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A Framework for English Writing Centres Transformation in Crisis Conditions

The 21st century's technological advancements and globalisation necessitate effective written communication skills in English across all professional fields. Consequently, writing is integral to university curricula, with competence-oriented instruction based on European language education recommendations. The English Writing Centre at the National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" (KMA EWC), established in 2014, aimed to enhance students' *English as a Foreign Language* (EFL) writing skills. However, its services were suspended during the pandemics and armed conflict. Proceeding from scholarly research in the related fields, this study examines the challenges faced by the KMA EWC, focusing on the impact of global and local crises on its practices. With the aim of restoring the KMA EWC, we emphasise the need for innovative approaches to support students, faculty, and the centre itself in times of hardship. In the context of rapid AI development, the study addresses concerns about learners' tendencies to misuse of AI-generated content, raising concerns about academic integrity and posing risks to the EWC's very existence. Given the current global and local crises, the project envisions the online Learning Management System (LMS) as a platform for effective tutoring, proposing a hybrid model that integrates online and offline sessions. Based on the survey-based research methodology, incorporating career-oriented writing into the EWC's activities is identified as a high priority. Additionally, informed by research on therapeutic writing and language-through-resilience teaching, the KMA EWC views writing sessions as a means to nurture the participants' emotional well-being. Through these innovative approaches, the KMA EWC aims to contribute its unique experience to the global evolution of writing centres.

Key words: AI, Business writing, English Writing Centre, EFL Writing skills, Hybrid tutoring, LMS, Therapeutic writing

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, rapid technological advancements and globalisation necessitate strong written communication skills across all professional fields, as effective written communication is crucial for professionals to maintain professionalism, clearly convey ideas, and collaborate on the international level.

In this context, university curricula integrate written communication subjects, emphasising competence-oriented instruction and ensuring that students acquire essential skills for academic success, professional development, and global engagement, making writing skills an essential component of modern education.

In order to improve students' writing proficiency, universities establish writing centers that offer personalised guidance and support through tutoring sessions, workshops, and resources that address a wide range of writing needs, including academic essays, research papers, and creative projects.

Transcending traditional educational boundaries, writing centres play a crucial role in equipping participants with the effective written communication skills necessary to excel in diverse professional fields and thrive in a competitive global economy through fostering critical thinking, clarity, and persuasive communication skills, which underscores the relevance of the research topic, highlighting the significance of writing centres as essential platforms for developing competencies crucial for both academic and professional success.

However, global and local crises, such as pandemics, environmental disasters, political upheavals, armed conflicts, economic downturns, local crises like budget cuts, staff turnover or campus-specific challenges significantly impact the writing centres' practices, requiring innovative use of technology and adaptations to remote or hybrid models so as to effectively address the increasing students' needs for support.

In the Ukrainian context, the English Writing Centre at the National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" (KMA EWC) was established in 2014 to enhance the standard EFL curriculum aimed to develop core linguistic competencies in line with European language education recommendations [6, p. 15–19]. The centre provided tutoring, consultations, workshops, and mock lessons.

However, the pandemic disrupted regular operations due to lockdowns and the necessity of remote learning, which hampered the centre's ability to provide in-person support essential for effective writing instruction. The war further aggravated the situation, causing instability and safety concerns and diverting resources and attention away from educational services. These compounded issues ultimately resulted in the suspension of the centre's operations.

In view of these circumstances, our research problem focuses on the challenges faced by the KMA EWC due to the discontinuation of its services during

the pandemic and war. These challenges include the loss of motivation among learners and the misuse of AI-generated content, which threatens academic integrity.

Thus, our study aims to examine how the KMA EWC can sustain its support to students and faculty during crises while promoting authentic language education and maintaining academic integrity through innovative solutions, with a focus on authentic EFL learning and resilience. The subject area of the research encompasses the practices and challenges of English Writing Centres in general and the KMA EWC in particular. The specific topic addressed by the paper includes the impact of global and local crises on writing centre practices and the integration of innovative approaches to maintain academic integrity and support authentic language learning. The research objectives comprise exploring the KMA EWC's challenges, proposing innovative support solutions, and addressing academic integrity concerns related to AI misuse. The research tasks include needs analysis through surveys, data analysis, developing proactive approaches, and integrating these solutions into the Writing Centre's practices. The research methodology includes a comprehensive literature review, qualitative methods like observation, surveys, and content analysis, focusing on the writing needs and challenges faced by students and faculty. To analyse the current challenges and develop strategies for effective writing support, the research material includes surveys of writing needs, questionnaires defining the Writing Centre's scope, and data on the misuse of AI-generated content.

The research hypotheses include the following: (a) Innovative approaches and proactive measures can effectively support writing centres in times of crisis, and (b) ethical guidelines and practical strategies can mitigate the misuse of AI-generated content and maintain academic integrity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recognising the importance of EFL writing and communication skills, which are highly valued in academia and business, universities introduce writing centres to support students' writing skills development and enhance their academic performance. Scholars in the field of writing research examine the role of writing centres, highlighting their positive impact on student learning [15, p. 5–19], emphasising the "academic literacies" approach [3] and demonstrating the efficacy of writing centres in improving students' writing skills and overall academic success [16, p. 499–507].

Investigating the role of writing centres in diverse contexts, researchers examine their operation in multilingual universities [15, p. 5–19], universities of technology [12, p. 18–34] and management studies [2, p. 48–62], addressing the marginalisation of writing centres [14], highlighting the challenges and impacts on student learning, focusing on promoting a humanising

pedagogy that contributes to students' aesthetic, socio-political, and cultural development [12, p. 18–34], and demonstrating how writing centres can evolve and enhance academic literacy support despite resource limitations.

Extensive research supports the therapeutic benefits of writing, demonstrating its healing power. L. DeSalvo [7] illustrates how narrative writing has transformed renowned authors like Virginia Woolf, Henry Miller, Audre Lorde, and Isabel Allende, and offers self-care guidance during the writing process. K. Baikie and K. Wilhelm [4, p. 338–346] found that expressive writing about traumatic events significantly improves physical and psychological health. Reflective practices, as noted by R. Charon [5], help students to explore their thoughts, biases, and feelings, reconnecting them with their purpose. Overall, the research shows that writing can heal emotional and physical traumas, facilitating a transition from woundedness to wholeness.

Understanding students' learning behaviours and attitudes can inform strategies to enhance student performance [13, p. 247–261] and to implement these strategies for writing centres development in crisis conditions. Building upon the threshold concepts essential for continuous learning and engagement [1], we address the challenges and advantages of these concepts and develop innovative approaches to be implemented in writing centres during times of hardship. In our prior research, we address the impact of global and local crises on learner motivation in Ukrainian academia [8, p. 207–216; 9, p. 108–112], suggesting that targeted language use in educational contexts can enhance resilience [11, p. 66–77] and provide groundwork for the Writing Centre development.

Building on these insights, our project aims to restore the Writing Centre at the National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy" and emphasise the need for innovative approaches to support students, faculty, and the centre itself during times of hardship.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: Needs Assessment through Survey

The research is grounded in a comprehensive review of literature and employs qualitative methods to gather and analyse data. These methods include observation, surveys, discourse and thematic analysis, focusing on the writing needs and challenges faced by students and faculty.

In order to meet the needs of both students and instructors, we conducted a survey of university students and faculty to define the scope of Writing Centre services based on their needs. The survey aimed to understand participants' perceptions and experiences, guiding the development of EWC practices and communication strategies.

Participants were selected randomly from *English as a Foreign Language* (EFL) classes, who would be potential attendees of EWC, to ensure diverse proficiency levels and academic backgrounds.

The experimental component of this study involved 243 students aged 18 to 25 and five staff members from the National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy". The primary data collection was conducted through online surveys administered via Google Forms. Initially, the first round of surveys was distributed during the establishment of the English Writing Centre (EWC) in 2014–2015 to assess students' writing needs and expectations. To verify and update the findings, a follow-up survey was conducted in 2023–2024, focusing on the evolving challenges faced by students experiencing crisis conditions and the role of AI in academic writing. Participants were invited to complete the questionnaires voluntarily, with links to the Google Forms disseminated through university communication channels, including official and private emails and learning platforms. The collected responses revealed students' experiences, highlighting the necessity of adaptive strategies for sustaining the EWC's operations in times of uncertainty.

Data collection included structured, closed-ended questions aimed at specific information for quantitative analysis and open-ended questions for qualitative insights. The open-ended questions allowed participants to express their thoughts freely, revealing the respondents' writing proficiency, experiences, and attitudes.

The questionnaire addressing the students' writing competencies included the following list of questions:

1. *Were you required to write and submit at least one assignment every semester (e.g., paragraph, essay, paper, etc.)?*

2. *How many hours per week do you dedicate to writing for academic purposes?*

3. *What type of non-academic or academic papers were you required to write?*

4. *From your own writing experience, would you agree or disagree with the following statements?*

- *I know how to plan before writing my paper.*
- *I do the reading before I start writing.*
- *I take notes on the reading before I start writing.*
- *I am good at time management.*
- *I understand the importance of revision.*
- *I always ask someone for feedback to improve my paper.*

• *I receive sufficient feedback for my texts/papers from my instructors.*

• *I think that my university supports my writing development.*

- *I know how to avoid plagiarism in my writing.*

5. *How helpful would you consider the following?*

- *More courses in which writing is used as a means of learning (like seminars).*
- *More feedback on my writing.*
- *Better instructions for my writing in existing courses.*
- *Professional tutoring for my writing.*
- *Online support for my writing.*

- More training to improve my writing skills.
- Other (please specify).

6. Which of these genres do you write for your classes in English (if any)?

7. When writing a paper or a thesis in your field, how important are the following?

- Understanding and reflecting on research methods.
- Finding the relevant literature about a topic.
- Revising a text to make it grammatically correct/ revising your text for the right word choice.
- Using the right terminology for English for Specific Purposes.

- Summarising research sources.

- Planning the writing steps.

- Structuring a paper.

- Knowing the writing conventions of my field.

- Other (please list).

8. How confident do you feel in these skills?

- Supporting your own point of view.

- Interpreting research findings.

- Quoting and paraphrasing sources.

- Analysing a subject.

- Expressing yourself precisely.

- Finding the right style for academic papers.

- Designing, commenting, and/or integrating tables, graphs, and charts in a text.

- Writing a bibliography/Reference List.

- Revising or editing your paper.

- Working in a team to write a paper.

- Other (please specify).

9. What are the characteristics of "good writing" in your major/subject?

- Creative ideas.

- Critical thinking.

- Avoiding plagiarism.

- Avoiding the first person ("I," "we," "my").

- Supporting arguments with evidence.

- Clear structure.

- Basing the text on previous research.

- Figurative language.

- Simple, comprehensive language.

- Terminological accuracy.

- Avoiding bias.

- Other (please specify).

10. In the last academic year, how often did the following occur?

• Did you receive written instructions on a writing task?

- Did you receive oral instructions on a writing task?

• Were you engaged in discussions with your university teacher(s) on your written work?

• Were you engaged in discussions with your classmate(s) on your written work?

• Did you participate in online chats, discussions, forums, wikis, etc., at your university on writing topics?

• Did your instructor ask you to plan or begin your writing in class?

- Did you take notes during classes?

• Did your instructor explain how to avoid plagiarism (how to paraphrase sources, how to incorporate excerpts into your writing)?

The survey responses make it possible to highlight the basic needs of EWC participants for targeted support and resources.

An additional *Job Applicants' Writing Needs Questionnaire* for university students preparing for careers gathered comprehensive data on their writing needs. It included questions about the types of job application documents they write, time spent on them, challenges in writing these documents, self-assessed writing competencies, and the perceived usefulness of resources like career-related workshops or online templates.

Specifically, the *Job Applicants' Writing Needs Questionnaire* included the following questions:

1. Were you required to write and submit any of the following documents during your job search?

2. How many hours per week do you dedicate to writing job application documents?

3. What types of job application documents have you found most challenging to write?

4. From your own writing experience, would you agree or disagree with the following statements?

• I know how to tailor my cover letter to different job applications.

• I can effectively highlight my skills and experiences in my resume/CV.

• I understand the importance of a personal statement in job applications.

• I am good at organising and presenting my professional portfolio.

• I always seek feedback on my job application documents.

• I receive sufficient feedback on my job application documents from others.

• I believe my writing skills are a key factor in my job application success.

5. How helpful would you consider the following resources for improving your job application writing?

- Workshops on writing cover letters and resumes/CVs

- Online resources with templates and examples

- One-on-one professional tutoring or coaching

- Feedback sessions with peers or mentors

- Writing centres or career services support

- Online forums or discussion groups

6. On the scale from 1-5, how important do you consider the following skills for writing job application documents?

- Tailoring documents to specific job descriptions

- Highlighting relevant skills and experiences

- Using professional and concise language

- Structuring documents effectively

- Proofreading and editing

• Demonstrating knowledge of the industry or company

7. On the scale from 1-5, how confident do you feel in the following skills?

- Writing a compelling cover letter
- Crafting a detailed and effective resume/CV
- Composing a persuasive personal statement
- Assembling a professional portfolio
- Completing application forms accurately

8. What are the characteristics of "effective writing" in job applications?

- Clarity and precision
- Relevance to the job description
- Highlighting achievements and skills
- Professional tone and language
- Strong organisation and structure
- Evidence of industry knowledge
- Avoiding errors and typos

9. In the past year, how often have you engaged in the following activities related to job application writing?

- Attended workshops or webinars on job application writing
- Sought feedback from peers or mentors on your documents
- Used online resources for templates and examples
- Participated in mock interviews or application reviews
- Consulted with career services or writing centres
- Joined online forums or discussion groups for job seekers

10. Are there any additional skills or resources you feel are important for job application writing that were not covered in this questionnaire? Please specify.

This survey aims to assess the participants' confidence in career-related writing skills.

The described approach aimed to identify writing gaps and inform targeted support services, ensuring graduates can articulate qualifications effectively and secure desired employment.

The research prioritised participant rights through voluntary participation, informed consent, clear communication of the purpose and procedures, and measures to protect sensitive information. The obtained empirical data focus provides a framework for EWC practices and communication strategies, with implications for language instruction, intercultural communication, and resource development in the field.

4. DISCUSSION: KEY FINDINGS

Based on survey data, we can define the scope of EWC services. In particular, students indicated difficulties with basic grammar, sentence structure, conventional punctuation, highlighting a need for foundational EFL support, and preparation for tests. Participants also expressed challenges in organising paragraphs and developing strong topics and concluding sentences, underscoring the need for advice on paragraph structure and coherence. Mastery of academic styles, narrowing down topics, and defining research questions were

common concerns at the master's level language studies. There was also a demand for support in writing various types of documents to meet diverse academic and professional requirements. Students reported struggles with essay writing, organising ideas coherently, and adhering to academic conventions regarding citation and documentation. Students also indicated issues with draft editing and revision, as well as a demand for prompt feedback and qualified tutoring. These findings emphasise the necessity for comprehensive writing support services, such as workshops, tutorials, and resources, to address diverse writing needs of university students and enhance their academic and professional writing competence.

Additionally, survey results revealed that participants needed support in writing various career-oriented documents, such as letters (cover, motivation, inquiry, thank-you), proposals, resumes, projects, minutes, summaries, and reports. Students required assistance on completing applications and writing case studies. Given the development of international relations and the continuous growth of information exchange and international labour mobility, tutoring in business writing will help participants to develop and strengthen practical knowledge regarding the specific needs identified by the survey data.

War-related challenges like air raids and power cuts, or the Internet inaccessibility inevitably cause stress and apathy, diminishing learners' motivation. Based on the responses, a thematic breakdown reveals the reasons for lower learner motivation reflected in Fig. 1.

As illustrated in Fig. 1, the primary factor contributing to lower learner motivation is the stressful circumstances of the war, cited 52 times. This is followed closely by interruptions in the power supply and/or Internet, reported 48 times. Additionally, 12 respondents indicated that being (self-)employed and lacking sufficient time to study negatively affected their motivation. A smaller number of participants—six in total—stated that their English proficiency was already high enough, making further study unnecessary, while three mentioned that their English level was too low to understand instructions. Other contributing factors include general life circumstances, such as family concerns and personal stress (2 mentions), and extreme stress related to family members in war zones (1 mention).

An increasing temptation of the students to rely on AI for writing assignments raises academic integrity concerns, as the risks associated with AI-generated content include potential plagiarism, a lack of critical thinking, and a decline in genuine language development. In addition, AI poses a significant threat to the very existence of the EWCs by serving as a 'surrogate tutor'^{©Ya.Fedoriv} providing an immediate yet not always reliable response to students' prompts, thereby forging essential components of effective writing instruction and undermining the authentic development of students' EFL writing skills.

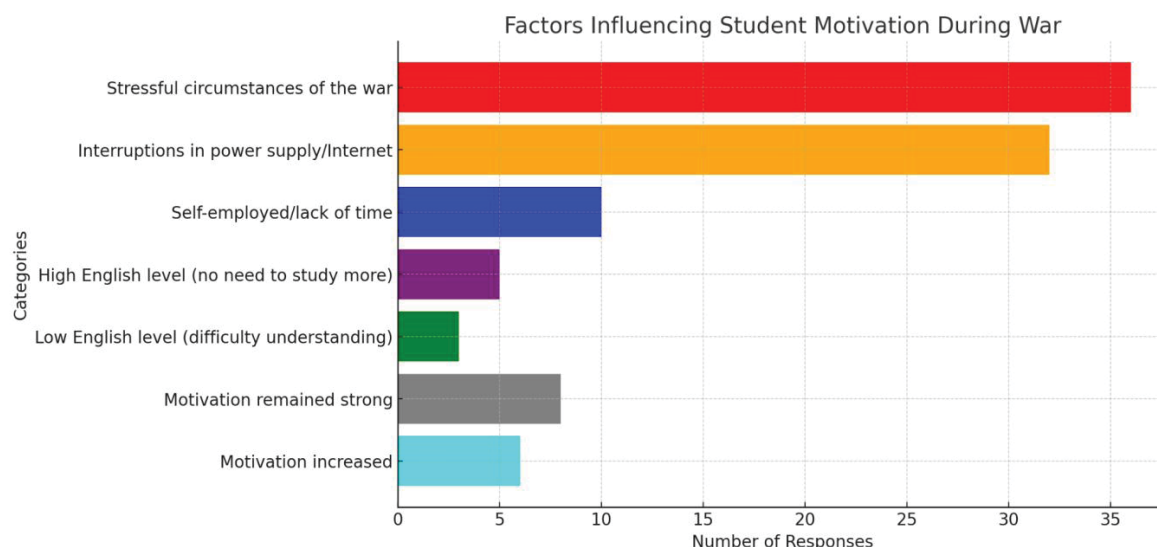


Fig. 1. Factors affecting students' motivation during war

5. RECOMMENDATIONS: Innovative Approaches and Solutions

In view of the global and local humanitarian challenges and the rocketing AI evolution, it is essential to explore and implement innovative approaches and solutions to enhance the effectiveness of Writing Centre practices. We see it as the EWC's primary role in emphasising AI literacy and the ethical use of technology, as well as helping students to develop their writing skills authentically through personalised human-provided tutoring and feedback on assignments. By emphasising the importance of real effort and discouraging the use of AI-generated content, the EWC can promote a culture of integrity and improve the overall learning experience for students.

The KMA EWC's future is envisioned as a hybrid platform, integrating both online and offline tutoring sessions. Drawing on research in the online teaching of language and resilience, this approach aims to enhance the writing centre practices through the integration of an online Learning Management System (LMS), offering a flexible tutoring platform that provides accessible support, aligning with the changing needs of students and contributing to the advancement of writing centres in crisis conditions.

Responding to the students' career-oriented writing needs, the KMA EWC should emphasise developing skills in drafting job-related letters, resumes, summaries, minutes of meetings, proposals, case studies, and reports. Broadening its audience and offering career-oriented writing support to senior graders in secondary schools, the Writing Centre can prepare these students for their future careers, whether they choose to enter the workforce immediately or pursue higher education. This initiative will enhance their readiness for professional challenges.

The role of writing centres in crisis conditions should extend beyond enhancing academic writing skills; it can

also serve as a therapeutic space supporting participants' emotional well-being. Supported by scientific research, writing centres can offer expressive writing sessions for emotional processing and stress reduction, journaling workshops for self-exploration, creative writing for coping with emotions, and personalised online sessions, with tutors acting as empathetic listeners. With prompt feedback, writing centres can transform into support hubs that contribute to students' resilience, alongside their academic success.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Writing centres are essential for improving EFL writing skills by providing personalised tutoring, feedback and general language proficiency assistance.

This study advances research in education by addressing global and local challenges faced by EWSs, such as pandemics, armed conflicts, and competing with AI. The theoretical value of this research lies in its contribution to understanding writing centres' roles in the circumstances of disturbance and ethical AI use in academic writing, while its practical value anticipates implementing innovative approaches and strategies for writing centres through the integration of online LMSs for hybrid tutoring, introducing career-oriented writing, and nurturing emotional well-being through supervised healing writing sessions. In such a way, the KMA EWC can promote academic integrity, enhance writing competence, and contribute to students' educational and personal success.

Future research directions include exploring the long-term impact of hybrid tutoring models on writing proficiency, developing guidelines for ethical AI use in academic writing, and examining the role of writing centres in various contexts globally.

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КОНЦЕПЦІЯ ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЇ ЦЕНТРІВ АНГЛОМОВНОГО ПИСЬМА В КРИЗОВИХ УМОВАХ

Технологічний прогрес XXI століття та процеси глобалізації вимагають ефективних навичок письмового спілкування англійською мовою в усіх професійних сферах. Відтак, письмо є невід'ємною складовою університетських навчальних програм з компетентісно-орієнтованим навчанням, відповідно до європейських рекомендацій щодо мовної освіти. Центр англомовного письма, створений у 2014 році на кафедрі англійської мови Національного університету «Києво-Могилянська академія», мав на меті покращення навичок писемної комунікації англійською мовою як іноземною у студентів. Проте діяльність Центру англомовного письма в НаУКМА була призупинена під час пандемії та війни. Ґрунтуючись на відповідних публікаціях, цей проект аналізує виклики, які постали перед Центром англомовного письма, та наслідки глобальних і локальних криз для його роботи. Маючи на меті відновлення Центру, ми наголошуємо на необхідності запровадження інноваційних підходів для підтримки студентів, викладачів та самого Центру в кризових умовах. У контексті швидкого розвитку штучного інтелекту (ШІ), дослідження не оминає увагою схильність здобувачів освіти до зловживання контентом, згенерованим ШІ, що порушує підвалини академічної доброчесності, та ризики для самого існування Центру. На тлі сучасних глобальних і локальних криз, проект розглядає онлайн-систему управління навчанням (СУН) як простір для ефективного консультування і передбачає майбутнє Центру як гібридної моделі, що поєднує онлайн та офлайн сесії. Виходячи з методології дослідження, що ґрунтується на опитуваннях, впровадження професійно-орієнтованого письма в діяльність Центру визначено як високо пріоритетне. Крім того, на підставі досліджень про письмову терапію та розвиток стійкості через вивчення мови, Центр вбачає в письмових сесіях інструмент для відновлення емоційної стабільності учасників. Завдяки цим інноваційним підходам Центр англомовного письма в НаУКМА прагне поширити унікальний досвід, сприяючи еволюції центрів письма на глобальному рівні.

Ключові слова: *гібридне консультування, ділове письмо, навички письма англійською як іноземною мовою, письмова терапія, система управління навчанням, центр англомовного письма, ШІ.*

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