

## Conversations in Process: An Observational Report on WAC in China

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IN MAY 2013 we co-authors found ourselves crisscrossing China at the same time, each giving invited talks at different universities about our work in writing across the curriculum and writing in the disciplines (WAC/WID).<sup>1</sup> Although each of us knew the other was in the country, we were there for different purposes, under different auspices and our paths did not cross. Still, we believe our collective experiences contribute first-hand observations that further contextualize the research Wu Dan writes about in *Introducing Writing Across the Curriculum into China: Feasibility and Adaptation* (2012), reviewed in this volume. We both served as informants to Wu Dan as she was doing her dissertation research, on which the book is based, and we both met with her (though on different days) at Xi'an International Studies University where she now teaches when we were in China. Our observations, although derived from only the six institutions we visited, help document a growing interest in WAC in China as well as a desire on the part of the faculty with whom we met for an ongoing cross-national dialogue among Chinese and US scholars on writing instruction across the disciplines.

This article is based mainly on conversations with EFL faculty, administrators and students during our visits to universities that have varying educational missions, ranging from science and technology, teacher education, international studies and a "Sino-Foreign" English-medium collaboration (see Appendix for list of institutions). On our return to the US we spent a day together discussing what we had seen and learned about the state of postsecondary EFL writing instruction and WAC in mainland China,<sup>2</sup> gradually narrowing our focus to themes and issues we thought most pressing in light of the increasing numbers of Chinese international students we are encountering in our US composition and WID courses. These include the influence of a national testing culture on approaches to writing instruction, particularly the

use of formulaic, decontextualized assignments to demonstrate learning rather than the use of writing to aid learning; faculty and students' understandings of and expectations for critical and original thinking; and concerns about maintaining Chinese rhetorical traditions when Western-style writing is increasingly the goal whether students are writing for specific purposes in English or in Chinese. Our observations here join with conversations in progress, conversations evidenced in recent articles in *College Composition and Communication* and *College English*, new books found on the WAC Clearinghouse and articles by Chinese scholars in the *Writing Research Across Borders* (WRAB) volumes, among other publications. The first half of our essay presents some of the literature that we searched in preparation for our 2013 visits, supplemented with related observations and reflections. The second half addresses the themes and issues noted above that emerged for us as a result of our visits and subsequent conversations. We close with news of nascent but promising WAC efforts that are underway now.

By way of background, we note that both of us have a longstanding interest in and experience with international applications of writing instruction through our US professional activities, our scholarship, and our travels abroad.<sup>3</sup> More than a decade ago, for example, Marty wrote about the ways writing is part of the teaching and learning environment at Nankai University, a well-respected research university in Tianjin (2002). Based on the first of Marty's three WAC-related China visits, this first article details her interviews with faculty, alumnae, and students about their university writing experiences. These interviews, conducted in 1999, were very much on Marty's mind during the visit that is written about in this article. For a second visit in 2007, she served on the US steering committee to plan and host "Literacies of Hope: Making Meaning across Boundaries," an academic conference that brought together Chinese and American scholars at Beijing Normal University, China's premier institution for teacher education. Both Marty's 1999 and 2013 visits were sponsored by the University of Missouri's Council on International Initiatives, which supports faculty in international teaching and research.

Terry's visit to China was arranged by Wu Dan and by Liu Xinghua at Shanghai Jiaotong University, whom Terry had first met at a European writing research conference in Prague where she was an invited presenter. While Terry's China visit was her first, she has traveled several times to the Middle East to give talks and work with faculty and administrators on implementing WAC at postsecondary institutions in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. In both the Middle East and in China, the focus of the invited workshops and talks Terry gave was on writing and teaching writing across the curriculum in English as a second language. We want to note, however, that Arab and Chinese scholars in these countries are also increasingly engaged in research on L1 (first language) academic writing practices in the disciplines. We

point, for example, to Chen Huijun's "Modern 'Writingology' in China" (2010), in which she describes the rise of interest in and research on "practical" or applied writing in Chinese postsecondary language instruction. Our visits in 2013 however, connected us with composition and WAC-interested Chinese colleagues in EFL fields, so that is our focus here.

### *Brief Bibliographic Background, with Commentary*

Our description of the Chinese EFL literature we consulted is both brief and selective; we aim to introduce readers to fairly new work we believe is especially interesting and informative. In general, we find limited publications in English on postsecondary EFL writing studies and/or writing in and across disciplines by Chinese scholars working in China. There is, however, a larger body of work on L2 (second language) writing available in Chinese. This is not surprising since even if Chinese scholars have been educated in English-medium institutions, they are expected to publish their research in Chinese in Chinese journals to be considered for promotion (Wu Dan email communication 15 December 2010).<sup>4</sup> Whether writing in Chinese or in English, the authors typically have backgrounds in applied linguistics or translation studies; those writing in English are generally publishing in TESOL, EAP or ESP journals.<sup>5</sup>

We begin by referring readers to Mya Poe's review of Wu Dan's *Introducing Writing Across the Curriculum into China* (2013). Based on her dissertation research at Clemson University under the direction of Art Young, Wu Dan's book is the first full-length consideration of WAC's potential contribution to higher education in China. She makes a compelling case that China needs WAC and that the time is right given the current national attention to the quality of teaching and learning in higher education; yet, as she told us, her book is mostly unknown in China and print copies are not yet available to Chinese readers. Beyond Poe's review, we note from our (separate) conversations with Wu Dan that faculty attitudes about student writing and teaching with writing in the disciplines that she describes are very much like our own in the US but are exacerbated because cross-discipline and cross-departmental—not to mention cross-institutional—communication between faculty in China is rare. Few channels exist for faculty exchange or conversation around writing, such as US faculty might have through centers for teaching and learning. Departments and colleagues seem isolated from one another; the writing center, for example, at Wu Dan's institution, Xi'an International Studies University, is open only to English majors. She herself was transferred from English Studies to the School of International Programs because it was believed that she could provide more help to students with her knowledge of American higher education. Yet this move further isolated her from other departments and has hampered her WAC efforts (although

she did design and teach a WAC-focused graduate course for the English Studies department).

We also refer readers to a recent special issue of *College English*, “Studying Chinese Rhetoric in the Twenty-First Century,” edited by LuMing Mao (2010). As Mao writes in his introduction, the five articles in this special issue are intended to complicate what has often been characterized in the literature as the East-West cultural and rhetorical divide; rather, he hopes to “negotiate between developing a localized narrative and searching for its broader significance without turning it into a super narrative” (p. 341). We hope to contribute to that same cause with this article.

Composition scholars may already be familiar with the recent CCC article “College Writing in China and America: A Modest and Humble Conversation, with Writing Samples” by Patrick Sullivan, Yufeng Zhang, and Fenglan Zheng (2012). Here, three teacher-researchers, one American and two Chinese, read and responded to essays written by students in China and the US. The authors conclude that, while there are marked differences in both the student writing and teachers’ responses to the writing, these differences stem not solely from different rhetorical traditions but also from a very different view of the role of writing in student learning—that is, whether writing is viewed as a way to learn or a way to demonstrate learning. Zhoulin Ruan, one of the faculty who hosted Terry’s visit, discusses this pedagogical divide in *Metacognitive Knowledge in Self-regulated Language Learning and Writing* (2012). He explains that while Chinese EFL teachers are familiar with process pedagogies and socially-situated approaches to teaching writing, these are far from being widely adopted in writing classes that are generally still taught along current-traditional lines, largely in response to China’s emphasis on testing, a point we comment on more fully below.<sup>6</sup> One of the questions for Ruan, then, is how an awareness of task, purpose, audience and cross-cultural rhetorical preferences might help to foster Chinese students’ autonomy as writers.

Increasingly, Chinese scholars are arguing for more contextualized approaches to researching and teaching writing.<sup>7</sup> In “More than Ba Gu Wen (Eight-legged Essay) and Confucianism: A New Research Agenda for English-Chinese Writing Studies,” Xinghua Liu (2011), another of Terry’s hosts, calls for an ecological approach that considers the nature and “academic domain” (discipline) of the writing task, the students’ L1 and L2 educational and writing backgrounds, and their perceptions of their own processes and difficulties (p. 5). Similarly, Xiao Lei (2008), in “Exploring a Sociocultural Approach to Writing Strategy Research: Mediated Actions in Writing Activities,” argues that cognition and content are so deeply interrelated that to study cognition one must look at sociocultural contexts and the activity systems in which writing occurs. She also acknowledges however, the complex role language acquisition plays as a fundamental element of context. An overarching question asked by

faculty at all of the universities where Terry spoke was how to balance attention to disciplinary and rhetorical contexts in their English L2 writing instruction when students are still struggling to acquire fluency and accuracy at the sentence level. This question is, of course, one that Chinese writing instructors will need to grapple with if WAC pedagogies are introduced, although they will find precedent in the numerous places in the US where WAC has been applied to foreign language instruction.

At the same time that many Chinese English L2 writing scholars are making arguments for more situated approaches to writing research and teaching, they also note the powerful effects of the required national tests of English on writing instruction. In their surveys of K-12 Chinese teachers of English, Danling Fu and Marylou Matoush (2012) found that high school and college entrance exams not only drive writing instruction but also shape the attitudes of students and parents who see English writing as the application of correct vocabulary and form and very much isolated from the rhetorical traditions of their Chinese L1. In *Writing in the Devil's Tongue: A History of English Composition in China*, Xiaoye You (2010) describes the role of writing and national examinations in traditional Chinese education and the changes that occurred with the “infiltration” of Western rhetoric (among other influences) from the late 1800s through to the present. His chapters on the continued influence of traditional rhetorical forms, the introduction of expressivist and process pedagogies in the 60s and 70s, and the persistent formulaic constraints imposed by the required College English Test (CET) provide a valuable guide to understanding the “global contact zone” (p. 175) of postsecondary English writing instruction in China.

Also valuable is a new book on the WAC Clearinghouse, *Chinese Rhetoric and Writing: An Introduction for Language Teachers* in which Andy Kirkpatrick and Zhichang Xu (2012) trace the development of Chinese rhetorical traditions. They argue that Chinese writing styles are dynamic and changing in response to sociopolitical contexts, just as other languages are. To suggest, as many scholars have, that Chinese students bring “culturally determined and virtually ineradicable rhetorical traditions to their English writing” is to overlook that fact. Yet, the authors argue, writing teachers should not aim “to gut the English of the Chinese writer of local cultural and rhetorical influences,” but to see how students can draw on these influences to form effective texts (p. 4).<sup>8</sup>

You's and Kirkpatrick and Xu's insistence on the importance of recognizing and valuing differences—historical, cultural, rhetorical, pedagogical—in the Chinese/Western encounter returns us to the article Marty wrote over ten years ago, “Writing in/across the Curriculum at a Comprehensive Chinese University” (2002), in which she reports on interviews with twenty-five faculty, students, and alumnae of Nankai University. The goal was to discover whether an instructional initiative comparable

to WAC in the US might exist at Nankai. Equal in importance to the research findings, however, are the essay's cautions for US WAC professionals, two of which are particularly pertinent here; summarized these are:

- American-style WAC pedagogies cannot and should not be promulgated uncritically in other cultures.
- Social, economic, historic, political, and institutional pressures mitigate against acceptance and success of US-style WAC pedagogies in China. In particular, although American educators associate WAC pedagogies with critical thinking (in the form of encouraging students to question texts), Chinese faculty and students are not rewarded for challenging authority.

As we look at this article again, we are struck by the prescience of these cautions, especially in light of current arguments around translanguaging and global Englishes. (See, for example, Canagarajah and Horner, et al.).

### *Emergent Themes and Questions Raised*

Given the recent attention to rhetorical traditions and writing instruction in China, coupled with the interest in English L2 writing studies as shown in the literature above, we might have expected to encounter faculty with knowledge about WAC during our 2013 visits. Yet, apart from Wu Dan's monograph and our hosts' stated interest after our presentations, we found but scant knowledge of WAC during our professional travels.

What we did find is uncannily close to the displeasure that US compositionists endured for years prior to the introduction of WAC here—and in some places still do. The English language teachers Marty spoke with in China, for example, frequently commented that their discipline-based colleagues are asking, "Why haven't you taught our students to write better? They took your courses, so why are they producing such poor scientific papers for us?" In her research, Wu Dan reports similar comments as well, such as Chinese colleagues noting that writing skills are very important but that they have neither the time nor knowledge to teach these skills.

We suspect that Chinese discipline-based teachers' reluctance to engage with students' writing traces not only to their reported lack of time and knowledge but also to the relative lower importance of written work compared with the culture of national examinations. For example, Chinese students in many disciplines at both the undergraduate and graduate levels are expected to produce an independently written "scientific paper" based on research in their respective fields as a requirement for graduation. "Scientific" in this context does not refer to science *per se*. Rather, it means a student-researched paper produced in any discipline as a threshold or high stakes document that demonstrates the student's ability to think, research, and

solve problems in his or her academic field. Typically, undergraduate students begin research for this paper in their third year and continue on into their final year—at the end of which they “write it up.” At one institution, Marty was told of students being allowed to graduate with papers still unfinished; even though the research was concluded, the final document was incomplete and numerous exceptions were being made so students could graduate. Although professors guide their students through the necessary steps for research, guidance on writing the paper, she was told, is minimal. We wonder whether demonstrating the ability to do the research is paramount and that forging that research into a written document is not as crucial.

We also suspect the experience reported by Yaoqui Zhou, an informatics scholar at Indiana University’s School of Medicine, might be typical of faculty who see writing mainly as a product rather than what it might demonstrate about learning. (Our using an example from science to illustrate the point above about “scientific” papers is coincidental.) In the introduction to a set of guidelines Zhou produced for the graduate students working in his Indiana University lab, Zhou says that even though he had more than twenty publications by the time he had earned his PhD at SUNY-Stony Brook, his understanding of how to write a high-quality paper “remained at an elementary level and was limited to minimization of grammatical errors.” He had simply accepted his advisors’ corrections without asking what they meant. Later, during postdoctoral work at North Carolina State University, his mentor suggested that he attend a two-day workshop on writing at nearby Duke University. Zhou writes: “The workshop taught by Professor Gopen truly opened my eyes. For the first time, I learned that readers have expectations when they read, and the most effective way to write is to fulfill their expectations. . . . [I came to] realize that a good paper requires an in-depth, tough, and thorough self-review.” Zhou’s reference to George Gopen’s work will not surprise WAC scholars in the US and Zhou’s guidelines for his own students, based on Gopen’s workshop and offered in both English and Chinese PDF versions, represent an admirable attempt to “pay forward” the rhetorical understandings he wants his own students to demonstrate in their writing.

Given the comments made to both of us by the EFL teachers we met, they would welcome knowledge of the WAC research and work that has gone on in the US for over thirty years now. After Marty’s presentations about the underlying principles of WAC, with selected examples of classroom application, teachers expressed a sense of liberation in learning that they, in fact, are not responsible for Chinese students’ “poor” writing in discipline-based classes. When WAC theory and concepts are explained, interest is robust. After her lectures, Terry, too, heard faculty say, “This needs to be a discussion here.”

And there is much to discuss, as we recognized while outlining this article. These include questions that Marty encountered when she spoke about the importance of

writing to learn along with writing to demonstrate learning in courses across the curriculum. And questions that Terry was asked when she talked about her research with international students in the US, in particular, the difficulties they report with faculty demands for originality and critical thinking. During Terry's China presentations, she observed graduate students and faculty nodding in agreement, especially in response to her comment that Chinese international students she interviewed for her WAC and second language research all said that they regretted losing the "beauty" of their language as they learned to conform to US teachers' expectations.

We turn first to Marty's experience when she demonstrated several examples of how short, low-stakes writing-to-learn assignments might enhance students' understanding of difficult course concepts—and help them be more prepared to tackle the rigorous demands of their longer, high-stakes writing assignments to come. While some Chinese faculty seemed familiar with the idea, they indicated that so-called "writing to learn" practices are not widely used; some questioned why students would do them, if they were not receiving a grade. In one middle school English class that Marty was invited to observe, approximately sixty students were crowded shoulder-to-shoulder into a classroom at long, narrow tables, facing one another over rows of stacked books. A young teacher read short passages from a text, after which students quietly circled multiple-choice answers in printed workbooks. No teacher-student interaction occurred, and students did not have an opportunity to speak about what they were hearing. More to the point, judging from class size and reliance on the texts provided, students would not be writing short passages of their own in response to the reading.

The school Marty visited, with more than 7,600 residential students who live in dormitories and return home only on weekends, was selected because of its status as a "Provincial Model Unit in Moral Standards," one to which the county government "gives priority to the development of education" and thus significant resources. The school places "ultra emphasis on scientific management, and deepens classroom teaching reform." Administrators, including the full-time on-site Party Leader, proudly describe the school's audio-visual and other "experimental devices," high quality teaching staff, science labs, ten computer classrooms and one-hundred-thousand-book library. Even though observing the class only briefly, Marty wondered how much these students' acquisition of English (or any other subject) might improve if they were writing just occasional short paragraphs. The scene recalled You's conclusion in "The choice made from no choice": "[S]tudents' individual needs for English are hardly acknowledged; many teachers are predominantly concerned about teaching language knowledge and test-taking skills, instead of language skills for communication purposes. English writing is still taught in the



current-traditional approach, focusing on correct form rather than helping the students develop thoughts” (108).

We surmise that Chinese teachers’ reluctance to embrace writing-to-learn pedagogies is closely tied to the well-established testing culture that dominates all levels of education, as mentioned earlier. As Ze Wang, Xiao Yong Hu, and Yong Yu Guo explain in “Goal Contents and Goal Contexts: Experiments with Chinese Students” (2012), the pursuit of scholarship as a means of attaining economic well-being and social status is inextricably interwoven in Chinese history and culture. Drawing on previous studies by other scholars, they show that official examinations of scholarly learning in China trace to 700 AD. They write, “High-stakes testing, high educational expectations from parents, traditional values, and teaching practices that make comparisons transparent (e.g., test scores or rankings made public to all teachers and/or students) contribute to a competitive school environment in China, even in middle schools” (p. 108).

It is easy to see that an examination system that values standardized testing to the degree that China’s does will not readily embrace writing that does not *demonstrate* knowledge but only leads *toward* it. In “The Education System That Pulled China Up May Now Be Holding It Back” (2012), Helen Gao describes how disorienting it was for her to come to the US for study after having had an education that prepared her primarily for taking the *gaokao*, China’s annual, nationwide college entrance exam. In an “intense, memorization-heavy” nine-hour exam over two days, during which city neighborhoods near testing sites virtually shut down, students provide rote answers to mostly multiple-choice machine-graded questions. Gao’s education had not prepared her for the analytic essays she subsequently encountered in the US. Lest we seem to appear too US-centric in this observation, however, we hasten to point out that WAC pedagogies may prove to be part of the answer to enabling Chinese students in our classrooms—whether in China or the US—to make sense of writing assignments they encounter as English L2 learners. Pedagogies that call for incremental development of longer papers, multiple drafts with revision based on feedback from teachers, and explicit grading criteria—the staples of WAC—may go a long way toward diffusing Chinese students’ confusion.

This is not to say, however, that, even with attention to writing processes, students—and teachers—will not be confused about other US-centric values, as was apparent in the questions Terry was asked, for example, about expectations for critical thinking and originality in writing. Both of these concepts seem particularly troublesome to understand and enact in a Chinese context for many reasons, cultural and linguistic.<sup>10</sup> An article given to Terry by Lihong Wang, a visiting scholar with whom she met at George Mason prior to her trip to China, is especially useful in helping to understand that context. In “But when you are doing your exams it is the

same as in China’—Chinese Students Adjusting to Western Approaches to Teaching and Learning.” Wang, who did her doctoral work in the UK, cautions against making easy comparisons between Chinese and Western educational practices, such as seeing memorization as exclusive of understanding or as synonymous with rote learning in contrast to thinking critically. As Wang’s and others’ investigations show, both Chinese students and teachers see memorization and understanding as “interlocking processes, complementary to each other” and achieved with “considerable mental effort” rather than “a process of sudden insight” (p. 408). Wang calls this belief “effortful learning/*kuxin*,” or the idea that “painstaking effort” is required for all learning. This “inherited” belief goes along with two others—“reflective learning/*yong xin*,” which requires “emotional and intellectual commitment” and “humble learning/*xu xin*,” which emphasizes “learning from others with modesty and humility” (p. 410-13). Yet “humble learning,” as we see from so much of the literature on Asian students’ writing, often seems in direct opposition to our Western conceptions of critical thinking and the need for students to learn to generate original arguments.

We do not mean to imply, however, that Chinese students are not expected to think critically. Western-style critical thinking was mentioned as an expectation by the EFL faculty with whom we talked but also something which many felt was particularly difficult to teach—given, as we noted earlier, the pervasive testing culture and students’ ongoing struggles to articulate complex knowledge in English. On the other hand, when students become more acclimated to writing in English, as Wang’s research shows and as Terry could clearly see from the graduate and advanced undergraduate students she talked to, they are quite able to adapt to teachers’ expectations for thinking originally and critically. Two of the undergraduates Terry met at the English-medium institution she visited, for example, described enthusiastically the assignment they were working on for a web-based marketing plan for Apple that was sensitive to Chinese contexts.

The students’ demonstrated ability to adapt to Western rhetorical norms, however, begs the question of whether and the extent to which they should. Zhoulin Ruan, whose book we referenced earlier and who has published numerous articles on critical thinking, expressed some concern to Terry about the Chinese rhetorical traditions that are being lost with the national emphasis on learning to write in English. Terry found this a striking but perhaps not surprising observation coming from someone who is the head of the Department of English, Culture and Communication at Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, an English-medium institution, and whose scholarship concerns metacognition and self-regulated language learning and writing.

### *Promising Signs for WAC in China—What We Are Seeing Now*

Based on conversations with WAC-interested faculty and administrators both in China and on our return, we see many promising—and exciting—signs for the start of WAC in China. We begin with the “needs assessment” survey research Wu Dan conducted to determine whether students in different departments would like to see a bilingual writing center established for all students. Students responded that they need and want assistance with writing in both Chinese and English, so the next step for Wu Dan, as she wrote to us, is to report her findings to the university administration to begin a conversation about both Chinese and English writing across the curriculum. Given the current national emphasis on evaluating instructional quality in higher education and a first-round governmental report indicating that much improvement is necessary, Wu Dan anticipates that the university administration will be receptive to the idea of WAC. “If WAC can be introduced to institutions as one possible method to help teaching and learning,” she writes, “or be used as ‘proof’ that the university has tried to work on instructional quality, then the national evaluations are actually good opportunities for WAC to be started in China” (email communication 5 August 2013). In addition, both Ruan and Liu agreed that WAC is “an important future direction of English L2 writing teaching and research in China considering the current transition from college English teaching to English for Specific Purposes” (Liu, email communication 2 August 2013).

We also see exciting potential in the listserv Ruan is developing with assistance from Wu Dan and Liu as a platform for conversations among WAC-interested faculty. In his initial posting on this planned WAC network, Ruan writes that “Such a forum will enable us to discuss some key issues in teaching and research on WAC in China; explore the potential of research collaborations across different institutions; organize WAC seminars and symposiums in China; develop a Chinese association of WAC when it matures; establish a collective connection with the international community of WAC; etc. etc. . . .”<sup>11</sup> (email communication 1 August 2013). To support these efforts, we note here that Mike Palmquist has extended invitations to Zhoulin Ruan and Wu Dan to join the WAC Clearinghouse Publications Review Board, a move that recognizes these scholars’ WAC interests and moreover makes their expertise visible to their colleagues in China.

In a timely confluence of events for WAC in China, Marty learned just prior to her trip that one of the US’s most prominent WAC resources—John Bean’s first edition of *Engaging Ideas* (1996)—is available in Chinese translation. Of the translation’s origin, John tells us that “about ten or twelve years ago, I gave a WAC workshop at the University of Wyoming and a Chinese professor in the Department of Agriculture—Rhenduo Zhang—asked if he could translate the book into Chinese. He handled all the details and produced the translation surprisingly fast” (email

communication 15 May 2013). John does not know to what extent the book has been used, although Martha Patton, newly retired from her English position at Missouri and now teaching English through the Peace Corps at Southwest University's School of Foreign Languages in Chongqing, told us that she has forwarded her only copy of the Chinese translation to her dean, who is "interested in these ideas, does want to make changes, and is beginning to implement some" (email communication 16 May 2013). We also know that two of the faculty Marty worked with at Northwest University of Agriculture and Forestry have obtained the book in Chinese. If the concepts in *Engaging Ideas* prove adaptable by the Chinese professoriate and the book has a fraction of the impact in China that it has had on the American professoriate, WAC may begin to achieve what WU Dan calls for in *Introducing Writing Across the Curriculum Into China*.

### *Conclusion: Where Can We in the US Go From Here?*

While this essay is not a formal study by either of us and is based on a limited sample of institutions, we believe our observations point to exciting possibilities for WAC in China. Both our formal presentations and informal interactions with Chinese colleagues generated genuine interest in the WAC work being done by US scholars; we, likewise, have much to learn from them. Toward that end, we encourage WAC scholars to become familiar with the literature on writing in China; to take time to talk with visiting colleagues from China about their work; to volunteer to host Chinese scholars if opportunity arises (Marty, for example, will be hosting two scholars from Northwest University of Agriculture and Forestry in the 2013–2014 academic year and may return to NAAF to teach a short seminar); to welcome visiting Chinese scholars into their graduate seminars; and to engage Chinese graduate students in study of WAC, as Art Young did at Clemson with Wu Dan. However, mindful of the cautions we mentioned earlier, we call for a genuine exchange of research and practice, an exchange that values the rich rhetorical history and traditions of teaching writing in China.

It seems appropriate, then, to close our observations with the Chinese term 接轨 or *jiegui*, which is often used to refer to acts of dialogue and connection (literally "connecting the tracks"), to say how exciting it is to be playing some small role in connecting WAC-interested Chinese scholars to one another and to WAC scholars in the US with the goal of sharing research and pedagogies across our borders.

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## Notes

1. For simplicity's sake, we use "WAC" to refer to both WAC and WID throughout this essay, intending for readers to assume an expanded definition of both terms in the single label. In fact, we conflate the meanings of both in our work and, in most cases, find using separate terms misleading and unnecessary.

2. Our interactions with Chinese scholars, and our comments in this article, are limited to mainland China. The educational system in Hong Kong, a Chinese SAR (special administrative region), developed under British rule and its writing instruction has evolved in concert with British traditions.

3. See Notes on Contributors in this issue for more details on our professional activities and scholarship related to our broader international WAC experiences.

4. After having her article accepted for a "WAC and Second Language Writing" special issue of *Across the Disciplines* that Terry co-edited, Wu Dan had to withdraw when she was told by her supervisors that the publication would not count for promotion and that she "should try to translate it into Chinese for a Chinese journal." In a more recent email, Wu Dan confirmed this point, adding that she will present "Missing persons: The under/unrepresented writers and readers in English L2 writing studies research in China" at the 2013 Symposium on Second Language Writing in Shandong, China. Her paper includes a review of second-language (L2) writing studies in China, "*almost all of which are in Chinese [her emphasis]*" (email communication 4 August 2013).

5. EAP, or English for Academic Purposes, and ESP, English for Specific Purposes, are the closest academic constructs in China and many other countries to the US initiatives for WAC, WID, CXC, ECAC, and the like. EAP and ESP often take the form of stand-alone programs or are combined with some version of teaching and learning resource centers.

6. In "'The choice made from no choice': English Writing Instruction in a Chinese University" (2003), Xiaoye You investigates the often uncritical transplantation of Western writing pedagogies into first and second-year classes designed for non-English majors, classes that are taught under a system requiring teachers to prepare students for China's national examination system. This requirement leads to a focus on correct form rather than on language for communication, even when teachers are versed in process and expressivist pedagogies.

7. Arguments are being made for applied or contextualized writing instruction in both Chinese and English writing studies, at least partly in response to national directives, as Huijun explains in "Modern 'Writingology' in China."

8. We also see this attention to China's rhetorical traditions in the writing of two popular contemporary authors, one Chinese and one American, both of whom should be read by scholars seeking to understand Chinese language and culture. Yu Hua is among China's top

contemporary writers; his newest work, *China in Ten Words* (2011), combines memoir with social commentary. Each of the ten one-word-titled chapters is based on a mandarin character that Hua believes describes the country today. The chapters “Reading” and “Writing” are particularly relevant for our community. In *Oracle Bones* (2007), American journalist Peter Hessler employs an archeological framework, both literal and figurative, to explore China’s changing cultural landscape; the title itself refers to characters inscribed on shell and bone, thought to be the earliest known writing in East Asia. That these characters can still be read by modern Chinese readers, even though modern characters are vastly more sophisticated, is one of the reasons, Hessler explains, that the character writing system and the beauty of the characters themselves are so deeply embedded in Chinese culture and identity.

9. Quotations here are taken from printed material provided by the school. The school’s designation as locus for students’ moral development traces to Confucian philosophy that holds that the state is the moral guardian of the people (Asia for Educators). As we note elsewhere in this article, China’s standardized exam system is related to this concept as well.

10. Teachers’ expectations for originality are also among the most fraught for English L1 students as Chris Thaiss and Terry found in their research for *Engaged Writers and Dynamic Disciplines*.

11. We are thrilled to be included in these early efforts at building a WAC network and are being copied on the messages, as is Mike Palmquist.

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### *Appendix: Universities Townsend and Zawacki visited in 2013*

- Shanghai Normal University, Fengxian & Xuhui campuses, May 18 – 21 (MT)
- Shandong University of Technology, Zibo, May 23 – 24 (MT)
- Northwest University of Agriculture and Forestry, Yangling, May 26 – 27 (MT)
- Xi'an International Studies University, Xi'an, May 22-24 (TZ)
- Shanghai Jiaotong University, Shanghai, May 29 (TZ)
- Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, Suzhou, May 30. (TZ)