

# The "Doodles" in Context: Qualifying Claims about Contrastive Rhetoric

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The education of composition teachers, tutors, and researchers about culturally influenced rhetorical differences in writing, or contrastive rhetoric, is usually limited, often consisting of brief explanations of Robert Kaplan's 1966 diagrams purporting to represent the rhetorics of five cultural traditions: Oriental, English, Semitic, Russian, and Romance. Frequently reprinted in teacher-training sources, the diagrams are only briefly and unproblematically explained in his own controversial terms (e.g., "the Oriental writer" and "Oriental rhetoric") as if they depicted the Truth about five complex rhetorical traditions. For example, the five drawings discussed in Kaplan's vocabulary appear in a sevenpage section entitled "Cultural Differences" in Muriel Harris' *Teaching One-to-One: The Writing Conference*, the guidebook for many writing center tutor-training programs. These models have been assumed factual and further disseminated at numerous presentation at writing center conferences (Xia Wang and Liu Yue; James Robinson, et al.). The increasing number of writing center publications and conference sessions on English-as-a-Second-Language issues such as contrastive rhetoric reflects the increasing number of international students using and working in writing centers. It is important that international students be approached by tutors with a stance that acknowledges the complexities of the rhetorics of different languages and cultures.



The five drawings depicting five different rhetorics first appeared in "Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education," nicknamed "the doodles article" (Kaplan "Revisited" 9). By no means are they wholly erroneous; there is indeed some validity to the depictions of English rhetoric

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as a straight line, Oriental rhetoric as a spiral, Arabic rhetoric as a series of zigzags, and Romance and Russian as lines heading downward but veering off at different angles along the way. However, subsequent studies have suggested these depictions are exaggerated and need qualification (Mohan and Lo; Hinds, "Contrastive Rhetoric"; Purves, "Introduction"; Liebman "Contrastive Rhetoric," "Toward a New Contrastive Rhetoric"). Over twenty years after the diagrams first appeared, Kaplan himself admitted that he had overstated the case although he asserted that he did not regret having made the case. He qualified his previous position on contrastive rhetoric, arguing that all written languages contain similar organizational patterns but that languages differ in the frequency that their culturally preferred patterns are found ("Revisited" 10). I applaud Kaplan's having made the case and thus launching the fascinating field of inquiry known as contrastive rhetoric; however, I regret that few in the ESL teaching community and even fewer in the native-English composition and writing center communities realize that the case needs to be, and in fact has already been, to some extent qualified—by Kaplan himself, among others.

Teachers and tutors are rarely exposed to Kaplan's and others' qualifications and elaborations of his original claims. Visual memory of the five sketches has imprinted itself on the thinking, learning, teaching, and writing of teachers and students. Publishers of teacher-education texts and first- and second-language composition texts (for example, Troyka's *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*, 3rd (Annotated Instructor's) Edition; Bander's *American English Rhetoric*) continue to reprint "the doodles," and generations of teachers, tutors, and ESL students "learn" that English speakers develop their ideas in a linear, hierarchical fashion and "Orientals" in a non-linear, spiral fashion. What they don't learn are the numerous modifications of Kaplan's contrastive rhetoric hypotheses, nor are they made aware of the multiple problems in the design, methods, and stance of his research. Yet in increasingly multicultural educational settings such as writing centers, the internalization of reductive notions about the rhetorics of different languages and cultures, including English in the US, can lead to skewed, simplistic expectations and interpretations of ESL students and their writing and an ethnocentric, assimilationist pedagogical stance (Severino "Sociopolitical").

The goals of this article, then, are to re-problematize Kaplan's original study, thus providing a suitable and accurate context for "the doodles." The study has certainly been critiqued before, mainly because it has led to product-centered teaching in ESL writing (Silva; Leki). Secondly, I will show how subsequent contrastive rhetoric studies have eliminated many of the flaws of Kaplan's research. Finally, I will provide some results from a writing center pilot study that follows in the line of contrastive rhetoric research focusing on native-language writing instruction. My study, which involves students communicating to their tutors about their rhetorical traditions and



writing experiences, demonstrates the writing center tradition of learning from students that which is often unavailable in the existing literature.

### **Problems with Kaplan's Study**

Based on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that language influences thought, Kaplan hypothesized that each culture has different logics and thought patterns which are reflected in how its writers organize and develop paragraphs ("Cultural Thought Patterns"). The first controversial aspect of this hypothesis was that Kaplan was focusing on the organization of the individual paragraph, not the entire discourse. Because the paragraph is often an arbitrary and artificial unit of discourse, not always intended by the writer as a unit of thought, it is less likely to reveal "cultural thought patterns" than are whole discourses. A second questionable feature is that Kaplan conflated rhetorical patterns with thought patterns. The way writers present their ideas in a paragraph or an essay does not necessarily reflect thought patterns or processes or the way they arrived at and connected their ideas, especially if the writer has revised her writing (Liebman "Contrastive Rhetoric"). We assume that the 600 ESL student essays that served as Kaplan's data base were first drafts, but many examples he uses to support the claims he makes in the 1966 article (for example, his translated French and Russian examples of "digressive" prose) are from published works which almost certainly had been revised.



Other factors that Kaplan's 1966 study didn't take into account were the particular language backgrounds of the writer, genre factors, developmental factors, and previous writing instruction. To speak of "Oriental rhetoric" when Asia is comprised of over fifty languages, countries, and cultures is most certainly a gross generalization. Even though in one section of the article he says that "Oriental" means Chinese and Korean, but not Japanese, it seems unlikely that successive generations of over a billion Chinese in Taiwan, the People's Republic, and Hong Kong, not to mention Chinese speakers in other Asian countries (Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines) and Korean speakers in Korea and elsewhere, would use the same indirect spiral form in their written communication.

Claims about contrastive rhetoric must also be qualified by specifying genre and sub-genre and the background of the writer in terms of the demographic factors of age, gender, class, and educational background. Kaplan at least specifies that the diagrams refer to expository, not literary prose. However, he mixes the types of evidence for his claims by quoting not only from student essays from the 600 student sample but also from different genres of professional writing— French philosophy and a Russian policy analysis. In addition, not all subgenres of expository writing in English are linearly and hierarchically organized according to the top-down outline. Consider the multiple ways in which personal and business letters, personal

and journalistic essays, newspaper articles and editorials, and academic writing in each of the disciplines are organized (Purves Introduction").

As Mohan and Lo's research on the writing instruction of students in Hong Kong and British Columbia showed, developmental factors in second language learning and the nature of writing instruction must also qualify the contrastive rhetoric claims illustrated by "the doodles" when the focus is the organizational patterns of second-language writing. Organization is often the last feature to be taught and learned in both first and second-language writing, if it is taught at all. In the teaching of second-language writing, grammar and syntactical patterns are stressed, especially as a means of enforcing those same patterns in oral discourse. Chinese students' essays may appear disorganized or "out-of-focus," say Mohan and Lo, because students are concentrating on grammar and syntax as their teachers encourage them to rather than on organization not because they are transferring a Chinese spiral pattern to their English writing.

Although Kaplan may be well meaning in his desire to help ESL students write for US audiences, his phrasing is often disparaging and assimilationist in tone: "The foreign student who has mastered the syntax of English may still write a bad paragraph or a bad paper unless he also masters the logic of English" ("Cultural Thought Patterns" 15; emphasis added). Almost thirty years later, this judgmental attitude seems curiously old-fashioned and ethnocentric. In a multicultural society, English-speaking readers will have to learn to read writing in different rhetorical forms without pronouncing it "bad" simply because it isn't thesis and topic-sentence driven (Land and Whitley), the pattern sometimes preferred in some US schools by some US teachers.

Although Kaplan called for more research in contrastive rhetoric, on the very same page, he recommended that his framework be applied "immediately" to ESL teaching (10; emphasis added). His article concludes with two exercises in English organizational patterns for ESL students, the second of which requires that they fill in the blanks to a detailed hierarchical outline about American TV (news broadcasts, special features, variety shows, situational comedies, adventure tales, advertising), an assignment which demands extensive familiarity with all different types of TV fare, a challenge for international students who have spent little time in the U.S. and less time watching American television.

### **Recent Contrastive Rhetoric Research: Improved Design and Methods**

Fortunately, subsequent contrastive rhetoric research has begun to recognize these complexities in the rhetorical patterns and features in the prose of speakers of different languages and has eliminated some of the aforementioned flaws. To control for developmental factors and genre,

scholars compare native-language writing with the writing in English by the same writers. One of the most effectively designed recent studies is by Chantanee Indrasutra who found that when Thai students in Thailand wrote narratives in both Thai and English, the rhetorical features of psychological plot and internal mental changes in their personae were foregrounded. She compared the Thai students' narratives in both English and Thai with English narratives by US students of the same age and class background, in which, by contrast, physical plot and external events moved the narrative forward. Indrasutra's design, methods, and stance improve upon Kaplan's in many ways: native language discourse is examined (not just ESL writing or translations of native language writing); genre, age, and class background are controlled for; and a complex discourse analysis is performed, taking into account content features which are as revealing of cultural differences as organizational features. No discourse analysis was mentioned in Kaplan's 1966 study. Indrasutra also provides the insider's "emic" perspective on Thai culture and writing. She attributes the focus on mental states in the Thai students' essays in both Thai and English to the Buddhist philosophy and the didactic purpose of the narrative in Thai culture. American students writers, on the other hand, saw themselves in control of the many events in their stories and wrote to entertain, not educate an audience (220-21).

Another line of contrastive rhetoric research examines the tradition of literacy instruction in students' native countries to gain insights into how literacy practices are embedded in a culture. In other words, culturally and linguistically influenced thought patterns cannot by themselves account for differences in rhetorical patterns and features. There is a complex relationship between cultural ways of thinking and that culture's literacy instruction. Anna Soter describes this relationship in terms of what she calls the "Cultural Context Model":

The model presents writers as part of an environment that influences them in all aspects of writing, both through schooling (the formal context) and through the whole community (the informal context). The process of influence is seen to be an interactive one. (179)

Notable is Joan Carson's study of the collective rather than individualistic nature of society as a context for literacy instruction in China and Japan, two of the countries that send the greatest numbers of international students to the US. Also notable is survey research by JoAnne Liebman who asked ESL students to describe how or if they were taught to write in their native countries and what rhetorical forms, if any, were recommended and practiced ("Toward a New Contrastive Rhetoric").



## Writing Center Research

This line of survey research on the instructional backgrounds of international students is what we have begun to pursue in a pilot study at our writing center in which half of the students who enroll are ESL. It is teacher research that fits into the writing center's pedagogy and curricula. In other words, ESL students write about their previous writing instruction and what makes writing good in their native countries (the preferred features of their language and culture), as part of the opening sequence of the "invitations to write" offered in our writing center. Our center does not operate according to a drop-in model; instead, students enroll for the entire semester. New students usually spend the first half of the semester responding to a series of invitations and the second half expanding and editing selected responses and/or working on assignments for their courses. Returning students work more on course papers and writing about reading that interests them.

In the past, an invitation called "Self-as-Writer" (Kelly Context and Response), constructed mainly with native speakers in mind, often elicited self-deprecatory responses from ESL students bemoaning what they perceived as their poor skills in grammar and vocabulary. Because the writing center staff was concerned that discussing such self-disparaging responses began the semester on a negative note, we composed an additional invitation asking students to describe their native-language writing instruction and experiences (See Appendix). It also asks students to describe how the experience of writing a paper for a teacher in the US is different from writing a paper for a teacher in their native country.

As with any other of the students' writings, if a phrase or passage is unclear, confusing, or requires more elaboration, writing center teachers ask helpful questions in the margins and end comments (Kelly "One-to-One" 16-18), which can lead to revisions and further writings. Because the teachers' questions serve as prompts for subsequent writing, it is possible to build an entire sequence of three or four thematic writings from this one invitation, which we called "Self-as-Writer II." For example, in the followup writings on this theme, teachers can encourage students to speculate about the sociocultural and political reasons for the differences in writing pedagogy and preferred features for writing between their native country and the US. How do cultural values differ, and do these differences influence writing and writing pedagogy?

In collaboration with their writing center teachers, students articulate their native cultures' rhetorics, probe their previous writing experiences, and compare and contrast both with their experiences writing in English in the US (fevering "Writers Writing"). The information writing center teachers learn from this process can be used immediately in their work with students. Drop-in or "enrolling" writing centers which don't use their own assignments can conduct a version of this inquiry by interviewing students, asking

the kinds of questions in "Self-as-Writer II." Students' responses and/or tutor-student discussions of contrastive rhetoric can be taped and used to inform subsequent tutoring sessions. In tutor-training or writing research courses, tutors and teacher researchers can listen to the tapes and examine transcripts of interviews to discern and discuss patterns and the possible tutoring strategies they suggest.

ESL students themselves value such opportunities to articulate cultural differences. For example, a Japanese exchange student commented on how beneficial it was to discover such differences through writing:



Since I came to the U.S., I have felt so many differences and I found new ways of thinking. But these happened only in my mind. I had never written what I thought of differences before I took this lab. I really feel that there are totally difference between writing and thinking. In thinking, what I think disappears rapidly.

In effect, we are asking students in the writing center to be contrastive rhetoricians as JoAnne Liebman did in her composition classes ("Contrastive Rhetoric"). Thus, the invitation serves both pedagogical and research purposes. As Harvey Kail and Kay Allen recommend for writing center research, it is a project that is "integrated into the normal day to day operation of the lab" (234). It provides teachers with students' perceptions of their cultural literacy backgrounds, and it confirms or complicates what has been reported in Kaplan's and others' studies about writers from different language backgrounds. Such research fits into the framework of what Liebman calls the "new contrastive rhetoric"

which considers not only contrasts in how people organize texts in different languages but also other contrasts such as their approach to audience, their perception of the purposes of writing, the types of writing tasks with which they feel comfortable, the composing processes they have been encouraged to develop, and the role writing plays in their education. ("Toward a New Contrastive Rhetoric" 142)

Liebman maintains that although Kaplan said he was interested in thought processes, he was actually focusing on arrangement, the "static result" of composing, rather than on invention, more the locus of thought processes. According to Liebman, "Kaplan believed that texts reflected culture, yet the actual cultural context that produced these texts was not explored" (143). Our study, although just beginning, aims to explore those cultural contexts. I will echo Liebman's caveat that although the ESL students' writings reveal only their perceptions about their writing instruction and not "reality," it is valuable for students to articulate these perceptions and for teachers, tutors, and researchers to know how they view the writing they did in their native countries ("Toward a New Contrastive Rhetoric"). Here, because of space

limitations and because Chinese speakers are the largest group of ESL students enrolled in our writing center and are among the largest international student groups in the US, I will examine only the information and experiences revealed in the writings of Chinese students from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China. Results will be reported in two categories: (1) Organizational Patterns Emphasized in School Writing and (2) Students' Pedagogical Histories.

### **Organizational Patterns Emphasized in School Writing**

The nature of organizational patterns in Chinese expository prose has been hotly debated. Mohan and Lo first challenged Kaplan's claim that the indirect spiral pattern transferred into Chinese students' English writing by reporting that only a few of the Chinese- (Cantonese-) speaking writers they surveyed in Hong Kong and British Columbia said they had problems organizing papers in English. Mohan and Lo maintained that there was "no support for claims that the organizational pattern of Chinese writing differs markedly from that of English" (515). Their study, however, was largely a survey and did not include the examination and discourse analysis of actual student essays in either English or Chinese. They claimed that the traditional indirect eight-legged essay form or *ba-gu* used in Chinese civil service exams no longer influences Chinese writing, an assertion which is contradicted by both Fan Shen's learning experience and Carolyn Matalene's teaching experiences in China. Nancy Duke Lay, who learned to write in Chinese schools in the Philippines, and Gao Jie, who learned in China, attempt to resolve this dispute by clarifying that many types of *ba-gu* exist in China and that the term is often used to mean writing in any strict format.

None of the Chinese-speaking students in our writing center (approximately 50 percent are from Taiwan, 25 percent from Hong Kong, and 25 percent from China) specifically mentioned the eight-part *ba-gu* form in their initial essays written in response to the "Self-asWriter II" invitation. Their lack of experience with the eight-legged essay is related to their age; most are in their twenties and thirties, having attended high school and college in the 1970s and 1980s. As Lay and Jie state, it is doubtful that anybody under the age of seventy would be able to recognize, let alone write, a traditional eight-legged essay. All of the students surveyed said that they were taught either a three-part structure, a four-part structure, or both for their school essays which were usually written to practice for the timed college entrance exams. Because these structures are strict formats, students sometimes referred to them as kinds of *ba-gu*, thus confirming Lay and Jie's resolution of the conflict. One writer from Taiwan noted that after students mastered the more simple and direct three-part form, viewed as a guaranteed formula for passing the exam, they were taught the more complex and indirect four-part form.



Most of the three-part forms that students described seemed direct and linear—like the introduction-body-conclusion format taught in the US. The names of the first two parts of the school essay varied according to the particular writer, but the last part in both the three and four-part forms was always called "the conclusion" or "the closing." However, as Ilona Leki warns us, even if the names for essay sections translate easily from one language to another, we cannot automatically conclude that they have the same function as they do in a typical school essay in English. One student from Taiwan defined the three parts as ( 1 ) the whole outline of what you will do, ( 2 ) reasons and details, and ( 3 ) conclusion. A second writer from Taiwan discussed the (1) Prologue, (2) Elaboration, and (3) Conclusion; another, (1) the Beginning, (2) Description, and (3) Conclusion. A student from China called them (1) Opinion, (2) Evidence or Examples, and (3) Conclusion. Using a helpful Chinese metaphor, another student from China wrote that because the introduction tells the main idea of the article, it is called "open the door and see the mountains," the next two parts developing that main idea "from the beginning to the peak."

A writer from Hong Kong wrote,

The organizational structure of the writing in my native language is pretty much the same as English—Introduction, body, conclusion. Each section also has its own introduction and conclusion sentences. The function of conclusion sentences are suppose to conclude all of the above and introduce the next section.

A rebel against this tradition, she added,

This mode is stupid enough to drive everybody crazy, also rob students' creativities. As long as people understand the essay, I don't believe it is necessary to follow the format. Wild animals are always fun to look at. [Emphasis in original]

Another student from Hong Kong called the three parts (1) head, (2) turn, [the first hint of a nonlinear pattern], and (3) conclusion, but said she had written in whatever form she wanted. By the time Chinese composition class arrived, she said, her teachers were tired of giving instructions, so they allowed them to write what they wanted within the framework of the prompts or titles.

However, the four-part essay structure described by other Chinese-speaking students, all from Taiwan in this particular sample, is more suggestive of indirectness, especially the third part which one student described as "the inversion," another as the "changing— something opposing or contrasting to the second paragraph," a third student as "the turning," a fourth student as "the opposition," a fifth as "the application." This four-part structure is akin to the classical Chinese poetic form *chi-chengjuan-he* described by Feng-fu Tsao and demonstrated by John Hinds to be common in Korean, Japanese, and Thai as well as in Chinese ("Inductive").

This fourth student stated that she never believed that Chinese wrote in spiral fashion until she learned to write in English. She called the four parts "start, support, opposition, and ending." Unlike in English, she said, the start, which another student from Taiwan labeled "warming up," does not have to be directly related to the topic. Like Earl Sllen who noted that in China he had to state "the conditions of composition before coming to the main point or core, a process he described as akin to peeling an onion, this writer said that "it is an art to start the article far away and lead the reader to the topic in several sentences." She eloquently pointed out that cohesion among supporting paragraphs is established differently also:

In English, the last sentences in the previous paragraph give the reader a strong hint about the next paragraph. But in Chinese, the relationship between paragraphs is like rivers' confluence: starting wherever you want only if you can lead them into mainstream.

The support in Chinese is different than it is in English as well. Instead of "bragging," and defending one's own opinions, a writer considers her opinions from other points of view and then refutes these points, a practice related to the value of saving the face of the opposition by avoiding the conflict of meeting their argument head on. The conclusion, she reported, differs also. In English, the conclusion closes the essay, leaving nothing further to be said ("it is like arriving at the end of a road"), while the Chinese conclusion can be less closed. Another writer commented on the preference for deductive forms in English and inductive forms in Chinese:

I was taught to make readers understand the key point immediately in the first paragraph or sentences when I wrote in English. But writing Chinese, I write indirectly and let the reader understand the main opinion at the end.



Another writer from Taiwan supports this observation about indirection: "You may not really understand what is talking about when you read the first of the second paragraph, and you'll have a surprise at the ending."

The fact that both direct and indirect forms seem to coexist in school writing in Chinese-speaking countries might be related to Hinds' assertion that written Chinese is a language in transitions moving from being indirect and inferential, what he calls a "reader-responsible language" (Reader vs. Writer: 145). The student who came to agree that Chinese is a spiral form describes the differences in cohesion in Chinese and English in a way that suggests reader responsibility:

The concept gap [in Chinese] between two sentences is larger than in English....As a result I was always asked to write more sentences to express my ideas in English writing [no doubt by her native-English speaking writing center teachers!].

In terms of Kaplan's qualifying variables, indirect, more inductive forms occur with greater frequency in school writing in these Chinese-speaking countries than they do in the US (Hinds "Inductive").

The information collected from this small sample of Self-as-Writer II pieces reveals that what scholars have called "Chinese rhetoric" cannot simply be depicted with a spiral diagram (Kaplan), nor can we say that organizational patterns in Chinese are similar to those in English (Mohan and Lo). The situation is too complex for such generalizations. Clearly more research with larger samples is necessary to develop an accurate picture of current and past practices in writing instruction in these three countries. It is also possible that school writing in the more outwardlooking mercantile center of Hong Kong may be more influenced by Western, particularly British, rhetorical patterns and features than writing in Taiwan and China. In Hinds' terms, the movement toward writer responsibility has occurred more rapidly in Hong Kong perhaps because of British colonial influences on the educational system ("Reader vs. Writer"). It will be interesting to see whether writing instruction changes when Hong Kong becomes part of the People's Republic of China in 1997.

### **Students' Pedagogical Histories**

The varied stories students shared about their past writing instruction also contribute to complicating any attempt to generalize about rhetorical traditions. Students told us that in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China, multiple drafting was the exception rather than the rule. Although they were sometimes encouraged to make an outline before they wrote, if they revised, it was usually to correct the errors the teachers identified, often misused characters (akin to spelling errors in English). Timed exams made multiple drafting impractical. A student who outlined or wrote a rough draft might run out of time and not finish. Freewriting was not practiced either. Wrote one student, "One-hour freewriting, without any restriction, that is unbelievable thing in Hong Kong. We were taught to do on purpose." As if to emphasize this point, at the end of the one-hour period in the writing center, she ended her writing with, "One hour has passed. I should stop, should I?"

Most students replied to the question of what makes their country's school writing good by citing features that one would find in a U.S. rhetoric handbook, again problematizing the characterization of Chinese writing as always indirect. Students said writing should be clear, fluent, concise, vivid, and detailed although we cannot assume that Chinese-speaking students have the same meanings for these terms as the U.S. handbook authors. Chinese-speaking students also repeated their former teachers' prescriptive notions about good writing although some were critical of such notions. The features the students listed were no misused characters, good grammatical structures, no awkward sentences, "good ethics (what the teacher wants to

hear)," and the right number of words when a 500 or 1000-word theme was assigned. The inclusion of sayings, proverbs, and quotations was also emphasized, confirming Matalene's experiences with her students in China who found it difficult to write essays in English because English does not have enough sayings.



Much of the secondary school writing was done either to practice for the crucial, future-determining college entrance exams. The exams themselves often contained politically charged topics such as "On Patriotism" (Taiwan) and "The Just Suppression of Student Demonstrations" (China). Students who graduated from high school in Taiwan ten or more years ago often felt they had to adopt their teachers' opinions or the party line. Said one student, "To earn a better score, students tried to link any topic to anti-communist, patriotist society." Another student from Taiwan said that her school writing consisted of elaborating on teacher-assigned slogans such as "Study hard and save China." "The conclusion of every writing," she said, "mention about We need do the right thing and to be a right person, we will can fight back to main China and save all the people in the main China." Essays with stereotyped and sloganistic messages were also referred to as *ba-gu*. Hence, *ba-gu* has the connotations of any formulaic writing, whether the formula is organizational, political, or both. Obviously, the historical relationship between the communist mainland of the People's Republic of China and the capitalist island nation of Taiwan and the dream of reunification has affected the writing and the writing pedagogy of both countries. As Mary Erbaugh pointed out in her discussion of what she calls a two-thousand year-old tradition of political surveillance, direct spoken and written expression against the government has usually involved risk and danger in both Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. It is important to note, however, that current writing pedagogy in China and especially in Taiwan is less influenced by a party line. For example, a Chinese student who recently taught writing in Taiwan commented that the strategy of giving teachers what students thought they wanted to hear would often backfire, earning students poorer grades than a strategy of demonstrating critical, independent thinking. She and many of her colleagues did not reward essays based only on commonplaces or the party line.

Objective rather than personal writing was also mentioned as a preferred feature in school writing. As Fan Chen and Matalene pointed out, citing ancient and present-day authorities is much preferred to citing personal experience or testimony. A student from Taiwan wrote that it was important not to use "the words full of feeling" but rather to "describe the fact and utilize the theory." Another student from Taiwan pointed out that personal writing is becoming more widespread in Taiwan, possibly because of the influence of teachers educated in the West. A student from Hong Kong wrote,

The function of writing is to communicate formally with others, not to share feelings. Moreover, people in Hong Kong have the notion that it is easy to write about personal experience. Therefore, you don't have to learn how to write it.

In the US., her college writing teachers have encouraged her to use "I" as a subject, but she was discouraged from doing so in Hong Kong. The lack of personal writing is underscored by the lack of sharing writing or of the US. practice of workshopping personal essays. "Actually we are not accustomed to share feeling with other in class. We never have a chance to look into the other's writing and we don't want other to read our own writing too." A student from Taiwan pointed out that the only writing that was shared in class was the essay considered by the teacher to be a model for the students to imitate, often a formulaic, "politically correct" essay. The writer who was ambivalent about freewriting was also conflicted about the freedom to do personal writing in English.

I enjoy freedom when I write in Chinese, because there are some built in restrictions—I can't let myself gossip and talk a lot of things about myself and this is useless to my audience. I have to tell them something that I think it is valuable to them. Paper is not expensive, but time is.

These comments remind us that personal writing is a culturally relative preference related to the US. valuing of individuality. The collective nature of Chinese societies contributes to the perception of personal writing as unusual, easy, or frivolous—in general less rigorous and respectable and possibly politically risky as well.

### **The Doodles in Context**

The difference between frequent and preferred processes, products, and pedagogies in Chinese and English may cause some Chinese-speaking students to have some difficulty with the greater frequency of deduction or personal viewpoints required in English writing in the US. Our writing center experiences indicate that difficulties with personal writing are usually temporary, that many Chinese students come to enjoy personal writing and relish opportunities to write about their views and their lives. If writing center relationships are truly collaborative negotiations of meaning and form, native English-speaking tutors and Chinese-speaking writers might follow Joan (Gregg's suggestion to work out hybridized, "culturally balanced" styles that will be acceptable in Chinese rhetorical traditions but also in US composition and in the other academic disciplines. Such blended styles might include, for examples a personal point of view combined with occasional sayings and indirect organization—lines of support that converge into a single thematic "mainstream," rather than explicit topic sentences and transitional state

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ments. This culturally balanced style may be especially useful for those students who plan to return to their native countries to live and work.

As can be seen by these few examples, Chinese-speaking students' native-language writing experiences are too complex to be described by a spiral sketch. Teachers and actors unaware of the research context for Kaplan's doodles are in danger of misinterpreting their students' writing in terms of the spiral. Any communication that is unclear or misunderstood will be considered a result of a preference for indirectness, rather than, say, a lack of vocabulary. Moreover, recommending the linear "downward arrow" pattern falsely represents and stereotypes writing in English. Multiculturalism must reject narrow definitions of individual rhetorics and embrace a "multicultural rhetoric" (Lisle and Mano) that recognizes complexities and that not only allows experimental and culturally mixed patterns, but more important, offers opportunities for students themselves to explore cultural and rhetorical differences through writing (Liebman "Contrastive Rhetoric").

Writing centers are excellent sites for collaborative exploration of cultural and linguistic differences. More research is needed on the rhetorics of other international and US populations that use writing centers, for example, Koreans, Japanese, Southeast Asians (Vietnamese, Cambodians), as well as bilingual and bidialectal students from the US. Inquiry should proceed jointly and respectfully through careful, slowly paced interviews and writing. Researchers need to first discover the culture's preferred features of school writing with full awareness of the dangers of overgeneralizing and stereotyping. They need to speculate about the possible cultural and political reasons for the preferred features. It is important that such work not only connect writing with cultural values and historical traditions but also with individual students' own writing histories. Our experiences with the "Self-as-Writer II" invitation have taught us that the writing experiences and backgrounds of Chinese speakers can vary as much as do those of English speakers. Just as not all the native-English speaking students in our composition classes have been trained to write the five-paragraph theme, not all Chinese-speaking students have received the same kind of training in the three- and four-part essays. Not all have felt obligated to produce formulaic writing to succeed in school. Writing center interviews and assignments about contrastive rhetoric should attempt to embrace multiple layers of difference—national, political, historical, cultural, linguistic, class, gender, and experiential. Contrastive rhetoric is still in its formative stages. Writing center studies, such as this pilot project, suggest rich possibilities for future research. Kaplan's doodles need to be emphatically characterized as only the beginning of contrastive rhetoric and not synonymous with it.

(Joe Essid has copies of Severino's bibliography)