees.

Discussion of Case Study Findings from Tutors

The following subsections summarize the most notable observations provided by the

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tutors of the UPRMEWC and according to research questions #3 provides recommendations for revising and readapting tutoring principles, methods and outcomes. The analysis of these responses includes language issues, “writing on the paper”, and the relationship between UPRMEWC faculty and the institution and bilingual connections, all of which relate to the ability tutors have to empathize with tutees (as depicted in figure 4).

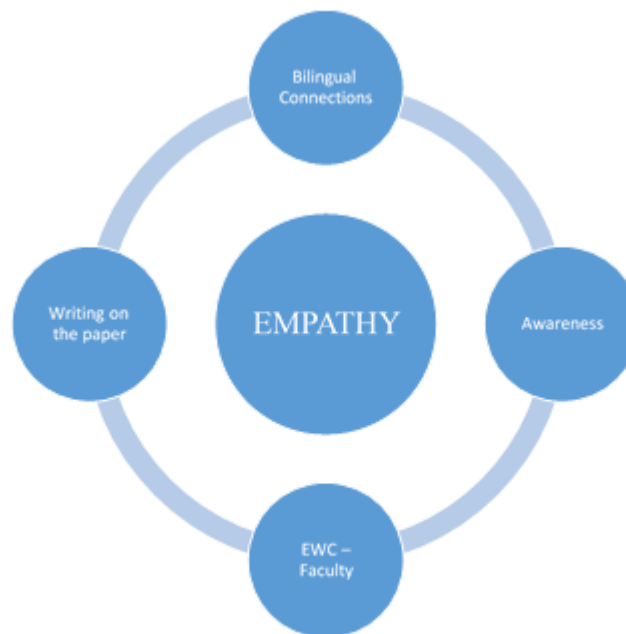


Figure 4 Tutor findings

Language use, proficiency and “writing on the paper”. For the tutors, there were not many language issues present. However, the language issues they perceived in tutees are much more numerous. Affective needs related to usage of the English language are the most apparent. According to Clarissa, embarrassment was a symptom of the tutee having less understanding of the English language in comparison to the tutor, especially when enforcing a non-directive tutoring style. Other tutors, like Julia, commented on how her more academic style of writing influences her style of tutoring, which, she admits, helps her bring “much more context in English than they [tutees] do.” This was said in reference to her upbringing in the US, and her

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numerous experiences writing more research and academic based papers in English. Even though they were not many language issues present, they did comment on other areas of language such as proficiency and bilingual settings. When it came to describing their English language ability, all tutors were aware of how having an ability to handle the English language was essential to providing a productive tutoring session, more specifically being able to relate to the tutee and their level of English ability. A notable observation was made by Ronald when asked about his English language ability and how it relates to the students he serves:

“I feel that the fact that I do dominate English as well as do, that I am as proficient in English as I am, helps me understand a wide variety of different levels of proficiency so even the students who have very basic English, the fact that I do dominate English as well as I do helps me understand them, helps me understand where they have gaps in their education, their language, their barriers.”

Using an advanced understanding of the English language as an instrument of empathy rather than dominance allows tutors to relate to their tutees on multiple levels. Arnold emphasizes that, despite knowing more about English than the tutee, empathy puts tutors in a position to be accessible by creating a comfortable relationship between tutors that topples any power structures that could be a hindrance:

“So I think that it’s a good thing that the tutor knows more you know, a much higher level of proficiency in a certain area. I don’t think there is a lack of solidarity because we are peer tutors and you know I heard a tutor say ‘don’t worry I am not your professor’.”

According to the comments in this section, tutors show satisfaction with their ability to communicate with tutees. This expectation is already part the principles the UPRMEWC uses to select tutor staff and should be continued and constantly improved. And advanced understanding

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of the English language coupled with empathy allows tutors to relate to the students they serve in the UPRMEWC producing more fruitful tutoring sessions. Moreover, it creates a comfortable space for ESL/ELL tutees to express themselves. However, language is not the issue that tutees have difficulty with and stems from space and relationship created from language proficiency.

Most of the interviews show common agreement that the UPRMEWC policies are suitable and good for both staff and the UPRM community. Nevertheless, various issues arise from the interviews, which conflict with how current operations react with those policies. Every tutor participant agreed that writing on the tutee's paper during a session is something that is unavoidable, and even beneficial towards a productive session. For example, Arnold comments on the difficulty of avoiding writing on the tutee's paper:

“I think it's kind of inevitable that you'd end up writing on the paper. Like, for example, especially on the résumés, if you have some margins that are off, I think it's a thousand times easier to write just like a line with an arrow to move it over a little.”

Furthermore, Julia reveals that the students she has tutored over the past two years generally express an aversion to writing on their own papers and instead ask tutors to do it for them:

“Let's say that I am in a session and I haven't written anything on the paper yet and we're just talking – every time that happens they ask; can you write that down for me? Can you write it on the paper for me?”

ESL/ELL tutees reported apprehension to taking complete ownership over their papers rather than collaborating within a policy driven non-directional methodology during the session is indicative of the tutees' desire to know what they “got wrong” or lower order concerns rather than higher order concerns. In his exceptional contribution to the scarce scholarship on what he

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calls “multilingual writers” in US writing centers, Ben Rafoth (2015) attributes this quality to second language writers who have learned in “cultures of testing” where students “become accustomed to memorizing information for a test, reading examples, and viewing corrections. When it comes time for their own writing, instead of using creativity and judgement, students focus on what they think is the correct way” (p. 107), thus showing the importance grammar plays on their conceptions of good writing. This way of thinking is in complete disagreement with the Socratic methodologies used within the UPRMEWC, and demonstrates that the same methods tutors use to collaborate with native speakers of English in the US are different from collaborations ESL tutors use with ELL/ESL tutees in Puerto Rico. In addition, this also shows that there is constant negotiation of power going on in the tutoring sessions, which are forged on day to day encounters that evidently challenge the tenets and principles disbursed in tutor training manuals and center policies. Even though the tenants of writing center pedagogy focus on higher order concerns it appears that ESL/ELL students can benefit from a comfortable move between higher and lower order concerns which would require tutors to write on student papers when necessary so students do not forget important and specific structure and vocabulary. This is in tune with second language acquisition research that shows in negotiating “meaning” leads to better acquisition levels (Reid, 1994). Therefore, this is an important consideration readapting tutoring policy and methods to allow tutors to write on tutees papers.

EWC – Faculty Relationship. The more salient commentaries, both positive and negative, from tutors interviewed for this exploratory case study revolve around the relationship the UPRMEWC has with faculty. However, it is not unique to the BWC itself. Issues like having a more comprehensive understanding of what instructors and professors are looking for when a student enters a tutoring session, or ways to reduce the pressure for tutors to reach the instructors’/professors’ standards are common amongst WCs in the US. Clarissa notes: “I know

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that their professor has certain expectations of what needs to happen in a tutoring session here, so I kind of feel the pressure to be a lot more thorough.” She follows up this statement with a request: that professors have a more face-to-face relationship with the EWC, especially when they require students to visit for an assignment, as is commonly done with speaking logs (sessions for tutees to practice their English speaking). Clarissa comments, “When they come for a speaking log and they have prepared statements... I can’t blame them, sometimes their professor asks them to do that but I really wish that professors would be able to come here at some point and see how those methods don’t work.” The “obligatory visit” method is framed by the trust the instructors and professors alike have put into the UPRMEWC however their actual interaction with the center and its day to day processes is, as indicated by Clarissa, is not frequent. Ronald notes that:

“Professors and instructors alike tell us and they refer more and more students every single year to our facilities. So, I understand that the services are feedback alone is really, really great. As a tutor, I feel that we are definitely creating an impact on students.”

All things considered, it is essential that the UPRMEWC and the community it serves stay in constant, collaborative contact to ensure that tutoring and classroom complement one another rather than being in opposition. Furthermore, it is essential that instructors and professors that send their students to the UPRMEWC are aware of the tutor faculty and peculiar ESL/ELL context that is constantly in play when tutors and tutees interact. They need to be reminded that the UPRMEWC is not a fix it up shop for student work, but a place for learning how to write (North, 1984; Rafoth, 2015). On the other hand, the UPRMEWC staff need to encourage a closer relationship between teaching faculty and tutor staff to increase understanding of how second language acquisition takes place through tutoring within the UPRMEWC. This collaborative awareness can assist in the revision of tutoring methods and principles that guide the

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UPRMEWC.

Bilingual Connections. The Title V proposal that gave rise to CIVIS outlined a plan for the creation of a Bilingual Writing Center (BWC), which would merge former independent projects known as the English Writing Center and the *Centro de Redacción en Español* (SWC, for its English acronym). However, the nominal reconfiguration of these centers for institutional and funding purposes has not materialized in tutors' and tutees' daily practices. There has hardly been any collaboration between both centers besides sharing a physical space for tutoring sessions and daily operations. Moreover, throughout the years, the EWC has seen more student visits in comparison to the SWC. In light of this, Arnold suggested that students from both centers be prepared to serve one another in the case of long waiting lines: "all the tutors I know in the Spanish Writing Center are perfectly bilingual and the things that we evaluate are often time thesis and structure, which don't necessarily have to do with grammar or specific [English] conventions." However, the separation is recognized in his observations: "I think maybe an issue is that there are two separate programs so really it's not their responsibility to help during those times but it would be kind of cool if they could." Collaborative initiatives between both centers could possibly benefit visitors to the BWC and streamline the tutoring process in times when there is an increased demand for tutors. Moreover, collaborative tutor training initiatives involving both the EWC and the SWC might improve our respective abilities to serve our particular student population.

Discussion of Case Study Findings from Tutees

According to the tutees that participated in the interviews there were multiple policy issues that could be adjusted to help improve the services offered by English Writing Center. A noticeable criticism that comes from Dana, a graduate student and third language learner of

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English (she knows Spanish and French), reads:

“I have noticed that many undergraduate students need and desire the UPRMEWC’s services, but they cannot benefit from it; they have to wait too long to only to receive 15 minutes of service.”

This points towards a lack of sufficient staff to take care of a large volume of students who visit. During the semester these interviews were taken, the BWC was under reduced operation hours due to budgeting concerns upon its institutionalization. Dana also discussed the lack of continuity provided by the EWC towards tutees who would like to learn to improve their spoken and written abilities in English. She explained this when referring to a string of speaking logs she took with Arnold, “We spoke a lot, but on behalf of the center there is no continuity. The leave you up in the air.” A desire for a mini-conversational English curriculum in the EWC would be a useful supplement to ESL/ELL learners throughout the UPRM. However, she does appreciate the intimacy the tutoring session provides and the benefits of the distance from the classroom: “it was like a personalized help where you could express your fears and worries in a very direct way, something that you probably couldn’t when you’re talking to a professor,” Dana added.

This fear is perhaps framed by a comment she made earlier in the interview concerning her use of English towards people she does not know and those she feels comfortable with: “when talking English with people I do not know, I feel embarrassed. But, if I am talking with a person I am comfortable with, my English flows. It depends... many times one believes they will be bullied if a word is not pronounced how it is supposed to be.” Sonia also shared these feelings, “when I’m with someone I know, my English flows, but when it’s with someone I do not know, I feel nervous.” Giselle, another tutee, also expressed insecurities when using English socially, especially in tutoring sessions, “Since I know that the tutor knows more English than I

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do, I would think that if I made a mistake speaking English I was afraid what the tutor might think of me. Despite this worry, they always treat me super good here.” Dana is aware of how much pressure there is to learn English in UPRM, and her need to master the language, “in a certain way the university motivates you to improve certain aspects and there are professors and tutors that require you dominate the language. This is promoted by expositions, interactive videos, etcetera.” This exploratory case study thus suggests that ESL/ELL tutees arrive at the UPRMEWC with fears, hesitations and insecurities about their academically expected English language skills. Moreover, my findings suggest that these apprehensive sentiments are assuaged when they encounter ESL/ELL tutors who treat them with empathy and understanding.

It has been evidenced that many classrooms in the UPRM are bilingual in the sense that lectures are given in Spanish while materials and resources are given in English. Elizabeth noted: “I don’t know if you have noticed but most of the classes here the book is in English but the class is in Spanish and the exams are also in Spanish so I mostly use Spanish.” This pressure to learn English, for Dana, has led to a sense frustration, negativity and at times failure: “There comes the moment where one feels bad. One says ‘damn so much time and effort and I just can’t get there.’ Also, you feel impotent in a way.” Elizabeth described her experience where English was actually the only language that was used: “In my linear algebra, my professor was Chinese...I don’t know mandarin and he doesn’t know how to speak Spanish so the only language is English so we tried to understand each other.” English is an instrumental language to learn, or at least to have an understanding of, in the UPRM, and it plays a crucial part in the overall performance of students in the courses they take. The language experiences of both Dana and Elizabeth are representative of the research found by Mazak and Donoso (2015) regarding translanguaging practices in classrooms at UPRM.

Figure 5 Tutee Findings



Policy Issues of Writing on the Paper. Tutees did not provide many comments pertaining to negotiating of the ownership of their paper. Elizabeth mentions how this stemmed her desire to learn, and made her feel as she were unconcerned;

They weren't concerned in explaining to me what I was bad at. They took the paper and started marking, its good – sometimes some students don't want to learn, they want to be like, 'OK, make this paper look good' but in my case I want to learn what people did wrong and learn what I did from my mistakes and to know the rules and try to use less the –ed, you know? So sometimes I was forced to ask a lot, and it should come from the person, 'Oh this part is wrong because of this!'

Elizabeth's explanation is indicative of the thin line current UPRMEWC tutors are required to traverse when negotiating ownership and power over the work of their tutees. The “no writing on the paper” policy, in her perspective, contrasts directly with the perspective given from the tutors, and is something that should be handled delicately for the sake of providing the most efficient and productive service to tutees.

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Elizabeth has visited the UPRMEWC equipped with the extrinsic motivation to improve her English; a desire to pursue graduate studies in the United States upon obtaining her bachelor's degree: "I'm aiming for a PhD, and in Puerto Rico the PhD in mathematics is not to well recognized so I always knew that I was going to study in the United States." Giselle mentions that her main reason for going to writing center is to "improve my verbal abilities, not pronunciation, but syntax." Samantha has a more academic reason, recognizing her deficiencies, "[the UPRMEWC] helps me a lot, and in terms of drafting I am not too great so it helps me there to and it benefits me for class!"

Recommendations from Tutees

The following quotations are recommendations made directly to the UPRMEWC by participant tutees. These primarily reveal the needs of tutees based on what the center lacks, a list which ranges from learning material, to physical resources, to staffing recommendations. Also, this provides insight to the discrepancy between the policies that are currently in place, relative to their English language proficiency. Comments made during the interview are italicized following by my commentary:

"There should be personal cubicles, tutoring sessions should be longer, and maybe audio-visual rooms can be provided in that case a tutor is absent where one can sit down and see videos or movies in English. The hiring of more tutees also because the wait time is very limiting."

Dana notes that there should be personal cubicles in the tutoring area so the tutor can feel less insecure when attempting to use the English language. She also recommends there be more resources, including audio-visual programs, didactic material as well as more tutors to reduce waiting times and congestions. Dana's comments are indicative of a need for more resources to help supplement ESL/ELL speaker's affective and cultural needs. The apprehension ESL/ELL

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tutee's have entering a tutoring session is well documented in writing center literature (Blau, Hall & Sparks, 2002; Cogie 2006) and implementing tutoring methods that assist in alleviating these insecurities can lead to an overall more productive learning outcome.

"When you choose the tutors, don't choose it only because they approve a class. I don't know how you choose the interviewees, but sometimes - I don't know - I felt that they didn't have the knowledge, and they were under-prepared for it."

Elizabeth suggest that there should be a more comprehensive process when hiring tutors to ensure good service. Despite her overall perception of the writing center being positive, she had some bad experiences with non-receptive and withdrawn tutors that have put her off to the service. In light of this she suggests that coordinators make sure that tutors are not only good in English, but good at teaching it as well to make sure tutees who are very uncomfortable utilizing the English language feel comfortable. Elizabeth's issue's possibly stem from a desire of tutees to work with tutors who are native speakers of English (Rafoth, 2015). Furthermore, her comments are also suggestive of the need of more comprehensive evaluation standards to ensure that the ability tutors have to teach tutees are effective and helpful towards meeting their learning needs.

"During a tutoring session, one can be listening to English and Spanish at the same time... I think it should be separate to avoid confusing both languages!"

Giselle comments that the English and Spanish writing centers should be separate. She feels that having both centers working in one room can cause interference and a lost focus of the tutee. Also, she feels that the policy should allow tutees to bring their essays in electronic formats for the sake of time and efficiency. Sonia does not provide recommendations, but rather expresses that she is happy with the services that the UPRMEWC provides, and feel that they do excellent work.

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Summary of Exploratory Case Study Findings

The interviews reveal much about how we can readapt our services to better fit the particular context of the UPRM. The unique language identities of both our tutors and tutees relative to the normal discourse of the writing centers and the populations they serve in the United States beckons that a careful look be given to the policies, philosophies and methodologies used in the UPRMEWC for the sake of offering a more contextualized service to the UPRM community.

Tutors and tutees have demonstrated various similarities and differences when it comes to practice of their role within a tutoring session. The interviews have demonstrated both groups to be particularly anxious about their English language use, and how it could isolate or reduce the gap between both parties. Tutees find issue when actually speaking the language in front of someone who is they understand and expect to have a better proficiency of the English language. On the other hand, tutor participants demonstrated how careful they are when using the English language in tutoring sessions, out of a perceived understanding that not forming rapport with the tutee can lead to increase the distance between the tutee and themselves. Also, both parties agree that hiring more tutors would be beneficial for the writing center, in so far that it would greatly help to reduce tutee wait time, as well as lighten the load tutors face when a large group of students are have registered to be tutored. While tutees did not have much to comment on the tutoring strategies, one participant did recommend a revision of evaluation policies to ensure that the services provided by tutors remain at a proficient level, in part to avoid bad tutoring experiences in the future. Furthermore, this participant felt that, when it came to writing on the paper, tutors were being overly directive, opting to take complete ownership of the paper rather teach the tutee. Various tutors thought it better to write on the tutees paper for the sake of permanence, reference and practicality. Both groups see the writing center as a valuable resource

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in the UPRM, and have demonstrated to be satisfied with what it brings to the table.

Chapter 5 will provide a conclusion to these findings, as well as recommendations and a more in-depth discussion to move towards a more inclusive, efficient and productive practice between our writing center and the community it serves on a day to day basis.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this chapter I discuss the conclusions from the findings of the three research questions that guided this study. In light of this discussion I offer a series of recommendations for the URMEWC, address the limitations of my study and make specific recommendations for much-needed research based in the UPRMEWC as a unique site of multilingual practices that could enrich current writing center scholarship in Puerto Rico and the US.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the questions that guided my research are:

1. What have been the dominant ideologies, principles and methods that have guided the tutoring of ESL/ELL students in US writing centers over the past 3 decades?
 - a. How are ESL/ELL learning needs conceptualized in this scholarship?
 - b. How are cultural/affective needs of ESL/ELL conceptualized in this scholarship?
2. What have been the explicit and implicit ideologies and principles that have guided the tutoring of students at the UPRMEWC? To what extent have these differed from those that have permeated in US Writing Centers in terms of:
 - a. Tutor training content and methods
 - b. Tutee learning, cultural, and affective needs
 - c. Tutee/tutoring outcomes
3. Based on the analyses conducted in response to questions #1 and #2: How could the UPRMEWC revise/adapt its principles, tutoring guidelines, tutoring methods and tutee/tutoring outcomes based on our particular context of predominantly ESL/ELL tutors serving predominantly ESL/ELL students?

The literature reviewed in order to address research questions #1 reveals that the dominant ideologies that direct ESL/ELL learning needs include Rogerian theory, the writing as process

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movement, the directive versus nondirective approach, and the notion of the writing center as a remedial service. All of these ideologies come out of English as a first language research and theory. However, during the 90s, research provided new insights on second language writers in how to approach them in the writing center thus deemphasizing the traditional paradigm of non-directional tutoring methods towards more adaptable strategies that meet ESL/ELL students' particular needs (Rafoth, 2015). One of the most salient observations that emerges from the review of the literature is that ESL writers do not share the same rhetorical, cultural and educational contexts as native English writers, which led to research interventions aimed at discovering, trying and polishing alternative ways to appropriately tutor writers who are acquiring a second language rather than resorting to homogenous instructional methods. Rafoth (2015) supports this claim by mentioning the danger of "native speakerism," which views English as the only target language to be learned while dismissing every other, a concept which plays a role in teaching composition to native language learners and non-native language learners similarly. In light of the aforementioned and the literature review, it is important to meet the cultural and affective needs of ESL writers in tutoring sessions through negotiating interactions that enable "simultaneous focus on form and meaning" (Rafoth, 2015, p. 48). ESL students do not respond in the same way as native writers of English to some of the traditional methodologies that focus on the process of composition. Contextual factors play a role as well as language issues, and it is essential that this be kept in mind when deciding which methodology would be the most useful when engaging ESL writers in the classroom and in writing centers.

With regards to research question # 2, my critical discourse analysis of UPRMEWC documents and manuals reveals that the explicit ideologies that have dominated the UPRMEWC since its founding have been similar to those used in the US. Socratic, non-invasive styles of tutoring which emphasize the writers' ownership of their own papers and seek to refocus the

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writers' compositional strategies rather than the specific piece of writing they bring to center. On the other hand, implicit ideologies have underlined the writing center as a safe space--away from the presence of the professor--where writers can air out their worries and doubts when it comes to composing in a language in which they are not generally immersed in their daily lives. Tutees, overall, recalled experiencing anxiety about sharing their work with others out of fear of being judged since they are aware that peer-tutors are more proficient in English than they are.

Moreover, they desire more supplementary materials to help them, based on the perspective that the writing center is a place to learn both oral and written English, as opposed to the more traditional view of the writing center as place to produce and improve better writing. Tutors were cognizant of their English language abilities and the agency they had to bring about change in the way tutees see the writing process. However, they were opposed to certain policies, most notably the "no writing on the paper" rule, which they have deemed ineffective in tutoring sessions. These findings might be indicative of how ESL writers in predominantly Spanish speaking countries learn a second language as opposed to ESL writers in predominantly English speaking locations.

Conclusions for research question # 3 are summarized in the following subheadings.

Outreach and electronic spaces were plans from the Title V Grant that were not given adequate attention, which could contribute to answering these questions in terms of methods and resources that could be readapted to improve the services currently offered by the UPRMEWC.

Outreach

The importance of outreach activities for the UPRM community is essential for the UPRMEWC's growth. Over the past 4 years the UPREWC has offered various activities to the UPRM community and beyond which include classroom visits (some of which has included the option of tours to the UPRMEWC), informational tables at the Incoming Student Orientation

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Week and in the Open Houses for High School Students as well as a “tour” which was conducted in Spring 2015 and offered tutoring sessions outdoors in various building throughout the UPRM campus. Digital outreach resources include the UPRMEWC blog which was launched 3 years ago, the UPRMEWC Facebook page and various writing tutorial videos which are available on YouTube. Workshop that have been offered to both students and faculty given by tutor staff and/or the EWC Coordinators that have focused on different formatting and citation styles including MLA, APA, and GSA. Furthermore, the UPRMEWC regularly offers workshops to the UPRM community on how to create résumés and cover-letters, how to prepare for job interviews, the conventions of scientific/academic writing in English, and, more recently, how to avoid sexist language. Sometimes these workshops are co-organized and co-sponsored by particular student organizations but more often than not they are a UPRMEWC initiative. Over the years, these workshops have proven to be successful in terms of attendance, participants’ assessment and subsequent requests for repetition of the workshops by student organizations and/or instructors.

The UPRMEWC may also consider reducing its administrative and academic distance from the UPRM English department. In its beginnings, despite having less physical and financial resources, the UPRMEWC was staffed by a committee of professionals from varying areas of the English studies. This committee would inform and guide the UPRMEWC tutoring ideologies and principles, especially in light of the unique situation of the ESL tutors serving ESL tutees in a Spanish speaking context. Strengthening collaborative ties with the English Department will help the UPRMEWC become what it was previously envisioned to be; a place for language research and innovation.

Electronic Spaces/OWL

It is essential that the UPRMEWC keep an online presence to increase accessibility of its

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services, as well as begin to offer resources and lessons to those who are unable to make it to the writing center. The idea of a language resource center that included an online writing lab (OWL) component was part of the original proposal before entering the CIVIS project. The OWL was planned to be a free service staffed by English tutors “who are equipped to answer simple questions that do not require deep intervention into the writing process” (B.Virtanen, personal communication, Email and chat services could be used for communication between writer and tutor, as well as to simulate a face to face tutoring session, while still maintaining the ability to be asynchronous if needed. As noted by Tutee interviewee Dana, the importance of developing the electronic component of the UPRMEWC is crucial for catching up and maintaining a relationship with the UPRM community. An OWL that has cultural and affective needs of the students in mind would make strides in consolidating the relationship between UPRMEWC and the community it serves.

Empathy

One of the most salient premises of the UPRMEWC is its commitment to offering an empathetic service to all students. The fact that the majority of both tutors and tutees share similar language identities as second-language learners is a benefit rather than a hindrance towards meeting the center’s established mission and goals. This is particularly helpful considering that ESL students bring different writing experiences and language proficiency to the academic English writing context (Ritter, 2005). Having ESL tutors that can relate to ESL tutees but are more proficient in verbal and written English, results in an ideal approach towards motivating productive and comfortable sessions. More recently, Ben Rafoth (2015) emphasizes the need of the writer and tutor to have a comfortable relationship because it “significantly influences what is possible for them to achieve” (p. 42). However, this empathy comes at the price of the traditional tutoring protocol that is widely shared in writing centers across the US;

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the non-directive, non-invasive methodology. This is not new when diagnosing the most efficient and effective way to tutor ESL writers: a study conducted by Williams and Severino (2004) notes that tutors are willing to take on authoritative roles with L2 writers which “is manifested in their greater willingness to reply to L2 writers’ questions and request for help...For their part, L2 writers voice their wish for their tutors to take on this role” (p. 169).

As suggested by the tutors and tutees who participated in my exploratory case study, empathy is not at odds with directiveness and assertion of knowledge in the ESL tutor/ESL tutee encounter. This empathy must also be expressed within the tutoring session, more specifically the tutoring methodology itself. The benefit of empathy comes at the cost of taking another look at our current policies to consider possible revisions in an attempt to distance itself from using homogeneous methodologies based off research that prioritizes one writing concern over another – primarily the HOCs/LOCs hierarchy. As demonstrated in the interviews, writers who visit the UPRMEWC enter with a variety of affective and cultural needs. These require urgent attention by the tutor and the Center’s facilities as well as from accommodations to ensure that the session is fruitful and conducive to learning. As a consequence, it will help increase the chances of return visits—a standard measure of effectiveness and success in US Writing Centers that has not been adequately tracked at the UPRMEWC. The tutors’ personal experiences with the second language learning processes and challenges faced by ESL writers helps them recognize communicative and affective issues and concerns that may arise while tutoring ESL students. Tutor interviews reveal that there is an explicit effort given towards making sure the writer is comfortable, and this is done by a variety of means that primarily root from identifying common ground both culturally and affectively. Key characteristic that distinguishes it from writing centers staffed in the US include empathy and the ability to identify with the specific language and cultural needs of ESL writers that visit the UPRMEWC. This was noted by tutor participants

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Julissa and Clarissa who observed how empathy played an essential role in creating a comfortable space for ESL/ELL tutees. This contrasts with writing centers in the US which are staffed predominantly, if not exclusively, by Native English speakers who are generally also monolingual English speakers.

Non-directive vs. Directive

Nondirective tutoring methods are described as “the ideal interactions between a writing center tutor and a student client in which the tutor intervenes as little as possible” (Clark, 2001). On the other hand, directive tutoring strategies are characterized by the tutors adopting the role of mentor, showing and telling the tutee rather than providing guidance through Socratic questioning (Clark, 2001). Traditional methodologies used in tutoring sessions are usually non-directive in nature. While this has been supported to construct sessions that emphasize writer ownership of their own paper, my research suggests that it might not be the best approach for ESL writers at UPRM. Research concerning L2 tutoring suggests tutors take a more directive and authoritative role during the tutoring session (Williams & Severino, 2004). Conversely, evidence from writing centers in the US has demonstrated this negotiation of power to be frustrating in light of the fact that tutors are constantly advised “to avoid proofreading and deal with higher-order concerns (HOCs)...before lower-order concerns (LOCs)” (Blau & Hall, 2002, p. 24). Despite recognizing academic and cultural differences, research on tutoring ESL/ELL speakers of English suggests that they be tutored in a similar manner as native speakers of English. However, evidence from the interviews included in my case study demonstrates that ESL writers should be approached differently. While it might be argued that UPRMEWC tutors and tutees generally share a common cultural landscape, the interviews point to a conflict that arises when observing the relationship between culture and the academic English writing standards imposed by the institution and pursued in English classrooms. These academic forms

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of English rarely take into consideration the different dialects used by ESL/ELL students (Rafoth, 2015; Robinson, 2009) which in the UPRM is fairly common of students learning to write in a second language. This conflict then permeates within the tutoring session, where students would rather receive direct, sentence level tutoring. However, tutors need to be careful of their methodologies, which at times either borderlines or becomes, plainly, copy-editing.

A purely non-directive approach in tutoring sessions has proven to be commonly conflictive with the ways ESL writers of the UPRM have been taught to write. Teaching methods in schools emphasizes grammar over ideas which motivates students to worry about what they have written rather than the process they used to actually come to the idea. This is not to say a tutor seizing ownership over a writer's paper is the ultimate solution to un-learning this mindset, but the interviews are indicative that using a purely non-directional form of tutoring is distancing rather than welcoming a population which struggles to enter into the normal discourse of academic English composition. Robinson argues that the division of higher-order and lower-order concerns "limits the way in which we engage basic writers because it separates out language and content" (2009, p. 71); his claim directly supports the adjustments I am proposing in order to better serve ESL writers who visit the UPRMEWC. Bell and Elledge (2009) further explain the conflict writers and tutors face when choosing between following policy over being obliging to their best interest; "they feel tension between what the student wants out of the session, which is often help with surface features and grammar, and what the tutors have been trained to address, which is process orientation and global issues" (p. 19). ESL student writers, in their majority, are considered outsiders who have issues learning academic English discourse as well as idiomatic English (Brendel, 2012). Consequently, this revision of historical paradigmatic prioritization of content concerns before grammatical concerns has proven to be limiting when tutoring second language learners of English at the UPRM.

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In light of the results of this research, all parties involved must be made well aware of these changes, specifically concerning non-directive and directive tutoring strategies and its implications. Writing on the paper can be negotiated and managed effectively without losing the attention or interest of the tutee; during the session, writing on the paper can be managed by not making written corrections directly on the tutee's document, but by circling areas in the document that need improvement, and subsequently providing explanations in these areas on a separate piece of paper which is given to the tutee at the end of the session. On the Record of Visit Form (a form that is stamped and stapled to the students' document and serves as evidence of their visit, as well as informing the writer and instructor on what was worked on during the session) a check-box should be included which informs all parties, tutee and professor/instructor, of the consent from the writer which allows the tutor to write on their paper. This would benefit instructors/professors in bringing to light specific areas of need in their student's writing, as well as possibly suggest how to improve their (instructor/professor's) approach towards teaching the student. Also, through observing previous drafts, professors can accurately pinpoint progression and continue to offer constructive feedback. On behalf of the tutee, providing consent to the tutor to write on the paper helps them to remember any corrections and suggestions, as well as have a permanent, visual artifact they can take home and further study. Done in a collaborative manner, negotiating these terms prior to a tutoring session and stating them clearly can help writers maximize their learning, while peer-tutors remain peer tutors. The policy of not writing on a student's paper finds its origins within the popularization of the directive approach, which in turn was derived from the "social ethics orientation of the process movement" and cautioned tutors of "imposing their own ideas on a student's text, talking too much, making changes to the student's language, and, generally, having too much influence on the conference" (Clark, 2001, p. 33). However, as evidenced in the exploratory case study, both tutors and tutees found that writing on

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the paper, while a breach in current UPRMEWC policy, is at times unavoidable as well as it is an effective tutoring strategy. This has become increasingly more important in the day to day functionality of UPRMEWC not only because it is asked for and allowed by tutees, but also because of its ability to accommodate ESL tutees who consider themselves novices in Academic English composition. Cogie (2006) and Blau and Sparks (2002) agree with opting for a more directive role within the tutoring sessions because it “prove[s] helpful to meeting the ESL students’ need for cultural information and for avoiding the related tendency for Socratic questioning to deteriorate into “trolling for the right answer” (p. 49). Furthermore, this can open and strengthen communication and collaboration between faculty and the UPRMEWC by uncovering what is being worked on both the classroom and the tutoring sessions at the writing center and improving upon the individualized feedback that is offered by tutors at the end of each session. While strategies like recasting and scaffolding are indeed effective manners of teaching writing, the temporal boundaries of tutoring sessions (20-30 minutes) beckons many students to commit to return visits, which should be a goal and a measure of success for the UPRMEWC. Writing on the tutee’s paper as well being open to directive strategies will make tutoring sessions more efficient without sacrificing the humanizing, empathetic elements they provide. However, it is important to reiterate that authorial ownership, no matter what the terms of negotiation are, should be at the behest of the writer and any revisions to the tutee’s work which the tutor suggests should be taught comprehensively and clearly. Authorial voice should always lay in the hands of the writer at all times and the tutor should be able to maneuver effectively, always intent on teaching rather than fixing.

It is imperative that as a writing center which primarily tutors ESL writers the UPRMEWC take steps to contextualize our services, even if this entails revising and updating policies created years ago without a diverse group of students in mind. If the UPRMEWC’s goal

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is to improve the writing process of tutees, professors and UPRMEWC faculty and the institution must understand that learning how to write English academically, for ESL students, is like navigating a dark room. The writing center could be a light in this dark room, one they can pick up and wield as a tool to find the door which leads to the light, which in this case, is further understanding, command of and empowerment in the use of English not just for academic and professional purposes but for personal ones as well. If we fail to take into account the different ways in which an ESL student learns English composition, we are failing to connect with their concerns and by extension the humanization of the learning process. Applying methods designed and used in a predominantly native-English speaking contexts can be detrimental to what we do in our particular language context. Ironically, Stephen North's (1984) landmark essay supports the notion of the tutor as a participant observer who "sees what happens during this 'ritual,' tr[ies] to make sense of it, observe[s] some more, revise[s] our model, and so on indefinitely" (p. 439). To deny tutees, or rather steer them away from certain teaching methods, does not promote this continuous revision. North further clarifies this analogy, adding that tutors "must measure their success not in terms of constantly changing [the] model they create, but in terms of changes in the writer...they [the tutors] observe it and change it: to interfere, to get in the way, to participate in ways that will leave the "ritual" forever altered" (p. 439). The writer's ritual of composing must be supplemented by a tutor willing to suggest changes, without prioritizing one concern over another, and while letting the tutee have a hand in deciding the best tutoring and learning method available for them.

Moving forward, further research into the use of directive tutoring strategies for ESL/ELL students will offer wider insight into how Writing Centers in the US and beyond can provide more effective and efficient services. The need to view non-directive and directive tutoring strategies as a fluid spectrum rather than a set decision a tutor makes upon commencing

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the session will assist Writing Center administration, staff and tutees in forming more inclusive, empathetic approaches towards learning.

The Idea of a Bilingual Writing Center

The results of the research conducted for this thesis point to a revisualization of the idea of a Bilingual Writing Center at UPRM, which is informed by bottom-up explorations of experiences and practices instead of on top-down designs valuably crafted to pursue much needed operational funding. As discussed in Chapter 3, in 2008 the English Writing Center that originally emerged as a pilot project of the Department of English at UPRM in 2004-2005 academic year was absorbed into one the programs of CIVIS, an institutional entity created with the support of a Title V grant from the US Department of Education. The English Writing Center, along with the Spanish Writing Center, which was formerly a project of the Department of Hispanic Studies at UPRM were institutionally merged into the Bilingual Writing Center. The chosen nomenclature and the merge itself are rare in writing center scholarship. In practice, the BWC would serve mainly as a term to identify a commonly shared workspace by the staff of the Spanish and English writing centers. For the past 9 years, there has been minimal collaboration between the centers, which casts doubts on the extent to which such a bilingual center ever materialized.

Bilingualism is nonetheless a central theme and practice at the UPRMEWC. English tutors do lean on their bilingualism to tutor writers, the term does not go further than that when describing the center. Reimagining the Bilingual Writing Center, and giving it an operative mission and vision would be a benefit to the UPRM community, as well as the special identity of the students that visit it. Also, it is important to understand what the bilingual component of the title refers to; Seigel (2003) describes bilingual education as a program where two or more languages are used. On the other hand, a bilingual person is one that knows two languages

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(Seigel, 2003). This begets the question: which is the operative definition? If we are to follow Seigel, we would have to concede that the Bilingual Writing Center is an appropriate concept insofar as it offers tutoring sessions in two languages. On the other hand, if we are to follow the second definition, we would have to take stock of the fact that not all BWC tutors are bilingual (i.e., proficient writers and speakers of both English and Spanish). Having proficient bilingual tutors working at the writing center would require BWC administrators to change their hiring process and conditions to reflect the nature of the center.

A bilingual writing center should go beyond a name for a shared space between English and Spanish writing centers; it should be indicative of the collaboration between both languages. A truly Bilingual Writing Center would serve as symbol of unity and collaboration between both languages and could be a place where research into Spanish and English acquisition can thrive and grow. Tutors who can offer both English and Spanish tutoring sessions would be beneficial towards a community of writers who have been evidenced to struggle in one language, English, and are constantly using their native language, Spanish. To join forces internally would entail creating resources and offering outreach activities on behalf of a center that values both languages equally.

It was an institutional imperative to name a bilingual center as part of the Title V CIVIS grant, but it never materialized and the two centers have formed their own identities despite sharing the same space. Tutors who are older and more knowledgeable about languages seem to think the bilingual center could hold possibilities for collaboration. However, tutees who are trying to learn English as expressed by tutee participant Giselle see the two languages as troublesome for their learning needs. More research is needed on the effects of bilingual collaboration in writing centers before more can be said on this issue.

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Limitations of the Study

Regarding research question #1, the search engines I used did not offer a full range of recent research on writing centers for both native English and ESL/ELL speakers, or for any other languages for that matter. This lack of awareness on where to find research also limited the scope of the review of the literature. Furthermore, research done in English writing centers that exist in places outside of the US, and the observation of its ideologies, methodologies and philosophies could have been reviewed in the literature to critically view how administration and staff interact with tutees in context similar to that of the UPRM (ESL students tutoring ESL tutees).

Regarding research questions #2, where I employed critical discourse analysis, there were limitations because I was unable to unearth all of the documents from the beginning to present day UPRMEWC history. This was most likely caused by faulty record keeping throughout the years, which was accelerated by constant moving of physical spaces, as well as the passage from physical record keeping to using digital equipment and programs. These gaps can possibly reveal more key tenets in the development of the UPRMEWC, BWC and associated programs that influenced it.

Regarding research questions #3, the exploratory case study, besides interviewing tutors and tutees, interviews could have also been done with BWC/CIVIS administrative staff to examine their perspective on policy and thoughts on possible revisions and changes. Since the research of this study was focused on ways to revise/readapt existing tutoring methodologies, policy and practices, administrative staff was not considered as a relevant source of information at the time. However, in hindsight, the perspective of the administrative staff could have shed light on tutoring activities as well as the factors that led the policy to be what it is today.

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Recommendations for Future Research

Considering the findings from research questions #1 I found there are differences in how ESL students should be treated and this contributes the small, but growing body of research that has been done on ESL/ELL students in the writing center. However, even though Rafoth (2015) is the most recent authority on this, his perspective still comes from ESL writing centers in the US, and not in contexts where English is not the first language such as Puerto Rico suggesting that more research is needed in this unique language context.

More research can be done on other writing centers that exist in predominantly ESL contexts which could be analyzed and compared to what is being done in the UPRM's BWC with the intention of applying what has worked in those centers to further improve and develop the services that are being offered here. Recently at UPRM, research in translanguaging (Mazak & Donoso, 2015) has shown that English and Spanish are used interchangeably in academic contexts and students find it challenging, a sentiment that was evidenced by tutees. Because our bilingual tutors use Spanish to help tutees understand English in their writing, a study that looks at translanguaging in the UPRMEWC would expand our understanding of the unique language situation and how English and Spanish interact in a tutoring situation.

Given the fact that Puerto Rico functions in two languages, and the UPRM is primarily bilingual, the idea of a Bilingual Writing Center is positive and reflects a general view of the expectations of our students upon leaving the university. Since the bilingual graduate is part of the mission statement of UPRM, the name symbolizes the expectation for our students. However, within the center itself the students seem to work better when their concentration is on improving one language at a time, even though tutors may use both in explaining rhetorical or grammatical issues. Research in the working of bilingual writing centers can help tease out some of those issues.

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During my research with the critical discourse analysis, I found that there was a lack of a record of administrative operations since its opening in 2004. Research could be done on the administrative operations of the UPRMEWC/BWC since its creation, and more comprehensive study on its position in the university, as well as its relation to higher administration, and to Puerto Rico as a whole. If more records were made available it would benefit the continued operations of the UPRMEWC because it would provide transparency which would create awareness as to how important the center is.

The Puerto Rican archipelago is a place rife with spaces that offer the opportunity for research in second language acquisition, and it would be ideal that the major public institutions like the UPRM took advantage of these unique context. English and Spanish are languages that have been under the political, academic and social scopes for decades, so research is needed into how to improve the ways we teach future generations, as well as better understand second language acquisition from an academic viewpoint. The UPRMEWC/BWC is one of the few resources that takes the UPRM's unique multilingual culture into account, and because it is a place that offers distance, comfort and collaboration away from English classrooms, it could aspire to become what one of the founding directors had envisioned so many years ago: "a cutting edge institution whose research and support programs in a multilingual education setting will contribute to the development of language-learning theory and practice" (B.Virtanen, personal communication, 2005).

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APPENDIX A: Tutor Interview Questions

I. Interview questions for UPRMEWC tutors

A. Biographical items

1. Birthplace
2. Age
3. Place(s) of residence and length of residence in these places
4. Language(s) spoken at home during childhood and adolescence
5. Language(s) spoken at school before entering college
6. Language(s) spoken by parents or parental figures
7. Parents' or parental figures' occupations
8. Schools attended prior to college (e.g., public or private; predominantly Spanish, bilingual or English immersion; location, size, etc.)
9. Language(s) currently spoken at home
10. Language(s) currently spoken in social interactions in college
11. Language(s) regularly used in curricular activities in college
12. Major
13. Year in college
14. First-year college English level placement at UPRM
15. Length of employment as tutor at the UPRMEWC
16. Other employment during college

B. UPRMEWC reflection questions

1. Why did you choose to become a tutor at the UPRMEWC?
2. How would you describe the services offered by the UPRMEWC?
3. How would you describe the tutoring policies that guide the UPRMEWC's daily

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work?

4. How would you describe the tutoring methods taught to you and other tutors during formal and informal training?
5. How would you describe the population of students served by the UPRMEWC?
6. How would you rate the services offered by the UPRMEWC for this population?
7. What works? What doesn't? What could be improved?

C. Personal tutoring experience reflection questions

1. What are your concerns when you are about to begin a tutoring session? Why?
2. How would you describe your tutoring strategy?
3. How effective do you think you have been as a tutor working with the population you described above?
4. What have been your strengths as a tutor working with this population?
5. What have been your weaknesses, shortcomings and/or challenges?
6. What has helped you (or could help you) overcome these weaknesses, shortcomings and/or challenges?
7. What kinds of problems have you encountered in tutoring sessions? Why do you think this happens (e.g., tutoring policies, tutoring method, tutoring context, tutor training, other reasons)?
8. Based on your ___-year(s) experience as a tutor at the UPRMEWC, what do you think about the tutoring policies and guidelines followed at the Center? Do you have any recommendations? Explain.
9. What do you think would help you improve your tutoring sessions with the population you work with at the UPRMEWC?
10. How would you compare your English abilities (written, verbal) to those of your

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tutees?

11. To what extent do those differences affect your ability to tutor? To what extent do they affect your tutoring session outcomes?

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APPENDIX B: Tutee Interview Questions

A. Biographical items

1. Birthplace
2. Age
3. Place(s) of residence and length of residence in these places
4. Language(s) spoken at home during childhood and adolescence
5. Language(s) spoken at school before entering college
6. Language(s) spoken by parents or parental figures
7. Parents' or parental figures' occupations
8. Schools attended prior to college (e.g., public or private; predominantly Spanish, bilingual or English immersion; location, size, etc.)
9. Language(s) currently spoken at home
10. Language(s) currently spoken in social interactions in college
11. Language(s) regularly used in curricular activities in college
12. Major
13. Year in college
14. First-year college English level placement at UPRM

B. Personal reflections on English questions

1. How would you describe your English communication (written, verbal) abilities?
Why do you think this is the case?
2. To what extent did your assessment of your English communication abilities changed after you entered UPRM? Why do you think this is the case?
3. How would you describe your experience in English courses at UPRM? How would you describe your ability to write in these courses? How would you describe your

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ability to verbally communicate in these courses?

4. To what extent do you need to communicate in English in other courses at UPRM?

Explain with reference to specific courses.

5. How would you describe your ability to handle these situations? What are your strengths? Your challenges? Why do you think that is the case?

C. Personal UPRMEWC tutoring experience questions

1. When was the first time you visited the UPRMEWC? Why did you visit it?
2. How would you describe that first tutoring experience? What worked for you? What didn't? Why do you think that was?
3. Did you choose to return to the UPRMEWC after that visit? Why?
4. How often do you visit the UPRMEWC?
5. How would you describe your experience at the EWCUPRM? What has helped? What hasn't?
6. To what extent are the UPRMEWC and its tutors serving your particular English communication needs? To what extent are they serving the needs of other students who are similar to you? To what extent are they serving the needs of other students who are different from you? How are they different from you? Explain.
7. What have you learned from your tutoring sessions? What haven't you learned that you wish you had?
8. How have you felt about yourself during tutoring sessions at the UPRMEWC? Are there particular sessions that you remember for how they made you feel about yourself?
9. What are, in your opinion, the UPRMEWC's strengths? What are its weaknesses, shortcoming or limitations?

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10. How could the UPRMEWC and its tutors help you better? What recommendations do you have for the improvement of UPRMEWC's policies, methods and tutoring services?