IWAC – Panel Proposal for Paper Presentation on Bridging Linguistic Diversity with Technology: Evaluating Digital Tools in Multilingual Classrooms
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Abstract

Join us for an engaging exploration into how digital tools—AI-powered writing assistants, translation software, and online writing labs—are reshaping academic writing support for multilingual undergraduate students at Texas Tech University. This presentation delves into ongoing research that evaluates these tools' ability to tackle challenges such as grammar, vocabulary, and self-editing while also addressing their limitations, including overreliance and lack of contextual understanding. Through an overview of preliminary findings from a mixed-methods study, attendees will discover practical strategies for effectively integrating these tools into WAC pedagogy. Together, we aim to foster inclusivity, linguistic diversity, and equity in multilingual classrooms, striking a balance between the promises and pitfalls of digital technologies.

Description

Texas Tech University serves a linguistically diverse student body, reflecting the broader multicultural landscape of higher education. Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) is critical in this context, aiming to provide equitable writing support for all students. However, for multilingual undergraduate students, linguistic diversity can present both opportunities and challenges.

Scholars such as Matsuda (1999) argue that traditional WAC frameworks often fail to address the nuanced needs of multilingual students. Zawacki and Cox (2014) emphasize that culturally inclusive writing practices are essential for ensuring that multilingual learners can thrive in academic settings. This research builds on these foundational works by focusing on the intersection of technology and WAC pedagogy. It explores the role of digital tools—AI-powered

writing assistants, translation software, and online writing labs, in addressing linguistic barriers while promoting equity and inclusivity.

The rapid integration of technology into education has raised important questions about its impact on learning outcomes. AI writing assistants such as Grammarly offer real-time feedback, while translation tools like Google Translate provide multilingual support. Online writing labs, often operated through university programs, offer tailored guidance to students. These tools hold immense potential for enhancing multilingual undergraduate student' academic writing. However, challenges such as overreliance, inaccuracies, and limited contextual understanding require critical examination. This research aims to address these gaps by evaluating the benefits and limitations of digital tools in WAC pedagogy.

Situating the Study in Current Scholarship

Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) scholarship has long recognized the need for linguistically inclusive approaches. Matsuda (1999) emphasizes that the integration of second-language writing into composition studies is critical for addressing the needs of multilingual students. Similarly, Zawacki and Cox (2014) highlight the importance of adapting WAC frameworks to accommodate linguistic diversity, promoting equity and inclusivity in academic writing. As the conversation evolves, digital tools such as Grammarly, ChatGPT, Google Translate, and online writing labs are emerging as powerful allies in bridging linguistic gaps.

Building on these foundational studies, this research situates itself at the intersection of WAC pedagogy and digital innovation. Godwin-Jones (2022) critiques the advantages and limitations of AI tools in supporting language learning, offering a framework to evaluate their pedagogical utility. Moreover, Goodlad and Baker (2023) argue for the humanities' role in shaping ethical AI development, underscoring the importance of embedding cultural and linguistic inclusivity into technological practices. This study extends these discussions by examining how digital tools impact multilingual learners' academic writing, offering both a critical analysis and practical recommendations for WAC practitioners.

Proposed Presentation Content

The presentation will focus on three key areas, each designed to provide attendees with a comprehensive understanding of the research findings and their implications for WAC pedagogy:

1. Findings from the Study:

   The panelists will share insights from an ongoing mixed-methods study that evaluates the effectiveness of digital tools in multilingual WAC contexts. The study combines student surveys, focus groups, instructor interviews, and tool analyses to assess the tools' impact on grammar, vocabulary, and self-editing skills. Preliminary findings indicate improvements in writing mechanics but also highlight challenges such as overreliance on AI, inaccuracies, and limited contextual sensitivity. Notably, the study reveals that these tools often fail to build students' writing confidence, instead fostering dependency.

2. Critical Analysis of Digital Tools:

   This section will delve into the affordances and limitations of specific tools such as AI-powered writing assistants, translation software, and online writing labs. For example, while Grammarly excels in providing immediate grammar corrections, it often overlooks nuanced academic contexts. Similarly, Google Translate aids in bridging language gaps but struggles with idiomatic expressions and subject-specific terminology. The analysis will emphasize the importance of balancing these tools' use with traditional writing instruction to ensure linguistic inclusivity without sacrificing academic rigor.

3. Practical Recommendations for WAC Instructors:

   The panelists will provide actionable strategies for integrating digital tools into WAC classrooms effectively. Recommendations include:
   - Encouraging critical engagement with AI-generated content to mitigate overreliance.
   - Selecting tools that align with students' linguistic and cultural needs.

- Incorporating workshops to help students navigate the limitations of digital tools while enhancing their self-editing and critical thinking skills.

Methodology and Anticipated Takeaways

The research employs a mixed-methods approach to gather data from multilingual undergraduate students and instructors across disciplines. Key methodologies include:

- Student Surveys and Focus Groups: These will capture students' experiences with digital writing tools, focusing on their perceived benefits and challenges.
- Instructor Interviews: Structured interviews will explore instructors' observations of how these tools influence multilingual students' academic writing.
- Comparative Tool Analysis: A detailed evaluation of digital tools will assess their multilingual support features, accuracy, and user experience.

By the time of the conference, the study will yield data-driven insights into the tools' pedagogical impact. Attendees can expect to gain:
- A nuanced understanding of how digital tools shape multilingual undergraduate students' academic writing.
- Evidence-based guidelines for selecting and integrating these tools into WAC pedagogy.
- A framework for fostering linguistic inclusivity and academic rigor through technology-supported writing practices.

Contribution to the Field

This study contributes to WAC scholarship by bridging the gap between digital innovation and pedagogical inclusivity. While existing research acknowledges the potential of digital tools, this study provides an empirical evaluation of their effectiveness within multilingual contexts. It also highlights critical challenges, such as overreliance and contextual insensitivity, offering a balanced perspective that extends current discussions. Most importantly, the research advocates for humanistic values in technology integration, ensuring that digital tools serve as enablers of inclusivity and equity rather than mere efficiency drivers.

In the concluding section of the presentation, the panelists will propose a framework for integrating digital tools into multilingual WAC classrooms. This framework emphasizes collaboration between students and instructors, encouraging reflective practices that balance technological affordances with traditional writing pedagogy. By grounding WAC in humanistic values, this approach aims to foster a more inclusive and equitable academic environment.

Conclusion

This research underscores the transformative potential of digital tools in addressing the linguistic challenges faced by multilingual learners. However, it also calls for a cautious and reflective approach to their integration, ensuring that these tools enhance rather than hinder academic writing. The findings will contribute to ongoing discussions on how WAC can adapt to the complexities of multilingualism in the digital age, providing instructors with practical resources to navigate these challenges.