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Developing Writing Centers in Russia: A Balancing Act

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Using grounded theory methodology, I take a snapshot of Russian writing centers in the process of development. I explore how writing centers build their relationships with the institutions and writers they serve and position themselves as sites of writing pedagogy. Through interviews with writing center directors and the analysis of writing center mission statements, I identify four tensions in writing center work: (1) between the immediate demands of academic capitalism and long-term goals for internationalization; (2) between Russian and anglophone academic and rhetorical traditions; (3) between Western writing center pedagogies and the needs of local writers; and (4) between serving in the niche of English for research and publication and the desire to establish itself as a field. These tensions present a fertile ground for further research on the development of writing pedagogies in an international context.

In 2012, the WAC Clearinghouse published a collection of essays on writing programs across the world (Thaiss et al., 2012), which included a green map where the location of each writing program selected for the collection was marked with a white flag. Indeed, it was a map of writing in many places, from North and South America to Australia and New Zealand and from Northern Europe to Africa. Not a single flag, however, dotted the vast green swath of Russia.

Seven years later, at the time of writing this essay, researchers in the US may still find that English-language publications about academic writing in Russia have been few (see, for example, Bollinger, 2016; Butler et al., 2014; Korotkina, 2018; Squires, 2018, among the few). At the same time, in my native Russia, conversations about academic writing have been gaining momentum: publications in the Russian-language *Journal of Higher Education in Russia*, the emergence of the National Writing Center Consortium, and the *Journal of Academic Literacy and Research Skills*, and a regularly held conference. Newly established centers for academic writing, whose number had

grown from one in 2011 to 15 in 2018 (Squires, 2018), have been hubs for these conversations.

As Irina Korotkina says in Chapter 1, writing center practitioners do and will play a significant role in the way the teaching of academic writing develops. The mission of Russian writing centers, the range of services they have provided to faculty and, in some cases, to students (Bakin, 2013; Bazanova, 2015; Korotkina, 2013, 2016b), and their advocacy for teaching academic writing at all levels and across disciplines in English and Russian (Bazanova & Korotkina, 2017; Korotkina, 2016a, 2018) suggest that these writing centers have the potential to develop into full-fledged writing programs.

As Russian writing center practitioners work to enable researchers to enter professional conversations in their fields internationally, they, too, through publications and international conference presentations, have begun to position themselves among the international writing center community, to which this edited collection is a testament. Thus, they contribute to the process of the internationalization of writing studies both in Russia and the US even as Russian writing centers appear on the map.

This is an opportune moment to take a snapshot of writing centers in Russia to understand how writing pedagogies have developed in an educational context different from the US. At this early stage, I want to understand how writing centers have related to their institutions, how their pedagogies have developed, and how they have developed as a profession. I argue that in Russia this process has been a balancing act between the “order of fast capitalism” (Lu, 2004, p. 16) and long-term educational goals for internationalization, between Russian and anglophone academic and rhetorical traditions that often have been in conflict, between existing writing center pedagogies and unique local educational needs, and finally between serving in the niche of English for research and publication and the desire to establish itself as a field.

Internationalization of Academic Writing in Russia and the US

Internationalization within Russian higher education (Frumina & West, 2012; Ganzler et al., 2009; Lebedev, 2014) and the dominance of English-language publications in the world (Canagarajah, 2002; Lillis & Curry, 2010; Pennycook, 1994; Rafoth, 2015) have created pressure for Russian academics to write in English. Internationalization in Russian higher education has involved, among other things, an increased number of citations in the Web of Science, a citation-indexing service, and Scopus, an abstract and citation database that includes English-language peer-reviewed journals. This pres-

sure has created problems in three primary areas: language learning, writing pedagogy, and rhetoric.

The low rate of English-language proficiency among academics in Russia has been one of the problems. With only 14% of faculty fluent in English (Volkova & Shmatko, 2018), many faculty members, if required to publish in English-language journals, may not be able to do so without language support. Another problem has been the lack of formal teaching of writing in higher education, where “oral methods of instruction and assessment” with lectures, seminars, and oral exams have been preferred (Zemliansky & St.Amant, 2013, p. 252). Throughout my own education in Russia in the 1990s, I never received a syllabus or assignment guidelines (except those in textbooks). My professors communicated their expectations, instructions, and feedback orally.

Yet another problem has lain in the differences between rhetorical traditions and publication practices in Russia and in the West (Korotkina, 2018, see also Chapter 1). Unlike their Western counterparts, Russian professionals have spent less time on the writing process and have paid less attention to the audience and more attention to grammar and style (Zemliansky & St.Amant, 2013). Opaque writing (Korotkina, 2018; Yakhontova, 1997) has continued as the legacy of the Soviet style of communication when the state had strict control over the dissemination of scientific knowledge, and thus professional communication was limited to an internal audience. Zemliansky and St.Amant (2013) explain,

It is probably true that the Soviet regime consciously worked to limit the free flow of information and the ability of its citizenry to communicate with people in other countries. It also makes sense that, to achieve these goals, the Soviet ideological machine might have curtailed the teaching of foreign languages, particularly as a means of communication. But this theory fails to satisfactorily explain the lack of structured writing instruction in the native languages of the USSR under the Soviet higher education system. (p. 252)

Furthermore, they argue that in the USSR, “a culture of writing in relation to language—and the teaching of language—never emerged” (Zemliansky & St.Amant, 2013, p. 252).

The growing understanding of difficulties that Russian-language writers have experienced when writing for publication in English has provided a rationale for institutionalizing writing support and establishing writing centers. With the support of the Russian federal government, universities participating in Project 5-100 (see Introduction) had an opportunity to establish centers for academic writing to meet the needs of faculty and graduate students

who write in English. The goal of the project has been “to maximize the competitive position of a group of leading Russian universities in the global research and education market” (Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, n.d.) and place at least five Russian universities among the top 100 universities in the world.

Ashley Squires (2018) notes that the emergence of writing centers in Russia has reflected “the traditional relationship between the academy and the state” in that “writing centers have been established to serve specific state ends related to the international integration and prestige of Russian higher education” (p. 19). Thus, from the outset, the goal of writing centers was to participate in creating a competitive advantage for their universities in particular and for Russian higher education in general. However, instructors of English seized this opportunity to build a stronger case for incorporating writing at all levels of higher education (see Korotkina, 2018).

In the US, writing centers have also expressed interest in internationalizing, as suggested by the recent calls from the International Researchers Consortium and from the International Writing Center Association to conduct international research in writing and to build writing center partnerships. At the same time, writing center scholars in the US have been questioning their lore, calling to reconsider the theoretical grounding of writing center work (Nordlof, 2014) and the non-directive approach to tutoring (Denny et al., 2018; Salem, 2016). To reconsider our existing practices and find new meaning in what we do, it may be helpful to make the familiar unfamiliar again by turning our gaze to writing centers in other countries, non-English speaking in particular. Christiane Donahue (2009) reminds us that international writing research and partnerships will have to focus on what can be learned rather than on what has been missing or lacking. Focusing on gaps, Donahue says, has been less constructive and productive for researchers who want to participate in conversation without “othering” (p. 214). Following Donahue’s advice, in this study I sought to enrich my own understanding of writing center pedagogy, which at present has been limited by my experiences of writing centers in the US even though I was educated in Russia.

Researcher Reflection: My Writing Center Experience

As someone who grew up, received education, and became an English-language teacher in Russia, I was overjoyed when I learned about writing centers being established there. Although my views on writing pedagogy and writing center work have been shaped in the US, my interest in this field began in 2001 when I worked as an instructor at the Amur State University in the

Russian Far East. At that time, I attended a summer workshop on academic writing and began introducing writing into my own teaching. When I came to the US in 2006 and began to work as a tutor in a writing center, I soon realized the immense pedagogical possibility writing centers hold for developing both writers and writing pedagogies.

Writing centers have served as contact zones (Pratt, 1991) where writers from all social, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds have engaged in conversation about their writing, speaking, or research projects with peer tutors. Through these conversations, writers could develop ideas and begin to acquire academic and disciplinary discursive practices (Bizzell, 1994; Bruffee, 1995). For multilingual writers, this process has also involved negotiation of differences between two or more languages (Canagarajah, 2012; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Lu & Horner, 2012; Matsuda, 2015; Rafoth, 2015). In the non-hierarchical context of the writing center, tutors have not acted as teachers; they have become “brokers” (Canagarajah, 2012, p. 276) who help prepare scholars to “negotiate the competing discourses” among academic audiences worldwide (Canagarajah, as quoted in Rafoth, 2015, p. 81). For tutors, this kind of engagement has required developing rhetorical skills such as listening, asking critical questions, and responding. For writers, these conversations have helped develop rhetorical attunement (Leonard, 2014) and flexibility. The process of attunement has often required writers to reflect on the political and historical contexts in which they learned to write. Thus, they become attuned not only to writing practices in another language and culture but also to “the political and historical trajectories of [their] literate practices” (Leonard, 2014, p. 238), thereby developing reflexivity and critical consciousness.

I recognize that this understanding of writing centers has been culturally constructed and that, as Donahue (2009) says, “our frames of reference may or may not be meaningful in contexts with different histories and structures” (p. 232). As a community of practice, each writing center has functioned within its own sociocultural and educational context, and within each context, the needs of participants have generated “knowledge, theories, and policies from practices” (Canagarajah, 2012, p. 272). The methodological frame that best suits the purpose of generating knowledge from practices is grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), which would allow us to take a snapshot of writing centers in Russia in the process of development.

Using Grounded Theory in Writing Center Research

A qualitative research method, grounded theory allows for developing an analytical framework to explain a process or phenomenon based on the ex-

periences of research participants (Creswell, 2007). It is inductive, drawing interpretations from practice rather than theory and is thus well suited for research on writing (Leonard, 2014; Magnotto, 1996) and writing centers (Neff, 2002) and for interpreting and explaining our practices. This method is also recursive, and reflexive (Charmaz, 2006), like writing itself. It focuses on the process of developing a theory rather than on the result, which allows researchers to exercise flexibility by adding sites and new data as the study unfolds.

To begin generating knowledge about writing centers in Russia from their practice, I interviewed five directors of academic writing centers from November 2018 through January 2019 and collected mission statements and descriptions of services from centers' websites. Three of the five writing centers were in Moscow, one in the south east, and another one in Siberia. Four of the participants I interviewed have directed writing centers at public universities participating in the 5-100 Project. The five centers have been the longest in existence and therefore could provide richer data. Four of these centers have served faculty and graduate students, and one has served undergraduate students because it was established to support the undergraduate curriculum at a private university modeled after a U. S.-style liberal arts college. This center, therefore, has been atypical among the Russian writing centers. All five participants were experienced teachers of English with advanced degrees. Some have led academic departments and faculty professional development programs and co-authored textbooks on academic writing.

Four interviews were conducted in Russian and one in English. The interviews were semi-structured (see Interview Guide in the appendix) and lasted from 45 to 90 minutes, resulting in 36,866 words of transcribed data. After I recorded and transcribed the interviews, I used line-by-line coding, looking for verbs describing action and coding these segments of data with gerunds to reflect the focus on action and process (Charmaz, 2006). When I coded segments of data using participants' words verbatim, I translated those words or phrases into English. I also translated quotes that were later included in this essay. I had gone through several cycles of coding and writing analytical memos, describing my interpretations of the data until I began to see core themes or categories emerging from the data and could determine connections among them.

A Snapshot of Writing Centers in Russia

The data analysis resulted in four possible theoretical categories from which to describe the current moment of writing centers in Russia. Writing cen-

ters 1) facilitate internationalization by creating a competitive edge for their universities; 2) function as mediators in the clash of expectations, rhetorical traditions, and academic identities; 3) ground their pedagogy in localized, situated practice rather than borrowed theoretical concepts; and 4) contribute to the professionalization of their field. While these categories are not stable (Charmaz, 2006) and reflect my interpretation both at the current stage of research and the stage of development of writing centers, each category provided some insight.

Writing Centers Facilitate Internationalization by Creating a Competitive Edge for Their Universities

The mission of most writing centers in Russia has been guided by the need for internationalization and integration of faculty into the international academic community. One center, for example, has stated on its website that its mission has been to contribute towards “increasing the number of publications in international journals.” A statement on the website of another center has emphasized that their trained tutors have used practices that may open opportunities for faculty to begin to publish in “prestigious international journals” and thus “enable [doctoral students and junior researchers] to compete for limited journal space with native speakers from some of the best universities in the English-speaking world.” Yet another center has described its mission as support for those who “write for international publications and take part in global research conferences.” Enabling faculty’s participation in global research communities and giving their universities a “competitive edge,” as one participant expressed it, in international higher education has driven the mission of most writing centers in Russia. Although the decision to establish writing centers was top-down, the idea of a writing center had been around in the English-language teaching community even before. One participant, for example, recalled:

You know we had this movement in Russia when academic writing and different programs began to develop. My colleagues and I were involved and participated in different seminars and conferences on academic writing, so the idea of creating writing centers was growing from the ground up. . . . We were beginning to think about ways to start an academic writing center as a separate unit or part of another center or department. We were not sure how to do it. And then the university administration initiated this; they understood the

importance of [a writing center] in creating, how do I say it, a “competitive advantage” to participate in this global project.

The administrative decision, however, was necessary to get the centers off the ground, to hire administrators and staff, and to provide space and budget. Therefore, continued administrative support has been essential to the continued functioning of writing centers.

Participants talked about how the need to improve writing for publication was recognized by their administration. Yet in the experience of one director, her administration did not accept the idea of long-term programmatic support for faculty writers, and her proposal for a writing center was met with resistance:

It’s difficult to move forward, with the lack of financial and administrative support, to accomplish what we could have done in three or four years. . . . Our administration wants results here and now. They don’t want to wait three or four years until we start seeing the results.

She further argued that, to facilitate internationalization at her university, they need to adopt a language policy that would provide continued support for language learning and academic writing, both necessary for international communication:

I presented a proposal for a language policy, but again my administration did not support it. The proposal clearly outlined language competencies, who needs them and how those are developed, and, of course, everything was based on academic writing because, whatever they say, academic writing, in English in particular, is at the basis of international communication in academia.

As this participant suggested, a “language policy” that would connect internationalization, language learning, and academic writing might provide a long-term solution to the institutional efforts for improving academic writing for publication.

Even when faced with resistance, writing centers, in the words of one participant, “filled the niche” by offering services that had not been offered before, and, in the words of another participant, provided an “exclusive” service that other universities did not: “It’s such an exclusive service. It’s not something that is mass produced. [Writers] feel privileged that they can request an individual consultation like this, that we work with them one-on-one. It’s

not a production line.” A sense of uniqueness about writing centers was also expressed by another participant:

We are a very unique place, where a lot of things intersect because we have writing-in-the-disciplines needs, we’re teaching in a fully bilingual space, where every student is a native speaker of Russian who also speaks English as a second or third or fourth language. So I think we have the ability to do some really interesting things here.

By occupying this exclusive niche and by offering unique services that were “not mass produced,” these writing centers have been serving the purpose of raising their universities’ prestige. This connection between the university’s prestige and the work of the writing center promises a greater attention to the teaching of writing at all levels and may ultimately position writing centers as central to the overall success of the university. At this time, however, as one director observed, the writing center is perceived as a peripheral rather than global project for the university: “We are a supporting unit, and although everyone understands the importance of [writing in] English, we are not the priority.” Nevertheless, from this peripheral position, the writing centers have worked toward the global task of internationalization by providing centralized support for faculty in writing and publishing their research in English.

Writing Centers Function as Mediators in the Clash of Expectations, Rhetorical Traditions, and Academic Identities

Even as Russian writing centers work under pressure to fulfill the goal of their institutions to increase international publications, the directors described the mission of their centers as long-term and educational rather than short-term and service oriented. Carrying out this mission involved mitigating conflicts that result from new expectations, differences in rhetorical traditions in Russian and English, and developing a new academic identity that writing in a foreign language may require. Therefore, writing center work could be described as that of mediator negotiating these conflicts.

The first clash writing center practitioners have dealt with has been that of expectations. Administrators and faculty seemed to look for fast results, but writing centers saw their goal as “long-term” and “educational.” They understood that the results of their work may be “intangible”:

It’s understandable that the result is intangible, . . . like any teaching. We can’t say that tomorrow people, because of our

help, will start sending articles for publication. Of course, we understand this process can take a long time.

In other words, the desired publication in higher-ranking journals may not happen even if a faculty member works with a consultant in the writing center.

Meanwhile, writing centers were assessing their work by faculty satisfaction with consultations, seminars, and courses. They also were tracking the number of visits and number of pages they worked on with researchers. In addition, they were asking faculty to update them on whether their article had been submitted and to which journal. They noted if the article was published or rejected. While they were keeping track of faculty publishing activities, the directors resisted evaluating their work by the number of publications. As one director said, “Luckily I was able to convince the administration that my work will not directly affect publication numbers . . . when they tried to include this measure into my evaluation.”

Even with the support of top administration, writing center directors have had to work to establish the reputation of their center within the university community and address initial skepticism about the ability of English instructors to consult on writing in fields outside their own. To diffuse skepticism, directors again have had to work from the top down and first seek the support of department chairs and directors of research institutes. As one participant recalled, a director of a research institute attended her seminar and sat with his eyes closed and arms crossed, listening to what was going on around him. Once he was convinced that the seminar was worthwhile, the members of his institute began to attend.

The new idea of a writing center and its mission has to be communicated abundantly to the university community through center websites and university publications, in meetings, and by reaching out to departments whose faculty members had not yet been using their center. One director recalled,

I sent out information letters to each department about what we do and how we provide consultations. Because the first reaction was that people would bring us their text and we would translate it. We had to explain that we do not translate. . . . I met with people, spoke at departmental and other meetings, explaining what we do and how we do it so that people understand and have the right expectation.

This director also described the work of her center as the work of enlightenment—using the Russian adjective *prosvetitel'skaia*, from the word *svet*, or light—which suggests that writing center work involves disseminating knowledge about academic writing and writing center support.

Furthermore, faculty sometimes expected writing centers to translate their articles as a quick solution to the problem of having to publish in English-language journals. As participants said, faculty believed translation could be done quickly by an English-language specialist, not realizing the differences between the work of a translator and that of a writing consultant. One director explained that translation required knowledge of the discipline, but finding a translator who had the required qualifications may be difficult and expensive, and translations done by non-specialists often did not make sense.

Another director found translation problematic because the translator would become, in a sense, a co-author, and this may have raised issues of authorship:

They ask me to translate their article. I say, sure, but then make me a co-author because [to rewrite it in English] I will have to change the article conceptually. It doesn't just involve putting information into another language, translating it from one language to another. Submitting to a different journal often means that you have to change the concept of the article. Yes, the results may be the same, but conclusions, key concepts, categories, and criteria may need to change dramatically. But [the faculty] don't believe this.

For this participant, rewriting an existing Russian article in English involved a substantial conceptual revision of the original and thus warranted including her name as a co-author. The researchers to whom she offered co-authorship did not, however, expect any major revisions as a result of the translation. The idea that academic writing in another language required understanding linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical conventions—and making authorial choices about those—seemed novel to these faculty writers.

The second clash writing centers in Russia have had to address has been that of rhetorical traditions and practices in academic writing. Participants pointed out that writers have assumed that if the grammar was good then the writing must be good, not realizing the importance of understanding new rhetorical conventions (e.g., creating a context for research, explaining why the study is important, articulating research questions, and discussing suggestions for future research). As one director aptly put it when summarizing writers' difficulties, "We don't understand why [we do research] and we don't understand what to do with it," referring to the writers' struggle to articulate the purpose and significance of their research for a new audience. In the experience of this director, Russian researchers have not usually thought about the application of their research:

They don't make their thoughts surface on paper. They don't talk or write through their ideas. It's like a cauldron in which their ideas are stewing. And then, some brilliant idea comes to the surface. Anyone interested, say from some organization in the West, can lift the lid of the cauldron with this delicious stew and spoon out whatever they like. But no one here would think to use these ideas to feed our country.

As the comment suggests, Russian researchers have tended to underestimate the pragmatic value of their research, which has then translated into difficulties with articulating the significance of their studies when they write in English.

The problem of “not talking through ideas,” as one participant described it, may be inherent to the Soviet style of communication when researchers withheld information for political and economic reasons. As the same participant said, “Never, almost never, will a Russian researcher talk about suggestions for future research. They say, ‘Why would I discuss this?’” This comment implies that Russian researchers may be unwilling to write about their future research because, as Zemliansky and St.Amant (2013) explain, many of them have not been used to a free exchange of ideas and feedback from an external audience. Perhaps this is also why, according to some participants, researchers have hesitated to share drafts of their papers with tutors from the West, preferring Russian consultants.

Learning, understanding, and negotiating social norms different from one's own involves changing, redefining, or expanding one's identity and authority. One of the directors explained, “Even though everyone understands the importance and significance of [writing in English], they say, we'll lose our identity, we'll lose the characteristics of Russian academic writing because of the different approach.” Writing in English has been easier for younger researchers and graduate students, most participants noted, but may have been particularly difficult for established faculty, who may feel threatened by the new requirement to publish in English: “The aging generation of scholars, they are resistant. . . . You have to understand what it is like to become a student again when you are already a doctor of science. You have to have courage.” In a way, experienced researchers have become neophytes again (Yakhontova, 1997) and have had to give up their authority and may lose confidence, even if temporarily.

The difficulty of writing in a foreign language brings about strong emotions, from tears of joy to anger and resistance. One writing center director described how she worked with a seasoned researcher who had just written

his first article in English by himself. Before that, he would have his writing translated from Russian into English:

When he wrote this article—we worked on it for a long time and it was finally published—he came to me, and he almost cried, he was so happy: “It’s my first article in English!” Since then, instead of writing in Russian first, he’s been writing in English.

Another participant recalled the opposite reaction of a professor confronted with having to conceptually change his article: “One professor told me: ‘If that is so, then they need to learn Russian. I am not writing in English.’ And he is a doctor of physics and mathematics, full professor. It’s difficult to deal with this mindset.”

It is not surprising, perhaps, that some writing center directors said that learning to write in another language required courage and that they saw their task as helping writers gain confidence. Thus, writing centers may function as safe houses (Canagarajah, 1997) that allow writers space to be vulnerable, to practice writing in a different language without fear of rejection, and with support from more experienced language users before they submit their manuscripts to a journal. With their own long-term goals of developing independent writers on the one hand and with faculty seeking quick solutions through translation on the other, writing centers can work towards mediating these conflicting orientations and developing new pedagogies.

Writing Center Pedagogy Is Constructed Through Every Day Practice Grounded in Local Needs Rather Than Borrowed Theoretical Concepts

A writing center is a practice situated in a local context. Even though my participants collaborated with U. S. specialists to study the work of writing centers in the US and some of them visited writing centers at Harvard University, MIT, and Purdue University, they found that U. S. writing center pedagogy has not fit their context. As one director observed,

Our approach is different because we work with a different group of people . . . with teaching and research faculty. We are not involved with students yet. This is what makes us different and, at the same time, presents problems because we are working with writers who had no formal training in writing for publication. We would be in a better position if they were trained and took courses in academic writing.

Therefore, the approach to tutoring has to reflect the unique needs of these writers, which participants described as follows: addressing language proficiency issues, creating a collaborative environment appropriate for working with faculty, many of whom are already experienced researchers; offering various forms of instruction and staying flexible to accommodate writers' busy schedules; and encouraging and motivating faculty to increase their confidence when writing in a foreign language for a new audience.

According to the participants, faculty have to understand the norms for writing for publication in international spaces (e.g., citation practices and responding to editor's feedback); differences between academic and non-academic writing; requirements for good academic writing; and rhetorical differences between Russian and Anglo-American discourses. Understanding conventions of different academic genres, such as articles, conference abstracts, and proposals was also mentioned as important. Participants pointed out that, with the added problem of low language proficiency, they may discuss grammar issues more than in the US.

When working on these issues, participants approached faculty as partners rather than instructors. This approach, it seems, may offer a non-hierarchical, non-threatening way of introducing faculty to new concepts and conventions and might help to reduce faculty's initial resistance. One participant described her approach in the following way:

When a faculty member or researcher comes to us, I understand that we are in a peer relationship. I may have expertise in English, but I am not an expert in their field. In other words, I respect what they do . . . I understand that their thinking is different. . . . So we have to have a conversation. I can't tell them . . . I mean I can express my opinion, I can make a recommendation, but I respect when they want to do it in their own way. So I have to find a common language, to reach a compromise. . . . It's a dialog between equals.

She explained that this dialog has been necessary to understand writers' ideas and not to take away their authorship.

Writing center directors also seem to value the collaborative, peer-like nature of their work for the learning environment it allows them to create. One director, for example, described how some of her seminars have brought together faculty from different disciplines and of different ages and experiences: "The writing center brings together people that may not otherwise get together in one classroom: young and experienced, physicists and lyricists, they all come with a different level of English proficiency."

She described how this combination has resulted in a “synergy,” a productive dialog that enriches faculty’s understanding of their own research. As she stated, researchers begin to “like what they do even more.” Furthermore, this environment seemed to allow researchers to develop an ability to talk about their writing across disciplinary and generational differences: “Young researchers have a different attitude, they ask [older] professors tricky questions that make them think.” Another director noted that tutoring sometimes has resulted in collaborations between faculty writers and writing consultants. It appears that the collaborative forms of interaction with writers can help faculty become more comfortable with communication outside their usual discourse community and produce generative forms of collaboration.

Another need that influences writing center pedagogy is that faculty have busy lives. Therefore, writing centers have to stay flexible as to accommodate faculty time constraints and multiple responsibilities. Writing centers have offered different forms of engagement, from individual consultations to more direct forms of instruction, like short seminars and longer courses, thus blending a collaborative, non-directive approach with a directive approach. One director, for example, said that her center has offered seminars every two weeks, 20 seminars per semester. Faculty have preferred to sign up for shorter seminars because longer courses require a great deal of preparation. They also seem to prefer face-to-face rather than online courses because the dropout rate in online courses is high. Another director commented that they had “shifted away from weekly workshops, which were inefficient, to short courses, which are better attended.”

Having to work within faculty’s time constraints, writing centers have varied the mode of engagement (e.g., online, face-to-face, asynchronously) and the length of sessions. Some have not set a time limit for consultations and continue until the writer and the consultant have achieved the expected result—the finished product, which satisfies both. One director said, for example:

A consultation can last two or three hours. And if it’s online, 24 hours. I can send my feedback and say, “Take a look.” They get excited. They send it back to me [with changes] and say, “Please have another look.”

To keep the writing momentum, a consultation has often become a long, extended conversation through email exchange or a series of sessions.

Consultations themselves have required preparation for consultants, as described by one of the participants:

You may understand that the process is not that simple because we are not native speakers. We have to read [the article] first. . . . Also the articles may be from different fields: physics, mechanical engineering, sociology. So when the clients arrive we are ready to talk with them.

Another director (who has worked in the writing center for students) said she may give students assignments before their sessions, particularly when students have come to practice conversation in English, a service this writing center also has provided. The assignment may have included reading or watching the news in English.

Writing in a foreign language for a new audience with new expectations requires encouragement and motivation. As one participant said, the goal of her writing center has been to “make writers who don’t write, write.” Motivation may involve following up with authors who have used the center, reminding them that the writing center is there to support them. Three of the participants mentioned that writers have needed a push: “Administrative push is needed in Russia.” One of them even wished that writing center courses were mandatory so that faculty could receive continuous instruction and move forward faster. It appears that the non-hierarchical approach to encourage writers has worked alongside the need for an administrative push.

The result of this pedagogy, participants said, is that faculty begin to perceive writing centers positively, and their awareness of the concept of academic writing has been growing. Furthermore, as one participant said, writing in English adds “system and logic,” or organization and clarity, to writing in Russian. Another participant noted that even if articles they worked on were rejected, they have not been rejected because of issues with the writing.

Although all participants acknowledged the need for student writing, they did not focus much on writing pedagogy when talking about students, except one participant, who directed the student-oriented center. Many noted, however, that students have needed more writing assignments and more motivation to write. Among the ways to increase student engagement in writing, participants mentioned holding writing contests for students, involving graduate students in writing and publishing, and rewarding students with extra points for consultations in the writing center. The director of the student-oriented center also talked about developing a peer consulting program and making consulting prestigious among students.

To summarize, writing centers have taken a measured approach to the U. S. idea of a writing center by focusing on the needs of writers at their universities, such as developing language proficiency, increasing motivation, and offering

different forms of engagement to accommodate faculty's busy lives. In a way, they have functioned as multiliteracy centers, offering faculty not only speaking and writing support, but also instruction in practices that surround the work of an academic, from the use of databases and citation indexes to responding to editors' comments. Even though Russian writing centers have worked in a different linguistic and cultural context with a different group of writers, the collaborative, flexible approach that would encourage writers to write seems similar to the approach used in the US perhaps because this approach has helped best when we address writerly problems. These problems have not been specific to those who write in a non-native language and have had to do more with experience of transitioning from one discourse community to another.

Writing Centers Serve as Places of Professionalization

As writing centers have participated in internationalization, their educational goals, the range of issues they address, and the variety of modes of instruction they have provided to faculty from all disciplines have positioned them as writing programs (although for faculty rather than for students). Participants described that to be able to manage these programs, they sought opportunities for their own professional development as center administrators and experts in academic writing, provided training to other instructors and writing consultants, and built their own professional network.

Managing a writing center has been a new but welcome challenge for the participants. One director recalled that she was questioning her abilities to serve as director: "It was not something I've been doing all my life." For some directors, managing a center and learning how to be a consultant rather than a teacher was new:

It was important to understand this shift from a teacher to a consultant because when we work with professors and researchers, they look at you as an instructor, but not quite in the same sense as when we work with students. In other words, one must have certain skills and competencies to be able to work with researchers.

The participants also talked about needing to build confidence of their own and credibility and trust within the university to be able to do their work. In the words of one director,

To understand that I have the credentials, the expertise [to work with researchers], . . . I had to present a clear argument

that my suggestions [for revision] wouldn't compromise the article. This has to be openly discussed with writers because there are disciplines in natural sciences that sort of look down on us in the humanities.

Working with writers, who sometimes may be more experienced researchers, has also put pressure on the directors themselves to raise their expertise in academic writing. One participant shared that becoming a writing center director motivated her to fulfill her dream of studying Anglo-American rhetoric at Harvard University. She believed this new learning experience would give her more authority and credibility among faculty writers and would allow her to give feedback to them with greater confidence.

The directors shared that their position has involved multiple responsibilities that often have not been clearly defined and that pull them in different directions. They have often been invited to other universities to conduct workshops. Some had to divide time between teaching and directing the center, running the center on different campus locations, and managing center staff. With these responsibilities, participants had difficulty finding time for professional development and research. Two participants, for example, noted a desire to do research, yet they could not find time to analyze the data they had been collecting.

A main concern for directors, however, has been finding consultants with a sufficient level of English-language proficiency and creating a steady cohort. For example, one director, while discussing how Russian writing centers have differed from their American counterparts, said: "We are faced with different issues. Our main issue is to find [consultants] who can speak English first and foremost. Other issues are of secondary importance." Some directors have relied on their English departments for a pool of candidates for consultants; others have trained their English department faculty as consultants. Yet others have sought prospective tutors among participants of their workshops and seminars. The student-oriented center has handpicked teaching assistants who have demonstrated interest and have brought ideas of their own about the writing center.

Creating a pool of trained tutors is a slow process. As one director noted,

We find people and train them. Their numbers are growing. It's just such a slow process that requires a great deal of time. But we are getting to the point where we have a group of tutors that can train other tutors.

Training may take different forms: apprenticeship, observation, or a conversation about the structure and content of seminars, workshops, and consul-

tations. One center that has functioned as a lab within a language department has conducted tutor training as part of professional development for the departmental faculty. Another center has recently piloted a professional development program to train instructors for academic writing centers. In the student-oriented center, the director has offered a non-credit course to students and has assigned classical writing center literature from the US. She also has trained tutors to identify specific issues and common problems, including grammar.

The problem for the existing centers, then, is to sustain their efforts and continue their work by developing a reliable staff, so that the work of the writing center does not rely solely on the director, as one participant expressed it:

My big task in my first two years as a director was get us in a place that was sustainable because due to the financial crisis here in 2014 and pressures to cut back, I had concerns about how we're going to maintain adequate staff and also what might happen if I should leave at some point whether it was for a different job or for family reasons.

The question of continued financial support, after the 5-100 Project money has run out, has also been raised by the participants: "Right now we are funded by the 5-100 program, but every year, we are discussing what to do once the program is over: Would the center become one of the university-supported units and be funded from the university budget?" Considering the future of writing centers, participants also mentioned that many universities have had trouble in moving forward in their thinking about the teaching of academic writing. Although there has been interest in helping faculty to write and publish in English, there has not been enough interest, as one participant noted, in writing centers for students, and funding them would be difficult.

As they seek ways to sustain their work, these writing centers have also been building their own association of academic writing experts, the National Writing Center Consortium, which now has organized an annual academic writing conference. They have maintained an active website for the organization and a Facebook page, and have invited each other to their universities to conduct writing seminars and tutor training workshops, thus growing their network and influence. In the words of one participant, "When we were establishing the Consortium, it was important for us to be able to discuss our experience, to have a community of like-minded people, to support each other in what we do." In the words of another participant, a strong professional organization would also help to assert their position in higher education and advocate for adding writing to the higher education curriculum:

Our association will work to draw the attention of the Ministry of Education to the teaching of writing, to the need to change the higher education paradigm, and not only in higher education but also in secondary education, where writing is also a missing component.

The “paradigm change,” as this participant implied, has required governmental support, and the organization might help coordinate the efforts of individual educators in garnering it. Yet, as another participant observed, there has not been much discussion about extending the teaching of writing beyond writing in English for publication: “So much [is] focused on English, and in the disciplinary sense, so much of it is being driven by English.”

To summarize, the writing centers in Russia have worked towards creating a larger cohort of trained writing consultants and promoting a greater awareness of the need to teach academic writing in higher education. This might, however, present a point of tension because the concept of teaching academic writing seems to be firmly connected to teaching writing in English, specifically for publication. Therefore, extending the concept of academic writing beyond a niche service for faculty may require a broader discussion that addresses student writing and writing in Russian.

Developing a Bigger Picture from the Snapshot

The snapshot of writing centers in Russia has captured the remarkable progress made in just a few years. Currently, they seem to have been able to find a balance among conflicting expectations. Set up to respond to the demands of academic capitalism, they were able to create space and time to begin to establish a culture of writing in an educational setting that did not promote it. What started as a goal to develop writing for publication among faculty may then extend beyond it to include writing for students.

Writing centers in Russia have served as places where rhetorical traditions and academic discourses rooted in often conflicting social, political, and cultural values come into contact. As writing centers have mediated these conflicts, they have developed pedagogies to support writers as they develop greater rhetorical flexibility necessary for negotiating differences between discourse communities. As faculty writers develop a greater understanding of rhetorical differences in academic writing and thus become more attuned to and more comfortable with the differences in writing across fields, languages, and cultures, they may also reflect on how they write in Russian. How might the characteristics of anglophone discourse, for example, influence their

writing in Russian? Furthermore, faculty who participate in writing center consultations, seminars, and classes, may develop a greater awareness of the writing process and of the need for using writing to support student learning. How might they be applying concepts and practices they acquire in the writing center to their own instruction?

Writing centers in Russia have sought to develop their pedagogy on their own terms instead of borrowing pedagogies from the US. First, they have applied the idea of a centralized writing support to faculty rather than students, and secondly, they have blended both collaborative and more directive methods of instruction to meet the needs of faculty writers. While U. S. writing centers have still been developing their pedagogies for multilingual writers (Rafoth, 2015) and very few have positioned themselves as multilingual (see, for example, Lape, 2019), Russian writing centers started as centers to meet the needs of writers for whom English was not a native language and have now been moving towards greater understanding of rhetoric and composition in language teaching.

Despite the obvious differences between Russian and U. S. writing centers, one may observe fascinating points of connection that writing researchers and practitioners both in Russia and the US may want to explore. For example, researchers in the US may be intrigued by the potential of writing centers to develop into full-fledged writing programs for faculty. Another opportunity involves exploring tensions identified in Russian writing centers that are also common in U. S. writing-across-the-curriculum programs and writing centers: administrators' desire for fast results versus writing faculty and tutors' commitment to longer-term results. Also, with a growing understanding of English as *lingua franca* and as a multitude of local Englishes, writing centers and programs have played a role in developing multilingual dispositions, important for predominantly monolingual cultures like Russia and the US. This development, however, has been sometimes met with resistance in both countries, as the Russian writing center directors reported in this study, and as writing center directors in the US also have experienced in their practice, albeit in a different way, when they have encountered negative attitudes towards local varieties of English in academic writing (Griffin & Glushko, 2016). It would be interesting to see how these tensions are negotiated in both countries.

Russian writing centers as places of professionalization seem to operate within a niche field of English for research publication purposes. Extending this field into a larger discipline might require creating a bilingual framework for teaching academic writing, as Irina Korotkina (2018) has proposed. Meanwhile, in the absence of professional departments and formal education

in writing studies, Russian writing centers have been developing professional consultants through apprenticeship, collaborations, and tutor-training workshops—methods that may serve well the purpose of centers whose work is to deliver sessions that are not mass produced but fine-tuned to the needs and circumstances of faculty at their universities. Professionalization, however, would eventually require a theoretical framework from which to approach the teaching of writing in Russia, one that would reflect the values of writing center work and be congruent with the goals for higher education in Russia. Conducting a meta-analysis of current literature on academic writing and writing centers in Russia might contribute to that while also helping international researchers on writing see where Russia enters the conversation on teaching writing in higher education.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

1. How and why was your writing center established?

[Follow-up questions: Who initiated the establishment of the writing center? What was the role of the university administration? How did you become the director? What was your experience with teaching writing prior to becoming director? How did the university express the goals to be accomplished by establishing a writing center? What is the administrative structure of the writing center? What's the reporting structure and budget? Where is it located?]

2. Could you please describe the work of your writing center?

[Follow-up questions: Who is the writing center for? What does the writing center do? What are the director's responsibilities?]

3. How many tutors do you have? Who are they? What are the tutor's responsibilities? How are the tutors chosen? Are they trained, and, if yes, how? What are your goals in tutoring? How do you go about accomplishing these goals?

4. What does a typical day/tutoring session in your writing center look like? What documentation is used in your center (e.g., forms, reports)?

5. What difficulties do you encounter in your writing center as director? How do you overcome them? Where or who do you go to if you have difficulties, questions, or want to talk through ideas? What resources and publications do you use to develop ideas about your center?]

6. How do you envision the future of your writing center?

[Follow-up questions: In what way (if any) does the writing center affect views on teaching writing/composition in English and in Russian? What professional organizations do you and your center participate in? What is your relationship with the National Writing Center Consortium?]

7. Is there anything important about your center or the teaching of academic writing at your university that I haven't asked about?

8. Are there any questions you'd like to ask me?