

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
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MEDICAL  
LABORATORY SCIENCES

**Multilingual and Native  
English-speaking Student  
Writers in Clinical Laboratory  
Sciences: A Pilot Study**

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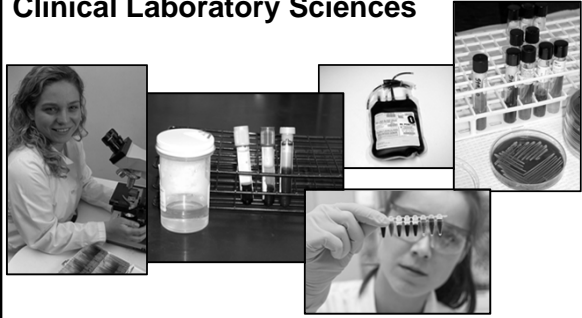
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**The Field of  
Clinical Laboratory Sciences**



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**CLS Graduates**



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### Emerging Area of Quality Management

The Joint Commission - National Patient Safety Goal # 02.03.01

*Report patient deaths or serious injuries resulting from "failure to follow-up or properly communicate laboratory results"*

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### Clinical Laboratory Sciences and the Writing-Enriched Curriculum Program

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### Writing Enriched Curriculum in CLS

- WEC survey of faculty, students, practitioners
  - What characterizes writing in the field?
  - What writing abilities should CLS graduates have?
- Discipline-Specific Writing Characteristics
- Desired Writing Abilities
- Assessment of Student Writing

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**“Writing is a key component of communication between staff of different shifts. When descriptive, clear, and concise notes are passed from shift to shift, it makes the transition smooth, but when they are not, it creates much confusion and often delay in patient care” (practitioner)**

**“Accurate communication of medical information is crucial to the delivery of quality health care. This includes communication with laboratory colleagues, other healthcare practitioners, patients, families, and other care givers.” (faculty)**

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**“It wasn’t really necessary for us to write. We interpret results. It is what it is.”**

**Student quote**

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**Research Question #1**

**Taking into consideration the characteristics of writing in Clinical Laboratory Sciences (CLS), as well as the desired writing abilities for CLS undergraduate majors, what global and local error patterns are evidenced in CLS student writing?**

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**Research Question #2**

**Do the error patterns identified in multilingual student samples differ significantly from those error patterns identified in native English-speaking writers' samples?**

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**Research Question #3**

**Given the results derived from answering the first two questions, what strategies can CLS faculty/instructors employ to best support multilingual student writers?**

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**Methodology**

- **Data collection**
- **Artifact selection criteria**
- **Artifact analysis protocol**

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**Preliminary Findings**

**Research Question 1:**

- Global errors: incomplete abstract, logic, lack of descriptive detail, missing author information errors most common
- Local errors: article errors most prevalent in both groups in the case studies; commas (NS) vs verb tense (ML) in clinical experience write-ups
- Plagiarism concerns

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**Preliminary Findings - continued**

**Research Question 2:**

- Number of global errors were not significantly different
- Articles, verb tenses and word choice errors were the most common sentence-level errors for both groups
- Frequency of local errors was greater for MLs

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**Research Question #3**

**What strategies can CLS faculty employ to best support multilingual student writers?**

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Research Question 3 Findings:

Pedagogy

- Provide ample writing practice and review, including self-review
- Develop holistic support, tying together assignment instructions, grading rubrics, instructional materials, etc.
- Revise grading rubrics to better reflect priorities
- Prioritize outcomes for each type of writing assignment
- Weight grading criteria to reflect relevance of each factor
- Increase transparency of expectations

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Research Question 3 cont.

Addressing sentence-level and structural support

- Build awareness among faculty of “written accent”
- Distinguish between errors that are significant and those that are insignificant
- Creating assignments, instructional materials, and grading rubrics using best practices / scaffolding / revising

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Research Question 3 cont.

Additional Strategies / Recommendations

- Build a collaboration with Student Writing Support / possible satellite office in Diehl Hall study center, or online support
- Hold students accountable for fulfilling instructor expectations
- Add a preprogram class with a writing component

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**Questions for Discussion**

**Question One:**

What constitutes an ethical approach to working with multilingual students in a program such as Clinical Laboratory Sciences, acknowledging the need for exactness/accuracy in some types of writing vs. a realistic expectation/understanding of multilingual writing and development?

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**Discussion - continued**

**Question Two:**

What strategies might CLS faculty employ in order to best support multilingual student writers in the program while maintaining the standards of the profession?

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**Discussion - continued**

**Question Three:**

What kind(s) of support do faculty and staff need to work effectively with a diverse student population and diverse levels of writing in English?

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**Discussion - continued**

**Question Four:**

To what degree can multilingual students' "writing with an accent" be acknowledged and accepted in Clinical Laboratory Sciences, given the understanding that the production of error-free writing in a second language is difficult to achieve?

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**Discussion - continued**

**Question Five:**

What types of errors/inaccuracies might be acceptable, given second language acquisition processes?

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**Thank you!**

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