Journal für Schreibwissenschaft

Volume 25 (1/2023), 14. Issue

# JoSch

## Concepts, Community and Collaboration

**Editors**
Franziska Liebetanz, David Kreitz, Leonardo Dalessandro, Nicole Mackus

**Guest Editors**
Gerd Bräuer, Lawrence Cleary, Matthew Davis, Lisa Ganobcsik-Williams, Andrea Scott, Susan E. Thomas

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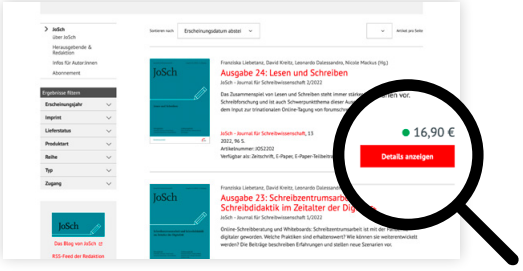


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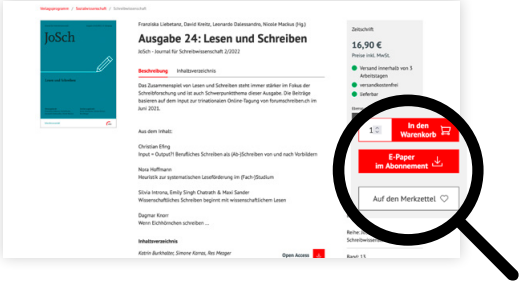

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**JoSch – Journal für Schreibwissenschaft**
14. Jg. 2023 - Ausgabe 25



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wbv Media GmbH & Co. KG, Bielefeld
wbv.de

**Titelbild:** Christine Lange, Berlin

**Anzeigen**: wbv Media GmbH & Co. KG, Hannah Kropla, Auf dem Esch 4, 33619 Bielefeld
Tel. (05 21) 9 11 01-720, E-Mail: anzeigen@wbv.de

**Erscheinungsweise**: Jährlich 2 Ausgaben (Juni, November)

**Bezugsbedingungen:** Einzelausgabe 16,90 €, Jahresabonnement Print + Digital 30,- €; E-Abonnement 25,- €. Das Abonnement (2 Ausgaben) wird zunächst für 12 Monate geschlossen und verlängert sich danach stillschweigend auf unbestimmte Zeit, sofern dieses nicht mit einer Frist von einem Monat zum Ablauf der zunächst vorgesehenen Vertragsdauer gekündigt wird. Um das Abonnement zu beenden, kann es ab dem 2. Jahr jederzeit mit einer Frist von einem Monat gekündigt werden.

ISSN: 2701-066X
Best.Nr. JOS2301

Alle Beiträge dieser Ausgabe finden Sie zum Download unter dem DOI der digitalen Ausgabe: 10.3278/JOS2301W



**Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek**
Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.

# Inhalt

## Foreword



## Concepts, Community and Collaboration

# Concepts, Community and Collaboration: A Foreword to a Special Issue of *JoSch*

*Gerd Bräuer, Lawrence Cleary, Matthew Davis, Lisa Ganobcsik-Williams, Andrea Scott & Susan E. Thomas*

The theme of this special issue of *JoSch*, "Concepts, Community and Collaboration", recognizes both the transdisciplinary and the transnational endeavors of many practitioners, academics, and researchers working in the fields of writing studies, writing center theory/practice, and writing research. People, ideas, books, and concepts within these fields are traveling back and forth across countries and continents and are influencing and shaping writing development practices around the world. This special issue features collaborations and single-authored articles exploring this exchange of writing concepts, theories, and practices across national, institutional, and disciplinary borders, focusing on their routes and impact.

As an editorial collective, we have welcomed the opportunity to engage with new editorial arrangements and practices that emerged from the unique institutional history of writing research traditions in Germany. For example, for this particular issue, the journal's editors–not the guest editors–developed the theme of the issue. Guest co-editors then applied for the role through a call to the writing studies community or were invited to serve on the guest editing team. Aspects of the review process were also distinct: a full draft of articles was required by the submission date, and peer reviewers, including peer tutors, were recruited in advance instead of being determined by area of expertise. The review and revision processes followed *JoSch*'s normal policies and included two major stages, one for "higher-order concerns" and one for "lower-order concerns." (In a nod to early writing center lore in the U.S, these terms are cited in English in *JoSch*'s original German editorial guidelines.)

As we edited this issue on collaboration and "travelling concepts" (Bal 2002), we were particularly attuned to how local institutional contexts and cultures shape the language and form of the various contributions. We were careful to edit texts only when the meaning was not clear to readers from other contexts. Our goal was to preserve our shared sense that these articles are enriched by the linguistic repertoires their authors brought to writing in English. We resisted the urge to Anglicize terms or privilege US-centric citations. For example, when Isensee and Töpper used the term "student union," a direct translation of the German term "StudierendenWerk," to describe the institutional home of an influential writing center in Berlin, we opted not to replace it with a translation more reflective of a U. S.-based context. We thereby avoided using a term like "student affairs," which evokes a discourse community and set of institutional practices and norms that differ significantly from the German case. From this experience, we see more clearly that "lower order

concerns", as they have been revised in writing center scholarship during the past two decades (e. g., Blau, Hall and Sparks 2002), are not always so lower order after all.

Just as Isensee and Töpper, in this issue, show how the failure to address local culture can account for gaps in writing support for Ph.D. students in Germany, we also learned through the review process that citation practices matter for the arguments writers make and the contexts they illuminate. During the peer review process, Isensee and Töpper were encouraged to engage with U. S.-based scholarship on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), Writing in the Disciplines (WID), and Writing-Enriched Curriculum (WEC). When they incorporated this feedback in the revision, they wisely used it as an opportunity to sharpen their argument about the particularities of the German context by sketching out how a romanticized ethos of individualism is institutionalized in support structures for Ph.D. students. In short, the words authors choose and the sources they use to define and frame their ideas have distinct cultural contexts that are important to preserve and make visible to readers.

Our editorial processes–like the content of the pieces in this issue–are rooted, in part, in the disciplinary history of writing studies in a specific region. In Germany, the field emerged largely from within interdisciplinary writing centers and their rough equivalents (Scott 2017). German writing centers themselves have a transatlantic history: U. S.-based theory and practice were adapted and extended in the research and practices of the first generation of writing centers founded in Germany in 1994 and the earliest peer tutor writing centers established in 2002 (Bräuer 2002) and 2007 (Ruhmann 2014). Within this landscape, *JoSch* was launched in 2010 as the first peer-reviewed journal in German-speaking countries dedicated exclusively to writing center praxis. However, the regional identity of writing center theory has always been distinct (e. g., Bräuer 2012; Ruhmann and Kruse 2014; Huemer, Doleschal, Wiederkehr, Girgensohn, Dengscherz, Brinkschulte and Mertlitsch 2021; Sennewald 2021). During the first several years of its existence, for example, *JoSch* published articles that overwhelmingly cited scholarship published in German (78 %) (Scott and Bromley 2019). And the U. S.-based concepts that have gained currency are those that are particularly amenable to the German institutional context and have been adapted and changed in the process (e. g., Dreyfürst and Sennewald 2014; Scott 2022).

This mix of influences is still legible in *JoSch*'s editorial practices, even as they have evolved over the years. For example, *JoSch* emerged, in the words of early writing center theorist Gabriela Ruhmann, as a forum for "both established and student writing consultants [...] for the exchange, on equal footing, of information about concepts and insights" relevant to the field (2014: 47). *JoSch* has retained this mission, serving as a "platform for student writing consultants to actively participate in the scientific discourse" and promoting "intergenerational exchange between student writing consultants and the academic staff of the writing centers," according to its official website (*JoSch*, n. d.). Peer tutors, who have gone on to set up and direct writing centers, have played a key role in discipline-building in the region, making *JoSch*'s mentorship model particularly noteworthy. *JoSch*

has since expanded its mission, in 2015 becoming the official journal of the German Society for Writing Didactics and Research, the largest organization of writing professionals in the region. Since 2020, the journal has carried a new name. No longer titled "*JoSch*: *Journal of Writing Consultations*" (*JoSch: Journal der Schreibberatung*), it now goes by "*JoSch: Journal of Writing Research*" (*JoSch: Journal der Schreibforschung*). This change is reflective of an interdisciplinary field that has grown from 7 writing centers in 2007 to roughly 70 in 2017 (Girgensohn 2017: 19). *JoSch* now publishes "the entire spectrum of topics in writing didactics and research," focusing "primarily [...] on the German-speaking higher education area, but [...] nevertheless open to all (educational) institutions where writing and writing reflection take place."

That said, our editorial work on this issue has also identified missed opportunities for providing guidelines for reviewers offering feedback on work outside their cultural contexts. As is widely known, the field of writing studies across the globe has robust traditions of writing research published in languages other than English, but these tend to remain understudied in the U.S. and other English-speaking countries (e.g., Horner, Ne-Camp and Donahue 2011; Donahue and Horner 2022). Therefore, negotiating these editorial and authorial dynamics is a particularly fruitful conversation to have during the preparation of *JoSch*'s first issue published almost exclusively in English. It comes at a moment in the field's history where German-language research is growing and networked within and beyond Europe, and concepts from German-speaking countries are now influencing research and practice in writing studies communities outside the region and continent (Liebetanz, Voigt and Dreyfürst 2018). *JoSch*, over the years, has helped forge new concepts, communities, and collaborations in the writing research community–making this an apt theme of this particular issue.

We see several dimensions of our editorial work–a collaborative ethos, a commitment to linguistic innovation, and an openness to negotiating meaning across transnational and translingual differences–reflected in the rich, diverse articles that this issue comprises. We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we did editing them.

## Special Issue Contents

**Bromley**, writing from Claremont, California (USA), explores a phenomenon of great interest to practitioners and scholars of writing center work: the global expansion of writing centers. Bromley's article reports on a 2015–16 study to compile a comprehensive database of writing centers located outside of the US, the writing center's country of origin. Findings from the study indicate that writing centers across the globe have different institutional positions, and Bromley views this as a first step to learning more about how the US writing center concept has traveled and changed around the world.

**Bart**, **Daunay**, and **Donahue**, writing from France and the United States respectively, provide a comparative study of two sets of documents for evaluating the academic writing

of students and faculty at two different universities. These two sets contain a total of five "grids," each of which serves a purpose at one of the universities: one grid from Dartmouth College serves to place students into writing courses, while the other evaluates how those placement decisions are textualized; the three grids from the University of Lille analyze how students, researchers, and teacher-researchers integrate sources into their academic writing. The comparison across these disparate purposes and categories illuminates how such grids construct, operate on, and evaluate texts. By encouraging the construction of textual categories (and thereby data) as meaningful entities and orienting interpretive attention to specific aspects of academic writing norms, grids shape decisions—for both students and academic writers alike—with respect to the assessment, evaluation, and description of their texts.

**Ambinintsoa** and **Pham**, writing from Japan and New Zealand, reflect on how they both benefited from collaborative research and writing as doctoral students in New Zealand, where the settings of their research were in Vietnam and Madagascar where English is used as a Foreign Language. The two authors come to view collaboration as a strategy for broadening their understanding of their own subfields but have also come to see collaboration as having implications for their approaches to teaching writing.

**Harahap** and **Hendrickson**, writing from the United States but embodying transnational identities, share the experience of building toward a "relational collaborative dynamic" crossing multiple areas of professional life: conference-going, organizational work in the discipline, editorial work, travel, and publication. Key to this dynamic–and to their mutual development as a collaborative team–is careful negotiation of identities emerging across difference, the constitution of reciprocal communication, and attention to affect "in the spatial, temporal, and sociocultural dimensions" of academic work.

**Hughes**, **Liebetanz**, and **Voigt**, writing from the United States and Germany, engaged in a *Schreibgespräch*, or writing conversation, on the topic of Writing Fellows programs. Listening in, readers learn how two writing centers in Germany benefited from the expertise and collegiality of Hughes, at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and how his model was adapted to the German context. Since then, newly-formed Writing Fellows programs have informed writing pedagogy and improved writing in the disciplines as a result of a newly formed collaborative relationship between writing specialists, subject specialists, and students.

**Isensee** and **Töpper**, writing from Berlin, use their collaborative writing process to make the provocative argument that the German practice of centralizing writing support for Ph.D. students in writing centers has significant costs. The emphasis in German theory and practice on individualized writing support and processes inadvertently reinforces the German myth of academic research as the result of "solitude and freedom," a regional blind spot their article highlights with nuance. In this way, they suggest, U.S.-imported models are not sensitive enough to local research cultures at German universities. In its place, they argue for shifting the writing culture at German research universities by insti-

tutionalizing more collaborative spaces and support for Ph.D. students within departments.

**Kolgjini** writes from an American university in Kosovo, a country where multilingual practices in everyday language regularly challenge the entrenchment of monoglossic ideology in state policies and educational institutions. Yet surprisingly, when Kolgjini studied his own students' writing, he discovered that translingual practices were nearly absent. Though such choices may be deliberate, they also suggest, he argues, the need for proactive pedagogical and institutional approaches that nurture translingual dispositions by making students aware of the strategies they might use to challenge norms and leverage their rich linguistic repertoires.

**Payant** and **Zuniga**, writing from Montreal, reflect on their own experiences of using collaborative writing and cooperative writing and how this has informed their thinking on the value of the two methods and their respective roles in co-authored writing projects. The authors conclude that collaborative and cooperative writing are not alternate strategies, as they are sometimes depicted, but are dynamically related, as demonstrated by their own collaborations.

**Everke Buchanan**, **Macdonald**, and **Schneider**, writing from Germany and Australia, draw on two metaphors, *Trampelpfade* (German) and *sheep lines* (Australian) that represent their 5-year cross-national collaboration. They describe the informal, creative information pathways writing scholars forge, often on the periphery of academic institutions, to sustain knowledge and instigate workplace change.

Read together, the articles offer a survey of travelling concepts in a transnational landscape. We invite you to join us in thinking deeply and collaboratively outside of your local contexts. We also hope these concepts will travel and find a home in your own methods of research and pedagogy, and you will share them widely with colleagues and students to keep this translingual conversation going.

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# Locating the International Writing Center Community

*Pamela Bromley*

## Abstract

Writing centers are expanding globally, but little is known about the locations of all centers outside the United States. This study, conducted in 2015–16, shares a comprehensive database of non-US writing centers (n = 552) and survey of professionals (n = 218) compared to similar US studies. The study finds that more than half of writing centers outside the US are located in six countries – Australia, Canada, Germany, Japan, South Africa, and the United Kingdom – and that non-US writing centers have somewhat different institutional positions compared to their US peers. Locating writing centers outside the US is a first step to understanding the ways in which the work of these centers, as a group, compares to their US counterparts.

## Introduction

Writing centers are expanding globally, as seen in the growth of professional organizations and scholarship. International Writing Centers (IWCs)—defined here as writing centers outside the United States[1]—have created associations to connect practitioners, promote professionalization, and encourage collaboration and research, thereby building a shared disciplinary identity and helping writing centers to advocate for themselves and their work in and beyond their local institutions (Girgensohn/Peters 2012; Scott 2017). Unlike US-based writing centers, which are generally part of a larger writing program (Finer/White-Farnham, 2017), IWCs generally serve as their institution's locus for writing and may offer courses, workshops, writing groups, and/or pedagogical support for faculty and graduate students, as well as one-on-one consultations (e. g., Bräuer 2002: 61 ff.; Ganobcsik-Williams 2012: 503 f.; Santa 2009: 3; Nichols 2017: 185).

Academic writing professionals, often located in writing centers (Scott 2017: 45), have created many national and international associations. Four organizations outside the US have become International Writing Center Association (IWCA) affiliates: the European Writing Centers Association in 1988, Middle East-North Africa Writing Centers Alliance in 2007, Canadian Writing Centres Association/L'Association canadienne des centres de

1 Though a complex history (e. g., Lerner 2009), the first writing centers were established in the US (Bromley 2017: 25; Nichols 2017: 183). For a history of writing teaching and methods in German universities, see Kreitz 2020.

rédaction in 2013; and La Red Latinoamericana de Centros y Programas de Escritura in 2014. The European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing (EATAW), established in 2001, also connects global writing researchers. National writing center or studies organizations have been established in Switzerland (2005), Israel (2007), Austria (2009), Germany (2013), Ireland (2015), the Netherlands (2016), and Russia (2017); networks and gatherings are also present in Argentina, China, Japan, South Africa, Sweden, and the United Kingdom (Bromley et al. 2021: 25 ff.; Song 2018; Writing Centers Association of Japan 2022).

Like organizations, scholarship connects practitioners and also builds new knowledge and a shared disciplinary identity, as underscored in the foreword of *JoSch*'s first issue (Kowal et al., 2010: 2). Much scholarship investigates IWC initiatives (e. g., the many contributions in Thaiss et al. 2012). Several European journals focus exclusively on writing center work and academic writing, such as this journal, published in Germany since 2010, and *Journal of Academic Writing,* published in the United Kingdom since 2011. IWC scholars also connect research and practice across borders (e. g., Datig/Herkner 2014; Dreyfürst/Liebetanz/Voigt 2018; Santa 2009; Scott 2017; WLN 2022). The rapid growth in organizations and scholarship highlights that IWCs are part of a larger community exchanging ideas, practices, and individuals.

While IWCs are expanding, no systematic investigation of these centers exists; that is, no census has been taken. To my knowledge, such investigations have only occurred in the Writing Centers Research Project (WCRP) and the National Census of Writing (NCW) in the US, and a Latin American study asking and adapting relevant questions from the US surveys to that context (Molina-Natera/López-Gil 2020). A similar initiative is underway in the Middle East North Africa region (Hodges et al. 2022). Because a census gathers and shares data systematically, stakeholders are able to see and position themselves as part of a larger community and to make evidence-based arguments grounded in that community. This article partially fills that gap for IWCs, highlighting their geographic and institutional locations compared to their US peers. This study also helps lay the groundwork for a systematic investigation of IWC work, highlighting writing centers as an important part of a growing, changing global educational system, with accompanying massification, internationalization, and multilingualism.

## Methodology

This study has two parts: a database of IWCs and a survey of IWC professionals. I created an IWC database by internet searches of: the Writing Center Directory at St. Cloud State University; international IWCA affiliate websites; and country names and Canadian provinces alongside "writing center," "writing centre," "writing lab," "learning center," "learning centre," and "academic resource." I undertook the search in languages where I could decipher basic information: English, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Por-

tuguese, Spanish, and Swedish. The database includes IWC contact information, geographic location, names, and whether one-on-one consultations were offered. I define IWCs as those centers offering one-on-one appointments, a hallmark of writing center practice (Harris 1988), excluding centers hosting only workshops and/or courses. If an institution had several centers, all were included (e. g., the University of Osnabrück has three IWCs, one each for students in English, German, and Law). By April 2015, I had located 552 IWCs.

To learn more about IWC work, I conducted an Institutional Review Board-approved survey of IWC professionals, replicating questions from the WCRP and the NCW to allow direct comparisons, adding and adapting questions for the international context. A similar approach was used in Latin America (Molina-Natera/López-Gil 2020: 100 f.). I emailed the survey to database contacts in May 2015, issuing one reminder; data collection closed in March 2016. Of the 552 IWCs in the database, 69 had no functioning email address. Of the 483 IWCs with working email addresses, 218 responded, with an average of 165 responses per question, for a response rate of 34 %, in line with published studies about organizations (Baruch/Holtom 2008: 1155).

When possible, I compare my survey results to the two largest surveys: the 2017 NCW (n = 727, combining two-year and four-year institution responses), and the raw data from the 2016–17 WCRP (n = 273; participants can skip questions in both surveys). The institutions completing the NCW are all US-based, while just 5 % of institutions in WCRP are outside the US, making it a good, if imperfect, comparison. The Latin American survey, while important, had just 23 responses and thus is excluded here.

Important limitations exist, as the database does not include the full population of IWCs. A center had to have a website in specific languages to be included in the database; certainly the database would be more complete by employing someone to search in other languages. A center must also have a working email address to have the option to complete the survey (although 15 % of IWC respondents reported that they did not have a website). Importantly, survey responses are not fully representative of IWCs in the database. Three regions are well-represented: 4 % of responses were from sub-Saharan Africa (4 % of the IWCs in the database), 5 % from the Near East (8 % of IWCs), 2 % from South and Central Asia (3 % of IWCs). However, the Western Hemisphere (35 % of respondents and 29 % of IWCs in the database) and Europe and Eurasia (45 % of respondents and 35 % of IWCs) are over-represented while East Asia and the Pacific is underrepresented (10 % of respondents but 21 % of IWCs). While it is not possible to generalize from a sample to an entire population (Grutsch McKinney 2015: 30), this study captures a wide range of IWCs that have not been systematically documented. Finally, the data shared in this article were collected in 2015–16 and are compared to relevant data from that period; a pandemic pause has allowed for publication. While the data is not current, and it could benefit from searching for IWCs in more languages, it allows us to see our recent past more clearly; the study is currently being repeated, which should allow us to see some ways the IWC community has changed.

## Results and Discussion

### Geographical Location

Geography, of course, is an essential aspect of location. Using the database, I find 552 IWCs located in 77 countries outside the US, shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**
IWC distribution by country and region*
(the country with the most IWCs in the region is italicized)

| **Africa** | **25** | **Europe** | **194** | **Near East** | **43** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ethiopia | 1 | Albania | 1 | Algeria | 1 |
| Ghana | 2 | Austria | 6 | Bahrain | 1 |
| Namibia | 2 | Azerbaijan | 1 | Egypt | 2 |
| *South Africa* | *20* | Belgium | 1 | Iraq | 1 |
| **East Asia & the Pacific** | **115** | Bulgaria | 1 | Israel | 1 |
| *Australia* | *48* | Cyrpus | 1 | Kuwait | 2 |
| China | 7 | Czech Republic | 1 | Lebanon | 3 |
| China, Hong Kong | 3 | Denmark | 1 | Morocco | 1 |
| China, Macau | 1 | Estonia | 3 | Oman | 3 |
| Fiji | 2 | Finland | 1 | Qatar | 8 |
| Japan | 23 | France | 2 | Saudi Arabia | 6 |
| Mongolia | 1 | *Germany* | *85* | Turkey | 1 |
| New Zealand | 11 | Greece | 3 | *United Arab Emirates* | *13* |
| Singapore | 5 | Hungary | 1 | **Western Hemisphere** | **160** |
| South Korea | 7 | Iceland | 1 | Argentina | 5 |
| Taiwan | 6 | Ireland | 5 | Bermuda | 1 |
| Vietnam | 1 | Italy | 6 | Brazil | 1 |
| **South & Central Asia** | **14** | Liechtenstein | 1 | *Canada* | *123* |
| Afghanistan | 1 | Netherlands | 5 | Chile | 4 |
| Bangladesh | 2 | Norway | 4 | Colombia | 16 |
| *India* | *5* | Poland | 3 | Ecuador | 1 |
| Kazakhstan | 2 | Romania | 1 | El Salvador | 1 |
| Krygyzstan | 1 | Russia | 1 | Jamaica | 1 |
| Nepal | 1 | Spain | 3 | Mexico | 3 |
| Pakistan | 2 | Sweden | 18 | Puerto Rico | 1 |
| **Global**** | **1** | Switzerland | 5 | Trinidad & Tobago | 1 |
| **Webster University's online writing center serves all 10 international campuses | | Turkey | 11 | Uruguay | 2 |
| | | Ukraine | 2 | | |
| | | United Kingdom | 20 | | |
| **Grand Total** | **552** | | | | |

* Regions from US State Department (2021)

33 countries, from Afghanistan to Vietnam, have just 1 IWC, 27 countries have 2–5, and 12 countries have 6–19 IWCs. 58% of IWCs are in just 6 countries: Australia (48), Canada (123), Germany (85), Japan (23), South Africa (20), and the United Kingdom (20). Countries with the most IWCs have strong ties to the US: all but Germany and Japan are English-speaking, and West Germany and Japan's education systems were reshaped by the US after 1945 (Ash 2006: 253; Nakayama 1989: 32). The US, currently "the most powerful academic system … pioneered academic thinking and curricular trends" influencing global higher education (Altbach et al. 2009: 17) – perhaps including writing centers.

Interesting regional differences surface when comparing the distribution of IWCs and universities, shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Distribution of IWCs and Universities, by Region*

| Region | % of IWCs | % of World Universities |
|---|---|---|
| East Asia and the Pacific | 21% | 27% |
| Europe and Eurasia | 35% | 33% |
| Near East | 8% | 5% |
| South and Central Asia | 3% | 12% |
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 4% | 7% |
| Western Hemisphere | 29% | 16% |

* University statistics derived from Förster (2016)

In four regions, IWC and university distribution generally aligns: Europe and Eurasia, East Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Near East. In two regions, though, there are substantial differences: the Western Hemisphere has many more IWCs relative to universities, while South and Central Asia has comparatively more universities relative to IWCs. Geography could play a role. Perhaps countries in the Western Hemisphere are more influenced by US educational practices (they are, at the very least, closer geographically), while countries in South and Central Asia may not be as strongly influenced.

## Institutional Location

Institutional location is likewise important, as seen via institutional type, writing center name, and campus location. First, using the database, I determine the types of institutions hosting IWCs. 95% (523) of IWCs are in universities; other locations include community writing centers (12), secondary schools (8), two-year colleges (4), and for-profit organizations (5). This information is quite similar to the US; in the WCRP, 97% (266) writing centers reported they were in higher education, with a few at secondary schools (4) and workplaces (2). That IWCs are mostly, but not exclusively, located in universities is

intriguing; perhaps writing centers will continue to expand into for- and non-profit ventures (Scherübl 2016; Weber Metzenroth 2022).

A center's name may be another important way it positions itself in and beyond its institution. Such positioning may or may not be intentional: while an IWC may be able to choose its own name, the larger institution may also determine the IWC's name. Examining the database, I find 76% (418) of IWCs have an English name, while many also have names in English and in their country's language. Translating the names of the 24% (134) of IWCs with non-English or multiple names (e.g. Laboratorio Bla–Bla– Blá at the University of Medellín, Colombia, or the Språkverkstad/Language Lab at the University of Borås, Sweden), I find that 74% of IWCs have "writing" in their name and 68% include "center" or "centre." Other common parts of IWC names are "academic" (13%), "learning" (12%), "English" (5.4%), "support" (4.5%), "language" (4.5%), "skills" (4.2%), and "lab" (4.0%). The politics of writing center names has long been debated (e.g., Carino 1992: 31; Lerner 2009: 2f.). That most IWCs use "writing" and "center" or "centre" in their names connects them to the larger writing center community, as IWCA and all its regional affiliates use "writing center/centre" in their names. Terms like "support," "skills," and "lab" – not uncommon in IWC names – could be read "pejoratively," showcasing IWCs as locations for remediation (Carino 1992: 36). Or perhaps "lab," as a place to experiment and learn, is a clear reflection of writing center ethos (Lerner 2009: 14). That "English" and "language" are common parts of IWC names may indicate that writing centers support the growing numbers of students around the world working in English as an additional language (e.g., Altbach et al., 2009: 7ff.; Brinkschulte/Stonian/Borges 2015: 19).

Finally, using survey data, I consider IWC's campus location, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Campus Location of IWCs and US Writing Centers

| Campus Location | 2015–16 IWC (n = 168) | 2016–17 WCRP (n = 257) | 2017 NCW* (n = 550) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Classroom or Academic Building | 27% | 29% | 41% |
| Library | 25% | 46% | 55% |
| Learning or Student Centers | 26% | 11% | n/a |
| Other (including free-standing, residential) | 22% | 14% | 25% |

* Respondents were allowed to select multiple options

A center's physical location can reflect its position in the larger community (Haviland/Fye/Colby 2001: 85) and its institutional power (Singh-Corcoran/Emika 2011). The most common location for IWCs is classroom buildings, followed closely by libraries and learning or student centers. This finding differs from US writing centers, where most centers are in classroom buildings or libraries, with just 11% located in learning or student centers.

19 % of IWCs have more than one location; in the U. S., 16 % (NCW) to 35 % (WCRP) of centers report multiple or satellite locations. That a large proportion have multiple locations may indicate that writing centers are becoming more "de-centered," increasingly connected to their institution's teaching and research missions (Kinkead/Harris 2000: 23).

## Conclusions

This study raises an important question: what *is* a writing center? Many places that were ultimately excluded from the list of 552 IWCs support writers but do not provide one-on-one tutorials, the definition used by Harris (1988) and here. However, key terms must be defined and it is impressive that over 500 IWCs (as well as associated organizations and scholarship) meet this definition and comprise this diverse yet cohesive community. Understanding IWC's locations is a first step to promoting the exchange of ideas, individuals, and institutions.

Certainly, my thinking about what a writing center is and what a writing center does has changed as a result of conducting this project. As I repeat the census in 2022–2023, I continue to consider what defines a writing center and how that definition shifts across contexts. The understanding that a writing center provides, at minimum, one-on-one tutoring – with other offerings, such as courses or workshops, as optional additions – may, indeed, be particular to the US. As the writing center concept continues to travel globally, our understanding of what exactly a writing center is may also need to shift. IWCs show that writing centers can be places that can support undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty as writers and teachers, using a range of activities from one-on-one sessions to workshops to courses. Considering writing centers in this more expansive way, which is common amongst IWCs, can expand US understandings of what writing centers are and what writing centers do. That is, we all need to be conscious of what assumptions we make about writing center work and what approaches we may want to import into or adapt to our own centers (see, e. g., Ganobcsik-Williams 2012: 501 f.).

Looking at IWCs also provides a window into a changing higher education landscape. Between 2001 and 2020, global higher education enrollment more than doubled, to 236 million students (UNESCO 2022). While the US was the first country with "mass higher education," higher education in "almost all countries [has] dramatically increased" (Altbach et al. 2009: vi). While expanding higher education increases access for more, and more diverse, students, it also means that students are seen as one among many. Writing centers, where students work with someone attentive to their specific needs, are places where "the mass template methods of the academy can be undone" (Gardner/Ramsey 2005: 26). Writing centers have worked hard to introduce and revise pedagogies to support larger and more diverse student populations, such as by integrating and adapting multilingual pedagogies (e. g., Lu/Horner 2016; Brinkschulte/Stonian/Borges 2015). As higher education continues to expand, writing centers are well positioned to serve stu-

dents' and universities' changing needs and goals. Documenting writing centers enables them to situate themselves in a larger community, to better advocate for themselves and their essential role.

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# Comparative Analysis, Grids across Contexts

## The Careful Work of Exchange

*Daniel Bart, Bertrand Daunay & Christiane Donahue*


### Abstract

Researchers from France and the US compared grids for analyzing academic texts to explore similarities and differences and to raise questions to each other. The analysis focused on two US and three French grids for analyzing students' and scholars' academic texts. The comparative work makes it possible to shed light on fairly fundamental choices in terms of the relationship to the norm, to evaluation, to prescription, and to description; in terms of the constitution of data, the elaboration of units of analysis, and processing tools; and in terms of the theoretical foundations of methodological choices, the modalities of the comparative approach.




### Introduction

Cross-cultural and cross-tradition teaching and research exchanges around writing, higher education, literacies, and didactics have been ongoing between scholars at l'Université de Lille (France) and Dartmouth College (USA) for many years now. Those exchanges have been fostered by the scholars' mobility, back and forth between countries and within Europe, sharing projects and learning from one another. In 2021–22, in order to contribute further to "exchanges of methods and research themes relevant to shared areas of expertise in analyses of students' [...] textual literacies" (Donahue 2020: 1), we undertook a comparison of our analytic grids for studying academic texts ("grid" here meaning the organized set of codes implemented for each analysis):

- two grids from research at Dartmouth College's institutional digital portfolio project, "DartWrite" (Baker et al. 2020): the "orienters'" grid[1], used by faculty to make decisions about orienting students in their choices for writing courses based on their Directed Self Placement[2] essays (henceforth DSP), and the "researchers'" grid[3], used in a study intended to identify the textual variables at play in orienters' orientation choices;

1 https://www.josch-journal.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/c-orienters-grid.pdf
2 Directed Self Placement is a process used to help US college students determine their writing level on entry to the university and to choose the curriculum most adapted to their level.
3 https://www.josch-journal.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/q-research-grid.pdf

- three grids developed by French researchers from the l'Université de Lille[4]. Two of the grids concern the analysis of sources students and researchers used in academic writing, whether to identify the non-theoretical references convened in the texts—references to non-conceptual, non-scholarly knowledge (Bart/Daunay 2019)—or to identify students' references to "change" (departing from previous knowledge) or "continuity" (building/extending previous knowledge) in terms of how their work contributes to the scholarly conversation (Bart/Daunay 2021). The third concerns the didactic and scholarly writing of teacher-researchers and describes their enunciative modalities for inserting the discourse of others into a text (Daunay/Delcambre 2017).

For this comparative analysis, we have constituted an *ad hoc* research corpus in the context of our transnational collaboration. We are examining this corpus not to compare this research for its own sake, and even less to generalize by assuming an "Americanness" or a "Frenchness" of the research. Instead, the comparison aims to question, based on this specific limited corpus, *possible* methodological variations which are, themselves, generalizable. We note that we have not situated this article within a particular body of scholarship, primarily because our focus is simply on the different research practices (each with its own universe of references) in relation to each other. There are certainly rich traditions of both research and assessment that could themselves be put into dialogue in a future project evolving out of this one.

## Various corpora and purposes of use

### A variety of bodies of work

We note that the research analysis grids we are comparing are based on very different purposes:

- The orienters' grid used in the US research is linked to institutional evaluation issues, since it involves orienting students to different course levels by evaluating their DSP;
- the two grids in the US context, especially the orienters' grid, are designed *a priori* to operate in a recurrent manner on annual corpora of student papers, whereas the French grids were designed for use limited to corpora collected on one occasion;
- the two US grids, both for the orienters and for the researchers, are designed to work on fairly large corpora with multiple coders, whereas the three French grids are built in relation to more limited corpora (although the final corpus could be large) and pairs of coders (who are also the researchers).

4 https://www.josch-journal.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/french-grids.pdf

The following table compares the corpora covered by the five grids.

**Table 1**
Comparison of the corpora covered by the five grids

| | Number of source writings of the corpus | Size | Number of coders |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Enunciative modalities* grid (Daunay & Delcambre, 2017) | 3 courses or course materials, 3 scientific productions (articles, book chapters or communications) provided by 4 colleagues. | Several hundred pages, 191,491 words (Daunay & Delcambre, 2017, p. 46) | 2 |
| *Non-theoretical references* grid (Bart & Daunay, 2019) | 20 excerpts from student papers, 20 excerpts from research articles | One hundred pages, 37,404 words | 2 |
| *Change and continuity* grid (Bart & Daunay, 2021) | | | |
| *DSP Orienters'* grid | 700 DSP essays | About 1050 pages No word count | 8 |
| *DSP Researchers'* grid | 175 DSP essays | About 265 pages No word count | 5 |

## Various approaches to data construction

For methodology, the coders of the five grids, despite the difference in the number of people involved, adopted more or less the same process, which is summarized in the US research (Baker et al. 2020: 2):

> *We then tested our ability to apply the features with sufficient agreement on small sets of essays that had been de-identified in terms of placement recommendations. We achieved between 74 % and 87 % agreement, 71 %–84 % after Cohn's Kappa, for most of the features. We modified, redefined, or removed any for which we could not achieve agreement over three rounds of testing and refining.*

Since the coders in the French research were pairs of researchers, more spontaneous adjustments were sufficient. But a strong difference from a methodological point of view lies in the *units* of data on which the grids operate. For the US research grids, each unit of the corpus for the coders is the whole student essay for most of the features studied. As shown in Table 2, below, each row of the data collection and analysis table then populates the codes assigned to a student text.

Table 2
Excerpt from Baker et al.'s (2020) data table

| Q26 Essay number | Q1 Degree of understanding of Source 1: Kolata | Q2 Degree of understanding of Source 2: Freedman | Q3 Degree of understanding of Source 3: Walker et al. | Q4 Source integration: use a check mark for each type of integration strategy you encounter – check once |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 130 | Lack of understanding | Some understanding | Essay not referenced | Source used with no integration strategy, Post-reference explanation |
| 131 | Some understanding | Some understanding | Lack of understanding | Source used with no integration strategy, Signal phrase introduces author, Signal phrase explains topic/goal, Post-reference explanation |

For the French research grids, the units are not the full texts that make up the corpus overall, but rather, excerpted text segments. A unit here is defined in terms of form: it is a passage framed by two strong punctuation marks. These excerpts are then coded, and the way an excerpt uses a source becomes one of the variables. The units were marked off in the corpora (as long as they were related to the subject of the research at the thematic level), and then coded through the relevant grid. For example, the excerpt presented in Table 3 below shows two items identified and coded within the framework of the "entry into the subject" (introduction) research, as they make the statement of a non-theoretical reference. One is coded as "historical reference" and the other as "reference to a broad field of research".

Table 3
Excerpt from Bart and Daunay's (2019) data table

| Number | Source | Item | Categorization |
|---|---|---|---|
| A01–01 | A01 | From the slate to digital platforms, educational action has always been based on the technical means of the moment. | Historical reference |
| A01–02 | A01 | Usually described in secondary terms (supports, tools or auxiliaries), these objects are perceived in a strictly functional way, dissociated not only from their specific "mode of existence" as technical objects (Simondon, 1958), but also from the activity of the users and their driving role in the evolution of societies. | Reference to a broad field of research |

The US research has tables with as many lines as there are texts (700 for the orienters and 175 for the researchers), while the table of data on enunciative modalities had 1337 lines, changes and continuities had 178 and non-theoretical references had 198.

In each case, these methodological choices connect to the aims of the research: for example, since the US research aimed to identify the determining variables in the orientation choices of orienters, the unity of each text studied needed to be preserved; this unity has no real significance for the French research. But the choice of unit of observation connects more broadly to a theoretical orientation: on the one hand, researchers are investi-

gating the practices of the writers in relation to a type of discourse (the *DSP essay*); on the other hand, researchers are investigating the specific modalities of discourse functions, which causes a certain destructuring of the writing. Note, too, that in the French research the destructuring is doubled in the case of the two research projects on the ways introductions are crafted. In those cases, not only does the coding concern excerpted passages, but these passages are identified in texts that are themselves the result of cutting up the larger text (only the introductory paragraphs of articles and student dissertations were kept).

## Modes and aims of the analyses targeted by the grids

### Intuitive and professional standards

The US analytic grids, as compared to the French research grids, are connected to a specific pedagogical and professional framework. The grid used by the orienters to analyze the students' DSP texts is thus itself analyzed via the researchers' grid. So we will describe here how these two US grids work in relation to this US framework, keeping in mind that in the next section we will see that the question of normativity (a standard for evaluating or making judgments about outcomes, assumed to be shared) comes up for the French grids as well.

With both US grids, for the orienters and the researchers the norms seem obvious and consensus-based as far as mastery of language is concerned (C8, Q16, Q17, Q19). Among these, it is a question of "conventions" (in C8, Q17) or of an even more implicit referent (in Q16, Q19). This is also the case for other formal aspects, such as the textual structure in the orienters' grid (C3, C4) or that of the researchers (Q11: "good choices about paragraphing"). The notion of "risk-taking" (Q18) relativizes or reinforces this spontaneous normativity, depending on the point of view one adopts: it relativizes normativity, because non-conformity can be valued; it also reinforces normativity in the sense that non-conformity can be stigmatized. Among the 18 essays that were coded as taking risks in "sentence structure", we find 15 coded "full mastery" in Q16 ("Degree of control over sentence structure") and none coded "little mastery". Among the 13 essays to have "little mastery" in Q16 and Q17, 12 (no. 9, 10, 30, 35, 50, 51, 68, 70, 71, 115, 131, 146) none is coded for risk-taking in the language domain. Remember, however, that the researchers' coding of risk-taking features is intended only to identify what drove orienters' evaluations, not to evaluate students' choices.

Students' degree of understanding material (C5, Q1, Q2, Q3) also seems to be grounded in consensus-based norms, even though the researchers' grid proposes a three-level "degree of understanding" scale. For the other criteria of the orienters' grid (C1, C2, C6, C7), the orienters are being asked to carry out a professional evaluation, and their intuition is solicited in a global perspective. We are in a criterion-referenced summative evaluation perspective; hence the strength of a model of norm-driven value judgments. We see this logically in the boldface used in the orienters' grid, which marks the expected standard and whose absence is negatively connoted.

In all these cases, the criteria are grounded in a "default theory" of the traditional logic associated with school disciplines, in two respects: 1) the criteria at work (the bold of the orienters' grid or the keywords for questions Q1, Q2, Q3, Q16, Q17, Q19 of the researchers' grid), and 2) the modalities of evaluation of the texts envisaged globally on the basis of the criteria referenced in (1). These criteria, which can be characterized by their normative and expert professional intuition dimensions, seem to be among the most discriminating in terms of students' placement (Baker et al. 2020: 3).

## Description versus evaluation

The researchers' grid escapes these dimensions of evidence, consensus, and value judgment for certain aspects by constructing descriptive categories with an objective and non-exclusive content. This is the case for the modalities of student writers' quotations (Q4, Q5, Q20-Q24): if certain words (such as "regular" in Q5) seem to identify a norm, all the items can be read as possible modalities listed in a neutral way.

This is perhaps what most distinguishes the orienters' from the researchers' grids. For example, while it is not cited specifically, the "5-paragraph essay" model seems to be the standard in the orienters' grid; in the researchers' grid, it is cited as *one of* the modalities of "Scaffolding/progression of ideas" (Q9) but also as something whose "*avoiding*" can be valued as "evidence of risk-taking" (Q18). The list of "risk-taking evidence" (Q18) can also be seen in this way (even if the absence of a response to this criterion can in itself appear devaluing). And this is the case (apart from Q11, as we have seen) for most of the items concerning the textual structure (Q9, Q12, Q13, Q14) or the modalities of argumentation (Q7, Q8), even if some of the names of these criteria seem to carry values (even in a playful form), such as "Star Wars" in Q12 and Q13.

There is therefore both distance and proximity between the orienters' and researchers' grids. The distance is explained by the researchers' concern to be descriptive and not evaluative (as explicitly noted in Baker et al. 2020: 2)—even if, as is often the case, the distinction was, according to the researchers, difficult to maintain. But the proximity between the two grids can be explained by the very logic of the construction of the categories, which is rooted in the aim of the research: to better understand the student writing features that were triggering the orienters' recommendations.

On this topic, the grids of the researchers of the US project and those of Bart/Daunay (2019; 2021) concerning a sub-category—the writers' ways of crafting introductions—can also be compared. At first glance, the fact that each study identified the presence of a given criterion in a neutral way, far from the traditional evaluative assessments of student writing, seems to suggest these grids are similar. But the comparison of the grids makes it possible to question their neutrality with respect to the writers' introductions, even if, in the categories constructed, there are no *a priori,* explicit value judgments based on normative criteria in use in professional practices. For example, a close analysis of the labels of the Bart/Daunay categories allows us to see a loss of neutrality:

- explicitly (for example, when quotation marks surround *historical* in the category "'Historical' reference not sourced to a historian") or
- implicitly (for example, it is hard to imagine that "reference to a common (everyday) discourse" is a valued writer's choice when "common" discourse is stigmatized everywhere, by everyone). Not to mention the hierarchical effects that can be implicitly drawn between the categories (for example between "Reference to a personal interest" and "Reference to the academic context").

While this loss of neutrality is not apparent in Daunay/Delcambre's (2017) grid, which is more clearly neutral and descriptive with no evaluative or normative character to the analysis of the texts in the corpus, the three French research grids are similar in another way. At the root, a *norm* underlies the very construction of the research questions: a certain conception of research writing. The difference is, perhaps, that in the other two French studies this norm is more explicitly cited precisely in order to describe, question, and explain it. We can clearly see a double difference between the two grids of the US research and the three grids of the French research: the US ones refer to a norm of the academic teaching-learning universe in order to identify the key factors of the evaluation of the students' productions, while the French ones question a norm of research discourse through contrasting the modalities of how it is carried out. The US research leaves that questioning to the orienters – that is, the research results are returned to the orienters to use in their own questioning of their practices.

In this sense, we emphasize that, in the French research on introductory material, where a comparison is made between student writers and experienced researchers, the aim is not to establish or verify the degree of adequacy of student writing to a norm of research discourse but to describe modes of discursive functioning (in particular, the functioning of theoretical references). There is, however, a risk in the work of describing research discourse: these results could be seen as standards to be attained by students. For example, it would be possible to transform the description of the rate of paraphrasing/metaphrasing in research articles into a numerical objective to be attained by apprentice researchers. This risk is even greater in work that compares the writings of beginners and experienced researchers as if it were a question of encouraging the former to resemble the latter, which is, at least from a teaching point of view, debatable.

Since we are using a comparative approach, a word on the fact that the three French studies focus methodologically on the question of comparison or cross-comparison. This is because they are all based on corpus comparisons. The comparative dimension is not absent from the US research, but in the researchers' grid, the comparison is rather internal to the same corpus: it is a matter of comparing the characteristics of the DSP essays according to the orientations proposed. As for the orienters' grid, the comparison is implicit, since it is a matter of evaluating texts in order to classify them. This difference in comparative orientation may also say something about a more or less implicit conception of the norm, which we attempt to describe next.

## Logic of the differences between the grids

This comparison points to three variables that may explain the differences between grids: the aim, the construction of categories, and the objects actually analyzed.

### The aim

Even if the authors assume that their categories of analysis "can serve as a framework for analyzing students' difficulties and guiding the help that can be given to them," the aim can be strictly theoretical (Daunay/Delcambre 2017: 40), or it can be both theoretical and pedagogical, whether peripherally (Bart/Daunay 2019; 2021) or centrally (Baker et al. 2020). The US aim, to understand the features that drive the orienters' professional evaluation choices, linked categories of the researchers to those of the orienters, in order to be able to identify what was at stake in the evaluation of the texts. This difference in aim explains why the descriptive dimension of the texts sometimes gives way to a more evaluative one when implementing criteria elaborated by the professionals (in order to be able to describe them).

### How the categories are constructed

This greater or lesser proximity between the professional context and the theoretical work in each study may explain the ways in which the data were constructed. With regard to Daunay/Delcambre (2017), the categories of analysis were explicitly constructed on the basis of previous research by the authors (Daunay 2002; Delcambre 2001) or other researchers (among others, and centrally, Boch/Grossmann 2002). These categories therefore owe little to the context and are constructed on theoretical grounds and for theoretical purposes; they are focused on the (linguistic) distinction between metaphrase and paraphrase. On the other hand, in the US project (Baker et al. 2020) the categories are explicitly constructed in relation to professional practices, even if the researchers' reading of the students' essays was disconnected from these practices. For the researchers, moreover, informed by their own previous research for the constitution of their grid[5], it was a question of appealing to a professional intuition.

Between the two is the research of Bart/Daunay (2019; 2021): the criteria, as in the research of Baker et al. (2020), were developed from multiple (cross) readings of the corpus, intuitively, from the experience of the researchers, and from a perspective specific to the corpus itself. This encounter between *a priori* intuition and the corpus data, however, was not explicitly subject to prior professional and theoretical categories.

5 Dartmouth writing faculty had studied, for example, what text features acquired in a first writing course reappeared in a second writing course ("transfer"); what kinds of writing students were doing pre-university; and whether students' sense of their progress could be seen in their writing.

### The analyzed objects

The third difference lies in the very objects of the analysis, which can explain the greater or lesser proximity to professional issues of student learning. The three grids of French research operate on writing in learning contexts *and* scholarly writing: in Daunay/Delcambre's research (2017), the corpus is divided between writing with a teaching purpose and writing with a research purpose; in the two research studies on ways of crafting introductions (Bart/Daunay 2019, 2021), the corpus is divided between excerpts from student theses and scholarly articles. Conversely, the two grids in the US research concern only student writing, even though they may involve how that writing refers to scholarly discourse. In addition to this difference, there is the difference in the authors of the texts in the corpus involved: in the first French research, only teacher-researchers are involved; in the other French research, teacher-researchers and students are involved; in the grids of the US research, only students are involved.



## Conclusion

This comparison alone brings out some essential methodological aspects which make it possible to shed light on fairly fundamental choices in terms of the following:

- the relationship to the norm, to evaluation, to prescription, to description;
- the constitution of data, the elaboration of units of analysis, and processing tools;
- the theoretical foundations of methodological choices, the modalities of the comparative approach.

Such a cross-examination of analytical grids has a reflexive dimension insofar as the confrontation allows for a better understanding of the theoretical, methodological, and even academic presuppositions that these grids more or less implicitly entail. For the actors concerned, this reflexive return was facilitated by the work in another language: the fact of working on corpora and methodologies written in another language created an effect of disorientation, of distancing or *straniamento*, to borrow the term of the Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg (1998).

Another outcome of this work, for the authors themselves, comes from questioning the objects to which these grids are applied. In the US research, the grids concern texts (DSP essays) which are read and treated as such and which retain their unity; in the French research, parts of texts can be isolated in order to excerpt portions (items) which are categorized using the grid. The discovery of this difference, implicit at first, seemed to us particularly interesting because it allowed us to clarify two orientations in the study of academic literacies: one centered on the practices (of the orienters, of the student authors, etc.) relative to a certain type of text (for example: the question of the division into argumentative paragraphs) and the other centered on the functioning of a certain type of dis-

course (for example: variation of the forms of quotation, weight of the nontheoretical references, etc.). Exploring these objects and grids was illuminating for all three of us.

This methodological comparison has led us to question the way in which our research orientations can lead to a destructuring of the writing studied. But above all, the comparison leads to the fact that writing can be fruitfully analyzed without always being read as a whole. This seems to us to be a point that is all the more crucial to identify and reflect upon, since the theoretical underpinnings of academic literacies, as much from the side of academic literacies as from the didactics of French, are precisely about the meaning and significance of the texts produced, giving full importance to their overall coherence, to their global construction, or to other wholistic features. Our cross-analysis of our respective grids has allowed us to better identify this tension that our future reflections and work will have to clarify. In addition, it reminds us that a longstanding tradition in French pedagogical research (whether specifically about writing or not) to resist "applicationism"[6] as a driver of these methods is deeply useful.

In terms of the comparison between academic literacies and didactics of French, two theoretical fields with strong contextual specificities, we think it is time to make better known the francophone concept of didactics that underlies the three French projects presented here and that has been the subject of many discussions among the authors. This concept, which has started to become better known outside of Europe in recent years, has specific contours as a non-normative theoretical discipline dedicated to describing the phenomena of teaching in specific contents (see in particular Schneuwly 2011). For researchers outside of the French context, this concept offers new and generative ways of understanding writing, literacy, and their relations to other disciplines and to the construction of knowledge.

Of course, the comparison we undertook here would not be complete without a comparison of the results obtained. But that is an entirely other project for future exchanges. As it stands, however, the work of comparison can only enrich the understanding of each method by identifying its specificities or its links with other methods.

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# Collaborative academic writing

## Two young-career researchers' reflection on their experiences of co-authoring

*Dominique Vola Ambinintsoa & Ha T. P. Pham*


### Abstract

Collaborative writing has received increasing interest in the teaching of writing as well as in writing research over the last two decades. While co-authoring in the physical and social sciences is now a norm, more attention has been given to the former, leaving it rather obscure as to what co-authors in the social sciences and humanities experience during and after their collaboration. In particular, what co-authors learn from one another's research and in what ways such learning is applied to their own teaching practice and research have received scant attention. This paper aims to address this gap. It serves as an autoethnography where we, two young-career researchers, reflect on our recent co-authoring experience of academic writing. We hope that our reflections and self-evaluations offer some food for thoughts to other writing researchers, especially those who are early-career academics and writing researchers.


### Introduction

> *"Being reflective involves being: open… curious… patient… honest… rigorous."*
> Williams, Woolliams, & Spiro (2012: 2 f.), *Reflective Writing*

It is well known that publications are the currency of academics. However, due to huge workloads, academics often struggle to get published. Early-career faculty members and writing professionals may have to fight a harder battle to keep up to the expected productivity. Many, therefore, look to collaboration as a solution. *Collaborative writing* is defined as "an activity that can be simply defined as the involvement of two or more writers in the production of a single text" (Storch 2019: 40). Writing collaboratively has been reported to bring a number of benefits, including boosting research output (McGrail/Rickard/Jones 2006: 19), increasing quantity and quality of writing (Zutshi/McDonald/Kalejs 2012: 32), enhancing mutual learning and mentoring (Jones/Jones/Murk 2012: 91; Zutshi/McDonal/Kalejs 2012: 43), providing accountability, and the potential for developing long-term friendships (Zutshi/McDonald/Kalejs 2012: 32).

While productivity and writing quality are the most often credited benefits of collaborative writing, expertise sharing, an inherent part of the collaboration process, has remained underresearched. In this paper, we aim to fill this gap by reflecting on our recent collaborative writing experience. The focus of our reflection is on what we learnt from each other's research, and how our learning has influenced our teaching and research. Since both authors' backgrounds sit in the second language learning discipline, our discussion is directly related to this knowledge domain.

## Before our collaboration

We both did our doctoral research at Victoria University of Wellington. Ha's research was on peer feedback (PF). She examined the effects of computer-assisted and face-to-face PF on student revision, writing quality, and student perceptions. Vola's research was on learner autonomy (LA). She investigated how LA, in this case students' writing skills, was enhanced through reflective writing.

The settings of our research were Vietnam and Madagascar where English is used as a foreign language (EFL). In the two years that we shared at our graduate school, Ha learnt about Vola's research through osmosis, particularly through a PhD writing group where both frequently updated each other on research progress. However, it was not until when she was asked to help Vola validate the coding of her thesis data did Ha have a better understanding of Vola's research and of LA in particular. Through analysing Vola's participants' journal reflections, Ha learnt that one of Vola's key findings was that journal writing had positive effects on writing quality and LA.

After graduating, we embarked on our new journeys. With Vola in Japan and Ha in New Zealand, and both engaged in new responsibilities, co-authoring a paper seemed to only exist in our distant dream, until one day when Ha learnt of a Call for Proposals (CfP) for an edited book titled *Writing beyond the University*. Given that our research areas sit under the same knowledge domain and that there were many overlaps between our topics, co-authoring seemed to be a natural call.

## Our collaborative work

In our work, we examined the short- and long-term effects of reflective writing and PF on student writing (Pham/Ambinintsoa 2022). The short-term effects were examined in our PhD research (Phase 1), whilst the long-term effects were investigated between one and two years after (Phase 2). The results of Phase 1 showed that reflective writing raised students' awareness of writing goals and problem-solving abilities, while PF benefited students' writing at text level and their critical thinking. The results of Phase 2 showed that our participants' perspectives on writing evolved from product- to process-oriented. This

finding was deemed significant in our contexts, for here writing pedagogies have remained product-based. In what follows, we will present on what we gained from our collaborative writing experience.

## Vola's reflection

In this section, I reflect, first, on how I integrated PF, an approach I learnt from Ha's research, in my teaching and then on how I think collaborative writing can help us develop as teachers, researchers, and writers.

I have learnt that PF is a form of collaboration that stemmed from sociocultural theory (Vygotsky 1978). PF is also theoretically underpinned by other frameworks, including process writing, collaborative learning, and interaction and second language acquisition (Liu/Edwards 2018: 3). Grounded in these theoretical backgrounds, PF promotes interaction, scaffolding, and collaboration among peers. It also stresses the idea that writers need to receive feedback in order to improve their writing (Pham 2019). The fundamentals of PF have a lot in common with LA, which has a social dimension according to scholars in the field (e. g., Benson 2011: 14; Little/Dam/Legenhausen 2017; Palfreyman 2018: 52). One of the definitions of LA is "the capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a socially responsible person" (Dam et al. 1990: 102). As a researcher in LA, I strongly believe in the importance of peer collaboration in EFL learning. However, I had never used PF in my teaching. Though I used peer collaboration in my classes for various activities and researched on its effectiveness on the development of LA, I did not have my students exchange their written work and give feedback to one another. Thus, co-writing with Ha and learning about the positive results of PF from her research have raised my awareness of the importance of PF. In both undergraduate and graduate school courses that I currently teach, I have my students write their reflections on platforms such as Moodle and Google Docs, which enable them to be commented on by everyone in the class. Though this is not exactly PF on the writing itself, it can still be considered PF, as students still need to read and then give feedback on what has been written. That is a practice I started to adopt since the collaborative writing with Ha. From my observation, that type of PF also helps students improve their audience awareness. This awareness makes them pay more attention to their writing. Moreover, reading their peers' writing influences how they write, as the others' writing pieces serve as examples of real writing.

I have realised that collaborative writing can help us develop as teachers and researchers. In our case, writing collaboratively enabled me to learn more about PF and Ha to learn more about using reflection to promote LA (see Ha's reflection below). By writing about our research together, we were able to combine our suggestions of approaches to offer pedagogical implications that could be applied in contexts such as ours, where writing support is scarce. Those suggestions are also relevant to any EFL/ESL settings, like

Japan and New Zealand, where we are currently working. For instance, one of our suggestions was to integrate self-reflective prompts and guidance for PF into the English writing curriculum so that students become accustomed to taking charge of their own writing and also to helping one another (Pham/Ambinintsoa 2022). If we had not written collaboratively, we may not have reached such a conclusion. Therefore, our collaborative writing allowed us to explore our research findings together to find better ways to support EFL/ESL learners.

Besides, collaborative writing can help us develop as writers, who are expected to possess a range of skills, including planning, revision, and editing. During our project, we had to plan carefully, as we had to figure out how to make our writing as succinct and yet informative as possible due to the word limit we were given. Throughout the writing process, we had to negotiate the writing content a number of times. We evaluated one another's writing sections and gave feedback to each other. That enabled us to improve the writing as a whole, that is, to make it clearer and better structured. Fitting the descriptions of two pieces of longitudinal research into 4,000 words was a real challenge to us. Nonetheless, we developed these skills thanks to our collaboration, and we believe that they are useful to our other writing endeavours.



## Ha's reflection

My reflection was guided by Kolb's (1984) *experiential learning* model, designed to help learners learn from their experiences through four stages: *concrete experience*, *reflective observation*, *abstract conceptualisation*, and *active experimentation*. I presented my first stage of reflection, concrete experience, in the Our collaborative work section above. In this section, I will discuss the last three stages.

My reflective observation, which is the second stage of Kolb's model, had more to do with affection than cognition. The overarching feeling that I had at the time was joy, which came from the fact that it was my first collaborative project after my PhD, and it would be published open access. I also felt proud that, despite challenges, my co-author and I managed to see our work through by pooling our skills, knowledge, and prior experience.

When those initial feelings subsided, as my reflection progressed to the next stage, abstract conceptualisation, I noticed that I gained more from our collaboration than I had expected. Though I had learnt about Vola's PhD research, it was only through our project that I had a better grasp of LA, which is broadly defined as "learner's ability to take charge of one's learning" (Holec 1981: 3) and intended for both language teaching and learning in general (Little 2006: 1). More specifically, LA is defined as "when students take control and responsibility for their own learning, both in terms of what they learn and how they learn it" (Hardy-Gould 2013). Also, according to Hardy-Gould (2013), LA is based on an assumption that students are capable of self-direction and are, therefore, able to develop a

proactive approach to their learning. I further learnt from Vola's research that LA largely remained unknown in her Malagasy context (Ambinintsoa, 2020: i), despite being popular elsewhere, e. g., Europe, for it was "central to the Council of Europe's thinking about language teaching and learning since 1979" (Little 2006: 1). What Vola reported in her research resonated with my context of Vietnam because here too, despite some recent studies on the topic, there is a big chasm between research and practice. Since LA is often associated with lifelong learning, which is particularly useful to language learners, I wanted to know more about it and learn how to boost LA in my students.

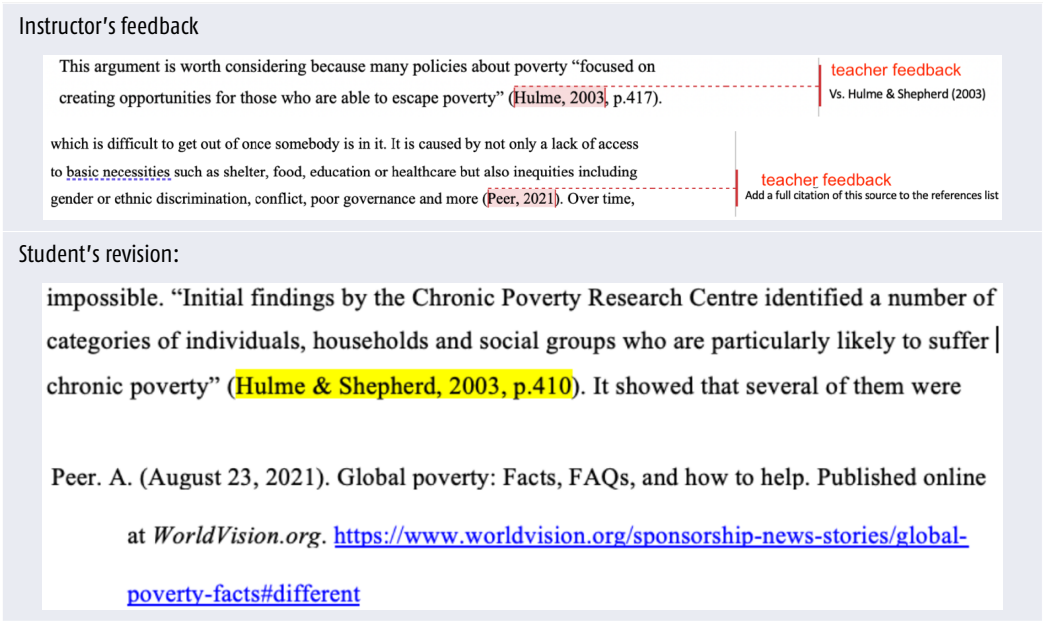
One of the LA methods I learnt from Vola's research was reflective writing, an aspect studied in the second phase of her PhD. In our collaborative work, we surveyed some of Vola's former participants' use of reflective writing. We found that they became more self-driven in learning thanks to applying reflective writing beyond the university (Pham/ Ambinintsoa 2022: 116 f.). One of the questions I asked during our research was: How could reflective writing help? I later found out that to become autonomous, learners must learn to control their learning, which can be achieved, according to Little (2022: 68), "by requiring learners to identify learning targets, choose learning activities and document the learning process." Then it follows logically that documenting the learning process involves reflection on, for example, how one did over a period of time and on whether learning targets were met. Before our project, I simply presumed that students reflect regularly and that reflection is an individual activity. However, it dawned on me during our project that formal reflection, which requires students to reflect on their progress and share such reflection with their instructors and peers, has a greater impact on their learning.

Our project ended in mid-2022, and since then, I have applied reflective writing to research, teaching, and supervision, which means I have embarked on the last stage in Kolb's model – active experimentation. In one of my current research projects, my team evaluates the effects of product-based as against product-and-process-based assessment in student collaborative writing. For both assessment methods, we asked our participants to reflect on their writing process and products. We did so based on the findings reported in Vola and Ha's research, my new knowledge of reflection, as well as my teaching experience. Besides reflective writing, our participants also did PF, a step that has become established in the writing process due to its positive effects reported in recent research. We found that reflective writing and peer feedback enable students to collaborate better, hence engage better in assignments. We also found that product-and-process-based assessment resulted in better writing quality.

In a writing course that I am teaching, reflection is an official component. It is an assessed task in which students are required to prepare a 1,200-word portfolio to reflect their writing development. My observations informed me that my students showed great engagement with the task and were critical of their learning process and outcomes. Figure 1 below, which is an excerpt of a student's reflection, provides an illustration. In it, Miriam (pseudonym), reflected on how her referencing skills developed thanks to my feedback. In

the upper part of the figure, my comments on Miriam's first draft are on the right margin; in the lower part, Miriam's revision includes a citation (highlighted) and a reference.

**Figure 1**
Student reflection on writing improvement




In her reflection, Miriam said:

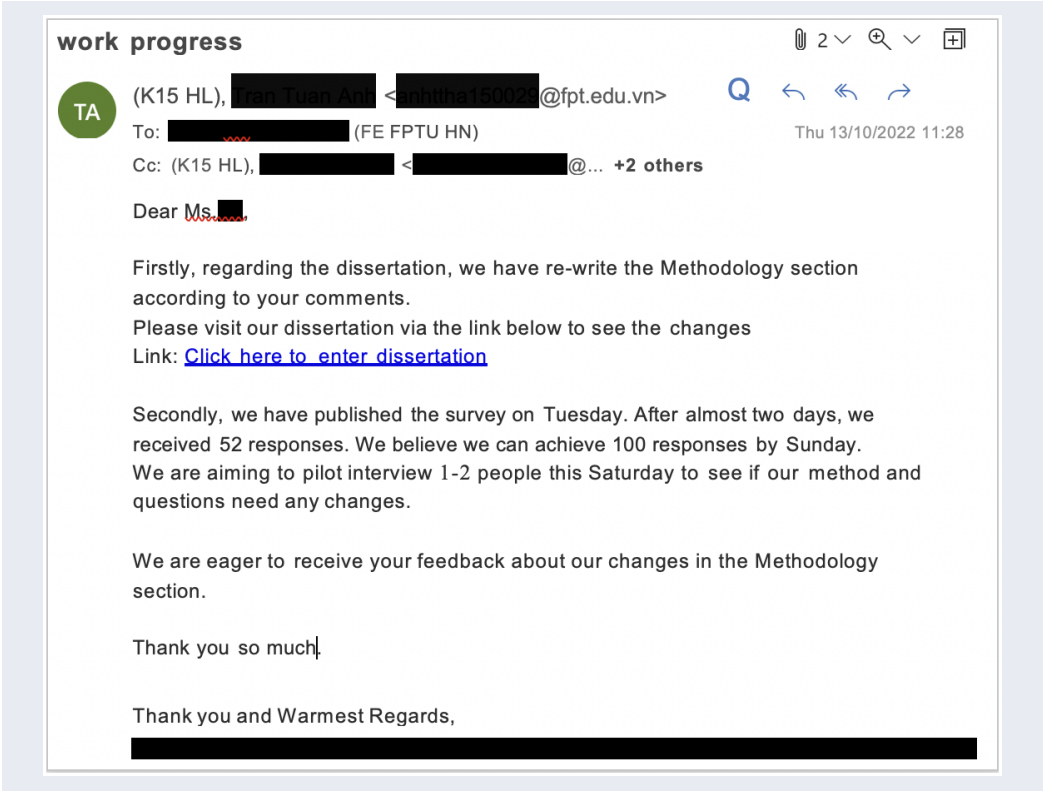
> *The first goal I set was to reference and use in-text citations correctly in the APA 7th referencing style. Before this course, I was aware to write a reference list at the end of the writing but did not know about the in-text citation and how to do it in a proper way. This was one of my weaknesses at the beginning. At first, it was a bit challenging for me because I constantly forgot to bookmark or save the resources I found on the internet. As a result, I ended up writing an incorrect in-text citation and missing a full citation of the source in the reference list. These mistakes can be seen in Figure 1 [upper part].*
>
> *To overcome this weakness and achieve my first goal, I kept reading 'The Concise APA Handbook' (Iida. P, 2020) which was the recommended reading at the beginning of this course. This book really led me to the right way of referencing and using in-text citations. Therefore, I made good progress in improving these skills thanks to WRIT 151 course. Figure 1 [lower part] shows the developed and correct example of the reference and in-text citation.*

With a detailed account that she provided, Miriam demonstrated that she was well aware of her achievement and how she obtained it. In her concluding paragraph of her reflection, she said, "From the writing skills I learned throughout this course, I think I have pretty much become an independent and critical writer." With the writing knowledge and momentum that Miriam gained, it seems likely that she will do even better in her future writing.

As for supervision, I noticed that the thesis students who were asked to reflect tended to be more autonomous than those who were not. Evidence of their autonomy includes regular reports on their work progress. As seen in Figure 2 below, these students share their self-driven exploration of knowledge. The effects of being in control of learning were clearly felt, though it still requires formal research.

**Figure 2**

Undergraduate thesis students' update to supervisor on their work progress



## Implications and conclusion

As demonstrated above, our collaborative writing experience has positively influenced our research, teaching, and supervision. It has also motivated us to apply collaboration to our teaching and writing. We hope some implications drawn from our experience below would be useful to writing teachers, researchers, and writers.

The first suggestion is to encourage teachers to write collaboratively with others who are in the same field as them but whose teaching approaches are not necessarily similar to theirs. As researchers, we tend to focus so much on our specific fields that we do not explore other topics, which can be useful for our professional development. Also, as teachers, we may use the same teaching approaches, and we may not have the willingness or the confidence to try different approaches. As we demonstrated in this paper, collaborative writing can push us to reach out beyond our comfort zones. By reading the co-author's writing section and discussing the writing content, we learn something new in terms of the co-author's field.

Collaborative writing has another benefit, as the discussion with the co-author can also help develop writing skills. In our case, we constantly gave feedback to each other's writing, which enabled us to see our own writing in a different perspective and to improve it. Though we are aware of the importance of feedback, it is not always easy to appreciate it in our own writing. However, as we also give feedback to the other author, we understand and see that it is mutually beneficial and is intended to make the co-written paper better. Also, since the paper is co-authored, we both feel ownership and aim to make it the best it can be, which means that we are less cautious about providing constructive feedback than when we are asked to review a colleague's writing where there is no co-authoring for instance.

Our third suggestion is related to the importance of reflection. In this paper, we put collaboration and reflection into practice, as we reflect on our previous collaborative writing experience together. Writing this paper has made us aware of not only the benefits but also the joy of collaborative writing. Without actually writing this paper, we surely know that collaborative writing is useful, but we would not have reflected so deeply on how it has affected us so positively. Thus, after any collaborative writing, it would be useful for the co-authors to reflect on the experience, which can be done in writing. Pointing out the positive points can be rewarding and can encourage other writers to co-write in the future, if the reflection is shared. If there are any negative points, discussing them can engender ideas on what needs improvement.

In conclusion, we both felt that we learnt *prima manus* the value of collaborative writing and what a Community of Practice (Wenger 2011: 1) could bring when we regularly interacted with others in a research community. In our small community of practice, though we were both new to collaborative writing, we learnt from practice and experienced the influence from our collaborator's research on our own work. This learning and

influence have empowered us to reach out to other research communities, both within and beyond the applied linguistics field, to expand our own communities further.

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# Affective Dimensions of Transracial and Transcultural Scholarly Collaboration

## A Case Study

*Al Harahap & Brian Hendrickson*


### Abstract

The exigency of transracial and transnational academic collaborations has emphasized an array of positionalities and uncovered the inadequacies of traditional, formal, objective relationships. We draw on our experience through a decade of multiple projects to identify the need for collaborators to not only recognize our individual positionalities but, also just as crucial to the health of the collaboration, reflect on and discuss difficult differences deliberatively. We focus on the controversial travel ban and boycott calls of CCCC 2018 Kansas City as one example moment and site where this happened for us. The academic conference also serves as a representation of a much grander academic project between thousands of collaborators.


### Introduction

We were first introduced to each other early in our careers by a colleague at the 2012 Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Shortly thereafter, Brian invited Al to co-chair the Diversity Committee of the Writing Program Administrators Graduate Organization (WPA-GO). In those initial interactions, we showed one another the restrained, formal respect that professional colleagues would expect in a new collaboration. However, that dynamic gradually shifted as we continued to meet virtually once each week with the ambitious task of making the graduate organization more diverse. The parent organization, CWPA, recognized that their membership and leadership, including students, were relatively homogenous—in terms of racial composition, positions/titles of membership, and institution type. Thus, our task was part of CWPA's mission to establish a mentorship pipeline toward eventual equitable and inclusive conditions within the parent organization. The enormity and stakes of that task perhaps heightened our sense that we would need to function and communicate on the same wavelength, perhaps even form a close bond, if we were to hope for any kind of organizational change. We took to heart Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford's (1985) call to acknowledge the affective dimensions of collaborative writing, noting too Sara Ahmed's (2004, 2014) contention that "emotions are not 'in' either the individual

or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects" (p. 10). Sure enough, as we continued to collaborate across various contexts over the coming decade—professional organizations, conference presentations, editorial responsibilities, and the occasional road trip and backpacking expedition—we learned how to communicate openly about the affective dimensions of our lives, work, and friendship in ways that have enhanced our professional collaboration. To each other, we are no longer interchangeable academics in dress shirt, suit, and tie, but have become real people with complex identities that have to be negotiated within what Ede and Lunsford (1983) called "rigid time schedules" (p. 153). Shedding our professional facades has enabled, even necessitated, us to become more emotionally invested in our working relationship.

Demographic identity—in our classrooms, our field, and our professional relationship—has always been at the forefront of our work together. Brian is a white, cis, hetero man who grew up middle class in a predominantly conservative county in the U. S. state of Florida, oblivious to what that all meant in terms of his own privileges and biases, and he has never lived outside the United States. For much of the past two decades, however, he has been plodding through what Janet E. Helms (1990) described as the process of white racial identity development, trying to get to the point where he can more healthfully own that identity through a commitment to antiracism. An important part of that developmental process has involved collaborations that challenge reductive racial identity categories, such as his work on local racial healing initiatives, his partnerships with leaders in international indigenous rights movements, and his continuing collaboration with Al, who is proactively trying to eschew identity marker labels. This thought-project, for Al, has gradually built up over years alongside developments of identity politics both in and out of academia. As an immigrant across multiple regions of the globe, Al has difficulty responding to the reductive "from" question of origination: with how to place themself in the limited academic categories of "native," "non-native," "first-language," "second-language" English speaker-writer; with being considered part of one socioeconomic class in one place and a different one in another; with belonging to racial/ethnic categories that are malleable depending on regional and historical contexts; and with claiming non-English pronouns as a statement on the limitations of a binary, gendered language. Al seeks to deliberately break down the public proclamations of socially constructed identity marker labels to be more fluid with their gender presentation, sexuality, and ableness of body and mind.

In other words, identity is complicated. So, we had to learn over the years how to communicate about identity in a more personal, nuanced, generous, trusting, and reciprocal fashion. For example, Al had to open up about how they were processing the trauma that coincided with living under constant threat of deportation. Brian had to better understand that. Brian also had to confront the effects of growing up in a culture rife with white supremacy and toxic masculinity. Al, who is not raising a traditional family unit

with children, has had to try to understand the pressures Brian feels to balance work and friendships with his domestic responsibilities.

In doing so, we have become increasingly aware of the broader need for collaborators to attune to how entangled affect is in the spatial, temporal, and sociocultural dimensions of our work and how that entanglement shapes the ways we, in turn, collaboratively shape the field of rhetoric/composition/writing studies, especially as we undertake justice-oriented work in increasingly transracial and transnational spaces. As the Black Lives Matter movement catalyzed a global reckoning with racial injustice, the coinciding social justice turn in writing studies and related disciplines (Walton/Moore/Jones 2019) manifested in increased scrutiny of racially unjust policies and practices within our professional organizations and journals (e. g., Inoue 2016) as well as antiracist efforts to transform those structures (e. g., Cagle et al. 2021). As part of this broader trend, scholars in our field have begun to call attention to the affective, relational, intersectional, and deeply personal dimensions of interracial scholarly collaboration (e. g., Faison/Condon 2022; Johnston et al. 2022; Licona/Chávez 2015; Pettus et al. 2022). This work is valuable, though not only because greater ethnic diversity more strongly correlates with higher impact factors than other markers of diversity like academic age, discipline, gender, and institutional affiliation (AlShebli et al. 2018). By drawing upon one particularly illuminating anecdote, we aim to contribute to this emerging conversation by calling attention to how affect shapes our collaboration and our field. Accordingly, we will make the case that explicitly attending to the affective forces at work in any transracial and transnational scholarly collaboration has implications not just for the success of that collaboration but also for the future of rhetoric/composition/writing studies on a global scale. We will close with recommendations for how our field might more intentionally cultivate opportunities for transracial and transnational scholarly collaborations to constructively account for the affective dimensions of collaborative work.

## CCCC Kansas City as Case for Affective Collaboration in the Field

On June 7, 2017, the State Conference of the Missouri National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (MONAACP) issued a travel advisory for the U. S. state of Missouri. MONAACP's advisory was primarily a response to the passage of Senate Bill 43, which enacted a state law limiting protections against various forms of discrimination, but the advisory also cited multiple examples of "looming danger," including racist attacks on high school and college students, homophobic comments by state legislators, the Islamophobic killing of two internationally born men, and excessive police traffic stops of African Americans—including that of Tory Sanford, who died while in police custody without ever being arrested.

Just weeks prior to the advisory, the National Council of Teachers of English's (NCTE) Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) issued the call for pro-

posals for its 2018 Annual Convention to be held in Kansas City, Missouri. The CCCC Black, Latinx, American Indian, and Asian/Asian American Caucuses (2017, August 15) later issued a joint statement in which they "strongly suggest[ed] moving the locations of the 2017 NCTE and the 2018 CCCC conventions from St. Louis, MO, and Kansas City, MO, respectively, to locations that are more inclusive of and safe for all of the NCTE/CCCC membership." After this statement was first posted to the WPA-L,[1] Todd Ruecker (2017, August 17) pointed out, "When conference rates were off last year, I recall seeing a few dozen messages about that. This seems like a much more important issue to discuss." Ruecker's remark called attention to how unusual this silence was. In addition to being known as a space to procure helpful advice from colleagues and share job ads and calls for proposals, the WPA-L was also known as a space where gripes were frequently aired, especially in regard to CCCC Annual Conventions.[2] One could interpret the relative silence on the WPA-L regarding the travel ban as a typical phase during a busier time of the academic calendar. If, however, as Iris Ruiz et al. (2023) described it, the WPA-L functioned as "a manifestation of inequities within the discipline at large" (para. 5), then one could interpret the relative silence on the WPA-L regarding the travel ban as a manifestation of the broader field's lack of awareness of and, on a more affective level, concern for the dangers that traveling to Missouri posed for scholars of color, as well as a lack of any sense of obligation to act in solidarity with MONAACP and Missourians of color.

The joint caucus statement succeeded in stoking some conversation on the WPA-L, accumulating several hundred cosigners, and prompting a quick response to the WPA-L from outgoing CCCC Chair Linda Adler-Kassner (2017, August 17) assuring that the CCCC Executive Committee was "listening hard to the suggestions." A link to an official update (now deleted) from CCCC on their ongoing deliberations was shared to the list on August 28 (Carbone 2017), followed by an official decision (CCCC 2017) rejecting the possibility of moving the convention at such a late date and recommitting to a standing "Conference Siting and Hostile Legislation" policy, which called for engaging with members and other local organizations in local activism while ensuring attendees' safety at the Convention. The *WPA-L Archives* contain no record of that statement ever being posted to or discussed on the list. Again, the silence speaks volumes. Drawing upon Ahmed (2004, 2014), we might say that this silence surfaces in the field's predominant online discursive space as a resounding ambivalence toward engaging with scholars and Missourians of color, even as objects of consideration. That the WPA-L was not a space where scholars of color showed up in critical mass as subjects themselves to discuss and debate the matter speaks volumes as well to how that space failed to cultivate a broader sense of belonging.

1 Now defunct, the WPA-L was not officially affiliated with CWPA, NCTE/CCCC, or any other professional organization, but it was at the time one of the field's most utilized listservs within the United States. Professional organizations frequently used it to communicate important information to members and nonmembers alike, and members of the field frequently used it to discuss those announcements.

2 For a case in point, search the *WPA-L Archives* for the term "bedbugs."

Certainly, plenty of discussion was still taking place off-list between CCCC members as to whether to boycott or attend the 2018 Convention. While our own conversations often began with commentary on the drama unfolding on the listservs or behind the scenes, they quickly shifted into how we found ourselves enmeshed in the circumstances in different ways given our different positionalities. Brian, who had recently secured a tenure-track job, had less to lose professionally by boycotting; he could afford to miss a year and not lose out on the networking opportunity or line on his curriculum vitae. On the other hand, going carried little personal safety risk for him. Was it better for him to show solidarity with his colleagues of color leading the boycott by leveraging his agency as a paying CCCC member or should he leverage his privilege toward contributing to a safer convention for his colleagues of color in attendance? Brian had cosigned the joint caucus statement, but now that the Convention was moving forward regardless, how should he proceed?

At around the same time, and in response to member concerns, the 2018 Convention Program Chair, Asao B. Inoue, invited Al to join the nascent CCCC Task Force on Social Justice and Activism, one of many formed in an effort to institute antiracist transformation within the organization. For Al, showing up and doing this work that needed to be done, at least in this instance, was more crucial to the potential change than the statement of boycott. By explaining his own stance, Al had successfully convinced Brian of the merits of showing up and leveraging his positionality, and as has been our collaborative custom, Al invited Brian to also serve on the CCCC Task Force. In general, when Al pulls Brian into a collaboration, it is often to have a white ally he can rely on for moments that strategically require white privilege. When Brian pulls in Al, it is often to make a project or space more aware of its homogeneity or lack of inclusiveness. But what we have in common at this point is that we have grown to trust each other, which in turn has strengthened our collaborative processes.

Preparation for the 2018 Convention was in many respects an invitation to the broader field to build trust between white scholars and scholars of color through meaningful allyship that centered the latter group's concerns and expertise while not expecting them to do all the labor. One such trust exercise manifested through our work on the CCCC Task Force's Safety and Security subcommittee, which was charged with ensuring the safety of Convention attendees traveling to and from the Convention and related events within the Kansas City, MO metropolitan area. We launched the Welcoming Companions Pilot Project after our preliminary needs survey of CCCC members found that more than half would either "definitely" or "maybe" use the service and that respondents found additional benefit in the service as a networking opportunity. The pilot included multiple ways for members to request a companion: a booth at the Convention, a phone line staffed by volunteers, and an online advance signup form. As with any pilot project, this one ran into several significant challenges. We found difficulty in identifying enough volunteers to cover even the standard hours of the Convention schedule. Very few people signed up in advance. And when we arrived in Kansas City, we realized that the distance

between the airport and downtown, where the Convention was located, was substantial. This would require considerable effort from volunteer Companions to accompany colleagues, and we did not have funding to pay them shuttle, taxi, or rideshare services.

We did discover, though, that attending to the affective dimensions of traveling to Kansas City was more important than attending to the logistical ones. Just by offering the service, we created a point of contact between colleagues of color who were anxious about traveling and a team of volunteers who could provide assurance regarding the relative safety of the bus ride from the airport and the environs immediately surrounding the Convention. At the same time, the Welcoming Companions Pilot Project also provided us another layer of opportunity to process the affective dimensions of our own collaboration and friendship.

We had flown into Kansas City early to assess the safety of the route to and from the airport and the areas around the Convention. We arrived at our hotel late in the evening, famished, to find the hotel bar and restaurant closed. The maître d' was sympathetic to our plight and connected us with the hotel shuttle driver, an affable fellow who agreed to take us to his favorite place for late-night Kansas City-style barbecue chicken wings. Over beers and wings and between chatting with the locals about other great places to eat in the city, we talked about how it felt to be there—at the Convention, in the academic field, in the world—together, with different identities and positionalities. We had flown in from the cities serving as our respective, temporary homes to this new city steeped in its own unique culture and burdened by an unfortunately less unique, ongoing story of racial injustice. We carried with us our own unique geographies and experiences, which we unpacked together on the bartop. It was not the first time and it would not be the last, but it was a moment when Brian came to better understand how Al felt as a visible minority in a politicized and racialized moment and space and when Brian's deference of subjectivity gave Al the affordance of being vulnerable enough to share. All of this contributed to our trust-building in the ways we each differently needed so that we could show up in our justice-oriented work in ways that would benefit the field. And it is very possible that in undertaking justice-oriented work, we had opened up a space to grow closer as friends while also growing more cognizant of one another and ourselves as individuals and members of an academic community.

## Implications for Transnational and Other Cross-Group Collaboration

This particular space and moment became a pivotal node in the ongoing development of our collaborative relationship. Just as the Kansas City metropolitan area spans the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri Rivers, which mark the border between the two eponymous U. S. states, this case study, too, operates as a metaphor, if not direct physical manifestation, of what academia at large—and our field specifically—is undergoing: an ongoing negotiation of the various identities and needs of the human individuals within

the community. In essence, the CCCC Convention, the largest annual gathering of rhetoric/composition/writing studies scholar-teachers in the United States, if not the world, is itself a collaboration involving around 3,000 member attendees every year, both in the months leading up to it and during the culminating short week of the Convention itself. One reason the 2018 Convention was fraught for many is because we did not have the mechanisms to properly address affective dimensions in collaboration. CCCC itself is a large-scale collaboration that can no longer sustainably pretend that its members participate without identities more complex than the titles and institutional affiliations on their name badges, and the 2018 Convention in particular was evidence of the need to acknowledge and, together, negotiate the pertinent affective dimensions of our collaboration in real space and time. Our collaboration is just one of the many unfolding within this larger system, and while we are not necessarily presenting it as an ideal model, we do share it to encourage others undertaking long-term collaborations to take the same leap we have by establishing the basis for a more relational collaborative dynamic.

For our professional relationship and collaborative endeavors to work, we have had to acknowledge our individual identities and positionalities, and that has required time, vulnerability, and reciprocity, as well as a commitment to doing this work not only within our own interpersonal relationship but within the broader field. As the international rhetoric/composition/writing studies communities become more enmeshed on a global scale through conversations such as this, we are inevitably going to contend with difficult social justice issues. Dealing with them productively will require us to lay effective groundwork of relationality and reciprocity. Drawing upon these lessons from our own transracial and transnational collaboration, which began for us as graduate students, we would like to stress the importance of establishing stronger transnational graduate mentorship networks wherein future scholars and leaders in the field might develop collaborative relationships early in their careers around commitments to justice-oriented work and sustain them by more fully accounting for its affective dimensions. In addition, we encourage scholarly collaborators to be more mindful of how the affective dimensions of collaboration are always entangled in the spatial, temporal, and sociocultural dimensions, perhaps by explicitly attending to these complexities through autoethnographic metanarratives that accompany collaboratively written manuscripts, or any other means of rendering more visible within professional academic culture how the authors have navigated these sorts of contingencies in their work.

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# Writing Fellows Conversation

## A Journey from the US to Germany and Back

*Bradley Hughes, Franziska Liebetanz & Anja Voigt*

### Abstract

This writing conversation centers around the adaptation of the writing fellow program from the University of Wisconsin-Madison at the German writing center in Frankfurt/Oder. The protagonists in this conceptual journey share insights and experiences from their collaboration.



**Franziska**: Dear Anja and dear Brad, when I thought about this issue of *JoSch*, I immediately thought of our exchanges about writing fellows. As a best-practice example of transatlantic collaboration, the successful adaptation of the Writing Fellows (WF) model into the German higher education context may interest readers.

**Anja**: Yes, what a great opportunity to talk to both of you about WF again. I'll try to give a general description first, what WF are and what they do. They are student writing advisors integrated into writing-intensive seminars, extensively trained in supporting academic writing processes. They provide support for students in selected seminars by giving them individual feedback on their written work, but they also work closely together with the professors. Together with WF, the professors work out their expectations for students' texts as well as assessment criteria for their academic texts. WF also advise the professors on the design of writing tasks or assignments and discuss with them how understandable and feasible the writing task is for students. In this way, they take on an important mediator function between teachers and students. For me, the WF program also represents a very concrete way of bringing approaches and methods of writing science and writing didactics directly into contact with the disciplines. Seen this way, WF programs can help universities work out a new understanding of writing support as an essential part of higher education.

**Franziska**: Exactly! Do you remember? Our friendship with Brad Hughes and the Writing Center of the University Wisconsin-Madison began with Katrin Girgensohn. In 2011, she spent one year in Wisconsin working together with Brad and conducting her research about writing center leadership and sustainability. Her year there gave us an inside look into a writing center totally different from ours. After learning about their WF program, we decided to start a similar program within our Writing Center. The idea of having student workers giving feedback on papers from different disciplines was new for us and seemed to be a way to incorporate peer feedback and writing in the disciplines more fully into our university culture.

**Anja**: Already, in the first workshop with Brad back in 2013, we realized what potential a program of this kind could have, and I was sure that it would be worth adapting it to the German university system. It was clear to you and me from the start that such a well worked-out concept, which focuses on all the important actors at the same time, is well suited to supporting writing in the disciplines. We immediately felt like we also had to implement something like this at the European University Viadrina. Within our team, we had already realized that we needed to focus more on collaborating with the faculty, and the WF program, with its goals and its inherent ability to address many different actors, seemed to us to be a model worth adopting. So, Brad, can you please tell us about the WF program in the Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin?

**Brad**: Sure. The WF program here began in the fall of 1997. My wonderful colleague Emily Hall has directed the program for decades now. We were inspired by the first WF programs (also called course-embedded tutors or curricular-based tutoring), developed in the late 1970s and early 80s by Harriet Sheridan at Carleton College, Tori Haring-Smith at Brown University, and Margot Soven at La Salle University. When we started, our WF program had 14 undergraduate fellows and now has about 50 who work with student-writers and professors in writing-intensive courses across the university. We added the WF program to our longstanding Writing Center, which began in 1969, and to a faculty WAC program, which began in 1984. Every spring semester, the WF program selects, through a rigorous application process, enough undergraduate students to become new WF the following year to replace those who have graduated. Each fellow works with about 10–12 student-writers and a professor in a writing-intensive course—reading drafts for two papers, writing revision-oriented comments on the drafts, and meeting individually with each student-writer to discuss students' plans for revising their papers. Students then submit their revised papers to their course professor for grading; along with the revised paper, they also submit the draft and their fellows' comments and a letter explaining their major revisions.

At first it wasn't easy to find stable long-term funding and to recruit faculty. But over time, the program has found strong campus partners and is now well established and admired. Key to our success was securing some modest initial funding to pilot a small WF program experiment as an overload, working with just a few courses and professors we knew well and with some great initial WF. During that year, we began to figure out how to make this complex program work, did some assessment, and earned the trust of key professors across the university teaching those courses with WF, who then became strong allies supporting our proposal to grow the program. Starting with this kind of small pilot program is what I'd advise faculty who want to develop a WF program—but alerting university leaders from the start that it's going to be successful, so it's important to begin planning to secure enough funding to grow the program. Using this initial success and partnering with other teaching-and-learning programs, we persuaded our university leaders to invest in the program long term and we raised substantial gift funds from university alumni to endow part of the program.

WF programs combine process theories of writing, especially about the importance of strengthening student-writers' revision strategies (e. g., Sommers 1980); collaborative learning (Bruffee 1984) and social constructivist theories of learning, especially the power of knowledgeable peers to help less-experienced writers (Nordloff 2020; Vygotsky 1978); and social theories of writing (e. g., Bazerman 2015) and the importance of disciplinary discourse (e. g., Bawarshi/Reiff 2010; Prior 1998). The program taps into the amazing power of undergraduates to help peers with papers in progress and to influence and support teachers as they do the hard work of teaching with writing in all disciplines.

We recognized that to succeed in this challenging work, undergraduate fellows needed substantial initial and ongoing education and support. So new fellows take a semester-long seminar on the theory and practice of peer tutoring across the disciplines, which helps them learn how to be effective writing tutors, examine their role in teaching and learning at the university, and develop further as writers. As they comment on student drafts and prepare to consult individually with students, all fellows receive individual mentoring and participate in regular ongoing education and reflection about their work. In the seminar, new fellows conduct substantial original research about some aspect of tutoring writing or about writing in the disciplines. They share their research in the seminar, and some present their research to larger audiences in our Writing Center and at conferences, and some publish that research, thus making the WF program a rich intellectual experience for our fellows. Our WF program has influenced many programs at universities around the world, including Florida International University and the University of Iowa in the US, Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, and Goethe University in Germany.

**Franziska**: I really believe in WF because the fellows and professors enter into a deep communicative process, an academic process of negotiating, in order to understand the process of writing and their expectations. Anja and Brad, why do you believe in WF?

**Anja**: In the last session of the Writing Fellow SIG, this special interest group of Gesellschaft *für Schreibdidaktik und Schreibforschung,* we recently spent a lot of time talking about that. We concluded that a WF program offers a real chance for teachers and other university actors to appreciate what writing didactics can actually accomplish for the disciplines. A WF program is essentially about linking writing to learning objectives. Working with fellows can motivate teachers to reflect on alternative performance measures, assessment criteria, and writing and feedback processes. The program can also make explicit what the Writing in the Disciplines approach has long been taking as one of its central assumptions, namely that discursive knowledge is already available in the disciplines. A WF program constantly relies on the expertise of its teachers. It can also demonstrate that academic writing and its peculiarities are strongly tied to the disciplines, and that it is therefore particularly useful when experts from the disciplines help to shape how students learn to write. In my opinion, it is precisely the interlocking of writing didactic approaches and theories, of guiding ideas and small interventions, that accumulate in a beneficial way in this program.

**Brad**: I believe in WF for several additional reasons—first, the model leads disciplinary teachers to incorporate writing process into their pedagogy. As writing and WAC-WID specialists talk with disciplinary teachers in workshops and consultations, we're always encouraging colleagues to build carefully designed assignments, drafts, feedback, conferences, revision, and reflection into cycles for student papers. But that's sometimes impossible for teachers to do, because they have competing priorities and too many students. But a WF program makes it possible for more teachers to integrate writing-process pedagogy into selected courses. And, as Anja was saying, when they work with fellows, teachers reflect more critically on how they design writing activities and talk more with their students about disciplinary discourse and genre expectations. From their fellows' written comments, teachers also learn new ways to give feedback about writing.

Second, a WF program taps into the power of collaborative learning, expanding collaborative learning among students far beyond those who choose to go to writing centers, thus embedding writing center pedagogy into courses across the curriculum. The students who work with WF not only receive detailed, individual, critical, and encouraging feedback on their drafts, but also learn how to talk about their writing in progress. The WF themselves learn so much from the experience—not only about writing and tutoring, but also about leadership and about listening, collaboration, and teamwork (Hughes/Gillespie/Kail 2010). And the fellows conduct exciting original research about writing, so undergraduates contribute to our discipline.

Finally, writing centers and WAC-WID programs grow stronger when they add WF programs. A WF program widens the circle of teachers engaged with WAC programs and writing centers, teachers who deepen the understanding that writing centers and WAC programs have of disciplinary discourses. Anja, can you please tell us a bit about your journey implementing the WF program at the European University Viadrina?

**Anja**: It began in 2013, when Brad and Stephanie White came to visit the "big" and the "small" Frankfurts. In multiple workshops, we learned about the WF program and had an intensive exchange about Brad's and Stephanie's experiences. They also brought materials from faculty members as well as their handbooks for WF and for teachers. And I remember how impressed I was with the handbook for fellows (see material). The team at Wisconsin-Madison had transformed a very complex learning process into an easily understandable manual format. Inspired by this, I started to rework the materials for the German context, modifying the content and adapting the "language" to German universities. As a result, I produced handbooks for WF and faculty members, both of which I later revised and updated, often with the help of our wonderful WF. As more and more requests from German colleagues came in, together with Stephanie Dreyfürst (former director of the Writing Center, Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, Germany) we published our handbooks and a few theoretical discussions in 2018 (Dreyfürst/Liebetanz/Voigt).

**Franziska**: In 2015, together with Stephanie Dreyfürst, we became part of an alliance for university teaching (LehreN Netzwerk). The aim was to promote excellent teaching projects, to strengthen committed actors, to support transfer and practice, and to form a

network of excellence on teaching-related university development. Through this alliance, we were able to develop our WF program, discuss it with our colleagues from different disciplines and from different German universities, test the program, and adapt it to the German university system and to German academic culture. That process included adapting the writing tasks to ones familiar in German universities, observing the feedback culture at our university, checking whether professors need more context about writing didactics and knowledge about writing processes, and gauging whether we have to give more context about theory and practice about Writing Across the Curriculum. Because writing center theory and practice are not that well known in German universities, we always have to provide more background information, develop handouts or short talks to inform colleagues, and help them see the benefits of WF.

We presented the program at conferences, we received feedback from different universities, and, most importantly, we became part of a very effective network of teachers, professors, and specialists in didactics. Our work with this group contributed significantly to making WF programs known at German universities. This alliance gave us time to reflect, talk about WF programs with specialists from German universities who are experts in higher education, and as a result of this process shape this model into a form that would match the German university context.

I received from the Volkswagen Foundation (in 2015) a grant to travel to the US in order to learn more about WF program. I visited the Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where Brad was a wonderful host, introducing my colleagues and me not only to the WF program but also to the work of his Writing Center. There, I learned what a great WF program can look like and saw the professionalism and passion with which the WF worked. Because we were going to import the program to our country, it was very important for me to see firsthand and to understand the setting and the university culture and practices in which a program like the WF program works, so that I could then think deeply about how it might work within my own university culture.

I have found that there are extraordinary benefits when writing centers have transnational collaborations. For developing our WF program, we were able from the beginning to work with a well-established and solid program. We got fantastic materials. We could speak to our colleagues from the US, get important information, reflect together and share our concerns and difficulties a new program always goes through. We could rely on articles and research results; those resources help a lot, not only with inventing a program but also with convincing faculty and colleagues to work with WF. The benefits also go beyond the program. Somehow if you work together on developing a program, if you share ideas, if you visit each other (Brad has been multiple times to the Writing Center of the European University Viadrina), you learn much more. You learn about different academic cultures, not only theoretically but also in practice. I saw as an observer—and then experienced even more clearly when I worked together with Brad and his team—the power of collaborative and cooperative ways of working, in order to communicate and achieve goals and consensus. Another thing I really appreciate is what a good listener Brad

is, which I observed from seeing him at his Writing Center. For our work, that is one really important skill. If we understand students and colleagues through careful listening and if we help them explore their knowledge, thoughts and ideas through dialogue, they will be able to make their implicit knowledge and ideas explicit, so then other people can really see and work with their explicit ideas in (ideally well-written) academic papers. As good listeners, we can help build bridges between writers, students, professors, faculties and knowledge. Writing is one of the best instruments to communicate sciences, and the better we are in writing the better we can contribute to sciences. And I am sure everybody will have these kinds of experiences or reflective thoughts if they step into international cooperation. Developing international academic friendships, which allow us to exchange ideas, concepts, and programs, is also a very important means for fostering friendship and peace in the world.

**Anja**: And then the second WF-Book-Adventure came up. Since 2013, in German-speaking higher education an increasing number of WF programs have been launched in writing centers or in related institutions. One after another, the WF programs emerged from their respective trial phases, so 2018 was a good time to put the WF program to the test. By then, there were several theoretical considerations about the use of WF, initial evaluation results in different disciplines at the university, and other adaptations of the Wisconsin-Madison/Viadrina model. With the second WF book, I wanted to present an interim assessment of the program and thus help to continue working on the WF model as a way of promoting Writing in the Disciplines.

The SIG Writing Fellows also started their work around the same time. We are currently addressing three major sets of issues. The first concerns strategy development: How can a WF program support strategic goals of the university, which are normally expressed in "Leitbildern" (mission statements) and as concrete measures in "Struktur-und Entwicklungsplänen" (structural and development planning)?

Furthermore, we continue to explore the question of advantages and disadvantages that the subject-specific and/or cross-disciplinary deployment of WF can have in the disciplines and to what extent the collaboration with the faculties and disciplines can be particularly supported by a subject-related deployment. And of course, we always talk about how we can keep our programs running successfully under very different conditions. In any case, it's clear that many of us have to deal with a shortage of resources, so it's not so easy to keep WF programs running. As a result of the phase-out of the so-called "Qualitätspakt Lehre" (Pact for Quality in Teaching) led by the federal ministry of education in 2020, many writing centers and other related institutions in Germany have had to realign themselves in new situations. Either they had to find new external funding resources, or they had to become (fully) integrated into the university structure. In this context, WF programs may be a particularly suitable starting point, for they provide a very concrete, manageable, and dependable "package" of a writing didactics intervention.

**Franziska**: One challenge is to sustain WF program even if your institution is being restructured. Since 2021, our Writing Center is completely and forever financed by our

university. Securing this long-term funding has been our biggest success so far. We are still in the process of restructuring, so we have had to change much in order to make things work. Our WF program also seems a bit "lost." Everybody wants the program to continue, but we have to find ways to integrate it a new university structure. We had to do a lot of compromising, which is good in ways, because we are now more accepted by our faculties, and our work is now included in the university's description of its programs. I already talked about how much I learned from transnational cooperation, but I want to stress one more valuable thing beyond the program: especially valuable was fostering the friendship between our Writing Center and the Writing Center at the University of Wisconsin. I am lucky to still have this friendship and to be able to get in touch with Brad, meeting him regularly over the years. Having a friend who shares my passion for writing center work and who lives and works on almost the other side of the world is invaluable not only to my work and to our WF program but also to me personally. Anja and Brad, let's talk about what we learned from each other!

**Anja**: I have learned that our writing didactic interventions and offerings have to present themselves in more "explainable" and "digestible" terms. When working with teachers, it is very important to meet them where they are and to find the right tone. In some of the SIG WF sessions, we have talked about "Beziehungsarbeit," a German word that, on a very literal level, reflects the fact that relationships are not something statically given but something that demands active engagement. In the case of the WF program, this means that it's not just about making an offer that teachers can accept or reject. A WF program in itself can seem rigid and strict, so you need a flexible vocabulary. It is also very helpful to have a ready-designed program that you just apply to the context. Teachers have little time, and when asked to implement writing literacy instruction, over and above their usual preparation, it is not uncommon for them to get stressed. However, the WF program offers a very practical, hands-on and easy approach to this topic. This is why teachers most of the time greatly appreciate the support for their disciplinary teaching provided by the WF and the Writing Center.

**Brad**: When I had the honor of introducing WF concepts and practices at the two Frankfurt's Schreibzentren, I learned about writing assignments and instruction in German university contexts, which differ from US universities, and I saw how smart and theoretically sophisticated German undergraduate writing tutors were, how eager tutors and professors were to learn about WF models, and how critically they thought about how to adapt this model to local contexts. I have been inspired by all the work that you and others have done to introduce WF models to universities in Germany, including all the resources you have shared with colleagues and by the enthusiasm you have for WF. It's a perfect example of what Bromley, Girgensohn, Northway, and Schonberg (2021), using concepts from organizational studies, describe as the "reflective, intentional translation" of writing center models and concepts from one educational culture to another. From collaborating with colleagues at Viadrina, I also learned much about sponsoring writing groups, which we later adapted for our Writing Center.

And I'm still learning, even from this conversation—I love the term "Beziehungsarbeit," which captures perfectly the careful listening, collaboration, and relationship-building among WF, teachers, students, and program leaders and the flexible ways in which writing specialists work with disciplinary teachers. From observing WF programs in both German and US universities, I see some of the tensions in goals that Bastian (2021) identified when WF (or embedded tutors) work in different kinds of WAC programs. Going forward we need to think more holistically in order to theorize WF program administration within institutional contexts, using some of the theories Cox, Gailin, and Melzer (2018) used to characterize WAC program development— complexity, systems, social network, and sustainable development theories. Finally, this collaboration has given me a priceless gift of enduring international friendships. As Franziska said, I honestly think of international collaborations as a form of citizen diplomacy.

**Franziska**, **Anja** and **Brad**: We hope that our conversation has inspired readers to consider developing WF programs. We've shared some resources below to help get started, and we're genuinely eager to talk with you by email. If, however, it's not the right time for you or your university to consider this, we would still strongly encourage writing professionals to experiment with small international collaborations. If you read a publication or hear a presentation by an international colleague that interests you, try writing to the author or talking with the presenter to show interest, which could lead to inviting that colleague to speak by videoconference with the staff in your writing program or center or collaborating on a future research project and presentation. Almost all writing scholars are thrilled to have colleagues interested in their ideas and eager to talk and learn together.

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## Material

The handbook for Writing Fellows (unpublished) by the UW–Madison Writing Center. https://writing.wisc.edu/writingfellows/current/

The handbook for professors working with Writing Fellows (unpublished) by the UW-Madison Writing Center. https://writing.wisc.edu/writingfellows/faculty/

## Authors

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Franziska Liebetanz directed the Writing Center of the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder) between 2011 and 2020. Since 2021 she has been directing the Viadrina Center of Teaching and Learning with Anja Voigt. She is Vice-Chair of the European Writing Center Association and founded JoSch with her colleagues.

Anja Voigt is co-director of the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder). For several years, she directed the Writing Fellow Program there. Since 2020, Voigt has been chair of the SIG Writing Fellows of the Gesellschaft für Schreibdidaktik und Schreibforschung. She is also author of several publications on the topic.

# Working Together, Writing Together

## A Call for Collaborative Writing Support Structures

*Fanny Isensee & Daniel Töpper*


### Abstract

This contribution focuses on academic writing, especially for PhD students, and the support structures at German universities. Drawing on our own biographies and collaborative writing experiences we argue that the institutionalization processes of PhD writing support fall short as they rarely conceptualize writing as a collective endeavor. Rather, they tend to incorporate US-American models only to maintain the idea of the academy as a collective of autonomous intellectuals. The article describes existing writing support structures, discusses the needs of PhD students and postdocs, before closing with reflections on the benefits of understanding writing as (collaborative) work and how this could improve German academia.[1]




### Introduction

During two semesters I, Fanny Isensee, spent at a liberal arts college in New England, I experienced a crucial moment that altered my position on academic writing. When the time came to start writing the papers we had to hand in for our classes, a professor suggested visiting the writing center. When I showed my paper to the writing tutor, they started out with the basics of academic writing (how to structure your paper, devoting a separate paragraph to each of your arguments, composing meaningful topic sentences) before going into the details of the paper I had written so far. Initially, I was taken aback when what I had come to know in Germany as a skillful and meticulous craft was reduced to simple guidelines. However, the explanations provided indicated that I could rely on basic structures. This helped me to understand the writing process itself, which in turn allowed me to think about my writing and my audience. Through the encouragement of the professor, who valued the writing center, and the meeting with the tutor, I encountered writing as part of a larger and collaborative university culture. Back in Germany I encountered very different customs – the writing process itself was rarely addressed during classes. If addressed, most professors remained on the level of formatting hints and I received very little feedback on papers aside from the grade.

1 Note to the Reader: this is an abridged print version, you can find the full-length article online: https://www.josch-journal.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-03-11_josch-online_working-together.pdf

Academic writing is a burdensome process, which changes constantly and is influenced by experiences, backgrounds, and institutional cultures. (Trans-)national contexts, disciplines, institutions, generations, and individuals all shape and are shaped by these (unstable) traditions and uncertainties. In this essay, we address this writing socialization from an analytic-autobiographical perspective and combine observations of ongoing institutional change with personal experiences to search for fractures, additions, and contradictions. We will discuss where the current reform processes in German academia stand and whether they actually improve writing socialization. This essay aims to add personal voices to the debate as these differ from aggregated individual opinions collected in social studies. By reflecting about and abstracting from our experiences in a dialogical process, we raise possible new perspectives which in turn provide starting points for empirical follow-up studies. Our contribution is situated in German academia, more specifically in the field of German-speaking history of education.

As a frame, we first describe existing writing support structures at German universities and situate our alma mater Humboldt University in these. In a second step, we present our PhD writing biographies and connect these with existing support structures. Thirdly, we reflect upon our experiences with collaborative writing and which kinds of structures and settings support it. The article closes with an outlook on what the future of (collaborative) writing might hold for us and why it might improve current university structures.

## Writing Support Structures – PhD Students' Woes (and Silver Linings) in the German Academic System

Starting, conducting, and completing a PhD is a complex and time-consuming task. It requires a large set of specific skills and activities (Carell/Reis/Szczyrba 2011: 1 f.). To set the process in motion, usually a doctoral student and a professor agree on a potential PhD-project idea. The third entity in this triangle is the university that provides the organizational framework and has the right to grant doctoral degrees. This constellation forms the basis for a PhD candidate's "socialization into science" (Schneiderberg 2018: 121 ff.).

The concept of offering specific support to PhD candidates by providing, among others, writing support is still fairly new at German universities (see e. g., Gruber 2010: 18). Although predominantly anchored in the image of a task that should be performed in "solitude and freedom" ("Einsamkeit und Freiheit", Schelsky 1963: 209 f.), PhD programs at German universities increasingly involve structured support. These developments open up the aforementioned triangle and introduce new actors. The structured PhD program, which entered the discussion in German higher education in the 1980s, takes its inspiration from US-American models of graduate schools and centers (see e. g., Bosbach 2009; Nünning/Sommer 2007).

Although the significance of academic writing skills as such is extensively addressed in discussions on doctoral studies, the details and possible support structures are less central in the literature on PhD programs in German universities. This differs from the US case, where academic writing and writing centers are much better researched (Siegel Finer/White-Farnham 2017; Rose/Weiser 2002). We can find an overview of such institutions (Isensee/Töpper 2023) as well as literature on the institutionalization process of writing support institutions (Girgensohn 2017). There is literature on specific aspects of writing support (Dayton 2015; Girgensohn 2007, 2014; Girgensohn/Liebetanz 2010; Simmons/Singh 2019) as well as the specific disciplinary needs or otherwise defined target groups that are addressed with specific (trans-)national structures and traditions in mind (Saxalber 2010; Badenhorst/Guerin 2016; Schneijderberg 2018; Templeton 2021; Doleschal/Gruber 2007). Further, there is a lot of advice literature (see among others Carell/Reis/Szczyrba 2011; Korff/Roman 2013) and some social studies that explore specific needs – e. g., for PhD candidates with children, special needs, a non-academic background, or for part-time PhD students (Dülcke et al. 2021). We also find studies on the future and prospects of writing support (Bammer 2015; Kuh/Ehrenberg 2011); and there is literature providing reflections and support for doctoral supervisors (Brentel 2019).

However, this literature does not provide a comprehensive overview of practiced standards and established institutions of writing support. While advice literature is necessarily written from a general perspective, most of the studies frame academic writing in quantitative terms and propose measures of individual support. Yet, these measures do not factor in or specifically address the context of writing. Possible obstacles, such as an imbalance between time devoted to work and time devoted to writing, or potential problems like writer's block only receive attention in the form of categorizable individual problems. In most cases, support only starts when problems occur. There is not enough knowledge about academic writing in practice or about structural influences on individual writing.

In the following, we present some findings on support structures in the German university system. It is not easy to find an overview about what is offered to PhD students in German universities. Mostly there are empirically aggregated statistics on student numbers. To gain more detailed insights, we decided to conduct a *standardized website analysis* based on Korff and Roman's approach (2013: 42 ff.). For our review, we considered universities located in Germany that offer PhD programs and award doctorates, in total 51 institutions. Drawing from this sample, we focused on universities with more than 1,000 completed PhDs in 2020 (Statistisches Bundesamt 2021) as these institutions have the funds to create support structures for graduate students. We developed an explorative analytical framework to identify possible support structures in general and structures targeted at academic writing in particular. We investigated if there were any support structures on the central university level and if they included writing centers or offered academic writing courses on the PhD level. We looked at the central university structure, the faculties, and the department of educational research. Within the writing support struc-

tures, we looked at which kinds of formats were featured and whom these formats addressed.

Our results showed that the majority of universities featured some type of graduate school, mostly as a central structure, and sometimes as a structure for specific academic fields; in many cases additional grant-based structures existed. The larger universities (e. g., Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and Freie Universität Berlin) try to feed research grant resources into the structure of the central graduate school. The majority of universities (35 out of 51) offered some type of writing support: Some universities offer specific "writing centers" (eight in total: Universität Köln, Universität Tübingen, Universität Bayreuth, Universität Bielefeld, Universität Göttingen, Universität Bremen, Universität Jena, and Universität Stuttgart), others offer so-called "welcome centers" (e. g., Universität Konstanz, Universität Regensburg, Universität Potsdam) – structures that address the particular challenges of the PhD process for specific groups but most often for international students. Many universities also offer counseling, which is often designed to accompany the entire PhD process. On a very formal level, most universities saw the need to aggregate and combine information on the PhD process. They integrated this information into graduate school structures and (overarching) consultation services for faculty, staff, and students.

When it comes to writing support, we found that the courses offered were often, but not always, included in the PhD program structures of graduate schools. In some cases, i. e., in Stuttgart, Tübingen, and Bielefeld, the writing schools/writing centers shape this specific curriculum. Further, interesting cases of pioneering structures are the Universität Bremen, where special courses and counseling on English academic writing for PhD students are offered. When looking at the general content of the writing structures, we found courses designed for specific text types (exposé, introduction, journal articles, essays, etc.), a specific academic language and style (English, German), and courses on specific parts of the PhD process (beginning, writing phase, defense etc.). There are further problem-specific offers, e. g., writing counseling (for groups and individuals), net- and co-working opportunities as well as writing retreats and workshops. Some universities feature distinct writing guidelines (e. g., the diversity-oriented writing approach at Universität Tübingen), with the levels of differentiation varying between the writing structures and the way they are connected to the PhD programs.

When we look at Humboldt University, we see a similar constellation to the picture above. Based on their specific roles, a lot of actors offer different courses, lectures, and talks geared towards PhD students, yet there is no overarching structure that provides information about these services or guides PhD students along the way. There are several graduate schools, with some of them offering writing courses and different workshops that are accompanied by offers from the so-called career center, the university library and the "Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin", the Berlin State Library which is one of the largest libraries in Europe. The student union also maintains a writing center. However, despite this broad range, there is no distinct institution that focuses solely or in large part on writing

support, the closest being the Interdisciplinary Center for Education Sciences, which offers some activities on writing, but does not have a designated writing coach or a structured curriculum. As in many cases, writing represents only one of many tasks and thus there is no specific actor or group that focuses on the improvement of academic writing at Humboldt University. Hence, our personal journeys were a mixture of inputs and advice from different expert positions offered in a peer format, but neither was this training provided by academic experts nor was it a part of our work environment, where writing seemed to happen behind closed doors at odd times in the form of a solitary and opaque task.

Writing is highly valued in academia, little discussed, taken as a given but hardly explained, highly individualized, yet it represents the results of combining the thoughts and perspectives of many. We have argued that this might be connected to the German understanding of academic research as a result of "solitude and freedom" (Isensee/Töpper 2023). However, this myth actually (re-)produced ensuing problems and hierarchies, as the ideals of solitude and freedom affect individuals and social positions quite differently. Though some universities offer interesting new approaches, we argue to rethink academic writing even more by understanding it as consisting of both individual and collective components. This evolving and shifting understanding of the specific individual-collective compound should be addressed in writing research and practices. A first step in this direction might be to create a basis for discussing the connection between individual writing and institutional context, to which we hope to contribute to.

In the subsequent part, we will discuss how we learned and practiced academic writing and propose some considerations for discussing a different writing culture, which informs our claim for structural changes that enhance collective writing. From our perspective, the more appropriate future of academic writing takes place in the form of collaborative co-working instead of collective loneliness (for some considerations on collective writing see Ede/Lunsford, 2001; McNenny/Roen 1992). This includes an understanding of writing as work that is open to discussion and sensitive to process (see e. g., Blake Yancey 1998: 199 ff.), rather than as a covert and result-oriented pastime.

## Making Collaborative Research and Writing Work

We would like to turn to some lessons we have learned from each other through collaborative work. Although we underwent a similar academic socialization, our experiences still differ to an extent and are influenced by our individual positions and expectations when it comes to academic writing. Before we started our collaborative writing journey, we first of all needed to establish a basis of trust that allowed us to share unfinished thoughts and texts with each other and find adequate forms of critique. Working together showed us the need for a more detailed planning at the project start, which helped us flesh out well-rounded and robust argumentations. Our writing styles and attention to stylistic and lin-

guistic details improved, and we have picked up terms in both German and English from one another. What precedes these learnings is an acknowledgement of our different takes on academic writing, and that these different positions are both valuable. In this way, we can both challenge our writing and contribute to its improvement at the same time.

Although the structures at German universities regarding writing support have changed in the past years, and innovative approaches for support structures have emerged (e. g., at the universities in Bielefeld, Bremen, and Stuttgart), there are still too few efforts to further collaborative writing opportunities and far too few discussions on academic writing. In the US research literature on writing support, apart from writing centers, we can find further possibilities in the form of "writing across the curriculum" (see e. g., McLeod 1992: 1ff.), "writing in the disciplines" (see e. g., Bizzell 1992), or scholarship on the "writing-enriched curriculum", which map out other support structures.

What we would have needed to hear early on is that you should start writing as soon as possible, prioritize writing projects, and find a group of enthusiastic writers to exchange ideas and texts. These needs cannot necessarily all be met by an external structure focused on writing support, but have to be addressed within the concrete working structures and their respective cultures. Even though PhD support structures modeled after their US counterparts have been established, certain critical aspects that are characteristic of these structures in the USA (such as the need for the establishment of a writing-friendly work culture) hardly exist in German academia. Hence, when we understand writing support as an aspect of a "traveled concept" of improved PhD support originating in the USA, we would argue that attitudes towards and cultures of writing (and PhD support) in the departments are not necessarily considered in the reforms, but instead all changes are outsourced to writing centers, with little collaboration between the two. Along these lines, discussions on how writing support could be improved have remained superficial, with the writing center remaining as the established fallback option. This externalization preserves the idea of the primary responsibility of the individual and the individual structure that at best tries to implement cultural change on their own terms. But we would argue that the institutionalization processes of PhD writing support need to understand and support writing as a collective endeavor. Writing should be visibly recognized as the (collective) work it is.

We would like to stress the significance of talking not just about *what* you are writing about but give priority to the *how*. We argue for a move from knowledge about scientific content to knowledge about scientific content *and* academic writing. Writing support structures at German universities can only change if there is a change in attitude as well – merely transferring writing centers from one academic context to the next does not significantly change the views on writing and how it should be conducted. Hence, a simple transfer of the characteristic US writing experience would not suffice as the German academic writing culture with its specific style and customs would need to be integrated as well.

Collaborative writing projects start interpersonal exchange on writing and thereby enhance necessary public discussions by providing and shaping ideas and models on how to support (collective) writing. To encourage this form of work and allow text production to combine different thoughts and perspectives and produce more multi-faceted takes on questions and knowledge production, universities need to promote collaboration not only in research output but should encourage the idea to conceptualize the academy itself as a collective thinking and research space.



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# Translingual Writing

## The Re-emergence of an Invisibilized Variety

*Julie Kolgjini*


### Abstract

In recent writing scholarship, translanguaging has received much attention. These vibrant repertoires can, however, challenge various language ideologies. This study's research question seeks equitable solutions concerning translingual writing in a college course in Kosovo. The methodology considers appropriateness-based approaches to linguistic diversity, critical language awareness, and written materials submitted by students during two semesters. The results suggest that additional conversations with students, among others, are crucial, in particular regarding the monolingual paradigm and critical approaches to language. A literature review is followed by the research question, methodology, results, discussion and concluding remarks.


### Language ideologies, shifting paradigms, and the translanguaging lens

During the past few decades, various language scholars have shed light on the problematization of hegemonic language ideologies. Efforts to interrogate standard language cultures have offered a counter-narrative to repressive sociolinguistic forces (Joseph/Rutten/Vosters 2020). While a homogeneous standard language was concomitant with modernization, linguistic variation was viewed as threatening the progress of the nation-state (Ricento 2000). This critical paradigm shift sought to address various injustices associated with rigid language policies, including speakers with dynamic linguistic repertoires being viewed as linguistically deficient (Milroy 2001).

A turn away from a monolingual paradigm–which considers languages to be static and discrete, as opposed to dynamic, emergent, porous, and fluid–is also relevant to dislodging hegemonic underpinnings associated with language. This monoglossic disposition underscores the silo model of multilingualism, where complete mastery of each named language is the focus: "The 'true' bilingual in this model is that rare linguistic hermaphrodite: someone who is essentially two monolinguals residing in one person" (Horner/NeCamp/Donahue 2011: 285). Such an optic reinforces the ideas of each language being its own fortress and linguistic hybridity signaling deficiency, whereby monolingual bias associates "language mixing with contamination and lack of proficiency" (Lee 2016: 177). A polyglossic shift thus problematizes these engrained assumptions of monolingualism.

Translanguaging, the meshing of linguistic codes, challenges rigid monoglossic mindsets. Rooted in Baker's English translation of the Welsh *trawsieithu*, the term was used to describe pedagogical practices observed by Williams regarding Welsh revitalization (Li 2018). Translanguaging, as defined by Canagarajah (2011: 401), is "the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system." These language users possess distinct linguistic repertoires containing reservoirs of multifaceted linguistic resources not bound by rigid, static, named standard languages and varieties (Kaufhold 2018; García/Otheguy 2020). In translanguaging, codemeshing is also often involved, where various languages, varieties, registers, and constructions are "part of a single unitary system"–but unlike codeswitching, which treats such elements as "switches between two different systems" (Canagarajah 2011: 403). Like translanguaging, codemeshing is a strategy for "bringing the different codes within the same text rather than keeping them apart" (Canagarajah 2013: 112 f.; Young 2013). Such bi/multilingual and multidialectal languagers "inhibit or select features from their linguistic repertoire based on the communicative context..., but their full linguistic system is always active" (Ossa Parra/Proctor 2021: 769). Instead of being a double monolingual with two separate systems, a unitary system containing lived linguistic experiences in an expansive linguistic repertoire is called upon (Turner/Lin 2020). As García and Kleifgen (2019: 556) maintain: "[T]ranslanguaging is a political act focused on reinterpreting language as a decolonizing process and liberating the language practices of bilingual...populations." Such practices can yield transformative experiences that address structural inequalities, including monolingual ideologies (Turner/Lin 2020).

Numerous scholars have investigated translanguaging, including translingual writing, and embraced it as a pedagogical stance (Horner, et al. 2011; Canagarajah 2011, 2016; Young 2013; Cushman 2016; Kaufhold 2018; Lee/Canagarajah 2019; Seals/Olsen-Reeder 2020; García/Otheguy 2020; Gilham/Fürstenau 2020; Özer 2021; also Matsuda 2014). Cushman (2016: 236) underscores the fact that by utilizing translanguaging in academic writing, marginalized languagers "could ideally see their home languages valued, taught, and practiced in reading and writing assignments and classroom discussions in ways that sustain one of many Englishes." Instead of relegating various linguistic resources solely to particular domains, these repertoires could be woven into academic discourse, such as written assignments (García/Otheguy 2020). As Cushman (2016: 235 f.) explains, employing such a decolonial and post-monolinguistic approach could mean that "[h]eritage languages and scripts that were lost or being eroded and (re)learned alongside English could become a scholarly, curricular, and pedagogical focus." Varieties that have undergone varying degrees of marginalization and attrition could be meshed into academic writing processes (Seals/Olsen-Reeder 2020). Translingual pedagogy thus underscores "difference in language not as a barrier to overcome or as a problem to manage, but as a resource for producing meaning" (Horner et al. 2011: 303). Linguistic tourism – an instructor's or classmate's "fascination for 'alien writing'" (Matsuda 2014: 482 f.) – would, however, need to be addressed so that critical metalinguistic awareness and other translanguaging aims are

not sidelined (Britton/Lorimer Leonard 2020; Arnold 2020; Lorimer Leonard 2021; Shapiro 2022).

Also relevant to translingual writing is linguistic erasure of non-standard forms. Despite usage practices, when a given configuration is excluded from the official norm, it undergoes invisibilization; such an element is thus relegated to non-standard oral options and stigmatized as it lacks the overt prestige of the standard (Joseph/Rutten/Vosters 2020: 175). Standard-gazing gatekeepers may render such structures as invisible in written materials, including in documents (re)produced by prescriptivist proofreaders. Attempts to eradicate these stigmatized elements include depicting them as handicaps and non-resources that are 'inappropriate' for effective communication (see Havinga 2018; Flores/Rosa 2015).

## The current study: The research question

This study's research question is as follows:

> What are various equitable solutions regarding translanguaging, including codes once erased from academic discourse, in assessed writing in an undergraduate EMI[1] writing-intensive course in Kosovo?

## The methodology, subjects, and textual artifacts

This study's methodology draws on Flores and Rosa's (2015) interrogation of appropriateness-based approaches to linguistic diversity in pedagogical contexts where Standard English is the dominant norm. Lee and Canagarajah's (2019) examination of student-generated textual artifacts as well as Lorimer Leonard's (2021) emphasis on both critical language awareness (CLA) in writing and quantitative analysis were also considered in the current investigation.

The study examines the translingual writing experiences of first-year undergraduate students (n = 180) in Kosovo while attending a credit-bearing EMI writing-intensive course at a global campus of a private university in the US. The students represent a variety of linguistic and cultural heritages and may thus draw upon multiple (named) languages and varieties (i. e. Albanian, Romani, Slavic, Turkish, German). One instructor (n = 1), i. e. this study's author, is involved in the study. The materials considered are from Fall 2020 and 2021 while COVID-19 restrictions (online and hybrid learning) were in place. The artifacts consist of typed first and final drafts uploaded by students to the learning management system throughout the above semesters, during which students were given three writing assignments involving process writing. The first assignment

1 English as the Medium of Instruction

focused on narration; the other two assignments were researched expository writing, some done in small groups (one to three students). The students were encouraged to incorporate translingual writing and were informed orally and in writing that their essay projects may be used in research.

The total number of essay projects considered for the study is 353. These projects (first and final drafts) were coded according to one of three categories:

a. those that contained overt translingualism (including codemeshing);
b. those that did not include explicit translanguaging, but overtly attempted to examine CLA issues relevant to the student authors (i. e. standard language ideology and dialect shaming); and
c. other (the submissions that did not fall into the other two groups).

If one or both of the drafts contained translanguaging, the project was coded as belonging to the first category (a.). If none of the drafts included translingualism, the project was coded as belonging to either the second or third category (b. or c., respectively), depending on the content of the essay.



## Results

Occasional translingualism emerged in some of the student writings. Out of a total of 353 projects, only nine (n = 9; .025 %) contained overt translanguaging, in particular where the named languages of Albanian, German and various Slavic varieties were integrated. Three other projects (n = 3; .008 %) addressed CLA – but did not contain overt translingualism. In total, twelve projects (n = 12; .034 %) contained translanguaging and/or openly discussed CLA concerns. Given this pilot project is ongoing, current and future iterations of the course will also be included in later reports of translanguaging in student writing at this institution.

### Figure 1

Extracts from student translingual writing

**1.** "Mos u sill si **katunar** se nuk tdon kerkush." While waiting for the bus, I overheard a friend tell another friend something that has stuck with me all these years.

**2.** "**Hilfe! Bitte, Hilfe**!" Those distant screams for help from my uncle pulled me out of my agonizing thoughts, eliciting a small light of hope inside me. "**Zot, ndihmome**!" I pleaded in my head while struggling to catch my breath.

**3.** When in Prishtina, Speak Like **Prishtinalis** Do!

Figure 1 contains extracts from three separate student writing projects. The first extract includes at least one (formerly) marginalized element from Geg Albanian (G) – in contrast

to Tosk Albanian (T) and Standard Albanian (SA) – i. e. *katunar* (***d*** dropped, cf. G *katun**d**ar* 'villager'; T and SA *fshatar* 'villager'), a 'reduced' form with pejorative connotations and stigma, depending on context. In the second excerpt, the student's trilingualism is observed, where pleas of 'Help! Please, help!' in German and 'God, help me!' in Albanian (G, T, and SA) are woven into the text. In the third fragment, the essay's title shows multiple languages being fused, in particular the fusion of Geg Albanian (cf. T, SA *Prishtinas*) with the English plural marker.

## Discussion

Bearing in mind the various (named) languages and varieties that emerged in this study as well as a historical lens, linguistic erasure can be observed when considering Albanian, in particular the language codification policies of the Geg and Tosk varieties[2] in Southeastern Europe during the previous century. In 1956 in the People's Socialist Republic of Albania, Geg went from being employed in a wealth of genres to being relegated to footnotes in Tirana's version of *The Orthography of the Albanian Language* (Ismajli 2005: 277 ff.), despite appearing in various textbooks in Kosovo and select literary pieces (i. e. by the Geg writer Migjeni) on both sides of the border (Vokshi 1959). Just over a decade later in 1967 Geg was nearly eliminated as a legitimate linguistic code in the publication of scholarly, scientific, and other official materials via erasure and proscription by a team of linguistic authorities under the auspices of the University of Tirana (Ismajli 2005: 357 ff.) – and then again in 1968 in the Autonomous Socialist Province of Kosovo by a group of language specialists at Prishtina's Albanological Institute (Ismajli 2005: 521). The standard language of Albania and Kosovo came to be known as Unified Literary Albanian (ULA) of 1972, based primarily on the southern Tosk dialect (Ismajli 2005: 523 ff.; Byron 1976, 1978, 1985). Language planning of the 1960s and 70s shaped the linguistic landscape of language standardization in Albania and Kosovo. Whereas Geg was stigmatized and thus marginalized, Tosk was elevated to overt prestige by being selected for the new standard.

Also germane to investigations of translingual writing is implicit codification of non-standard forms. As Hickey (2020: 222) explains, if speakers, including of a non-vernacular variety, "do not perceive a structure or feature as vernacular then it can slip through the net and be incorporated into the...implicitly codified variety." That is, 'transgressive' forms can be woven into the standard with this type of codification. Hickey (2020: 226) observes that "some features which were initially stigmatised by being typical of vernacular varieties can percolate upwards into a supraregional variety and lose their stigma in the process." In other words, implicit codification involves formerly stigmatized structures no

2 While Geg has historically been employed by speakers north of the Skumbini River in Albania and Kosovo as well as in parts of Montenegro and North Macedonia, Tosk is spoken in southern Albania and parts of North Macedonia (Byron 1976).

longer being regarded as inferior – or *katunarçe* – as may be transpiring in Figure 1. In extract 1, at least one Geg regionalism surfaced that had previously undergone invisibilization; given it was non-standard, it was deemed as stigmatized and thus 'inappropriate' for formal contexts, such as assessed academic writing (see Flores/Rosa 2015). Albeit favoring the dominant standard or language is not uncommon in Kosovo (Kolgjini 2021), in some cases formerly invisibilized elements resurface, perhaps in part due to implicit codification, including in the translingual writing of the present study.

As is evident in the low uptake of translanguaging in this study's findings, many learners opted out of embracing their polyglossic repertoires. Goodman and Tastanbek (2021: 38), when discussing translingual writing in Kazakhstan, state that "students may feel translanguaging is not a resource but a crutch unless the monoglossic ideology is interrogated and resisted." The entrenchment of monoglossic ideology on the part of the state, educational institutions, and learners may still be so engrained that critically resisting it may require considerable resources (Goodman/Tastanbek 2021: 37 f.), including in Kosovo. As Arnold (2020: 318, 337 f.) explains in her research on translingual writing at a post-secondary institution in Lebanon, some learners may intentionally opt-out depending on their academic goals, i. e. alignment with established norms, as could also be the case in the current study.



## Concluding remarks

In Kosovo everyday language practices exhibit numerous instances of translingual utterances, thus illustrating resistance to hegemonic norms of dominant, standard varieties and languages, and also the leveraging of linguistic repertories to refuse erasure (Kolgjini 2021). Such could also be the case for translingual writing; instead of casting aside (once) marginalized constructions, these languagers could opt to norm-break, to resist hegemonic and monoglossic ideologies, including in the drafts submitted for critical examination of content.

In order for students to feel empowered to leverage their vibrant linguistic resources in their writing, additional support at pedagogical and institutional levels, including for peer tutors, could assist in addressing this issue. Engaging students and others in conversations regarding critical approaches to language and the monolingual ideology could be instrumental in expanding their horizons regarding a translingual disposition.

The study's limitations involve various COVID-19 mitigations, including restricted in-person support for students. Future results of the author's ongoing investigation of translingual writing may be revealing in understanding to what extent these constraints influenced the uptake of translingualism. Future avenues of research could also include examining translingual practices in other courses and during peer tutoring sessions at the institution's writing center.

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# Reflections on the Dynamic Nature of Academic Co-writing

*Caroline Payant & Michael Zuniga*

## Abstract

Collaborative writing (CW) is a writing process that encourages language learners to share the responsibility of planning, producing, and providing on-going feedback on a text. CW, however, does not always capture the dynamic interactions that unfold when working with peers. The aim of this paper is to discuss how we negotiated a Dynamic Co-Writing stance, one which captures the interactive dynamics of our cooperative/collaborative relationship, as we engaged in an intensive writing project. In this reflective paper, we describe Dynamic Co-Writing and share how embracing such a stance not only fostered positive emotions but also benefited our own academic writing experiences.



## Introduction

Collaborative writing (CW) is a commonly researched and implemented practice in first (L1) and second/additional language (AL) classrooms. It invites learners to share the responsibility of generating ideas, producing a coherent and organized text, and providing ongoing feedback (Lowry/Curtis/Lowry 2004; Storch 2013). In AL contexts, CW implies that authors work simultaneously on the writing task, which contrasts with *cooperative writing*, whereby authors work independently and asynchronously on separate sections of a text (Roschelle/Teasley 1995). This cooperative approach characterized most of our academic co-writing experiences until a recent tight manuscript deadline of three weeks incited us to also adopt CW practices in the name of efficiency. We simply did not have time to only work cooperatively on the text one at a time. What emerged from this intensive writing experience was an awareness that collaborative and cooperative writing are not alternate strategies as they are often depicted in AL writing literature, but in fact have the potential to be dynamically related in important ways. We also perceived this co-writing experience as being one of the most positive we have had in our academic careers to date. We attribute such positivity to our Dynamic Co-Writing stance, which captures the unpredictable and evolving nature of interactions as well as the social dynamics of the collaborative relationship that emerged during this writing project. In this reflective paper, we share how embracing such a stance not only fosters positive emotions but also benefits experienced writers' academic writing knowledge base. In what follows, we will define collaborative, cooperative, and dynamic co-writing, and consider some difficulties

and strategies that emerged from the experience, before concluding with a discussion on how such a dynamic co-writing stance may enhance existing CW models.

## Collaborative and Cooperative Writing

CW practices are implemented in L1 (i.e., language arts) and AL contexts (Svenlin/Sørhaug 2022). In AL writing research, collaborative and cooperative writing are discussed as distinct dynamics. CW is operationalized as learners interacting in dyads or groups as they jointly make decisions, solve problems, and contribute to the production of a single text for which all members share equal responsibility (Storch 2019: 40). In contrast, *cooperative work*, as an umbrella term, "is accomplished by the division of labour among participants, as an activity where each person is responsible for a portion of the problem solving" (Roschelle/Teasley 1995: 70). When applying this lens to AL writing, each contributor is responsible for a given section of a text (Kozar 2010: 17).

Research on CW with language learners has focused extensively on learner-learner interactions (Svenlin/Sørhaug 2022) and shown that by creating mutual scaffolding opportunities throughout the writing process, CW boosts confidence, which results in performance-supporting positive affect and motivation (Fernández-Dobao 2020; Zhai 2021). Compared to individual writing, CW leads to the production of higher quality texts (Fernandez-Dobao/Blum 2013; Wigglesworth/Storch 2009 2013), characterized by greater grammatical precision (Fernandez-Dobao 2012; McDonough/De Vleeschauwer/Crawford 2018), improved argumentation (Cuevas et al. 2016) or improved structure and organization (Shehadeh 2011). CW also contributes to language learning. Indeed, the written and oral output of such activities exposes gaps in learners' developing linguistic systems and facilitates *collaborative dialogue*. Collaborative dialogue, operationalized as language-related episodes, is a form of metalinguistic discourse aimed at solving language-related problems that emerge during production (Swain/Watanabe 2012) and allow for focalized attention to form about language and discourse in a meaningful context. In contrast, cooperative writing, because of the division of the writing responsibilities, we obtain a product constructed in parallel. This reduces opportunities for mutual engagement and the co-construction of knowledge that typically unfolds during collaborative interaction. Despite its numerous benefits, CW also presents some challenges. First, its benefits can be impacted by learners' differing language proficiency levels and willingness to collaborate, which can create both dominant and passive postures in writing tasks (Storch 2002). Indeed, Zuniga and Payant (2021) found that learners believe that unless they are the ones in control of the pen/keyboard, their contributions are merely simple suggestions. Furthermore, CW may deprive authors of the time and space needed for silent reflection on writing problems.

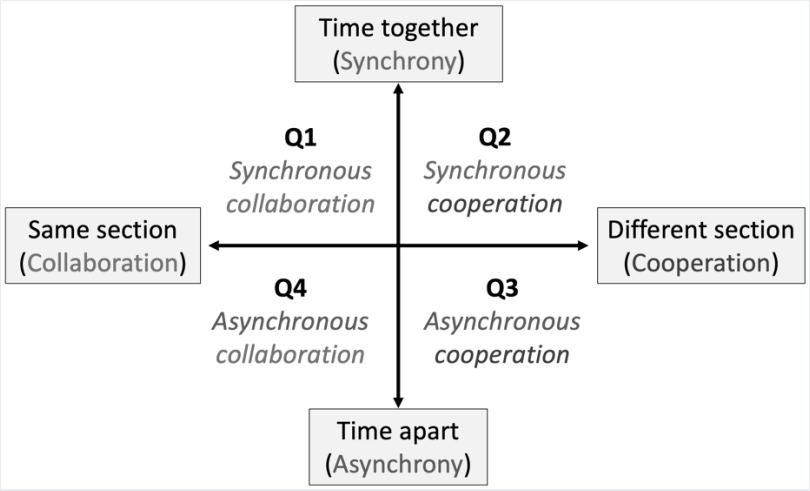
## From a Dichotomous Stance to a Dynamic Co-Writing Stance

As mentioned above, time constraints related to a tight manuscript deadline incited us to integrate CW into our usual cooperative practices. As a result, we negotiated our own flexible form of *collaboration*, one that organically responded to the evolving needs and constraints of the writing task at hand. Indeed, throughout the writing process, we constantly shuffled between *collaborative* and *cooperative* writing stances. These terms, we felt, failed to capture the true nature of our interactions, which has motivated us to propose a *Dynamic Co-Writing* (DCW) stance. The term "dynamic" allows us to depict the unpredictable nature of interactions between contributors and the ensuing fluctuations between the collaborative and cooperative stances. This position stands in contrast to a rigid adherence to a particular stance and responds to evolving needs throughout the writing process. More specifically, while CW allows for efficient joint problem solving, cooperative writing affords contributors time to reflect without the distractions of collaboration and the ability to continue working when collaborators are unavailable. In the following, we describe this term and the insights we gleaned from this experience.

As we prepared to write the manuscript, we negotiated that Caroline would take the lead as the first author. During this first week, Caroline wrote a very rough first draft of the introduction, literature review, and methodology sections whereas Michael worked on the data analysis. Once Caroline shared her work with Michael, he initiated a one-day individual writing session where he expanded on the text and added the results section. Over the course of the next few days, we engaged in multiple writing sessions, flowing between cooperative and collaborative writing stances during synchronous and asynchronous timeframes. To best capture these fluid relationships, we mapped our interactions along two dimensions: 1) the time we were working on the manuscript (i. e., synchronous and asynchronous), and 2) the section of the manuscript on which we were working (i. e., same or different section). This two-dimension dynamic writing relationship is illustrated in Figure 1.

In Quadrant 1, we wrote during identical timeframes on the same section of the manuscript, communicating directly through Zoom videoconferencing, using either its shared screen function or working simultaneously on the live version of the OneDrive document. Working with the live version of the manuscript using OneDrive in a synchronous relationship, we were both able to modify the text directly and see the changes in real time, thus facilitating collaborative problem solving and the co-construction of ideas: *synchronous collaboration*. In Quadrant 2, we wrote during identical timeframes connected through videoconference, but on different sections (without shared screen): *synchronous cooperation*. Since we were both online, we could consult each other when needed which facilitated the simultaneous development in two sections of the manuscript. In Quadrant 3, the more cooperative stance, we wrote individually during different timeframes, on different sections: *asynchronous cooperation*. Finally, in Quadrant 4, we wrote individually, but on the same section: *asynchronous collaboration*. This implied the use of

Figure 1
Dynamic Co-Writing dimension and quadrants

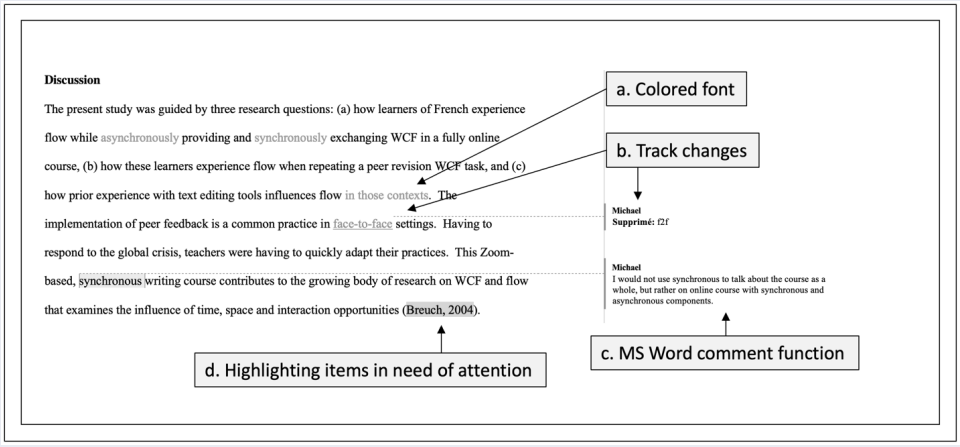



highlighting, colored fonts, comments or the Track Changes function, which would allow the collaborator to easily see and accept or reject what had been added or deleted since the last interaction with the manuscript. We could also go to the version history pane to see changes if needed. These tools and functions were also used to guide subsequent synchronous discussions about sections in question. Such a bi-dimensional representation (time/space), we believe, offers a more nuanced portrait of the interactive dynamics of a given co-writing project and how those dynamics can evolve over time throughout the process.

## Developing Effective Revising Communication Strategies

An important aspect of our successful collaboration was our ability to negotiate effective revising communication strategies *about* the text and *in* the text. At the start of the project, we spontaneously implemented various traditional strategies, namely, direct inserts in the text using colored font (Figure 2a), Track Changes function (Figure 2b), the MS Word comment function (Figure 2c), and highlighting sections in need of attention (Figure 2d). We also had daily discussions via Zoom (with and without shared screens), FaceTime, and/or SMS.

**Figure 2**
Co-Writing Communication Strategies




As the co-writing project progressed, however, finding the visual result of the Comment and Track Changes functions cumbersome, we settled on signaling changes using colored fonts. We also spontaneously started inserting information about the intended purpose or content of each paragraph between brackets at the start of various sections, which we refer to as *paragraph titles* (see Figure 3a). These titles were not only effective in helping us communicate our writing intentions at the paragraph level, but they also afforded the joint attention necessary for the negotiation and development of the manuscript's emerging macrostructure. Another strategy that emerged was the use of requests written directly into the text in capital letters and colored font to attract each other's attention. In contrast to the bracketing strategy used to highlight the text's macrostructure, this strategy afforded asynchronous joint attention on specific details in the text that needed to be addressed quickly with each other's expertise. We believe it was with such effective communication strategies that we were able to efficiently establish an outline, negotiate co-ownership of the manuscript, and arrive at a final product we were both proud of. In sum, because of the communication strategies and our open and flexible stance, our writing took on a very dynamic nature entailing seamless shifts between all four co-writing quadrants.

## Negotiating Genre and Rhetorical Traditions

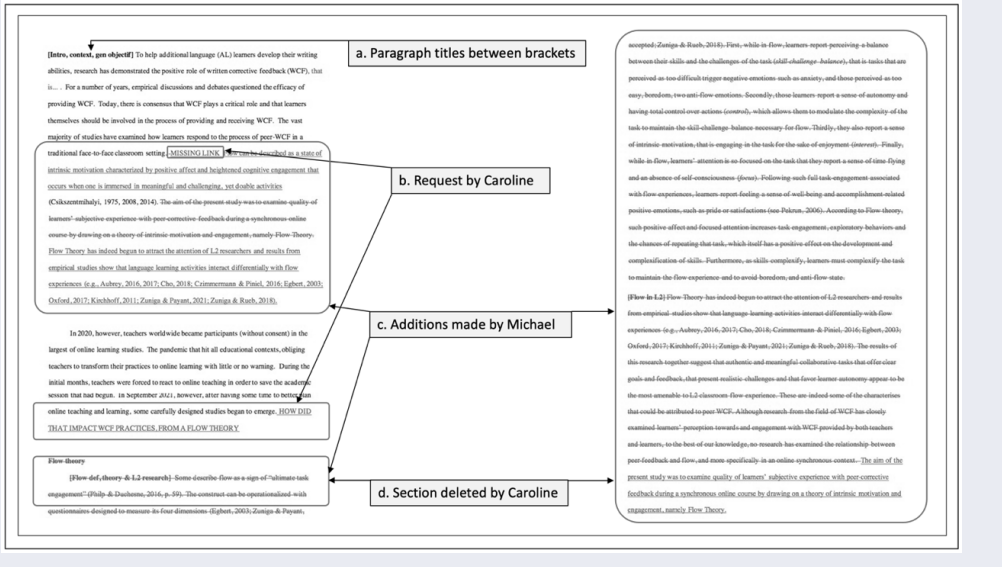
Academic writing is a complex process and with each writing project, there are learning opportunities. As a graduate student, Caroline was introduced to Swales' *Create A Research Space* (CARS) model for writing succinct research article introductions in Anglo-Saxon communities of practice (Swales 1990; 2004). Michael, having had training in the

French tradition, was not familiar with this work and tended to favor longer introductions, which are reflective of the French genre known as *la problématique*. Considering the target journal, we decided to use the CARS model as a guide to orient the structure of the introduction.

To establish our expertise in the field, one of the rhetorical moves associated with the CARS model, the addition of a summary of flow-related research was needed in the introduction. To this effect, on the morning of March 20, Caroline wrote the words MISSING LINK, which she thought indicated the need for Michael to add a few sentences about Flow theory (Figure 3b). While working on the manuscript in *asynchronous cooperation* (Q3), Michael actually added an entire subtitled section on Flow theory with nearly a full page of text operationalizing the construct (Figure 3c). On March 21 at 12:06 p. m., Caroline made major modifications to the introduction, by first deleting most of the text added by Michael (Figure 3d) and requesting specific information directly in the text (red font, capital letters): "HOW DID THAT IMPACT WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK PRACTICES, FROM A FLOW THEORY" (Figure 3b).

### Figure 3

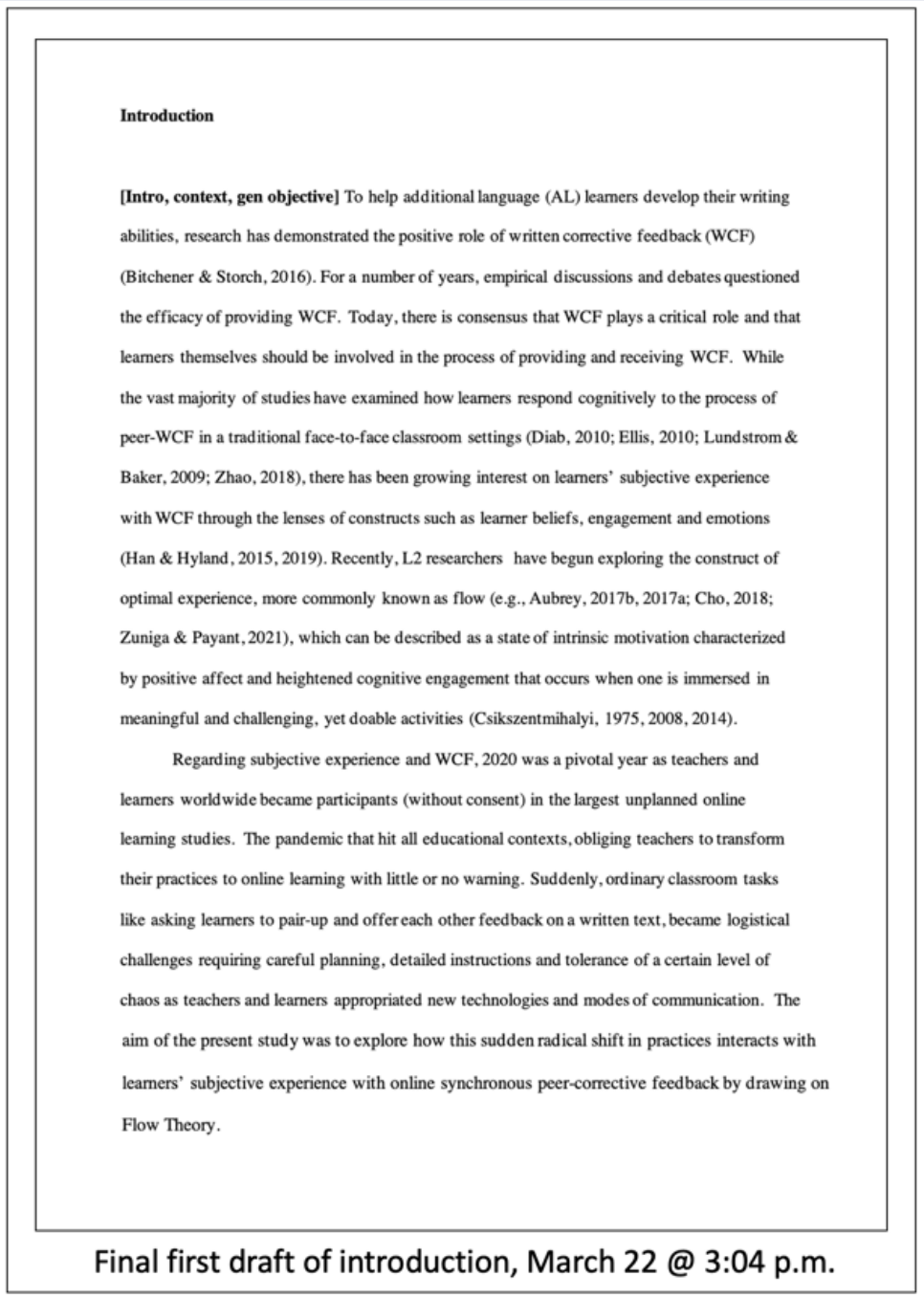
Major revisions to RA introduction on March 21 at 12:06pm




At noon the same day, we discussed the CARS model and in the revised introduction, we established a gap in the literature by briefly linking feedback and flow, a construct which we felt needed to be briefly introduced (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Revised draft of the RA introduction



**Introduction**

**[Intro, context, gen objective]** To help additional language (AL) learners develop their writing abilities, research has demonstrated the positive role of written corrective feedback (WCF) (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). For a number of years, empirical discussions and debates questioned the efficacy of providing WCF. Today, there is consensus that WCF plays a critical role and that learners themselves should be involved in the process of providing and receiving WCF. While the vast majority of studies have examined how learners respond cognitively to the process of peer-WCF in a traditional face-to-face classroom settings (Diab, 2010; Ellis, 2010; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Zhao, 2018), there has been growing interest on learners' subjective experience with WCF through the lenses of constructs such as learner beliefs, engagement and emotions (Han & Hyland, 2015, 2019). Recently, L2 researchers have begun exploring the construct of optimal experience, more commonly known as flow (e.g., Aubrey, 2017b, 2017a; Cho, 2018; Zuniga & Payant, 2021), which can be described as a state of intrinsic motivation characterized by positive affect and heightened cognitive engagement that occurs when one is immersed in meaningful and challenging, yet doable activities (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 2008, 2014).

Regarding subjective experience and WCF, 2020 was a pivotal year as teachers and learners worldwide became participants (without consent) in the largest unplanned online learning studies. The pandemic that hit all educational contexts, obliging teachers to transform their practices to online learning with little or no warning. Suddenly, ordinary classroom tasks like asking learners to pair-up and offer each other feedback on a written text, became logistical challenges requiring careful planning, detailed instructions and tolerance of a certain level of chaos as teachers and learners appropriated new technologies and modes of communication. The aim of the present study was to explore how this sudden radical shift in practices interacts with learners' subjective experience with online synchronous peer-corrective feedback by drawing on Flow Theory.

Final first draft of introduction, March 22 @ 3:04 p.m.

The process of negotiating the rhetorical and genre structures required a flexible and open posture on our part. Such collaboration resulted not only in a more impactful introduction, but also contributed to the development of genre knowledge and rhetorical skills of both writers. In effect, Michael remarked in a post-writing discussion how this experience impacted his own writing and teaching practices: "The other thing that really helped me out was the CARS model which I did not know about until you mentioned it to me, and now I use it regularly and I use it with my grad students" (April 2, 2021). Although we focused our discussion on developing genre knowledge using the example of the research article introduction, it should be noted that we both continued to develop our knowledge of academic writing and diversify our rhetorical styles.

## Conclusion and Future Directions

In this discussion, we shared our positive experience of co-writing and revising a manuscript for publication and illustrated the fluid nature of this collaboration. Through conversations and reflective analysis of our experience, we learned that collaborative and cooperative writing are not distinct tasks, but rather part of a single task characterized by dynamic variation along time and space dimensions. As co-writers, we seamlessly flowed between synchronous and asynchronous collaborative and cooperative spaces.

As a result of this experience, we have reconsidered how we operationalize collaborative writing and proposed a DCW stance and are now able to recognize the unique affordances of this fluid writing dynamic. We learned that communication strategies are essential as writers move through the DCW spaces, and that those strategies evolve in response to personal preferences and to the specific needs associated with the writing task. Finally, we learned that openness and flexibility are of the order when negotiating genres and rhetorical styles in the elaboration of a manuscript's micro- and macrostructures. Throughout our exchanges, we clearly engaged in micro revision practices as we carried out textual changes at the sentence and word level. However, we also engaged in collaborative macro revisions as we forged the manuscript's structure, which positively impacted our knowledge about how texts are constructed in various rhetorical traditions. We can appreciate how, even as *experienced academics*, our knowledge about writing in different communities of practice and cultures continues to evolve.

In addition to the emergence of new revising strategies and genre knowledge, the DCW experience had some unexpected outcomes related to affect and motivation. Indeed, while the daunting nature of some academic writing tasks can trigger negative feelings such as anxiety and frustration, our DCW experience was characterized by enjoyment and vigorous intrinsic motivation. We believe that the social interaction, the reciprocal encouragement, and the dynamic mutual scaffolding in moments of difficulty afforded by DCW bolstered our motivation and helped us successfully rise to the challenge of producing a finished manuscript in a short three-week timeframe. More specifically, DCW helped

us manage the difficulty of the task, bringing it into what Csikszentmihalyi (2014: 147) refers to as the *flow channel*, that is, a mental state that emerges when one is fully engaged in meaningful and optimally challenging tasks (neither too hard nor too easy). It is a state characterized by positive affect, focused attention, and divergent, creative thinking. Furthermore, the ability to periodically shift into the more solitary cooperative mode afforded time for quiet reflection, and a pause from the cognitive and emotional demands of the ongoing interaction associated with CW.

Thinking about the practical classroom implications of our DCW experience, we now feel better equipped, as university professors, to create assignments for our own students that will combine writing opportunities in multiple DCW writing spaces that may contribute to writers' intrinsic motivation. We better understand the importance of exploring communication strategies with students before they begin co-writing tasks, but also of encouraging them to collaboratively modify these to respond to their evolving needs and to stay within their own flow channels. This experience has helped us to appreciate how, despite our respective areas of expertise, our different epistemological stances, and our unique rhetorical styles, we can come together to co-write and revise a text for which, in the end, we can both proudly claim co-ownership. We recognize that our willingness to collaborate and our similar skills and experiences contributed to a positive experience with DCW. Further research will be needed to examine how such an approach would be experienced by learners with varying motivations and preferences. We invite scholars not only to experiment with a DCW stance in their own writing practices but also in their pedagogical practices.



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# *Trampelpfade* and *Sheep Lines*

## The Benefits of Sustained Transnational Collaboration

*Britta Schneider, Stefanie Everke Buchanan & Shem Macdonald*


### Abstract

For more than seven years, there has been an international sustained collaboration between researchers and experts in the teaching of writing in Germany and Australia, involving visits and ongoing discussions about our work. In this article we aim to explore what it is about these experiences that has motivated us to keep on meeting and working so enthusiastically and productively. To do this, we identify two metaphors, *Trampelpfade* and *sheep lines*, that describe informal information pathways, and ways of working as writing experts while traversing complex academic terrain. Applying these to three examples of our work as writing experts allows us to demonstrate the value of our transnational collaboration for finding pathways and gaining clearer visions of our respective contexts in ways that both sustain knowledge and enable us to instigate change in our workplaces.


### Introduction

"Why do we keep meeting?"

It is a valid question that Australian researcher Britta asks in our Zoom call in August 2022. It has been five years since her DAAD/Universities Australia research stay at the German partner university, four years since German researchers Stefanie and Heike came to do their fieldwork in Australia at Shem's university. Several job changes, restructures, and a pandemic later, we still meet every few months as we work with and through what we have learned from our cooperation, and the Call for Papers struck a chord with all of us. Why do we feel that even though our grant project has been completed and we have published our data (Meyer 2019; Everke Buchanan 2021) and delivered on our promises to our research funders, we are not done yet? What is it that sustains our conversations about language and learning, writing, and teaching?

In this article, we demonstrate how our sustained collaboration and exchange has allowed us to see that while our fields of work and the student needs we address are comparable, we are on different timelines in terms of our academic contexts. Figuratively speaking, we are riding asynchronous waves and bumps. Our day-to-day work is largely shaped by immediate responses: to requests from deans and administrators, from funding bodies and students, local politics and higher education policies. Yet when we meet at our interdisciplinary, international level, we can see beyond the current wave. To demonstrate

what we mean by this, we will use two metaphors to visualise how we can navigate within our respective institutions and find alternative strategies and ways for managing the always unforeseen present, one from German and one from English, to consider the respective routes we are travelling and the different stages we are at along these routes: *Trampelpfade* and *sheep lines*.

Stefan Kühl evokes the image of "kommunikative Trampelpfade" (2018: 25 f.) that form within institutions and allow its members to exchange information beyond the established formal ways of communication. These informal pathways allow writing experts like us the opportunity to use communication to make change, sustain change and find ways to work within our systems. A *Trampelpfad* is an unofficial track that only becomes visible because there are a number of people using this route - and if it is no longer used, this track will become overgrown and invisible.

The second travelling metaphor that helps us to understand our collaboration is the notion of the tracks or lines that sheep make by finding and following the easiest/most practical route through difficult or steep terrain. This may not be the most direct route – straight up a hill – but may involve working one's way around the contours of the hills. The use of sheep lines as a metaphor for ways of working in a university helps to understand the approach often taken by people working outside the traditional academic structures of school or department. As writing experts, not content area specialists, we are most often outside these structures. Our specialism is writing and therefore we often need to find our own ways to reach our destinations.

With these metaphors in mind, we will focus on three examples, moving from most specific to most abstract, to demonstrate how our sustained collaboration has helped us work within our respective institutions far beyond the grant phase: First, we use the example of the development of "Shut Up and Write", collaborative writing sessions that the German researchers encountered at the Australian partner university, into a context-specific writing arrangement in Germany to show how a concept can travel across contexts. Our second example stems from the experience of travelling from one's home context to a less familiar one interviewing students only to find out more about the universal needs of student writers and the scope of the writing expert's role. The final example is a critical look at the de-skilling of writing support work that has been worsened by the effects of the pandemic but was already evident beforehand in frequent organisational restructures: the constant reinventions that are being made which suggest novelty but bring with them the danger of loss of expertise. Our collaboration has provided the Australian colleagues with an opportunity to find pathways through the challenges that this situation has presented so that we keep sight of our professional strengths and are inspired to persist with contributions to advancing knowledge about academic writing.

What these examples have in common is that they show how our sustained collaboration has helped us see the challenges we face from a different perspective and supported us to act within our institutions as agents of change in a way that Bronwyn Williams (forthcoming) describes: Through our collaborative reflections on our practices, we use

the opportunities to articulate to each other our values and beliefs about language and learning, and about writing pedagogy. This has given us clarity of insight and deeper understandings which have enabled us to effect positive changes from within the institution (see examples 1 and 2). It has also offered clearer perspectives on what we can continue to offer the field and our own development in light of the de-professionalisation of writing centres and staff imposed through ongoing restructures (see example 3). Such clarity supports us and provides a line of sight or pathways through this adversity by keeping open the tracks of our discussions with a focus on what is central and important to our work and needs maintaining (Trampelpfade). This also offers us better understandings of our choices and the directions, or sheep lines, we can use to navigate within our institutions in the most efficient and effective manner without losing momentum in difficult territory. And once the tracks have led us up the hill, we use the clearer view from the top to help us figure out our next steps.

## Making connections to a specific place and time: Travelling from "Shut up and Write" (SUAW) to *Gemeinsame Schreibzeiten*

Our first example of how our sustained collaboration has helped us work within our respective institutions is "Shut Up and Write" (Fegan 2016; Mewburn/Osborne/Caldwell 2014; Khoo 2016). It is a concept as powerful as it is simple: Meet with a group of fellow writers. State your goals for the session. Then type away in 25-minute pomodoro sessions with small breaks in between. At the end, share how you went. The SUAW session that Stefanie attended at La Trobe University in August 2018 was a transformative experience that sparked the slow but steady establishment of such joint writing sessions in Konstanz. From a once-a-week session in the campus cafeteria, several different formats have evolved: a regular format of four sessions a week (invaluable for sustaining our writing on Zoom during the pandemic) and an intensive week-long hybrid format offered during the semester breaks, both face-to-face (on campus) and online. Even though the event at which Stefanie first encountered SUAW was designed for experienced writers, namely higher degree research students and academics, she found that it also offered relatively inexperienced writers, students in their first semesters of their bachelor degree, an opportunity to create what Rauter et al. have described as a community of practice that empowers them (2022).

We could have read about SUAW, but experiencing it and realising that its strength lies in giving writing a space and a time, making it visible for each other and sharing this experience, was far more powerful. It is the emotional connection to a specific place and time and the empowerment that is possible through it which has made the difference. Yet even though we set up such writing sessions immediately after we returned from our research stay, there was a significant delay of three years until we reshaped and renamed the format into the weeklong *Gemeinsame Schreibzeiten* (joint writing sessions). The sus-

tained effects of our research collaboration only surfaced long after the original contact, but these long-term effects carry great weight.

## Finding universal student needs and professional growth in unexpected places

Our second example of our sustained collaboration and how it has helped us work describes how travelling to a foreign country to do research interviews with students at a German university about their writing experiences enabled insights and professional growth for an Australian writing expert.

Prior to Britta's journey to the German site, the research team had met online and discussed the types of writing students were expected to do at each university, the type of difficulties students commonly encountered and the support available to them. Similarities between the two contexts were found in the writing support offered, e. g., one-off workshops in undergraduate or postgraduate courses; one-on-one appointments between writing experts and students or between students and trained student peer mentors.

In addition to the team's discussions on the approach to writing at the two research sites, the qualitative research interview was essential for probing deeper into the particularities of each student's experiences with writing. During the interviews, Britta noticed that the students in Germany raised similar topics to those raised by Australian students. They talked frequently about the intellectually challenging new ways of thinking and writing. Students expressed both creativity and perplexity in the way they tried to integrate new knowledge into existing knowledge. In the absence of explicit teaching on the genres students had to write, some reported accessing informal writing support from more senior students or family members. All students expressed a range of emotions when talking about their writing, e. g., feeling overwhelmed or a little bit sarcastic about the university's expectations of their writing.

Doing all the interviewing in an unfamiliar place helped Britta realise something else. She was surprised about how openly students talked to her about their writing. It mattered for each participant to talk about their writing and to be listened to by someone who cared about writing. Britta observed how students developed knowledge about and stances towards writing in the interviews with her. Maybe because as a visitor Britta was not fully knowledgeable about the workings at the German university, she was able to just listen, prompt and listen more rather than asking too many specific questions.

Travelling abroad, in part to do qualitative research interviews, allowed Britta to make the connection between teacher-student conferences and those interviews: In the Australian higher education context, with its institutional focus on measurable outcomes, the practice of conducting one-on-one conferences with students is often misjudged as inefficient and thereby devalued as teaching practice (cf. Chanock 2007). Doing the research interviews helped Britta to re-evaluate her one-on-one writing consultations with

students in Australia. Just as the research interviews in Germany enabled students to access and develop their knowledge and understanding of writing processes (see Macdonald/Schneider 2020 for an example of how student writer identities emerge during such interviews), Britta's conferences with individual students in Australia enable her to reflect more deeply on their writing processes. Recognising that meaning is actively and collaboratively constructed in both the interview and the teacher-student conference has reaffirmed to Britta the value in continuing to use them as informal pathways or Trampelpfade despite their contested status.

The knowledge generated during the international collaboration has made Britta more confident in her professional judgement and practice to see beyond the current wave. Pursuing the pathway of taking the time to talk about writing with students has led her to make better choices and give clearer directions when teaching writing, not only to individual students but also in larger groups. The value of this 'talk in the middle' (Harris 1995) lies in providing students with different options or pathways towards becoming better writers rather than writing better texts (cf. North 1984).

## The (d)evolution of writing expertise in Australian universities

Our final example takes a bigger view; that of the (d)evolution of writing expertise in Australia. It focuses on how working with colleagues from other parts of the world has helped the Australian colleagues to respond to larger structural changes that have resulted in the winding back of positive developments in writing expertise in their contexts. This example is valuable for illustrating how our collaboration with our German partners has allowed us to find a pathway through the adversity to be able to continue contributing to knowledge in the field of academic writing.

Writing expertise in Australian universities has undergone an evolution followed by a devolution over the last four decades. In the late 1980s and 1990s universities in Australia began to recruit large numbers of full fee-paying international students.[1] This presented novel challenges for academic staff in adjusting to different levels of the students' preparedness to study in a new academic context, often in a language that was not their first. To address these challenges, additional staff were employed to work with these students. These were typically those with training in teaching English to speakers of other languages and related fields, often with postgraduate qualifications, and employed as tenured staff in writing support centres at universities. They developed approaches and programs to effectively orientate and support international students to build on the skills the stu-

1 International students in Australia pay full fees for their courses. As an example, a student studying an undergraduate degree in business in 2022 pays around 24,000 Euros per year. An Australian student in this same course pays around 8,000 Euros per year. In response to cuts in funding to Australian universities by successive governments, attracting full fee international students has been a priority for Australian universities since the 1980s.

dents brought with them and to lead them to develop new skills that would assist them to succeed in a new academic culture. The writing experts also often had opportunities to work with academic staff and to collaborate with them to create materials, activities and assessments that supported the development of students' understandings and skills and that were integral to the learning, though this has not been without its challenges (Grossi/Wright-Neville/Gurney 2021). Importantly, these writing experts evolved forming a professional association with statewide annual meetings, a bi-annual national conference and a journal (see https://aall.org.au/).

However, sustained periods of disruption and change, recently made worse by the pandemic but beginning a couple of decades ago, have heralded the devolution of writing expertise in Australian universities. The frequent organisational restructures and the constant reinventions of ways to support learners all suggest novelty but typically have brought with them the loss of expertise. One by one, many writing support centres have been wound back or closed, with many of the highly skilled and experienced writing experts sacked. Libraries and peer tutor programs have stepped in and are increasingly being tasked with seeing students and running generic skills workshops (Malkin/Chanock 2018), while commercial online study assistance (typically grammar checks of writing) is subscribed to (see Barber 2020). In short, much of the specialised and expert knowledge, skills and experience about writing work has been lost. Seeing the well-evolved writing support in Australia decline, with the increasing emphasis on generic support provided by less qualified and less experienced staff, has been disheartening for the Australian colleagues (see Chanock 2011a, 2011b for an overview of this process). However, the international collaboration has provided a valuable opportunity for the Australian colleagues to reflect on what has taken place and to refocus on our core strengths in teaching, writing, and learning. While we could not stop the planned restructures, (and in fact both Australian colleagues changed employment, and one moved from working directly with academic writing to a related field), the pathways we have found through our extended discussions with our German partners have enabled us to keep sight of, and value our professional strengths even when our organisations did not. Our continued collaboration inspires us to apply the skills and knowledge we developed in language and learning and contribute to advancing knowledge nationally and internationally about academic writing through conference presentations (Schneider/Macdonald 2017, Macdonald/Schneider 2019, Schneider/Macdonald/Everke Buchanan 2023) and publications (Macdonald/Schneider 2020).



## Conclusion

So, in answer to our question at the beginning of this article: We keep meeting because it gives us different and clearer visions and pathways, sheep lines and Trampelpfade, of and through our respective territories. Time and again, our sustained collaboration has al-

lowed us to step back from the need to prove a quick, direct and immediate effect of our work and see the bigger picture. Amongst each other, we can talk freely and find ways of approaching our contexts that do not contravene the rules but make use of informal pathways to overcome roadblocks, difficult terrain or times of change. In doing so, our transnational, intercontinental collaboration has shown us that our academic contexts are asynchronous. Developments in higher education in one country may have happened earlier or might come later in the other, like offset waves. This means that the ones placed in a different context may be able to see much more clearly what the other place is currently going through and be able to point to a similar development in their own context. These different time and sight lines allow us to look across at the evolution of such processes beyond the immediate surroundings and find responses which deal with problems in novel ways or look for more global inspiration to continue our work and maintain the professionalism of our field and of ourselves.

We are certain that we would not have had such fruitful discussions if we had just met at a conference. It was the personal contact, sustained over time and distance, and our ongoing collaboration that have given us a greater sense of recognition and confidence in ourselves as professionals allowing us to see pathways forward. We are deeply grateful to funding institutions such as the DAAD and Universities Australia[2] which made it possible to begin such conversations. Yet what makes travelling concepts truly powerful and meaningful is their connection to travelling people and real, lived experiences - and the ability to sustain these connections over time. The impersonalisation and de-skilling of expertise means that such sustained knowledge of the terrain and the Trampelpfade and sheep lines in it that allow us to remain agents of change within our institutions are rare. Also, sustaining these conversations has to happen in our spare time, voluntarily and without funding. Ideally, we would like to advocate for opportunities to not just initiate but also sustain such transnational cooperation. And in contexts where this is not possible, we would like to encourage researchers to keep talking to each other informally. It is worth it.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank staff and students at the University of Konstanz, La Trobe University and Monash University who so graciously gave us their time and insights into their learning and teaching activities. We would also like to thank the reviewers and editors for their encouraging and astute comments on earlier versions of our manuscript. They helped us greatly to become better at writing about our collaboration and further deepened our appreciation of the international research community.

2 https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/media-item/australia-germany-research-collaboration-flourishes/ https://www.daad.de/de/infos-services-fuer-hochschulen/weiterfuehrende-infos-zu-daad-foerderprogrammen/ppp/

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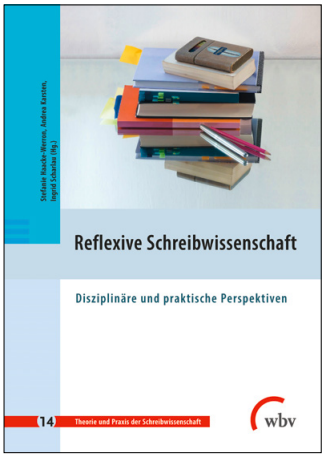


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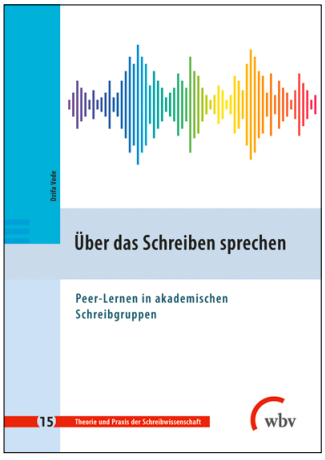


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