



# Writing in/across the Curriculum At a Comprehensive Chinese University

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Unlike the other essays in this special issue of *Language and Learning Across the Curriculum*, this one is not about the development of a WAC program in an international setting. Rather, this essay describes research conducted at Nankai University, Tianjin, China, from June 25-30, 1999, the overarching question of which was “In what ways is writing (composition) a part of the teaching and learning process at Nankai University,

a well-respected, research-based institution?” As a WAC advocate and practitioner who has had the opportunity to observe and consult on WAC in several other international venues, I wanted to learn the answer to this and related questions, knowing that whatever information came forward would be integral to further discussions about WAC at Nankai.

Under the auspices of the University of Missouri’s USIA-funded Global Scholars Program, twelve MU faculty, all from different disciplines, were selected on the basis of competitive proposals for a two-week visit at Nankai University. Through participating in an intensive seminar and an array of field trips organized for us, our goal was to acquire sufficient knowledge to “internationalize” at least one undergraduate course that each of us teaches in MU’s curriculum. My proposal centered on four sections of first-year composition to be taught the following fall semester. In addition, I arranged to stay on at Nankai for one week after our seminar concluded. With the help of an MU International Grant and NU’s Office for International Academic Exchanges, I sought to learn how writing (in any language) is used in this top-ranked comprehensive Chinese university.

Tianjin, ninety minutes east of Beijing by train, is a modern city of nine million residents. According to Chinese fac-

ulty who have studied in the U.S., Nankai University, which enrolls some 20,000 students, is in China's "second tier" of higher education institutions. Established in 1919, NU is below Beijing University (which might be compared in China's national higher education hierarchy to the U.S. positioning of Harvard, Yale, and Stanford) and is similar in China's higher educational system to, say, the University of Michigan or Penn State. NU's 1500 professors and lecturers offer 55 different B.A. degrees, 114 M.A. degrees, and 75 Ph.D. degrees in disciplines ranging across the arts and sciences. It is known especially as an international center for mathematics. NU is a highly competitive school for students to be admitted to; performance on entrance examinations must be quite good. As one interviewee put it, "NU's graduates have 'staying power.' That is to say, NU has a good reputation and NU grads do well in their professions."

### **Methodology**

With the assistance of Ms. Zhang Wei, assistant to the director of NU's Office for International Academic Exchanges, I interviewed eleven Chinese faculty from nine different disciplines, four American faculty teaching at NU, two Chinese professionals who are graduates of NU, and eight Chinese students. Disciplines of the Chinese faculty interviewees were Chinese language and literature, history, environmental science, foreign language and literature, international business, English, sociology, international economics, and biology. I constructed an interview protocol of six open-ended questions, intended to be generative rather than narrowly focused, which Zhang Wei translated into Chinese:

1. In what ways is writing (composition) a part of the teaching and learning process at Nankai University?
2. Is writing (composition) taught at NU? How? To whom? At what point or place in the curriculum?
3. What forms of writing are required in various programs of study (formal essays, examinations, lab reports, field notes, journals)?
4. Do faculty use writing (composition) as a "tool" for teaching and learning? Are faculty satisfied with stu-

dents' ability to produce written texts? What features do faculty look for in student writing? How is writing connected to (or representative of) students' ability to think? How is writing assessed? How do students respond to writing assignments and writing assessment (willingly, reluctantly, perfunctorily)?

5. If students need help with writing, what resources are available to them (writing center, tutors, websites)?
6. Does the government have specific regulations or guidelines for student competency in writing? What are they?

Most of the one-hour interviews took place in the International Academic Exchanges's conference room. Zhang Wei gave interviewees the protocol both in English and in Chinese translation. Most of the interviewees were sufficiently fluent in English for us to converse easily about these topics. A small number either did not speak English or were not comfortable attempting the interview in English; for these, Zhang Wei served as translator/interpreter. I started each interview by describing how I had come to be at NU for the previous two weeks and by explaining that, because of my WAC work in the U.S. and other international settings, I was interested in learning about how writing is used in Chinese higher education. I also asked each interviewee to tell me something about his or her academic work at NU. Out of concern for creating an overly intrusive interview atmosphere, I did not tape record the interviews, but I did ask interviewees for their permission to take close notes as we talked. The protocol served to structure the interview process and elicited specific answers to the questions posed. But, as expected, the questions also generated a wide range of additional questions and conversational diversions, some of which were as revealing as the protocol replies themselves. I concluded all sessions by asking whether interviewees had any questions or comments they wanted to put to me. Nearly all responded by asking questions about U.S. higher education and writing or with more personal matters having to do with places in the U.S. they had studied and/or attended academic conferences. Overall, it seemed to me—and Zhang Wei confirmed—that

the ambiance of the interviews was cordial, friendly, and intellectually stimulating for all participants.

In addition to the twenty-five interviews, I also reviewed a variety of materials (student writing, textbooks, school catalogues); conducted site visits to NU's main library and the English Department library; interacted with faculty and students following my (Global Scholars-required) lecture on "Writing Instruction in American Higher Education"; and became a regular patron of the on-campus cybercafe.

### **A Note about the Teaching and Learning Culture in China**

In general, I wanted to learn whether an instructional and faculty development initiative similar in any way to the U.S. WAC/WID movement existed at Nankai and, if possible, in Chinese higher education more broadly. While I did not expect WAC/WID to have a presence in China, I was curious to know how writing—what we Americans think of as composition—is construed in this vastly different educational and political culture. As one Nankai faculty noted, "Ancient China is the birthplace of both paper and printing, so what better place to ask these questions?!" Another commented, "Of the American exchange faculty who have come to Nankai, you are the first to ask us about these things."

The other authors in this *LLAD* special issue note that U.S. pedagogical principles, especially those of WAC/WID, cannot simply be transferred to international settings, that deeply embedded teaching and learning cultures significantly affect how classroom interaction—or lack thereof—occurs. Nankai University, of course, is no exception. Like the whole of Chinese education—elementary, secondary, and tertiary—Nankai's educational culture can be described as traditionally teacher-centered. Knowledge is delivered via lectures, to students who dutifully take notes, memorize, and display their learning in oral and written examinations. Students address teachers formally, with the utmost respect and deference. Classroom discussion is minimal and never to challenge a teacher's or a text's precepts. Competitive, rather than collaborative, learning styles are emphasized. Students take their opportunities for higher education seriously. Motivated and ambitious, they work hard to meet instructors' expectations.

Having duly noted these characteristics of Chinese higher education, I was fascinated to hear the faculty I interviewed express surprisingly similar concerns to those of American teachers. Among their concerns: Students focus on studying for exams they know they will have to take, as opposed to concentrating on the bigger picture. Students' ability to write in Chinese is not adequate, and although a basic, foundational course in Chinese language is optional at NU, few take it. In China's market economy, students work toward jobs, not learning. Chinese employers look for correctness in English-language use, rather than ideas and concepts. Many students fail to meet faculty's expectations, and graduate theses are far from satisfactory. Good students respond well to writing assignments; poor students want less.

This was the context, then, in which the interviews took place. I note, also, numerous qualifications that pertain to the study: the language barrier and potential for misunderstanding that obtains because I do not speak Chinese; the minimal time (only one week) available for collecting data; the interviewees having been selected for participation by NU officials, and the corresponding possibility that their participation was not entirely free of bias of one sort or another; the relatively small number of interviews (twenty-five); and the focus on only one institution. Obviously, all of these factors combine to limit the generalizability of what follows.

One more complicating factor may have influenced these interviews, in ways more difficult to discern. Our visit to Tianjin took place in the aftermath of NATO's May 8<sup>th</sup> bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, just four weeks earlier. Our passports, which had been sent in April for visas to enter the country, were held up by Chinese officials for a period of time, putting the entire MU Global Scholars trip into question. In fact, the overall political atmosphere was tenuous. In March, U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright had targeted China's human rights abuses and her high level talks in the country were tense. In May, then-President Clinton appointed a retired military officer as the new ambassador to China. The ten-year anniversary of the Tiananmen protests was approaching, and a prominent Chinese protest leader fled to New York. China was increasing its surveillance of Falun Gong practitioners. At home, June newspaper headlines read, "U.S. and China creep toward cold war." Although virtually every Chinese person I talked with about

these sensitive political matters claimed to differentiate between the U.S. government and individual U.S. citizens (like myself), I have no way of knowing to what extent my interviewees may have been responding mainly from politeness to me or at the request of the NU officials who asked them to talk with me. Nor can I tell how their responses may have been colored one way or another as a result of the particular moment in history that I was there.

### **Discussion: Three Sample Disciplines**

Not surprisingly, writing instruction—as we understand it in the U.S.—does not exist at Nankai University. (Keep in mind that my protocol asked about writing in any language, not just in English.) There is no equivalent to our first-year composition requirement. Students are expected to command their native language by the time they enter the university. Still, according to one of my interviewees, NU's academic leader complains about students' inability to write in Chinese and urges department chairs to address this in their curricula. Students, though, have had six years of English language study prior to entering the university and at least one faculty member noted that students' command of English is better than his was when he was a student. Because many Chinese students aspire to study abroad, says one faculty, "they pay attention to English and work hard to be able to study elsewhere."

### **Environmental Science**

Also not surprisingly, the amount and kind of writing students do varies according to their discipline of study. In Environmental Science, for example, Vice Dean Zhu Lin reports that his department's curriculum "doesn't feature much practical homework in writing" until the third and fourth years. The department supports an undergraduate student-written newsletter, *Greenleaf*, with short articles and poetry, published monthly in Chinese. Third-year students take a required field work course situated in factories, at the sea coast, or in a city, that culminates in a ten- to fifteen-page report about their findings. At the end of the term, students take the data home with them, spend about two weeks writing their report, and turn it in after the semester is over. Because the writing is done over a holiday, the report is written only once, with no revision. Usually, none ask for help

with the writing. Students whose work is not acceptable may be asked to rewrite since they must pass the fieldwork component to earn their degrees. "Most write a nice report. Some are good, even excellent. Most get 75 to 95%," Lin says.

Fourth-year Environmental Science students spend an entire four-month term in a laboratory experimenting and collecting data; later, they are given guidelines for organizing a scientific report (introduction, observation, idea, conclusion). These twenty- to fifty-page theses are generally rewritten two to four times, with one professor overseeing two to four students. Grading is done by a committee of seven to ten departmental faculty in front of whom the students present and defend their work, but only the "promoter" (faculty supervisor) reads the whole thesis. Fluency, clarity of each part, and control of time during the presentation/defense form the basis for the grades which "vary." If the student gets good results and generates a new idea, the grade will be "good" or "excellent." The top two in the class are given prizes and honored by the department.

Post-graduates write "a lot" in their specialty courses, according to Professor Lin. Faculty lecture a total of forty hours per term, two hours per week. Students generally write three reports, and faculty do see improvement in the writing after the second or third. Students also translate scientific articles from English, a process that Dr. Lin describes as "not too difficult, if they just spend time on it." Masters degree students take three years to finish, half of the time in courses, the other half part-time in courses and part-time in labs. The last two "very busy" months are spent writing the MA thesis, which must typically be rewritten "a few times" in order for it to be acceptable. First, students produce a brief, general report, which the teacher reviews; students are then told either to proceed with the writing or to return to the lab to conduct additional experiments.

There is no writing center to which students may go for help; indeed, the concept of writing centers is unfamiliar at Nankai, and several faculty expressed surprise that American teachers do not always routinely provide this help. As Professor Lin says, "Here, teachers do this work." The teacher's own Ph.D. students might help, but the "promoter" must oversee the work. Typically, full professors have six Ph.D. students and four or five MA students, so they have time to work closely with students on writing, Lin says.

## History

Professor Chengbo Feng comes from a family of academicians. His father, a professor of philosophy, studied at Grinnell College, the University of Chicago, and Berlin University, and his uncle, a professor of Educational Psychology, studied at the University of Chicago. His daughter teaches agronomy at Auburn University, and his son teaches biology at the University of Cincinnati. In addition to being in the History Department, Professor Feng once chaired the Sociology Department and served as Provost of NU. He had lectured to the MU Global Scholars the week before, so I know him to be familiar with Dewey's influence in China and I know him to be dissatisfied with the Cambridge system of teaching the English language to Chinese students. When I ask him to reflect in general on how students learn and, specifically, on writing in Chinese higher education, he replies,

Teaching and learning and writing in China are changing all the time. In the Humanities and Social Sciences [his fields], we all have one thing in common—all of us pay close attention to writing. We all pay attention to composition, but from different angles, different perspectives....In History, we pay close attention to writing ability, and teachers discuss this with each other about our students. Chinese tradition says it is difficult to separate history and literature (narrative). A good historian must be a good writer. Chinese history majors must study ancient Chinese language; students do a lot of translation from ancient to modern language. This is related to their ability to understand history in China. Writing in Chinese history—especially the Ming to Qing dynasties, which have a lot of poems and historical records—is important. Few students try to use the ancient language, but it is important for skill and comprehension. Students must also take two required core courses—world and Chinese history, which are two and a half-year courses. In these, writing is important—at least three papers per term. In years three and four, they prepare a thesis. Even BA students have to defend their essays. So, from beginning to end, writing is important. Teachers correct grammar and bad handwriting, but mainly, it is logic, organization of paragraphs, subject matter, and clear expression that's looked for. Students present their papers in class if they're



good enough, and other students are asked to comment on them. We pay closer attention to content than skill. We don't care much about small technical things, though we do watch footnotes. We're strict with those.

Professor Feng describes a "famous" history course, *Writing in the Western World*, in which students translate from English to Chinese. Taught at NU by an eighty-year-old faculty member, students "take the course seriously, sentence by sentence, word by word. Students benefit from the rigid training, and it's a successful course. Some student appreciate his effort and method, some do not. The administration really likes what he does."

I ask Professor Feng whether Chinese teachers are as concerned with "critical thinking" as American faculty are. "Yes and no," he says, adding,

For history, critical thinking is expressed differently from literature. Students are not allowed to "invent" or "create" history. They must be loyal to the facts. You can't twist or change the basics. Based on facts, you can ask questions to find the truth. Chinese historiography pays close attention to facts—another kind of critical thinking, but very traditional. Recently, faculty have started to pay attention to students' original thought, in their theses, for example. Is it interesting? Is the ability there in the student to judge? What is new or different in the conclusion from previous knowledge? Is creative thought there? We try to train students to do critical thinking in history. There is a shift to this new orientation.

I ask Professor Feng to comment on a history course taught at NU by visiting Fulbright Professor Kendall Taylor, in which students researched particular historic section of Tianjin and then produced a tourist guidebook for it. His reply reveals much about his personal philosophy about his field. "She is very practical. She wants to transform history into usefulness. We faculty in the department," he continues,

are "pure" historians, far away from reality. I hate that term "pure." Students ask why should we study "x"? Many history majors have history as their second or third choice. They wanted to be in other departments and didn't

get in. It's a problem here. They love books and paper materials, but history is far away from their day-to-day reality. For example, there is a history program on television about the Qing and Ming dynasties, about Yung Jun, 4<sup>th</sup> Emperor of Qing dynasty, a big reformer but cruel to his family. He tried for the highest power and was a controversial person. A play was written and produced with famous actors that was very popular among Chinese people, but our faculty are very negative about it. They say it's not history and that it remakes history. Me, I think it makes history available. I appreciate it.

Because several interviewees have commented on Chinese students' apparent declining ability in their native language, I ask Professor Feng's opinion on this. "I can't generalize, but I think it has declined. I don't know who should take responsibility," he says, noting that

shortage of parents' time here is now a problem. And secondary education must do more. But the quality of Chinese teachers is a problem; the requirements are so big, and the number of students increased in 1949. Also, [Chinese] English teachers, even after ten years of study still aren't qualified. American students surprise me. After two to three years of [studying Chinese] in the U.S., or after one year here, they are fluent. Some are really good. Our way of teaching English is not good enough. Many times students ask me about my presentations in English....I tell them every morning I face the wall and read English loudly for twenty to thirty minutes. I listen to the *Voice of America* every day. I need daily practice.

### **Foreign Language and Literature**

Professor Ke Wenli is Chair of the Foreign Language and Literature Department and Chair of English. He received an MA in English and American literature from Indiana University in 1987. Wenli contrasts the place of writing in his department at NU with the Tianjin's famous Foreign Language University just across town. There, the stress is on orality, being able to speak fluently in the target language. At NU, students are expected to be well rounded, and writing is basic to their education. Students must have knowledge of language, writing, oral proficiency, translation, and hand writ-

ing [penmanship]. “Writing,” Professor Wenli says, “is a very good way to judge a students’ ability in language performance. You can see the actual ability.” If the student is good in English, he is usually good in Chinese, too. Students majoring in English at NU write one paper every two weeks. “We believe that practice makes perfect,” he says. In the beginning, assignments are mainly journals and diaries. Later, students move to several types of compositions—descriptive, narrative, expository, and argumentative. The department uses an English textbook produced in China which resembles a 1950s-60s American rhetoric—a combination of grammar, sentences, paragraphs, whole essays, modes of writing, and a handbook section. Professor Wenli confirms my observation, gleaned from my visit to the departmental library. “Our books are outdated. They’re very expensive to get here.” Some teachers try to use the text in the first and second year classes, but students find it difficult. Normally, third and fourth year students use it more.

Wenli believes teachers in his department do use writing as a “tool” for teaching and learning, especially in the lower stages when students aren’t adequate in language performance. But, he says, teachers spend too much effort on students’ language problems instead of focussing on thinking and ideas and creativity. Native Chinese teachers and Chinese employers, he notes, want grammatically correct language, whereas international teachers are more satisfied with students’ ability to write; they spend less time on “correctness” and more time on concepts and ideas. Like Environmental Science Professor Zhu Lin, Wenli says there is no concept of a writing center for students. If students need help with writing, they get it from their teachers and thesis supervisors. One-on-one conferencing is common.

As is the case with Environmental Science and History majors, English majors also write a thesis in their fourth year. “Chinese faculty don’t like teaching the thesis course,” Wenli notes, “because it’s too much work and a hard job.” They prefer teaching the oral English classes, which have no papers to grade. He refers me to Richard Orb, a “Foreign Expert” who has been teaching the thesis writing course for the department. Wenli acknowledges that Orb is “dissatisfied” with the experience, finding it “much too time consuming and thankless.” A historian by training, Orb has come to NU via a “circuitous route.” He’s taught at NU for three

years and is returning to the U.S. within weeks. Orb confirms his frustration from overseeing the English department's senior thesis class. Chinese students, he says, are accustomed to using *chung yu* in their writing—proverbs and pithy phrases which “save a lot of thought.” Students' writing, both in English and in Chinese, is “loaded” with these clichés he says. At the same time, on their final exam in his course, “One half of the class was really thinking and I was jumping up and down with pleasure over their accomplishments,” Orb said.

### **Discussion: Two Students' Perspectives**

#### **Pang Ling**

Ms. Pang Ling has just completed an English degree at Tianjin's prestigious Foreign Language University (FLU) and is newly admitted to NU to study science. Her father is the Vice President at Nankai and had hosted the MU Global Scholars at a welcoming dinner two weeks earlier. Pang Ling is openly nervous about talking with me, but says her father told her it's OK. “Just pretend it's your mother,” she says he had told her by way of encouragement. “It's a good opportunity to talk with an English professor.” In four years at FLU, Pang has met only four international teachers, and I am the first with whom she has had a one-on-one conversation. FLU uses the same text NU does, *A Handbook of English*. The book has some mistakes, she says, which her teacher corrected. At FLU, writing occurred only in years two and three, two times per week. Pang wrote stories about scenery. She also kept a required diary, which I take to mean a journal, but “the effect of it was not good,” she says. “Students don't have anything to write about, so they make up stories to put in them.” About Pang's senior thesis, *The Changing Status of Chinese Women*, her teacher told her the essay's point was not clear. By way of explanation for this critique, Pang comments, “I was busy prepping for my graduate entrance exam. I spent one half year studying for the GRE. I stayed up late each night, studying thirteen to fifteen hours per day. All students are quite anxious about it...Exams are unfair. They don't show our real level, and there is no second chance.”

Pang was allowed to select the topic for her thesis. “We talk in the dorm about it [the changing status of women in China].” Her paper covered politics, legal issues, economics,

education, and family aspects—all of which are changing a lot, she says. “Before liberation,” she tells me, “there were no laws to protect women. Now there are. Before, women were at home with children. Now women are in politics. I want to go out and do what I want.”

When I inquire about the nature of writing instruction at FLU, Pang replies,

Our teachers taught us so we could pass exams. They gave us advice to make our writing “beautiful.” Different teachers have different ways of doing this. All encourage us to do better. They give us marks that show “OK,” “good,” “very good,” and “excellent.” I do not think a grade is important. Grades give pressure....Teachers look for language use, a real point, grammar, figures of speech, compound sentences. Chinese teachers do not pay attention to creativity and original thought. But international teachers do; some grade just on content, not grammar.

When I ask where students can go for help with their writing, like others before her Pang replies, “We go to the teacher. Every teacher can help.” When I ask about how Chinese students respond to being given writing assignments, Pang answers quickly: “We like to do homework. From childhood this is the way. We can do it quickly, though sometimes the quality is not very high. I like assessment. It helps me change. What I get is good for me. Having my shortcomings pointed out is good for our growth.”

### **Teng Chuhui**

One week after my return from China, this email arrives from a student who had attended my lecture at Nankai on writing instruction in America:

I feel regretted that I was not able to take part in any discussion during your [visit] because I had to prepare for the final big exams. Actually, I am interested in your program. From my own experience, I felt I'm a victim of our educational program which is not attach importance to writting. If there is no specific practice lesson or training period for writting, it is impossible to that one could get much more progress in writting than last year he or

she did. We need more free writing opportunity and also teachers' comment. As for me, I find it difficult to organize the idea I want to express and every sentence is not satisfactory. I find I could not do well in writing in a short time, sometimes I hate to write. So it will be appreciated if you could give me some advice to improve my condition. Thank you very much!

yours sincerely,  
Teng Chuhui

I suspect most American teachers would find much to admire in Pang's and Teng's comments. Who of us wouldn't wish for adventurous students who, from childhood, like doing homework, want feedback to help them improve, tackle controversial subjects for research and writing, seek and appreciate teachers' advice, yearn for new learning opportunities, and want to challenge their society's systems and norms? I also suspect that many of us would find much to agree with in their statements: examinations often *don't* show students' true ability, and even the best writers at times find it difficult to organize ideas and sometimes hate writing.

### **Tentative Conclusion**

Only a small portion of an admittedly small interview sample is represented here. And clearly, a full analysis of the responses is called for. Nonetheless, I believe that more of this kind of people-to-people research in cross-cultural composition would enable a deeper, richer view of educational processes in other cultures. Much remains to be explored, especially as those processes concern writing instruction. At the very least, such studies could inform American faculty about our international students' preparation for writing and their motivations for learning. Likewise, American writing centers could be better prepared to tutor international students through the complexities of American academic discourse. But at the other end of the "possibility spectrum" exists a promising potential for exploring WAC/WID with our international colleagues. I found the Chinese educators with whom I spoke to be open to intellectual discussion about teaching and learning as it pertains to writing. And I found NU students open to the possibilities of new ways of learning, both with writing and other student-centered pedagogies. Insofar as Chinese-American and other educational exchanges center on conver-

sations about WAC/WID, there are a number of cautions to keep in mind:

1. American-style WAC/WID pedagogies cannot—and should not—be promulgated uncritically in other cultures. American teacher/researchers must understand much more than just WAC principles to engage in cross-cultural discussion about teaching and learning. Genuine interest in and sensitivity for “the other’s” culture and language is key. Significant changes and adaptations to U.S. methodologies are needed for acceptance and success in other educational cultures.
2. Social, economic, historic, political, and institutional pressures mitigate against acceptance and success of WAC/WID pedagogies in non-U.S. settings, in China in particular. For example, many American educators associate WAC/WID pedagogies with critical thinking; one compelling aspect for U.S. teachers adopting WAC methods is the hope for improving students’ ability to challenge received ideas and concepts. Chinese faculty’s expectations for their students, however, do not necessarily include this attribute. Chinese faculty and students alike are not typically rewarded for challenging authority.
3. Lack of fluency in another’s language is an obvious barrier to in-depth communication. The extent to which my interviews with Chinese faculty and students yielded useful data is due to Zhang Wei’s superb Chinese/English bilingual skill. Ideally, the American WAC teacher/researcher would speak and read Chinese fluently before undertaking a long-term project there.
4. Nearly as problematic at the language barrier might be U.S. faculty’s willingness to spend the necessary time to undertake significant research at Chinese universities. Even though the Fulbright and Foreign Expert professors with whom I visited claimed to be “satisfied” with their living accommodations, living conditions do not match American standards. This,

coupled with time away from one's own school, home, and family, make the commitment difficult to arrive at.

These cautions notwithstanding, such work would be valuable, I think, and rewarding to the adventurous scholar who attempts it. Despite his frustration teaching the thesis class, after his three-year teaching sojourn at Nankai, Richard Orb believed that "by combining the best of the distinct approaches" real differences could be made. More important, if one is persuaded by Hong Kong business magnate Kazuo Wada's often quoted 1993 claim that "the 21<sup>st</sup> century belongs to China," the contributions and outcomes from a Sino-American exchange based on WAC could be significant for both cultures.