

*Multilingual Students in the Writing Centre: Building an International Community of Practice*

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Diane Wenger (1998) described “Community of Practice” as being a situation where there is mutual engagement in a joint enterprise with a shared repertoire, shared strategies, and a common vocabulary, and where participants respect and challenge each other in this enterprise. Nancy Grimp (2013) applies this idea to the Writing Centre in her article “Rethorizing Writing Centre Work” where she states “ Writing Centres can be understood as places where these identities of participation or non-participation are being negotiated and the policies and practices of a particular writing centre can either encourage or discourage the process of developing an identity of belonging to an academic community” (p. 96). Greenfield challenges common practices with international students in Writing Centres as being based on the deficit model of language acquisition, and as promoting the imposition of North American values and academic practices on these students, in a practice known as “code switching”. This practice ignores the values and expertise international students bring to the Writing Centre and views their language skills as problematic within the academic community. In order for international students to succeed in this environment, they must participate not as active members of the enterprise, but as passive entities who submit their work to be “fixed.” This raises two important questions: (1) Can an academic community of scholars and students ever be a community of practice as defined by Wenger? (2) Under what conditions can a Writing Centre be a site where that community of practice is situated? In this talk, I will outline how best practices with international students can reinforce the academic community of practice of the university.