PROCESS AND POSTPROCESS IN CHINA'S EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2012

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation investigated China’s college-level composition instruction for English majors through the lenses of Western rhetoric and American composition theories. Historically, the teaching of writing in China belongs to the field of applied linguistics, and its classroom assessment followed EFL testing theories. However, viewed from the perspective of rhetoric and composition, China’s teaching methods fall into the category of current-traditional rhetoric, a product-oriented methodology. The limitations of the approach lie in an excessive emphasis on structure and accuracy but insufficient attention to rhetorical strategies. This teaching method conforms to the literate tradition of the Chinese language, its competitive society, and its test-driven educational system. However, effective communication skills are neglected.

To solve these problems, I proposed Chinese writing instructors implement some effective mainstream writing pedagogies but adapt them to China’s educational context. Chinese instructors could consider a “community-based socio-cognitive instruction approach” that stresses revision skills with reference to assessment criteria. With the process-and postprocess-based framework created by employing cognitive theories and Bruce McComiskey’s postprocess theories, instructors could partially integrate Asao B. Inoue’s community-based assessment pedagogy, tailoring it to a specific site. McComiskey’s theory advocates three levels of composing—“textual,” “rhetorical,” and “discursive”—which ensure improvement of writers’ linguistic, rhetorical, and social skills. Inoue’s pedagogy involves students in creating assessment criteria, assessing, and assigning grades. This pedagogy empowers students, encourages collaborative learning, and connects assessment to
teaching and learning, all of which gives students the opportunity to practice social and rhetorical skills.

This study utilized two major research methods: 1) a textual analysis of scholarly publications in English and Chinese, and 2) a teacher research method related to my own teaching and learning experiences in both Chinese and American universities. This project exemplified a community-based teaching approach. Additionally, I also suggested professional development for Chinese instructors so that their updated epistemology can aid in their research and curriculum reform. This research can broaden Chinese instructors’ academic visions and enable ESL instructors to know about the Chinese culture, literate tradition, and educational systems, which promotes cooperation, exchange and business between the East and the West.
This dissertation is dedicated to my family, who has given me so much love, care, and support.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my dissertation committee members, Dr. Kristine Blair, Dr. Patricia Kubow, Dr. Sue Carter Wood, and Dr. Lance Massey, who have given me constructive feedback and incessant support. Without them, this dissertation would not have been possible. Among them, my chair, Kris, has kindly rendered me years of academic support, encouragement, and understanding that have sustained my professional advancement. As a role model, Kris demonstrates excellence not only in professionalism and work ethic, but also in many attributes related to being a friend, daughter, wife, and an incredible woman. It is indeed an honor to work with her.

I also thank my colleagues and friends for their moral support and timely assistance. Meetings at Panera Bread, where we exchanged drafts and recommended sources, helped me with my dissertation research. This part of experience has become valuable memories in my life. Vanessa Cozza has been first reader of a couple of chapters, and Ann-Gee Lee has also been a very helpful proofreader and collaborator. They also shared with me their writing experiences, which inspired me to complete this challenging project.

I am very grateful to my three sisters and their families who have been taking care of my aged mom so that I was able to concentrate on my work, free of worries and cares. Their financial help, as well as long distance conversations, comforted me and encouraged me to complete my studies.

In the end, I would like to thank my son, Toby, whose company alleviated my homesickness during the years. His motivation, diligence, and commitment to excellence set me a good example. My husband, Jiaying Zhou, has been the one to give unconditional support, love, and understanding.
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CHAPTER 1  CROSSING THE DIVIDE: (POST)PROCESSING WRITING
FOR ENGLISH MAJORS IN CHINA

Writing is a shared human act, but the teaching of writing is not. The reason might be that both writing and the teaching of writing are culture-specific; both acts take place in particular cultural and linguistic contexts. In her book *Understanding ESL Writers: A Guide for Teachers*, Ilona Leki confirms this point and states that students from one cultural and linguistic background may write on similar themes, use similar patterns to develop their ideas, and have similar difficulties with writing (88). Students’ personal histories with writing count, too (Leki 30-32). She adds, “the teaching of writing and rhetorical patterns reflects social, economic, and political realities, not natural mental processes or psychological capacities” (Leki 89-90). Leki means that students with different cultural, educational, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds may have different writing habits and difficulties. Therefore, writing instruction should take all these socio-cultural and writer factors into consideration in order to tailor the teaching of writing to their needs.

What teachers teach and how they teach, to a great extent, determines what kind of writers they produce. In other words, methods of teaching writing directly affect students’ perception about writing, involvement in writing activities, the learning outcomes as well as the quality of teaching. Thus, teachers play a big role in education. The “Statements of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing” by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) contains one sentence which I think applies to all educational situations, “Quality in education is intimately linked to the quality of teachers.” Jennifer Goldstain, an educator, makes the same statement in her book *Peer Review and Teacher Leadership: Linking Professionalism and Accountability*: “The most crucial factor in a child’s academic success is a
high-quality teacher. The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) has argued that what teachers know and can do is one of the most important influences on what students learn, and the link from teacher expertise to student learning and achievement is well established by research” (14). Writing as a part of education also relies on teacher quality, which has a decisive effect on learning outcomes.

The goal of composition studies has been a debated topic. Scholars have come up with different definitions. In *The End of Composition Studies*, David W. Smit provides an array of perceptions about the goal of composition studies held by different scholars. For some, writing instruction is necessary to “promote the use of writing” (1). Instructors help students to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to convey their ideas. Others understand writing as “self liberation” (1), which Sylvia A. Holladay explains as the ability to gain “self-esteem, confidence, and authority to free themselves, to change their lives” (qtd. in Smit 1). Some scholars think of writing as “part of a larger set of social or cultural practices,” which means people have to observe the norms for “various academic disciplines and work-related organizations” (1) when they participate in the communication. However, I hold that the definition of the end of composition studies Smit has given is the most comprehensive. Smit views writing as a way of participating in a civic culture, a local, a national, or even world culture, as part of a literate citizenry with large obligations to participate in and critique forms of social and economic organization for the common good. For these scholars, teaching writing is intimately connected with teaching ways of thinking about social and economic practices and the ways writing can help to promote social and economic justice. (2)

Achieving good learning outcomes is definitely not just to help students pass writing classes or
obtain their degrees because students shoulder more important missions when they enter society as intellectuals. In other words, writing instruction prepares people with a sense of cultures and responsibilities toward the world. Mike Rose and Vivian Zamel share similar views to above-mentioned scholars, and contend that the goal of writing instruction is to “teach writers rather than to teach writing” (qtd. in Leki 9).

It follows that to teach writing effectively, instructors should teach more than the writing skills. Teachers need to know “who those writers are and what their goals might be” (Leki 9) and consider a variety of factors. Theoretically, in the process of learning and teaching writing, both writers and teachers should take into account rhetorical situations, purposes, audiences, literate traditions, and socio-cultural factors that impact the teaching and learning of writing. However, classroom practices are usually restricted by various factors, and there exists a gap between rhetorical theories and the reality. These factors could be pedagogical choices, student population, the administrative level, teacher quality, educational systems and policies, and institutional and program requirements as well as literate tradition, and whether writing takes place in a second or foreign language environment. In most cases, classroom practices lag behind rhetorical studies, which seems to be not only a common phenomenon but also a force for further research and teaching reform.

Relating the above-mentioned general rules of education to composition practices for English majors in Chinese universities and in first-year composition (FYC) classes in the United States, I have discovered significant similarities and differences. In addition to differences in pedagogical choices, the societal expectations and teaching objectives for English majors in China seem to resemble some of the goals for FYC students in American universities. Both groups of writers are expected to communicate effectively and adhere to proper rhetorical norms.
Due to similar goals, universities in China can selectively introduce some effective American approaches to its writing classrooms. Reflecting on my teaching experiences in both countries, I can see the strengths and limitations of each context. The process- and postprocess-based approaches in American classrooms, for example, help students develop their writing skills faster. In contrast, China’s current-traditional teaching style puts more of an emphasis on structure and linguistic fluency. This approach results in formulaic writing and overemphasis on grammar perfection and positions students as passive receivers and duplicators of information. In my dissertation, I argue that instruction for the English majors at Chinese universities could be improved by incorporating student-centered process and postprocess pedagogies into their L2 teaching methods that emphasize not only linguistic but also cultural and rhetorical factors that influence writing. The proposed community-based socio-cognitive curriculum, with focus on collaborative revision skills with reference to assessment criteria, intends not only to involve writers in the whole process of writing, including the assessment procedure, but also to focus on individual writers, their sociocultural backgrounds, and the local culture. Hopefully, this approach is able to help solve some of the pedagogical dilemmas of teaching English in China.

The introduction to the dissertation includes why I chose this topic, the site of my research, and a brief summary of the differences in writing instruction in American and Chinese universities. This comparison is intended to give readers a general idea of the different approaches adopted and different teaching results yielded in the two countries. Next, I raise the research questions, and describe the methods I used and the purpose of the study. The last part summarize the chapters of my dissertation.

Why This Topic?

In this dissertation, I investigate writing instruction for undergraduate English majors at
Chinese universities through the lenses of the Western rhetoric and American composition theories. My dissertation topic stems from my own learning and teaching experiences at Bowling Green State University (BGSU), U.S.A. and my home university, Xi’an International Studies University (XISU), China. Composition instruction for English majors in Chinese universities has been an intriguing topic for me because I have been a member of the community since I entered college in 1984. It was customary for Chinese universities of higher learning to retain their best graduates for teaching positions at the time. So, I stayed on to teach when I graduated in 1988. For eleven years I taught writing at XISU, noted its problems, and experimented with different ways of teaching writing. Having studied rhetoric and composition at BGSU and being an insider of the XISU and BGSU communities, I began to see the major differences in teaching and learning outcomes caused by different pedagogical choices. Therefore, I became keenly aware of the limitations of the writing instruction in China. The traditional and dated teaching methods used in English departments in China tend to produce formulaic writing and passive learners of rules about writing. The constraints of the traditional method become more visible when the issues are viewed in the light of theories in rhetoric and composition.

During my college careers and at my teaching positions, I have seen that instructors in China are greatly influenced by contrastive rhetoric theories and grammar. So, discourse patterns, rules about the language, mechanics, and stylistics take up most of the time of writing classes. Owing to a limited understanding of process pedagogy, the process of teaching is just like what Lad Tobin describes in his article “How the Writing Process Was Born—And Other Conversion Narratives.” Teachers lecture on the rules about writing but do not explain much about the process of writing. “Or they would explain some of the rules governing good writing: they might spend as much as a whole week of class on the benefits of brevity. But they would say nothing
about invention, about how to get started, what to do in the middle, what to do when the middle
turned back into the start, and so on” (3). The students’ process is “outline, write, proofread,
hand in”; and the instructors’ process is to “assign, collect, grade” (2). In the classroom, reading
model essays and talking about writing essays in the style of the models constitute major
classroom activities. Instructors evaluate papers holistically and do not require students to submit
multiple drafts. Products—what instructors look at and give grades to—are the main focus of
student writers.

Lack of professional training caused ineffective teaching outcomes. I became a faculty
member and began my teaching career in China without any pre-service training. In the
beginning, I could only teach the way I was taught. I had no idea of what peer review, prewriting,
or portfolios were at all. Over the years, my colleagues and I—and many other faculty in China
as well, I think—have wanted to improve their teaching outcomes, but many times we had to
give up the idea due to various restrictions. These constraints include the large student population,
faculty’s already heavy workloads, lack of appropriate curriculum materials such as textbooks
and resources for the faculty, academic support, and professional development opportunities.
My ten-year writing instruction experience was associated with modes of discourse, grammatical
accuracy, and mechanics, which are thought to be very traditional and outdated based on the
theories on current rhetorical and composition studies. With the expertise I have acquired from
rhetoric and composition studies at BGSU, my passion for improving the effectiveness of writing
instruction has been increasing every day. My past, present and future have witnessed and will
witness the evolution of composition instruction in Chinese colleges and universities.

China now, as a rising power, needs intellectuals who can promote communication and
cooperation in many areas with the rest of the world (The North Project Group 5; Dai 322). In
his article “Rising China to Fit the World System and the Changes in Geopolitics,” Dr. Xiaodi Wu, who is also an entrepreneur, states that China’s fast economic growth surprises the world, and its new economic position calls for the state to fit in with the world system. This situation urges China to reform its foreign language education to get ready for the new challenges its young people will meet. In the economy, science and technology, as well as in education and cultural exchanges, English is still the most widely used language. Therefore, English majors’ proficiency is important because they represent China in world affairs.

The English majors in my study are undergraduate students of English departments at Chinese colleges and universities. They learn English, a foreign language, as a field of study, and earn a bachelor’s degree of English language and literature. These students enter English departments through rigid standardized national college entrance examinations. Candidates applying for English studies must take an oral test in addition to the compulsory written test. Usually the oral test weeds out those with pronunciation and hearing difficulties. Only students whose English test scores, both written and oral, have reached a certain level can be admitted to the English department. In other words, English majors must demonstrate an aptitude for and strengths in language learning. Their college courses cover many aspects of language learning; they learn language skills and cultures related to the language. Compulsory courses include literature, linguistics, history and cultures of English-speaking countries, translation, oral interpretation, and some special-topic courses. Selective courses usually satisfy their personal interests. Students can choose to focus on one or more particular areas within English studies: literature, linguistics, translation, or cultural studies. Basic language skills classes, mostly offered during the first two years, include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In the junior and senior years, upper-division compulsory classes, such as advanced writing, thesis writing,
translation, oral interpretation, and electives like American fiction, British fiction, intercultural communication, and cultures through movies, are offered.

Among the above-mentioned courses, all English majors must complete four writing classes: introductory writing, intermediate writing, advanced writing, and thesis writing. According to the National Syllabus for English Majors at China’s Colleges and Universities, each semester students must write eight compositions each semester. Within thirty minutes, at the basic level, students are expected to write about 150 to 200 words. At the intermediate level, students learn professional writing or write short essays, and are expected to write papers of 250 to 300 words within thirty minutes; at the advanced level, about 300 to 400 words within thirty minutes; and for thesis writing, about 3,000 to 5,000 words. Instructors usually use holistic scoring as the major assessment procedure and ask students to submit one draft to be graded. Although some teachers might include prewriting or peer review activities in the classroom, most teachers usually do not provide formative feedback, that is, feedback provided when writers are still in the process of writing. However, writers can get some suggestions from peers. Usually, instructors return evaluated papers with summative feedback, which could be long and very detailed, that describes the strengths and weaknesses of a composition. The end-of-term timed writing test is the most common practice. The course score is the average of the scores from separate papers added up. Having completed four years of study, students are supposed to have a good command of the English language, its history, culture, and literature so that they can manage work that requires good English skills.

Society pins great hopes on English majors. However, when they do not perform well, the effects of the unsatisfactory writing instruction may go beyond campus because English majors represent China in world affairs. In his article “English Departments in Chinese Universities:
Purpose and Function,” Zhaoxiang Cheng finds that the jobs held by graduates include teaching, tour guides, business, finance, mass media, bilingual secretaries, working in foreign ventures and joint ventures, banks and finance companies, and in foreign affairs departments of governments and enterprises (260). They participate in various cultural and academic activities worldwide by communication in English. Their communication skills, both aural and written, not only represent China’s educational and intellectual standards but also directly affect the results. In spite of the above importance, the biggest influence of writing instruction goes to academics. Some graduates will teach when they complete their graduate studies, and they fill almost all the teaching positions in China. All English classes at institutions above the elementary level include writing; most English tests contain writing tasks, too. At present, China has the largest number of English learners in the world. According to a new report commissioned by the British Council, “By 2010 there could be around 2 billion people learning English” (Cheng 257), which is “almost equivalent to the total of native English speakers in the world” (Bao). John Flowerdew and Yongyan Li give a detailed account of the use of English in scholarly publication among Chinese academics. In their article “English or Chinese? The Trade-Off Between Local and International Publication among Chinese Academics in the Humanities and Social Sciences,” they report that every year there are 200-odd papers published in English in international journals. Flowerdew and Li also address the idea that with the trend of Chinese higher education toward internationalization, English-medium instruction will be increasing (1-3), and it is natural that students will write more in English for these courses. So, the effectiveness of writing instruction really matters.

I choose to focus on college-level writing instruction for the English majors because many students do not have a chance to take other writing classes once they graduate from college.
Only when students pursue a master’s degree or a doctorate do they take a graduate-level writing course, thesis writing, or the equivalent. Thesis writing, however, concentrates more on research-related techniques rather than on basic writing skills. Most of the graduates rely on the writing skills obtained from undergraduate writing courses for the rest of their lives. Therefore, undergrad writing instruction plays an important role in students’ careers and academic success.

Over the past ten years, writing instruction and research have been one of the popular topics of English education reform in China. The reasons could be that new challenges arise. For example, the 1999 revised National Syllabus for English Majors at China’s Colleges and Universities updated the contents for English instruction. This document points out that technologies impact people’s way of writing and have entered writing classrooms. Diverse teaching methods emerge, such as the computer-mediated approach, the genre and discourse analysis approach, and the corpus-based approach. The rise of the language proficiency of English majors could be a reason, too, because their English is above the proficiency of English majors in the past decades. Another but more important reason that explains the situation of writing research and instruction is that satisfactory ways to tackle the existing problems in the classroom have not been found yet. Therefore, research has been active, especially at conferences and seminars. For example, there has been an annual writing conference since The First National Writing Teaching and Research Seminar was held in Guangdong Foreign Studies University in 2003. The number of conference attendees is increasing every year; however, there have not been published articles showing certain research results are accepted nation-wide. For example, process-based approaches have garnered national recognition in the United States. Therefore, the journey of exploring a workable writing teaching approach will continue.

When I arrived to pursue my master’s degree and Ph.D. at BGSU, I came to realize the
restraints of the Chinese way of teaching writing, and my wish to reform the teaching of writing in China intensified. Having been taught through process-based approaches and having been exposed to different cultures, I can see the differences in the pedagogical choice from the perspective of both a student and an instructor. My own writing improves while I am producing multiple drafts and interacting with peers and instructors. Working as a writing consultant at the Writing Center and teaching first-year composition (FYC) courses for the General Studies Writing (GSW) program at BGSU has enabled me to become more aware of the advantages of process and postprocess approaches over the traditional approach. Students are the biggest beneficiaries because they gain more attention from process-based approaches than from the traditional approach. I have come to see the importance of the social aspect of writing. As a student writer, I myself have cultivated the habit of writing and revising based on peer feedback. Building a repertoire of knowledge of the rhetorical situation, purpose, and audience has helped me to get ideas across to the intended audience in an appropriate manner. When I improve my own writing through a social process, I think it is beneficial to take students through the same process so that they can learn writing through writing practices, know about their audience by interacting with their peers, and obtain social skills necessary for their future career and life. From the classes I have taught, I have noted that by the end of the semester that American FYC students improve their writing tremendously through continuous efforts through the semester. I embrace process and postprocess approaches because my students and I mature as writers. Thus, I wish the same effect will take place with Chinese students in the near future.

Current-Traditional Rhetoric and Post/Postprocess Approaches

College-level composition classes in China and in the United States adopt different approaches, and the differences become clearer when they are viewed from multicultural and
multidisciplinary perspectives. In China, English is learned and taught as a foreign language (EFL) rather than a second language (ESL). Susan Gass clarifies the two language learning environments in her plenary address delivered at The 4th International Conference on ELT (English Language Teaching) in China: “In the first case, second language learning, learning takes place in the environment of the language being studied (e. g., Chinese in China); in the second, foreign language learning, learning takes place in the environment of the native language rather than the target language (e. g., English in China)” (4). In spite of the differences in language learning environments, writing instruction in China usually refers to the language teaching theories and learning styles in both fields as well as some related subfields, such as English as a foreign language (EFL), English language teaching (ELT), second language acquisition (SLA), or second language writing (L2 writing). English composition in China does not fall into the field of rhetoric and writing because there is no such a field there. For a long time, writing instruction for different levels of learners has followed the tradition of applied linguistics or certain principles of language teaching/learning styles.

Although some journal articles and books written in Chinese touch upon rhetorical theories and American pedagogies, many textbooks and classroom practices carry very strong characteristics of current-traditional rhetoric. During the past two decades or so, some scholars and instructors have written on rhetorical and pedagogical studies. Their topics include the following: rhetorical studies (Huang), rhetoric and grammar (Zhiling Li), “audience awareness” and “strategies toward audiences” (Xu and Gan), the process approach (Deng et al.; Sen Li), process and product (Sun and Zhao); or particular aspect of the process, such as peer review and feedback (Gong; Qi; Shao; Zhang, Cheng, and Li ), revision (Wang), and teacher commentary (Qi; Baiqing Li; Zuo; Chen and Li). Research remains active, but classroom practices and
learning outcomes fall behind. For example, some textbooks released in the 1980s, in the 1990s, and in the 2000s are characterized by current-traditional rhetoric, for instance, Yuqin Hei et al.’s *Intermediate English Writing* published in 2009, and the two editions of *A College Handbook of Composition* by Wangdao Ding et al. published in 1984 and 1994. Many classrooms are still teacher-centered. Instructors tend to teach rules about writing rather than design activities that help students improve their writing abilities through writing. Guided and fruitful invention activities, such as prewriting, free writing, peer review, and workshops, are scarce. Products and test scores are valued over the process. Many professors, especially those working in institutions located in less developed areas, can only collect one draft from students because they may be overloaded with multiple tasks, such as teaching, advising, administering, and research. Then holistic grading is applied, and only summative feedback is provided. And the list cannot exhaust all problems.

In brief, the pedagogies used to teach Chinese EFL writers differ from the pedagogies utilized for FYC students who write in their first language (L1 writing). Some people call the writing instruction for native speakers “mainstream writing instruction.” On the whole, the current-traditional approach occupies writing classrooms in China. In contrast, FYC courses at American universities adopt process- and postprocess-based approaches. Different from Chinese writing classrooms, students are involved in the whole writing process by participating in all sorts of invention activities, such as freewriting, drafting, peer review and editing, revising, workshopping, conferencing with the instructor, and group or team writing. Portfolio assessment, which intends to examine students’ progress in writing, is one of the most widely used assessment procedures. All these activities—from teaching writing, writing itself, to writing assessment—make writing doable and transparent for students. Students learn writing through
the writing process, know how their works are evaluated, and what criteria are valued. In spite of these, I must admit that in the writing classrooms in these two countries, other teaching methods are also incorporated. For example, in China, genre, discourse analysis, and computer-mediated approaches may be applied; in the United States, computer-mediated writing theories, critical pedagogies, feminist pedagogies, writing center pedagogies, and cultural studies are embedded in the process-based approaches. However, none of the above plays as important a role as the current-traditional approach in China and process-based approaches in the United States.

But how does current-traditional rhetoric influence composition instruction in the United States and in the world? What are process and postprocess approaches? According to Paul Kei Matsuda’s article “Process and Post-Process: A Discursive History,” the term “current-traditional rhetoric” was coined by Daniel Fogarty in *Roots of a New Rhetoric* published in 1959, and was popularized by Richard E. Young in “Paradigms and Problems: Needed Research in Rhetorical Invention,” written in the late 1970s. Young identifies current-traditional rhetoric as an approach with “emphasis on the composed product rather than the composing process” (qtd. in Matsuda 70). The analysis of discourse breaks up into words, sentences, and paragraphs. This approach gives plenty of attention to usage including syntax, spelling, and punctuation; and to style like economy, clarity, and emphasis (qtd. in Matsuda 70). Even so, Matsuda states that product-centered pedagogy dominated American composition classrooms from the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century up to the 1960s (70). During this period of time, current-traditional rhetoric had been America’s most prevailing type of pedagogy, which emphasizes formal correctness, elegance of language, and discourse patterns. The well-known modes of discourse include description, narration, exposition, and argument. Writing for the current-traditional pedagogy is silent, rigid, and product-oriented.
In spite of the above-mentioned deficits, current-traditional rhetoric has dominated or is still dominating writing classrooms in the world. Even in some American writing classrooms characterized by the composing process, the influence of current-traditional rhetoric can also be felt. In *Rhetoric and Reality: Writing Instruction in American Colleges, 1900-1985*, James Berlin maintains that current-traditional rhetoric has been the most pervasive of rhetorics, and has influenced writing instruction for several hundreds of years (9). Therefore, the current-traditional approach is indeed influential. Another composition scholar, Karen Burke LeFevre, in her book *Invention as a Social Act*, analyzes the reasons why the current-traditional approach stresses formalism and independent writing. LeFevre believes that prior to the process approach some people assumed “that the individual possesses innate knowledge or mental structures that are the chief source of invention. Invention, according to this view, occurs largely through introspective self-examination” (11). Instructed through this pedagogy, writers rely on just themselves to discover the truth in their minds. In this inventional pattern, writing activity is private, solitude, and individualistic; no interactive activities are involved. Having been a tradition and an established rhetoric, current-traditional rhetoric still plays a role in process-based classrooms because some instructors may require students to produce current-traditional texts (Crowley 65).

In China, writing instruction also follows some of the principles of applied linguistics. The current-traditional pedagogy, similar to the audio-lingual approach in EFL teaching by nature, has been the most widely used teaching method, although the term current-traditional rhetoric might not be familiar to some practitioners. In some L2 or EFL writing, instructors use “the audiolingual approach” (Matsuda 75). In *Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education*, linguists Colin Baker and Sylvia Prys Jones define the audiolingual approach as a style of teaching used in teaching foreign languages. The audiolingual method, appearing after
World War II and becoming popular during the 1950s and 1970s, is based on behaviorist theory, which stresses grammar and imitation of good examples, known as drills (672-673). So, in many ways, such as its purpose, the audiolingual approach resembles the current-traditional approach. Up until the 1980s, another language teaching method, the communicative approach, a term coined by Dell Hymes (Baker and Jones 675), began to play a bigger role in language classrooms. According to Baker and Jones, “Communicative competence deals with actual speech, to know what to say, to whom, when, where and how” (677). It arose in reaction to the audiolingual method, and invited learners’ attention to interaction and communicative competence (Baker and Jones 677). Educators then realized that communicative competence is more important than accuracy in the form of a language. The communicative approach shares some similarities with process approaches, calling upon instructors to place emphasis on communicative competence. Nevertheless, this approach is not designated for writing classes, so it cannot solve some problems that writers have, such as invention or peer work. From the above analysis, it is easy to see that composition instruction in China and in the United States belong to different fields; thus, the use of different terminology.

At present, college-level writing instruction in the United States uses process- and postprocess-based theories as primary approaches. The majority of classes use the process-based theories although other approaches may be incorporated. The process movement started in the late 1960s and early 1970s and achieved “the status of dominance by the early 1980s” (Matsuda 69). Process has been the most common and widely practiced method of teaching writing since then (Berlin 10; Tobin 10). Some early scholars contributed significantly to the field, and their landmark essays are still widely read and become the start of much extended research. For example, in “A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing,” Linda Flower and John R. Hayes put
forward the well-known three-part model: planning (pre-writing), composing (writing) and revising (re-writing) (367). This model helped American composition classrooms complete the paradigm shift and made writing manageable for students.

Then, in 1994 John Trimbur used the term “post-process” in his review article “Taking the Social Turn: Teaching Writing Post-Process,” to refer to what has been known in composition studies as the “social turn”—the shift of emphasis from cognitive issues to larger social issues. Later, in 2000, in *Teaching Writing as a Social Process*, Bruce McComiskey gives some detailed and in-depth explanations of the postprocess theory. McComiskey holds that the postprocess theory does not abandon the process theory, but expands it to the social aspect of writing, turning writing into a social process. Matsuda comments on McComiskey’s postprocess theory as “not rejection of the process movement but as its extension” (73). McComiskey’s theory reflects the current social-cognitive urge in composition studies in general. The author’s new map of composition studies shows three levels of composing: textual, rhetorical, and discursive (6). According to McComiskey’s analysis, effective writing instruction should include all three levels of composing; without one level, writing cannot achieve what it aims for. The beauty of this approach is that in one class, students can learn the language, gain rhetorical knowledge, and acquire social skills. From this point, the postprocess approach does possess benefits over the cognitive process theory because it kills three birds—language, rhetoric, and social skills—with one stone.

In spite of the different approaches adopted by Chinese and American universities, both countries follow similar reform paths and their purpose of change seems similar, too. Having reviewed the U.S. process movements and the situation of China’s writing instruction as well as its future direction, I find that China seems to be duplicating nineteenth and twentieth century
American composition history. For more effective results, Chinese universities can adopt America’s successful practices. More than that, the mainstream composition studies and research can enrich and aid in China’s curriculum reform. Matsuda refers to both Alexandra R. Krapels and Bernard Susser’s research and explains the influence of first language writing on second language writing. Matsuda writes, “[T]he field of second language writing has borrowed substantially from composition studies in developing its own brand of the process movement” (Matsuda 66).

Right now, China is striving to step out of the current-traditional paradigm and move into the process and postprocess era. In spite of the overwhelming influence of current-traditional rhetoric, some teachers and scholars—especially those with working and learning experiences in the United States—have seen the limitations of the traditional approach. The linguistic approach may put emphasis on language and imitating activities, but it also overlooks the creative, artistic, and social aspects of writing. Chinese instructors have been experimenting with somewhat of the process approach since the 1980s (Chen 77) or 1990s (Li 123). Scholarly articles published in 2000 and after cover some of the postmodern classroom practices. Instructors have begun to pay attention to the composing processes and interactions in the classroom, especially when technologies can facilitate the process. However, this experimental process is long and slow, and it seems China has not yet broken through the boundaries of the traditional methods. Research on process and postprocess theories and process-based teaching methods that are suitable for the Chinese context are scarce and unsystematic. There have not been methods that cover the whole process of teaching writing, writing itself, and writing assessment. Classroom practices cannot keep up with rhetorical studies, which is true with China and the United States. In his article “Problems in Process Approaches: Toward a Reconceptualization of Process Instruction,” Arthur
Applebee points out that “[T]here is always a gap between educational theory and educational practice, and process approaches are no exception” (97-98). Some instructors claim their classes are process-based, but their process is simply “teach-assign-grade,” and the students’ writing process is “select-narrow-amplify” (Crowley 72). Process is used to help with the production of current-traditional texts. All these pedagogical problems also occurred in American writing classrooms in the past, and some classrooms today are still experiencing similar problems now. This phenomenon generates many questions for scholars and educators to ponder about and to solve. I would like to explore the cause-and-effect relationship involved and try to work out possible solutions to the existing problems with China’s writing instruction.

Different Learning Outcomes

Pedagogical choices play a very important role in education, and different pedagogies result in different learning outcomes. My teaching and learning experiences at BGSU and XISU serve as the best testimonies. When I taught first-year composition courses at BGSU, I found students’ writing skills improved much faster during a semester. All sorts of writing tasks, interactive activities, conferences, and portfolio assessment procedure combined bring about many positive outcomes. With my experience teaching writing in China, I view the progress as a consequence of suitable pedagogical selection. Completing a year’s worth of writing classes, most first-year American students can utilize basic rhetorical skills in their essays and have acquired the essential strategies needed for academic writing. The “WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition” makes it clear that students are supposed to have a good command of rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, reading and writing abilities, to embrace processes, have knowledge of conventions, and to write in digital environments which may mediate the writing process and interaction among student writers. In other words, when students exit the
outcomes-based FYC courses, they should develop critical thinking and writing abilities, lay a solid foundation for future writing and research, and have the ability to cater to various writing situations, audiences, and purposes. The end of composition instruction is not just to help students write papers to pass the courses, but to teach writers and equip them with abilities that they will need in their future jobs, which will sustain them for the rest of their lives.

However, outcomes from current-traditional classrooms are quite different. As a result, by learning rules and modes about writing, Chinese students usually craft their ideas into one of the four modes—narration, description, exposition and argumentation; only very strong writers know when and how to combine the modes. Student writing tends to be limited and formulaic. This may be due to the reason that the National Syllabus for English Majors at China’s Colleges and Universities requires students at four-year colleges and universities to grasp the four modes of writing and other entry-level writing skills—such as combining sentences, writing notes and short essays—but it does not mention rhetorical strategies, writing processes, or research abilities. Problems with the current-traditional approach are that students seldom demonstrate sound arguments and lack sufficient support, creativity, or a good sense of audiences and purpose, especially when their papers are evaluated based on the Western rhetorical knowledge. For the most part, their difficulties are caused by the current-traditional approach and its emphasis on the form, structure and the beauty of the language, rather than rhetorical maturity.

China’s test-driven educational system could also be responsible for students’ low writing abilities. Scores and certificates from large-scale standardized tests seem more important there than in European and American universities. This is because the job market and higher level institutions of learning value them over their performance and grade point average (GPA) in college. Test requirements greatly impact writing teachers’ pedagogical choices and students’
perceptions about writing. As far as I know, almost all of the English majors take two tests: the Test for English Majors, Level 4 (TEM-4) in their fourth semester and the Test for English Majors, Level 8 (TEM-8), in their eighth semester. Writing accounts for 34.5 percent in TEM-4, and 23 percent in TEM-8. (See details in Chapter 3.) It is not hard to imagine that regular writing classes have to include test-preparation materials, such as timed writing tests.

What is worse is that the test results could be misleading because students might think that if they can get good scores on timed essay tests, they can write well or even better when not pressed for time. In fact, five-paragraph themes as a genre are not frequently used in real-world writing. This kind of formulaic writing—which includes the introduction and thesis, three supporting points, and a conclusion—lead students to think writing is that easy. Ideas are usually personal experiences or some observations because students cannot fully develop their points within a limited period of time or support them with credible sources. They do not have chances to revise or engage in interactive activities that can help them develop more knowledge about their topics and informed opinions on complex issues.

In addition, high-stake tests force students to learn to the tests, and teachers teach to the tests. Jennifer Goldstein comments on this kind of test, writing that “Standardized tests provide a partial picture of student learning (or lack of learning)” (15). Goldstein means that standardized tests cannot accurately show what students have or have not learned. High test scores do not necessarily mean good writing skills. Only when students face complicated writing tasks (Hu 4) or have real communication situations—for example, writing graduation theses or communicating complicated thoughts or professional knowledge—do they realize their communication proficiency is not sufficient. Although students produce better works than their counterparts twenty years ago because the entry level skill has been increasing, still a lot of
attention is paid to product and linguistic fluency rather than sophistication in writing and rhetorical skills. These factors make writing instruction less efficient and less effective than expected; therefore, some students are not satisfied with the outcomes of English education in China. The different teaching outcomes in English departments in Chinese universities and American FYC classes trigger many questions and urge me to explore ways that can better serve China’s educational context, writing instructors, and their students.

(Post)Processing L2 Writing in China?

American first-year composition classes tend to adopt process- and postprocess-based writing approaches, while Chinese universities utilize the current-traditional approach or the early linear process approach with strong product-oriented and Chinese characteristics. For example, Chinese instructors have to add timed writing or test-preparation skills to their normal teaching contents. However, the goals of writing instruction for Chinese and American universities share some similarities: they aim at “helping students to develop their critical powers as readers and writers” that has been “the academy’s most serious mission” (“Statements of Principles and Standards”) and train students to be intellectuals that can best serve future society. While China is facing the big challenge of improving its education quality to close the gap between its universities and prestigious universities in the world, the so-called “internationalization of Chinese higher education” (Flowerdew and Li 3), I propose China’s EFL writing instruction break through the divide between EFL and mainstream writing instruction. A global view of teaching writing is needed in order to produce citizens for the global world. Since Chinese students and native writers communicate in the same language, it makes no sense that Chinese teachers teach their way, and American teachers teach in different ways. Nevertheless, Chinese teachers can integrate some effective L1 writing approaches into their own methods and
make them China-friendly.

However, teaching L2 writers through some of the American ways seems to be an adventure because teaching English as a foreign language prevents researchers and instructors from thinking about stepping into the current of L1 writing. In fact, some previous studies have already discussed the topic as well as the possibilities, though from a different perspective. Some doubt if the divide between L1 and L2 writing really exists. In 1992 Leki stated, “Teaching writing to ESL students is not radically different from teaching writing to native English speakers. Many of the same attitudes, techniques, and even syllabuses work well with ESL students” (“Introduction” Xi). What Leki means is that the teaching of L1 and L2 writing is by nature similar; therefore, there should not be a clear-cut line between the two fields. Matsuda, who has done research on ESL writing, confirms the trend of combining the scholarship in L1 and L2 writing in the “Introduction” to the book, *Second-Language Writing in the Composition Classroom: A Critical Sourcebook*, published in 2006. Historically, L2 writing instruction belongs to applied linguistics; however, over the last two decades, the divide between L1 and L2 writing has become more and more blurred, and an alliance of L1 and L2 writing is advocated by more and more scholars.

Chinese scholars with overseas learning and teaching experiences seem to see the problems with China’s current writing instruction more clearly and support incorporating cultural studies in the writing classroom. According to Xiaoye You, a former instructor at a Chinese university and now an assistant professor at The Pennsylvania State University, “English education at the college level [in China] is conceptualized as not only the teaching of language knowledge and skills, but also of language learning strategies and cross-cultural communication skills” (254). You, who has experienced both writing cultures, finds that culture should be
foregrounded. Like You, Weihua Yu also recognizes the place of communication skills in the writing instruction. Yu, who interviewed 15 Chinese students studying in the United Kingdom of Great Britain who used to study in Chinese universities, reveals in his article, “An Investigation of Some EFL Learning Problems in China’s Higher Education System,” that “communication certainly involves more than linguistic skills” (414). Yu implies that students need to familiarize themselves with the Western culture of successful communication when Yu writes these words: “To meet the trend of globalization, China needs a pool of citizens competent in English for international communication” (398). Chair of China EFL Writing Teaching and Research Association, Lifei Wang, writes in his article “The Current Situation of and A Reflection on the Empirical Research on Writing Instruction in China” that most Chinese students’ essays use the Chinese thinking pattern (19) and do not have strong contents (24). He implies that writers in China need to learn Western rhetorical strategies, the so-called golden rules for communication. In other words, students must learn cultures of the English language to become effective communicators. In the same essay, Wang proceeds to point out that studies about process and localized process theories that work in China’s particular context are badly needed, and that it is one of the urgent issues China’s writing instruction in the 21st century is facing.

Composition instruction in China is heavily influenced by the styles and theories of applied linguistics, but rhetorical knowledge, writers, and their backgrounds are ignored. Scholars hold on to the idea that writing instructors do not just teach writing; they should teach writers (Leki 9). Writing is not just putting words down on paper. Holistic reading as the major assessment procedure cannot safeguard the desired pedagogies and processes evaluated and valued. Compositionists contend that in writing classes, teachers should teach the process of writing or how a paper is produced, exemplify thinking, inventing, revising, peer reviewing, and
assessing processes. Overemphasis on grammatical perfection, structure, and the beauty of the language and neglect of the rhetorical and social aspects of writing is misleading. McComiskey sums up the three levels of composing as “textual,” “rhetorical,” and “discursive” (6). McComiskey explains that good writing should include all three levels; with one level missing, the writing cannot be effective. Of course, writing in a foreign language “increases the writer’s cognitive load” (Leki 4); therefore, students should get more individual attention. The CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers contains a sentence that describes the difficulty with learning English as a second language, “the acquisition of a second language and second-language literacy is a time-consuming process that will continue through students’ academic careers and beyond.” To EFL students in China, learning the language takes time, so they need an environment where they can continue learning the language and obtain rhetorical knowledge.

In addition, China cannot keep the number of students in each writing class under 15, a number the CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers prescribes. However in China, the small size of writing classes has been about 20 to 30 students (Hu 4). Since college enrollment expansion in 1996, the number is usually 25 to 30, and sometimes there could be more. With a heavy workload, teachers cannot give a lot of support to students, so engaging students in interactive activities enables them to collaborate and practice using rhetoric within their writing community. This postprocess approach, extending the process to the social aspect of writing, brings together language learning, rhetoric study, and communicative skills. This approach seems to lead to the objective of composition, teaching effective communication skills.

China’s low writing learning outcomes, to a great extent, are due to the lack of revision in the writing process, especially due to the lack of helpful feedback that guides revision activities.
Based on my observations and also theories in composition studies, the core of the process approach—revising with formative feedback and through an appropriate assessment procedure—is America’s biggest success. A good assessment procedure ensures that what is taught in the classroom is evaluated. In Bob Broad’s words, assessment should evaluate what we claim we value (73). To deal with China’s problem of large student populations, I think China can use Asao B. Inoue’s community-based assessment pedagogy, a theory he exemplifies in his article, “Community-Based Assessment Pedagogy.” In this pedagogy, students are asked to set evaluation criteria and participate in evaluating peers’ papers. This approach is enlightening.

Considering China’s educational setting, I propose combining McComiskey’s post-process theory and Inoue’s student-centered and community-based assessment pedagogy with an emphasis on revision skills. I term this proposed pedagogy “a community-based socio-cognitive writing instruction approach that emphasizes revision skills with reference to assessment criteria.” Chinese students and teachers embrace prewriting, drafting, outlining and all other related practices because they aid in making the product. However, for a long time, teaching effective revision skills has been ignored. Chinese educators’ recent studies cover peer review, or online peer editing, but they neglect writers and their cultures in the writing situations that impact writing. When students are involved in the assessment procedure, they know how papers are evaluated, and what standards their writing is supposed to reach. They can apply this knowledge to composing and providing feedback.

The benefits of this post-modern approach, extending from process to the social aspect of writing, will be new to China. In light of composition theories, this proposed method incorporates culture into writing instruction. McComiskey states, “…culture and writing are inseparable—there is no writing without culture, and there is no culture without writing” (10).
Other compositionists such as Edward White, Bob Broad, Brian Huot, Peter Elbow, Asao B. Inoue, Sandra Murphy, and Richard Straub have confirmed the connection and interdependence between writing, assessment, and cultures. In the dynamic process of writing, practicing culture and rhetorical knowledge, as well as applying assessment, students are involved in invention, which turns writing into a process because invention is recognized “as social, as dialectical, and as an act” (LeFevre 33). Karen Burke LeFevre, Nancy DeJoy, Patricia Bizzell, and Sharon Crowley hold that invention plays an important role in process approaches. More importantly, this act extends throughout the whole writing process.

The proposed approach brings about multiple effects. Both students and teachers benefit. Students’ knowledge about the writing culture as well as writing assessment turns them into insiders and contributors of the writing community. Students get a chance to express their thoughts, understand different cultures and values, and develop a sense of audience and purpose in real communication, all of which improve the writing quality. These activities, which students could not possibly get in current-traditional classrooms, will stand them in good stead in terms of their future life and career.

However, this teaching method will, in many ways, impact people’s perceptions about writing instruction, assessment, and teacher-student relationships, and probably incur resistance. Chinese students are used to “the banking concept of education” (72), which Paulo Freire describes in his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Resulting from this style, students are passive receivers and processors of information rather than creators of meaning. Under this teaching mode, teachers still have to find ways that balance teaching writing skills and improving students’ performance on standardized tests. The positive aspect of this method is that studies show that emphasis on process does not undermine the quality of product. This study may help instructors
in China to teach writing through a new approach and satisfy students who shoulder the high expectations of their society. Instructors may choose to employ this approach when students have possessed the competence to handle such tasks as assessing papers, providing feedback, and assigning grades in class and bring about expected results.

This postmodern writing approach will turn the composition classroom into a “contact zone” where different ideologies, values, cultures, and disciplines meet and clash, but through interactions with peers students learn skills necessary for their future careers. In “Order out of Chaos: Voices from the Community College,” Sylvia Holladay cited a 1991 survey of Illinois business and labor representatives by the Center for Government Studies at Northern Illinois University that identified many basic skills that jobs in the 21st century require. The survey shows that the composition classroom serves as a setting to help students develop communication, academic, cognitive, personal and interpersonal, leadership as well as employment readiness skills (34). It seems that an interactive classroom can provide students with more opportunities to acquire these abilities, abilities that all jobs and societies look for. Process- and postprocess-oriented activities can somewhat help students meet the requirements, although it might bring about other problems.

Different teaching approaches adopted by American and Chinese universities not only lead to different learning outcomes but also produce different types of graduates or future citizens. Students instructed in inappropriate ways will suffer from lack of adequate communicative competence, creativity, and skills toward community members. In my dissertation, I am going to explore the following questions:

1. How do pedagogical selections impact the EFL students’ success as writers?
2. How can the (post)process-based teaching methods improve the effectiveness of China’s
writing instruction?

3. What is a viable (post)process-based curriculum for China’s English majors?

4. How can Chinese instructors of English composition utilize a (post)process-based approach without invalidating good standardized testing results?

5. How might a student-centered interactive approach help China’s EFL writers become more active participants and valued contributors to their writing community?

By answering these questions, I should be able to find out the major limitations of current-traditional rhetoric and the advantages of process-based approaches, and more importantly, introduce some of the effective methods to China’s writing classrooms.

Research Methods

In my dissertation research, I utilized two major research methods: textual analysis and teacher-research methods. To do textual analysis, I consulted scholarly articles on varied topics and in different disciplines, such as rhetoric and composition, language and literacy studies, ESL/EFL writing instruction, educational systems and policies, and curriculum materials. These sources contextualized my topic and situate my audience in the socio-cultural backgrounds in which various writing movements and pedagogies take place. The recent focus of textual analysis has placed more emphasis on the connection between context and writing as well as meanings. However, previous practices have paid attention to texts and making meaning from words. In “Context-Sensitive Text Analysis,” Thomas N. Huckin notes this trend and mentions that increasing emphasis is given to “the role of contextual factors in composition,” and “more and more researchers are drawing attention to the social dimension of writing” (84). The reason is that a writer belongs to one or more discourse communities, and each community has its own values, norms, and ways of knowing and communicating (84). So, consulting works published in
both English and Chinese has allowed me to learn about writers in different contexts, the circumstances in which various pedagogical movements take place, the values guiding these changes, and the consequences resulting from them.

With the textual analysis method, the researcher can incorporate different theories, practices, and methods. Published articles that contain all sorts of information, knowledge, and pedagogical changes allowed me, as well as readers, to visualize the settings in which process movements and various pedagogical changes take place. They have helped me to construct my study in the right theoretical ground and aid in the analysis of the relationship between writers, their compositions, teachers, and other sociocultural factors that impact the teaching and learning of writing. My dissertation research—examining American FYC and writing instruction for English majors in Chinese universities—relates to different epistemological, disciplinary and sociocultural dimensions of writing. So, academic scholarship on related topics has enabled me to review the history of U.S. and China’s composition instruction, trace the evolution of composition theories and practices, and critique the changes from a crosscultural and multiple disciplinary perspective.

The second research method I utilized is the teacher-research method. Teacher research, as an inquiry and a method of composition research, has advantages over other research methods. Ruth Ray, in “Composition from the Teacher-Research Point of View,” states the teacher researcher as an active participant in the context can “inform and improve practice as well as to advance theory” (175). Ray also quotes Garth Boomer and Richard H. Bullock who comment on the characteristics of the teacher research method. Boomer embraces this method because it allows teachers to focus on “[their] own research into their own problems that result in modification of their own behaviors and theories; this personally owned research replaces the
concept of research as residing ‘elsewhere’ in universities and other traditional sites of inquiry” (174). Bullock thinks positively of teacher research as teachers demonstrate their “power to take control of their subject and their profession” (174). What they mean is that teacher research can help the teacher researcher find methods that work in his/her particular teaching context. New discoveries can, in turn, enrich, improve, or modify existing theories. This method combines teaching and research, turning it into a dynamic process: they depend on and enrich each other. The collaborative nature and interactions between teachers and students in the research process suit the process and post-process advocates: studying writers, their backgrounds, and the teaching and learning contexts. The teacher research method is also a two-way system, which means theory comes from practice, should be tested in practice, and serves practice as well. On the other hand, practice is the soil that cultivates research. Teachers can develop and improve theories based on their classroom observations and practices.

In my study, I have examined writing classes for English majors in Chinese universities and FYC at American universities from a teacher researcher’s point of view, relying on my own experiences as a teacher and a student in China and the United States as well as my expertise in rhetoric and composition to put forward solutions suitable for China’s educational context. As a non-native speaker of English and a teacher researcher, I can clearly see the similarities and differences in writing instruction between China and the United States. My own experiences have allowed me to perceive writing in relation to different contexts and from different cultural and epistemological perspectives. In addition, I have been able to weigh the gains and losses of each teaching method with teaching objectives and sociocultural factors in mind. With an insider’s knowledge about the discipline, the institution, the program, and a particular course under study, I am able to modify, improve and develop teaching methods that aim to solve the
problems Chinese students encounter and achieve communicative effectiveness that universal English speakers expect.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation is made up of five chapters. In Chapter 1, “Crossing the Divide: (Post)-Processing Writing for English Majors in China,” I have introduced the topic, summarized the differences between the Chinese and American ways of teaching writing, and described the research methods. In Chapter 2, “From Product to Process to Post-Process,” I review scholarly works on process movements and related topics, and this chapter serves as the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter 3, “Chinese Universities: Politics, Pedagogical Issues, and Solutions,” describes the local context and discusses the exigency for curriculum reform. Chapter 4, “Community-Based Socio-Cognitive Writing Instruction,” outlines an approach that incorporates process, post-process, writing assessment, and cultures into the classroom practices. Chapter 5, “Looking Back and Looking to the Future: Conclusions, Implications, and Limitations,” concludes the dissertation and specifies its implications, limitations, and ideas for further research.

The purpose of the study is not to change China’s writing instruction all at once, but to find out the causes of the limitations within writing instruction, compare the different pedagogies used in Chinese and American universities, and incorporate effective approaches into current writing curricula. In this study, I show Chinese writing instructors how American scholars and instructors tackle similar pedagogical issues previously mentioned, in the hope of helping them understand the importance of “theorizing” or reflecting rather than accepting “Theories” (Zebroski qtd. in Takayoshi and Huot 4). Chinese instructors should learn to update their theories and practices of writing based on observations in the context so that they can train faculty, design
curriculum, and write textbooks needed in their particular settings.

Besides, this study only discusses the possibilities of applying a community-based socio-cognitive writing instruction approach on a theoretical basis. It seems teachers need professional development opportunities so that they can meet the requirements of the discipline and the profession. Future studies and experiments will try to find answers to questions such as how to balance process, product and tests in China’s context, how to best allocate class time, and how to plan if teachers, students and administrators resist this post-modern approach. But this dissertation will surely broaden the visions of Chinese instructors of English composition. They can break through the tradition of EFL writing and experiment with the proposed method.

Making changes happen is a long and hard process. A review of literature on China and America’s pedagogical movements will help readers understand how American instructors and scholars have successfully completed the paradigm shifts from current-traditional rhetoric to the process and postprocess pedagogies. Chinese scholars and instructors will learn in what context the shift happened and for what purpose, and absorb useful experience from U.S. composition history. My next chapter, “From Product to Process to Postprocess,” serves as a theoretical framework for my dissertation.
CHAPTER 2 FROM PRODUCT TO PROCESS TO POSTPROCESS

Writing scholars in the United States hold the view that teachers, students, and various social and cultural factors influence teaching and learning outcomes. Different understandings of writing, literate traditions, personal backgrounds, and histories with writing, to a great extent, not only shape instructors’ educational philosophies and pedagogical choices, but also influence students’ attitudes toward writing and writing behaviors. In other words, writing is also influenced by various sociocultural factors rather than just linguistic competence. On the surface, writing is made up of words, sentences, paragraphs, and grammatical rules that guide or restrict the use of the language, but studies in composition show a writer’s rhetorical knowledge and his/her background play an important role in writing as well.

On the other hand, in China, writing instruction has traditionally been thought of as a part of applied linguistics, so like many ESL and EFL classes, writing instruction and research give more attention to lexical, syntactical, and grammatical aspects. Rhetorical strategies—such as audience, purpose, and situation/context—are seldom heard of. Therefore, instructors and writers focus on the text, not on who makes the texts or how the text is produced. Since the 1980s, although the process approach has been heatedly discussed in research or at conferences, classroom practices, which show strong influence of current-traditional rhetoric or the early-stage process theory, lag far behind theoretical studies. The turn from the cognitive to the social aspect of writing remains a relatively new and contested topic for writing instructors in China, the intended audience of my dissertation. The reason is that the test-driven educational system and independent and competitive learning style contradict some of the advocacies of process and postprocess approaches. So, viewed through the lens of Western rhetorical and composition history, Chinese college-level writing instruction for English majors still lingers around 19th-
century Harvard’s current-traditional mode of writing instruction. Although sometimes instructors may experiment with other approaches, such as discourse analysis and genre, none of them seems to be as deep-rooted, prevailing, and influential as the current-traditional approach. Teaching outcomes are significantly affected, so an updated perception of writing and reformed curricula geared toward China’s own issues and cultures is direly needed. The changed curriculum that intends to train students’ language, rhetorical, and social skills in the classroom will certainly better serve an increasingly globalized China.

In this chapter, I review literature surrounding perceptions of writing, writing as a process, process and postprocess theories, and writing as a product or current-traditional pedagogy. Based on the theories, I also intend to find the gap between current composition instruction/research and writing practices in China. Finally, this chapter outlines a theoretical framework for my dissertation research.

Different understandings of writing might be a contributing factor to the different pedagogies adopted by the Chinese and American writing instructors, which might, in turn, yield different results. Through this review, Chinese writing instructors will learn how American composition scholars, researchers, and instructors have successfully tackled similar pedagogical problems in the past that Chinese instructors are confronted with now. The pedagogical issues American instructors have encountered could fuel their enthusiasm for their sustainable curriculum reform. Based on the success American writing instruction has achieved, I argue that Chinese instructors should consider adopting process and postprocess approaches to improve their classroom practices. The new approach features a process-based, collaborative, student-centered, and rhetorically-oriented environment that might enhance students’ writing abilities more efficiently than current-traditional pedagogy.
Different Perceptions: Writing as a Process vs. Writing as Product

The process approach has been widely accepted and used in writing classrooms in the United States and many other countries since its advent in the 1970s. Nevertheless, not all instructors, especially those outside the United States, have a systematic and comprehensive understanding of the process theory. However, the instructor’s perceptions of writing and pedagogical choices are also influenced and restricted by his or her beliefs, values, as well as institutional and sociocultural contexts. An alternative pedagogy promises more fruitful results, whereas misconceptions usually mislead writing practices and cause difficulties for students, which, in turn, affects the improvement of writing abilities. This seems to be a universal issue with education.

In China, writing instruction in English belongs to the field of applied linguistics, so most instructors are used to the EFL teaching principles and testing systems. Although instructors claim they use process approaches, they still pay a lot of attention to the linguistic aspect of writing. L2 writing scholars such as Tony Silva, Ilona Leki, and Valdes et al., have noticed that EFL/ESL writing gives too much attention to grammar and accuracy. Therefore, in view of Western rhetoric, China’s writing instruction carries very clear current-traditional characteristics. Confronted with the national test-driven educational system, a large student population, limited curriculum resources, and heavy workloads as well as the call for raising students’ communication competence, instructors feel perplexed and stressed out. Writing instruction for English majors, the group of students with the highest English proficiency, has experienced a bottleneck. Students’ communication competence remains at a plateau, not making much progress once they have grasped the basics of the language and writing. Students cannot communicate effectively and are unable to perform well in jobs, or other important positions.
Teachers feel lost, too, not knowing the real causes of the problems or whether they should stick to their linguistic-oriented approach or switch to process-based approaches. Although some Chinese instructors use Western approaches, including America’s process approach, most of them are unsure how this approach came about, its advocates, and in what circumstances and for what purposes the United States changed its focus from product to the process around the 1970s. To understand the pedagogical evolution in U.S. composition history and finally tackle the problems with writing instruction in China, Chinese writing instructors need to see how Westerners perceive the process theory, understand how they apply this theory in classrooms, weigh the pros and cons of the approaches Chinese instructors are using, and finally reform the curricula through wise pedagogical choices. I believe they can gain some inspiration from the process-based approaches and culture.

Scholars define the process approach from different perspectives. Based on my research, Melanie Sperling gives a comprehensive definition in her article “Process Theory of Writing,” which covers the components and processes of writing as well as the relationship between writing and products. Sperling defines the process theory as the following:

“Process theory” makes the assumption that writing is more than the sum of its formal textual parts—which is to say, more than its lexical, syntactic, and semantic structures. Rather, writing is a manifestation of complex and interpenetrating cognitive, social, and cultural process selecting the literature meaning making of writers. Texts are shaped by these processes and help shape the processes in turn. To understand writing is to understand these processes, and describing and interpreting them can serve writing, teaching, and leaning. (243) This definition shows that writing requires not only writing or linguistic competence, but a
combination of skills and related social, cultural processes. Texts and the processes are interdependent: one relies on and enriches the other. A good perception of these processes and the relationship between product and text will aid in the teaching and learning of writing. Joseph Petraglia expresses a similar view in “Is There Life after Process? The Role of Social Scientism in a Changing Discipline” when he regards writing not as a single behavior but as a series of procedures and strategic choices that form a complex system of text production (51). Thus, besides language, cognitive and sociocultural factors as well as rhetorical strategies also directly attribute to writing. Therefore, teaching all these processes is more important than just evaluating the product. Both Sperling and Petraglia confirm that writing involves cognitive, social, cultural, and rhetorical factors. Hopefully, such views can broaden Chinese instructors’ visions, enable them to see beyond the cognitive and linguistic aspects of writing, and help them solve some of the pedagogical crises.

With the emphasis of writing instruction morphing to the cognitive process (1970s) and later to sociocultural processes (1990s), pros and cons arise. On the one hand, some teachers, especially those who are not quite familiar with the process theory, may worry that the product, the ultimate manifestation of writing, might be ignored. On the other hand, other scholars contend this kind of worry is unnecessary because processes are usually designed to attain expected products.

There are reasons for the different stands above in regards to the process approach because different instructors hold different values that affect their pedagogical choices. Besides, institutional and social contexts also restrain the implementation of some pedagogies. In spite of the many advantages, the process approach has its own limitations, which might be the reason for debate. This approach just works well with certain groups of students, and affects others
adversely. In her essay “Reading the Writing Process,” Lisa Ede points out that “the writing process can help a motivated writer, if not all writers, become more productive and efficient” (33). To my understanding, the reason might lie in the change to the teaching method. As process pedagogy advocates writing through writing practices, such as through various writing activities, writing teachers do not lecture on the rules, but help students produce multiple drafts based on feedback. For this reason, some less motivated and less competent students may get lost when they are not told to craft their writings in certain modes.

Difficulties mentioned above may cause some traditional opponents of the process approach to doubt its effectiveness. They even argue for going back to the basics like grammar, usage, logic, or “Back to standards and models” in order to solve the literacy crisis, as Tobin discovered (5). The traditional way of teaching makes instructors feel that their students can at least write something and know what to put down on paper, although they might not write well. These instructors think literacy or language quality plays a crucial role in writing. Ede and Tobin’s views reflect concerns shared by some conservative instructors in the United States and in other places including China. Writing is seemingly more directly related to textual features like grammar, sentence structures, vocabulary, and mechanics than to other less obvious factors, such as rhetorical strategies, invention, feedback, collaboration, and some social factors. Nevertheless, according to scholarship by James Berlin, Ilona Leki, Thomas Kent, Bruce McComiskey, and others, a pure linguistic approach proves to be ineffective in the teaching of writing. Current-traditional rhetoric serves as a good example. I discuss the disadvantages of the linguistic approach in detail in later parts of this chapter.

Contrary to the worries shown in Ede and Tobin’s works, the process approach has gained tremendous support because this approach outweighs others. It reflects the cognitive nature of
writing, and more importantly, associates the composing process with the product, making one compatible with the other. This advancement, the characteristic of combining process with product, is important because instructors usually do not just want to adopt a new way of teaching; they are more interested in a method that can lead up to good quality texts, the final manifestation of writing in most people’s eyes. So are students. Fortunately, the process approach can satisfy this need. David Bartholomae analyzes the relationship between process and product and contends, “If writing is a process, it is also a product; and it is the product and not the plan for writing, that locates a writer on the page, that locates him in a text and a style and the codes and conventions that make both of them readable” (qtd. in McComiskey 20). Bartholomae makes it clear that process and product coexist: the process contributes to the product, and the product manifests all processes and techniques involved. Ken Macrorie expresses the same idea, noting that “It’s not enough to talk about process without bringing the product, or evidence, to the courtroom” (69). The product justifies pedagogical choices. Both scholars embrace the close connection between process and product. A product demonstrates all processes and writing skills including mechanics and writing conventions. Therefore, the process approach can safely eliminate the doubts on instructors’ minds. From an opposite perspective, a good product helps one to understand all processes applied in producing the product (Macrorie 78; Tobin 11). Therefore, the process approach, which brings together the two seemingly bipolar concepts of writing, process and product, establishes people’s faith in the implementation of the approach.

This paradigm shift has gained ever increasing attention inside and outside the United States since its advent in the late 1970s. The process approach has changed the way people teach writing over the decades. In composition history, the change from the emphasis on product to the process is called a “paradigm shift.” A contribution of the process movement that aimed for the
paradigm shift is that it establishes the general principles and guidelines for writing instructors to follow. Richard E. Young refers to Thomas Kuhn’s term, “paradigm,” which means “a system of widely shared values, beliefs, and methods that determines the nature and conduct of the discipline” (29). Young further explains that “A paradigm determines, among other things, what is included in the discipline and what is excluded from it, what is taught and not taught, what problems are regarded as important and unimportant, and, by implication, what research is regarded as valuable in developing the discipline” (29). Kuhn and Young enable writing instructors to understand that teaching methods are influenced by cultures, beliefs and values. They also let writing instructors know what to teach, and how, why and when they adopt a certain approach. More importantly, their theories help researchers and instructors to tell the important from the unimportant, to go beyond the surface of education, and to explore the connections between cultures, beliefs, values and pedagogies.

Since the 1970s, the paradigm shift has had a sweeping influence in both the field of rhetoric and composition. The paradigm has proved to be the most successful pedagogical movement in American composition history (Matsuda 69), and it is also viewed by some as “a triumph of compassion and empiricism over tradition and prejudice” (Pullman 16). Teaching practices and research in composition studies show that the process approach does not just signal a paradigm shift theoretically; it brings about many actual changes to the field of rhetoric and composition, such as teaching and evaluating the processes, and giving attention to writers’ lives and experiences rather than just writing. The whole nature of the way we think about and teach writing in school has changed over the past thirty years, according to Tobin (4). The greatest contribution of that paradigm shift has changed the culture and values of writing, writing instruction, and writing assessment. Writing instruction, especially the postprocess approach,
concerns itself more with writers, their needs, and thoughts/voices rather than the finished products of writing.

Although the writing process is a general guideline for writing instruction in the United States, it is still difficult to require all instructors to implement the approach according to strict standards. Problems, difficulties, or even resistance exist owing to various teaching contexts, the instructor’s epistemological and pedagogical orientation, and sociocultural factors. The advantage of combing the composing process with the product requires instructors to evaluate students’ composing processes through students’ works, which is a general principle for writing assessment. Instructors should evaluate what they claim they value (Broad 73). However, in reality, some instructors hold misconceptions of the process approach and use traditional ways to evaluate writing, which may betray the nature of the process theory and undermine the effectiveness of instruction. According to Tobin, this happens when instructors break up the connection between a writer’s writing process and the instructor’s reading process. In other words, Tobin states that when the instructor evaluates a piece of writing, he/she should try to replay the process the writer uses so that he/she can divert his/her attention from the final product. The reader should not focus on the errors in the student writing (Tobin 11). The traditional way they use to look at students’ writing shows a gap between process theory and actual process practice.

The above-mentioned practices, which are regarded as defects in the process-obsessed teaching environment in American universities, remind me of the teaching methods for EFL learners in China. Most college writing classes follow 19th-century Harvard writing instruction model if the instruction there is viewed through Western rhetoric. They employ a traditional product-oriented teaching method shaped by current-traditional rhetoric. For example, instructors
lecture on the rules, review model essays, require students to write papers after the four basic

discourse modes—narration, description, exposition, and argumentation—and evaluate students’
works according to the rules taught. As a teaching method, the limitations of the current-

traditional approach are varied and obvious.

Robert J. Connors introduces the origin of current-traditional rhetoric and its features in

his 1981 article “Current-Traditional Rhetoric: Thirty Years of Writing with a Purpose.”

According to Connors, there is no record of the exact origin of current-traditional rhetoric. The

features of current-traditional rhetoric, in Connors’ understanding, are “a palimpsest of the

theories and assumptions” rather than a static and coherent system that date back to classical
times (208). Current-traditional rhetoric shapes a product-based inventional style, teaching
method, and corresponding evaluation system. The most noticeable characteristics of the current-

traditional approach, according to Richard E. Young, are as follows:

- the emphasis on the composed product rather than the composing process; the
- analysis of discourse into words, sentences, and paragraphs; the classification of
- discourse into description, narration, exposition, and argument; the strong concern
- with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity,
- emphasis); and so on. (31)

Clearly, product is the focus of this approach. Instructional objectives are to master the discourse
patterns and produce error-free prose. Young’s enumeration presents what teachers do in current-

traditional classes. Berlin comments on Young’s description: “The thrust of all this, of course, is

a rhetoric which offers principles of style and arrangement that are to be applied to the written
product, not learned as a process” (10-11). Berlin implies that this approach does not teach the
composing process but some minor things like style and organization, which makes writing
mysterious, abstract, and unreachable to student writers. The ultimate goal of this approach is to produce error-free texts. But how writing is done under this approach remains unexplained.

The obvious pedagogical differences between process-based and product-based approaches reflect different epistemological and pedagogical orientations. Instructors’ pedagogical choices show not only what they value but also teaching contexts and various sociocultural factors that contribute to or restrain the implementation of their choices. Sylvia A. Holladay shows the relationship among different conceptions about writing, writing behaviors, and different purposes of communication. Instructors understand writing differently; therefore, their different perceptions of writing put them into two large camps: inner-directed writing, and outer-directed writing. Holladay reveals the following views from the perspective of writing instructors:

To some, composition is self-expression, inner-directed, and we teach it to help students discover themselves. To others, composition is communication, outer-directed, and we teach it to enable writers to influence others. The current rhetorical view is that composing is manipulating a text to achieve a specific purpose for a particular audience, and we teach it to give students power and control of their language and their lives. (29)

Holladay echoes Patricia Bizzell’s two well-known terms that divide writing theories into two large camps: the “inner-directed theory” (389) and the “outer-directed theory” (390). The former is “‘prior to social influence’” (Bizzell 389-390), which means writing does not rely on social factors. The latter, “the outer-directed,” concentrates on “the social processes whereby language–learning and thinking capacities are shaped and used in particular communities” (Bizzell 390). The latter claims that the community or the local context impacts language use; writing or other
forms of communication should not be separated from cultural factors. These two camps correspond to product-based and process-based approaches, such as the current-traditional approach and the process-based approaches.

Culture is an essential part of education, and so is it in process-based writing instruction, although it was ignored in the current-traditional era and the early process stage. In Cultural Foundations of Education, Young Pai, Susan A. Adler, and Linda K. Shadiow define culture as “a system of knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, artifacts, and institutions,” and education is “the intentional attempt to pass on such a complex whole from one generation to another” (6). Thus, the way writing is taught and learned cannot be separated from the environment where it takes place. A certain culture reflects certain values and beliefs that a nation or an institution wants to pass on. Related to the two camps of writing, “the inner-directed” means self-reliant and static communication, while “the outer-directed” puts emphasis on rhetorical strategies and the power of rhetoric, such as the purpose, the audience, the writing situation, and the power of influencing or changing others through the medium of language. The purpose and approach of these two camps differ, probably because different groups hold different cultures and values.

Viewed from the perspective of Western rhetoric, college-level writing instruction in China and in the United States falls into the above two camps, due to the different pedagogies used and the values that guide the choice. In China, writing in English and in Chinese has long been a private, silent, individualistic, and independent act; moreover, product is valued above process. Although other approaches, such as genre and discourse analysis as well as process approaches, are adopted or tried out in some college-level writing classes, the influence of the current-traditional approach, the tradition of valuing the product over the process, can be easily found within curriculum materials, classroom activities, and particularly assessment procedures.
In contrast, based on my research, in many American college-level writing classrooms, instructors adopt process- and postprocess-based approaches. They try to create an open, democratic, and collaborative space where students learn writing and other social skills. Students learn writing through writing, learn with others, and learn by all means available.

Then what makes the two camps different? The divide between the two large camps is caused by the different inventional styles because teaching activities and writing behaviors center around inventional modes. Inventional styles also determine the different assessing procedures instructors choose because assessment procedures should conform to their pedagogical advocates. According to Karen Burke LeFevre, the current-traditional mode of writing depicts invention as “a closed, one-way system, and the inventor as an atomistic unit, abstracted from society; and it fails to acknowledge that invention is often a collaborative process” (32). Similarly, Tobin specifies this traditional approach as “product-driven, rule-based, correctness-obsessed” (5). From the above definitions, we can see that the current-traditional approach does not intend to improve writing through collaborative writing activities; instead, it is directed toward error-free texts or products, a form of inner-directed self-expression.

Different from the current-traditional approach, the process and postprocess approach takes a different route to writing and writing-related activities. Its inventional style, characterized by being “as social, as dialectical, and as an act” (LeFevvre 33), encourages participation, empowers students by giving them opportunities to express their thoughts, and allows students to influence others by applying their rhetorical skills in their writing and classroom activities. The process movement has abandoned the superficial aspect of writing, such as “rejecting the packaged, formulaic essays” (Tobin 5) and attaining real and effective communication with audiences including peers. Therefore, writing through the process approach
is outer-directed, dynamic, and collaborative. These two broad approaches, product-based and process-based approaches, illustrate the different ideological and cultural values that guide them.

When we review U.S. composition history, we find the success of the process movement did not come easily. It has gone through a long process; instructors encountered and tackled copious difficulties on the journey. Their experiences, either positive or negative, will be enlightening to instructors in Chinese universities who are implementing curriculum reform in writing instruction. In the next section, I review process, post-process, and current-traditional theories, their major advocates, and the culture and values that shape these theories. Chinese writing instructors will be able to see how writing instruction moves from product to the process and then to the postprocess, and how the pros and cons of that change impact both instructors and writers.

Early Process Theories: Revolutionary but Limited

The first-phase process movement happening during the 1970s and 1980s changed the traditional way of writing instruction in the United States and initiated a new era in U.S. composition history. Writing instructors abandoned the tradition of teaching rules and evaluating products but emphasized composing processes and the cognitive abilities associated with writing. This paradigm shift has impacted not only the writing practices of native writers, but also those of L2 writers inside and outside the U.S. The reason is that both L1 and L2 writing instruction share similar challenges and goals; therefore, L2 writing can learn from L1 writing instruction and improve its practices by reviewing past experiences in L1.

Process movements achieved success in the United States, but the process fluctuated representing a discursive history (Matsuda 65). The first-phase movement earned support and encountered resistance in the process. However, the positives and negatives from the movement
are equally valuable to Chinese instructors because they can learn from both sides of the issue and avoid similar mistakes or correct their own errors based on America’s experience. Studies show L2 writing instruction and its paradigm shift are influenced by L1 process movements, and both L1 and L2 process movements adhered to similar goals: helping writers to communicate effectively (Leki, Cumming, and Silva). From the opposite perspective, L1 writing and its experience are quite meaningful to L2 writing instruction. The situation China’s college-level writing instruction is now facing resembles the pre-process period in the United States when current-traditional pedagogy dominated the classroom practices. Therefore, America’s success will help with China’s writing instruction.

Advantages brought by the paradigm shift are not only shown in the instruction mode for first-year composition (FYC) in American universities but also in worldwide L2 writing instruction. L1 and L2 writing faced similar pedagogical crises before the process movement, such as teaching and learning rules rather than improving writing through actual writing. Both L1 and L2 writing was expecting a change to the existing writing mode. Today, the process approach is such a prevailing pedagogy that everyone seems to be using it. However, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the act of changing a centuries-long tradition was recognized as revolutionary in that it liberated and empowered writers and turned writing into a more manageable process. The significance of the movement lies in the fact that it fought against the dominance of product-centered pedagogy or current-traditional rhetoric (Matsuda 67), which was characterized by formulaic writing. The new emphasis of the process approach featured the cognitive aspect of writing. Students were trained to do prewriting, writing, and rewriting and think critically about the process rather than engaging in the past practice of memorizing and reduplicating rules about writing. Student writers participated in all the writing and revising
activities involved in producing the product, a composing path experienced writers take. The psychological burden was eliminated because they were not expected to produce a perfect draft but encouraged to make it better by producing multiple drafts. When students could grasp techniques that helped to make writing doable, they would likely become interested in writing even if their writing did not actually become stronger.

Research and publications during the first-phase movement prepared the paradigm shift theoretically. The most representative scholars, Janet Emig, Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, have influenced the field of rhetoric and composition for decades. They took American writing instruction to a new sphere. Emig established the cognitive power of writing from a psychological perspective in her 1971 work, “Writing as a Mode of Learning.” Two of her important contributions related to this research are still helpful to writing instructors in China. First, Emig announced that writing must be learned by classifying the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—into first-order processes and second-order processes (90). Talking and listening are first-order processes and they are naturally acquired; reading and writing are second-order skills and must be learned. Emig emphasized the place of written language in language learning. In her view, the development of more advanced cognitive functions, such as synthesis and analysis, relies on the support system of verbal language, particularly of written language (89). This point is important owing to her explanations of the relationship between first-order and second-order skills. In addition, she convinced the academic community that writing does not conflict with other language skills but helps with acquiring them. Therefore, good written language helps to improve a learner’s entire language proficiency. Emig’s another important contribution is her proclamation that writing as a unique learning practice brings together enactive, iconic, and representative or symbolic aspects of language
learning all at once. That is to say, to learn a language well, the learner can try multiple
approaches and make full use of his/her potential intelligence. In addition, writing employs
different parts of the brain and enables writers to enhance their overall language ability by
practicing the written language (92). Thus, learning to write activates all powers of the learner’s
brain and does good for improving other language skills, such as speaking, reading, and listening.

Another important essay of that period, by Linda Flower and John R. Hayes, “A
Cognitive Process Theory of Writing,” revealed the thinking process involved in writing in an
unprecedented way. In this work, Flower and Hayes put forward the well-known three-part
model: planning (pre-writing), composing (writing), and revising (re-writing) (367). This model
introduced the cognitive processes involved in composing and laid the groundwork for a more
detailed study of thinking processes in writing (366). On the basis of their theory, other scholars
could extend the study of thinking processes in writing and continue their efforts in perfecting
these theories. Flower and Hayes also declared that thinking processes are embedded in writing
and are hierarchical by nature, similar to Emig’s theory of high-order skills. The three-part
writing model was pioneering and revolutionary at that time because it manifested a different
paradigm of composing, turning writing that seemed to be abstract and complicated into doable
stages.

Through both works, Emig, as well as Flower and Hayes, established the role of
cognition in writing and accentuated the role that learning and thinking play in the writing
processes. Their theories led writing instruction and research to a new platform on which
scholars and educators search for effective approaches to communication rather than lecturing on
and evaluating rules. The paradigm shift turned writing into an act, a clearly more tangible and
manageable process, which set student writers more at ease. The process approach triggered
scholars’ great interest in teaching and research. Most of them approved of the approach and promoted the spread of it. In “Who’s Afraid of Subjectivity? The Composing Process and Postmodernism or a Student of Donald Murray Enters the Age of Postmodernism,” Robert P. Yagelski writes, “the idea of composing as a process is a powerful way to understand what writers actually do. The beauty of ‘the composing process’ is in the way it makes simple this complicated activity of writing. It allows us to talk about, study, and teach writing in ways that make the complexity of the act manageable” (205). In other words, when writers know what to do, writing seems to come more easily. In addition, writers and teachers all participate in the composing process, so they can discuss, learn, teach, and write in ways that could possibly make writing simpler. The previous current-traditional approach made students fix their eyes on the structural and linguistic aspects of writing, which not only sounded abstract but also constituted a psychological pressure on the writers as they had to strive for perfection. As a result, creation was degraded to duplicating rules through writing.

Because of the various advantages, the process approach has gained plenty of support from scholars since its advent. Some endorsed the process approach and began extensive research on it, which, in turn, fostered its wide use. The most obvious strength of the process approach is that it is student-centered, giving attention to students, their voices and thoughts, and their individual needs. Guided by these principles, students play an active role in the classroom. They express their own thoughts rather than follow the rules that model essays demonstrate or teachers try to impart. The three-part model functioned as a path that writers could follow in the composing process. Tobin embraced the process, student voices and choices, and self expression of the process approach. All these new ideas and acts challenge the teacher/student binary, which has been at the center of higher education for centuries (DeJoy 49). Students become the
center of the writing classroom. They are no longer passive receivers of information; they are human beings with a creative mind. They construct meaning, which in a sense, makes them believe they are valued writers, and there is a real purpose for doing the writing.

The early process theories, though they originated in the U.S. around the 1970s, are still relevant to Chinese students and instructors of English because they are learning and teaching writing in a similar situation before the process movement began. Emig’s theory confirms Chinese students and instructors’ belief that if writing must be learned by native writers, it should be natural that EFL learners must learn it, too. In addition, the point that learning the written language helps to improve overall language proficiency satisfies one of the goals of language instruction in China: improving learners’ entire language ability. This objective coincides with Emig’s idea that writing nurtures language ability. Therefore, learners will become more active in the learning process. Limited by their understanding of writing and the actual teaching conditions, some Chinese instructors mistake the process for producing current-traditional texts for writing process. In that product-oriented approach, lecturing on and assessing rules take up a major part of the classroom time. Based on these, the early process theories still have a place in the classroom because Flower and Hayes’ three-part model can help shift the teaching emphasis from rules to the process, liberating writers from the restraints of grammar, vocabulary, or even mechanics. At least, it can inspire them to look at writing in a different way, stepping out of the rules-obsessed teaching methods which kill students’ interest and creativity.

In spite of the previously mentioned benefits, it appears obvious that the early process theory oversimplified the writing process, thereby going against the nature of writing and creation. The limitations lie in the fact that attention was paid to just the writer’s innate intellectual capacity rather than a combination of factors. In Gary A. Olson’s view, it is wrong
“attempting to systematize something that simply is not susceptible to systematization” (8). To use a single way in writing seems unreasonable, simply because the one process that could be applied to all or most writing situations does not exist (Olson 7-8; Kent 1; Sperling 244; Russell 80). Olson means that it is impossible for all writers to compose in the same manner and follow a single formula. Writing is a creative act, so writing cannot be captured by a “codifiable or generalizable writing process” or “a Big Theory” (Kent 1), which means a theory that works for all situations. Instead, students should use multiple processes in writing (Russell 80) because writing is a recursive process and is related to the writer’s background, educational experience, and sociocultural factors. Different situations, audiences, and purposes may cause writers to approach writing differently. Teaching writers to move from planning to the final step of reviewing is wrong (Sperling 244) simply because such a linear way may not always work in writing, which proves to be a complex and recursive process. Therefore, the effort of finding “the writing theory” or process is “misguided,” “misleading,” and “unproductive” (Olson 9).

Early writing processes invited writers’ and instructors’ attention to the thinking power involved in writing and broke through the restraints of rules, but they also neglected other factors, such as cultural and social influences, which seems to put writers in a vacuum that is free from personal, contextual, and institutional limitations. In this sense, the early process theory replaced the previous rules-guided approach with another formula: prewriting-writing-rewriting. Lack of cultural and social influences on writing is a defect of the early-phase process pedagogy. The reason is that a writer does not just rely on cognition or a linear pattern for generating ideas, drafting works, and revising them. Other factors, including the writer’s experience, his/her mindset, and the sociocultural background, also impact writing, according to Flower, Murray, Trimbur, McComiskey, and many other scholars. Petraglia’s two observations confirm the place
of cultures in writing beyond the early writing process era as the following:

[F]irst, that writing genres, audiences, and writers themselves are socially and culturally constructed, and second, that the way in which writing get produced are characterized by an almost impenetrable web of cultural practices, social interactions, power differentials, and discursive conventions governing the production of text, making writing more of a phenomenon than a behavior. (53)

Petraglia shows two layers of meaning. First, writers, audiences, genres of writing, and rhetoric are culturally and socially constructed; therefore, the study of these must be associated with the particular sociocultural contexts that produce them. Second, writing reflects a phenomenon which entails different elements that impact the act of writing. The needs for studying and incorporating the social aspects of writing pushed research into new areas, areas beyond the cognitive aspect of writing.

From the above literature, we can see that the process theory verifies the place of innate cognitive power in writing. Writers develop their language skills by practicing the written language. The prewriting/writing/rewriting pattern frees writers from the rigid form of the current-traditional writing style. However, the intent to generalize and systematize the writing process goes against the nature of writing. Neglecting social and other aspects of writing deprives writers of the chance to become competent writers who may collaborate and cultivate their rhetorical skills in the writing process. These limitations lead theorists to explore more suitable approaches to teaching writing, so the process movement moved on to the postprocess era starting from the 1990s.

Postprocess Theory: Extension of the Process Theory

In the 1990s, research into process theories, especially the social aspect of writing,
entered a new phase because scholars, researchers, and instructors realized that theories are relative and dynamic rather than steady and absolute. Thus, enriching theories to make them reflect reality is the responsibility of researchers. From a different angle, the limitations of early process theories urged theorists to continue to explore more scientific teaching methods. Linda Flower set an example of extending and enriching existing theories in 1990 in writing *Negotiating Academic Discourse*, in which she expands her three-part model to the social aspect of writing. She does not think that the transition to academic discourse takes a traditional, staged, or a linear path. Instead, it relies on a “discourse community,” “cognitive and rhetorical strategies,” “past experience” (222) and a wealth of other elements that help construct academic discourse. Flower found that not only cognition but also the environment, rhetorical strategies, and writers’ background all contribute to and influence the production of the text. In another book published in 1994, *The Construction of Negotiated Meaning: A Social Cognitive Theory of Writing*, Flower mentions conceptions about literacy as action (19), constructive process of literacy (108), collaborative planning (141), and social context of leaning (150). These new perceptions about writing show Flower paid more attention to the environment in which writing takes place, or the “process of discourse construction process” as Sperling calls it (246), all of which demonstrate the social and collaborative nature of writing.

On the basis of previous studies and research in 1994, process theories turned over a new leaf when John Trimbur introduced the term “post-process” in his review article of three books: C.H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon’s *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy*, Kurt Spellmayer’s *Common Ground: Dialogue, Understanding, and the Teaching of Composition*, and Patricia Bizzell’s *Academic Discourse and Critical Consciousness*. Postprocess theories marked a new era in composition studies in the United States. Since then, the social aspect and collaborative
nature of writing have been recognized, stressed, and integrated into classroom practices, which meant a significant change to the cognitive feature of the early process theories. Trimbur uses “post-process” to refer to what has been known in composition studies as the “social turn”—the shift of emphasis from cognitive issues to larger social issues. Postprocess theories put more emphasis on “the nature of writers’ contexts” (Trimbur 246), which refers to such things as writers’ backgrounds, experiences, as well as educational and writing histories. Scholars interpreted the social turn from different perspectives and shared their understandings with the rest of the field. Crowley views the “turn” as “a transfer of attention from ‘a body of arcane knowledge’ to the lives and experiences of [their] students…” (70). Crowley points out that the “turn” means more emphasis on writers and their life experiences rather than on theories about writing.

The social turn of writing enables some advantages over the previous linear process approach. One outbreak of the social turn is that literacy is not viewed as language or texts but as a result of writers’ cultural choices in relation to other community members and the social context in which writing takes place. Trimbur views literacy as “an ideological arena” and writing as “a cultural activity” (109). Trimbur holds the view that writing or literacy reflects the writer’s ideological orientation, and writing is connected with the sociocultural environment. Postprocess theory turns writing into a social activity in which students collaborate and interact with the teacher, with peers, and other resources available. In the writing process, students do not just rely on their own innate capacity but engage in social activities designed for the writing community. The product or the text manifests values and beliefs of writers. During the composing processes, students play dual roles; they, as both writers and readers, participate in the discourse construction, contribute to the discourse community, and make meaning in that
context because “both readers and writers build socially shaped, individually formed meanings” (Flower 52-53). Trimbur initiated a compositionist’s understanding of the role sociocultural factors play in the writing process that also has a lasting impact on composition instruction.

On the basis of Trimbur’s “social-turn” theory, another scholar, Bruce McComiskey elaborates on the postprocess theory from both a theorist and practitioner’s perspectives in his book, *Teaching Writing as a Social Process*, which demonstrates how the postprocess approach could be applied to classroom practices. McComiskey gives in-depth explanations of the postprocess theory, the philosophy behind it, and its application in the classroom. McComiskey clarifies the “post” in postprocess theory and articulates on the differences between the ordinary understanding of “post-” as a prefix and its exact meaning in composition studies. McComiskey claims the “post” means not a rejection but a complex extension, and it signals that he offers “social process rhetorical inquiry as a pedagogical method for extending [the] present view of the composing process into the social world of discourse” (47). Matsuda agrees that the postprocess theory not only keeps the composing process but also extends beyond the process approach (73), and perhaps that is why postprocess theory is also viewed as “an outgrowth of what has come before” (Eubanks 716). Patraglia makes a more specific comment than Matsuda by stating that the postprocess rejects the formulaic framework for understanding writing, but has not abandoned the fundamental of composing, the process, which consolidated specifics related to writing instead of the rough framework (52). In contrast, the three-part model—prewriting, writing, and rewriting—seems abstract and does not take writer and environmental factors into account.

In addition to the advantage of preserving the merits of process theory, McComiske...
instruction through the social process. Covering the key aspects of communication, these three levels of composing could greatly enhance the effectiveness of communication if applied properly. These three levels of composing—textual, rhetorical, and discursive (McComiskey 6)—reflect the current socio-cognitive urge in composition studies in general. According to McComiskey, each level focuses on one aspect of writing:

At the textual level of composing, we focus our attention on the linguistic characteristics of writing. At the rhetorical level, we focus on the generative and restrictive exigencies (audience, purpose, etc.) of communicative situations; and at the discursive level, we focus our attention on the institutional (economic, political, social, and cultural) forces that condition our very identities as writers.

(6-7)

McComiskey suggests an integrated theory of composing that strikes a balance among these three levels of composing promises successful writing. McComiskey further explains, “excessive attention to just one level, whether textual, rhetorical, or discursive, gives students a limited, unbalanced, and, I believe, inaccurate view of how writing works” (11). McComiskey’s integrated view of writing instruction should conform to the nature of writing and include major factors/elements that influence writing. Both instructors and students can benefit from this theory, because they both will be able to have a clear mind about what to teach in and what to expect from writing classes. This paradigm of writing as a social process works as a guideline for postprocess classrooms.

McComiskey’s theory, the expansion from the initial cognitive aspect of writing to the social aspects, brings about advantages that the early process theories do not have. Recent studies show the postprocess approach outweighs its antecedents for its grounded approaches to writing
and its continuing inquiry beyond process, extending to the social sphere of writing. McComiskey’s postprocess approach seeks to enculturate students in all aspects about writing including writing culture. Writing culture includes rhetorical strategies and all writing-related factors and activities. Teaching these factors and activities are important, which aids in demonstrating how writing works. According to McComiskey, “…culture and writing are inseparable—there is no writing without culture, and there is no culture without writing” (10). However, a big gap exists between the nature of writing and a reality about writing instruction. Philip Eubanks points out a persistent difficulty in composition studies in his review essay, “People, Places, and Writing”: for a long time, there exists the uneasy relationship between the social-cultural influences that students carry with them to writing classes and the professional or disciplinary imperatives that students are inevitably preparing to meet. These two factors often seem to be so much at odds that one is nearly always explored at the expense of the other. (717)

Both McComiskey and Eubanks have noted the close connection between culture and writing. The reason that culture should be included in composition classes is that “composing is always situated within particular socio-political context rather than within autonomous individuals or structured minds” (McComiskey 3). Composing does not just rely on individuals’ independent thinking abilities and their constrained minds. A good understanding of the relationship between culture and writing helps with the process of making meaning. Meaning is socially and culturally constructed, so the construction of discourse should not be separated from the context and culture. Petraglia confirms the idea that writing is a culturally and socially mediated behavior, and he thinks that the relationship between culture and writing is like that between text and the composing process. Petraglia views this kind of connection as all natural and uncontroversial
However, the paradox is that writing classes fail to provide students with that part of instruction they are expected to meet: their social-cultural backgrounds that influence writing are sometimes overlooked. Theoretically, postprocess writing classes can fill the gap because writing instruction guided by this approach is characterized by interactive activities through which students learn to understand other writers, their sociocultural backgrounds, values and beliefs, personal education history as well as the impact of these factors on their writing. In addition, students are able to see through interactions that writers and readers judge things that their values comply to and their previous experiences relate to. Thus, to understand writing, we should put writing in the situation in which the work is produced and connect the work with the context in which the writer does the writing. To separate writing from culture, writers are cut off from the clues that usually provide the cultural and ideological understandings of writing. This kind of disconnection goes against the nature of writing.

The benefits of postprocess writing classrooms are not limited to the connection between culture and writing; students learn writing culture from their own experiences. They come to see why rhetoric has long been thought of as the basis of Western humanities and the limitations of grammar and accuracy. Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle state in “Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (re)envisioning ‘First-Year Composition’ as ‘Introduction to Writing Studies’,” that writing, which seems to consist of just basic skills, is actually highly contextualized (578). Students understand writing is more than collections of grammatical and syntactical constructions (Broad; Diller and Oates; Haswell, *Gaining Ground*, qtd. in Downs and Wardle 555). From what they do in class, they understand that good linguistic competence does not necessarily mean effective writing. The postprocess approach remediates what current-
traditional approach and early process theory lack and shifts the central goal from the previous teaching rules and mysterious abstractions of writing to familiarizing students with realistic conceptions and useful strategies about writing, such as the above.

Besides the linguistic aspect, students develop critical reading and writing abilities and adopt rhetorical skills by doing hands-on exercises in postprocess composition classes. They practice invention, drafting, reading, peer reviewing, revising, editing, and writing conventions. They are trained to consider who will be reading the writing and what purpose the writing intends to achieve. Students learn to write by working with others, and they understand rhetoric by writing in response to particular situations and audiences. A comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of writing not only helps students understand how writing works in the real world but also makes them good communicators. Since writing is “context-contingent and irreducibly complex” (Down and Wardle 558), the required high engagement in postprocess classroom activities makes composition classes activity-generating, rhetorically-oriented, and culturally-situated. Students grow as writers in actual writing and in a world-like classroom setting.

Moreover, the postprocess approach overthrows the traditional teacher-student relationship; instead, students are empowered and play a leading role in the classroom. Teachers are no longer editors and judges, but coaches and fellow writers (Pullman 19). They do not stand behind the podium but participate in discussions and actual writing activities. This change decenters authority and allows students to play a major role in the classroom. Student opinions are valued, and the audiences in the classroom care about how student writers get meanings across, which makes them feel the real need for effective communication.

All changes, such as teacher-student relationship and the focus of instruction, show teaching methods reflect teaching philosophies that guide the practices. The adoption of
postprocess composing approaches, to a great extent, depends on instructors’ perceptions of the relationship between writing and other contributing factors. Instructors can be expected to include interactive classroom activities if they embrace writing as a social process. Socializing classroom activities means abandoning the early process approach of the prewriting-writing-rewriting model or the current-traditional approach’s writing to rules, and moving toward invention, arrangement, and revision (DeJoy 86), which characterizes a postprocess composing process. Invention, a major focus of writing instruction (Pullman 19), determines whether changes can happen because invention in different contexts mean completely different writing activities.

In postprocess pedagogy, invention is a way of inquiry and a social act. This style of invention transforms the nature of postprocess composition into activities, because invention involves writers in the whole writing process, but this act is not limited to the prewriting stage. Invention is rooted in classical rhetoric and one of Aristotle’s five canons— invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery (Aristotle 175). James J. Murphy explains the five canons as the following: “The speaker finds (“invents”) ideas, then arranges them in an order, then puts words to them, then remembers all of this; finally, the exterior expression (“delivery”) occurs through vocal sounds, facial expression, and bodily gesture” (42). These five canons show communicative activities are both a process and a rhetorical behavior because they not only suggest the procedures for delivering a speech but also demonstrate rhetorical strategies speakers use to make the speech effective. Another great rhetorician, Cicero, defined “Invention [as] the discovery of valid or seemingly valid argument to render one cause plausible” (Murphy 41), which means invention helps one to find plausible arguments. To Cicero, invention performs the role of inquiry; writers discover topics or ideas to write about.
Invention, as a social activity, encourages collaboration, and at the same time creates opportunities for students to learn and practice rhetorical skills. Invention is by nature a social, dialectical, creative, collaborative, outer-directed act, and an integral part of the writing process, according to LeFevre. LeFevre’s definition pinpoints the characteristics of postprocess classroom activities. In this inventional style, students collaborate rather than write independently. Also, they display their talents and creativity instead of duplicating rules about writing. More importantly, invention is a social act, so students have the opportunity to talk about writing and get to know one another’s experiences. These interactive activities allow them to participate in life-like communication and improve their strategies by writing together and learning from peers. So, invention also allows students to demonstrate the part that makes who they are as readers and writers. In addition, through these activities, students can develop a more sophisticated understanding of communication. They pay attention to peers’ and also audiences’ reactions and try to improve their strategies. For instance, they do not just utilize “logos” (logic reasoning and facts essential for their writings), but also establish “ethos” (character and ethics), and display “pathos” (emotions) (Aristotle 181-182 and 236; Lauer 108). These appeals enable them to realize communication, including writing, is “an art of language” rather than a science, and sharpen their awareness of different audiences, purposes, and contexts.

Educators agree that curricula do not just manifest teaching philosophies but also reflect social, economic, political and educational changes, changes that happen outside of campuses. Writing instruction has to conform to departmental, institutional, and disciplinary contexts and also mirrors larger economic, political, and cultural issues. Writing, in this sense, is culturally situated. McComiskey thinks “the best way to convey this contextual character of writing processes is to teach students the social nature and function of writing—both in the text they
produce for class and in those they encounter everyday outside of class” (19). So, if there is one culture, there is one composing process that complies with it. The same phenomenon applies to rhetorical studies. Rhetoric has been undergoing revolutionary changes (McKeon qtd. in Enos and Brown vii), making the history of rhetoric a history of plurality. Therefore, writing instruction should adopt multiple methods to conform to the pluralism of rhetorics and different local cultures. Using one method to solve all problems, such as the early process pedagogy, is not only impossible but also does not sound reasonable. From another perspective, to understand writers, readers should find clues both inside and outside their works. Their life and experiences reveal and help to make meaning, interpret meaning, and negotiate their position in this space.

Reflecting on writing instruction in China, I find the overemphasis on linguistics has already witnessed pedagogical crises. Recent studies by Lisa Ede, James Berlin, and James Moffett also show that rhetorical strategies cannot guarantee effective writing improvement because writing is much more complicated than just writing in language and presenting rhetorical skills. Students’ lives and experiences constitute a part of successful communication. In “Coming Out Right,” James Moffett concludes:

The teaching of writing improved only after we quit looking to linguistic, rhetoric, and literary criticism for guidance and turned instead to actual practice outside of classrooms. The so-called process approach amounts to no more than teaching writing as adult practitioners go about it. It is phasing composition into the recursive stages of mulling, looking around, conferring, drafting, seeking feedback, revising, and polishing that people who write for real purposes have always found themselves doing. (23)

Here, Moffett points out clearly that writing improves only after instructors move their attention
from texts and rhetoric to students’ social activities outside of the class. In other words, teachers should help students adopt the writing skills and procedures that experienced writers actually employ. Besides, communication strategies are essential for writing. The social aspect of writing equips students with social skills that help them communicate well not only in class but also in future life and career. These skills will benefit students and society in the long run. Therefore, the postprocess approach, which extends to the social aspect of writing, will remediate the limitations of current-traditional and early process approaches.

Knowledge of current-traditional rhetoric helps practitioners become aware of the limitations of the traditional approach and motivates them to explore approaches that work in their local context. The next section focuses on the history of current-traditional rhetoric, which will enable my audience to see the limitations of this approach.

Writing as Product: Current-Traditional Rhetoric and Its Lasting Influences

Current-traditional rhetoric has been a page in U.S. composition history, which mostly stands for the past or the tradition because process and postprocess approaches have been a must in most composition classes. However, the target audience of my dissertation, college writing instructors in Chinese universities, still employs the current-traditional approach in their classrooms but are not quite aware of the drawbacks of this approach and the advantages of other approaches. One reason is that scholarly resources that cover a systematic knowledge of writing pedagogies, research, and assessment are scarce. In this circumstance, updating and correcting their pedagogical choices seems very difficult. Another reason is that instructors were instructed in this approach when they learned both English and their first language, Chinese, so the current-traditional approach is deep-rooted in their ideology, and they have been used to teaching and learning writing this way. It seems natural that they take it for granted. In addition, China’s
sociocultural context—such as a large student population, test-driven education system, instructors’ heavy workloads, and the competitive social environment—seems to conflict with the conditions for implementing process and postprocess pedagogies, but supports the current-traditional instruction mode and its corresponding assessment procedure. In brief, China’s educational and social conditions at present are fit for the existence of current-traditional rhetoric. All these constraints, the special culture, and the pressure for advancing students’ communication competence, force Chinese instructors to experiment with teaching methods that work for China’s contexts and students. I analyze causes and problems with China’s college-level writing instruction in Chapter 3 in more detail. Chinese universities have paid a high price for the limitations of its pedagogical choice. Teaching and learning outcomes are negatively affected. Students and instructors are eager to improve the situation. Therefore, a review of the origin, the sociocultural context, major features, and the pros and cons of the current-traditional approach in contrast to process and postprocess approaches, might serve as a theoretical base for Chinese instructors’ curriculum reform. They can reflect on their practices and find viable solutions to the pedagogical crises they are now fighting.

*Current-Traditional Rhetoric and Its Limitations*

*Harvard’s Instruction Mode*

As discussed earlier in this chapter, current-traditional rhetoric shapes a product-based inventional style and teaching method. Because current-traditional rhetoric is more of a teaching rhetoric, its characteristics or problems are more clearly shown in teaching practices. A look at Harvard’s writing instruction in the 1870s enables Chinese instructors, who use the same approach with EFL students, to have a better understanding of the current-traditional approach, and to see its limitations more clearly.
Guided by current-traditional principles, the first writing program in the United States, the Harvard writing program established in 1875, set a standard for other writing programs in the United States at that time. Since then Harvard’s instruction mode has been influencing instructors’ pedagogical choices, and even in today’s so-called process- and postprocess-based writing classrooms, the impact can still be felt. From a historical perspective, Thomas Newkirk studies Barrett Wendell’s failing example in Harvard’s writing instruction mode in 1886, which helps us to see the negative sides of this pedagogy and understand why the process approach was proposed in the 1960s. Newkirk discusses the features of Harvard’s mode in his essay, “The Politics of Intimacy: The Defeat of Barrett Wendell at Harvard,” and sums up Harvard’s influence into two points, “Most historians of composition —whatever their differences—have agreed on two points. The first is that Harvard exerted a strong, even dominating, influence on the direction of composition teaching in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. And second, their influence was negative and regressive” (116). In spite of its negative effects, the Harvard influence, characterized by current-traditional rhetoric, lasted till the late 1960s in the United States. However, the influence is not gone; it still works in other places in the world.

Judging by current composition scholarship, Harvard’s writing instruction was misleading with its overemphasis on rules, accuracy, structure, and the beauty of the language rather than other factors that contribute to effective communication. At that time, teachers and students at Harvard were overwhelmed with the large number of papers. Quantity and products overrode the composing process and effectiveness. Such activities as discussions, feedback, conferences, and revision were absent. In class, teachers focused on reading and discussing essays; papers were assigned, handed in, and graded, but no or little attention was given to helping students get started, generating ideas, providing and reading feedback, revising, or
practicing rhetorical strategies such as audience (Lauer 112). Like Lauer, Petraglia also held a negative view towards Harvard’s current-traditional approach. This approach treated writing behavior as a sort of stimulus-response, and writing became a reproduction of the instruction. In addition, students never knew how writing happened, so writing remained mysterious and unreachable, like a “black box” (Petraglia 50), which was hard to decipher. This situation lasted until the early half of the twentieth century, but that also showed current-traditional approach reached a dead end. Clearly, product, or to be more specific, stylistics like accuracy and grammar, was the core of the instruction. Absent and lost were creativity, collaboration, the process, and rhetoric, which are thought of as keys for successful communication.

Resulting from the above-mentioned deficits, the process movement which intended to help writers uncover the mystery of writing and solve the pedagogical crises brought about by current-traditional rhetoric started in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Pioneering scholars including Richard E. Young, Alton Becker and Kenneth Pike, challenged the current-traditional approach. They intended to restore the classic way of teaching writing by linking rhetoric to composing process. Their firm “[b]eliefs in process, ‘process over product,’ and beliefs in the promise of a new paradigm” urged them “to reclaim invention from classical rhetoric…” (Minock 157). The new paradigm marked the beginning of a new page in composition history: since then, writing instruction has put emphasis on the composing process, writers, and their needs and voices. With the adoption of process pedagogies, the American way of teaching writing has received national and global recognition. Later, the process approach was adopted by L2 and EFL writing instructors both in the United States and other places of the world.

Disadvantages of Current-Traditional Rhetoric

Inventional style, the core of writing instruction, determines the way to arrange classroom
activities and students’ writing behaviors. In other words, invention reflects ideological and cultural orientation because from it, we know what is valued. Invention used in the current-traditional era was closed, abstracted from society, and was a one-way system (LeFevre 22-32). Instruction at that time adopted a product-oriented invention approach, which means teachers and students focused on error-free texts, or the linguistic aspect of writing. This approach lays emphasis on form, structure, and stylistics, but neglects rhetorical strategies and the social aspect of writing. In contrast with process and postprocess approaches, the current traditional way of teaching writing hinders writers from communicating effectively. Its limitations include product orientation, rule-based teaching, lack of creativity, limited/narrow understanding of rhetoric, static and independent learning style, and absence of social activities in class, all of which stem from the current-traditional invention mode and adversely affect the effectiveness of communication.

Although composition scholars have not reached an agreement on the existence of invention in the current-traditional approach, they concur with the product-oriented invention pattern in this pedagogy. The debate centers on the existence of invention and the function invention performs. Berlin contends invention is absent from current-traditional rhetoric (11), but Crowley asserts that invention is not always absent and it exists in both classical and modern times (158). However, invention in the classical times performed a different function from the modern times. In the classical times, invention was used to help find arguments; in the modern times, such as in the nineteenth century, invention associates discourse with context, which provides clarifications for the text (Crowley 146). Invention in the current-traditional approach leads to arguments or ideas about certain topics and for certain writing situations. This skill usually happens before writing, or at the prewriting stage, and takes the form of an outline which
is a very important component and stage of a current-traditional text. An outline, a rough framework of a piece of writing, is created before the thesis statement is formed. It helps the writer to find related topics suitable for the situation, aiding in arrangement, but does not help much with generating ideas (Crowley 59; Connors 210). Therefore, outlines are used to foster the formation of texts, but do little to generate ideas for writing. So, the role that invention played in the current-traditional mode seems very limited. The purpose is just to produce the text; the collaborative, social, and dynamic characteristics, typical of postprocess classroom characteristics, do not exist. Classroom activities in the current-traditional classroom are product-oriented. It is this inventive style that makes the writing curriculum, classroom activities, and assessment in the current-traditional mode aim for products.

In addition, the current-traditional features of static and individualistic learning styles affect the quality of invention as well as writing. Crowley mentions that as early as the eighteenth century rhetoricians found that the quality of invention relies on not only the writer’s intelligence but also the amount of knowledge of the world he/she has (52). Effective writing requires the writer to know his or her environment, the people around him/her, and their cultures and values. However, from the nineteenth century to the 1960s when composition instruction operated under current-traditional philosophy, invention was reduced to just composition and the tie between rhetoric and composition was cut off, or at least ignored. As current-traditional rhetoric connects the quality of composition squarely to the writer (Crowley 54), a typical independent learning style, students’ sources of information and ideas come solely from themselves. The quality of invention in the current-traditional pattern depends on three sources: the composer’s “knowledge and talent,” “teacher’s instructions in how to strengthen natural intellectual endowments through discipline and exercise” as well as “ordering of assertions” or
“a line of reasoning” (Crowley 54-55). This means invention comes from the composer’s own talents, instruction from the teacher in strengthening his natural talents and through exercise, and logical arrangement of arguments. Of the three forms, the composer’s intelligence plays the key role, because the other two center around his natural ability or just take a different form. So this kind of invention is not a social act, because composers do not interact with others. Instead, it is a pure mental task, and its success just shows in texts or products. That is why writing behavior guided by this inventional mode is “inner-directed” (Bizzell) and static. Students in current-traditional classrooms are solitary and self-reliant composers and have to struggle with all challenges and difficulties on their own. They do not get assistance from others, and have no way to contribute their own talents to the community.

The product-oriented inventional style results in rule-based writing instruction which puts an emphasis on grammar and accuracy, but severely hinders learning outcomes and effective communication. Of course, this pedagogical choice reflects the cultural and ideological orientation of that time: form/organization, accuracy, and the beauty of language. In a word, a perfect draft is valued, but how to produce such a draft is not. In 1981, Connors studied a 1950 edition of the textbook, Writing with a Purpose, which describes the current-traditional approach of invention in writing as “the product-orientation: an interest in the final essay as a discretely produced piece of writing, done to order, error-free” (210). Clearly, the objective of writing instruction is to produce error-free essays, so the mainstay can only be grammar and usage. In this same piece, Connors regretted that “methods of attaining this desired competence were not discussed in much detail” (210). Several scholars have noticed the same problems and claim that students are taught concepts or theories about good prose, such as “unity, coherence, and emphasis” (Berlin 15), or the qualities of good writing being “‘clear,’ ‘logical,’ ‘varied,’
‘emphatic,’ ‘vigorou,s,’ etc.” (Connors 210). These abstractions did not specify actual procedures students could take in writing. So, what was left in students’ minds were these rules that they were expected to transfer to their writing. The reality is that theories about writing are hard to transfer because writing is far more complicated than understanding these concepts or rules. Scholars argue that rules are untransferrable to learners’ language ability or writing situations (Shaughnessy 128; Crowley 147-149; Leki 16; Noguchi 4).

Current-traditionalists, who wished to transfer rules to writing, actually oversimplified the composing process, misguided students, and degraded learning outcomes when we view this approach in light of contemporary scholarship in composition studies. Crowley has studied some textbooks guided by current-traditional principles and feels strongly about “the disparity between the formulaic composing process recommended by current-traditional composition textbooks and the messy procedure that writing is for most people” (159). Experiences and classroom practices show writing is much more challenging than the teaching and memorizing of the rules. In the current-traditional classroom, teaching theories about choosing a topic, outlining, forming a thesis, finding supporting details, editing, and modeling essays composed in certain discourse patterns gives students the wrong impression that writing has to follow a certain formula. Asking students to read and imitate a model and evaluating student writing according to the model serve as a case in point. We see there is a gap between what students learn from the class and the actual difficulties they encounter in writing. Crowley sums up the defects and states that teaching the assumptions about discourse has nothing to do with how writing is done; nor does it show the relation between thinking and writing (159). That means the teaching materials in current-traditional classes do not satisfy writers’ needs; therefore, the insufficient instruction does not prepare students adequately for their writing tasks.
Today, when writing process has been a guiding principle for writing instruction, many instructors label process pedagogy as one of the teaching methods they use in their classroom. However, some activities behind closed doors do not quite follow process theories because some of their misconceptions of the writing process take the teaching of writing astray. An example of this is that some teachers mistake current-traditional writing formula for the process approach. In the current-traditional teaching method, if teachers and students do use a process, this process is, in every sense, different from the composing processes of the process pedagogy. “The process,” just some formulas or recipes, used by current-traditionalists, is for the purpose of producing current-traditional texts but not for the purpose of leading students to experience the composing process experienced writers use in writing; nor is it for helping students to produce multiple drafts. McComiskey calls the current-traditional process of writing instruction “read-this-essay-and-do-what-the-author-did method of writing instruction” (1). Pullman describes 1885 Harvard students’ writing process as a “linear writing process: outline, write, edit, and submit…” (16). Crowley describes the process as a three-step procedure, “select-narrow-amplify” (72), moving from choosing a topic, to narrowing down the topic, and to adding details. All above processes mentioned by different scholars have one thing in common: teaching writing formulas or recipes but not cultivating creativity and critical thinking. This practice misleads students to understand writing as displaying rules or duplicating models in their writings. Berlin and Crowley criticize the current-traditional approach because it teaches writing rules or the theories, such as stylistics and arrangement that are the most teachable and applicable to products, but seldom models the writing for students.

In addition to the formulaic writing instruction, current-traditional teaching modes limit rhetoric to discourse patterns and makes mastery of discourse patterns a goal of its writing
instruction. This approach overlooks more important aspects that could be obtained and improved through interactive activities, such as rhetorical strategies and the composing process experienced writers use. Connors and Berlin noted that when discourse patterns or modes which are divorced from the rhetorical situation become the end of composition, and when rhetoric is used as “analytical act” rather than a “generative creative act,” writing turns into a pragmatic, rigid, and repetitive act (qtd. in Miller 205). This kind of writing instruction cannot reach the goals of composition, which is to train effective communicators. This approach fails to use rhetoric to create and generate ideas but use it to analyze samples for students to model, which shows the pragmatic and formulaic feature of current-traditional pedagogy. However, scholarly works show that effective communication usually presents rhetorical sophistication which suits its audience, purpose, and the situation.

Rhetorical knowledge and strategies help student writers not only improve their communication competence, including their language abilities, but also equip them with social skills that the real world and future employment require. ESL/EFL students, including Chinese students who learn English outside of English-speaking countries, need this knowledge to become familiar with the Western culture in order to communicate in English effectively and behave appropriately in various social settings. The reason is that rhetoric has not gained enough attention in L2 writing, which belongs to the field of applied linguistics. However, in the West, for over 2000 years, from ancient Greece and Rome down to the Renaissance, rhetoric has been the primary concern of Western higher education (Miller qtd. in Stapleton 17; Kinneavy 20; Lauer 107) and the subject matter of writing classes. In the writing class, students learn the arts of invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery, the well-known five canons. Rhetoric helps writers find the right topic, arrange their ideas, read their own and others’ writings
critically, and express their thoughts in an appropriate manner (Kitzhaber qtd. in Berlin 129). They learn that rhetoric as an art teaches them to communicate successfully and effectively.

ESL/EFL students, including Chinese learners, need to know rhetoric is more than sentence and paragraph formation (Christensen qtd. in Berlin 136). The beauty of rhetoric is that “[it] works with words and through words, it inevitably makes its practitioners more language-conscious” (Corbett qtd. in Stapleton 32). Rhetoric that combines social and language competence is extremely helpful to ESL/EFL learners because students improve their social skills by learning the language and its culture.

Owing to its particular importance, Hans P. Guth states that rhetoric must be the subject matter of the writing course for two obvious reasons: 1) Rhetoric combines features of literature and linguistics, and 2) Rhetoric enables students to express and reflect on their private, practical and political life through the medium of language (qtd. in Berlin 131). In agreement with Berlin and Guth on the place of rhetoric in language studies, James Kinneavy deepens the role of rhetoric in relation to humanities in the Western world and states: “For 2,100 years, the study and the production of persuasion…formed the core of the humanities and linked the humanities to the practical life of the everyday citizen. Rhetoric, in other words, made the humanities relevant to the political and religious life of society” (20). In this quote, Kinneavy reveals the natural connection between rhetoric and humanities. Rhetoric gives value and meaning to humanities and serves as standards of interpreting social issues, which makes rhetorical study the basis for understanding the Western world. Kinneavy’s insights show students can learn both academic and social skills from the writing class, which prepares them to be good communicators and citizens. This approach that stresses rhetorical studies satisfies the end of composition instruction. There are many reasons why rhetoric possesses an important place in Western education (Lauer
Current-traditional pedagogy’s lack of the social aspect of writing causes the composition class to lose the opportunity to inspire collaboration and to cultivate students’ social skills. For example, in this kind of “banking concept of education” (Freire 72), students only receive information and comments from the instructor, but they have few chances to play active roles, such as providing feedback to peers or getting feedback from peers to improve their own writing. Without interactive and collaborative activities, writing tends to be individualistic and inner-directed, and students tend to be passive and teacher-reliant. Not playing a dynamic role, students cannot get help or contribute to the writing community. They can only get knowledge from books and the instructor, and sometimes have to struggle with their writing tasks by themselves even when they encounter difficulties.

The current-traditional approach also strangled creativity for accuracy. Creativity does not just rely on one’s intelligence and good language skills; it also comes from interactive activities. LeFevre has done a profound study of the relation between creativity and the learning community and stressed its contribution to the communicative learning environment:

> Creativity results from the partnership of a potentially creative person and a creativogennic society and culture. …New ideas are invented when cultural elements interact and are synthesized in an individual psyche. …The “magic synthesis” that these individuals achieve creates something new that in turn goes into the socioculture, which may itself change as a result. (24-25)

LeFevre explains that creativity benefits from the creativity-generating environment and collaborative peers. Interactive writing activities enhance creativity because different cultural elements foster thinking and reflections. By exchanging different perceptions among peers,
students may get some inspiration, and individuals may come up with new ideas which could, in turn, help with other students in the same learning community. Creativity leads to unique writing; thus, the quality of writing results from a positive and supportive environment.

The above cons show that the current-traditional approach has many limitations that do not support effective teaching outcomes, especially when this traditional pedagogy is compared to process and postprocess approaches.

*What U.S. Composition Curriculum Reform Means to Chinese Instructors?*

While instructors, researchers, and administrators applaud the progress in writing instruction and research brought by the process and postprocess approaches, current-traditional rhetoric is actually still influencing writing classrooms in both contemporary America and in many other places of the world, such as in Asian countries including China. The reasons are that current-traditional rhetoric has been a widely-accepted tradition since the late nineteenth century, or that it coincides with a learning style in another language, or that the sociocultural and educational context is optimal for this pedagogy in spite of its many defects. However, America’s success sets a good example to writing instructors who are thinking about improving their learning environment.

America’s successful completion of the paradigm shift from product-oriented to process-oriented instruction should be enlightening to Chinese instructors of composition. There are some similarities between the teaching objectives, social cultures and values, and pedagogical problems. In the paradigm shift during the late 1960s and early 1970s’ in the U.S., the process approach arose as a reaction to the previously dominant current-traditional rhetoric, as it is thought. The similarities pertaining to the context and purpose for curriculum reform should assist Chinese instructors with the pedagogical dilemma, and American instructors’ experience
will be of great value to them. By taking a lesson from history, finding reasons that constrain teaching effectiveness and absorbing useful experiences from America’s paradigm shift, hopefully Chinese writing instructors can succeed with improving their teaching outcomes.

The evolution of American composition theories and practices enable Chinese instructors to see the connection between the study of rhetoric and composition instruction. As discussed previously, rhetoric had been a prestigious academic discipline from ancient Greece and Rome to the Renaissance, but it shrank to just the teaching of composition in the twentieth century. The decline of rhetoric shows that society tended to be more pragmatic, and this kind of pragmatism was reflected in the curriculum. Thus, education cannot be separated from its culture and context.

Problems with L2 Composition Instruction in China

American composition history, particularly the paradigm shift from product to process and postprocess approaches, could be used as a lens through which to view L2 writing instruction in China. This part of history, from the late nineteenth century to the 1990s and onward, shows the process movements’ great impact on the writing practices in the world. Its effects prove to be very powerful because the new paradigm restores the nature of writing and leads writing research and instruction to the goals composition classes plan to reach. Thus, L1 writing evolution should be of help to L2 writing in China.

L2 writing sometimes seems more complicated than L1 writing owing to its linguistic and sociocultural conditions as well as resource restraints. These limitations cause L2 writing instruction and research to refer to L1 research achievements, and sometimes instructors have to accept both the advantages and disadvantages. The process approach was first introduced to China during the 1980s (Chen 77) or 1990s (Zhixue Li 123), almost at the same time as the world’s L2 process movement, but twenty years later than the process movement concerning L1
instruction in the United States. The reasons vary. The most important reason is that there is no
consistent theory about L2 writing. For example, in 1993 there was no coherent, comprehensive
theory of second language writing (Silva qtd. in Crusan 256), and until 2001 there was still no
agreed upon definition of L2 writing (Cumming qtd. in Crusan 256). Research and instruction
have been active since the 1980s, but in 2005 L2 writing still lacked “a tidy corpus of conclusive
theory and research upon which to base a straight-forward introduction to processes of learning
and teaching” (Ferris and Hedgcock qtd. in Crusan 256). Therefore, numerous ESL/EFL writing
theories and practices are borrowed from and heavily influenced by those of L1 writing. Thus,
L2 writing, such as that in China, may have the positive and negative effects that L1 initially had.
However, over the years, Western writing theories have been updated and are becoming more
and more multidisciplinary because various social, cultural, and economic changes are reflected
through pedagogical choices. China, a rising power, serves as a case in point because it needs to
shorten the distance to world standards, including education. Thus, instructors in China reflect on
their own teaching and research and find solutions to existing problems, especially when
instructors and scholars have opportunities to take part in conversations with professionals in the
field and when the needs for international communication skills increase. Every year, cases of
world cooperation and exchange in economics, business, education, culture, as well as science
and technology are growing. However, due to the complexity of L2 education, it takes time and
effort to make Western theories and effective methods fit local linguistic and sociocultural
conditions, but it is always good to refer to some successful practices and experiment with them.

The purpose and the social environment for processing L2 writing share similarities with
L1 writing in the United States. Both of them aim to help writers to communicate effectively.
Early L2 process writing research, such as Zamel’s 1983 and Raimes’ 1985 case studies, shows
that, like L1 writers, L2 students also tried to and could express meanings rather than just manipulate language, but struggled with writing (qtd. in Leki 2). It is clear that the purpose for the process movement is to help writers to express their thoughts with ease rather than to ask them to follow rigid grammatical rules. The process approach concerning L1 writing emerges as a reaction to current-traditional rhetoric. The communicative approach in the 1980s for L2 teaching, which emphasizes interaction in language learning, arose as a response to the 1970s’ behaviorist-based audiolingual approach, which stresses grammar and imitation of good examples. Petraglia depicts the current-traditional rhetoric mode of writing instruction as “a sort of stimulus-response: teachers provided instruction, and students produced text as a result of that instruction” (50). According to some other scholarly works, most of China’s writing practices resemble the Harvard mode or 19th-century teaching and invention styles although the term “current-traditional pedagogy” is not used. Instead, words like “lack of interactive activities” (Dai and Wang 4-11) and “teaching rules” demonstrate the features of current-traditional rhetoric. From these, we can see that the writing instruction in China encountered similar problems that writing scholars found from American writing instruction in the past. The pedagogical crises associated with the outdated way of writing instruction urged a change. Owing to the similarities in the paths China and the United States take, America’s research, classroom practices, as well as the composition curriculum reform will be of great help to China’s writing instruction.

Although writing instruction in China has made some progress in recent years, it is far from satisfactory considering students’ involvement in classroom activities, assessment procedures, and the improvement of students’ writing abilities. Chinese scholars have also noted these issues. The ideal teaching environment for the process approach does not seem to exist. Some of the problems with Chinese students’ writing include the following: lack of strong
arguments, development, idiomatic usage, and the thinking/discourse pattern that the English language requires. Probably the most serious problem is the lack of creativity (Lifei Wang; Zongyan Wang; Ping Wang, and Liu Wenjie; Lan Yao, and Cheng Lini). In his article “A Thought on Constructing a More Objective and Scientific Composition Evaluation System,” Zhixue Li describes China’s college English instruction as “high investment of time and energy but poor effects” (23). There is no exception to writing instruction. Li’s comment is reliable when we associate this remark with one of his previous studies done in 2003 with another scholar, Shaoshan Li, entitled “Rethinking the Current Situation of China’s English Writing Research: A Statistical Analysis of Eight Top Journals in English Studies during the Decade of 1993-2002.” They studied eight top academic journals that publish articles on foreign language instruction including writing, teaching, and research that were published during the past ten years before they found English instruction in China to be less effective. Chinese scholars, researchers, and instructors have been trying very hard to improve the situation. At present, they need to update pedagogies, try out some Western effective approaches to their classes, and change or adapt the Western approach to the local setting. If they can obtain useful experiences from the recursive process, whatever efforts they make will be worthwhile because of the potential benefits for the students, the field, and the education system in China.

**Particular Issues for Chinese Universities**

It is clear that in completing its curriculum reform, China has to be prepared for some hardships and setbacks. Instructors can refer to what has happened to American writing instruction. In the current-traditional age as well as in the 21st century, American first-year composition has witnessed some pedagogical crises, such as assessing the product rather than processes, or teaching for the purpose of producing current-traditional texts even in the process-
based classrooms (Crowley 65), in spite of the achievements associated with the pedagogical movements. In addition, the social aspect of writing is sometimes put aside in contemporary process-based writing instruction. Lisa Ede writes in “Reading the Writing Process” that “Collaborative writing activities, for instance, are still very much the exception in most composition classrooms—including those taught by advocates of writing as a social process” (36). These phenomena show that in the U.S., the teaching of writing, like writing itself, is a recursive process; problems typical of product-based pedagogy also exist even though the process and postprocess pedagogies that incorporates linguistic, rhetorical and social levels of composing are widely adopted. America’s examples show that in the history of composition studies, problems and progression coexist, but a clear goal-oriented pedagogy could help resolve some problems.

Looking at writing instruction in China, according to Western rhetoric and composition theories, we may notice many writing practices, textbooks, and syllabi for college students including English majors continue to show many features typical of current-traditional pedagogy, which could restrain the growth of students’ writing abilities. Like much L2 writing in the world, college-level English composition instruction for English majors still attaches value to the linguistic or textual aspect (Lifei Wang 24). This is probably a universal problem in the field of second language writing. In their study “The Development of Writing Abilities in a Foreign Language: Contributions toward a General Theory of L2 Writing,” Guadalupe Valdes, et al., explain that L2 writing puts too much emphasis on grammatical accuracy and on producing correct forms, while composition and authenticity are not given enough attention (33). This is also true in China’s situation. Some L2 writing instructors fail to pay attention to a combination of factors, such as the linguistic, rhetorical, and social aspects of writing. Writing instruction for
the English majors seems to be duplicating America’s past experiences: it has the same old problems, such as teaching in the Harvard instruction mode, as well as new problems, such as negligence of rhetorical and social aspects of writing. However, what is encouraging is that some scholars and teachers are aware of the many drawbacks caused by product-oriented approach shaped by current-traditional rhetoric. Writing instructors and scholars in China have been trying to reform the curriculum and adapt Western approaches that fit into China’s context (Lifei Wang 24; Runqing Liu qtd. in Shu, Liu, and Xu 433). They need to try different approaches rather than stick to the traditional approach and make new ways of instruction work in the Chinese educational setting through the “theorizing” process. Of course, pedagogical choice as cultural act cannot be separated from its sociocultural and institutional context.

Teaching writing through process and postprocess approaches is a relatively new idea for Chinese instructors because these process-oriented approaches challenge the traditional teaching and assessment procedures as well as teacher and student roles. The current-traditional approach still fits the current sociocultural and educational context in China, it seems. As Crowley describes in “Around 1971: Current-Traditional Rhetoric and Process Models of Composing,” when instructors first introduced process approaches, they could not challenge the traditional approach because of the existing social framework that supported the old method (64). It seems that today China faces a similar problem. China’s educational system is test-driven, and the Chinese society is, on the whole, competitive. Employers, higher levels of institutions, and various kinds of promotion opportunities recruit members through rigid tests. Therefore, good test scores, finished products, and independence seem to be more important values than collaboration and process.

In China’s social climate, adopting process and postprocess approaches might incur
resistance and difficulties because for centuries Chinese students, parents, administrators and society have been used to relying on teachers for all knowledge. Thus, decentering authority in some Chinese people’s eyes is the same as neglecting responsibilities. In addition, China’s sociocultural environment, if not used properly, does not support the postmodern teaching method. The process pedagogy’s particular requirements, such as a small class size, the nonhierarchical teacher-student relationship, and process-based assessing procedures, might conflict with the centuries-old Chinese traditional perception of writing instruction.

More importantly, these constraints are inseparable from the operations of Chinese universities, their policies and systems, teacher and administrative qualities, as well as the sociocultural factors that shape China’s higher education. Unlike American universities, Chinese universities are under the guidance of the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China. The Advisory Committee for the Curriculum for Foreign Languages Majors at China’s Colleges and Universities, a branch of the Department of Higher Education, is responsible for making curriculum policies, designing courses, and recommending textbooks although some officials may not be well-known experts in the field. Professors’ rights to course design, textbook selection, and evaluation must conform to the general guidelines made by the Advisory Committee. In other words, universities, departments, or professors do not have much control over the courses. In addition, teaching conditions are not very satisfactory. These include low salaries, heavy workloads, large student populations, scarce research resources and teaching facilities, rigid teacher evaluations in relation to student test scores (in some universities), publications, and promotion. In spite of these, instructors have to try by all means to help students pass the class or score high on tests, which is the culture of Chinese education. Considering all these factors, we may come to see the reasons for teaching
the current-traditional way. Comparatively, this approach is easy, cheap, and less time-consuming. However, for the sake of students and the future of the field, I still think both instructors and administrators should adopt process and postprocess approaches that can work in the local context and help to tackle some of the pedagogical problems.

Teaching philosophies and methods reflect particular sociocultural, economic, educational conditions and changes. Through the contrast, we can see that the limitations of the Chinese way of writing instruction are related to its social, disciplinary, and institutional restraints as well as students’ writing histories in both Chinese and English. Lynn Z. Bloom points out in “The Great Paradigm Shift and Its Legacy in the Twenty-First Century” that “The process paradigm—once radical—is now the dominant, default rubric for teaching writing” (40). It is certain that writing instruction in China should be moving toward this trend. In a 2008 collaborative work by Qixin He, Yuanshen Huang, Xiubai Qin, and Jianping Chen, “Teaching Assessment of English in China Tertiary Education over the Past 30 Years,” they outline the results from undergraduate program assessment conducted in recent years. The four authors, all renowned scholars (He and Chen were formerly university presidents.) come from four prestigious universities in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. In this article, they address three major problems with English instruction for English majors: lack of qualified faculty, inappropriate curriculum designs, and students’ low language abilities (430-431). The authors specify that “Some students have poor language knowledge. Their English does not sound idiomatic. Many students fail to express their thoughts coherently, especially in English composition” (431). So, for Chinese students, writing is one of the greatest challenges.

Based on the scholarship in composition studies, the pedagogical problems are not limited to what are mentioned by these Chinese scholars. China’s English instruction has its own
characteristics related to its own systems and sociocultural environment, and China’s educational context also restrains effective writing instruction. To find really effective solutions, we have to consider an array of factors, such as national and university policies, tests, teaching objectives, faculty and administration quality, available resources, and various exterior pressures from the government, parents, and society. However, Chinese instructors should be aware that attaining the standards of the field is one of the main routes to success. The next chapter, “Chinese Universities: Politics, Problems, and Solutions,” will explore these issues in China’s sociocultural context in the hope of tackling the pressures and issues that China’s writing instruction faces.
CHAPTER 3  CHINESE UNIVERSITIES: POLITICS, PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES, AND SOLUTIONS

Chinese higher education operates through a unique mechanism. College-level English instruction that is closely related to domestic and international politics, economy, and sociocultural policies has always been the most heavily influenced field. From the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949 to the open-door times since the late 1970s to the new millennium, millions of English graduates have served in education, the economy, government, and many other fields and have made great contributions to the nation.

However, since China’s entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, English studies and its students have faced new challenges and opportunities owing to China’s increasing involvement in the world economy. China needs graduates who not only have a good command of the English language but also own professional knowledge of one specific field so that they can satisfy the needs of business, finance, government, law, or education. English graduates are expected to communicate effectively, not just speak or write grammatically correct English. In the face of these changed requirements for English graduates, problems with English instruction arise. Composition instruction, for example, cannot produce qualified graduates who can communicate with people of different sociocultural backgrounds and ideologies. This inadequacy will definitely affect China’s image and its benefits. To be sure, causes of unsatisfactory teaching outcomes lie in many aspects, such as pedagogical choices, educational system and policies, teacher quality, teaching philosophies, working conditions, as well as influence from students’ first language tradition. Yet the one most influential teaching method that composition instructors in China have been using is current-traditional pedagogy. Its limitations include a narrow understanding of rhetoric, silent and individualist style of learning, and overemphasis on form.
and language, all of which do not help much with writing abilities. In this circumstance, I propose Chinese professors consider a community-based socio-cognitive process approach in the hope of empowering students and liberating instructors.

Of course, in China’s particular educational context, timed writing and writing preps could be incorporated but should not play a key role. In the writing community, students experience the culture of writing, writing instruction, and writing assessment. They could use the assessment criteria they set to guide their own and their peers’ writing practices. In this chapter, I address how the operational mechanism and sociocultural context of China’s higher education affects effective writing instruction. Based on the current context, I suggest that writing instructors incorporate into their classrooms a combination of pedagogies and adapt them to China’s educational setting.

Chinese Higher Education and Its Operational Mechanism

College curricula mirror the changes in politics, economy, education, and culture of China. Mike Rose states in Lives on the Boundary that “More often than we admit, a failed education is social more than intellectual in origin” (225). So, some causes of ineffective education lie outside classrooms. Compared to other fields, foreign language studies is more closely related to the state’s political and economic needs, diplomatic policies, international business, and the technological advancements (Zheng; Hu 246). English education serves education, business, and government, and is at the same time restricted by policies. Pedagogical updates usually reflect current advancement in a particular field, social demands of particular types of graduates, and ideological and cultural orientation of a period of time. Owing to China’s long history, one of the oldest civilizations dating back to the Shang Dynasty (1700-1064 BC), and its distinctive Confucian influence on people’s ideologies and behaviors, its universities
differentiate themselves from European, American, and some other Asian universities. The subject of my study, writing instruction and literacy development, cannot be separated from the sociocultural contexts that shape it. As Rose comments, “To understand the nature and development of literacy we need to consider the social context in which it occurs—the political, economic, and cultural forces that encourage and inhibit it” (237). Therefore, to understand the pros and cons of college-level writing instruction, we need to explore China’s social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. To be exact, the operational mechanism, to a great extent, determines the educational objectives, pedagogical choices, and overall teaching effectiveness.

Characteristics of China’s higher education include the connection between curricula and the country’s political and economic policies, their unique operational mechanism, and various pressures professors and students must face. In addition, three levels of administration—national, disciplinary/provincial, and institutional—reflect a top-down administrative mode, which directly impacts daily learning and instructional practices.

Politics and Curricula

The history of China’s English instruction dates back to the establishment of the first foreign language academy, Tongwen Guan or the Interpreters’ College, set up by the late Qing (1644-1912 AD) government in 1862 (Zhang 248). According to Wenzhong Hu’s article “The Strengths and Weaknesses of China’s Foreign Language Education in the Past 60 Years,” contemporary English instruction started in 1949, with the founding of People’s Republic of China. Hu studied the 60-year history (from 1949 to 2009) and divided it into three major stages. Each stage demonstrates clear connections between teaching methods and political and socioeconomic characteristics of that period.

According to Hu, the first stage, from 1949 through 1965, a year before the Great
Proletarian Cultural Revolution, set up a new layout for English instruction. This period is also called the forming stage of English instruction. Shutang Zheng, another scholar of English, points out the relationship between English instruction and diplomatic policies in his essay, “Research and Practice: A History of College English Education in China.” Zheng states that in the 1950s, the teaching of Russian dominated foreign languages instruction, and English did not gain a place until the late 1950s and the early 1960s when China and the Soviet Union severed their ties. The termination of the diplomatic relations changed the course of foreign language education in China: English began to play a bigger role. In 1962, the first national syllabus for general studies English was released. In this document, reading was emphasized; in fact, listening, speaking, and writing were not even mentioned. Clearly, this syllabus lacked a sound theoretical base, and the quality of instruction was doubted. To solve the severe shortage of faculty, some Russian teachers turned to teach English (Zheng). In the 1970s, writing was not taught in college.

From 1966 to 1977, the second stage was set in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), a social-political movement that caused chaos and disastrous damages to Chinese society and was led by Mao Zedong, then Chairman of the Communist Party of China. According to Jonathan D. Spence, an authority of China research, the Great Cultural Revolution aimed to “destroy blind faith in Chinese and foreign classical literature” and to eliminate any “anti-socialist poisonous weeds” (603). Classics of Chinese history and Western cultures were thought of as poisonous because they contradicted Mao’s ideology. The East Asia National Resource Center of Georgetown University discovered that Mao launched the Revolution “to regain influence within the Chinese Communist Party,” “to prevent the party from becoming bureaucratic and losing its communist values and revolutionary spirit,” and “to maintain the
country on its socialist road.” Xianzhi Feng stated that to prevent China from falling into bourgeois and capitalist ways, Mao eliminated traditional and Western thoughts that could possibly take China and the Party astray. In this political climate, foreign languages departments, including English, closed down, and some of them did not resume until the 1970s. This movement had a penetrating influence on people’s ideology, values, beliefs, and behaviors, and also spread to the academics. English was then taught, but the English culture and values as well as lifestyle were different from those of the advocates of the revolution, and were, therefore, prohibited. People who had had Western education or dealings with Western businessmen or missionaries and all intellectuals could be charged with “feudal” or “reactionary” modes of thinking (Spence 606). In that political environment, English grammar was emphasized (Zheng) because it was neutral and did not offend any political groups. Students read and wrote about their devotion to Mao and the revolution, which complied with the sociocultural context of that time. In accordance with the prevailing ideology of the times, students were not provided with an environment where they could develop a feel for the English language and its culture.

During the third stage, from 1978 to 2009, foreign language education was revitalized and progressed with the adoption of the open-door policy in the late 1970s. This period has also been a developing and reforming stage. In the beginning, there were no national syllabi, no teaching plans, and no suitable textbooks because those used during the Great Cultural Revolution could no longer be used in the new sociopolitical situation (Hu 165). However, with the adoption of the open-door policy, English became popular at an overwhelming speed and very quickly became the number-one foreign language in China. The number of English learners grew so rapidly that from the late 1980s to early 1990s, the “English fever/boom” emerged in China (Zheng). In this climate, “English writing, the least emphasized among the five language
skills in the English classroom—speaking, reading, listening, writing, and translation—suddenly became a highly demanded skill in the mid-1980s. Learning English for practical use was unanimously the goal for the majority of Chinese educators and students” (You 643). Teachers sent by the government to study in the Western English-speaking industrialized countries returned to China and brought with them ideas from different schools of linguistic theories and offered new courses.

A steady and supportive political climate fostered research. According to Zheng, during the 1980s and the 1990s, three major debates arose in Chinese academia: the debate on teaching English for academic purposes or general purposes, using top-down or bottom-up approaches in instruction, and teaching for accuracy or fluency. These debates have not yet been resolved, but they allow teachers to see the complexities of English instruction as well as pros and cons of different views. Among all theories, it seemed that the communicative teaching method stood out because the open-door policy created opportunities for communication in English with speakers from many fields. In response to the trend, then, since 1990s, courses such as trade, economics, and law have been offered to English majors, so that students graduate with the English language skills and professional knowledge the market looks for. Led by Qixin He, renowned scholar of English and former vice president of Beijing Foreign Studies University, ten professors from different universities in China formed a national syllabus writing group. After four years, they worked out a new syllabus oriented toward the twenty-first century. In 1999, the revised “National Syllabus for English Majors at China’s Colleges and Universities” (I refer to this document as the “National Syllabus” in the rest of this chapter) was released and signaled the change in the course of English instruction. For the first time in history, the goal of English instruction was “to serve socialist construction and the world economy” (He et al. 428), although
it emphasized that acquiring English skills continues to be the top priority for English majors. In previous national syllabi, English education was to train talents with adequate English competence and a good knowledge of English-speaking countries’ literature, society, history, and culture. Although China would be more open to the outside world and become more market-oriented, it would not change its socialist course. English graduates now are expected to make contributions to the nation’s economic development. Therefore, training talents with mixed abilities has become the objective of English education in the new century (He et al. 428). In spite of the sweeping influence of communicative approach and curriculum reform, the nature of writing instruction was not very much impacted although the process approach aroused some instructors’ interest because teachers’ research interest was not supported by updated expertise or appropriate working conditions and sociocultural context.

A historic event, China’s entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, led its English instruction to a transformative era. China’s new political and economic position in the world has brought about challenges and opportunities to China as well as to English majors. To meet new challenges, the “National Syllabus” for English majors was renewed in order to fit globalization and China’s socialist market economy. Obviously, the market impacted the direction of foreign language education although the following qualities that are expected of English graduates are clearly written in the “National Syllabus”: “a solid language foundation, a wide range of knowledge, application of English skills to knowledge in a related field, adequate abilities, and good quality and all-around development” (He et al. 428). China’s national development plan attaches great importance to the economic growth, which, to some extent, impacts educational philosophies and makes education more pragmatic than ever before. English instruction is tailored to the market, producing graduates the market wants rather than what
scholars think of. Coincidentally, this also happened in American educational history. In his work *English in America: A Radical View of the Profession*, Richard Ohmann noted that during the Industrial Revolution knowledge became the dynamic force for economies and that in the past two centuries the application and increase of knowledge became essential to economic growth in industrial nations. Therefore, knowledge was systematically and innovatively applied to work (264-265). Education in each stage has its own concentration, and each demonstrates social values of the time.

*Operational Mechanism*

Chinese universities operate under a special mechanism. There exists a three-tiered administrative mode—national, disciplinary/provincial, and institutional—which regulates, aids, and supervises college curricula. The political and economic policies of the country determine or heavily influence all college curricula, including English. Usually national policies have been forces for educational reform and pedagogical adjustments. History of contemporary English instruction of China shows that these educational policies change with political and social fluctuations. Hu and Zheng studied the history of new China’s English education and found that all pedagogical changes responded to China’s domestic and diplomatic politics.

First, on the national level are two major government departments: the Higher Education Department of Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Education, People’s Republic of China. The former is responsible for the latter. These macro-level administrations make national educational systems and policies and have control over important issues. For example, they make it mandatory that all Chinese college students except English majors fulfill a two-year foreign language-learning requirement. English majors must take a two-year second foreign language class and pass its examinations to be qualified to graduate. These departments also issue
certificates to students who have passed the standardized tests, such as Test for English Majors, Level 4 (TEM 4)\(^1\) and Test for English Majors, Level 8 (TEM 8)\(^2\) (see Appendices A and B). I use the term “macro-level administration” here because administrators or officials at this level make policies as well as approve of and sign proposals for important changes and policies but are not involved in on-site administration or teaching.

On the second tier, a semi-macro and semi-micro level of administration, sit selected scholars from the field who form a Teaching Advisory Committee for Foreign Languages Majors at China’s Colleges and Universities. This committee works under the supervision of the Higher Education Department of China’s Education Ministry, undertaking research, providing advice, guidance and service for all foreign languages departments (He et al. 428), including Russian, French, German, Japanese, English, and so on. The English Division, a branch of the committee, takes responsibilities for teaching, research, and assessment for English studies. The most recent contribution of the committee was to renew and combine the previous syllabi at the basic level (for freshmen and sophomores), and the advanced level (for juniors and seniors) that were released in 1986 and 1990 respectively. In 1999, the revised and combined syllabus, called the “new syllabus,” was published. The combination of the syllabi was to maintain continuity in instruction throughout the four years at college. Serving as guidance for English instruction, it outlines the concentration of each area, such as linguistics, writing, reading, literature, translation, etc., and specifies the number and type of courses and tests students should take, when, and for how long. The Advisory Committee also sees to and entrusts a committee with organizing and writing test papers for TEM 4 and TEM 8. In addition to the Advisory Committee, at the same level are some provincial government departments that participate in supervising local colleges and universities. This level of administration and supervision plays a very important role: they
make many important disciplinary decisions and policies and help supervise teaching and research.

Lastly, on the institutional and departmental level, a kind of micro-level administration directly intervenes with curriculum design, pedagogical choices, and program administration. A universal practice is that all students must satisfy certain academic requirements of particular universities, such as the number of required and optional courses to take, activities they must intake, and attaining the minimal passing score for examinations, or completing theses or the equivalent. However, Chinese professors and students assume additional pressures. I call these pressures “interior pressures” because they come from the institutions and are part of the academic and work requirements.

Although most universities and departments do not exert direct pressures on professors, for example, setting a passing percentage for a certain national standardized test students take, usually professors can feel the pressure when they hear praise for professors whose students pass tests with good grades or hear about those who receive merit-based bonuses. This used to be and is still the practice in some universities or departments. In his review article “Foreign Language Education Reform: Respect Science, Abide by Laws,” Zheng’guang Liu points out the drawbacks of current educational practices in China, including that some administrators use test scores to decorate their own achievements, such as magnifying the place and effects of TEM 4 and TEM 8, using good scores to do self-promotion, and even associating passing standardized tests with degrees granted, which forces students to invest time in test preparation and affects normal instruction. The only result is to fuel test-driven teaching (Liu 63). In other words, the success of a university, a department, and a professor is usually associated with the test scores their students earn. In academic promotion, a candidate must get at least one “Excellent” from
annual faculty evaluations to be qualified. Considering all these, nobody can put scores aside.

In America, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act resembles many respects of the Chinese higher educational policies. This document concerns the education of children in public elementary and secondary schools. Its purpose is to increase teaching accountability and improve each child’s achievement by setting high standards and establishing standardized assessments. Students’ scores show whether the school has taught the students well. Educational funding provided to schools is related to the yearly progress in teaching and learning. Similarly, in Chinese universities, financial support and research funding allocated to schools and departments may also be related to scores because tests, especially those given by testing organizations similar to testing companies in the United States, seem to be a more objective indicator of academic achievements owing to the fact that universities and professors do not get involved in the writing and evaluating of test questions. Although, as professionals, we know scores cannot truly show a student’s real competence or demonstrate the connection between professors’ teaching and students’ progress, administrators or nonprofessionals may take advantage of people’s interpretation of scores. The public may think of scores as an objective reflection of students’ and professors’ abilities. As scores are viewed as important, it seems natural that teaching methods are made to fit tests.

*Exterior Pressures*

In addition to academic and institutional pressures, Chinese universities, professors, and students have to face exterior pressures, pressures from places of employment and society. Test scores, too, constitute exterior pressures. However, as China is a competitive society, it seems nobody could do without tests because high scores from courses and standardized tests aid students in entering a higher level of institution or in job search. It is true that tests play a bigger
role in China than in the United States and many other countries. The origin of the system can be traced back to the 1,300-year imperial examination in ancient China. Established in 605 AD during the Sui Dynasty (581-618 AD), the system ensured that “appointees to civil service positions were not to be chosen through special inherited privilege, but through an individual’s own abilities” (“Confucianism”). The positive aspect of the system was that this system broke up the monopoly of positions by descendants of high officials and gave common people the equal opportunity to display their talent. Usually, those who passed the test became official candidates of the imperial government. Once appointed, these scholar-officials and their families enjoyed not only honor but also material benefits. Since ancient times, selecting elite candidates through rigid examinations has been a very important part of Chinese educational, personnel, and political systems. In spite of its advantages and various other disadvantages including making education move toward test scores, it is hard to alleviate the practice because in a heavily-populated country with a high rate of corruption, examinations are believed to be a fair channel for upward mobility. This is extremely true to those without strong family background or of low social status because presumably the best always stand out and can seize the opportunity for advancement.

Because other forms of assessment cannot replace tests and scores, universities and professors cannot afford to take risk in their curriculum design. Even if professors do not teach to the tests, they must still consider students’ expectations and possible negative consequences if they score badly on tests. For example, when teachers hear the department heads mention or just reveal students’ ranking on standardized tests, it is a logical move to adjust our syllabi and teaching objectives in order to help students pass the tests. From another perspective, administrators, departments and universities cannot ignore test scores, either. A university’s
ranking on national large-scale tests, such as TEM 4 and TEM 8, is considered as an important indicator of teaching effectiveness in the teaching assessment for undergraduate programs that started in 2006. Sometimes, research funding allocation and professional development opportunities may be connected to the ranking on standardized tests. Clearly, the high expectations of good test scores from different perspectives can only make higher education more test-oriented.

The above discussion shows that the top-down operational mechanism of Chinese universities has clear pros and cons. The pros are that administrators/officials at the top can regulate teaching and ensure all schools and departments of English abide by the corporate national syllabus although there is room for teachers to make adjustment to fit the local context. The enforcement of the national syllabus also makes national standardized tests easy to be implemented. By using recommended textbooks and following the same syllabus, students in different universities can obtain similar contents. In this manner, scores from recognized tests seem fair, reliable, and valid, and make students easily accepted as qualified by society and all stakeholders.

The cons are obvious as well: officials and administrators’ participation in the decision-making process might make power override expertise. Officials or administrators might not be experts in a field or have adequate experience teaching certain subjects. As a result, the policies and regulations they make sometimes may not quite follow the generally accepted principles of education. For example, He et al. mention in their report that a variety of organizations supervise the English instruction that may cause some confusion and destroy the consistency of the policies (432).

Although English instruction in China has achieved remarkable progress during the past
sixty years, especially during the last thirty years since the adoption of open-door policy (Hu 163; He et al. 430; Zheng; The North Project Group 2). In the past decade, scores from TEM 4 and TEM 8 and the oral tests of them show English instruction for the English majors has greatly improved (He 5). However, some serious problems still exist. According to “The Educational Reform of Foreign Language Majors at the College Level for the 21st Century,” five “improprieties” concerning undergraduate English instruction exist: “improper teaching philosophies, improper talent training mode, improper curricula and teaching contents, improper knowledge structure, ability and quality, and improper curriculum administration” (He 7). These problems show that valuing future change is not demonstrated in the curriculum; therefore, revision of the national syllabus is urgent.

To prepare for the revision of the previous national syllabi released in 1986 and 1990, the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, set up two project groups: the South Project Group and the North Project Group, and entrusted them with the task of conducting surveys and collecting data for the upcoming revising project. The North Project Group surveyed employers, graduates, current English majors, and non-English majors who learned English as a general studies course. They discovered that 81.3 percent of these people were satisfied with college-level English instruction (2). However, employers found English graduates’ knowledge of English-speaking countries and their writing abilities to be limited (The North Project Group 2, 3; He et al. 431). The findings indicate the teaching methods are outdated, and student learning is lagging behind the needs of the times.

However, English graduates undertake great responsibilities on the world stage: they usually participate in conversations related to economic, scientific, political, educational, and cultural exchanges on behalf of China, according to Weihua Yu (398) and Zhaoxiang Cheng.
As China gets more actively involved in world economy and politics, it needs more personnel who are able to communicate effectively in English and can handle all situations strategically. In that circumstance, China’s English instruction needs to be adapted to fit the market.

Apart from problems with policies and the educational system, an array of related factors, including teacher quality, pedagogical choices, first language tradition, and its idiosyncratic educational context including working conditions are responsible for the low teaching and learning outcomes. The same becomes true with literacy development and writing instruction. In the next section I will explore possible causes of China’s limited outcomes from the perspectives of both a writing instructor of a Chinese university and a doctoral student of rhetoric and composition who has teaching experience in an American university.

Factors That Impede Effective Writing Instruction for English Majors

In China, English is taught and learned as a foreign language, so English instruction has its own characteristics as well as its cultural flavor. Traditionally, no matter what approaches English instruction adopts, language skills, such as grammar and vocabulary, have been given priority (Dai 323; Longxi Zhang 248; Runqing Liu 73), and content courses such as literature, linguistics, and cultural studies possess only a secondary position. English majors are expected to display their language gift and perform systematically trained skills over non-English majors in the workplace. The misconception that students’ language abilities will naturally improve when they have grasped vocabulary and grammar still heavily influences teaching practices. In reality, students cannot communicate effectively without adequate understanding of Western culture or without sufficient communication experience. An example is that Chinese students are among the top TOFEL score earners, which demonstrates their good linguistic knowledge. Nevertheless,
once in class typically they cannot speak or write well because of their lack of culture familiarity and communicative competence. From this phenomenon, we know cultural knowledge and experience seem to be more important for writing, speaking, and translation than for reading and listening. In the former group of skills, learners make meaning and show their ideology, preference, and values and beliefs through their words and deeds. At least, they should be able to communicate in a way accepted by the culture. Therefore, writing instruction should not ignore the cultural aspect, such as Western rhetorical strategies. Of course, a variety of factors impact students’ ability to write well. In the following section, I discuss some key factors that affect learning outcomes.

**Misconceptions in the “National Syllabus”**

Chinese college education operates under the supervision of government as well as disciplinary and institutional interference. Therefore, policies and the system might negatively impact curriculum design because professors cannot exercise sufficient control over the courses in the way the profession accepts. For example, since the 1990s, the direction for English instruction has changed to “serving socialist construction as well as needs of reform and open door policies” (He et al. 428) because graduates with only language skills cannot perform their job responsibilities satisfactorily. Therefore, English instruction has to sacrifice the ideal of training liberal arts elites. Clearly, its objectives have become practical and market-oriented and departed from the historical heritage. Traditionally, English education is to train the talented who know the language and literature, culture, and history of English-speaking countries so that they can speak and write in beautiful language. Now, with focus directed towards the market economy, a center of China’s national development plan, students are expected to acquire knowledge of a field rather than the above mentioned in order to serve economy. However, this turn from elite
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education to pragmatic education that is explicitly stated in the new syllabus could be somewhat misleading if interpreted from a professional angle. Professors try to reach a balance between the principles of the profession and the call of the government and market, which might affect the effectiveness of education. Take writing for example. According to the 1999 version of the “National Syllabus,” English majors should take two one-year writing courses, offered throughout the sophomore and junior years. Thesis Writing is a compulsory one-semester course offered in the fall semester of the senior year, which aims to help students produce a 3,000- to 5,000-word thesis by the end of the eighth semester. The students who have completed the thesis and passed the oral defense for it are eligible for graduation. Yet Practical Writing and Rhetorical Knowledge fall into the category of selective classes.

The curriculum and the assessment criteria for the above writing classes can reveal important teaching philosophies and the syllabus writers’ cultural orientation. For example, the second-year writing course, which ends at the end of the fourth semester, requires students to reach the Level 4 criteria, an equivalent to TEM 4 rubric. Students are supposed to be able to write a 150- to 200-word essay within 30 minutes and a 60-word note within 10 minutes. On TEM 4, they respond to prompts. In class, students write on assigned topics or choose their own topics. In both cases, their writing is expected to be to the point, well-organized, grammatically correct, and fully-developed, which is exactly what TEM 4 requires and tests. The other one-year writing course, offered in the junior year, requires students to meet the Level 6 requirements, which includes writing book reports, formal letters, and papers. The writing speed is 250 to 300 words within 30 minutes. It is evident that the syllabus writers invite students and teachers’ attention to the length between these two levels, but other important skills or strategies remain unexplained. The limited time and space do not allow much development, either. Thus, the
“National Syllabus” does not show what students learn from one year’s writing classes.

The writing section of the “National Syllabus” seems to be clear, specific, and comprehensive because it addresses content, organization, development, and appropriateness that a piece of writing seems to cover. However, the standards this syllabus sets could be misleading. They may cause students and teachers to pay attention to writing speed. However, does fast speed really equate to good writing? Moreover, the danger of this document lies in the fact that instructors may teach to the tests, aim at high test scores, and assess writing the way TEM 4 and TEM 8 raters do. When testing rubrics have replaced classroom assessment criteria, teachers neglect to evaluate what they teach in class. This kind of assessment misses the learning process, the writing process, and the purpose of writing classes. More seriously, some instructors might let students compose nothing other than timed writing to prepare students for the tests. Timed writing places an emphasis on writing speed, grammar, and formulaic construction of discourse, a genre that fits standardized tests, but does not conform to principles of contemporary writing theories, such as process theories. It also ignores the effectiveness of writing. An example of this neglect is that there is no way for students to understand audience because the audiences of the essay written for the exam are the raters.

One more serious but less visible downside of the syllabus is that it fails to provide guidance as to how to fill the gap between Level 8 writing and thesis writing, the biggest writing project. Level 8 requires students to write essays of about 300 to 400 words, but their theses must be about 3,000 to 5,000 words, which involves deploying many more complex strategies than short essays. But both are supposed to be completed at the end of the eighth semester. Clearly, students and teachers will meet difficulties simply because formulaic writing does not adequately prepare students for such a challenging project. Unfortunately, the syllabus does not suggest
teaching methods for instructors. In other words, the Advisory Committee and the “National Syllabus” do not quite perform their functions well when viewed at a theoretical level.

The negligence of the national syllabus has incurred some severe criticism from scholars and teachers. Liu critiques the syllabus and points out that, “The new syllabus just mentions that testing is an important means of reinforcing the requirement, but Ministry of Education’s overemphasis on testing will result in ‘testing only’ mentality and make test-oriented education even more serious,” (64). As discussed above, the current “National Syllabus” leads teachers to choose “testing out” as an assessment procedure because it conforms to the current rubric for the standardized tests students take. Another harmful effect of transplanting this easy and less expensive evaluation procedure is that it leads to some misconceptions about writing among students. They might think that if they can write test-form essays, they are competent writers. Actually, writing in different genres and satisfying different audiences and purposes are far more difficult than completing a short response to test prompts.

Nevertheless, it seems that the market, rather than professionals, controls the direction of English instruction because the general public and future employers of students all keep an eye on test scores. More seriously, the “National Syllabus” uses TEM 4 and TEM 8 results to evaluate the effectiveness of English instruction and administration that can only make Chinese higher education more market-oriented and test-based (Guang’zheng Liu 64). Practicality is a key characteristic of Chinese education, which goes with the current social trend, seeking economic growth. We can see that the “National Syllabus” fits test-oriented teaching and leads to current-traditional way of writing instruction although the syllabus writers might not intend to do so.

In contrast, two important documents for American colleges—the “WPA Outcomes
Statement for First-Year Composition,” and the “CCCC Position Statement: Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing”—point out the goals first-year writing classes are supposed to reach and investigate the working conditions of writing teachers. The former details the common knowledge, skills, and attitudes first-year composition programs in American postsecondary education seek, and it advocates outcomes-based instruction. In addition, it articulates what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory. All these key points ensure that writing classes provide students with all necessary instructions needed to achieve the goals of the course. They include responsibilities for both students and instructors divided into the following five large sections: rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and writing; processes; knowledge of conventions; and composing in electronic environments. This outcomes statement also addresses what administrators can do and expect the general public to understand the complexities of writing. In the end, it includes concerns and challenges even beyond first-year writing. Therefore, this document not only helps regularize first-year writing instruction in American universities but also enables all readers to know about the basics of writing. The latter document states clearly the professional standards all teaching faculty including tenure-line faculty, graduate students, and part-time faculty are supposed to reach, and that necessary working conditions guarantee the quality of education.

After examining both Chinese and American documents, I think China needs a similar outcomes statement and a position statement that can aid in professionalizing writing instruction for English majors and provide instructors with supportive working conditions. Even if educating graduates for the market has been the goal of English instruction, instructors and administrators still need to follow the principles and standards of the profession to ensure quality education.
Poor Teacher Quality and Outdated Teaching Methods

In addition to the impact of the “National Syllabus” and the current educational system on pedagogical choices, teacher quality is another important factor that impacts the effectiveness of writing instruction. This issue has been recognized by many scholars and administrators (Zhou 409; Dai 325; You 634; He et al. 430). If the national policies determine important educational decisions, teacher quality directly affects the quality of education (“Statement of Principles and Standards”). In China, most teachers hold master’s degrees. The number of Ph.D. holders has been increasing, but the percentage is still very low compared with that of the United States or European countries. Some teachers earn their degrees in English-speaking countries, but not every teacher has overseas learning and working experiences, which might affect their feel for the language, their understanding of Western cultures, and norms of college education.

Even if the teacher quality is not high, most teachers have not gone through a norming process before they teach (Zhou 408). When a department needs an instructor to fill in a writing classroom, for example, usually the teacher is given the textbooks and then begins teaching. Xiaoye You, who originally taught in a Chinese university and now teaches at Pennsylvania State University, notes that “During the past decades, the majority of English teachers in China were underprepared in teaching writing” (634). You’s account describes my situation; I became a writing teacher this way. While twenty years has passed since I began teaching writing in China, the situation has not improved much. A common and safe way for new teachers to handle their classes is to teach the way they were taught. Therefore, it is not hard to imagine that dated teaching theories and methods prevail. In China’s particular educational context, the test-driven educational system can only result in improper selection of pedagogies, curriculum materials, and assessment procedures.
Curriculum materials, assessment procedures, as well as classroom activities used in Chinese universities’ writing classrooms show that the current-traditional approach still prevails although some instructors think they teach through process approaches. Curriculum materials aid in implementing pedagogies and achieving designated teaching objectives. In their project “Understanding the Place and Function of Textbooks in the Process of Foreign Language Teaching Through a Survey,” Dingfang Shu and Yigang Zhang report that teaching materials, such as textbooks, have been important in China’s educational context for historical and traditional reasons (61). In 2001, these two scholars surveyed English majors and their teachers about the role textbooks play in English learning and teaching. They discovered that 60 percent of the students thought textbooks help with 50 percent of their academic success, while teachers holding the same view account for over 90 percent although they did not think it was necessary for textbooks to cover everything students learn (57). You also expresses similar views on the importance of textbooks for instructors and students. Based on his own teaching and learning experiences in China, You observes that “Once they choose the textbook, they would heavily rely on it in their teaching. In a still book-worshiping cultural environment, most students would read the book carefully if it was assigned to them as a textbook” (634). Chinese students and teachers’ heavy reliance on textbooks is related to both the traditional way of learning and teaching as well as to the testing system.

There are many examples like the above. As an experienced student and a teacher at a Chinese university, I know Chinese universities give more examinations than written assignments, and a large part of the tested contents are directly taken from textbooks. Some exams require students to recite part of the contents from the textbook, such as definitions, or some re-articulation of information. This kind of test has a long history behind it and is applied
to many classes students take. Before students came to college, their teachers in elementary, junior, and high schools asked them to recite some sections of masterpieces from textbooks. Students read or memorized textbooks for practical purposes.

Students and teachers depend on textbooks because of the multiple functions texts perform. Shu and Zhang have summarized the key functions of textbooks: “A set of textbooks should have the following characteristics: being purposeful, systematic, authoritative, and referential” (60). They mean these materials are targeted toward a certain group of learners, pass on systematic knowledge about a subject, are written or compiled by the most authoritative experts in the field, and can be used as reference books. Textbooks are thought to be perfect and error-free, so students seldom question theories or information in them. As for English learners, they need a target language environment, but clearly China lacks this kind of linguistic environment. In this circumstance, textbooks are supposed to exemplify good English, a standard that students are expected to attain. Textbooks are especially helpful for students who do not have other ways to access the language, such as TV, computers, or other books. As a result, the teacher’s use of textbooks and students’ attitudes toward textbooks foster rote learning and destroy critical thinking. They use writing textbooks the same way they use other textbooks.

Although textbooks are important for teaching and learning, they should not be thought of as absolute authority because theories and knowledge keep changing, and teaching methods need to be updated accordingly to fit new teaching contexts and new groups of students. As I have mentioned, reliance on textbooks has been a long history in China, which has much to do with the traditional way of teaching, learning, testing, educational systems and policies. In China textbooks are not updated as frequently as in the United States. In the past, we heard, hopefully it was a joke, that some teachers used one textbook and the same teaching method over the several
decades of their teaching careers. Now reprinting or producing new textbooks has become normal, but usually the one that used to be influential and popular has a great influence on new textbooks. On the whole, in China’s market, many textbooks including the old, new and imported mostly support current-traditional pedagogy. The most probable reason is that teachers or administrators in charge of textbook selection embrace this traditional approach. They choose books that support their philosophy.

Take textbooks I know and have used, for example. When I taught writing from 1990 to 2004 in China, the most popular writing textbook, *A College Handbook of Composition*, by Wangdao Ding et al., was first published in 1984 by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, the most authoritative foreign language publishing house in China. The revised edition was published in 1994. You explains, “During the past two decades, the book was printed thirty-six times and over 1.2 million copies were sold” (634); therefore, it is indeed influential and deserves serious attention. Although there are touches of the writing process, such as suggestions for paying more attention to producing drafts, both editions of this textbook have traces of current-traditional characteristics (You 642, 647), such as moving from word, phrases, to paragraphs, and the whole essay, and the division of four discourse patterns into narration, description, exposition, and argumentation. Ding is a well-known professor of English, so his book has been regarded as a model for other textbook writers. Another issue with the book is that the author emphasizes language over rhetoric. Rhetoric is reduced to diction, style, and coherence that focus on the linguistic aspect, and sounds more abstract than helpful in writing. Concepts such as audience, purpose, appeals, and *kairos*, are not touched upon, so writing as an art does not gain enough attention. In addition, this textbook does not leave much white space, which means learners are expected to read what is written there rather than create their own
writing in the spaces provided. It can be inferred that there are few writing activities, and the teacher controls the classroom. Therefore, both editions show a teacher-centered teaching philosophy that supports current-traditional rhetoric.

It seems traditions are passed on, unless people are convinced of the advantages over the old practice. I have found that some new textbooks cannot shake off the old form and contents of previously published books. For example, *Intermediate English Writing*, edited by Yuqin Hei et al. and published in 2009 by Xi’an Jiaotong University, is another example of a textbook shaped by current-traditional rhetoric. Although this book contains some aspects of rhetoric, such as audience, purpose, and writing as a recursive process, current-traditional rhetoric still plays a dominant role. Rhetorical knowledge presented in this book is neither systematic nor woven in classroom activities or assignments in each chapter. With rhetorical knowledge at the beginning of the book, it seems that students are expected to transfer this knowledge to every work they produce subsequently. Nevertheless, this plan still employs current-traditional thinking: using rules/theories to guide practice. The layout of the book shows an emphasis on writing theories over writing practices: nine chapters about theories and seven about the development of the four discourse patterns—narration, description, exposition, and argumentation. Other clear evidence includes a thesis-support binary, read-this -model -and -write -after –it approach to writing. All these are strong characteristics of the current-traditional approach. The purpose of the rhetorical knowledge and early process model serves the purpose of producing current-traditional texts that feature formulaic writing. Revision and responding to drafts are not evaluated. Therefore, in nature, this book does not look much different from previously published books. This shows teachers need to update their theories and practices in order to keep up with the development of the field and to achieve satisfactory teaching outcomes.
Imported textbooks that are expected to fill in the gap in theory and practice actually cannot perform their expected function because a certain expert’s teaching/research philosophy and ideological orientation determine his choices. In practice, we find a teacher only selects what the approaches he/she embraces. The United States is renowned worldwide for its writing programs and process approach, but it seemed none of the textbooks that I used in China was written in the procedural pedagogy, such as From Sentence to Paragraph, From Paragraph to Essay, and Research Paper Smart. A newly imported textbook from the United States, Writing Skills with Readings, the sixth edition, is another example of current-traditional rhetoric. The first edition of this book was published in 1985, and it was intended for students in community colleges. The original purpose of this text is to teach five-paragraph themes. Imported to China, the intended audiences of this book become sophomores and juniors of English majors, advanced non-English majors, as well as graduate students of English (Introduction v). Clearly, these four groups of students have different learning objectives. Therefore, it is not a good policy to select one book for students at different levels. The original intended audience, students in American community colleges, does not seem to fall into the same category as Chinese graduate students of English. Moreover, the table of contents shows signs of early process theory, such as “prewriting, writing a first draft, revising, editing”; however, this text is characterized by strong current-traditional pedagogy, such as the binary of “beginning with a point, or thesis” and “support the thesis with evidence,” a sign of “point-support” binary, which is typical of current-traditional approach. The majority of the book involves the teaching of discourse patterns, grammar, and mechanics. The book shows that Chinese scholars’ conception of pedagogies influence their teaching practices including selection of textbooks.

Although some teachers and textbook writers do not completely embrace current-
traditional rhetoric (You 643), the textbooks they write and select indicate clear features of this traditional and conservative approach, which, in turn, affects classroom practices and teaching outcomes. The most probable reason, I think, could be teachers’ outdated epistemology.

Compared to teachers in other fields, Chinese English teachers during the 1980s and 2000 did not seem to have the same pressures for professional advancement as teachers in other fields. In the early years of open-door times, it was a common practice for excellent graduates with a bachelor’s degree to be retained and become college teachers because a big number of teaching positions needed to be filled, and many more better-paying jobs at travel companies, joint ventures, or foreign companies were awaiting them. Graduate education was not common and not required yet. English used to be a popular major, and teaching English during teachers’ off hours was a very lucrative job. These outside attractions did not give them pressures, so they did not form the habit of doing research, and it seemed teaching only was enough for a writing instructor (He 7). The result was that over the past two decades teachers and administrators’ lack of a sense of crisis caused their research abilities, teaching methods and curricula to lag behind the needs of society (He 7). Their traditional values and past educational experiences heavily influence their teaching and research philosophies. Some might resist changes because new teaching methods take time and effort. Changes may also challenge the tradition and break up a relationship they are used to.

Outdated epistemologies and traditional values not only affect teachers’ work ethics and undermine their momentum but also severely impact their teaching practices. For example, when I first taught writing in China, like other writing instructors, I did not have much knowledge about writing theories or rhetoric. I could only rely on textbooks, so I also chose the previously discussed popular book, *A College Handbook of Composition*. This book has “handbook” in the
title, but it is actually a combination of a textbook and a handbook. I tried to remember all the rules, comments on sample writing and mechanics before class, and then lectured on each of them in class. Students listened attentively and took notes. Then, I asked them to duplicate the rules in their writings. When they turned in their work, I was shocked to see that their papers read really uninterestingly although the structure of many papers looked good. Students used many similar expressions and gave the same examples in support of their arguments. I could never associate writing with an art of language and creativity. Reading students’ essays was tiring, and only occasionally could I experience excitement. When I look back, I discovered this occasional excitement came from a couple of students’ adventurous acts: they broke the rules and wrote their own way, which was indeed a risk because they might have lost points. Owing to the big numbers of students, I collected one draft according to the policy made by the department. Although we instructors asked students to work on their outlines in class or let students exchange drafts before they submitted their final copies, from the drafts I found most of the corrections were grammar mistakes. Invention was outlining. I compared students’ essays to the models and also the rules I taught in class. Even if I provided very detailed summative comments, the hope of helping students to avoid similar errors in their next essay was in vain. Different writing classes repeat similar contents. Students’ progress is shown in the length of the texts they produce. My regret, I think, was the regret of many writing instructors.

From the above characteristics, we see current-traditional rhetoric has been an influential factor in both classroom practices and textbook production. Although process theory was introduced to China in the 1980s, the current-traditional approach that is thought to be conservative and less effective still dominates China’s college-level writing instruction including that for English majors. I think current-traditional rhetoric meshes well with China’s college
writing instruction mainly because this approach is compatible with China’s higher education system, teaching philosophy, the Chinese literate tradition, and China’s social context.

First, for most faculty who were educated in current-traditional rhetoric, it seems natural to teach the way they were taught, especially when they were not provided with any pre-service training. Writing is not yet a major in Chinese universities; therefore, getting training in writing instruction is difficult. Resources that systematically introduce writing theories and aid in teaching and research are scarce. In the market, most of the books related to writing are either textbooks or various testing preparations, which do not help much with teaching and research. Therefore, to teachers, updating teaching approaches through sound theoretical studies seems to be very hard, which causes writing instruction and research in China to fall behind Western industrialized countries. Some teachers are not aware that some misconceptions they hold, such as taking the current-traditional approach for the process approach, impede teaching effectively. You cites George Xu who did a historical study about the relation between teacher quality and teaching effectiveness. Xu discovered that some faculty did not learn writing during 1970s and 1980s when they were in college; therefore, when they teach, they find current-traditional pedagogy to be the most effective in maintaining their pride in the traditional teacher-dominant classroom culture in China. They lecture on the four modes of discourse, the methods of development, and the topic sentence, but exclude invention from their syllabus. With a relatively low level of proficiency, students also feel comfortable practicing writing following rigid steps: introducing the topic, writing topic sentences for the second, third, and fourth paragraphs, developing each paragraph according to the topic sentence, and drawing a conclusion (You 684). I agree with Xu, and this situation still exists in today’s China.

Second, for a long time, China’s education has presented a hierarchical rather than a
democratic social system. Education at all levels has been using “the banking concept of education” (72), a term in Paulo Freire’s book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. For Freire, in the “banking concept of education,” the teacher-student relationship is analogous to depositories and the depositor. Freire specifies that “the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (72). In this kind of hierarchical teacher-student relationship, the teacher controls everything, while students are passive receivers of information. As people say students take their cultures into the classroom, classrooms reflect students and teachers’ values as well as social problems. Although China has been absorbing Western ideology and cultures, it is, on the whole, a Confucian society that requires students to remain humble, pay respect to the authority, and seek harmony among citizens (“The Rise of Confucianism”; “Ideology in China”). Collectivism and hierarchy still dominate college classrooms. Now, even if democracy and free speech were written in the constitution and were strongly advocated in academics, students would not feel comfortable questioning the instructor or providing critical commentary for peers. For example, my students point out my mistakes after class in a very roundabout manner because they feel questioning or challenging an authority figure poses an embarrassment. In America’s democratic learning environment, students’ contribution to classroom activities may include harsh questions for professors as well as both friendly and frank commentary.

It is not surprising that current-traditional rhetoric survives and fits China’s educational context. Although this approach does not teach many useful skills about writing but emphasizes the structure and rules, “it serves to reproduce existing hierarchies by mystifying the sources of knowledge and judging students by how well they can reproduce established modes of thought,”
according to Thomas P. Miller (208). Miller points out the cause of its popularity because this approach mystifies writing and helps maintain the teacher-student relationship typical of Chinese culture. In other words, this approach supports the social system. Teachers were not aware that the traditional method resulted in rote learning and killed students’ creativity and critical thinking abilities. In his article, Qixin He notes the same issue with English instruction in China (7). Writing, which values creativity and is thought of as an art of language, became a tedious, passive, and repetitive chore. Very often, I felt bored, so did students, but then I had no way to solve the problem. I am sure I was not alone, however; there were more who faced the same difficulties.

Third, China’s long test-driven educational history and individualistic style of learning go well with the invention style of current-traditional rhetoric. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, current-traditional rhetoric belongs to inner-directed writing, which encourages writers to write independently and from their deposit of knowledge. This fits well with China’s competitive and test-driven educational system. Strong candidates for important positions are selected through examinations. So, to score high on tests, students compete and solve problems independently. Take the writing section of TEM 4 and TEM 8, for example. The two parts in TEM 4, essay writing and note writing, take up 34.5 percent of the total (45/135). In TEM 8, the writing part accounts for 23 percent of the total (45/195). Compared to other sections, such as dictation, cloze tests, and translation, students can score higher on writing more easily if they are prepared. In the past, when students felt pressured to pass the tests and the university felt it a loss of face when its students get low scores, test preparation classes were offered in the same semester students took the tests. Instructors speculated on the possible topics on upcoming tests because sometimes topics were related to current events of some familiarity to students. We also led
students to come up with possible points they could develop in the essay tests. So, what students learn are mainly the forms and rules they must present in their essays and tests.

Since professors cannot change the policies or cannot change them all at once, writing and assessment still have to work within policy restraints. Therefore, silent, individualistic, and passive ways of writing conform to the tradition of Chinese education. This might be a reason why for a long time current-traditional composing strategies can still survive even if instructors and researchers strongly promote process approach. As a result, the traditional approach still overrides the process approach.

Fourth, the Chinese first language instruction and its literate tradition share similar values to current-traditional rhetoric. Students learn the Chinese language through a current-traditional approach. A clear feature of Chinese instruction is its bottom-up approach, moving from words, to phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and finally the whole essay. Similarly, students learn the four discourse patterns in their first language: narration, description, exposition, and argumentation. Although the construction of the discourse patterns in English might be slightly different, the same terminology can definitely alleviate fears and resistance and make current-traditional rhetoric a welcome approach. Linguists and contrastive rhetoricians point out that the major difference between Eastern and Western discourse patterns is that Easterners use the inductive or spiral thinking pattern while the Westerners use the deductive or linear thinking pattern. However, based on my experience, the differences are not so clear-and-cut, and thinking in other rather than a writer’s native language is far more complicated than the terms indicate.

Take the Chinese’s first language composition for example. The Chinese are used to beginning essays or paragraphs with a description of the setting, mood, appearance, or context, and then narrating events, and finally reaching a conclusion or revealing the significance of the
event, which functions as a topic sentence or a thesis statement. They narrate, describe, or expound more than argue. Writers rely more heavily on logos but hide their ethos and pathos, which is especially true with academic writing because they are told to be objective and let facts speak for themselves. In addition, the Chinese language is highly context-dependent. The Chinese can figure out the intended meaning because they are used to this discourse pattern and are highly sensitive to the context. However, Westerners may get lost, or feel the message is vague and ambiguous. It is hard for Chinese students to write idiomatically, and their arguments sound like expository essays. Sometimes, writers do not sound friendly, and their essays are drab. In other words, they cannot handle the situation and appeal to the audience in a sophisticated manner.

Clearly, these problems cannot be solved by having students write a couple of short essays, especially when they do not study in a supportive linguistic environment. In writing classes, students are taught to think and organize ideas deductively, as native writers do, and they are also shown some examples. Beginning and inexperienced writers may use a mixed discourse pattern of their first language and English (Shuzhong Hu and Coe qtd. in Lin 15). Longxi Zhang, a scholar of Hong Kong, explains the reasons as follows: “they don’t write well or lack of a sophisticated sense of style and literary excellence, and they cannot communicate effectively for lack of knowledge and cultural literacy that are pre-requisite for an intelligent discussions of any subject in depth” (Zhang 249). They need to know the culture of the language, rhetoric, and criteria for effective writing.

Another literate tradition is that the Chinese value the beauty of language, so they pay attention to the form and style. When writing in Chinese, students use a large number of four-word idioms, parallel structures, and figurative language, all of which are highly valued in
Chinese. Because students hold a very narrow understanding of Western rhetoric, in their mind, rhetoric is the same as figures of speech in their first language. They decorate their language because the Chinese language pursues “cultural richness and poetic beauty” (Ong 87). By doing so, their language becomes even more figurative, abstract, and contains many expressions that are directly translated from Chinese metaphors (Lin 16). Without adequate support, it is even harder for Western readers to understand. Similarly, current-traditional rhetoric also emphasizes forms and the art of language. In this sense, China has the literate climate for current-traditional rhetoric. However, students’ writing is for all readers in the world, so communicating in an accepted manner is essential.

Unsupportive Working Conditions

Working conditions in China also contribute to the prominence of current-traditional rhetoric and low teaching outcomes. Although some instructors recognize the importance of the process approach in the teaching and learning of writing, in fact, they find it hard to implement this pedagogy. The reality is that their heavy workloads, large class sizes, score-worshipping and a testing educational system do not support process approaches.

To the best of my knowledge, teachers in most English departments of Chinese universities are overwhelmed by their heavy workloads. They are supposed to teach 10 to 12 credit hours’ undergraduate courses each week. These 10 to 12 hours are likely to be split into two different courses. In China, a class meets 2 hours rather than 3 hours per week. This means Chinese teachers have more students than American teachers even if they teach the same number of credit hours. The number of students makes a big difference to writing teachers. In China, there is not a document like the “CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers” that restricts the number of ESL students to 15 or less. In addition, usually a class is made up of
25 to 30 students. According to the “National Syllabus,” students have to complete 8 essays within each semester, which means they submit a paper almost every other week. If teachers ask students to produce multiple drafts as the American professors do, evaluating papers will take up too much time. Besides, professors have to teach graduate-level classes which are more demanding and time-consuming. Owing to limited teaching faculty, a graduate-level class may seat about 80 to 100 students. Sometimes, teachers have to offer a second section if the number of students that register for the class exceeds the capacity of the classroom. In addition, teachers have publication pressures in order to fulfill the quota for academic promotion. Some assume service and administrative work inside and outside universities. In working conditions like these, teaching what is teachable through the current-traditional approach can be reasonable when teachers are not really concerned with outcomes.

Assessment procedures function in support of selected teaching methods. Improper assessment procedures overthrow the chosen pedagogies. In China’s working conditions and educational context, evaluation does not gain due attention. For example, the most popular assessment procedure is holistic scoring, which conforms to the evaluation system of writing tests. However, the point behind the practice is to give a score within a short time. Related to teaching pedagogies, holistic writing assessment makes students and teachers neglect the processes involved in writing. Apparently, this procedure does not value what teachers claim they value (Broad 73). When evaluation does not support or even mislead writing instruction, valid learning outcomes cannot be developed and assessed.

The limitations of current-traditional pedagogy, holistic reading assessment, and the high-stake tests are many-sided: they impact normal instruction and mislead students to think that high scores on standardized tests are equivalent to good writing abilities. Therefore, the score and the
product become their chief concerns. It makes sense that teachers teach to the test, provide students with writing formulas, and ignore the goals of developing critical thinking and writing abilities through writing. However, real problems arise when all English seniors are required to complete a 3,000-5,000-word graduation thesis, an exit requirement. Only at that time do students realize they need to grasp more skills to be adequate for the demanding project. All teachers of English serve as thesis advisors. When they read student essays, they realize the disadvantages of current teaching methods. Many advisors complain that writing teachers have not prepared students for the task but have also neglected the nature of writing. Students and professors should know writing is a complicated and demanding process, and consistent efforts and practice are necessary. At the workplace, graduates might encounter problems that skills obtained from writing classes might help them solve, such as the necessary procedures involved in research and writing, rhetorical strategies that help them become effective communicators, critical thinking, reading and writing abilities, and providing constructive feedback in an acceptable manner. All these abilities are essential for an intellectual citizen. Therefore, reforming current teaching methods in China and incorporating linguistic, rhetorical, and social aspects of writing might bring about better learning outcomes.

A Way Out: A Community-Based Socio-Cognitive Process Approach

Writing is a complex social, cultural, and cognitive process. The problems related to the low learning outcomes for English majors in China are many faceted. China’s writing classes use current-traditional and the linear writing process model, which greatly constrains the development of students’ writing abilities. Revision, the most important part of effective writing and the process pedagogy, is ignored. Without this crucial technique, students’ writing abilities and their conceptions of writing will be tremendously affected. They do exactly what the
inexperienced writers do in Nancy Sommers’ 1980 article, “Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers.” Students just correct sentence-level errors. Most of the time they edit rather than make global changes, such as changes to arrangement of ideas, rhetorical stances, and development (381-383). To some students, revision is equal to rewriting, and it is a kind of punishment for their inadequate work rather than a procedure that helps them improve their writing. Because of such misconceptions, students write to produce grammatically correct texts but neglect the true value of writing: communicating ideas and influencing others. They do not develop ethos and pathos in their works, and therefore, they cannot clearly convey their character and authority and fail to give their writing a style.

To improve the above situation, I propose instructors in China consider teaching community-based socio-cognitive collaborative revision skills with reference to assessment standards. This pedagogy will invite students’ and teachers’ attention to the local context, the thinking process, the social aspect of writing, and revising strategies through collaborative activities with reference to evaluating criteria. Composition scholars such as Edward White, Bob Broad, Brian Huot, Peter Elbow, Asao B. Inoue, Sandra Murphy, and Richard Straub have confirmed the connection and interdependence between writing as a process, assessment, and cultures. In What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing, Bob Broad emphasizes the importance of context in examining commentary: assessment practice shows what assessors value (73), a guideline for assessing practice. Asao B. Inoue advocates a student-centered and community-based writing and assessment pedagogy. Inoue lets students create assessment criteria, use the criteria they create to assess each other’s papers, and guide their own practices. Students act as active assessors and foster writing and instruction, because they learn to consider what they and other writers value in the process and negotiate their
position, which is also a good rhetorical practice. Inoue states, “Good writing isn’t static or apart from contexts, purposes, audiences, assessments, and writing practices, as well as their modes of production and distribution” (222). Inoue’s pedagogy makes many aspects of writing come together. Such a comprehensive approach allows students to understand the complexity of writing.

Integrating Inoue’s community-based assessment pedagogy in the process and McComiskey’s post-process approach has many advantages over the current-traditional or linear process writing model. This method decenters authority, empowers students, encourages collaboration, makes assessment open and transparent, emphasizes local culture and participants’ backgrounds, and engages students in conversations with each other in the whole invention process. Theoretically, when implemented in China, this pedagogy could help students learn about the culture of writing, for example, knowing how to do writing, what is valued, how writing is evaluated, what is the culture of writing and assessing, and helps them to be critical writers, readers and evaluators. In the process, they use their cognitive capacity and social strategies, which will turn them into competent communicators and effective rhetorical practitioners with a globalized perspective. Collaboration and autonomy foster active learning and can liberate teachers from heavy and tedious but ineffective teaching. Certainly, teachers should also consider integrating test preparations, so that writing instruction also satisfies students’ personal needs and societal expectations.

Well-known Chinese scholars of English, most of whom are administrators, such as Lifei Wang, Runqing Liu, Qixin He et al., have called for Western teaching methods to be adapted to China’s educational context. In the next chapter, “Community-Based Socio-Cognitive Writing Instruction,” I discuss how a community-based socio-cognitive process approach could help to
solve some of the problems with college writing instruction for Chinese English majors.

Notes:

1. TEM 4 (Test for English Majors, Level 4) is an annual national standardized test for English majors. It is given in April every year. This test is not mandatory but highly recommended, so almost every student takes it. Because students take this test in the fourth semester, it is labeled as Level 4. The original test paper uses “Grade 4,” but I think “level” sounds more idiomatic; therefore, in my dissertation, Level 4 is the same as Grade 4 in the test paper. TEM 4, which runs 135 minutes, consists of the following sections: dictation (15 min.), listening comprehension (20 min.), cloze (15 min.), grammar and vocabulary (15 min.), reading comprehension (25 min.), and writing (45 min.). Except dictation and writing, the remaining parts are multiple choice questions.

2. TEM 8 (Test for English Majors, Level 8), running 195 minutes, is also an annual national standardized test, given each year in March. Students take it in the eighth semester; hence, Level 8. TEM 8 consists of the following sections: listening comprehension (35 min.), reading comprehension (30 min.), general knowledge (10 min.), proofreading and error correction (15 min.), translation (60 min.), and writing (45 min.). The first three items take the form of multiple choice questions.

3. The National Syllabus sets one semester as one level. In China, one academic year is made up of two semesters, fall and spring semesters. Hence, the four years of college fall into eight levels. For example, TEM 4 is the standardized test given in the fourth semester, which is equivalent to Level 4.
CHAPTER 4  A COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIO-COGNITIVE WRITING INSTRUCTION APPROACH

As I have discussed in previous chapters, Chinese instructors’ outdated epistemology, such as the current-traditional approach or the pure linguistic writing instruction mode, results in serious problems: product-oriented instruction, students’ misperceptions of writing, and low teaching outcomes. The reason is because pedagogical choices are connected to instructors’ expertise and various sociocultural conditions. In *The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers*, Ann E. Berthoff points out, “Pedagogy always echoes epistemology: the way we teach reflects the conception we have of what knowledge is and does, the way we think about writing” (11). Another scholar, Lisa Ede, argues in her well-known work *Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location* that the teaching of writing cannot be free from the context and ideology of a particular location (188). In China, forces from national policies and educational systems, such as the overemphasis on test scores, affect the effectiveness of teaching and learning. To improve the effectiveness of writing instruction, we must associate the renovated pedagogy with the problems and restraints from the site. Owing to the large class sizes, the importance of test scores, and different social and academic roles professors must perform, college-level writing instruction cannot duplicate the instruction mode of American universities’ first-year composition (FYC) courses. Instead, teaching methods that are adapted to the Chinese students and China’s particular educational context will better serve the purpose.

With China’s particular situation in mind, I propose Chinese college instructors of English composition adopt a community-based, socio-cognitive collaborative writing approach that operates in the framework of postprocess pedagogy. Two important theories serve as the
theoretical basis of the proposed approach: Bruce McComiskey’s three levels of composing (textual, rhetorical, and discursive) and Asao B. Inoue’s community-based assessment pedagogy. Both theorists emphasize student-centeredness, processes, the community, the social aspect of writing, and the effectiveness of communication. My proposed approach will adopt these concepts that enhance writing abilities. However, my approach will not combine their theories and duplicate their practices because Chinese students as EFL learners have more linguistic difficulties, and most of them are not familiar with the culture of process- and postprocess-based writing instruction. Therefore, instructors sometimes play a leading role, but their primary purpose is to model the composing process and rhetorical practices.

The proposed approach will change the habitual practices of Chinese writing classrooms and take students and instructors to a postprocess-oriented, student-centered, democratic sphere. The purpose is to help students understand the writing culture, demystify writing, and make writing assessment transparent. In addition, this approach also invites students’ attention to writing, writers, and their sociocultural backgrounds. With revision as well as assessment knowledge, criteria, and experience, students will be able to develop critical reading and thinking abilities, provide valuable formative feedback to each other, and improve their own writing. Certainly, to help students raise test scores and earn certificates from national standardized tests, instructors could include timed writing in their curricular materials, but this kind of test-type writing will not be the ultimate goal of the curriculum. With hope, good test results could demonstrate good teaching and learning outcomes through improved teaching pedagogies rather than be the sole objectives of composition classes. The benefits of the proposed curriculum lie in two aspects: 1) students will be able to improve their writing abilities through collaborative
writing activities, and 2) the communication skills gained from peers and classroom interactions will satisfy the requirements of young intellectuals for the 21st century.

In spite of all possible advantages over China’s current-traditional approach, this approach might incur resistance from students, parents, instructors, and administrators. However, writing as a professional and rhetorical practice should not only meet the requirements of the discipline but also satisfy the locality. Therefore, theorizing and exploring the most suitable approach will be the best response.

No matter how serious the situation in China is, instructors have to start from the most basic: converting its writing instruction into process-based so that students learn writing through interactive writing activities.

**Processing Writing through Interactive Invention Skills**

Different invention modes categorize writing into process-based and product-based styles, which corresponds to the process or current-traditional pedagogies, as I have mentioned in Chapter 2. To current-traditional rhetoricians, invention either does not exist or is simply outlining that happens in pre-writing stage only. In other words, current-traditional beliefs in invention show a clear product orientation and have a negative impact on students’ perceptions of writing and their writing behaviors. This phenomenon exists in China and greatly influences learning outcomes. I have analyzed the serious consequences in Chapter 3. In brief, outlining is different from invention. To current-traditionalists, outlining is making a blueprint for the architecture, a list of ideas to be covered in the essay, and is usually the first thing to do. Unfortunately, outlines do not translate a writer’s purposes, nor realize his intentions (Berthoff 24). The reason is that outlines do not entail rhetorical strategies. In other words, the effects of communication are neglected. In current-traditional classrooms, once students have a draft, they
just make local corrections, focusing on paragraphs, sentences, style and mechanics because they think the invention stage is over. Failure to consider the writing situation, audience, and purpose might cause their papers to be ineffective although their writing could be linguistically fluent.

To improve adverse learning outcomes through process-based writing instruction, instructors could adopt an interactive invention style. Scholars such as Karen Burke LeFevre, Nancy De Joy, and Sharon Crowley hold that invention turns writing into a process because invention goes throughout the whole writing process. Sharon Crowley discusses the relationship between invention, the writing process, and rhetorical studies in her article “Around 1971: Current-Traditional Rhetoric and Process Models of Composing,” defining invention as “any systematic search for or generation and/or compilation of material that can be used to compose a discourse suitable for some specific rhetorical situation. Invention may go on throughout the composing process” (71). Here Crowley points out that the purpose of invention is to generate materials or find ideas that work in a certain situation but not simply to make a list of ideas to be included in the essay. In the same piece, Crowley compares the role invention plays in current-traditional instruction and process-based classrooms. She suggests that invention was not included in current-traditional instruction; however, the process approach required invention (71). Therefore, one attribute of invention is that it extends through the whole composing process. By adopting invention in the writing class, the instructor can process the teaching of writing as well as students’ writing activities.

Another attribute of invention is that it is a situated, dialectical, and social act, and can make the instruction and writing more effective, dynamic, and sociable. In her book *Invention as a Social Act*, Karen Burke LeFevre agrees with Crowley on the role rhetorical invention plays in
the composing process, and thinks the interactive inventional mode gives a rhetor the chance to establish his/her ethos, present his/her pathos, and practice his/her awareness of audience.

LeFevere states:

For Aristotle, an individual’s character is created and expressed by virtue of that person’s existence in a community. In inventing arguments, the rhetor tries to manifest sound character; what he is will be reflected in, or possibly even created by what he says; and what he says and what he is will be judged according to the virtues valued by a group of people. Rhetorical invention cannot be viewed as a totally private act of an individual. It presupposes the existence of others and is oriented to take into account their knowledge, attitudes, and values. (46)

LeFevre situates the function of invention in the local context, associates it with the purpose of communication, and displays the social aspect of the act, all of which are composition studies strives for. Besides, LeFevre believes interactive invention also fosters creation (24-25). Based on Crowley and LeFevre, we can see invention is also a rhetorical act that enhances communication effectiveness. This method can cultivate citizens that society needs, so it aids in the realization of social roles of writing.

Chinese students are used to writing without invention as they are not instructed to do so in their English composition classes or their first language class. The traditional and dated writing practices are quite similar to what Anis Bawarshi describes in her book *Genre and the Invention of the Writer: Reconsidering the Place of Invention in Composition*, that invention is thought to be “so introspective, so individual, that it could not be taught” (60). Therefore, “writers must be left to invent alone” because “ideas and intentions not only reside pre-rhetorically within a writer’s mind, but, as suggested by the word ‘treasures,’ they are also a form
of capital that a writer owns” (60). In this current-traditional mode, students write in a private manner and display their talents and treasures in finished products. Clearly, the emphasis is on products but not on the writing process or the effectiveness of communication. In other words, the test-driven educational system and its policies are an important influence on adopting this kind of teaching method. However, rhetorical skills and the social aspect of writing that help improve the effectiveness of writing are ignored. Current-traditional pedagogy reduces invention to a means of arranging ideas, like outlining, rather than a way to collaboratively participate in the inventing activities, make discoveries, and explore rhetorical strategies that may be effective for the context and audience.

In contrast, process- and postprocess-based pedagogies privilege writers as the primary agent of invention. “Toward that end, scholars and teachers of writing have developed valuable methods of encouraging writers, alone and in collaboration with others, to discover, organize, construct, reconstruct, and reflect on their ideas and writing in ways that acknowledge and manage their agency as writers” (59), specifies Bawarshi. Writing collaboratively can definitely eliminate some of the difficulties writers face when they write alone. Many other scholars also write about functions of invention. Invention activities are not limited to prewriting activities, such as selecting topics, generating ideas, free- or focused freewriting (Sudol 241), but include a wide range of exercises, such as group writing activities (Enos 236), outlining, formulating a thesis, revising (Binkley 238-239), analyzing the rhetorical situation, deciding on the rhetorical purposes they intend to achieve and the strategies they adopt to achieve that purpose. These activities could be reached through different systems, according to Crowley. Instructors could divide students into groups, and they could also write along with students and share each other’s writing in the process (Crowley 233).
To advance Chinese students’ writing skills through writing processes, I suggest instructors first of all teach invention in their classes. In “Teaching Invention,” Sharon Crowley emphasizes the importance and place of invention in the whole writing process. Crowley reminds instructors that invention is teachable but is perhaps the most difficult part of rhetoric to teach (231). She also mentions that arguments need to be adapted to particular writing situations in order to make them fit. Crowley also corrects a frequently committed mistake: invention not only participates in the prewriting stage but also in composing the revision (233). She regrets that modern students use invention as the only means of arrangement. All these show invention, rhetoric, and composing processes are connected. Invention highlights processes, effectiveness, and its dynamic and social features. This approach is what Chinese students need.

My learning and teaching experiences at BGSU show that invention skills in process- and postprocess-based instruction help first-year students to improve their writing skills effectively. Curricular materials used in American first-year composition classes, including writing center resources, conform to and support selected pedagogies, which ensure that the learning outcomes are achieved through collective efforts. A widely used writing textbook, *St. Martin’s Guide to Writing*, the 8th edition, exemplifies a process-based rhetorical invention mode. I got much inspiration from this book, and my students became confident writers from its exercises. For example, in Chapter 7, “Proposing a Solution,” the prewriting section contains exercises on “purpose and audience” (358). Even in the preparational stage, writers begin to think about their audience and purpose. In addition, this chapter also tells students clearly that basic features of this kind of paper include “a well-defined problem, a clearly described solution, a convincing argument in support of the proposed solution, an anticipation of readers’ objections and questions, and an evaluation of alternative solutions” (360-361). To be more specific, the
Invention and Research section, (Here, I just list the questions concerning inventional skills.) covers the following inventional activities:

- Finding a problem to write about
- Analyzing and defining the problem
- Identifying your readers
- Finding a tentative solution
- Defining your solution
- Testing your choice
- A collaborative activity: testing your choice
- Offering reasons for your proposal
- Considering alternative solutions (363-369)

These questions direct writers to think about many aspects that are related to the writing assignment. By finding out answers to these questions, both with peers and by students themselves, they can speculate about what direction their writing should be moving towards.

These inventional questions that could be converted into different forms of classroom activities prepare writers for their writing tasks, help them understand their writing situation, audience and purpose, and make sure their papers display the basic features of a proposing a solution essay.

When I taught this essay, students first did not have a sense of a targeted audience, so they just put all ideas related to the topic in the essay. To help them understand the concept of audience, I changed the genre and asked them to write a letter to the person or the group of people concerned. Through this exercise, students immediately became sensitive in terms of tone, voice, and style. They understood that people in a different position may perceive the same problem from a different perspective. Therefore, a solution that worked for a group of audience might interfere
with the interest of another. To maintain consistency, students could stick to audience. Interactive activities, such as interviewing the targeted audiences, enabled student writers to test the feasibility of their proposals. When students performed well in their writing task, I thought if Chinese students were instructed this way, they could also have a better sense of Western rhetoric and the English language, which could improve their communication skills tremendously.

When I worked as a tutor in the BGSU Writing Center, very often I worked with students who had difficulty doing invention at any stage of composing, whether before drafting, in the course of drafting, or during revision. Talking to a tutor made them feel comfortable and eliminated some level of anxiety. Fortunately, the writing support resources on American campuses can solve some problems when students work alone. In fact, this kind of support can be viewed as a form of collaboration, collaboration between students and resources. For example, Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab shows that effective invention include strategies such as considering the audience, for what purpose the student writes about the topic, what effects the writer wants to create on the reader, how to achieve this purpose, what students should pay attention to when they do brainstorming, how to communicate with their audience, considering the topic from different points of view, and making a plan for presenting the ideas. All these process-based inventional activities help students improve communication. Besides, students with some knowledge of rhetoric will understand invention is a social, dynamic and situated activity. Invention is compatible with the process approach, supports the development of rhetorical strategies, and emphasizes the social aspect of writing, all of which help to improve writing skills from different perspectives.

I mentioned in Chapter 3 that common problems with Chinese students’ papers include a lack of interesting topics, no strong arguments, inadequate development, and no sophistication in
rhetorical strategies. In the current-traditional approach, students usually produce one draft and students place attention on style, so they cannot solve all these problems in one draft. Owing to the limitations of traditional pedagogy, in fact, students are not given adequate opportunities to practice the language. To tackle these problems, instructors could require students to invent in small groups and encourage them to share ideas and writing with each other so that they help each other during the writing process, from choosing a topic to the final editing of a paper.

Starting an essay could be a very frustrating experience. Take prewriting, for example. Some students become easily discouraged easily because they might expect a perfect draft even before they start writing. They are afraid of a messy draft and are overwhelmed by the difficulties involved in writing and revising. When students are assigned topics they do not like or have little knowledge about, writing becomes more challenging and boring. Thus, instead of assigning topics, sometimes instructors could let students suggest topics and then work with students on possible writing situations so that students understand the purpose of a particular type of paper. Once students decide on their topics, they could work together to find topics they care for and speculate about the expectations of their intended audience. Students do not have to wait to write until they have a full picture of the paper. Teachers could give students some time for free-writing. Then, students can share their very initial writings on their topics and possible ideas they plan to include in the essay.

My teaching and learning experiences show that writers get better ideas from collaborative invention. By listening to others’ free-writings, sometimes better ideas pop up. David Sudol confirms my observation in his essay, “A Model for Invention,” saying that students “see how other classmates respond and often get new ideas in the process” (242). These kinds of collaborative activities benefit all writers. Through this approach, we can expect Chinese
students to write more effectively than when they write independently. In such a process-based writing class, students have many opportunities to do invention together with peers; therefore, this pedagogy offers them the possibilities of becoming better writers by writing with others.

From the above, we can also see that invention, as an important feature of process and postprocess pedagogies, invites writers’ attention to rhetorical strategies. These strategies include a sense of writing situations, purposes, and their intended audiences, skills that current-traditional pedagogy does not contain. An outline does not care about how to get ideas across to the intended audiences or how the audiences react to them. The benefits over the traditional approach are very clear: invention supports the process of composing, liberates writers from rigid rules and formulas about writing, encourages collaboration, and provides them with effective means of improving their writing. These inventional activities enhance Chinese students’ sound writing abilities.

Writing and Assessing as a Contextualized Social Act

Inventional activities involve students in writing processes. There are many processes, and each student may have his or her own particular process of composing. Both sociocultural factors and literary traditions may have an influence on EFL learners’ learning habits. So, duplicating American universities’ successful approaches may not work for Chinese learners. Therefore, instructors should be aware that teaching is contextualized; pedagogies should be tailored to satisfy the local culture and the specific needs of particular students. Each site has its own group of students, proficiency, and different teaching objectives. In addition, students’ sociocultural backgrounds, values, and beliefs also influence their attitudes and writing behaviors. Pedagogies should take these concerns into consideration and be adapted to the locality.

Writing is, by nature, the construction of meaning through language. As writing and
rhetoric are contextualized social practices, pedagogies should reflect this ideology. Lisa Ede states in *Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location* that

…many scholars in composition—like many scholars in humanities—argue that the self or subject is socially constructed and is “always already” immersed in multiple and competing ideologies. No one, postmodern and social constructionist theories argue, can exist free of ideology; all perspective are partial.” (Ede 184)

From Ede’s words, we know people’s minds and behaviors are closely connected with the social context. Different thoughts stem from different ideologies, and they cannot truly and fully reflect reality if separated from the social context in which they exist.

The same rule applies to composition instruction and studies. Historically, Chinese culture does not advocate collaboration because its literary tradition, educational system, society, and all stakeholders do not support this means of learning, especially when their personal interests and the social expectations imposed on them are concerned. As discussed in Chapter 3, Chinese students need to score high on tests to get into a higher level of institution, and administrators also want good scores to justify their excellent work. Tests, scores, and the competitive educational system seem to contradict collaborative learning that contemporary scholars promote. For example, in China, political and educational systems as well as pressures from institutions lead teachers and students to put too much emphasis on results but ignore many elements that could bring about more positive results. Their attitudes toward scores resemble their approach to writing: emphasizing products, but neglecting ways to good results. Ede states her view about the relation between rhetoric and writing and the sociocultural context as follows:

After all, from the classical tradition to the present day, at their strongest and most vital moments, rhetoric and writing have been concerned with larger political,
cultural, and social good. Scholars can, however, learn to develop some healthy suspicions about these dreams, which, as Watkins points out, tend to ‘deny the specificity of location, the way in which actual practices of resistance depend on specific working conditions (28). (187)

Ede suggests that no matter how ideal an approach seems to be, it has to fit and be constrained by the local politics and systems; otherwise, it incurs resistance.

Although collaborative learning strategies typically do not seem to work in China’s educational context, it could be one of the major reasons for Chinese students’ low writing abilities. Collaboration in writing classes enables students to learn writing skills and rhetorical strategies from one another. I discuss collaboration in detail in the next section. In this learning mode, students can see limitations of an individual’s knowledge and how knowledge works in a particular situation. Ede cites Donna Haraway, who argues in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* that “knowledge is best viewed as both plural (as knowledges) and as situated” (qtd. in Ede 187). Students benefit from working together in generating ideas, peer review, and developing rhetorical skills. They learn with and from peers and enrich their own knowledge. In addition, there is no universal knowledge; what is known or accepted as true is always known in a particular context.

Through interactive activities, students understand that different stances and views may have something to do with their values and beliefs that are closely related to their different life and educational experiences as well as their sociocultural status. Usually these differences shape the way they look at the world and the people around them and influence the way they perceive and do writing. Activities such as reading and responding to others’ essays help students learn to consider whether their readers identify with their viewpoints and whether they have effectively
communicated their ideas to their audience. Gradually, students come to see that writing, including assessing activities, is a situated, dynamic, social and cultural practice. They establish their ethos and display their pathos through writing-related activities. With hope, writers will understand how writing works and how writing is done in a rhetorical situation. Therefore, teachers should not only enable students to understand that writing and rhetoric are socially constructed but also enact this knowledge in their curricular materials and arrange for activities that the profession calls for. Without collaborative activities, it takes longer for students to understand these kinds of knowledge, which may also adversely affect their writing advancement. From another perspective, collaborative writing might help with independent writing although this assumption is yet to be proven. For instance, with better strategies for understanding a rhetorical context and anticipating the needs of readers learned from collaborative activities, students might do better in timed writing on standardized tests. Such an assumption is yet to be tested, though.

Broadly speaking, assessment is a component and a form of writing, so in many aspects, assessing activities conform to the rationale a pedagogy is built on. The postprocess approach features the social aspect of writing. In accordance, assessing this approach should also cover the social aspect. Letting Chinese students know about and participate in assessment helps to eliminate a misconception of writing, which in Berthoff’s words read, “writing as a skill is the idea of language as verbal behavior” (26). Some people hold that good writing abilities come from strong verbal skills. Berthoff clarifies that “Of course, it’s behavior, but is not just behavior: language is an activity. Speaking, listening, reading and writing are acts of mind by which we make meaning” (26). In other words, Berthoff means writing is not just a verbal behavior although writing is done through the medium of language. If students want to write well, they
need to act, that is to write. All language skills can perform this function, and the improvement of
the skills relies on activities. In addition, interactive writing and assessing activities enable
students to see beyond their textbooks, model essays, and their own texts. They learn and
improve through writing in a life-like environment.

Recent scholarship in assessment stresses the social aspect and student-teacher
interdependency of writing assessment. Sandra Murphy contends that assessment is socially
situated work, so stakeholders’ background and values all affect assessing activities. Edward
White agrees with Murphy and thinks that the value of a text is negotiated and culture-bound, in
other words, it is socially grounded. Berthoff’s views can explain White’s argument. According
to Berthoff, composing means making choices, which cannot be separated from their social and
political implications (22). From these scholars, we learn that writing and assessment are
situated behaviors; therefore, assessors must take the sociocultural context into consideration.
Different students, institutions, and teaching contexts all impact teaching and assessing activities.

Considering assessing as a form of writing, assessment becomes not just reading,
evaluating, responding, and grading based on text; but rather it is an interactive process, like
writing. C. W. Griffin reminds us of this in his “Theory of Responding to Student Writing: The
State of the Art.” He states that readers’ different experiences and expectations as well as the
immediate situation all affect evaluation, so a reader may perceive a text quite differently than
another reader (297). So, teaching, writing, responding and assessment should be localized and
particularized.

An example that Chinese instructors could refer to is Asao B. Inoue’s community-based
assessment pedagogy. Inoue’s pedagogy stresses student-centeredness, transparency, and the
local context. His pedagogy gets students involved in teaching, making assessment criteria,
assessing and grading. For China’s writing instructors, this pedagogy helps to solve some issues, such as providing feedback for a large number of students, improving revising skills, in-depth communication about writing and writing assessment that the Chinese instructors feel difficult to achieve in the Chinese educational context.

Collaborative Revision Techniques with Reference to Assessment Criteria

As Roberta A. Binkley suggests in “Invention as a Strategy of Revision,” “We fall in love with our prose. I know I do; certainly my students do. The problem with this romantic attachment is that we become reluctant to change anything” (237). However, it is almost impossible to produce good writing in one draft. Usually, professional writing is a product of multiple drafts, according to Crowley (231). Many composition scholars have noticed the connection between writing and revision. In “Teaching Teachers to Teach Revision,” Toby Fulwiler recognizes the place of revision in the composing process and states, “The act of revision is the operational core of the composing process. Revision bridges the gap between one stage of creation and the next” (100). Other scholars such as Ken Macrorie, Donald Murray, and James Moffett share similar views.

Now that invention goes throughout the composing process and also applies to revision, instructors should integrate revising strategies into their classes to improve the writing quality. However, in China, owing to the dated pedagogy, current-traditional rhetoric, as well as various restraints caused by the Chinese educational systems and physical conditions, writing instructors for English majors cannot give enough attention to students’ composing processes, their drafts or the social aspect of writing, leaving students in a somewhat unsupportive learning environment. Revision, one of the most important skills of writing, is ignored, so students cannot know the real differences between a rough draft and a well-written final draft. That is, they do not gain
experience in anticipating the needs of a reader, more clearly articulating the purpose of a paper, determining how much explanation or evidence is sufficient, or deepening their understanding of the issues they are composing about. They are not clear about the distinctions between editing and revising, either.

Revising as an important skill helps with improving the quality of writing. Binkley sees the benefits of revising as helping students out of the surface editing into deep revision of the content and arrangement of their writing (237). Ronald A. Sudol clarifies editing and revising as the following: editing is a rule-based activity, and its purpose is to produce an error-free text; revising is to make new discoveries. This kind of surface revision can only make reading easier but neglected major problems like content, arrangement, and rhetorical skills (ix-x). However, in Sudol’s mind, revising is

the exercise of critical thinking to induce fresh discovery. The principle that has emerged from research into the composing process is that disciplined thinking and writing about the subject, situation, purpose, and audience of a piece of writing will improve the quality of the final product. … This is a dynamic and recursive action that allows the production of language itself to guide discovery. (x)

These explanations show revision improves the quality of a piece of writing, making it appealing to the situation and its audience. Both Binkley and Sudol see editing as surface revision but see revising as a means of improving the real quality of writing. Sudol sums up the value of revising as, “Revision is the essence of intellectual growth” (xi). I agree with him because revising requires sound judgment to ensure the writing changes for the better.

Since revision is such an important technique, instructors in China should make it a part of their writing curriculum. So, if instructors adopt a different pedagogy, teach students to
collaborate, and let them know how instructors evaluate writing and the standards they use, students can play an active role in writing and assessment. This approach involves students in the writing, revising and assessing processes, enabling them to know about writing and the culture of writing. Skills obtained from interactive activities can guide students’ assessing and writing practices.

For the above purpose and considering China’s educational context and particular policies and systems, I propose Chinese instructors integrate Asao B. Inoue’s “community-based assessment pedagogy,” into the framework of Bruce McComiskey’s postprocess theory. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, McComiskey views postprocess pedagogy an extension of the early process approach, which entails the social aspect of writing and advocates three levels of composing in his postprocess theory: “textual,” “rhetorical,” and “discursive”(6). McComiskey’s theories meet Chinese students’ and teachers’ expectations because they hope to improve students’ language abilities through language learning activities. However, for a long time, the rhetorical tradition and the social aspect of writing have been missing from writing classrooms. Even if Chinese students are taught under McComiskey’s postprocess pedagogy, they cannot solve some real problems that Chinese universities and professors are confronted with, such as large class size, heavy workloads, and pursuit of high test scores caused by the competitive educational systems. To lessen the problems and improve the teaching outcomes, incorporating Inoue’s community-based assessment pedagogy could be a possible solution.

Inoue’s pedagogy exemplifies a student-centered and community-based writing and assessment pedagogy. In his article “Community-Based Assessment Pedagogy,” Inoue defines community-based assessment as “what ‘good writing’ could mean in various context” (209). Inoue’s definition is open to interpretation because good writing could mean different things in
different contexts. This definition illustrates the core of his pedagogy: focusing on the local context. Through this changed pedagogy, Chinese students and teachers will pay more attention to the local site and its members, critical thinking, reading and writing abilities, assessment, the social aspect of writing, and revising through collaborative activities. Inoue’s major advocates agree with McComiskey’s. Embedded in the postprocess writing classroom, this pedagogy can solve some of the problems Chinese universities face. Inoue’s pedagogy focuses on students as agents, and makes full use of their potentials, which works with juniors and seniors of English majors in China because these students have already acquired basic linguistic and writing abilities. However, China’s large class size makes it almost impossible for instructors to conference with students or to provide feedback on multiple drafts.

Although well-known composition scholar Peter Elbow questioned whether Inoue used one set of criteria to evaluate all writing in the course (86) or “misinterpreted the multiple and competing values” (Inoue 228) employed in the community, Inoue’s pedagogy is pioneering in that he empowers students by letting them control assignments, set assessment criteria, and use the criteria they create to assess each other’s papers. This practice demystifies writing assessment and makes it transparent. In his essay, Inoue introduces in detail the approach which has been implemented over three semesters at a land grant university in the U.S. and how it works in classrooms. Inoue summarizes the features of this pedagogy as the following:

It promotes a classroom in which students take control of all writing assignments, their instructions, assessment criteria, and the practices and reflective activities that go along with their writing. It encourages a community of writers that are implicated in each other’s writing and assessment practices, and get them to critically engage with these practices. (208)
This kind of assessment turns students into active readers and assessors and fosters writing and instruction. In this process, they learn to consider what they and other writers value in the process and learn to negotiate their position in the practice. Inoue says, “Good writing isn’t static or apart from contexts, purposes, audiences, assessments, and writing practices, as well as their modes of production and distribution” (222). This shows that Inoue’s mode brings many aspects of writing together, which is especially needed in China. This pedagogy combines the teaching of writing with assessment and enables students to assess themselves, take active learning stances in the classroom, make assessment and writing work in their contexts, and turn students into “self-conscious, reflective writers” (209). Inoue emphasizes that “effective and productive assessment, like writing to communicate, is done in community by community members,” and that rubrics and assessment practices are reflected, theorized or updated (210). The whole class operates in a dynamic community where students play the key role. More importantly, students reflect on their behaviors and renew rubrics so that everything maintains the best working condition.

In spite of the various advantages of Inoue’s pedagogy, Chinese instructors should not completely copy Inoue’s teaching mode. I call my proposed approach “a community-based socio-cognitive writing instruction approach.” I partially adopt Inoue’s pedagogy but do not abandon the cognitive aspect of writing. Chinese students learn English as a foreign language, and it is natural they have more linguistic difficulties. It would be a win-win strategy if they could improve their linguistic and communicative competence through writing, as Emig argues in “Writing as a Mode of Learning.” Nevertheless, I do not want students to mistake writing for a clear-and-cut linear process that is made up of prewriting, writing, and rewriting. Instead, they should be instructed in the recursive and the complicated nature of writing processes as well as the culture of writing. For instance, the writing culture may include writing, revision, assessment,
rhetorical strategies, and how these skills develop and are used in actual writing and assessment. Inoue did not assess, evaluate, or grade students’ writing, but they still received course grades and assessments on everything they wrote (210). EFL learners without learning experiences in English-speaking countries will feel it difficult to accept such a drastic change. Therefore, instructors should explain how the pedagogy operates and walk students through the process at the beginning. For example, instructors should show or discuss with students what elements to consider when they assess student essays, how to provide rhetorical feedback and read peer feedback critically, and how to revise according to peer commentary. In addition, students should also know about grading in writing. Anyway, grading is performed by people who have their own sociocultural values; thus, absolute accuracy is hard to reach in writing assessment. Instructors should let students be aware of this and teach them how to deal with disagreement when it occurs.

Every pedagogy has some theories behind it. In the next part, I will elaborate on how my proposed curriculum works and the rationale for the approach.

*Operation of the Pedagogy*

Duplicating Inoue’s pedagogy would not be a good idea because the linguistic environment, students’ proficiency, and the educational context are different. Therefore, I base my approach partially on Inoue’s pedagogy but make it more adaptable to China’s context. While my approach emphasizes student-centeredness, I also invite instructors to participate in and exemplify important practices and provide assistance when needed. The operation of the pedagogy includes the following main parts:

- *Group Work.* A normal size of English composition class for English majors is about 30 students. This is a big size for writing classes. I suggest a class be
divided into groups of five or four depending on the exact number. By sharing their writings and life experiences, students can get to know each other’s backgrounds, values and beliefs, and their habits. Students are expected to participate in class and group discussions actively, which may include whole class and group discussions, providing formative feedback for peers, creating rubrics together, reflecting on their own writing, assessing papers, and updating rubrics.

- **Student Role.** Students play a central role in the class. They will write alone and with others. They are not only writers but also readers, assessors, contributors, and designers of the class. Acting as group leader in turns allows them to develop leadership abilities.

- **Teacher Role.** Instructors play the role of coach, facilitator, consultant, and group member. He/she assigns readings for each unit and gets ready for directing students to difficult questions students cannot answer themselves. Instructors can sometimes participate in group activities and co-evaluate with students. Considering the EFL learning environment, the instructor should show students in the beginning of the semester what to include in rubrics, how to rhetorically and critically read and comment on a piece of writing, how revising should be done, and give them a general idea of how the pedagogy works. When students disagree on the grades assigned, the instructor can discuss the issue with the writer, the group leader or members about it.

- **Assessment Procedures.** For the proposed curriculum, the assessment procedures include the following sections:
  
  - Teacher facilitated teaching, writing, and assessing
To EFL learners, it will be a big challenge to take control of assignments, evaluation, and course scores. Thus, I suggest instructors participate in students’ activities in order to keep up with the feasibility of the pedagogy. During the first two weeks, the instructor can exemplify and walk students through the reading, discussion, writing, and assessing process or evaluate with students so that students can follow suit during the remaining weeks.

- Mid-term feedback

Because one semester in China is usually made up of 20 or 21 weeks, a mid-term evaluation seems necessary. The instructor could work with a group leader elected by students and provide mid-term feedback for each student. The instructor could ask students to take turns acting as group leaders. For example, each unit changes its group leader every 2 weeks. In this way, every student has the opportunity to take leadership and play different roles in class. When students do not agree with the comments or scores given to them, they should be allowed to discuss with their group leader and the instructor together. A mid-term check can facilitate cooperation during the latter half of the semester.

- Final evaluation and appealing

At the end of the semester, the instructor could let students peer evaluate students’ portfolios within each group. Portfolios, a collection of student works, include notes, freewriting, drafts, feedback from peers, mid-term feedback, and an end-of-the-semester reflection. Then, the instructor can randomly select less than 30 percent of the portfolios and examine the
accuracy of the grades. Less than 30 percent ensures that students can still play a leading role in the class. After the instructor releases the final score, there should be some time for students to negotiate their scores with the instructor if they do not think their grades are fair.

- **Timed Writing.** This part trains students’ test-taking skills for standardized tests. In China’s educational context, timed writing still has its place in spite of its drawbacks because large and important tests, such as TEM 4, TEM 8, TOEFL, GRE, and many others, contain timed writing sections. As students have to write under great pressure and in a limited time, their performance is usually different from their classroom writing, so some practice preparations are necessary. Important standard tests usually contain two categories of impromptu tests, tests based on personal experience and tests based on given texts. The instructor assigns topics and asks students to write within the time limit. The whole class could read some sample essays, analyze the rubrics the testing committee uses, and practice assigning scores. In the remaining practice sessions, the instructor could also let students evaluate each other’s papers according to the rubric. When used wisely, this procedure can provide testimonies about whether timed writing skills improve when students have grasped the rhetorical, writing, and assessing knowledge.

Nevertheless, timed writing should not constitute the major part of the whole assessment procedure because this practice contradicts contemporary writing theories. Scores from impromptu writing may not demonstrate what students learn in class, neither do they show writer’s writing processes and progress.
Rationale for the Pedagogy

An awareness of assessment criteria enables students to look at their own and their peers’ writing from an evaluator’s perspective. Institutions like the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Council of Writing Program Administration (WPA) have confirmed and specified the function that assessment performs in writing instruction. According to the CCCC Writing Assessment: A Position Statement, “Writing assessment is useful primarily as a means of improving teaching and learning” (online). An appropriate assessment procedure helps teachers to make the right pedagogical choices and positively influences students’ attitudes and guides their writing practices. Another document, the NCTE-WPA White Paper on Writing Assessment in Colleges and Universities directs assessment to the right track by specifying that “Writing assessment should place priority on the improvement of teaching and learning” (1) and “should positively impact pedagogy and curriculum” (2). So the most important purpose of assessment is not to judge but to improve and enhance teaching and learning.

Process-based pedagogies make feedback and revision their prominent features; no other pedagogies rely so heavily on formative feedback. Formative feedback refers to the feedback provided when the writing is still in progress, while constructive feedback helps writers to improve the quality of their writing through revising activities. When process pedagogies are widely used in writing classrooms, instructors begin to evaluate students’ progress and their writing processes by looking at all drafts they produce. In writing assessment, a portfolio consists of “multiple writing samples written on different occasions and in various rhetorical modes” (Brossell qtd. in Yancy 138). With different genres and multiple tests, this assessment should be more valid than single sample evaluation. In addition, portfolios allow assessors to see a writer’s processes and progress as well as the context.
When students are involved in creating rubrics, the criteria used in evaluation and the assessment procedures are made more transparent. This practice demystifies assessment, letting students know the operation of the assessment system. Assessment is not an arbitrary act; it is done according to localized standards. Writing without knowledge of assessment criteria gives students the impression that writing and assessment are not guided by research and theory (Rhodes qtd. in Fischer 172). Students fail or get low grades because their evaluator does not like his or her writing. This happens when students do not understand the intent of and theories behind some writing activities designed for them. However, standards are made by particular people in a particular context and serve a particular purpose. This transparent and collaborative assessment process enables students to become their own evaluators. They learn from their own experience that teachers are not the authority figures in the classroom.

Recent scholarship in composition studies shows that assessment reinforces instruction as well as guides students’ writing and evaluating practices, and more emphasis is placed on the community and local context because each classroom has its own characteristics. Sonya C. Borton and Brian Huot state in “Responding and Assessing” that “Assessment is an important component of learning to compose with rhetorical effectiveness. When we help students learn to assess their own compositions and the compositions—the texts—that others produce, we are teaching them valuable decision-making skills they can use when producing their own texts” (1). From the quote, we can see that writing instruction, assessment and writing practice are related. Not only that, formative evaluation, the kind of evaluation “that provides feedback to students while they are still working on assignments or project” (2) not only conforms to the process pedagogy but also shows that assessing practice values learning and teaching process over the product. Bob Broad specifies Borton and Huot’s framework and proceeds to spell out
what teachers should value in assessment. In his book *What We Really Value: Beyond Rubrics in Teaching and Assessing Writing*, Broad emphasizes the importance of context in examining teacher commentary (73). To be reliable, the assessor should combine context with text. For Broad, a good assessment practice is to evaluate what a teacher claims to value (73).

Another important feature of the proposed pedagogy is that it encourages collaborative learning, which EFL learners need. Russian psychologist, Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky’s concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD) works as a rationale for collaborative learning, and it shows why and how collaboration helps learners. ZDP entails

- two developmental levels in the learner: the actual developmental level, which is determined by what the learner can do alone, and the potential level of development, which can be established by observing what the learner can do when assisted by an adult or more capable peer. Thus, Vygotsky recognized the contribution that others, the social medium, make to individual learning. (qtd. in Guerrero and Villamil 52)

The ZDP concept could be a theoretical basis for collaboration in ESL writing classrooms, as it has already been acknowledged that working with a peer could possibly awaken the potential of writers through a social act immersed in a specific cultural environment. In other words, writers in the collaborative learning environment can learn from each other and achieve better results than study alone.

Another concept by Vygotsky and Luria is “scaffolding” (qtd. in Guerrero and Villamil 52), which means to control, regulate, and intervene only when needed. Scaffolding makes it clear that the success of writing is determined not only by the tutor’s theory and skill about writing but also a theory of tutee’s performance. Writers in collaborative writing are like tutors
and tutees. A more recent application of the concept of scaffolding is Lidz’s scale for measuring mediated instruction which implies that peer interaction in the writing classroom means providing support, encouragement, and prompts when necessary that help learners to move ahead when ready (qtd. in Guerrero and Villamil 52). Thus, interaction or collaboration in the writing classroom helps student writers to develop their writing skills when they are adequately prepared. In China, students usually get less individual attention from the teacher, but need assistance with writing. Thus, by learning how and what to do in peer review or other interactive activities, students develop critical reading and writing abilities. They can make wiser decisions on how to improve their writing. Once they form the right writing habits, students can become more self-regulated, more independent writers and revisers (qtd. in Guerrero and Villamil 64). They no longer rely solely on the teacher to solve their problems.

Scholars such as Kenneth A. Bruffee, Rebecca Moore Howard, Julia M. Gergits and James J. Schramer agree that collaboration enhances social skills, autonomy, and independence, and leads to successful results through teamwork. In “The Case for Collaborative Scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition,” Geraldine McNenny and Duane H. Roen described the relationship between group members as that of marriage and each needs to be committed to others (305). Writing by nature is a social instead of a private act. Bruffee agrees with Clifford Geertz, and states in “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind’” that “Human thought is consummately social: social in its origins, social in its functions, social in its form, social in its applications” (420). Bruffee furthers that “thought is internalized conversation, thought and conversational tend to work largely in the same way” (420), so the writer’s all writing activities are social acts. He/she needs to converse and share his/her thoughts and writing in the shared community with his/her audience. Similarly, in “Collaborative Pedagogy,” Rebecca Moore
Howard sums up the benefits of collaborative learning: “Students who work together learn more and retain more” (54) and this pedagogy levels student-teacher hierarchy (59), which helps to lessen writing anxiety. Feedback and support from different students help them to develop autonomy and to learn social skills (60-62).

However, like everything else in the world, collaboration has its own drawbacks. Julia M. Gergits and James J. Schramer define the nature of collaboration as “a messy process, marked by conflict, disagreement, and difference” (218). Classrooms become “contact zones between often conflicting cultures” (Gergits and Schramer 221). The problem is that students “maintain social amity at the expense of constructive criticism” (Gergits and Schramer 223). This could be a big problem in China, because, the state ideology of China, Confucianism’s pursuit of order and harmony is still a huge influence on people’s thoughts and behaviors (“The Rise of Confucianism”; “Ideology in China”). This ideology might conflict with constructive feedback. Chinese people feel comfortable complimenting but embarrased expressing different opinions even if they are helpful to writers. In reality, writers need feedback that addresses their problems and shows directly what they should do. Harsh comments are needed sometimes. Therefore, through instruction about writer responsibilities, students will understand that different opinions help students to look at issues from multiple positions and perspectives. In the activities, students learn to negotiate rhetorical decisions. Hearing different voices help them to sharpen audience awareness and to be aware of their ways of communication.

Because of the drawbacks of collaboration, disputes and negative tales arise; therefore, split opinions about collaboration come into being. In “Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning,” John Trimbur argues to develop a critical practice of collaborative learning (462). He views collaborative learning “not merely as a process of consensus-making
but more important as a process of identifying differences and locating these differences in relation to each other” (470). Trimbur assigns more importance to dissensus as difference makes writers “imagine alternative worlds and transformations for social life and labor” (477) and experience “a heterogeneity without hierarchy” (477). In a collaborative learning environment, students can experience equality and the freedom to different opinions, which might be good for students who are sensitive to hierarchy.

Timed writing or essay tests must be a component in China but should not be a major part of the teaching materials. The reason is that “The score suggests certain abilities that may or may not show up under other conditions. It is unwise and unprofessional to generalize about a student’s ability on the basis of one test score without mother evidence” (White 161). In China’s sociocultural context, examinations and scores cannot do without. However, if too much emphasis is placed on timed writing, this practice not only causes students to aim at high scores and formulaic writing and become pragmatic writers but also goes against the nature of writing, such as process, collaboration, and creativity.

In sum, the proposed pedagogy has many advantages that the traditional approach does not have. If an approach can solve some problems, and at the same time improve students’ writing, assessing, rhetorical and social skills in the classroom, it should be tested in China’s context.

Fitting the Chinese Educational Context

In spite of some benefits, this postprocess approach will surely encounter some level of resistance. I imagine the resistance could come from students and their parents, instructors, and administrators. On the one hand, Chinese people may think that assessing homework and grading it are a teacher’s responsibility. Although this approach empowers students and enables them to
develop many skills that the traditional approach cannot offer, all stakeholders might question this approach. We have to admit that “It will always be difficult to step outside of our own ideologically and materially grounded experiences” (Ede 193), and the same is true with the implementation of this teaching method. However, as professionals, we need to respect the professionalism of the field. We need to adopt suitable approaches for better teaching and learning outcomes. On the other hand, collaboration does not seem to go along with China’s test-driven educational system. Writing and assessing as rhetorical practices have their own functioning conditions. For example, students are encouraged to collaborate in such activities as writing, revising, and assessing that can positively impact writers. Relying on the skills they obtain from collaborative activities, it is possible that they could write better without collaboration. Ede reminds us that “resistance in the practice of theory is situated and thus cannot be determined on an *a priori* basis” (202). One theory might encounter resistance in one situation but might work in another. Scholars should hold a dialectical view.

The best method is the one that works in the context. As teachers cannot teach free from the constraints from the policies and educational systems, they should try to find a balance between innovations and restraints. For example, teachers in China could include timed writing in their course materials because the whole society attaches importance to test scores, and ignoring tests is simply impossible. In “Evaluating Impromptu Writing Based on Personal Experience,” Edward M. White writes, “…much research has demonstrated that student performance on [impromptu] writing tasks will vary, sometimes greatly, from one kind of assignment or circumstance to another” (119). In the same piece, White cautions teachers that “essay examinations could be a powerful way to help students understand some of the quality differences that distinguish successful writing from unsuccessful writing” (120). White means
that students’ performance on the site has an impact on test scores. Writing under pressure and within a limited time is different and challenging. Because of this feature, it is necessary to provide training for students. At the same time, writing such short essays tends to be formulaic and requires good reading skills so that the writing can meet the expectations of prompts. Because its purpose is to score high and its audiences are the raters, in this sense, timed writing is different from classroom writing and cannot truly demonstrate a student’s real writing abilities. Therefore, timed writing should be viewed as just one genre among many to employ. Essay examinations have limited uses in life, so this kind of writing and the holistic scoring used with it should not be the major content of any writing classes, no matter the level. In each semester, several practice sessions will be enough. We should remember White’s words that “It is unwise and unprofessional to generalize about a student’s abilities on the basis of one test score without other evidence” (161).

Through the proposed approach, student writers will have more opportunities to improve their writing, revising, and assessing abilities, practice rhetorical strategies, and enhance their people skills through interactive activities. Students who receive this kind of training will become effective communicators in their future careers. From a theoretical perspective, this approach can solve some problems with Chinese college-level writing instruction. However, my speculations about these positive results wait to be tested. Certainly, with more evidence and observations from China’s writing classrooms, I will update the proposed curriculum. Improved teaching pedagogies come from updated expertise in the field, a future-oriented view, and innovative approaches. Therefore, professional development for instructors is essential. In Chapter 5, I recap the key points I have discussed in this dissertation, propose professional development opportunities for Chinese instructors, and discuss the contributions and limitations
of my study as well as my future research agenda.
CHAPTER 5  LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

In this dissertation, I examined college-level writing instruction for English majors in China based on the scholarship in rhetoric and composition and my own teaching and learning experiences in an American and a Chinese university. I explored the major causes of low teaching outcomes from academic and sociocultural perspectives. The reasons may lie in the following aspects: China’s particular sociocultural context, educational systems and policies, students’ linguistic proficiency, the Chinese language literate tradition, students’ perceptions of writing, but most important of all, teachers’ improper choice of pedagogies.

Looking back and reviewing U.S. composition history and China’s writing instruction, I have discovered that understanding the similarities and differences between U.S. first-year composition instruction and composition instruction for English majors in Chinese universities will be of great value to Chinese instructors. A major similarity is that, for a time, current-traditional pedagogy dominated both sites. However, the biggest difference is that the U.S. successfully completed the paradigm shifts from product-oriented instruction to process- and postprocess-oriented instruction and has achieved dramatic progress in the field. In contrast, in China, the traditional approach still occupies a position in writing classes, and holistic assessment remains the major assessment procedure. China’s practices cause its writing instruction to be more test-driven and formulaic, which results in its lagging behind the trend of the professional field.

To improve the situation, I proposed that Chinese writing instructors adopt process and postprocess-based approaches, such as Bruce McComiskey’s, and integrate Asao B. Inoue’s community-based assessment pedagogy into its framework, which I referred to as “community-
based socio-cognitive collaborative instruction” throughout this dissertation. One pedagogical advantage of this approach over the current-traditional approach is clear: writing instruction does not pay attention only to the cognitive aspect, but also to the three levels of composing—textual, rhetorical, and recursive, as McComiskey suggested (6). Thus, it entails language, rhetorical strategies, and the social aspect of writing, all of which improve students’ skills. This approach should be able to produce graduates with qualifications that the 21st century seeks. Another advantage is that this approach features a pattern of community-based learning, teaching and assessing, which gives attention to the locality or the community, views writers as agents, emphasizes students’ backgrounds, and assesses what they learn from the classroom.

When I proposed the approach, I took into account the local culture, such as national socioeconomic conditions, educational policies and systems, departmental and institutional requirements, working conditions, teacher quality, and student proficiency. This approach empowers students and liberates instructors from heavy grading and gives them time to learn new ways to arrange for effective classroom activities. Students learn to be critical readers, writers, revisers, assessors, and class planners, performing many academic tasks that were formerly teachers’ responsibilities. Theoretically, this curriculum not only solves some of China’s pedagogical issues but also falls into the current trend of the field of composition studies. At the same time, China should rethink its future direction of composition instruction.

Future Direction of Composition Studies

Teaching as a rhetorical practice should be site specific, which means pedagogies should fit the local culture and a particular group of students, and satisfy the needs of a given time. Although the United States takes a lead in the study of rhetoric and composition instruction, problems also exist in teaching practices. However, the ways American instructors have adjusted
their approaches for the sake of better outcomes will be enlightening for Chinese instructors of English composition. Looking back, we discover that at the beginning of the process movement some instructors claimed to teach their classes with the process approach but instead still taught rules about writing, emphasized structure and accuracy, and produced current-traditional texts while ignoring writing processes and the social aspect of writing (Pullman; Crowley). Crowley points out that this phenomenon still exists in current composition classrooms in the United States (qtd. in Bloom 275). There are other problems, such as a shortage of resources and conflicts for educational resources between compositional professionals and external assessment communities (White qtd. in Bloom 276). Yet instructors and scholars persist in searching for ways to reform the instruction practices. From the current-traditional era to the process and postprocess eras, each step demonstrates advancements in theory and application. At the turn of the century, scholars noticed that “Composition...is currently undergoing major changes in concept, theory, and research, which invariably affect pedagogical theory and practice” (Loom, Daiker, and White xi). In other words, the major concept, theory, and practice concerning composition instruction changed, which should be reflected in pedagogical choices. Updated theories and pedagogies that fit the changed circumstances should be one essential part of an instructor’s intellectual responsibility. Clearly, China falls behind in pedagogy renovation. How can China catch up?

Looking to the future, I think instructors in China should reconsider their position in the new social and economic conditions of the world as well as the expectations society puts on young Chinese intellectuals when they conduct curriculum reform. They could refer to what is going on in the United States. Betty Youngkin of the University of Dayton has suggested our field adopt Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes’ term “new geography of composition” (Daiker 2). I
also suggest Chinese scholars and instructors draw China’s own “local map of English composition” in the larger context of the “new geography of composition.” Lynn Z. Bloom says, “To the extent that any endeavor, any academic field, is alive, it is ever changing; any map of that field must be continually redrawn” (274).

One clear tendency is that the field of rhetoric and composition is expanding its geography to cultural studies (Berlin 223) and “intellectual action and social involvement” (Flower 252). From Berlin and Flower, we learn that writing classes do not just teach writing abilities but expand to humanities that concern writers’ involvement. In Flower’s words, with the implementation of rhetorical literacy, the focus of writing instruction moves from “texts to social practice and personal acts” (252). Students are encouraged to effect changes through their words and actions. In this new teaching context, teachers, students, and the teaching of writing take up a more important location than in the past (Daiker 4-5). Two examples show teachers’ and students’ role change. According to Flower, teachers are expected to be “skilled negotiators at sites of social, political, and academic conflict” (qtd. in Daiker 4). These words mean teachers are not just practitioners; they will embody what their profession promises to display. For example, they do not just teach rhetoric in the classroom; they perform a rhetor’s role at various sites of conflict. In other words, teachers do what they teach their students to do: participate in persuasive activities. Students will also play more important roles in the field of assessment (Daiker 5). They are welcome to get involved in assessment because assessing activities help with teaching and learning, which, in turn, ensures better learning outcomes. (See Chapter 4.) Clearly writing classes have crossed the boundaries of the field and become multicultural and multidisciplinary.

Relating the new demands of the field to China’s dominant pedagogy, I do not think a purely linguistic approach can satisfy the needs of the field and the times. In the world, Chinese
students will be negotiators in increasing cultural, educational, and business co-operations with native English speakers or people who communicate in English. Thus, cultural, social, and rhetorical knowledge and strategies constitute an essential part of their knowledge repertoire that ensures effective communication with people from different sociocultural backgrounds. Therefore, when Chinese scholars and instructors draw their own “local map of English instruction” to implement curriculum reform, they should add cultural studies and techniques in dealing with cultural differences to their agenda. They should exemplify through teaching practices and actions that while language is important in communication, language is not the only factor that affects communication. Their tolerance and understanding of cultural differences, for example, might help with the success of communication. I hope Chinese instructors can bear in mind James A. Berlin’s words in “English Studies, Work, and Politics in the New Economy”: within a democratic society, English studies, including both literature and composition, must have an expanded educational role. We must foster an openness to the differences of other cultures, at home and abroad, by expanding the literary canon and by taking cultural difference as the subject of writing courses. (qtd. in Daiker 3)

In the new century, like many countries in the world, China has to face cultural, ethnic, and racial problems. If education can prepare students for these ever complicated issues, graduates will be able to cope with many similar situations at work with ease. Therefore, future-orientation should be a characteristic of composition instruction.

Implications: Professional Development

Based on the above, composition classes will teach content that traditional pedagogies rarely cover. This change pushes Chinese scholars, instructors, and administrators to face and
meet new challenges. Not only should the contents of writing classes be broadened, but all faculty and administrators should also update their theories and practices of writing and teaching and assessing writing. They need new perceptions of the profession and the field. So, passive acceptance of existing theories is not enough because every theory is formed in a particular time, place, and context and serves that locality. Instead, such professionals should have the ability to adapt theories to the local culture and form their own theories that can best serve the local needs. Writing instruction and theoretical studies in China lag behind the field; therefore, professional development seems essential and urgent.

Scholarship in writing program administration and my own experience of going through graduate teaching assistant (GTA or TA) preparation in the United States have made me realize the importance of this norming process. Such preparation as a part of professional development should be of help to Chinese instructors and administrators. Faculty quality is directly related to teaching outcomes, as I have discussed in Chapters 3. Writing staff preparation helps inexperienced and inadequate instructors learn about the profession, their program/ institution, and the field. In Preparing to Teach Writing: Research, Theory, and Practice, Williams J. Carpenter states, “Professional development is an enculturation device, an introduction to the ways and means of a field…” (159). So, this is a process of knowing the norms, the culture of the field, its major teaching methods, and the goals teachers are supposed to reach. Professional development should be the first step of entering the teaching profession. Thomas L. Hilgers and Joy Marsella express similar but extended views in their book, Making Your Writing Program Work: A Guide to Good Practices. They stress that teacher training is initially intended to ensure that teachers fulfill required tasks. However, over time its significance is seen as a means for better performance and professional advancement. Hilgers and Marsella also state that this kind
of training should be part of a program’s responsibilities.

The goals of professional development lie in two aspects: first, instructors have to meet the requirements of the students, the program, the department, the administrators, the institution, and the field (Reid 245; Ward and Perry 117); second, professional development aims for a higher degree of expertise (Ward and Perry 126), which is essential for program/institutional development. Another scholar, Ernest L. Boyer, also recognizes the necessity of professional development and its relation to good teaching results, and states, “good teaching means that faculty, as scholars, are also learners” because “[p]edagogical procedures must be carefully planned, continuously examined, and relate directly to the subject taught” (qtd. in Roen et al. 159). In a word, these scholars hold that effective teaching relies on professionalism, and training leads up to such professionalism.

In addition to training teachers with a high level of expertise, professional development also contributes to program and institutional development, according to Irene Ward and Merry Perry. To make a program outstanding, teachers should know the most influential theories, philosophies and practices of the field. Catherine G. Latterell, in “Training the Workforce: Overview of GTA Education Curriculum,” expresses a view that I think relates to faculty development. Latterell suggests faculty members should know “what philosophies tacitly or overtly underlie certain teaching practices and what theories we can consciously use to strengthen their teaching and writing” (149) so that they can balance “whats” with “whys” (Latterell 148). That is to say, teachers should know not only what they teach but also why they teach the contents. Theories are the basis of good teaching practices: “Without theory, practice can become cut and dried…” (Berthoff 3). Theories are useless unless they are applied, as people say.
Training is designed to help writing teachers to “learn how to teach, conduct research, write and reflect” and become “theoreticians of their own methodologies, self-reflective word processors, philosophers of language” (338), according to Charles I. Schuster. When teachers do research, write, and reflect on their own activities, they better understand the relationship between theories and practices. They can study their own students, test theories, revise their own teaching, and form their own theories that work for their students and satisfy the particular needs of students, the program, and the institution. As Patricia Bizzell suggests, “theoretical knowledge helps [instructors] move past individualized assumptions about the problem” (qtd. in Michel 188). Theories help to avoid personal limitations and biases, and teachers’ new theories should function within the general principles of rhetoric and composition studies.

Although professional development can cover many useful areas and knowledge an instructor needs, it cannot exhaust all problems in the classroom. Therefore, the ability of reaching out from professional development is important. Kathleen Blake Yancey’s summary of program development highlights the key points for reconstructing writing programs. Yancey reminds instructors to make programs “respon[d] to a given local need; they want to be sensitive to such need. At the same time, to design good programs, we must consider not only the local context but also the larger rhetorical contexts of writing programs” (65). Therefore, meeting the internal or local needs as well as the external or disciplinary requirements is a must in program construction.

To balance these needs and requirements, instructors need to learn to “theorize” rather than follow the rigid rules of existent theories. With the basic knowledge, culture, and operational principles of a program and the field, teachers will be able to move from “Theory” to “theory” or “theorizing.” Anthony J. Michel quotes Patricia Bizzell that we should encourage
students as well as faculty “to make the critical move from the acquisition of theoretical knowledge to theorizing as a critical, self-reflective process” (qtd. in Michel 184). Bizzell clarifies that “‘Theory’ tends to be thought of as something static, like a table of laws.” On the other hand, “theorizing” can be better thought of as a process or an activity in which one is “thinking about what one is doing—reflecting on practice” (Bizzell 2-3). Theorizing challenges the more problematic tendencies of Theory, which instructors are likely to draw on to explain, rather than to think through, their assumption. In contrast to such “law-like” prescriptions, theorizing presents “rules of thumb, which will not dictate practice, but…may guide it” (qtd. in Michel 184). With theorizing abilities, teachers will be able to adapt to the ever-changing contexts. Changes seem to be an everlasting law of an alive program (Bloom 274).

Another scholar, Ruth Overman Fischer, agrees with Michel, and holds that “Theory and theorizing, then, can be seen as an ongoing habit of mind, and attitude of movement toward making sense, a systematic means of constructing a rationale for our practice” (204). The ultimate goal is that instructors should be able to make adjustments by themselves although they may base their moves on certain theories.

However, instructors should be prepared for resistance from all levels. This psyche enables them to understand that sometimes power or personal concerns and interests can still interfere with reforms even if adopting a new methodology can successfully solve some problems. People protect their own interests and prevent all possibilities that might constitute a challenge for them. A realistic view makes reformers think critically, which might aid in their professional advancement. In her book *Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location*, Lisa Ede warns instructors not to expect their scholarly or pedagogical project to tremendously change the teaching of writing in various sites and locations (198). Ede
also reminds instructors to bear in mind that “theory circulates primarily among scholars, we may develop more realistic criteria for evaluating scholarly projects than such litmus tests present” (199). Using realistic criteria and understanding various limitations may help instructors and scholars deal with all circumstances they might encounter on their way to reform.

Even without professional development opportunities, teachers can still improve teaching creatively. Ede tells us that “a gifted teacher can overcome many difficulties—from personal limitations to curricular and institutional constraints to such material limitations as inadequate resources and texts—and that there is an art to effective teaching that can be informed by, but not limited to, one’s consciously held pedagogical views” (204). Therefore, instructors should believe they can always think of ways to make teaching better. Professional development does not just mean taking training courses. Conferences, seminars, collaborative projects, and departmental colloquium are all means to improve professional performance.

Contributions, Limitations, and Future Research

My proposed approach fits into the general framework of the “new geography of composition.” In a sense, it breaks through the limitations of traditional ESL/EFL writing instruction and will make contributions to the field of rhetoric and composition, and college-level EFL writing instruction for English majors in Chinese universities. One possible contribution to the field is that ESL instructors in the United States and elsewhere will learn about Chinese educational policies and systems, students’ first language literate tradition, situation of writing instruction, teacher quality, and major pedagogies employed as well as teaching outcomes influenced by these factors. All this information will help scholars and instructors to teach Chinese students in ESL writing classes. The Chinese culture, which represents Asian core values, will enhance the communication, exchange, and cooperation between the East and the
West.

There are several contributions to composition instruction in Chinese universities. First of all, this approach combines effective mainstream writing instruction with EFL writing instruction, which broadens the vision of EFL writing instructors. Instructors are able to look at the familiar writing instruction from a new perspective: Western rhetoric and composition studies. Instructors can interpret some pedagogical phenomena with scholarship in rhetoric and composition, turning EFL writing instruction into a cross-disciplinary subject. The proposed approach can also solve some of the problems current-traditional writing instruction cannot solve. In addition, the rationale for the approach seems to be more solid because many EFL/ESL writing theories and pedagogies originate from L1 writing theories, which help Chinese instructors to know the original research context, purpose, and targeted group of students. It is easier for them to adapt teaching methodologies to fit China’s socio-cultural context and satisfy students’ needs. Thus, this pedagogy exemplifies a community-based theorizing practice.

Secondly, this pedagogy improves students’ linguistic, rhetorical and social abilities through writing, which enhances not only their writing abilities but also their overall language competence and communication skills. In this sense, this approach can better serve the teaching objectives than current-traditional rhetoric. Clearly, through this approach instructors could create a life-like learning environment where students write, learn the language, consider their writing situations, purposes, and audiences, establish ethos, and display their pathos. These activities help students to communicate effectively. In addition, this approach helps to realize the social role of writing and display the uses of writing in different situations. The rhetorical strategies students obtain will aid in their future life and career, which is also an end of composition studies.
Next, the proposed approach empowers students by liberating them from abstract rules about writing and turning them into active learners. In the classroom, they play the leading role, suggesting writing topics, creating assessment criteria, assessing student writing, assigning grades, practicing leadership, and proposing ways to improve the curriculum. These activities make them feel their opinions are valued, and they see the significance of doing writing and peer review. In class, they act as real writers and audiences. What’s more, critical feedback from peers is helpful for revising their essays; therefore, they will become more responsible and constructive reviewers.

In addition, collaborative leaning allows students to learn from each other, solve problems together, develop autonomy, and become more active learners. In China, each writing class has large student numbers, so it is more realistic to teach students to work collaboratively. In this way, students can get different feedback from peers that train their critical reading, thinking, and writing abilities. When students encounter difficulties, they feel more comfortable when they see other students write similar or even worse papers, which, in a way, mitigates against writing anxiety.

Finally, this approach liberates teachers from heavy grading and directs their teaching focus on ways to improve teaching outcomes. Teachers will spend more time directing and evaluating students’ writing and assessing activities. They could also do more research and update their writing theories and practices. With the change in teaching emphasis, they might have more time for professional advancement that could improve students’ writing abilities.

In spite of the above contributions, I am aware my proposed pedagogy has its own limitations. On the one hand, as a matter of fact, this pedagogy challenges a tradition, which will surely incur resistance. When more attention is paid to processes and the social aspect of writing,
at beginning the text quality might decline. What’s more, students’ proficiency and perception of writing might adversely affect the teaching results. Therefore, I admit the partial and limited nature of this approach. Admittedly, I have been away from the site of my study for some time. I cannot confirm in person the most recent changes to policies, systems, or departmental requirements, nor do I have a chance to employ the proposed pedagogy in my own classes. Although the proposed pedagogy works theoretically, I have no way to discover the reactions of students, instructors, and administrators. Finally, it is hard to access the most current sources concerning my topic because online sources from Chinese universities are only accessible to community members.

The above contributions as well as the limitations urge me to experiment with this approach and further this study. The first step will be to revisit the intended site and test the feasibility of the proposed pedagogy. By teaching writing through this approach and working with students in a Chinese university, I will be able to know firsthand the pros and cons of the pedagogy. My observations, notes, and teaching journals will allow me to obtain data from my own class.

Thus, I will conduct empirical study, gathering data from students, observers of my class, and writing activities designed for students including writing, revising, assessing, and rhetorical activities through longitudinal observations and serial surveys. Data will be used to enhance the accuracy of the study. I call this part of data “empirical” because data will come from empirical studies. I will then analyze the above data, reflect on my teaching practices, form my own theories or do theorizing, and refine and update the previous approach. Finally, after several semesters’ experiment and improvement, I will consider collaborating with other faculty members to continue to work on the approach. Once I have a more reliable and valid
methodology, I plan to promote this pedagogy in the department.

I can imagine that even after revision and improvement, the updated version of the proposed approach will still have its limitations. Even so, the process of conducting research will enable me to envision problems and prospective solutions. Scholars and instructors mature in this process, as students do in writing processes.

Thanks to the opportunity of writing this dissertation, I, as a student and an instructor, will be able to apply writing theories, writing instruction and assessment, and rhetorical strategies to China’s educational context and have a positive impact on my country’s future.
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PART VI  WRITING  [45 MIN]

SECTION A  COMPOSITION  [35 MIN]

Recently government agencies in some big cities have been studying the possibility of putting a “pollution tag” on private cars. The amount of tax private car owners would have to pay would depend on the emission levels, i.e. engine or vehicle size. This has caused quite a stir among the public. Some regard it as an effective way to control the number of cars and reduce pollution in the city. But others don’t think so. What is your opinion?

Write on ANSWER SHEET THREE a composition of about 200 words on the following topic:
Should Private Car Owners be Taxed for Pollution?

You are to write three parts.
In the first part, state specifically what your opinion is.
In the second part, provide one or two reasons to support your opinion.
In the last part, bring what you have written to a natural conclusion or make a summary.

Marks will be awarded for content, organization, language and appropriateness. Failure to follow the instruction may result in a loss of marks.

SECTION B  NOTE-WRITING  [10 MIN]

Write on ANSWER SHEET THREE a note of about 50-60 words based on the following situation:

During the summer vacation you would like to invite your best friend to your home town. Write a note to him/her, extending your invitation and telling him/her how to get to your home town.

Marks will be awarded for content, organization, language and appropriateness.
According to a recent newspaper report, many sites of historical interest in China have begun or are considering charging tourists higher entry fees during peak travel seasons. This has aroused a lot of public attention and also public debate. What is your opinion? Should famous Chinese sites of historical interest charge higher fees during peak tourist season? Write an essay of about 400 words.

*In the first part of your essay you should state clearly your main argument, and in the second part you should support your argument with appropriate details. In the last part you should bring what you have written to a natural conclusion or make a summary.*

*You should supply an appropriate title for your essay.*

*Marks will be awarded for content, organization, language and appropriateness. Failure to follow the above instructions may result in a loss of marks.*

*Write your essay on ANSWER SHEET FOUR.*