

Writing Centers in Japan from Creation until Now:
The Development of Japanese University Writing Centers from 2004 to 2015

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日本におけるライティングセンターの立ち上げから現在まで
— 2004年から2015年までの日本の大学におけるライティングセンターの発展 —

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Abstract

The number of writing centers at Japanese universities has grown over the past ten years (Nakatake 2013). Coincidentally, the number of studies and surveys of these centers has also grown, but remains a very small portion of overall English-Language education/research in Japan (Nakatake 2013, Hays 2009). Throughout the studies, the idea that Japanese University Writing Centers (JUWCs) are few but continue to grow and develop with regard to English-language education is expressed in nearly every report. (Nakatake 2013; McKinley 2011; Hays 2009; Johnston, Cornwell & Yoshida 2009; Johnston, Cornwell & Yoshida 2008). JUWCs have increased in number; however the most recent operating practices of the centers may differ from the framework in which they were originally conceived. This article examines several JUWCs and how they have grown while simultaneously changing in the past ten years. This growth and change also created the need for a forum to exchange ideas leading to the formation of the Writing Centers Association of Japan.

要 旨

日本の大学のライティングセンターの数はこの10数年間で増加している (Nakatake 2013)。それと同時に、ライティングセンターについての研究や調査も増加しているが、日本の英語教育、英語研究の全体におけるライティングセンターの割合は非常に小さいままである (Nakatake 2013; Hays 2009)。数少ない研究にもかかわらず、そのほとんどすべての研究において日本の大学におけるライティングセンター (JUWCs) の数は多くないが、英語教育は成長、発展し続けているという調査結果が発表されている (Nakatake 2013; McKinley 2011; Hays 2009; Johnston, Cornwell & Yoshida 2009; Johnston, Cornwell & Yoshida 2008)。JUWCsの数は増えているが、最近のセンターの運営方法は当初の計画とは異なるかもしれない。この論文ではいくつかのJUWCsを調査し、それらのライティングセンターが過去10数年でどのように成長してきたか、そしてどのように日本ライティングセンター協会が構成されてきたのかを調査している。

1. Introduction: The Start of Writing Centers and Writing Center Research in Japan

Writing centers are relatively new phenomena in Japan. The writing center's origin can be traced back to the 1950s in North America, but centers have only appeared in Japan during the last 10 years. Because of the relative newness of the field, the research is also in an early stage. One of the first and subsequently well-known articles on JUWCs was published in late 2008 by three researchers at Osaka Woman's University. The article surveyed the then-burgeoning development of writing centers in Japan (Johnston, Cornwell & Yoshida 2008). Their research led to the conclusion that the number of English-based writing centers in Japan would increase in tandem with an increase in university courses taught in English (p188). The researchers referenced the idea that English has been a priority of the Japanese Ministry of Education for many years with numerous initiatives and programs attempting to increase the overall English proficiency of students. One method to improve English skills, specifically writing, is the implementation of writing centers.

Johnston, Cornwell and Yoshida stated that the start of most current Japanese writing centers could be traced back to 2004 when Waseda University, Osaka Jogakuin and Sophia University each opened a writing center. The following year the University of Tokyo also opened an English-language writing center. These four JUWCs share similar fundamental educational principles with Writing Centers in North America (Fujioka 2012).

Additionally, Johnston, Cornwell and Yoshida's 2008 study said that the majority of JUWCs were created with the ultimate goal of providing students some autonomy with which to improve their English skills. Specifically, all four of the original JUWCs surveyed were primarily set up and operated to support undergraduate students, with Waseda and University of Tokyo focusing on a smaller, specific portion of the undergraduate student body. While this is good practice for any new project which is attempting to minimize risk while testing the environment in which it operates, these JUWCs differ from most North America writing centers.

2. The Role of Writing Centers

2.1 North America - Native and Non-native

Most writing centers at North American universities were created with the original intent of helping native speakers further improve their own language ability (Moore 1950). Well-known writing centers of competitively ranked universities in the US such as the University of California Los Angeles's (UCLA) have mission statements like the following: "Our goal is not only to help students with a particular writing assignment, but also to help them become more effective and confident writers (<http://wp.ucla.edu/index.php/home>)."

Similarly, The University of Pittsburg Writing Center states, "to enrich the educational experience of Pitt undergraduate and graduate students through one-on-one support in various aspects of the writing process (<http://www>).

writingcenter.pitt.edu/about-center/mission).” Both of these universities, and many others, strive for overall writing improvement or refining techniques with the underlying notion that writers have some familiarity or basic level proficiency. The most common phrases used in these kinds of mission statements contain the words “help” and “support” instead of the more teacher-learner oriented terms “teach” or “instruct.”

The goal of helping native-speakers who write with intermediate level skills develop into advanced writers was often the main purpose of a North American writing center. However, as time progressed and these kinds of centers became more widespread, a secondary need emerged. According to the Institute of International Education funded by the U.S. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the overall number of international students in the U.S. has grown 72% in 15 years, from 514,723 in 1999/2000 to 886,052 in 2013/14 (Witherell and Clayton 2014). With easier access to study abroad in the United States and other English speaking countries, many international students found themselves in college-level writing classes lacking the skills and amount of exposure to English-academic writing compared to their native-speaker classmates. These international students come to writing centers to receive additional instruction in order to perform what is required of them in class. It is important to note that this is not to say that these students are lacking in the ability to write highly academic work, but they may be unable to write highly academic work in English. Writing centers often serve to help these kinds of writers gain the confidence and experience needed to engage with their native-speaking peers.

The development of the North American writing centers has changed largely due to a change in originally intended users. The change can be summarized as a shift from solely helping native speakers to a center that also helps international students. This change is reflected in mission statements that are broader and more inclusive to embrace writers of varying levels of ability and background. In this manner, writing centers service more students while upholding their original yet updated framework.

2.2 Japan - Non-native and Native

JUWCs may have borrowed operational practices from the North America model, but many did not begin by offering services to all students. The original four (Waseda, University of Tokyo, Osaka Jyoshiin, and Sophia University) were not designed to support native language instruction. Instead of fostering better writing of a student’s first language, the center’s original goal was to increase a student’s written ability in English, a foreign language (Gally 2010). Unlike the North American counterpart that started helping native speakers and then adapted to serve non-native speakers, JUWCs began helping non-native speakers. It is still early in the development of JUWCs, but there may be some movement towards helping native-speakers in Japanese language and other language assistance besides English.

In Japan, students' English, particularly Academic English, can be seen as confusing or lacking structure. Japanese students may lack training in writing critical texts and making logical arguments both in English and in Japanese (Yasuda 2006). Therefore JUWCs were often created in the hopes of becoming a kind of informal, relaxed atmosphere in which students could receive peer support and improve their English skills (Nakatake 2013).

This is not always the case. Several preconceived notions in Japanese students' minds about what learning English looks like and how it takes place can interfere with the operating goals of many JUWCs. Some of these issues may include students' inability to recognize peer support and automatically default to the tutor whom they have placed in the role of instructor. Students may also believe the tutor holds all the answers and if they wait patiently and receptively, the tutor will teach them everything necessary to complete any particular assignment (Myers 2003). Obviously, this type of thinking is in direct conflict with the mission statement of all writing centers, including JUWCs. However, through repeated information sessions to faculty, students and staff the purpose of the writing center is becoming more widespread.

3. Then and Now: A Comparison of JUWCs from 2008 and 2015

So far this paper has discussed the role of writing centers both inside and outside of Japan, but what are some of the specific goals of JUWCs? One can argue that the goal of any writing center is to improve the writing ability of the student. Hopefully during this process the center, or more specifically a tutor, can instill confidence in writers without overtly teaching them or editing their work for them. The original four JUWCs each mention this on their homepages and in other research, but most of them focus solely on English as a foreign language. They also state that as the need for English increases, the centers will grow larger and more English support services will be needed. However are Japanese university students who need additional support in English as a foreign language the driving force that governs the time, amount and kind of service offered by the writing centers?

The following section will revisit each of the schools listed in Johnston, Cornwell and Yoshida's original study (2008) and see if those JUWCs have continued, grown, and/or changed focus. Three new JUWCs will be introduced to see if they have similar a similar goal or focus that mimics the original four.

In many cases, the website of the original writing center has moved, closed, or been altered. An Internet archiving source (The Wayback Machine: <https://archive.org/web/>) was used to compare the 2008 version with the current 2015 version.

4. The Original Four JUWCs

Table 1: Osaka Jogakuin College

Year	2008	2015
School Webpage	http://www.wilmina.ac.jp/ojc/top/view?set_language=en	Unchanged
Writing Center Webpage	http://www.wilmina.ac.jp/studylink/Writing_Center/index.htm	http://commune.wilmina.ac.jp/content_uportal/studylink/Writing_Center/index.htm
Relation to English	Most of the courses are taught in English	Unchanged
Operational	Six-day writing center	Five-day writing center
Additional Information	Japanese tutors Workshops	Caution against revision services Part of the Self-Access & Study Support Center (SASSC)

Osaka Jogakuin's writing center continues to operate. The website has been moved and the number of available days for sessions has decreased by one. There is a revision of writing center guidelines. In the 2015 version, the guidelines have been reformatted to a more user friendly FAQ-style. Overall, it would appear that Osaka Jogakuin's writing center is continuing with its original goals and has not had to alter its core services offered or make any other major changes.

Table 2: Sophia University

Year	2008	2015
School Webpage	http://www.sophia.ac.jp/E/E_toppage.nsf/	http://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/e_top
Writing Center Webpage	http://www.fl.sophia.ac.jp/academics/support.html	http://www.sophiawritingcenter.com/
Relation to English	English-sessions	English-sessions
Operational	n/a	Four-day writing center
Additional Information	Funded by a Ministry of Education grant for college development	Improved website Graduate student/alumni tutors Workshops Developed policy guidelines including lateness, and session expectations

Sophia University's website has changed drastically and the scope of the center has greatly increased. The original information offered in Johnston, Cornwell and Yoshida 2008 did not link to a writing-center specific homepage. Instead, it linked to an overall student services page without information directly concerning the writing center. Some information not present in the 2008 version included the center's hours of operation, types of sessions offered to students, the process of how to make a reservation, etc. In 2011, the director of the center published an article in *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal* describing the difficulties the center had encountered

(McKinley 2011). Some problems included low faculty involvement, low attendance, and student misconceptions about the center. McKinley stated that writing workshops were a key component to publicize the centers while simultaneously performing the service of writing improvement techniques. In this case, the JUWC at Sophia added the component of workshops to reach a larger audience within the university. This addition is complimentary to the goals of the center.

Table 3: Waseda University

Year	2008	2015
School Webpage	http://www.waseda.jp/top/index-e.html	Unchanged
Writing Center Webpage	http://www.waseda.jp/sils/en/	http://commune.wilmina.ac.jp/content_uportal/studylink/Writing_Center/index.htm
Relation to English	Many of the courses in this school are taught through English	Unchanged
Operational	Five-day writing center within 1 department, soon to be opened to all departments	Five-day writing center All departments
Additional Information	n/a	Multiple satellite offices Multiple languages offered Variety of combinations

Waseda University is one of the largest universities in Japan, so the scale at which it operates is larger than other JUWCs. It is important to note that the program started small and operated within a single department from 2004-2008 and then began to grow. Like Sophia University, the original information given in the 2008 report does not link directly to Waseda's writing center page (circa 2008). Instead it is a general information page of the department in which the writing center was based. However Internet archives determine Waseda's current website was established in 2009.

Waseda is unique among JUWCs because of the scope and speed at which it expanded. By 2009, Waseda's writing center was available to all students, not only students of the School of International Liberal Studies. In 2011, Waseda's writing center opened the first satellite office at the School of Science and Engineering campus. In 2012, a second branch office opened at the Tokorozawa campus (which is the location of human and sport sciences) and most recently, in 2014, a third branch office was opened at the medical campus (TWIns Campus). The tutors are dispatched from the main office. Travel time between campuses can take upwards of one hour.

Waseda was one of the original JUWCs to offer tutorial sessions in multiple languages. Tutors strive to make the student/writer feel comfortable by using the language choice of the writer (Sadoshima 2006). Waseda went further and differentiated session types by written and spoken language. From early on, Waseda offered native language (in this case Japanese) writing support in addition to non-native, specifically English. One such session classification is a paper written in English discussed in English or discussed in Japanese. Likewise, another classification is a Japanese

paper discussed in Japanese or in English. This expansion into native language support moves away from the idea of increased English exposure for JUWCs, but aligns them closer to the North American model.

Also, as of 2015, Chinese was added to the list of available languages to discuss papers. This shows a change in user demographics. Again, instead of an increase in English-language users, Chinese or other international students want help to put them on the same level as their peers. Waseda University Writing Center continues to grow and thrive and becomes more inclusive and multi-faceted with each passing year.

Table 4: University of Tokyo, Komaba Campus

Year	2008	2015
School Webpage	http://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/index_e.html	Unchanged
Writing Center Webpage	http://www.komed.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp/cwp/ http://aless.ecc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/	Unchanged
Relation to English	Specific assistance related to Science in English	Unchanged
Operational	Reservation and appointment only	Unchanged
Additional Information	n/a	Increased number of sessions

The University of Tokyo's writing center is unlike most other JUWCs for two reasons. First, this writing center is based within a department and therefor can have greater communication with faculty members, and second, it exists to help students complete a specific task. In 2008, University of Tokyo's writing center was a joint venture between the Komaba Writers' Studio and Active Learning of English for Science Students. Students receive assistance in both designing and completing their experiments (content) and the English skills needed to present them (language). The number of tutorial sessions has increased greatly from 350 in 2008 to 630 in 2011 (Nakatake 2013, Gally 2010). Because the University of Tokyo has such a specific niche in which it exists, it is difficult to imagine this kind of center being available to the entire student population. In one sense, this center is growing, but within predetermined operational limits.

5. New Additions: Three New JUWCs

The following three universities were not included in the 2008 survey by Johnston, Cornwell and Yoshida, but have been included to show the additional growth and development of recent JUWCs when compared with the original four. These universities were chosen because of the author's interaction with the directors at each of the universities. Additionally, the first university, J. F. Oberlin University, is under the direction of this author and several colleagues.

Table 5: J. F. Oberlin University

Year	2008	2015
School Webpage	n/a	http://www.obirin.ac.jp/en/
Writing Center Webpage	n/a	http://www.obirin.ac.jp/en/rj/academics/support/index.html
Relation to English	n/a	Bilingual center, focus on non-major English courses
Operational	n/a	3-day writing center
Additional Information	n/a	Joint venture with Japanese language program Visiting lecturers and sister university connections Japanese Education Graduate Students

J.F. Oberlin University is a four-year private school with departments in Business Management, Performing Arts, Sports and Welfare, and Liberal Arts. Approximately 2000 first-year university students must take a non-major English for General Purposes class that meets twice a week. The writing center at J.F. Oberlin University deals mainly with students from these non-major classes. Additionally, non-first year students looking to study abroad or improve overall English skills also use the center, but these numbers are not comparable to first year student usage. The English portion of J.F. Oberlin's Writing center has grown from its first year, adding tutors and additional slots for reservations.

It is interesting to note that this Writing Center is similar to Waseda's in that it has a Japanese component for students who study Japanese as a Foreign Language. J.F. Oberlin has a direct exchange program with many overseas universities. Students from these universities can use the writing center to supplement their short-term study abroad. However, the main users of the Japanese portion of this writing center are long-term international students who are enrolled in four-year degree programs. In the month of June 2015, 70% of the reserved sessions were for long-term international students who are enrolled in four-year degree programs. Many of these students live with their family in Japan, but often speak a language other than Japanese as a first language. These students are mainly from other neighboring Asian countries. The students can get lost in the Japanese university system because they may appear to be doing fine, but lack the knowledge for writing academic or business-related Japanese. Some of the heaviest users of this writing center are international students looking to graduate and secure a job. The Japanese-language tutors have had to adjust their tutoring techniques to better assist students seeking jobs.

This writing center wants provide service to all students in every language, but has similar limitations that other programs have such as budget and staffing. It is growing at a small rate, but it is currently unable to serve all students for all languages. Like the original four JUWCs, this center is increasing, but doing so slowly and focusing on foreign language assistance for both English and Japanese.

Table 6: National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies

Year	2008	2015
School Webpage	n/a	http://www.grips.ac.jp/en/
Writing Center Webpage	n/a	http://www.grips.ac.jp/en/pstudents/resources/writing/
Relation to English	n/a	Bilingual center, focus on non-major English courses
Operational	n/a	Combination walk-in/appointment
Additional Information	n/a	Stand alone graduate school Heavy English/international focus Academic presentations and publications

The National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) is unlike any other traditional university in Japan because it is solely a graduate school. Every JUWC, including the original four, were designed mainly for undergraduates. Of course if time, money and human resources were available to the other writing centers, graduate student assistance is an additional goal. In the case of GRIPS, graduate students are the only students enrolled at this highly competitive and international school. Many of the students who use the GRIPS's writing center are international students who come with a specific paper or article they wish to be published. Because of the international setting of this university, English sessions are the main type of session offered. Students are expected to come and discuss a specific assignment or seek feedback on the progress of their research. This differs slightly from other JUWCs that service undergraduates. The graduate students often have a more precise focus than undergraduates. This type of JUWC is a specialized one for a specific user.

Table 7: Tokyo International University

Year	2008	2015
School Webpage	n/a	http://www.tiu.ac.jp
Writing Center Webpage	n/a	http://tiuenglishplaza.weebly.com/
Relation to English	n/a	Ties to sister school in the US large, varied, international faculty
Operational	n/a	Combination walk-in/appointment
Additional Information	n/a	Multi-modal self access center Peer-assistance and Faculty in the role of tutor

Tokyo International University has a JUWC that is housed in a larger self-access center. The writing center can be seen as one component in an overall program that provides a variety of services for a variety of students. From the Tokyo International University English Plaza webpage, students can sign up for the following: tutoring sessions with peers on their writing, conversation practice (with native speakers as instructors), academic advising with homework assistance, usage of designated study space, and workshops. Tokyo International University's approach is interesting

because both faculty and student peers can provide assistance. It is unknown by just viewing the website if one is more desired and has a higher utilization rate. However, this type of format of keeping tutors as a peer or near-peer to the student is consistent with most North American writing centers.

6. Writing Center Development and the Creation of the Writing Center Association

From the development of the first centers revised in the 2008 paper (Johnston, Cornwell & Yoshida 2008) and the additional centers added in this paper, it is true that JUWCs are growing in number and size, but not in a unified manner. Each center is adapting to its own specific needs. There are three common threads found throughout the surveys of the original (Waseda University, Osaka Jogakuin, Sophia University and University of Tokyo) and new centers (J. F. Oberlin, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies and Tokyo International University); one -the inclusion of other languages for both input and output, two - the specialization of the writing center, and three - the offering of additional services (either within a larger self-access center or within the center to the larger student population). This review is just an overall survey of the trends and changes in the development of writing centers in the past 10 years. Future research could focus on any one of these points and study it in further detail.

Seeing the ongoing development of JUWCs, the members from the University of Tokyo (Gally), National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (Petchko), and Tokyo International University (Hays) formed the informal Writing Center Association of Japan. They were then later joined by J.F. Oberlin University (Delgrego). These members saw a need for a community in which members could share information, research, and findings for people connected to JUWCs either working as tutors and/or managing them. The association is currently in its ninth year of operation and holds a yearly symposium for JUWCs. Because JUWCs are still few in number, the conference is also open to representatives of other international writing centers with a particular focus on other writing centers in Asia. The conference of the year preceding this article the participants could discuss the issues (among others) covered above. The 2015 symposium was titled "Looking back and Looking Forward: What Writing Teachers can Learn from Contrastive Rhetoric Research." In this forum, JUWCs can discuss and share some of the issues and necessary changes they listed above. New JUWCs can also learn from established centers as well. Preparations are underway for the 2016 conference and the committee hopes to keep running the conference year after year.

7. The Future of Writing Centers in Japan

The increase of JUWCs is likely to continue in the immediate future. How each center grows and develops, though, is likely to be a very individual process that tries to meet each center's developing needs. This is speculation on the part of the author, but the type of sessions offered maybe the area that sees the most change in the next ten years. Similar to how North American Writing Centers saw an increase in international students, Japan is likely to have an increase in international students as well. An increase in long-term international students, who are enrolled in four-year degree programs, brings new challenges to the writing center. JUWCs will have to revisit their operational practices and mission statements to ensure that they helping as many students as possible. Long-term international students who visit JUWCs may need a variety of language support services that the JUWCs are currently unavailable to provide. JUWCs will have to identify the latest student needs and hire/train tutors to assist these students. The examples of Waseda University, The University of Tokyo and J.F. Oberlin University already show positive movement in this direction. Simultaneously, JUWCs are becoming more common at a various universities and the benefits of using JUWCs are also becoming better known. Perhaps, JUWCs will also include native-language instruction and move closer to their North American counterparts.

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