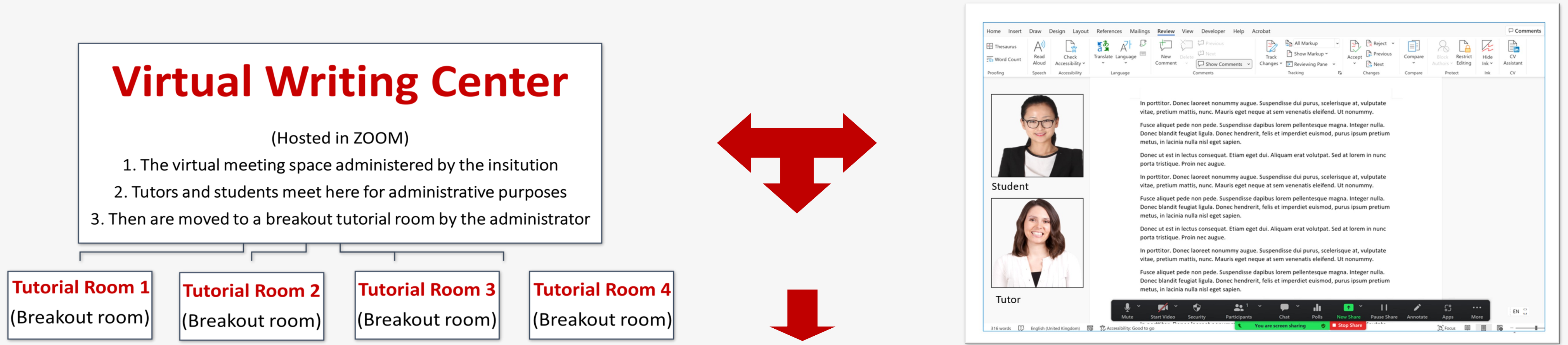# Appropriating ZOOM to Host and Conduct Writing Center Tutorials

English writing centers are growing in number in higher education as institutions respond to the needs of undergraduate students in English-medium instruction courses. Educators are increasingly required to offer student support services such as writing centers online. This poster considers the technological affordances of using ZOOM for pedagogical purposes in the context of one-to-one writing center tutorials.

Virtual Writing Center
(Hosted in ZOOM)
1. The virtual meeting space administered by the insitution
2. Tutors and students meet here for administrative purposes
3. Then are moved to a breakout tutorial room by the administrator

Tutorial Room 1 (Breakout room) **Tutorial Room 2** (Breakout room) **Tutorial Room 3** (Breakout room) **Tutorial Room 4** (Breakout room)

Student
Tutor

The Technological & Pedagogical Affordances of ZOOM

A ZOOM meeting room is a virtual space where videoconferencing takes place. ZOOM has a feature which allows the meeting host to divide the main meeting into smaller groups named *breakout rooms* for more focused discussions or group work. The host can then bring meeting participants back into the main meeting room when needed. Zoom also has a *waiting rooms* feature which automatically places participants in a separate virtual space when they join the meeting. These functions enable virtual writing centers (VWCs) to be created (Harwood & Koyama, 2020). They also enable VWC administrators to control tutorial entry to the VWC and provide a level security as administrators can monitor who enters the meeting. The feature also includes a sound notification, akin to a doorbell, alerting VWC administrators when a participant is in the waiting to join the meeting .

Online writing instruction should employ a user-centered design model that emphasizes student engagement (Greer & Harris, 2018). Studies have found that students perceive *breakout* rooms as a beneficial learning space as they enable increased social interaction and teacher engagement, and that *video, screen sharing*, and *annotations* can promote interactive synchronous learning. Furthermore, features such as *chat, emojis*, and *whiteboards* are reported as effective for increasing student engagement (Berges et al., 2021; Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2022). Studies have also reported that teachers find *screen sharing* to be especially useful for direct instruction and real-time resource sharing (Stevenson et al.,2022) and that ZOOM can facilitate the learning of writing in EFL courses (Huong, 2023).

References

Beta Testing of a VWC in a Japanese University

2 x Admin staff; 17 x Undergraduate students (TOEFL 105+); 5 x Tutors. Names are pseudonyms; photos are AI generated.
The VWC staff successfully scheduled, coordinated, and administered the Zoom breakout room writing center tutorials. The waiting room facilitated the flow of students and tutors entering the VWC, especially during the changeover times between tutorial sessions.

Data Collection: Students joined the VWC by connecting via ZOOM and interacted with tutors in breakout rooms, evaluated their experiences and documented them in a report. They also completed post-tutorial reflection forms responding to the question: *Reflect on your tutorial and the advice you were given. How will you integrate your thoughts and the tutor feedback in your writing?* Tutors provided feedback through a 45-minute focus group conducted on ZOOM.

Findings: Tutors reported that they used *screen sharing* to focus on student's writing and to facilitate the understanding of paragraph organization and coherence, paraphrasing, and in-text citations. The *whiteboard* feature was used to explain ideas and concepts linked to students' writing and research. The *chat* feature was used to share notes about student writing, and hyperlinks to writing resources and to troubleshoot technical issues as students worked out how to navigate the platform.

Hana, (19 years old, Japanese)

"The tutor advised me to include more outside sources to make my statements more reliable and accurate. I will also change some of the sources I used since it is a little bit outdated… My essay was neither a block pattern nor a point-by-point pattern so I will change that and put the counterargument and rebuttal only in the third paragraph. As I am going to change my last paragraph, I will also have to change part of my thesis statement."

Shunsuke, VWC tutor

"The Zoom tutorials were fairly similar to face-to-face tutorials in terms of outcomes…I had good sessions face-to-face and had some bad session face-to-face, and I had good sessions online and problematic sessions online. I don't think that was related to the technology but more the student themselves… whether they are passive or disengaged and so on…"

Summary & Concluding Thoughts...

Beta testing of a VWC and tutor and student feedback show ZOOM can function as an instrumental tool in facilitating university writing center tutorials.

The technology enabled tutors and students to engage in purposeful dialogues about the writing process in the VWC.

Student reflections of VWC tutorials suggest that ZOOM provides a space to reflect on and evaluate their work, which also aids in recognizing aspects of their writing that require revision.

As VWCs continue to be opened by universities, further research is necessary to evaluate how video conferencing applications such as ZOOM can be appropriated for pedagogical purposes.

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