

Writing Centers in Japan

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日本における Writing Centers

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Abstract

Since 2004, writing centers have increased in Japanese universities. At that time, Osaka Jogakuin College started operating its writing center daily. Writing centers will likely increase in Japan as more courses are being taught through English. Thus, we felt a need to examine the writing centers in Japan and their similarities and differences in order to understand the shapes that writing centers take in the Japanese context. This article draws on data from three writing centers in Tokyo in addition to the writing center at OJC. We found that while all the writing centers had English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, some also had English as a Second Language (ESL) students. There was no one Japanese model. Rather, institutions designed and organized their centers around their needs.

Key words : writing center, EFL

(Received September 22, 2008)

抄 録

大阪女学院大学にライティングセンターがスタートした2004年以降、日本の大学においてもライティングセンターが次々と設置されている。筆者らは、ライティングセンターの発展のためには、各大学のライティングセンターを検証することが必要であると考え、東京にある3つの大学ライティングセンターを実際に訪問し調査した。本稿ではそれらの結果を大阪女学院大学のライティングセンターと比較した。その結果、日本国内の大学でも英語を外国語として学ぶ（EFL）学生の他に、英語を第二言語として学ぶ（ESL）学生を対象とするなど、各大学が独自のニーズに応じた形でライティングセンターを展開していることなどが明らかになった。

キーワード：ライティングセンター、EFL

(2008年9月22日受理)

Introduction

Since 2004, writing centers have started to be established in Japan. Some articles have been published about writing centers in Japan (Johnston, 2005, 2006; Sadoshima, 2006; Yasuda, 2006). However, until now there have not been any articles published that compare different writing centers in Japan. Writing centers in Japan are different in from most writing centers in the U.S.A. One of these differences is that in Japanese universities almost all students are English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, although at a few schools there is a mix of EFL and English as a Second Language (ESL) students. EFL students use English in school for some or all courses, but the language outside of classes is not English, but Japanese in our case (Bruce & Rafoth, 2004). ESL learners learn English in school and need to use English in the community as well. EFL learners, in particular, need support not only in writing, but also in areas such as speaking, grammar, mechanics, oral presentations, and essay writing. In addition, these students need to gain confidence in using their second language. Thus, as more and more writing centers are established, they will take on broad and varied roles in supporting student development.

This report is part of a larger study looking at writing centers in Japan, Hawaii and some Asian countries. This report compares and contrasts some aspects of three writing centers that Cornwell and Johnston visited in Tokyo in June 2007 with the writing center at OJC where Cornwell and Johnston teach. Data on each center is included in the Appendix.

Before the visits to the writing centers in Tokyo, we created an interview protocol based on questions found at several websites including the IWCA homepage (Griffin, Keller, Pandey, Pederson, & Skinner, 2004; IWCA, 2006). In addition, follow-up questions were asked in emails.

We start this article with a brief description of writing centers in the U.S. and follow that by introducing the universities and their writing centers. Then, we compare the writing center in terms of students, purposes, tutors and training, hours open, administrators, and size. We conclude by discussing ways we have increased communication among writing centers in parts of Asia.

Writing Centers' Short History

Writing Centers have a long history in the U.S., dating back to the 1930s (Williams & Severino, 2004). Originally, they were viewed as places to fix the writing of American students who had limited writing skills. Writing centers have evolved to focus more on the writing process and to become part of writing programs in universities. Now, writing centers have been established in junior colleges and senior high schools. Some common characteristics of

writing centers are the one-one-one coaching, focus on each student's needs, and attempt to create good writers (Harris, 1988).

As writing centers have developed, they grow to fit their institutions. Harris (1988) says, "Writing centers, because of their variations from institution to institution, do not have a single model to follow or a mold by which to shape themselves." Clark (1992) says, "Writing center tutors work with papers at all stages of the writing process—those that are just in the process of being formulated, as well as rough drafts, or relatively polished efforts that need only slight additional editing" (p. 3). Thus, centers focus on supporting the writing process, but in different contexts.

In the U.S. since the early 1990s, writing centers have had more ESL learners. Ronesi (1995) even says, "ESL students are flooding the writing centers of colleges and universities nationwide." Writing centers in the U.S. are now addressing the issues that ESL learners bring to their writing classes and to the writing centers.

Thus, as writing centers begin to develop outside of North America, where there are mostly non-native English speakers, the writing centers will mold themselves to fit their institutions as well as the culture of the country in which they become established.

General Descriptions of Writing Centers in Japan

School: Osaka Jogakuin College

School Homepage: http://www.wilmina.ac.jp/ojc/top/view?set_language=en

Writing Center homepage:

http://www.wilmina.ac.jp/studylink/Writing_Center/index.htm

OJC is a liberal arts college with about 1000 students. Students in the four-year college major in International & English Interdisciplinary Studies and students in the two-year college major in English. OJC is one of the few colleges in Japan where most of the courses are taught through English and students have many writing assignments including essays, summaries, and research papers. The six-day writing center was established in April 2004 when the four year university was established. Prior to that there was a "writing center" one evening a week. The writing center is part of the Self-Access & Study Support Center (SASSC) which includes Japanese tutors, a Grammar Exam Workshop and a Phonetics Exam Workshop.

School: Sophia University

University Homepage: http://www.sophia.ac.jp/E/E_toppage.nsf/

Writing Center: <http://www.fl.sophia.ac.jp/academics/support.html>

Sophia University, also known as Jochi daigaku, is a well-known private university with 11,000 students in Tokyo which focuses both on research and teaching. The writing center

serves the approximately 800 full-time students and 300 exchange students in the Faculty of Liberal Arts. The writing center was established in 2004 when Sophia received a Ministry of Education grant for college development.

School: University of Tokyo, Komaba Campus

University Homepage: http://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/index_e.html

Critical Writing Program: <http://www.komed.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp/cwp/>

ALESS Program: <http://eless.ecc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/>

The University of Tokyo is a large public university with a strong research focus. The writing tutorial program is in the College of Arts and Sciences, which has about 6,670 first- and second-year students. It is not a writing center in the strictest sense of the term; rather, tutorials are provided as one aspect of several pilot writing courses offered by the College's Critical Writing Program. The students in the pilot courses were required to attend a tutorial for each main writing assignment. In April 2008, the program was expanded to offer tutorials on a voluntary basis to all first-year science majors enrolled in a new required course called Active Learning of English for Science Students (ALESS). The writing center at the University of Tokyo opened in 2005, when some faculty realized the need to use English as the medium of communicating content, particularly through academic writing.

School: Waseda University

University Homepage: <http://www.waseda.jp/top/index-e.html>

Writing Center: <http://www.waseda.jp/sils/en/>

Waseda University is one of the three largest private universities in Japan with around 57,000 students. The writing center serves the 2000 students in the School of International Liberal Studies. Many of the courses in this school are taught through English. The writing center was established when the School of International Liberal Studies began in 2004, and from October 2008 it will be open to the entire university.

Students Targeted

At the time this data was gathered, OJC's writing center was for all students in the college. OJC is a small liberal arts college with about 1000 students, in which there is one major for the two-year college and one major for the 4-year college. The other three universities targeted students in a specific school or course. At OJC, all of the students are EFL students, as the language outside of school is Japanese.

The writing center at Sophia University is for students in the Faculty of Liberal Arts. The students here are both Japanese students who are EFL learners and Japanese students

who have lived abroad a great deal and can use both English and Japanese. Some of these students use English outside of the classroom. Thus, Sophia has a diverse group of students in terms of knowledge and use of English..

The writing center at University of Tokyo, Komaba Campus was initially for a specific course. However, since the interviews took place, students in an additional course can also consult the writing center tutors.

The writing center at Waseda University was originally for students in the School of International Liberal Studies. It was established to serve both native and non-native English speakers. It is now open to the entire university.

Purposes

OJC, Waseda, and Sophia have broad views of what type of support they offer, extending beyond writing papers. For example, Sophia University's writing center helps with academic writing, graduate school application letters and essays. It also assists faculty members with their writing for conferences or publication. OJC's writing center helps students with writing, presentations, applications for studying in their semester abroad program as well as with students' discussion projects. Waseda University helps with course papers, presentations, application letters for study abroad, and TOEIC essays. In addition the support can be given in either English or Japanese, and the center also helps students with their Japanese writing.

On the other hand, the University of Tokyo's writing center, at the time of the survey, focused on specific papers in a course in the Critical Writing Program. The tutors consulted with the course instructors on what the instructors wanted students to focus on in the papers and then met with students one-on-one to go over those papers. At the time of this writing, the tutors were helping between 40-50 students in the pilot project.

There are two common threads for all of these universities regarding the purposes of the writing centers. They tend to avoid proofreading students' papers, and they want to help students develop into writers who can evaluate their own writing.

Tutors and Training

The three universities in Tokyo use many graduate students as tutors. Sophia University employed a total of 12 tutors—ten graduate students and two professionals. Waseda University employed 18 tutors— five doctoral students, ten master students and three undergraduate students from abroad with experience tutoring. The University of Tokyo hired five graduate students to give tutorials. OJC, which does not have a graduate school at this time, employs four part-time native English teachers to work in the writing center.

The training of tutors varies. Waseda University has the most extensive training program. Tutors meet for two hours on Tuesday. During part of this time, tutors present an analysis of their own tutoring (two a session) based on a transcript of the session. In addition, they practice role playing, read books on writing centers from the U.S., study several “manuals of styles,” practice diagnosing student writings, and practice “asking questions.”

The other three universities have different types of training. The University of Tokyo has a graduate course that may soon be required for tutors. Sophia University requires some hours of focused meetings with tutors before tutoring with rather detailed training sessions. Moreover, tutors are asked to read a set of introductory materials before they begin working with students. OJC has more limited training since the tutors are all teachers and are often writing instructors, as well. The administrator talks with the tutors about sessions, provides a Writing Center handbook for them to read, and often communicates with the tutors face-to-face, through emails, or through an online group made for these tutors.

Writing Center Hours and Sessions

Sophia University’s and Waseda University’s writing centers were open during the day. Sophia University’s was open between 11:00-16:45 from Monday to Friday, and had 45-minute sessions (seven in a day). Several sessions could go on at one time. Waseda University’s was open from 10:45 to 17:05 from Monday to Friday also with 45-minute sessions.

OJC’s writing center was open after most courses ended from 17:00 to 20:00 Monday through Friday and in the afternoon on Saturday with 15-minute sessions. Students could have two sessions if another student had not signed-up. It was open later in the day because students have a heavy load of courses during the day and more students could use the center in the evening.

On the other hand, the University of Tokyo’s writing center does not have set hours but rather works only by appointments which fit the schedules of the tutors and students. Their sessions were 30 minutes.

Administrators

None of the administrators have administrative backgrounds in operating writing centers, though all of them have visited writing centers in the U.S. As stated earlier, the U.S. is where the writing center movement began. In addition, the administrator at Waseda also had the opportunity to use the writing center at a U.S. university as a student.

The directors of the writing centers also have varying roles. Waseda University has two faculty members and a large staff. The director has a course reduction and she meets with the

tutors once a week. From April 2008, they also hired a receptionist.

At the University of Tokyo, running the writing center is part of official responsibilities connected to a course. At Sophia University and OJC, administering the writing center is part of one faculty member's responsibilities.

Scope of Operation

The size of the writing centers varies a great deal. Waseda University has a comprehensive writing center. Writing center sessions can be held in Japanese or English. Moreover, they also have writing sessions to improve Japanese writing. In addition to the administrators, students work at the reception desk. They have extensive financial support that helps with providing a dedicated space, computer support for on-line sign-up, and staffing of the center. The center holds between 1350-1500 sessions a year.

Sophia University has a room set aside for tutoring with partitions so that several sessions can go on simultaneously. There are many resources including dictionaries and computer software, as well as two computers. Students sign up in a different room for the sessions. An office secretary updated information on writing sessions. They hold around 500 sessions a year.

At the University of Tokyo, the Critical Writing Program has an office and some tables where the tutoring sessions are carried out and resource materials are available for use. In the pilot program, there were 40-50 students who had to have tutorial sessions with the five tutors.

OJC has a more basic type of writing center. An office secretary makes the sign up sheets and inputs the session data into Excel, all as part of her work load in the Education Development Department. The writing center administrator interviews and hires the native English tutors (there is only one tutor a night), writes up guidelines, and analyzes feedback sheets, as part of his faculty workload. The only expense for OJC is the pay and any transportation costs for the native English tutors. There were 686 sessions in the year 2007-2008.

OJC also has a Japanese tutoring system that supports student learning as part of SASSC. The tutors are graduates of the two-year college, who help students through Japanese with organizing writing, understanding grammar, developing time-management skills, understanding instructors' comments on papers, and using APA in papers. Often, students with poor English skills would talk with the tutors before visiting the writing center. In 2008-2009, tutors worked three nights a week.

Discussion

There is no one "Japanese model" of writing centers. Although we have noted similarities

as well as differences in the ways these centers are organized, there is still a great deal of diversity; indeed, it is difficult for us to limit ourselves to the term "Writing Center." The students have needs in writing, reading, giving oral presentations, applying for study abroad, and help with tests such as TOEFL and TOEIC. In addition, Waseda University supports writing in the Japanese language as well as in English. Thus, we are really more of Writing and Learning Centers that support students in their learning and improvement of writing and other skills.

The writing centers have developed because of perceived needs in departments, schools, or in OJC's case, the whole college. Since there was no communication between universities in Japan when these writing centers began, each developed based on information from the U.S. or from websites such as the IWCA's or from communicating with writing centers in the U.S. Since all of these writing/learning centers are still young, they will continue developing and growing to support the learners at their institutions.

After the visits to Tokyo, more communication between the administrators began. Then in September 2007, at the Symposium on Second Language Writing in Nagoya, there was a session for people interested in creating an Asian writing center group. Now, there is a listserv with over 20 members. Some members are administering writing centers while others are thinking about establishing writing centers at their universities. With more universities in Asia offering more courses taught through English, the need for writing centers and support among these centers will increase in Asia.

Acknowledgement

1. The research is supported by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (#19520531).
2. I would like to thank Tom Gally, Saori Sadoshima, and Robert Witmer for their interviews and their comments on drafts of this article.

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Appendix: Writing Centers in Japan

	Osaka Jogakuin College	Sophia University	University of Tokyo, Komaba Campus	Waseda University
Type of institution	Private	Private	Public	Private
Year started	April 2004	Fall 2004	October 2005	April 2004
Target students	All students in the school can go.	The writing center is mainly for the liberal arts department use. Faculty and graduate students have also used the center.	First- and second-year students taking pilot English-language writing courses in the College of Arts and Sciences. Beginning in April 2008, all first-year science students can use it.	For the School of International Liberal Studies students. It will be open to the entire campus from October 2008.
Purpose	Writing, presentations, power point use, grammar, discussion, semester abroad applications, etc.	Help with all aspects of writing; graduate school application letters and essays	Writing the paper connected with the course	Help with course papers, presentations, study abroad applications, TOEIC and TOEFL; Help with Japanese writing
Days and hours	M-F 5-8; W 4-8; Sat. 2-4	M-F 11:00-4:45; few sessions on Wed. Multiple sessions at many times	Sessions arranged around the times of tutors and students	M-F 10:40-5:05

	Osaka Jogakuin College	Sophia University	University of Tokyo, Komaba Campus	Waseda University
Session	15 minutes (sign-up)	45 minutes (sign-up)	30 minutes (sign-up)	45 minutes (on-line sign-up)
Number of sessions	Around 700 a year	Around 500 a year		1350 to 1500 year
Tutor	Part-time native English instructors; four working with two twice a week	Graduate students and some professionals; now 10 graduate students and two professionals	Graduate students working on masters or doctoral degrees. There are five this semester.	Five doctoral, 10 master and three undergraduates. The undergraduates are students from abroad with experience tutoring.
Tutor Training	Tutors are introduced to the process of writing in the writing courses at OJC; reference material available and contact by email with administrator.	Tutors have a training session and need to read materials.	There is a graduate course that teaches about teaching. Students who take the class and then tutor receive a certificate. In the future, TAs will be required to have taken a course in writing and tutoring pedagogy.	The administrator taught a 15 week course in Academic Writing that tutors attended in the past. Weekly meetings are held for two hours on Tuesday.

	Osaka Jogakuin College	Sophia University	University of Tokyo, Komaba Campus	Waseda University
Director of Center	One faculty member	One faculty member	The tutorial aspect is part of the Critical Writing Program, so no one person is in charge.	Two faculty and two associate faculty; one associate faculty is full-time at the writing center.
Director compensation	Part of workload	Relieved of some other committee meetings	Part of workload	One course reduction for full-time director
Funding	Part of institutional budget; main cost is for tutors.	Part of the university and currently renewed every year	Part of the Komaba Organization for Educational Development budget	Part of the school of International Liberal Studies. From 2008, the University provides the budget