

创刊词

写作活动始终贯穿于人类社会的各个方面，不仅是接收信息、传播思想的重要途径，也是创建意义、产生知识的复杂过程。二语写作是使用母语以外的第二语言进行写作的活动。学界普遍认为，母语之后所学习掌握的其他语言均属二语范畴，这样的共识赋予了二语写作丰富的研究内涵。

人们使用第二语言进行写作由来已久，但把二语写作作为系统研究的对象始于20世纪60年代。经过几代学者的努力和推动，二语写作理论体系日渐完善，研究方法逐渐成熟，与作文研究、二语教学研究之间的边界更加清晰，已成为相对独立的研究领域。20世纪90年代后，随着相关学术刊物、研讨会的创办和举行，二语写作研究进入了稳定、高速的发展期，有关写作过程、写作文本、写作教学、反馈评估等领域的研究成果丰硕，在语言研究体系中的地位和重要性显著提高。如今，二语写作研究呈现出跨学科转向，与认知科学、计算机科学、人文医学等交叉融合的趋势明显。

中国的二语写作教学早期可追溯至19世纪末。在之后不同的历史阶段，二语写作在外语人才培养方面发挥了不可替代的作用，在经济、政治、文化等领域产生了或直接或间接的影响。国内关于二语写作的研究始于20世纪60年代，已经历了逾半个世纪的快速稳定发展。近年来，二语写作研究持续走热，越来越多的研究者和一线教师参与其中，形成了国内语言研究领域最为活跃的学术群体之一。在此背景之下，中国英汉语比较研究会写作教学与研究专业委员会顺势而为，在写作教学与研究方面发挥了积极的引领作用。截至目前，已成功举办11届全国性大型学术研讨会、4届全国性英语写作教学与研究开放周和5届（国际）高端论坛，出版会议论文集5部。

然而，由于历史和学科特点的原因，国内外语类学术期刊数量偏少，尚无专门刊发二语写作教学与研究的学术刊物，导致大量研究成果难以及时发表，很大程度上影响了该领域的学术交流和健康发展。鉴于广大师生和学者对二语写作交流平台的热切期待，经常务理事会讨论通过，中国英汉语比较研究会写作教学与研究专业委员会决定创办《二语写作》集刊，以满足日益扩大的发表需求，促进二语写作教学与研究的可持续发展。

本刊将秉承“立足国内、面向国际，传播中国二语写作研究声音”的办刊宗旨，坚持理论与实践相结合，倡导学术创新，恪守学术规范。重点开设“理论视角”、“写作研究”、“写作教学”、“写作测评”、“跨学科研究”、“研究述评”、“新秀论坛”、“学术动态”、“新作评介”等栏目。其中，“新秀论坛”专为青年学者和研究生设立，是学术新秀展示最新研究成果的窗口。本刊顺应国际化发展需求，接受中文与英文稿件，欢迎不同语境下的研究成果，除英语外，也将刊登非英语类和对外汉语等领域的二语写作研究成果。

本期收录的九篇论文为众多投稿中的优选稿件。“特别约稿”栏目中，Tony Silva携领多位博士生分享了美国学生在美国攻读二语写作博士学位的成长经历。“写作研究”栏目中，Mariëlle Leijten和Luuk Van Waes介绍了键盘记录工具在写作研究领域的应用前景，Yachao Sun和Ge Lan汇报了写作过程中母语协同作用的研究成果。“写作教学”栏目中，刘应亮等关注了高中生英语词块的使用，张春红和何武探究了读后续写对高中生英语写作的影响，毕美芳和芮燕萍探讨了自动评分系统与写作效能及成绩的关系。“研究述评”栏目中，王颖、陈华和杨仕洲分别就二语写作反馈和二语写作身份等领域的研究进行了回顾和展望。“新秀论坛”栏目中，Zhaozhe Wang探讨了新手写作教师在美国教授国际学生所面临的挑战及应对策略。

今后，《二语写作》将紧跟学术前沿，不断拓展研究领域，创新研究方法，深化研究内容。期待专家学者对二语写作研究的理论构建和方法创新进行深入研究，欢迎广大一线教师立足课堂对二语写作教学的不同方面开展广泛探讨，希望青年学者和研究生基于个人研究借此平台实现学术思想的交锋和碰撞。《二语写作》尤其欢迎扎根中国二语写作教育实践的实证研究，鼓励具有中国特色的二语写作理论建构，优先考虑能够对接国家战略需求、反映社会现实需要并与国际学术界深度对话的研究性论文。欢迎大家踊跃投稿，共同推动我国二语写作教学与研究的发展，积极传播中国二语写作研究的声音。

Doctoral Study in Second Language Writing Studies in the United States: Some Chinese Students' Perspectives

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Abstract: This paper presents and discusses accounts of the experiences of six Chinese students doing doctoral study in the area of second language writing at a large research university in the United States. The accounts address several themes, including teaching first year composition, learning in and beyond the classroom, the processes and role of research, personal and professional relationships, challenges faced and the strategies used to respond to these challenges, and the importance of the concept of autonomy in graduate studies. It is hoped that this paper will be of interest and use to readers who are contemplating following in their footsteps, who are curious about their experience in the program, and who have themselves already studied in the US and would like to compare their experience.

Keywords: second language writing studies; Chinese students; doctoral study

The Genesis of This Article

Tony SILVA

On January 4, 2020, I received an email from a former student of mine, Cong Zhang, from Shandong University, letting me know that she was responsible for editing the first issue of the newly named *Chinese Journal of Second Language Writing* and asking me if I would be interested in contributing an article. I accepted her invitation immediately and began considering what I would like to write about. My primary concern was to make whatever I wrote directly relevant to the *Journal's* audience in China. I finally settled on a piece to be co-authored by me and some of my current and recently graduated Chinese doctoral students in the Graduate Program in Second Language Studies (SLS) at Purdue University. My plan was to ask my co-authors, all of whom worked in the area of second language writing, to provide a concise account of their experience as doctoral students in the Department of English in this large state research university in the midwestern part of the United States. More specifically, I asked each of them to contribute a roughly 1,000 word piece that would include a brief self-introduction and an account of their personal experience (academic, social, or otherwise) in Purdue's SLS program. Additionally, I requested that they aim at making their sections of interest and use to readers who are

contemplating following in their footsteps, who are curious about their experience in the program, and who have themselves already studied in the US and would like to compare their experience. My lack of further specificity was purposeful because I wanted their accounts to reflect their unique situations, perspectives and personalities. What follows is the result of this endeavor.

The Purdue Years: Dots Connected

Cong ZHANG

You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future.

— Steve Jobs

After receiving both my bachelor's and master's degrees from Shandong University (SDU), I attended Purdue University as a PhD candidate from 2011 to 2016. These five years, five very transformative and consequential years, boiled down to teaching, taking courses, doing research, and socializing.

On August 9, 2011, I arrived at Purdue, excited yet terrified, eager but anxious. I had frequently heard the term “culture shock,” but I was not fazed, confident in the courses I had taken, the books I had read, and the movies and soap operas I had seen. My dreams of a smooth transition to the States were soon dashed, though, and the fact that McDonald's had no hot water and no chicken wings would prove to be the least of my worries. I was tasked, like all first-year PhD students in the English Department, with teaching First Year Composition for American students. With my past teaching experience at Shandong University and two language training organizations, I thought I was prepared. But the American students purposefully used slang that I could not understand, talking about pop songs and other stuff that I was not familiar with to “prove” that I was not qualified to teach them. The first semester was a nightmare — I was intimidated to face them, and yet day after day, after teaching them, I would walk back home, crying. On the end-of-semester evaluation, they gave me an extremely low score (2.93/5) and expressed their contempt blatantly: “Why would we have an Asian teach us English writing? She doesn't even speak English.” I saw their harsh comments before Christmas, and that Christmas tasted bitter.

Those ratings and those words, while crushing, were a wake-up call for me. I knew I needed to change. I spent time familiarizing myself with American pop culture; I talked with and invited experienced teachers and mentors to my class to watch me teach, give me feedback, and show me how to deal with those “naughty boys”. When students challenged me, I was confident enough to discuss their concerns with them instead of hiding away. At the end of that semester, my evaluation was one of the highest, and later I won a Quintilian Teaching Award from the composition program and an Excellence in Teaching Award from the English Department at Purdue. In 2016, I graduated from Purdue and

came back to SDU, bringing back with me the syllabus, approach, and teaching materials. After several adaptations, I started a new course — English Academic Writing, and later created a MOOC (massive open online course) on the same subject. In the Spring of 2020, seven universities used this course during the COVID-19 pandemic and over 10,000 students learned to write English academic essays through this course — my efforts finally paid off.

As a PhD student, I of course took various courses — research methodology, language teaching and research theories, and countless seminars. Teaching crushed my confidence in the first semester, and the courses were in no way better — the reading load was heavy and classroom discussion was overwhelming. I had been good at reading comprehension in past exams, but academic essays were an entirely different cup of tea. While it took my colleagues one hour (maybe less) to finish reading a journal article, I had to spend at least three hours on the same piece to fully comprehend everything. At the same time, I regretted spending so much time teaching during my master's study and not reading research articles. Later, the more I read, the faster I became, slowly familiarizing myself with the genre, structure, and language, and learning to read only the important sections. Classroom discussion was also intimidating at the beginning. In contrast to graduate school in China, the Purdue classroom was defined by vigorous discussion between students and professors. In the first year, I was quiet, only talking when prompted. But at every session, my instructor, who was also my advisor, would ask for my opinion with an encouraging tone. Whatever I said, he would say “Good point of view” with his signature mild smile. Thanks to the tolerance and patience of my professors and colleagues, I, in the following years, dared to volunteer to talk in class, even leading discussions, slowly growing from an outsider watching others to an insider engaged in discussion. I had found my own place in this community.

My understanding of academia, and my role within it, would also transform over my five years at Purdue. Academia, for me, had always been about course grades and research, but my colleagues and professors showed me how it could be more about collaboration and community. It was my MA advisor, Professor Junju Wang, who first drew my attention to the field of second language writing, and then later Professor Tony Silva would induct me into this community. He and other professors invited me to co-present at various conferences, even inviting me to later serve as an assistant chair for the 2013 Symposium on Second Language Writing. Their encouragement and support opened the gates of this community, helping me grow into a scholar who can present confidently and independently at various conferences. Collaboration and community became not just buzz words or clichés, but represented the discussions, and even the arguments, between friends and colleagues that sparked good ideas that mattered. To this day, attending conferences, getting feedback, and meeting with friends and colleagues are the highlights of my job.

If teaching, courses, and research were bitter at the beginning, then socializing was the sweet part. I made quite a few good friends, on and off campus, who are now my

co-authors, friends, and my American family, providing the advice, encouragement, company, and support that I needed and craved. Socializing was crucial, even reparative. In addition to teaching, taking courses, doing research, and socializing, during these five years, I also moved three times, bought and sold two cars, bought and sold a house, learned golf, bowling, and tennis, and gained and lost 45 pounds. Plus, I had a baby. I wrote and defended my dissertation, received a PhD degree, and published a single-authored journal article and five other co-authored pieces, all in five years. Looking back, I dared not plan so much since it seemed unbelievable, unattainable, but at that time, I just did not know what would happen. Looking backwards, hindsight being what it is, the dots have somehow connected.

A Journey of Self-Exploration

Yue CHEN

My interest in second language writing (SLW) started about ten years ago, when I was a senior English major, preparing for my bachelor's thesis at Xi'an International Studies University. Struggling to write in English myself, I was very determined to find a "cure" to help learners "write like native speakers." With that in mind, I wrote my bachelor's thesis, *On Teachers' Scaffolding Role in Teaching English Writing*. During my last semester as an undergraduate student, I took an elective course on SLW, and it was in this class that I read about all the big names in the field and realized that there was an actual field of study called SLW.

Upon graduation from college, I came to the United States for graduate school. I first went to Grand Valley State University for my master's degree and then came to Purdue University to work on my PhD. My journey as a graduate student in SLW has been a journey of finding myself. During this self-exploration process, four things have been very helpful, which are taking different classes, working on various projects, attending multiple academic conferences, and developing relationships with my mentors and classmates.

Taking different classes has helped broaden my perspective. During my days at Purdue, I have taken various courses both directly and indirectly related to SLW. The courses offered in my program (Second Language Studies) have provided a solid foundation for me to see what has been done in the field both theoretically and practically. Taking courses outside of my program has brought new perspectives regarding how I view languages and SLW research. For example, I took ancient Greek for three semesters, which reminded me of all the challenges a beginner faces when learning a foreign language and made me more relatable to my students in teaching SLW.

Working on various projects has shown me what I enjoy doing and what I do not. I am grateful that my advisor allowed me to work on different projects to find what I was really interested in. These hands-on experiences taught me how to put my thoughts into practice and made me realize however seemingly interesting, some projects are not suitable for me. For example, I once started a project on L2 writers' placement in first-

year writing programs, but to be honest, the more I worked on it, the less I found myself enjoying doing it. Conversely, when I am working on synthesis projects, I become very excited, and I finally took synthesis study as my niche to develop my dissertation topic.

Attending academic conferences has helped me develop and refine research ideas. One of the things I have enjoyed the most during my graduate studies is attending academic conferences, where I learn about the most recent research trends in the field and polish my own research ideas. My current project and my long-time interest in synthesis studies were developed during the 2012 Conference on College Composition and Communication. It was the first academic conference I attended, and I was overwhelmed by the richness of SLW literature in English. Wondering what had been done on SLW in China, I began to review and to synthesize SLW scholarship (including published journal articles, doctoral dissertations, and masters' theses) in China. Being able to understand both English and Chinese, I wanted to be the bridge introducing Chinese scholars' works to the broader audience.

Developing friendships with fellow classmates has brought me not only academic collaboration but also social and personal support, which is much needed during graduate studies. Many of my academic works are collaborations with my mentor and/or my classmates. These collaborations have crystalized not only as conference presentations and publications, but also as lifetime friendships. When I am stuck in my research, I can consult with them. When I am stressed out, they help me to relax. It does not matter what we do, but rather the experience of being together with people who share the same interests brings a lot of joy.

Ten years have passed since I started my SLW journey, and I am still on my way. In this journey, I have found a research topic I enjoy, relationships/friendships I cherish, role models I can follow, and the career path I would like to take. Along with these exciting findings, came a lot of unpredictable changes in my path: if you asked me ten years ago, I would not have imagined I could be where I am today. When I first started my bachelor's thesis, I had never thought about taking SLW as my future field of study (I did not even know SLW was a legitimate field); when I first came to the United States, I had never thought I would be a PhD student with Dr. Tony Silva as my advisor; when I came to Purdue, I had never thought I would be in the program for so long; when I passed my prospectus defense five years ago, I had never thought I would have my own family and become a mom before I graduated. Right now, trying to balance being a full-time graduate student working on my dissertation and a new mom taking care of my four-month-old baby boy, I know my journey of self-exploration continues.

Life as a young scholar in SLW can be full of excitement and uncertainty, and that makes it so beautiful. You can say that my journey has been a matter of fate or luck, but I believe it has been a process of me using the gifts I have been given from above to find out who I am.

Why I Became a PhD Student in Second Language Writing

Yiyang LI

Embarking upon the journey of becoming a researcher in SLW was a serendipitous event, given that my undergraduate major was Accounting and that my plan was to become a self-made entrepreneur. I later went on to pursue a master's degree in TESOL because teaching, at that moment in my life, seemed not only a professional goal but also a career calling, for I developed a zeal for working to be an inspiring educator who cultivates young minds and alters fates by showing the power and style of mastering English. Needless to say, both ambitions failed due to my naiveté and the decisions made along the path of my career. What eventually guided me to the path of being a PhD student was the work of Professor Braj Kachru, who founded the field of World Englishes (WE), and this inspiration led me to Professor Margie Berns at the Second Language Studies (SLS) Program at Purdue University, which is also an internationally recognized center for the study of second language writing (SLW).

In the SLS program at Purdue University, the SLW community is characterized by a positive camaraderie among a group of like-minded SLW researchers coming from different places and cultural backgrounds. One's horizon can be greatly expanded by learning from one's fellow students and their unique stories. At the same time, the program has a robust SLW tradition that encourages the voicing of disparate and competing views. The classes often featured vigorous debates regarding cultural dynamics, pedagogical and disciplinary politics, and racial and ideological issues in the history of second language writing. The professors would guarantee a safe and nurturing atmosphere. Such experience was like intellectual black-belt training that prepared and inspired many to develop research projects on topics they were passionate about. The memories of such experience are valuable because they are a constant reminder of the significance of why one wants to do research — to explore one's intellectual boundaries and enjoy the work.

The SLW community also functions as a haven for international graduate students. To fulfill our responsibilities as teaching assistants, international graduate students are required to teach the entry level writing course in the English Department. This teaching task can be overwhelming, especially for those coming to a foreign land for the first time. Additionally, as first year writing instructors, we work with instructors from different academic fields such as creative writing, rhetoric and composition, and American studies. Unfortunately, instructors coming from second language studies are in the minority and can easily become outcasts in their instructor group, professionally or socially. Even though such outcasting is rarely intentional or in bad faith, it does create tremendous stress. The adaptation to and overcoming of cultural barriers in work and communication with others take time; however, the SLW community ensures that one can always find support and guidance. More importantly, it guarantees a sense of community that instills courage and confidence, which are essential for the ultimate completion of graduate studies for international graduate students.

During the years in the SLS program, the most noteworthy challenge is finding one's own research path. After two years of a wide range of coursework, we must factor in numerous variables to optimize the remaining time for reaching the most productive results. In other words, how to come up with as many publishable projects as possible is a crucial question. Also, the projects with the most potential for future publication might not be the most appealing ones. Many if not most international graduate students have struggled with such balancing between choosing the most practical projects and doing work in one's true area of interest. Fortunately, the guidance and advising in the SLS program are particularly supportive. As junior researchers, we are exposed to multiple disciplinary trajectories, conducting research in second language studies (second language writing, World Englishes, corpus linguistics, general linguistics, language testing, etc.) at an early stage of our programs of study. Moreover, our advisors are positively nurturing with regard to our own research passion and provide insightful suggestions to shape a research idea into a practical research project. Their guidance helps us understand that one's true research interest generates the most ideal and appealing research project.

The most frequently asked question (often from family or friends) I received during my years of graduate studies was "Why would you choose such a path as a PhD student?". The unstated assumption in such questioning seems to cast doubt on whether I have chosen the correct career or not. I hardly have a witty or convincing come-back when questioned, but my response is always the following: because I wanted to be a doctor like my mother but I was bad at math and biology.

Joking aside, having the opportunity to obtain a PhD degree in the SLS program is nothing short of a privilege due to its strong focus on scholarship and remarkable collegiality. Admittedly, a PhD degree does carry a certain amount of prestige or clout which, understandably, can be a lure for pursuing a career path. However, one of the most important lessons I learned from my PhD studies is that there is no necessary correlation between professional happiness and distinguished titles. The bright minds, like those of my colleagues in this article, I have encountered in SLW all have one thing in common: they find genuine meaningfulness in their research. By that, I am always humbled.

Doctoral Studies in Second Language Writing — Two Stories

Kai YANG

I joined the Graduate Program in Second Language Studies (SLS) at Purdue University in Fall 2014 to pursue my PhD study. In Spring 2019, I graduated from Purdue and took a position as a lecturer at a university in China. When I was invited to contribute to this article, I accepted gladly and without hesitation. Only later on did I realize that squeezing my five-year PhD experience into a few paragraphs was impossible. Considering the stages of completing a PhD in SLS have been documented elsewhere (Cimasko & Silva 2016), I will recount two stories to represent different stages of my PhD life.

Story One

Story One is about my first day of class at Purdue, two weeks after my first arrival in the United States (also my first travel abroad experience). Being a self-disciplined student, I had almost never missed any classes, nor had I been late for any occasion. However, my first day of class started with a late arrival. That Monday morning, when I was wandering around my office, Chen (a senior colleague in SLS and also one of the co-authors of this paper) asked me why I was not in class. Only at that moment did I realize that my first class was already in progress. Sweating and in a panic, I rushed downstairs to the classroom, 10 minutes late. When I arrived at the classroom, I explained to the professor that I had misread my schedule and went in with more than a dozen classmates staring at me.

During the break, I asked the professor if I could record the class using a voice recorder, which I bought before coming to the United States because I was not confident with my English language skills in an ESL environment (although I had been an English major for both my undergraduate and graduate studies in China) and was afraid of missing any details in a graduate level class. Seeming slightly surprised and stressing that there was no need to record, the professor agreed, with the condition that the recordings not be uploaded online. She was right. There was not much point to recording since, throughout the semester, the class was filled with discussion. Professors lecturing in a class, something I expected, did not happen.

The story of my first day of class shows how I was underprepared linguistically and culturally in a North American educational setting. Indeed, as the only PhD student without a North American educational background in my cohort, I spent more time being silent, observing and trying to understand the new educational norms, which featured open discussion, close reading, critical thinking, extensive writing, and active collaboration. Luckily, as a person who adjusts to new environments quickly, I fit into this new community after a couple months (at least I think I did).

Story Two

During my five years at Purdue, I normally went back to China in the summer to visit my family. In the summer of 2016, I took on an extra task — finding a topic for my dissertation. At that point, I had almost finished my course work, and my preliminary exams (for more details, see Cimasko & Silva 2016) were waiting for me in the coming Fall semester. As for my dissertation project, I only had a rough idea, concentrating on China — either on Chinese students or on the Chinese context. My identity as a Chinese emergent scholar in L2 writing caused me to spend more time and energy on this relatively underrepresented context.

That summer, I found myself in the local public library in my home city reading books and articles I had stored on my laptop before taking my trip back to China. Among the readings, two stood out — *Writing in the devil's tongue: A history of English composition in China* by Xiaoye You (2010) and *A synthesis of research on second*

language writing in English by Ilona Leki, Alister Cumming, and Tony Silva (2008). What was known to me then was that (1) one of these books was written by my advisor and the other by his previous advisee, and (2) these works consolidated my knowledge on L2 writing research and the history of L2 writing in China. What was not explicit to me then was my interest in historical and metadisciplinary work.

Finishing the last part “Afterword: Future Directions” in Leki, Cumming, and Silva (2008), an idea suddenly struck me — why not investigate how Chinese scholars conducted research in L2 writing if few people had touched upon this? Sitting in the humid public library with high school students cramming for exams around me, I had a strong feeling of achievement, satisfaction, and motivation. I brought this idea back to Purdue. Supportive as he has always been, my advisor showed great interest in this proposed project and spoke highly of its theoretical and practical significance to both Western and Chinese L2 writing communities. With his kind, careful, and insightful supervision, this idea eventually became my dissertation: *Empirical research on second language writing in China: A theoretical, methodological, and philosophical analysis*.

Reflecting on my dissertation writing experience, I found three things that were and still are of great help to me. The first is my true interest in historical and metadisciplinary aspects of L2 writing and the philosophy of science, which were significantly influenced by both my advisor’s research interests and the opportunities he provided to me for joining the TESOL panel “Scholarship on L2 writing: A year in review” and for working with him on the Selected Bibliographies in the *Journal of Second Language Writing*. The second is a broad view of scientific research and a metaparadigmatic understanding of empirical and hermeneutic research, which were strengthened considerably by courses I took both in and outside of the SLS program at Purdue. The last was my advisor’s open-minded attitude toward research topics and his strong motivation for bringing periphery scholarship to the core community. If it were not for these reasons, my dissertation project would never have been completed.

Now, as a “returnee” (Yang 2016: 80) to the Chinese academic context, I have officially started my profession as a new researcher, facing challenges writing for publication in English and Chinese and applying for governmental grants, including the struggles that were documented in Yang (2016). These stories will be told on another occasion.

Autonomy in Graduate Studies

Zhaozhe WANG

With a master’s degree in English from a traditional New England university and a determination to know more, I ventured west, ambitiously aiming to push the frontiers of knowledge in the budding field of second language writing studies. Purdue University, an academic powerhouse in second language studies and rhetoric and composition studies, kindly invited me in, fed me with intellectual inspirations, equipped me with

methodological tools to conduct research, and connected me with established and emerging scholars who were doing wildly different but equally interesting work. Now five years later, as I am approaching the light at the end of the tunnel dubbed “graduate school”, I would like to reflect on the *autonomy* granted to each graduate student, something that is invisible and intangible yet nonetheless defined my graduate studies.

“Autonomy” here is understood as the right and condition of personal choice in pursuing intellectual inquiries, accessing information, and expressing ideas. It protects our peace of mind as we tap into the unknown in academia; it allows us maximum flexibility when we attempt to do what is deemed unconventional; and it holds us accountable for our decisions. In retrospect, I was fortunate enough to exercise the autonomy granted by my academic mentors as well as that conditioned by the institutional structure. Specifically, this autonomy is manifested in my designing and executing my own program of study, crafting my authorial voice, and going above and beyond what is normally expected of a graduate student.

Once we got into the swing of things — completing the core coursework, attending and presenting at our first academic conferences, teaching entry-level courses and navigating the department with relative ease — it came time to flesh out our plan of study. A plan of study is a contract between a student, the faculty members of the advisory committee, and the graduate school that spells out the courses the student plans to take and a temporary timeline for academic progress. Although our plan will not be carved in stone, this institutional ritual prompts us to develop a concrete and realistic idea early on as to how we would like to define our own idiosyncratic scheme for graduate studies. No doubt, this freedom to individualize programs of study is a boon to a student whose interests span multiple knowledge domains. For example, to investigate multilingual writers’ literacy practices and understand their meaning-making and meaning-negotiation in a US academic context, I needed to build a solid theoretical foundation in literacy studies and writing studies, draw on postcolonial and ecological frameworks from rhetorical studies, borrow research methodologies from applied linguistics and education, and ultimately carve out a space in second language writing studies to make my case. Nothing was more reassuring than knowing I was institutionally supported to tailor the program to my liking. After all, the stated objective of a doctoral program is to nurture academic leaders rather than train laborers who work on assembly lines.

Having no authoritative figure to dictate what questions to ask, whose ideas to borrow, and how to respond to a rhetorical exigency in an intellectual movement is both “dis-limiting” and somewhat disorienting at first, especially for someone who is not yet accustomed to being persistently skeptical. Yet skepticism is a fundamental driving force behind a graduate student’s pursuit of truth and justice that’s universally valued in our contemporary society. The autonomy I was granted empowered me to embrace my skepticism and craft my own authorial voice. Having studied, worked, and lived in the US for almost a decade, I’ve grown used to being treated “differently” wherever I go: being singled out to share my Chinese perspective in classrooms, being spoken to with each

syllable theatrically emphasized at a local shop, and being fastidious about correctness in all my writing assignments so that I would not appear *too* different. Yet as I read about the then-evolving scholarly debate on translanguaging and attended conference sessions that took a decolonial and social justice turn, I began to question this “norm of difference (and sometimes *indifference*)” that my undergraduate international students and I live with. Why is it that we attract undue attention to our cultural (and for most undergraduate students, financial) capital yet are marginalized in certain academic and social spaces? How does this tacitly exploited population negotiate their difference through literacy? What can we as educators do to advocate on their behalf? These questions that were burning in my heart eventually found their way into my dissertation project and motivated me to get up and work every morning.

Obtaining a doctoral degree in our field is not unfathomably difficult: as long as you are willing and able to dedicate your labor to a clearly defined cause for an extended period of time, you are unlikely to fail. Yet obtaining a doctoral degree with some legacy left behind requires you to go above and beyond: seeking and connecting with people who share your interests and who may help to expand your area of expertise, partaking in emerging scholarly conversations by attending conferences and publishing, experimenting with innovative pedagogies in your classroom, and taking leadership roles in departmental, institutional, and professional activities. The list goes on. Simply put, being “out there” (in your professional communities) is as important as staying in (your graduate program) and completing the degree. Looking back, the autonomy I had enabled me to stay active in different areas, which kept me happily occupied and productive. As a second language writing scholar coming from composition studies, I experienced a disciplinary identity crisis at first — lacking strategies for positioning myself in language studies fields such as TESOL and applied linguistics. Soon, I learned that I was not alone; highly specialized fields that exist in disciplinary liminal space, such as second language writing, show characteristics of what I call “disciplinary diaspora” — constantly needing to strengthen their identity in different hosting disciplines. I also realized that we could capitalize on such “in-betweenness” — learning to speak different disciplinary “tongues” and work with people with different expertise — and go above and beyond my predefined profile.

With great autonomy comes great responsibility. The autonomy is anchored in self-awareness, self-discipline, and a little bit of self-marketing.

Learning, Research, and Teaching in a US Institution

Yachao SUN

After receiving a joint master’s degree in TESOL and Linguistics in 2015 from Ball State University, I enrolled in the Second Language Studies (SLS) doctoral program in the Department of English at Purdue University in Fall 2016 and graduated in Spring 2020. After graduation, I became an assistant professor in the Language and Culture

Center at Duke Kunshan University. The primary concentration for my doctoral degree was in Second Language Studies, and my secondary concentration was in Rhetoric and Composition, both of which paved the way for my professional development and academic career. My research interests include second language (L2) writing, translingual studies, multimodal composition, and corpus linguistics. Pursuing a doctoral degree in the US as a student from China was one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my life. In this section, I would like to share my experiences in learning, research, and teaching during my graduate study in the US.

Learning

Learning was my first, and perhaps most, important step in pursuing a doctoral degree because it influenced the direction of my research and my approach to teaching. Having a clear study plan before enrolling in the SLS program substantially contributed to the completion of my degree in four years and to my publication record. In addition to courses in my major, I found it helpful to include linguistics, rhetoric and composition, and bi/multilingual education courses in my study plan. Taking these courses helped me form an interdisciplinary or a transdisciplinary orientation to L2 writing, which further assisted me in building a solid foundation that helped me understand L2 writing as a field of study with various theoretical, ideological, methodological, and pedagogical perspectives. Second language writing has experienced a burgeoning development in the past three decades, but it also faces challenges in the increasingly diversified teaching and learning context in the world. Reading and understanding the challenges that L2 writing as a discipline faced and is facing helped me learn how to respond to the questions in and concerns of the field and how to develop a rational plan for my professional development. Another important part of my learning was attending academic conferences. The conferences that L2 writing scholars tend to attend frequently are, but are not limited to, the Symposium on Second Language Writing (SSLW), the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL), the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Convention, and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Meeting, talking to, and socializing with graduate peers, emerging scholars, and established researchers from all around the world has always been enjoyable and beneficial in both my social and academic lives. These experiences also helped me find my own research interests and decide on my own research directions.

Research

Doing research is crucial to graduate students' professional and academic development. A clear research direction and feasible research plans will pave a smooth path for graduate study. As I mentioned above, there are various approaches to L2 writing, and each approach contributes to the progress of understanding its multi-faceted complex nature. An explicit understanding of how each approach contributes to L2 writing studies and a clear idea of which approach(es) I prefer to take facilitated the process of pursuing

my doctoral degree. The preliminary exam, the prospectus, and the dissertation were all grounded in a clear, well-conceived, and well-designed research plan. My way of learning how to do research was to connect with my advisor and faculty mentors, who shared my research interests, to help me assemble my research toolbox. My professors' suggested readings, views, and advice helped me understand the current state of the field's scholarship and find the research gap that I was interested in filling. Collaborating with a lab (such as the Corpus & Repository of Writing [Crow]) directed by senior scholars with experienced researchers supervising my work and teaching me research skills was another way to learn how to understand, conduct, and report research. The important first step for doing research was to ask myself what type of research pertinent to L2 writing most interested me. My research projects mostly ended up as conference presentations, book chapters, or journal articles. In addition, my learning and research experiences definitely benefited my teaching.

Teaching

Many graduate students, including myself, who pursue a graduate degree in US institutions choose to be a teaching assistant to cover our study and living expenses in the US. Being a teaching assistant who was assigned to teach composition courses to both native and nonnative English speakers was not an easy job for me at first, as it involved building a positive multilingual identity in front of native English speakers and evaluating native and nonnative English writers' work together in the same class. But it definitely was a valuable experience for me to work in a multilingual and multicultural context and adapt to this increasingly globalized world. As a multilingual instructor, I learned that it is important to establish a positive identity as a multilingual writer, which can further help multilingual students in my classes form a strong belief in their pre-existing knowledge and abilities in a learning environment that is dominated by English. I always tried to help my international students realize that their languages (other than English) are resources rather than deficits, even in an English composition course. Their linguistic, social, and cultural knowledge and experience are assets rather than impediments in understanding and reaching their English writing goals. A facilitative rather than a deficiency perspective on multilingual resources helped both me and my students (including both native and nonnative English speakers) build a critical view of what we learned and were learning and motivated us to be actively engaged in creating rather than passively receiving knowledge for our intellectual development and independence. My learning and research experiences taught me that, as an instructor, I should strengthen students' beliefs in, critical views on, and active attitudes towards learning; in turn, students' creative and insightful work consolidated my teaching philosophy and broadened my views by allowing me to see the world from diverse perspectives. All in all, my learning, research, and teaching experiences at Purdue were memorable and invaluable. Hopefully, this short narrative provides prospective students and readers who are curious about graduate student life in US institutions with a little hint about what it looks like.