

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT: ANALYSIS  
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EXPECTATIONS AT WRITING CENTERS

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**Title**

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**MASTER OF ARTS**

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## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on international student expectations regarding Writing Centers, how participants develop these expectations and what Writing Centers can do to meet these expectations. Focus groups were held to gather data. The recorded interviews were then transcribed and analyzed using James Gee's approach to critical discourse analysis. Findings include four categories of expectations that were developed by participants before they went to the Writing Center, during a session, or after a few experiences: workshops, tutors in different disciplines, "involved" tutors, and "fix" paper. The analysis reveals that expectations categories are developed when students connect and/or disconnect themselves from the Writing Center services. Power dynamics involved include: Standard English, tutoring strategies designed for Native English Speakers, and advisers' powerful positions.

**Key words:** Expectations, writing, international students, graduate students, Writing Centers, focus groups, and critical discourse analysis.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The first time I went to the Writing Center was five years ago when I was on an academic and cultural exchange program in Council Bluffs, Iowa. I did my undergraduate and previous education in my native country: Algeria. During my exchange academic year, I was asked to consult the Writing Center for the first time by one of my instructors to review papers before I had to submit them. She suggested that I go so that I could improve my English. I was not sure what that meant exactly but I was curious to learn. I had only had one year as a Bachelors student in English back in my university in Algeria, so not much experience with written English and none writing for an American audience.

I remember how I felt when I walked into the Writing Center room for the first time. It was walk-in basis, so you go in and you work with whoever is available or wait for the person that you want to work with. I did not know I could choose whom to work with so I just asked for help and was assigned a tutor. The first thing I remember is the setting. There were many little round tables around the room with two to three people sitting and working together. It was a beautiful view. It was calm. Some people were sharing and others learning. I thought “Wow! Such a brilliant idea!” and “Why don’t we have such a support system in Algeria? We need it more because we don’t have exposure to the language like in the U.S.” but I left these questions to be answered later and just learned as much as I could. I went a couple of times during that year, as my instructor asked in class, and learned every time. I worked on a paper for an American Literature class. It was about one aspect of a novel we were reading in class. I went to the Writing Center after I was done with the paper as my instructor asked us in class.

I did not have any expectations at that point because I did not know how it worked. I just went with a mind to explore and learn how it works. The tutor would read over my paper, tell me what needed changing and why as I took notes of his/her remarks. I learned a lot from the process. Once I completed my program, I went back to Algeria to finish my undergraduate studies. After two years, I came back to the U.S. for my graduate studies and started going to the Writing Center again to get a different experience.

I did not go to the Writing Center my first semester of graduate school. I describe the first semester as numb when I was not sure what was expected of me and how to succeed in this new environment. Many international students I know had the same experience of a numb first semester; it is part of the experience. I did not know what to expect from the classroom, office space and colleagues, and university as a whole. Even when I knew what they wanted from me I did not know how to do it yet. There was a lot of discovery at that time, and still a little. When I finally had a “real” break as I called winter break, I started to reflect on my first semester experience. I found out that I was overwhelmed while I could get assistance from campus resources such as the Writing Center. I decided I would start going to the graduate Writing Center to get help with my papers, that way someone who knows what professors expect could direct me and the stress over the work load would lessen.

When I was thinking of attending the Writing Center conferences I realized I wanted to work with someone I knew because it would be easier to talk to them about issues in my writing. I chose to work with a specific tutor (I will refer to him as “Alexander”, not his real name) because we met at many international student events and

activities. I also assumed that he knew what kind of language issues and cultural differences can affect my writing since he was involved in many international student events and his research interests were similar. It was also comforting to think that he must understand international students.

Just like the first time I went to a Writing Center in my undergraduate studies, I went to the graduate Writing Center to review a paper for class. I wanted to get feedback on the writing and how it met assignment criteria. I was not sure what to expect regarding how the session would go. I just assumed it would be as my undergraduate experience. I heard in my department that the undergraduate Writing Center and graduate one have different set ups. The undergraduate Writing Center is like the one I went to before with little tables in one room. While the graduate one was in a small room, with one table for the tutor and student. I was not sure how that would be different but I did not give it much thought because I needed that paper reviewed and wanted to start a habit of going to the Writing Center to learn more about writing in the U.S. graduate school.

Once I walked in, sat down, and had my paper open on the computer, I waited for direction. The reason I went that day was to go over a professor's feedback on a paper for revision. I expected that Alexander would guide me through the process by telling me what needs work. I assumed that he would look through the paper and identify what was wrong with it and what needed attention. Just like my first undergrad experience, I thought I would receive information and take notes. I assumed wrong, because the next thing Alexander said was, "What do you want to work on today?" and I was surprised about that question. I went there with a paper and I wanted to make sure it is good, so I thought, "You tell me!" I calmly said that I just needed someone like a native speaker to



tell me how the paper makes sense and whether it is well written without mistakes. Then he started reading the paper and every time he came across something that needed rephrasing for example he would read it and ask me what it means. I was thinking, “Why don’t you just tell me what it should mean?” It was not clear to me why he was asking all these questions. At times, in our early meetings I had the thought that he doubted my English, then immediately negated that. I knew for a fact he didn’t judge my English but I could help but think that because of the questions about my writing choices . The more sessions I went to the more I started to understand that asking me to think of my writing is a good practice to pick up for myself. I realized that sentences should be to the point, more succinct. Only a little bit after that I read an article about tutoring that encouraged consultants to ask all kinds of questions. That is when I realized, “this is how it works here” but nobody told me that.

I realized after a while that what informed my assumptions and expectations about how the tutor-student interaction goes was due to my experience in Algeria. When I tutored students in English in Algeria it was my job to ask what they need to learn, then work with them on a solution. It was not peer tutoring. There was a clear hierarchy. After I knew what the student needed, I would think of activities or ways to help them understand. Sometimes that takes a little lecturing. There is a power dynamic because I know they too expect me to take the role of a mentor.

I had to analyze the situation and read in my field to understand these questioning and discussion techniques, but would other international students do that? Would they get past the frustration? Would they have to do the research? That is when I decided to start reading scholarship in both Second Language Writing (SLW) and Writing Center

Research (WCR) to find out about international student expectations and experiences at the Writing Center. I have not found as many stories about international student experiences of the Writing Center to feed my curiosity, so I decided to ask and find out. In this paper, I analyze the existing scholarship on the topic and discuss focus group responses that I received in order to learn about these unique experiences and offer a list of expectations and recommendations for Writing Centers.

International students are mostly second language writers (L2 writers). L2 writers are defined as individuals who are writing in languages they are actively learning. They represent “two categories” based on visa status of students: international students and U.S. residents...the distinction between the two groups is clear as they have different experiences and needs (Matsuda and Hammil 267). L2 writers who are international students are, therefore, students who are not familiar with the American system of education as they had their previous educational experience outside the U.S. and they are considered L2 writers because they write in at least one other language than English. The Writing Center, being part of the US higher educational system, is subject to navigation and experimenting from international students.

In addition to my experiences, I know many international students who do not go to the Writing Center, or if they go they do not realize its actual value. They talk about being sent there by professors or advisers to work on their English. Sometimes they simply do not know about it or they say they do not have time to go. I know that these students struggle because some of them ask for review of their papers and talk about their ideas with me. But they would not go to the Writing Center to do the same thing. It may be easier for them to work with someone with whom they had already established a

relationship and with whom they feel comfortable talking about their writing. The trust and comfort lacks in Writing Centers. As a result of my experiences and those of many more at Writing Centers, I believe that it is important to study international student expectations to come up with a set of recommendations for tutors and the Writing Center to work with international students both in the institution I conducted the study and in other institutions.

Both the university demographics and the specific Writing Center play important role in understanding the participants and the research questions. The university I am carrying the study at is a midsize upper mid-western university. The location of the university suggests that the student and community population is mostly white. There is a small percentage of international students on campus compared to many universities, but it is still quite a large number for a university in the region. The university does many efforts of integration and many networking events among international students and between international and domestic students.

The Writing Center is called at this institution the center for writers and is divided into two centers, in two different locations, for a year now: the graduate Center for Writers and the undergraduate Center for Writers. This division happened in an attempt to serve the different needs of graduate and undergraduate students and to have more space for each center. In this study I focus on the graduate Writing Center. I know the director, assistant, and many of the tutors at the graduate Writing Center personally so I talk to them often about their goals and how they work with students. I also know about many of their projects including more collaboration with advisors of graduate students in the disciplines. In addition, they reach out to as many students as possible by going to

classes to talk about the services. They are interested in learning about specific needs of international graduate students when I mentioned my project to them.

In this paper I will provide an overview of scholarship that deals with international students or second language writers at the Writing Center to lead up to the research questions this study engages in. James Gee's approach to critical discourse analysis provides the theoretical framework. The methods section will detail methods and approaches I took in carrying out the study. I will discuss in the methods section, the rationale for focus groups and approaches to recruiting participants and analyzing data. The results and discussion section will analyze findings and discuss their meaning in relation to my research questions. Finally is my conclusion and implications of the study where I will answer my research questions and discuss possible future research.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

International L2 writers often have a very limited understanding of Writing Center services, if any, which results in the creation of wrong assumptions and expectations. My paper responds to the call made by Judith K. Powers and Jane V. Nelson that “International ESL writers...are less likely to be acquainted with Writing Center conferencing and collaborative learning strategies and more likely to misunderstand the process in which they are engaged. Additional research in this area is needed”(120). This research is designed to benefit both students and the Writing Center. Increasing international L2 writers’ level of understanding of the services Writing Centers offer would help both the students and Writing Centers. International students would be able to get support in their writing process, while the Writing Center learns what international students expect from them so that to avoid frustrating sessions where tutors and students are not communicating well. This frustration is almost non-avoidable in a case where many international students may not understand or know how the Writing Center works because their previous experiences with tutoring are different. Although Powers and Nelson published this article twenty years ago, there is still much work that needs to be done to respond to their call for research on L2 writers at Writing Centers. However, some research has been informing the field in different ways that contribute to filling up Powers and Nelson “knowledge gap”.

Looking at international student expectations of the Writing Center in U.S. institutions invites us (scholars) to look at several areas of research. First, I will discuss issues of expectations to offer a context to this study’s main problem. Then, I will move

to existing works on international student experiences at the Writing Center that lead up to my research questions.

The work entitled, “An Empirical Study of Students’ Expectations of Writing Centers”, by Deborah L. Depiero discusses student expectations of Writing Centers. Depiero conducted a survey about freshmen student experiences at the Writing Center and their expectations for a tutoring session. She references Neal Lerner to establish that expectations are important to study because of “the way students’ expectations can control the structure and content of the session” (25). These freshmen students came from high schools that mostly do not have Writing Centers, and if they do, they may not work the same way as in college. Therefore, student expectations are formed either by previous experience, or by faculty or advisers, or from their first encounter with the service. It is important to know student’s expectations because it also sets their attitudes in the session and their goals for it.

Students are usually strangers to the idea of the Writing Center just like I was a few years ago during my academic exchange program. They go in with no idea what to do or what to expect for the session. Or in other times they have clear goals but those are contradictory to what Writing Centers offer because in many cases “Despite the ideal of making a better writer, rather than a better paper, most of the students...expect to come out of the session with a better paper” (Depiero 45). These expectations are not informed ones because students are not familiar with the service. If they do not have a “better paper” by the end of the session, they may consider the session a “bad” one.

Tutors, as well, being an integral part of the Writing Center culture, have formed many expectations about interacting and working with students. Tutors may expect

students to come prepared and to want to work on themselves as writers instead of “correcting” a paper. Depiero’s findings suggest that students who never went to the Writing Center before may go in with a “negative frame of mind, expecting the tutor to concentrate on what they had done wrong”, while having “experience with the Writing Center seems to have changed their expectations.”(43) There is hope that students can change their perceptions of the Writing Center after experiencing it for a while. So whatever the international student expectations are I believe that the two sets of expectations can be bridged. It is important that the Writing Center knows their students expectations. That way more students can benefit and a methodology to how to work with international students can be developed/revised.

The difference between what students expect of the Writing Center and what tutors think student expectations are is a real issue that requires attention. Depiero talks about “situations in the Writing Center where tutors would complain ‘don’t these students know what we do here?’” Then suggests “No! They do not know what we do in the Writing Center. How could they? They are outsiders to the culture of the Writing Center” (4). Each party needs to step out of those separate boxes and create a new one, one that bridges over to both. I believe in the power of communication expectations. I am hoping that this study will set some stepping-stones for this bridge of communication to be built, as communication of expectations and assumptions improves clarity and makes everyone responsible.

The works I reference below are valuable, as they deal with good experiences thanks to awareness and bad experiences due to ignorance of expectations. Sarah Nakamaru’s “Theory In/To Practice: A Tale of Two Multilingual Writers: A Case-Study

Approach to Tutor Education” deals with how little tutors and students know about each other’s needs and goals. She presents two case studies with experiences of multilingual writers that struggle at the Writing Center. Nakamaru explains, “These students come from different backgrounds and have diverse strengths and needs. One size never fits all when working with student writers, and this is certainly true when it comes to multilingual writers of English” (14). Providing lists of suggestions to tutors on how to work with L2 writers does not work if we treat it a recipe book. In both case studies with Li and Aki there are similarities in how they prefer a session to be, but there are also differences.

“Some seem to present the population of ‘ESL students’ as a more or less monolithic group who share certain assumptions and expectations” (Nakamaru 18). Yet international students come from different backgrounds and cultures that value different things and are new to the U.S. higher education system. Each individual in this group would have to develop their own ways of going about discovering the system. As Writing Centers are part of that system, every individual international student would have a different way of hearing about and of experiencing it.

In “Tutoring and revision: Second language writers in the Writing Center” by Jessica Williams it can be seen that the way a tutoring session goes depends on the goals and expectations set by both parties. L2 writers, including international students, attend the Writing Center “for many reasons and with a range of goals, some of which may conflict with the goals of WC practice” (Williams 173). I believe that conflicting goals are set because of having formed contrasting expectations. In addition, L2 writers are usually told to go to the Writing Center by their professors and advisers if or because



their English is not good. This may be how they develop such expectations as, “the Writing Center would act as an editing service rather than a tutoring lab” (Canavan 2). Not only do these international students get this misconception but it is also assumed that if they go to the Writing Center it is because their English is “bad”; who would want to go there? Thus, it is not surprising students have a cynical mindset. That is why an assessment of how many students experience this kind of motivation, if we can call it so, becomes important. Asking this particular student population what experiences they have in the Writing Center can start investigating how to fix this issue.

Christian Brendel, as a tutor himself, acknowledges that tutors face frustrations regarding expectations, especially related to L2 writers. Tutors have no way of knowing the literacy background of their L2 students unless communicated directly to them. Methods of tutoring and interaction may work with mainstream students but “the mainstream approach that tutors use in helping linguistically diverse students may be ineffective” (4) Much communication is needed between tutors and students and many more studies that focus on international students need to be carried out for us to understand the diverse needs they have.

Frances Nan suggests ways to work with Chinese international students at the Center for Writers where an emphasis on the importance of building a partnership between international students and tutors is crucial. She presents recommendations for tutors when working with international students from her own experience as a tutor. She argues that these partnerships between tutors and English Language Learning (ELL) writers begin by assessing where the writer is, being direct and stating expectations how the sessions should be conducted, in addition to being transparent about comments and

explaining what is “good” or “bad”. Noticing body language is another way for tutors to show they are engaged. In addition, tone of voice and body language are important communicators of interest, which seems to be a measurement for this student population. Usually, students “will be able to tell when a tutor is merely being polite or when he or she is consciously trying to speak slowly...” (58). Speaking slowly is good when the student needs it but if he or she doesn’t then it would be annoying to apply such a stereotype. In addition, the issue is not always about fluency and pace but also about lexicon. The author then suggests engaging in meta-talk (or chitchat as she refers to it). Chatting a little about things that are not related to the work may help establish trust and helps build an interpersonal relationship that is crucial. Finally, an evaluation to end the session is needed: a kind of final assessment. This can happen by making sure the students can repeat what they learned and reapply it. The recommendations offered by Nan are very important ones in relation to the Chinese student population, but the scope of her study is limited to one nationality. My study offers a wider scope, across nations, to give a little more comprehensive conclusion to how international students’ want/expect from the session.

The works presented in this literature review regarding international students and other L2 writers so far have one thing in common: they do not address all aspects of international students experiences and expectations at the Writing Center. First is including international student voice in research (Second Language Writing or Writing Center Research).

Assumptions and expectations can only get us a few places, even with educated guesses because every individual student has a different experience than the other. Paul

Matsuda and Mathew Hammill, when discussing second language writing practices in the classroom, suggest to

ask students during writing conferences to explain their rhetorical decisions in their own words, which can help teachers understand more about their students' work without assuming that perceived differences are necessarily rooted in linguistic or cultural differences (270).

Although Matsuda and Hammill refer to the classroom and provide this piece of advice to composition teachers, it applies to Writing Center tutoring, as well. Tutors could ask why students made the specific choices they made in their papers and learn about the rhetoric that the students employ. Only by a two-way discussion can assumptions be cleared and both parties experiences "good". The Writing Center should not be considered a language center for international students where they "correct" their papers, "Rather it is an additional resource that can be incorporated into students' repertoire of learning strategies (Matsuda and Hammil 273). Because Writing Centers are among of the most valuable resources on campus, more students—particularly international students should be taking full advantage of it.

This paper provides an analysis of international students' expectations and assumptions of the Writing Center to understand how to work with this population better. The questions this research raises are: What assumptions and expectations do international students have about the Writing Center's goals? What informs these assumptions and expectations? And how would these expectations help fine-tune tutor training and other Writing Center practices?

### CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to answer the research questions, I will implement James Gee's critical discourse analysis. I will provide in this section a small literature review of the critical discourse analysis and a rationale why I chose Gee's approach to address my research questions. Before that I will first discuss what critical discourse analysis does.

I will implement critical discourse analysis because I believe in Foucault's main idea behind Critical discourse as a theory, where he argues, "discourse is one of the principal activities through which ideology is circulated and reproduced" (Barbara Johnstone 45). The way different people use language changes according to whom they speak to because of different belief systems. In the case of my study, analyzing participants' responses on their expectations through a critical eye will reveal power dynamics present with the situation of international students at Writing Centers.

Language users make choices when using language that illustrate "a way of seeing the world" (45). Everyone always has many choices to how to say specific things whether they are aware of the choice or not. And whether they realize what impact what they say has on others or not, the fact is that it does. There are three choices, among others, that language users make according to Johnstone: "choices about the representation of action, actors, and events; choices about the representation of knowledge status; and choices about incorporating and representing other voices" (46-50) When using discourse analysis to look at a set of data, it is therefore important to keep in mind that participants choose these words and that they portray an ideology. In the discussion section, I will analyze passages from participants in the study by looking at linguistic choices and what those mean in relation to power dynamics.

Rebecca Rogers establishes in her book, *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education*: “Power is a central concept in critical discourse analysis” (3). How language portrays power or the absence of power is an important issue for discussion in a critical discourse analysis. In order to fully inform a critical discourse analysis, there is a need to look into several things: “How they use their bodies; integrate objects, artifacts, and technology; use gestures, time, and space; adjust their tone of voice when they speak; choose the words they use; and interact in particular ways with others” (Rogers 5). We could consider many things “discourse”, analyzing words in only one approach to understanding participants’ worlds, but this is an approach that helps answer the research questions posed in this research study.

Although there is no one correct step-by-step method to do a critical discourse analysis it is good practice to identify one that aligns well with a particular set of questions. Rogers suggests “What is important is that analyses are connected to a theory of the social world and a theory of language that is coherent. Beyond that procedures and methods vary”(10). I will first, briefly, introduce two approaches to critical discourse analysis: Norman Fairclough and Gunther Kress and discuss why they do not work with my research questions. Then, introduce the one I will apply in this study: Gee, and the reason why I think Gee’s approach applies better to my research questions and goals.

Fairclough’s works focus on the question of “mediation between the textual and social world” (Rogers 12). The analysis of discourse allows a scholar to look at a text and study it in relation to what kind of social relationships or social situations need change and how to make that effective. Fairclough is concerned with “social transformation” where he analyzes social problems through texts to enact action in the world both locally

and globally (12). I am not concerned in this study to change a social situation in the sense Fairclough suggests. The issue of international students at the Writing Center is a social situation I want to make better so that requires change, but Fairclough refers to change that is transformational. Through this study, I attempt to build bridges and understand what expectations the participants have and how they developed them.

Rogers suggests that Kress's main concern is different from Fairclough in that Kress's work is "concerned with how power gets realized in linguistic forms" (13). When individuals use language they make relationships between words and meanings, those meanings carry power in different ways. While Kress's approach looks into how to identify what the relationships between words and power are and how they are portrayed in language (Rogers 13), I am interested in studying language in use, with a different focus. I analyze how the participants' language indicates how they communicate to establish connections and form their own understandings of Writing Centers. The words the participants use in this study reveal power dynamics they do not carry power within themselves.

I do not want to assume that the participants will have a specific kind of view towards the Writing Center; rather, I prefer that information emerge from the analysis in the results. In his book, *An Introduction To Discourse Analysis Theory And Method*, Gee defines discourse as "language in use" (8). There are many reasons individuals choose words or signs over others when communicating with other individuals. "Language-in-use is about saying, doing, and being" (16) therefore, Language use portrays meanings that maybe conscious or unconscious. Participants in this study, use language to

communicate expectations in direct and indirect ways. I will discuss the meaning of the participants' language use in relation to power dynamics.

Individuals use language to “build the world around” and to “engage in world building” in different ways (Gee 16). Gee lays out seven ways to build “realities” in the following order: significance, practices (activities), identities, relationships, politics (the distribution of social goods), connections, sign systems and knowledge (17-20). Gee argues that every time individuals speak or write they engage in meaning building using one of the seven tasks depending on their goal. For example if their goal is to make an event or person more important than the other, they would signal that in their speech or writing to make the event or person more significant, and so on. This study looks into how participants use language to build meaning as if it is concrete. It is in fact true that language builds and breaks things like when individuals make promises or break them. (Gee 17) This meaning making can be done through different “realities” depending on what the situation and intention it was said to portray certain power dynamics.

After analysis of the results one building task emerged as dominant, and that is the one I will discuss in the results section more: Connections. A critical discourse analyst using this building task asks: How does this piece of language connect or disconnect, how does it make one thing relevant or irrelevant to another? (Gee 19) When any study's participants “make meaning” by connecting and disconnecting things, they use the connections building task. In critical discourse analysis, according to Gee, once we understand how the building tasks are used, we can conclude power dynamics. In the case of the Connections building task, if a participants is connecting or disconnecting

things or themselves from different things using language then they are reinforcing or pushing against ideologies.

Connections building task seeks to find meaning that connects and/or disconnects things in an attempt to understand the “realities” of individuals’ lives. Gee explains how individuals do it when he suggests,

We use language to render certain things connected or relevant (or not) to other things, that is, to build connections or relevance... Things are not always inherently connected or relevant to each other. Often, we have to make such connections. Even when things seem inherently connected or relevant to each other, we can use language to break or mitigate such connections. (19)

Participants of this study, as “foreigners” disconnect with what they know about tutoring as they start connecting to new ways they find at the Writing Center. Participants also make relevant and/or irrelevant what they learn about the Writing Center depending on the experiences they live once they visit the center.

Using Gee’s critical discourse analysis approach allows us to learn what informs expectations of participants, meaning which “reality” of the seven building tasks these particular participants live in and identify with. After looking at the results, it can be seen that students do not usually form expectations before they go to the Writing Center but once they are in a session or reflect. It becomes clear, then, that participants judge things they know about the center relevant or irrelevant to their experience and vice versa depending on their tutor-student interaction. The Connections building task, therefore, illustrates how expectation categories came up in this study’s pool of participants.



## CHAPTER 4: METHODS

Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin consider focus groups one of the approaches to qualitative interviewing. Rubin and Rubin consider focus groups as spaces where “group members respond to each other’s points, agreeing, disagreeing, or modifying, in anyway they choose.” (30) When students sit in what looks like a natural conversation setting, they feel more comfortable sharing their stories. The value of face-to-face conversation with a group of students is in creating something similar to a social atmosphere where sharing stories and experiences is an everyday practice. Although regular conversations and focus groups may seem similar they have different goals: “ordinary conversations are most often about sociability and maintaining a relationship, while interviews are more about making a relationship to help find an answer to a research question.” (Rubin and Rubin 99) In the focus groups I set up, the questions I asked kept the participants on point about what they should be talking about so that helped direct the conversation in a good way to answer this study’s research questions. A limitation can arise when focus groups ran more like an ordinary conversation than a study. But in that case it is the up to me as a facilitator to make sure to bring everyone back to focus.

David Silverman and Amir Marvasti discuss qualitative interviewing strategies when they suggest, “many interview studies elicit respondents’ perceptions.” (69) The students’ voice becomes more clear when participants are given a chance to share their experiences. One of the limitations of interviewing approaches, whether in groups or individually is that it may be a limited look into the whole experience. Although we do not get a full experience view, we get some aspect of it that the student deems useful in relation to the questions we ask them at that particular time.

To recruit international students to participate in the study, I sent a solicitation email to the director of the graduate Writing Center. He in turn forwarded the email to international students that attend the Writing Center. In recruiting participants for this study, I realized that many international students do not speak English as their first language. This means that the participants may not have a rich vocabulary repertoire. This may raise concern for the analysis, like how to know that the participants are actually choosing specific language/words over others since I am analyzing their use of language to indicate their expectations and experiences. This is a somewhat legitimate concern but it does not and should not affect the validity of this study because there are other cues that affect what students want to stress as important. For example I will look for experiences that are shared by many students across focus groups. Also international students usually repeat words and phrases if they want to stress them as important. In addition, tone is indicative of attitude towards experiences because many international students are expressive.

For this study, I interviewed five groups of international students. I had twenty participants total. The first focus group had four participants, the second had five, the third had four, the fourth had four and the fifth had three. I facilitated the focus groups myself because I believed that my experience would help me set up credibility and explain my motivation for meeting with these students and asking them questions about their experience at the Writing Center. Moreover, I know a lot of the students through international student activities. It was easier to talk to them because of that. We had many other discussions before, and it was a comfortable setting where sharing stories about being an international student in the U.S. could be told.

As a facilitator, my role was to guide the group by asking open questions for all participants to discuss. I asked relevant questions to the research at hand (See list in Appendix A) and helped the group stay focused. Before I asked any questions, I offered a framing introduction by sharing my experience at the graduate Writing Center. I started with general questions such as field of study and year in school to start the conversations. I then, asked more focused questions about the students' experience at the Writing Center. Participants signed the consent forms (Appendix B), and then the conversations started.

Now that methods of recruiting and gathering data have been presented, I will move to data preparation and organization. I will first talk about transcription with Inqscribe. After that, I will talk about my method of organizing data in different folders under individual themes, then putting them back together for the analysis.

I chose to transcribe all the speech from each focus group including pauses and chitchat at the beginning and end of the meetings. Since I did not have any particular angle to look at the results from, I wanted to look through all that has been said and pick out what stands out the most for discussion. I started in the beginning to transcribe using iTunes to listen to a phrase, pause, write and repeat for the whole focus group. It took me a whole day (about 8 hours) to finish one hour of speech. Then I started the second one and Inqscribe.com was recommended to me. The software allowed me to slow down the pace of speech, so I was able to type more words at a time and get done a lot sooner. Another advantage of using the software was that I could type and listen in the same space rather than having a word document that would make me switch between the audio and word.

As soon as themes emerged from the data, I created different folders for each theme and put all the data from across all the focus groups that belong to those themes. I will share which themes appeared most in the results section. Once I realized which major theme and subthemes are present, I went ahead and selected the most representative passages from student's responses to different questions (Appendix A) Once I selected passages to discuss, I assigned pseudonyms to the participants as can be seen in the results and discussion section. The passages I discuss and analyze are most representative because they demonstrate points that are present across focus groups by different participants. I chose to only focus on language use for analysis. I did not take into consideration tone of voice or other factors that participants may have used to indicate different things. This is mainly because of time constraints.

I read through each focus group and highlighted themes and motifs that are repeated. Then I crosschecked each theme in the other groups to see if the pattern continues. After that I put all the passages from each focus group under the same theme in order to fully see the pattern and how it shows in different passages of the transcribed text. I had multiple pages of passages for each theme, so I used the research questions and goal of the study as parameters in selecting which passages to use as examples in the results and in the discussion sections.

Workshops, tutors in the disciplines, "involved" tutors, and "fix" paper were the main discussed themes across groups. I identified passages that best represented the participants voice on these themes in order to discuss. For each of the selected passages, I wrote a summary and context of what the participants said. Then I discussed how that answers research questions by applying Gee's approach of critical discourse analysis. As

I read a passage I ask myself: what is the participant connecting or disconnecting with what? And, what is he/she connecting and disconnecting with himself/herself? That is to establish how these particular students forms these particular expectations. Then I ask myself, why did they establish that connection or disconnections? What does that say about their ideology or the ideology they perceive in the world around them? The results section lays out what I found out in the groups that falls under the four main categories and the discussion section analyzes how students formed categories of expectations and what power dynamics they reveal.

## CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

Four main categories of expectations have emerged in the results of the focus groups: workshops, tutors in different disciplines, “involved” tutors, and “fix” paper. Each of these expectations are formed during sessions because when I asked participants in a direct way what their expectations were they told me about their expectations within sessions. The expectations are, therefore, a result of student-tutor interaction mostly. In addition, in some cases participants have been told about the Writing Center by their advisers or faculty members, so once they were in the session they either find the center meeting their expectations or challenging them.

### *Workshops*

This expectation is about participants’ interest in workshops, topics they are interested in, and ways of scheduling or organizing the workshops. The first, second, and fifth groups discussed workshops more, while the third discussed working with tutors from the disciplines more, and the fourth group discussed expectations about tutor “investment” more than other groups.

In the first group discussion, Sabrina said that she and Eleine went to a Writing Center workshop earlier the week of our interview. Eleine first commented on the workshops, “maybe lengthen the duration of the workshop, I think that would be more helpful” Eleine expects longer and more workshops that will allow her to learn more. Sabrina believes that organizing workshops once in a while will not help as much, instead she expects that Writing Centers be able to stretch out the programs for workshops and insert them as “part of our schedule... because we don’t know uh how to write a literature review or how to write a prospectus.” As international students, who are not familiar with

academic writing in the U.S., many academic genres are new. Sabrina and Thomas agree that workshops could be worth “credits” and Thomas added, “Especially if you cover in those generals. I think many people may pick up how to write a thesis all at once.”

In the second group, Carl expects “workshops for international students” would be held. He adds, “They must be for basic writing, which you should use while in United States because you have to publish in American journals. You should choose this sort of words. Your context must be like in such a way that you can convey your idea.” Many international students may need a guided pathway into U.S. academic writing and these workshops would be a good addition from Writing Centers.

In the fifth group, Logan says that he expects to attend: “a specific workshop in terms of critical thinking, brainstorming, or to find problem in writing, so they re one workshop for this topic one workshop for another topic. Then that could help students. Go around and check their writing” Logan suggests a list of things that he and maybe other students (domestic ones too) need to work on for their writing. However, Carolina has a set of suggested topics, she expects Writing Centers to get such as basic language and writing skills that should be developed and reinforced. These skills are still needed in graduate writing, even more with international students, such as “question marks, use of commas, semi colon, and they could be different subjects, coordination, and conjunction or whatever it is.” Although these sound basic, they are still need with many international student, especially with those that started leaning English more recently than others.

### *Tutors in Disciplines*

Graduate student participants note that working with tutors that do not know the field makes it harder to meet their goals for the sessions. Participants expect to work with

tutors in their departments or major field of study, for a range of reasons: it takes less time, it is easier to communicate, and many more reasons.

In the first focus group, Laura shares her experience with a tutor while she was working on her literature review, “she wasn’t aware what was the type for engineering...so that was kind of like I expected you to know this already.” Each field has different conventions of writing that students need to become familiar with. Laura reiterates later in the discussion, “consultants should be from all the different backgrounds...because the style of writing is different.” It would be more helpful and less stressful to work with someone in the field. Thomas suggests that working with a tutor in the sciences, according to his own experience, is better because the tutor’s recommendations would be better informed, “what she would write would make sense in the science background.” In contrast, it would consume more energy and time to work with a tutor who is experienced in writing only and does not know about the student’s field of study.

Participants in the second group also shared experiences where they would have preferred working with a tutor from their departments or fields of study. When I asked, what participants thought the role of the Writing Center was, Andrew shared his expected goals from the center,

**Andrew:** “I think their goal should be to help international students in the scientific writing...rather than the technical part.”

**I:** mhm, so you think there should be discipline specific people?

**Andrew:** yeah



Andrew does not expect tutors to help him develop content but he believes that tutors should be able to help with “scientific writing”, as an international student who is not familiar with the conventions of scientific writing in a U.S. institution.

The graduate Writing Center has tutors in the disciplines, but the participants mostly do not seem to know that. Chris did not know that he had the option to sign up with a tutor in engineering so he signed up randomly, and says: “she was not related to the engineering as whole.” The tutor was most probably a writing specialist from the humanities. Chris did not think that the tutor and him were communicating well because she s not in the same area. Also the tutor worked on language, as she could not help with developing ideas. Chris says, “(she) focused on grammar. I don’t want her to modify the content, but I think if she has some background to engineering, not specific like civic engineering or my specialized target of engineering.” Chris wishes he could get help with content but since the tutor is not in that area of study, he prefers that she does not comment on his paper’s content. He would be a lot better if the tutor was familiar with engineering writing conventions. Chris says, “I feel it is much better”, so I do not think he does not value the language and grammar feedback, but that does not seem to be the kind of feedback he was hoping for.

The third focus group discussed this expectation more than any of the groups because as graduate students they participants seem to want some one who is already on the same ground as they are. Jack says that he expects them to work only on language and grammar because they do not know much about his field of study or topic, in order to understand his paper; he says, “They are not expert with that.” Chris seems to want to work with someone to direct him not to raise questions, especially that the tutor is not

well informed. Dave agrees that it is hard to work with tutors who do understand the field of study and writing conventions within it. In his experience, Dave says, “I was asking her question more than she was asking me.” Dave went to the session prepared and concerned, “I was like asking her this is good? This is bad? Do I have to change this? What about this part and this part and this title?” He knew where he wanted her to look and give feedback. However, it seems that it is time and energy consuming. Jack also adds, “when the other person has no technical knowledge...takes forever for them to really help.” It takes time for the participants, (the international graduate ones) to explain what they mean to tutors both at a language and a technical level and time may not allow that.

If tutors were more familiar with topics in science fields, participants would not have to worry whether the tutors understand fully what the students are trying to say. Adrian always raises the question, “Are you acquainted with the system for this or not?” how much the tutor knows about a field of study tells how much they can help. There is an issue with that: there are not enough tutors to cover all fields across departments. Adrian acknowledges this fact, yet expects the tutors to be prepared to work with students from emerging fields. Tutor training will have to stay up to date. Adrian says, “Because the sciences now are getting more specification even one branch is going to be a department, you have to cope with the system.” He realizes that if a tutor were not in the umbrella field at least, it would be hard for the tutor to help. He expects that the Writing Center look for a way to accommodate the emerging needs from separating the graduate and undergraduate centers. The graduate Writing Center is expected to offer something different than the undergraduate one. Jack says, “for grad students it will be nicer to have

a professional...or a graduate student who at least knows the area...and he can better help him streamlining the ideas”. If the undergraduate one was considered to only focus on language and writing strategies, then the graduate one is expected to do that and more; more because graduate students need help at a “technical level” as Jack put it.

In the fourth focus group, there were more undergraduate students, who were mostly discussing time limits in the undergraduate Writing Center. But they were still concerned about having a tutor who took the class before or who was familiar with their particular assignment. Alyssa expects that the tutor “knows the subject, she says, “because it would just make it easier for them too.” The tutor then, does not have to become familiar with the assignment; they can focus on the specific student’s needs instead. For a graduate international student, many times their adviser becomes a factor. Robert says, “it was difficult to explain my topic to the tutor.” He did not know how to explain his research topic and convey ideas to a tutor who did not know the field. Robert, seems to think that it is important tutors know the field. Participants need help with writing but in Robert’s experience, he does not want his adviser to see early drafts of his writing’ he says, “I don’t want to discuss my writing problem with my adviser.” The adviser is the person that looks into the value of ideas and their important in relevance to their goals in their graduate programs.

#### *“Involved” Tutor*

Participants expect tutors to use the time, “get involved”, and be “invested” in their writing and in helping them learn. In some participants’ experiences tutors may have seemed distant. In the first group, Thomas thinks that asking questions to generate discussion about the paper may end up distancing the tutor and the student. Thomas says

that tutors “Just sit back and say (oh what do you think?)” Thomas argues that he would rather work alone than go to get help and be asked questions. He adds, “I would appreciate a little involvement at the beginning then I pick the trend and I am able, I think, to cross-check myself.” He expects that the tutor would direct him in some way even if not fully, just enough to see what he needs to work on and how.

Maybe tutors are “in a rush” or at least what feels like it to Laura who says, “I went there and she just kind of like made like a drawing kind of, it wasn’t clear.” Laura went to work on an outline for her thesis. The tutor seemed to have brainstormed and written some things down, in what seemed to Laura as a rushed process. That is because by the time Laura wanted to ask questions about the tutors suggestions, the time ran out.

Thomas uses the phrase “just sit back” to signal that he does not believe the tutor is trying to help because he/she “sit(s) back.” Thomas does not find the tutor interested in being there and helping him. The same thing happens with Laura when she felt that the tutor “rushed” through her paper. She was disappointed that the tutor was not as engaged in the session as she had expected.

### *“Fix” Paper*

Participants used language like “fix” and “correct” when they refer to their work with tutors. Participants seem to replace “write” or “revise” with “fix” and “correct” in their description of their writing processes or what they expect from tutors. In the first group, Laura actually expects correction where the tutor find something wrong and suggest an alternative correct replacement. Laura says, “(the tutor) goes through the paragraph and correct like punctuation or order.” Although this is not the primary goal of the center this is something they work with. It becomes problematic when students think

the main focus of the center is “fixing grammar.” In the second, Hailey expects, “their main focus is just fixing grammar mistakes we make in our papers.” Hailey’s expectation has been formed around grammar, which, as an international student; she is not the only one. In the third group, Dave says, “I asked her to review it and see if what I need to fix in this resume.” Dave does not see the center as a place to generate ideas or develop them or get feedback, he sees it as a proofreading cite. Other students like Josh really do not want proofreading. Josh wants someone to spend time with his paper; yet, he still uses the word “fix” to describe the process. In the fourth group, Josh says, “they just fix it for ten minutes or 15 minutes.” In addition, while talking about what tutors might expect of students, Jessica uses “fixed” to refer to the goal of the student in the session. In the fifth group, Jessica says, “you have to be prepared, you want this fixed you have to know what you want to change.” Writing is treated as something that can be “fixed” and “corrected” instead of the complex process it is. Participants are international students, mostly graduate who all think of the center as traditionally the center has been labeled wrongfully: “ a fix it shop”.

In addition to the main for expectations that were discusses across groups, there was one that was a little less discussed but that raises an important issue especially regarding how students learn about the Writing Center in their institutions. Third group participants discussed collaborations in many ways: as graduate students, as undergraduate students, with faculty and advisers; in addition to within a university system with other services. Adrian says, “The university system is all connected to serve and get higher rank certainly for its students. They need to support each other at the faculty level.” When tutors collaborate with faculty members in a way or another,

students benefit. In the fourth group, Robert says, “I don’t need to explain those kind of stuff.” Robert refers in this case to writing in his field especially in relation to terminology, machinery, systems and other discipline specific writing characteristics.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As participants talk about themselves and their experiences they tend to include the population of international students when making statements. The use of “we” became popular quickly when participants talk about expectations and experiences as international students (graduate or undergraduate). Participants also tend to use “they” when they refer to Writing Center staff or tutors. The binary “we-they” serves as a distancing and othering tool. The participants stand at a point of insider/outsider where they are in the system and at the Writing Center, but they are also not fully in. In the use of “we-they,” participants build a network of connections and disconnections that they see from their perspectives as insider/outsider.

Applying Gee’s connections building task in light of the results allows a clear understanding of how participants form their expectations and why. Students form their expectations categories on the basis of how they connect or disconnect with tutors, Writing Center services, and with their advisers either before they went to the Writing Center, during a session, or after.

The four expectation categories: workshops, tutors in different disciplines, work with a tutor who is “involved”, and “fix” paper; are all a result of underlying connections, disconnections, the participants formed.

### *Connection with Writing Center Services*

Many students connect themselves to the Writing Center once their expectations are met. Andrew’s expectation to work on grammar in his paper was met. Although this is not the main goal of the center it is Andrew’s reason for going there. Andrew connects working on grammar to a good experience. He expected the tutor to help him work on a

paper in regards to grammar and he got what he wanted. After this experience he believes that the center is good with grammar. Andrew connected himself to the center when he says, “they help me” and “they were pretty good”.

**Andrew:** “They helped me a lot with just improving my writing and everything and citations and where I put my commas and everything, so they were pretty good.”

The connection Andrew establishes here is a result in his satisfaction with expectations of fixing his paper. Dave’s experience was also a connecting one with the services.

**Dave:** “I need to fix in this resume.”

Dave does not see the center as a place to generate ideas or develop them or get feedback, he sees it as a proofreading cite and he got exactly that as well. The connection Andrew establishes with Writing Center services, also allows him not to have expectations for more time in the session. Unlike Laura, whose time “time run out”, Andrew had enough time for what he needed. Laura expects more time because she planned to work on generating ideas and developing content.

The reason Andrew and Dave, among other participants, need to “fix” their papers is because they are EFL/ESL writers. This puts them at a disadvantage at the Writing Center, as it is a system that privileges Standard English. This power structure is in place as part of the system of education in the U.S. that puts native speakers in the position where they hold the power. The tutors that worked with Andrew and Dave stepped a little out of the mainstream to help these students with language issues rather than writing issues. The students were able to connect with the Writing Center services because they worked with someone who met them halfway. Tutors who recognized the students’ needs



and helped them with that. What the tutors did does not reinforce the already existing power structure in this case, one that is not all encompassing.

*Disconnection with Writing Center Services*

Carl connects the expectation to “take (his) paper and she would almost modify the whole content” with the expression “too high (expectations)”, which Writing Centers will be happy he made due to the short time of the sessions and the nature of work the Writing Center does. Then, he connects his adviser’s “concern” about the use of British English over American English with setting up high expectations. What Carl actually means by “too high expectations’ is that he assumed a tutor would go through the paper, identify all the instances of British English and offer a replacement. This could be partly done at the Writing Center.

Although Carl connected himself with the tutor because he thought she tried to do her job in the time she had; he was disconnected from the service. Carl disconnected himself from the service when he says,

**Carl:** “My expectations they were too high. For example I was expecting that the lady would take my paper and she would almost modify the whole content in a different language than I have written.... my adviser was more concerned that I shouldn’t use British English, I should choose American English. I didn’t know which one was British English which one is American. She was even very helpful. My expectations although too high.”

Carl disconnects with Writing Center services because they did not meet his expectations of identifying all instances of British English and replacing them with American English. As Carl disconnects from Writing Center services, he develops the

need for more time in the session and a “fix the paper” goal. Just like the Hailey’s experience, Carl, develops the expectation for his paper to be fixed because what he needs is in fact correction. So the tutor in Carl’s session should consider correcting, as Hailey put it, “their main focus.” A need for more time also arises because Carl could have went through all the paper if the session went long enough. Like Sabrina’s expectation, “consultants ...have 50 minutes and they go over one page...out of 8 or something,” Carl’s experiences calls for him to develop this expectation as well.

Even though Carl comments on the tutor’s work saying that it was “helpful” I see that as a sign of submission to a system of tutoring that was meant for native speakers of English. He also deems his expectations “too high” for the system in place. A system in favor of native speakers of English made Carl not able to express and hold on to his expectations. He, and other international students do not know what to expect because they need to alter their expectations as the non-conventional students whose writing would be looked at under conventional rules.

Carl’s experience with his adviser, like many other participants mentioned in the results were encouraged to go to the Writing Center by their advisers. Advisers hold the power over the participants’ view of the Writing Center, and over whether they go or not. Sometimes advisers do not speak about the Writing Center and we still find students going to the Writing Center. However the participants’ relationship with their advisers is determinant of whether they go or not, how they perceive the center, and what they expect of its services.

Examples of connections and disconnections are many, one constant motif seems to be the advisers’ role in participants understanding and attending of the Writing Center.

Advisers hold a powerful position hierarchically this tells participants to respect their opinions and take their suggestions. In addition, advisers who tell their advisees about the Writing Center shape the way the participants view the center because they heard about it from someone they consider a mentor and expert. Writing Centers should intervene by educating advisers about the goals of the Writing Center, so that they are informed when talking to their students about the Writing Center.

As discussed earlier, participants act as insiders/outsideers to the Writing Center as they are foreign to how it works and just getting acquainted with it. I believe that students should be surveyed and included in their own learning at the Writing Center. A needs assessment is a step towards a better serving Writing Center because that is one sure way to know that the students are getting what they need.

The analysis reveals that the expectations categories are developed when students connect and disconnect themselves from the Writing Center services. The power dynamics that are in play involve: Standard English, tutoring strategies designed for Native English Speakers, and advisers' powerful positions in how international students learn and navigate Writing Centers and other systems in the American university.

Writing Centers should develop connecting bridges to the international student population both graduate and undergraduate in the ways they each expect.

- Reach out to international students
- Survey international students about their specific needs

The recommendations represent different options depending on the strengths and weaknesses of each Writing Center. Not all have to be implemented, but ones that a particular center decides fit their students' needs. Student voice is important in

developing programs and trainings. Student papers are amazing resources to assess their progress and needs, but asking students proves insightful. In addition, students learn that the center is working hard to accommodate their specific needs.

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## APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

These are some of the questions that I might ask the participants in the focus groups. I will have a maximum of 5 in depth interviews with students whose responses seem particularly curious for further investigation:

- What is your field of study?
- How many times do you go to the WC during your studies at NDSU, per semester?
- How was your first time at the WC here at North Dakota State University?
- Why did you decide to go again?
- What did you expect of the WC when you decided to go for the first time?
- Did anything surprise you when you visited?
- What do you wish they did differently?
- What, in your opinion, can the WC do to accommodate international students in particular?

## APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

### NDSU NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

English Department, NDSU

Co-investigator / Researcher: Ibtissem Belmihoub

Principal Investigator / Supervisor: Dr. Amy Rupiper Taggart

**Title of Research Study:** International Student Expectations of the Writing Center

**This study is being conducted by:**

Ibtissem Belmihoub ([ibtissem.belmihoub@ndsu.edu](mailto:ibtissem.belmihoub@ndsu.edu)), graduate student in the Department of English at NDSU under the supervision of Dr. Amy Taggart, Associate Professor of English ([amy.rupipertaggart@ndsu.edu](mailto:amy.rupipertaggart@ndsu.edu))

**Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?**

You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are an international student that visited the Writing Center at NDSU.

**What is the reason for doing the study?**

The goal of the research is to identify international student expectations of the Writing Center. It will therefore be seeking to help both international students make better use of the Writing Center as a resource, as well as benefit the Writing Center by exposing some of the specific needs of the international student population.

**What will I be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate in this research study, you will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded focus group, which will take place at the Technology and Learning Media Center (TLMC) recording studio. You will be asked questions about your experience with the Writing Center. The findings to this research will be part of a Master's paper document, papers and/or articles. Responses will be displayed from each focus group in order to protect your identity and be sure that the information you provide will be kept confidential.

**Where is the study going to take place, and how long will it take?**

The focus group session will take place at the private and conducive environment of a recording studio. The length of the focus group will take about 60 minutes of your time.

**What are the risks and discomforts?**

There are no anticipated risks. If you are not comfortable sharing some information in a group, you are free to choose not to respond and are allowed to leave the group at any point.



**What are the benefits to me? Is there any compensation for participation?**

There are no individual benefits resulting from taking part in this study.

Yes, there is a compensation of 10\$ gift card for the NDSU bookstore. Because participants are sharing opinionated responses in a group, they will be rewarded after the focus groups are done.

**What are the benefits to other people?**

Your participation in the study will provide information on the needs of international students at the Writing Center. This information will provide rich data for the Writing Center that may allow them to modify their training for tutors and for International students to realize their needs and be able to share with the tutors early on.

**Do I have to take part in the study?** Your participation in this research is your choice. If you decide to participate in the study, you may change your mind and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are already entitled.

**Who will see the information that I give?**

All research records concerning you will be kept private. Any identifying characteristics such as field of study or previous academic background and anything else that might lead to your identification will be altered in case of a publication to ensure your identity is not compromised. The face to face focus groups recorded using a digital audio recorder will be stored in a password protected personal computer only accessed by the researcher. Audio files will be destroyed after transcription has been completed and the accuracy of transcripts has been verified. If you withdraw before the research is over, your information will be deleted at your request and no additional information about you will be collected.

**What if I have questions?**

If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact to co-investigator, Ibtissem Belmihoub at 701-552-1239 or email: [ibtissem.belmihoub@ndsu.edu](mailto:ibtissem.belmihoub@ndsu.edu) or the principal investigator Amy Taggart at 701.231.7148 or email: [amy.rupipertaggart@ndsu.edu](mailto:amy.rupipertaggart@ndsu.edu)

**What are my rights as a research participant?**

You have rights as a participant in research. If you have questions about your rights, or complaints about this research, you may talk to the researcher or contact the NDSU Human Research Protection Program by:

- Telephone: 701.231.8908 or toll-free 1.855.800.6717
- Email: [ndsu.irb@ndsu.edu](mailto:ndsu.irb@ndsu.edu)
- Mail: NDSU HRPP Office, NDSU Dept. 4000, PO Box 6050, Fargo, ND 58108-6050.

The role of the Human Research Protection Program is to see that your rights are protected in this research; more information about your rights can be found at: [www.ndsu.edu/irb](http://www.ndsu.edu/irb) .

**Documentation of Informed Consent:**

You are freely making a decision whether to be in this research study. Consenting to this document meanss

1. you understood this consent form as it was read to you.
2. you have had your questions answered, and
3. you have decided to be in the study.

By signing below you agree to participate in this research project. You will be given another copy of the consent form to keep.

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Signature here

Date