
Implementing Writing-Across-the-Curriculum in Hong Kong: The Challenges of a WAC Tutor

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Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) has gained currency in the United States since the late 1970s. This curriculum aims to integrate the rhetorical approach of *learning to write* and the cognitive approach of *writing to learn* (McLeod & Miraglia, 2001) to improve students' communication and thinking skills by incorporating writing in all disciplines. Despite its success in the U.S., not until 2002 was a WAC programme first launched in Hong Kong (WAC at CUHK, 2004), where English is taught as a second language (ESL).

This paper examines the implementation of a WAC programme in Hong Kong. In particular, the paper focuses on the challenges a WAC tutor encountered in an ESL environment. By reviewing the philosophy of WAC, the paper identifies the differences between the WAC programme as implemented in Hong Kong at CUHK and in U.S. settings. It is hypothesized that the differences produce a set of unique challenges to the WAC tutor in the present study. The paper then presents the research method followed by the results. The challenges unique to WAC in Hong Kong are finally discussed.

Philosophy of WAC: Learning to Write and Writing to Learn

Writing as a process and as a mode of learning are regarded as the backbone of WAC programmes (Thaiss, 1998). Britton (1970) views writing as a recursive process of rewriting upon feedback from the reader(s). Hayes and Flower (1986) further decompose the recursive process into three stages, namely, planning, sentence generation, and revision. Planning requires strategic knowledge which is used to organize goals and subgoals to construct a coherent writing plan. Sentence generation involves the translation of organized ideas into texts which are governed by the grammar of a particular language. Revision refers to the process of evaluating and editing the texts and may consequently change the meaning of the original work. Hayes and Flower have found that the amount of time spent on revision is positively correlated

to the level of expertise of writers. It is thus reasonable to postulate that revision in meaning is one of the indicators of expertise in writing.

What then conceptualizes writing as a mode of learning, or simply writing to learn? Emig (1983) argues that writing employs the brain and this reinforces learning. Some research findings echo Emig's idea. For instance, studies of patients with unilateral brain damage have established that two neurological pathways can be used to transform thoughts into writing. One route goes from thought directly to writing, whereas the other uses phoneme-to-grapheme correspondance rules as an intermediary (Shallice, 1981). Both pathways train students' problem-solving skills: In the writing process, people try to link different thoughts together to produce a coherent article.

Features of the WAC Programme in Hong Kong

The rationale of the WAC programme at CUHK follows the philosophy of WAC in the U.S. It attempts to enhance students' English writing skills by encouraging professors from different disciplines to include multiple drafts, peer review, and reflective writing in their courses. Over 90 courses of different faculties have been affiliated with the WAC programme since its inception at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), a bilingual university (WAC at CUHK, 2004). Yet WAC in Hong Kong differs in three areas which led to a set of unique challenges for the WAC tutor in the present study: the difficulties of writing in a second language, cultural differences in basic educational assumptions, and the logistical difficulties of implementing the programme.

A significant difference in the Hong Kong context is that students experience both learning to write and writing to learn techniques in their second language (L2) whereas in the U.S., students develop these skills in their first language (L1). This difference influences knowledge creation (Hunt & Agnoli, 1991) and the communication process as thoughts produced in the native language must be translated into English. Given this, the WAC tutor might require a wider range of expertise.

The success of a writing curriculum depends on its compatibility with the culture in which the curriculum is implemented. Chinese living in Hong Kong may share a distinctive set of beliefs and practices, which are dissimilar to those of Americans. It is plausible to postulate that the WAC programme at CUHK might be subverted by some basic differences in educational assumptions held firmly in the mind of students. The WAC tutor might need extra resources in dealing with these differences in mindset.

At the implementation level, the Hong Kong WAC model differed by two main factors. First, the WAC tutors were not graduates from the same department as the students. Instead, the writing tutors were housed in the English department. Second, the

WAC tutors were nonnative speakers of English. These implementation disparities were due to a lack of skilled writers who had practiced process writing in their undergraduate study (Braine & McNaught, 2006). These discrepancies may also contribute to a set of unparalleled challenges which the WAC tutor may need to overcome. This study thus centres on two research questions:

1. What challenges could these three sources of differences pose to the WAC tutor?
2. Could the challenges of the WAC tutor be overcome to improve students' communication and thinking skills?

Methodology

The research design of this study included triangulation of data comprising of interviews, students' writing analysis, and the reflective journals (RJ) of the WAC tutor. This design uncovered both an emic perspective (i.e., the interpretations of the WAC tutor of her challenges), and an etic viewpoint (i.e., outsider sources such as the students and the course lecturer). Two WAC journalism courses were selected for the study which lasted two consecutive semesters from September 2003 to April 2004. Data for the interviews and students' writing analyses were collected in the second semester while the reflective journals covered both semesters.

Course-End Interviews

Both the course lecturer and the students were interviewed at the end of the final individual conference. These interviews focused on two main points: the perceived challenges of the WAC tutor who had little knowledge of journalism, and the perceived learning outcomes.

Students' Writing Analysis

This measure aimed to reveal the writing behaviour of students and track the changes of their writing performance. Fifteen out of a possible 21 writing samples for each student were analysed. Six pieces were excluded because the students did not return either the first draft or the final draft. The length of the included pieces ranged from one-half to five and a half pages for the first draft and from one and a half to seven and a half pages for the final draft.

The differences, or revisions, between the first and final drafts were categorized according to an analytic framework used to analyse the writing skills of Chinese EFL learners (González, Chen, & Sanchez, 2001). The framework was modified to capture the intention of the writers in making the revisions. There were four categories of revisions: syntactic, grammatical, word, and format. Each category consisted of a few subcategories, under which the revisions were further fitted into *meaning-altering* revisions

or *meaning-conserving* revisions. According to the perceived intention of the revision, the changes were further classified into *clarification*, *information addition*, or *information deletion* in the case of altered meaning and into *style or mistake correction* in the case of conserved meaning, if possible. The subcategories of each group are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Categories and Subcategories of Changes in the Students' Writing Analysis

Syntactic revision	Sentence rewriting or sentence addition/deletion, word order, subject-object relationship, pronouns
Grammatical revision	Verbs, subject-verb agreement, tense, adjectives, adverbs, noun pluralization, prepositions, articles
Word revision	Word or phrase addition/deletion, word choice, collocation or journalism-specific wording or jargon, spelling, typo error
Format revision	Punctuation, abbreviations, capitalization, rhetorical connections

The students' writing changes were then analysed according to the quantity of the revisions, variety of the revisions, and purpose of the revisions. Some specific revisions and errors of the students were also recorded. Since revision or rewriting is one of the most crucial procedures in recursive writing (Hayes & Flower, 1986), these three dimensions disclosed students' behaviour and attitude towards process writing.

Reflective Journals (RJ) of the WAC Tutor

The journals attempted to record the experience of the WAC tutor in teaching all WAC courses throughout the study period. Although the tutor wrote the journals bi-weekly, only 15 entries were pertinent to the journalism courses. The journal entry analysis primarily concentrated on the perceived challenges the tutor faced in teaching newswriting and in the interaction with the students and the course lecturer.

The Selected WAC-Affiliated Courses

Two journalism courses, English News Reporting I (ENR-I) and English News Reporting II (ENR-II), were affiliated with the WAC programme at CUHK in the academic year 2003-2004 for the first and the second semester respectively. ENR-I aims to acquaint students with the principles and skills in general newswriting writing. ENR-II intends to further students' news writing repertoire in in-depth reporting, precision journalism, interpretative writing, and opinion writing. These journalism courses were chosen for two reasons. First, journalism writing seems to be compatible with the concept of WAC (Hurlow, 1989; Olson, 1987; Panici & McKee, 1997; Riley, 1996). Given the limited exposure of Hong Kong students to English writing, the journalism students were killing two birds with one stone—learning to write and learning to write investigative reporting. These two, presumably, are different skills, the second one being discipline-specific. Second, the WAC tutor had established a good interpersonal relationship with both the course lecturer and the students.

Students were required to take part in the reporting and editing of the *Varsity* magazine, the School of Journalism and Communication's English language practicum publication at CUHK. *Varsity* is an award-winning monthly magazine created for the tertiary students and the faculty at CUHK.

The journalism courses encompassed three WAC elements: individual conferences, mini-workshops, and multiple drafts of submitted work. The WAC tutor held one-to-one conferences twice a month with students during the semester. Each conference usually lasted for 30 minutes. In the conference, the tutor commented on the overall coherence, English usage and grammar, and journalistic conventions in the drafts. Optional mini-workshops on plagiarism and verb tenses were organised for students in both semesters. The workshops lasted for around two hours. Interactive presentations, exercises, and small group activities were employed. Students submitted a writing plan, a first draft, an optional second draft, and a final draft to the WAC tutor for comments. Writing plans and drafts were not graded by the WAC tutor and were only marked by the lecturer. Suggestions for improvement made by the WAC tutor were endorsed by the lecturer in the evaluative process.

Participants

The first author of this paper was the WAC tutor. She was a full-time WAC tutor for two academic years from September 2002 to July 2004. The tutor, holding a master's degree in applied English linguistics, was trained to provide WAC teaching services to students and professors (WAC at CUHK, 2004). The tutor was a native speaker of

Cantonese, the dialect of Chinese spoken in Hong Kong. She could also speak English and Mandarin. Her English proficiency was near-native.

All 21 students in this study enrolled in both ENR-I and ENR-II in the academic year 2003-2004. The students, with a mean age of 18, were full-time second-year undergraduates in the School of Journalism and Communication when they first participated in this study. Eighteen students spoke Cantonese and three spoke Mandarin as their mother tongue. The English proficiency of the students was considered to be upper intermediate.¹ Most students had lived in Hong Kong for more than six years.

The course lecturer, an associate professor in the School of Journalism and Communication, was a native speaker of English. He was born and educated in the U.S. He had taught English news reporting in Hong Kong for over a decade.

Results of the Qualitative Data

Data were grouped according to their relevance to the three possible sources of programme differences (i.e., the difficulties of writing in a second language, cultural differences in basic educational assumptions, and the logistical difficulties of programme implementation). Representative data from interviews and journals were excerpted for each source. A few responses showing the perceived learning effectiveness of the WAC programme were also gathered.

The Difficulties of Writing in a Second Language

The data reflected the problems or feelings ESL students had in the WAC writing process, particularly in writing task examination, idea generation and organization, and text generation. The lecturer's expectations of the WAC tutor in providing newswriting instructions to the students were also noted. These characteristics or expectations were believed to pose challenges to the tutor.

¹Their proficiency echoed the score of students admitted to the Journalism and Communication Programme in 2002, when the median and the lower quartile of the examination results in English language (Syllabus B) on the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination of the admitted undergraduates were C (Joint University Admissions System [JUPAS], 2006), corresponding to a TOEFL paper-based score of around 530 (Hogan & Chan, 1993), equivalent to a score of 197 on the computer-based TOEFL.

1. “The tutor should be able to speak Mandarin because some mainland students may find it difficult to express their thoughts in English or in Cantonese.” (Student A)
2. “I can communicate well with the coach in Cantonese. Sometimes, it is hard to express my ideas in English during consultations.” (Student B)
3. “I communicate easily with the tutor because we speak the same mother tongue The tutor can translate the sentences, in which I have problems in the expressions, from Cantonese to English.” (Student C)
4. “The tutor is able to provide the English equivalents of the Chinese terms or Chinese proverbs.” (Student D)
5. “The bilingual coach will understand my writing in Chinglish.” (Student E)
6. “The tutor’s Cantonese speaking ability is a principal asset which is important . . . to talk about writing. . . . Students’ inability to use English well was a great challenge to the tutor. The students lacked analysis in newswriting due to a lack of experience in newswriting. The students sometimes lacked sophistication in their work because they could not logically present lots of readings and ideas.” (Lecturer)

As shown in excerpts 1-3, the WAC tutor was expected to demonstrate a high level of proficiency in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English so as to communicate with students in their mother tongue to facilitate the writing process. Excerpts 3-5 show that students felt the WAC tutor should be proficient in Chinese-English translation to help them develop and express their ideas. More importantly, the tutor needed to be aware of why Cantonese Chinese made Chinglish mistakes. Excerpt 6 reveals a possible origin of ESL students’ difficulties in writing not shared by their American counterparts. Students in Hong Kong were not motivated to read, write, speak, or think in English. The tutor needed to go beyond teaching learning to write and writing to learn, and assist students with their English skills.

Cultural Differences in Basic Educational Assumptions

The data were related to the students’ concept of writing. This concept might stem from some basic educational assumptions since the students shared the culture of education in Hong Kong and/or China.

1. “Most students were criticized . . . due to wordiness of their writing.” (RJ)
2. “[A student] came to my office, sat down, and said to me, ‘You read [the copy].’ She expected me to give her inputs on the refinement of the story.” (RJ)

3. “[A student] always submitted the first draft . . . very early, say one week, before the due date. However, she did not really pay attention to the organisation, grammar, and the choice of words. She thought that I would turn her draft into an error-free article. This time, I asked her politely to re-read her draft carefully and re-write. But she insisted that I should spot the errors for her. She was kind of forcing me to ‘edit’ the draft for her.” (RJ)
4. “Some students failed to understand the value of the subject matter as well as the value of education.” (Lecturer)

Excerpt 1 shows that students failed to appreciate the beauty of the “less-is-more” philosophy. Students held the idea that the richer the content of their article, the higher the grade they would be assigned by the lecturer. The overemphasis on the content for grades was at the expense of organization, clarity, and grammatical correctness. However, due to the Chinese view that perfection should come at all levels, students were self-conscious of their organization or grammatical weakness, and thus sought editing help before submitting their papers to the lecturer who had the ultimate power to grade. This idea converged with the phenomenon in excerpts 2 and 3 where the students expected a “free lunch” from the WAC tutor. This grade-orientation was possibly what the lecturer referred to in excerpt 4 as a failure in understanding the value of education.

The Logistical Difficulties of Programme Implementation

The data also centred on challenges due to the limitations of the WAC tutor since she lacked discipline-specific expertise.

1. “Because *Varsity* is a local magazine, many topics are related to local issues. The bilingual writing coach understands local issues such as child adoption in Hong Kong, Chinese martial arts, and Hong Kong tramways.” (Student F)
2. “For the next issue of *Varsity* magazine, some students plan to write stories about cross-border school children, the entertainment reporter, and sports scholarship scheme in Hong Kong universities. To be frank, I do not know much about the topics they will write.” (RJ)
3. “Many people have a concept that a good essay is in a five-paragraph form. However, in newswriting, one sentence can constitute a paragraph for the sake of increasing the readability level.” (RJ)
4. “Journalism students often ask me, ‘How to develop my own style in writing?’ It is difficult for me to teach style in conferences because developing the quality of style is a truly personal discovery for writers.” (RJ)

5. “It was difficult teaching English newswriting for her because the subject matter was not concrete with facts and theories; rather, it was creative and personal. . . . The tutor was inexperienced in teaching newswriting . . . and journalistic conventions because she was neither journalism major nor a journalist.” (Lecturer)

Excerpt 1 demonstrates students’ demand that the tutor be sensitive to local and current issues. The tutor mastered some but not all of these issues, as evident in excerpt 2. Despite the fact that the tutor understood the general paradigm of journalism writing (as reflected in excerpt 3), the personal nature of journalism writing and the involved discourse community conventions required some sophistication in the discipline as indicated in excerpts 3-5.

Effectiveness of the WAC Programme

The data focused on the perceived effectiveness of the WAC programme to communication and thinking development.

1. “I have seen a significant improvement in the organization of my stories from the first story to the last one.” (Student D)
2. “I have improved my reporting skills, my journalistic style, and my organization in writing.” (Student G)
3. “My use of English language and organization in writing has improved.” (Student H)
4. “The students’ English improved dramatically in the use of English writing skills. My students did better this year than last year.” (Lecturer)

The usefulness of the WAC programme appeared to be positive for a wide range of writing components. Yet only a few students claimed that they benefited from the tutor for her disciplinary knowledge. No comment was received regarding the development of critical thinking skills.

Results of the Quantitative Data

The major focus of the quantitative data was to reveal the quantity, variety, and purpose of students’ habitual revisions which were pertinent to students’ attitudes towards and their performance of writing.

Quantity of Revision

In the 15 pieces of student writing, 593 revisions were located ($M = 39.5$; $SD = 44.2$). Individual differences were prominent, with the minimum number of

revisions in an article being three and the maximum being 154. Three pieces of writing (piece 6, 13, and 15) had a frequency of five revisions or below. Three students submitted an incomplete first draft (for piece 9, 14, and 15). These appeared to show either some misunderstanding of or resistance to process writing in the students' mind.

Variety of Revision

Among the four categories (i.e., syntactic, grammatical, word, and format revisions), syntactic revisions were the most frequent, followed by word, grammatical, and format revisions. The results obtained from ANOVA show that there was a significant main effect in the revision type, $F(3,56) = 2.863$, $p < .05$. Post-hoc t -tests show that all differences between categories of revisions were not significant, $p > .05$. These results suggest that the type of revisions influenced the revision frequency but the students did not focus on a particular type of correction. Statistical details of these four categories are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Statistical Details of the Four Categories of Revisions

	Syntactic revision	Grammatical revision	Word revision	Format revision
<i>n</i>	236	92	200	65
%	39.8%	15.5%	33.7%	11.0%
<i>M</i>	15.7	6.1	13.3	4.3
<i>SD</i>	17.95	8.49	14.40	5.74

The bivariate correlations among the four categories are shown in Table 3. All correlations were highly positive, ranging from $\beta = .759$ to $.914$, and were significant, $p < .001$, indicating that these revision categories were interconnected. This interconnectedness suggests that students' ability in revising their various types of errors grew as a holistic repertoire. Students did not fixate on certain kinds of revisions but developed evaluation and editing skills which covered all four categories—syntax, grammar, word, and format.

Table 3

Bivariate Correlations Among the Four Categories of Revision

	Syntactic revision	Grammatical revision	Word revision	Format revision
Format revision	1			
Syntactic revision	.775**	1		
Grammatical revision	.911**	.759**	1	
Format revision	.914**	.805**	.925**	1

Note: $N = 15$, ** $p < .001$

Among all subcategories, stylistic changes in sentence rewriting were ranked the first in terms of revision frequency ($n = 93$ or 15.7%), with word choice for stylistic purpose being the second ($n = 76$ or 12.8%), and information addition at the sentence level the third ($n = 59$ or 9.9%). Other than these top three subcategories, it is interesting to note that contrary to what has been stated in the literature (Holt, 1997), no revision was made to subject-verb agreement.

Purpose of Revision

All 593 revisions were classified either as meaning-altering or meaning-conserving. Only 35.9% of the total number of revisions was meaning-altering with the remaining 64.1% meaning-conserving. Paired sample t -tests show that the difference between these two groups was not significant, $M = 11.13$, $t(1,14) = 1.69$, $p > .05$, indicating that students did not intentionally revise meanings in their texts. However, if the revisions involving sentence and word addition were discounted, only 21.2% of the revisions were meaning-alteration. There was no revision made to paragraphing and merely one revision in sentence transitions to change the original structure or idea. It appeared that students were not fully capable of revising their writing at the global level.

Discussion

The qualitative and quantitative data from different measures and from all parties seemed to converge. With respect to the sources of differences between the programme in Hong Kong and in the U.S., the tutor was found to face a set of unique challenges.

Table 4 summarizes the relationship between the sources of differences and the relevant challenges.

Table 4

The Relationship Between the Sources of Differences and the Challenges

Sources of differences	Specific challenges
1. The difficulties of writing in a second language.	The demand for integrated multilingual and metalinguistic expertise.
2. Cultural differences in basic educational assumptions.	The robustness of product-oriented, teacher-centered writing in students' mindset due to a focus on grades.
3. The logistical difficulties of programme implementation	The demand for discipline-specific expertise.

The Demand for an Integrated Multilingual and Metalinguistic Expertise

The first challenge unique to a WAC tutor in Hong Kong was a critical demand for an integrated multilingual-metalinguistic ability. Students suggested that the tutor be able to communicate with them in whatever languages they liked. The multilingual ability must be coupled with a strong metalinguistic awareness to understand and explain the complicated and, worse still, illogical mistakes of ESL or EFL learners in L2 writing, and how L1 intervenes with the whole writing process.

One of the representations of metalinguistic awareness needed by the tutor was the ability to discover the "tricks" in L1-L2 translation. This idea converges with the notion of translation as an L2 writing strategy (Liu, 2005). Liu has found that proficient L2 writers struggle more at the semantic level while unskilled L2 writers at the syntactic level when they translate. Similarly, Wang and Wen (2002) have suggested that both L1 and L2 are used in L2 writing; yet at what stages L1 is employed depends on the nature of writing tasks, the writing prompts, and the language proficiency of both L1 and L2. Understanding the influence of translation on L2 writing, the WAC tutor in the Hong Kong context had to exercise her metalinguistic knowledge in Cantonese, Chinese, and English and intervene at specific stages of writing in the process paradigm.

This challenge of the WAC tutor was partly overcome since the tutor had a diverse language background and had training in applied linguistics and second language writing. Nonetheless, the tutor had to cater to the individual needs of 21 students. The linguistic and cultural diversity of the student population might have negated the effectiveness of the WAC programme in the growth of communication and thinking repertoires (Foote, 1999). In addition, the lecturer's feedback regarding ESL students' difficulties in writing indicated that students' overall lack of English practice and weaknesses in reading, listening, and speaking negatively affected the development of writing skills.

The Robustness of Product-Oriented, Teacher-Centred Writing in Students' Mindsets

The second challenge of the WAC tutor was a deeply rooted mindset of students about writing. Process writing puts equal emphasis on the intermediate writing stages as on the final product. The writing-to-learn paradigm encourages students to think deeply about their ideas and the meaning of what they write. However, did the students in this study understand and act according to the philosophy of process writing? The first impression from the data yielded a negative reply. Some students were not selective in choosing the content for their writing and thus produced wordy articles. As reflected in the results related to the quantity of revisions of individual papers, some students did not plan well in their first draft and hence submitted a final draft with a lot of new information which the tutor did not have time to comment on. Others hardly revised their first draft.

Misunderstanding of process writing? The above findings were, at first sight, an outcome of students' misconception of what process writing was. However, the overall pattern of students' revisions told another story. Students did not fixate on a particular revision type. As Perl (1979) has argued, this phenomenon was a probable indicator of intermediate expertise in process writing as students did not correct and edit their work with strategies that reduced "the flow of composing without substantially improving the form" (p. 328). Furthermore, students produced a reasonable amount of meaning-altering (semantic) revisions in their final drafts. These semantic alterations, though not extensive, were unlikely to be made by students who failed to comprehend process writing (Hayes & Flower, 1986). Rather than attributing the sloppy writing behaviour of students to the limited understanding of process writing, it was posited that the existing concept of writing as a teacher-centred product in Chinese culture probably resisted the full operation of writing to learn and learning to write techniques.

Product orientation. Chinese students face pressure to produce a "perfect" final draft for their coursework (Koffolt & Holt, 1997). However, perfection means content

sufficiency to some Chinese students. The stress on content overrides the importance of organization and clarity. This writing concept lay not only in students' minds but also in those of teachers. Some faculty expect a polished piece, not inventive thinking (Foote, 1999). Poor writing quality is thus overlooked or even reinforced by some faculty as long as the students get the facts correct (Davis, 1985). The development of this expectation for content sufficiency can be traced back to the examination-oriented secondary schooling to prepare students for their matriculation examinations in which keen competition exists. To score, students simply have to regurgitate what they have learnt by rote without a clear presentation in their essays. This education culture produces a biased focus on the writing product.

Given the bias toward content sufficiency, the submission of incomplete first drafts and wordy final drafts flooded with new information yet with only a few global-level, meaning-altering revisions could be understood. Students wanted only a perfect shot which could, in their eyes, impress the appraiser most. Not given ample time for the perfect shot in the first draft, a few students produced one or two pages of writing which were "error-free" (again in their eyes) in both grammar and organisation. They did not amend these pages in the final drafts, even though the WAC tutor gave explicit recommendations for changes as these one- or two-page drafts were claimed to be perfect—"Tutor, I am just not given sufficient time for a full piece of work! Anyway, the first draft is not graded, right?" The failure to appreciate the less-is-more writing principle—to be concise and precise by being selective with content—was fully evident in the scarcity of revisions in information deletion at both the word and sentence levels in final drafts, as compared with the number of revisions in information addition. This resulted in lengthy articles with loosely connected ideas. This kind of product-oriented concept absolutely hindered the cultivation of the learning to write habits of the students.

Teacher as the centre of writing. For most Chinese students, the definition of perfection in content varies from appraiser to appraiser. Chinese students show much respect (Braine, 2003) and fear of teachers, and view them as the ultimate authority in the class and even in their own writing. The inclination to authority makes writing an act that is not an exercise in critical thinking but an act of repeating what the students think the professor wants to hear (Koffolt & Holt, 1997). Coupled with the product-oriented attitude and the dread of penalties related to grades in creating new but odd propositions which might offend the ideas of the faculty, students simply regurgitate the points the faculty utter and even the way the faculty organize and convey these points rather than demonstrating their own critical analysis. Thus, organisation, format, and even rhetorical connections are fixed in the first draft or even in the writing plan. This

probably explains why the writing to learn technique could not fully operate and students did not revise much at the global level in this study.

The Demand for Discipline-Specific Expertise

The third challenge of the WAC tutor was the demand for disciplinary sophistication. Advanced knowledge such as a sharp sensitivity to disciplinary trends and personal experience in disciplinary writing were sought after. Researchers demanding an integration of language and discourse conventions propound that teaching these two elements separately render learning ineffective (McLeod & Miraglia, 2001). However, what level of sophistication should the WAC tutor attain? Could a writing generalist not teach WAC even with a shortage of suitable candidates such as in the case of Hong Kong?

Chanock (2004) argues against the notion that WAC tutors should possess disciplinary knowledge. She demonstrates that a general paradigm of questioning should be sufficient in teaching WAC for all disciplines. The role of a writing tutor in this model is to teach students how to ask themselves useful questions with regard to the writing task. For instance, in the planning stages for idea generation and organization, the tutor may cultivate students' habit of asking themselves how the various topics covered in the course are related. This technique can be viewed as a research-like paradigm: "Academic communities engaged in the construction of knowledge through a cycle of questioning, research, critical reception, and further questioning" (Chanock, 2004, pp.28-29).

The WAC tutor practiced this interrogating model to develop students' internal ability to perceive problems in writing and thinking. For instance, the tutor once suggested that instead of asking the interviewees about their "feelings towards the tramcars," the student might ask them to describe "their memorable experience of riding on the tramcars" (RJ). Repeatedly asking informational questions allows more details to be obtained. From there, topics can be narrowed and content selected based on the writing plan. Despite this interrogating paradigm which can boost students' thinking skills, admittedly, the WAC tutor may still need more knowledge in journalism conventions (e.g., the use of quotes in a news article) in correctly marking students' coursework.

Effectiveness of the WAC Programme

Both students and the course lecturer were satisfied with the performance of the WAC tutor. Positive learning outcomes were observed. The quantitative figures showed that students developed a holistic pattern or ability in editing their work in a wide variety of language aspects. Although the level of meaning-altering revisions, an

indicator of writing expertise, remained relatively low and all students were unable to discover their mistakes in subject-verb agreement, this group of students benefited from WAC in Hong Kong.

Except overriding the deeply rooted product-oriented and teacher-centred writing concept, the WAC tutor was able to cope with most challenges with the employment of WAC techniques. It is of interest to note the following claim by McLeod and Miraglia (2001).

WAC techniques that work well for native speakers do not work at all for ESL learners. Teachers in the disciplines who are told they do not need to know about grammar in order to use writing in their classes feel betrayed when faced with a non-native speaker's grammatical and syntactic tangles in a write-to-learn assignment. (p.12)

Considering students' robust mindset of writing which could not be immediately manipulated by the WAC tutor in this study, the above claim is not justifiable—the tutor did help the students produce better writing given the difficulty of changing the mindset of the students.

Conclusion

The paper describes how a unique set of challenges of a WAC tutor arose due to the differences in language, culture, and logistical factors between the WAC programme as implemented in Hong Kong and in the U.S. Challenges such as the demand for an integrated multilingual and metalinguistic awareness and discipline-specific expertise on the part of the tutor could be overcome with additional training or special pedagogical methods from cooperating faculty. Yet it is difficult to convince students of the benefit of writing to learn. The creation of such a new writing culture with the eradication of old mindsets is formidable. It takes much time for the WAC philosophy to be embedded in students' minds and, consequently, to influence their writing habits.

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