Culture Shock: Teaching Writing Within Interdisciplinary Contact Zones

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Abstract: To help writing faculty learn the language of discourse communities across campus, we conducted faculty interviews as a first attempt to describe knowledge about disciplinary cultures, specifically with regard to writing. Based on the data received from the interviews about disciplinary definitions and characteristics of good writing and how writing is learned, we advocate (a) awareness: recognizing that the particular beliefs and practices of a discipline may differ from those of other disciplines; (b) knowledge: learning about others' values, particularly regarding the definition and practice of writing; and (c) skills: altering perceptions and even communication strategies based on awareness and knowledge. Our interview data suggest that when writing faculty limit cross-disciplinary discussion to characteristics of good writing only, discipline stereotypes are reinforced, and communication may be restricted. However, when writing faculty discuss learning-to-write strategies with faculty in other disciplines, the results reveal commonalities about writing ideology.

The need to begin any interdisciplinary writing effort with dialogue across academic disciplines (and stakeholders) is well established (e.g., Walvoord, 1992). Writing across the curriculum scholarship, for example, often encourages workshops, collaborative partnerships, or simply being "a little more patient with each another [*sic*] in disagreements about [writing] models" (Williamson, 1988, p. 130) to effectively implement and continue interdisciplinary dialogues about students' successes and failures with writing. David Russell notes that "today's academia is a *discourse* community only in a context so broad as to have little meaning in terms of shared linguistic forms" (1990, p. 21; emphasis in original). In other words, in an attempt to carve a niche in academe, individuals within disciplines may or may not share the same values and definitions as those outside their discipline. Echoing C.P. Snow's *The Two Cultures* (1962), Perelman (1999) notes that major differences exist between engineering and humanities disciplines today, despite both having roots in classical rhetoric. As Herrington (1985) found, however, different values and definitions may also be present *within* a discipline.

Because discipline boundaries are well-established (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Fuller, 1991), simply *creating* a forum for dialogic communication to occur may not be enough to secure success in interdisciplinary writing initiatives (Cornell & Klooster, 1990). Although workshops and study partnerships (e.g., Bertch & Fleming, 1991; Carson, 1994; Faery 1993; Freisinger 1980; Weiss &

Peich, 1980), combined with textual analyses of discipline-specific writing (e.g., Bazerman, 1981, 1988) are crucial in interdisciplinary efforts, increased success will come when we "see what we are observing through the lens of historical development—and that will require more than studying just the writing, or its immediate surrounding context; it will require that we know, in addition, something about *the discipline* itself, as a forum of production and exchange of knowledge" (Anson, 1988, p. 26; emphasis in original). Working with individuals from other disciplines can result in "culture shock." For example, an accounting professor does not understand why a paper entitled "How to Make Spaghetti" does not constitute a good essay for an English professor even though it is a clearly stated recipe. To alleviate such misconceptions, Kate Ronald suggests that "curricular leaders must learn translation, the unpretentious ability to speak others' languages and to shed new light on what seems obvious" (2001, p.323). Our goal in the present study is to open dialogue on how writing faculty may learn to explore disciplinary culture as one factor in understanding how faculty approach writing instruction.

To help writing faculty, then, learn the language of discourse communities across campus, we conducted faculty interviews to determine descriptive knowledge about disciplinary cultures, specifically with regard to writing. Because of the strong history of cross-disciplinary conflict when implementing interdisciplinary writing measures, we address communication about writing within the context of *contact zones* or the "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (Pratt, 1991, p. 34). In this paper, we argue that prior work on disciplinary culture provides a foundation for advancing dialogue across disciplinary boundaries. We believe that "culture shock" with other disciplines can be averted by helping writing teachers develop a better understanding of different academic cultures and disciplinary attitudes toward writing. In other words, we advocate (a) awareness: recognizing that the particular beliefs and practices of a discipline may differ from those of other disciplines; (b) knowledge: learning about others' values, particularly regarding the definition and practice of writing; and (c) skills: altering perceptions and even communication strategies based on awareness and knowledge.

The Teaching of Writing and Disciplinary Conflict

Several articles on conflict within an interdisciplinary context already exist (Bergmann, 1997; Cornell & Klooster, 1990; McLeod & Maimon, 2000; Samuels, 2004; Soven, 1992; Thaiss, 1992; Walvoord, 1996; Young & Fulwiler, 1990). The most common source of contention arises from faculty resistance to teaching writing due to time restraints or different teaching philosophies about writing (Fulwiler, 1990; Russell, 1987), although conflict also arises about where to house the interdisciplinary writing program (Blair, 1988; Harris, 1992; Smith, 1988; Waldo, 1993; Young & Fulwiler, 1990). Suggestions for handling conflict include creating more effective workshops (Bertch & Fleming, 1991; Faery, 1993; Maimon, 1982; Soven, 1988); having faculty, graduate students, and/or undergraduates across disciplines collaborate more in research, teaching, or writing projects (Jones & Comprone, 1993; Maimon, 1986); developing a writing forum or "board of writers" to discuss interdisciplinary writing issues (Sipple, 1989); including practitioners or the nonacademic community to improve success (Parks & Goldblatt, 2000; Segal, Paré, Brent, & Vipond, 1998); increasing funding (McLeod & Soven, 1991); or simply practicing patience (Williamson 1988).

One method to adequately learn the language of discipline members is through studying disciplinary texts: Bazerman (1985) explored texts produced and consumed by research physicists; Hagge and Kostelnick (1989) investigated accountants' audit suggestion letters; Mirel (1996) focused on reports from electronic databases; and Geisler, Rogers, and Haller (1998) considered the texts used in software engineering. In all instances, such research makes disciplinary discourse conventions explicit, helping writing faculty deal with potential conflict caused by differences in discourse

conventions. Another method to learn more about academic cultures is to conduct surveys or interviews of discipline members. Bridgeman and Carlson (1984) distributed a questionnaire to faculty in 190 academic departments across 34 different universities to assess the types of writing tasks given to graduate and undergraduate students. Not surprisingly, the seven disciplines studied—chemistry, English, civil engineering, electrical engineering, computer science, psychology, and MBA programs—revealed disparate results about types of writing required and methods of writing assessment. In her survey of 400 U. S. colleges, Griffin (1985) discovered that faculty share some assumptions about the value of writing across disciplines. Eblen (1983) surveyed 266 faculty at the University of Northern Iowa about their issues with student writing and found that faculty across disciplines agreed that content issues—such as development and support, thesis, and organization—are more important components of effective student writing than are good grammar and mechanics.

Williamson (1988) interviewed English, biology, and sociology faculty from one site, and his results again emphasized disciplinary differences and boundaries, particularly with writing issues. He found that the "social context of specific disciplines" had a definite effect on the "acquisition of communicative competence by student writers" (pp. 89-90). Huot (1992) proposed "focused dialogues" or group interviews with 4-6 faculty members in order to determine how faculty, particularly those in the discipline of social work, assigned writing tasks to students. Davis (1987) interviewed eight faculty members and visited their courses at a large Midwestern state university to determine their attitudes toward writing's value for students. He discovered that while the writing assignments differed greatly, the faculty still agreed about what constitutes good writing.

Whether they collect data from students (e.g., Faigley & Hansen, 1985) or from faculty, researchers often use surveys and interviews to determine how students enculturate into academic discourse communities. In her interviews with graduate students and professors in three disciplines, Dysthe (2002) determined that the professors used three supervisory models for graduate student work: teaching, partnership, and apprenticeship models (p. 494). Although Dysthe's study makes headway into the subject of disciplinarity and its effect on graduate students writing in their disciplines through a Bahktinian-based analysis of supervisory methods, we advocate an inquiry into deeper cultural knowledge about the disciplines not only to assist students but also to make writing faculty aware of such knowledge in order to improve communication and successes for professors and students alike.

Because disciplinary differences are inevitable (Fish, 1989), we contextualize our dialogue within Mary Louise Pratt's (1991) framework of *contact zones*. Although Pratt's application, like most research on contact zones (c.f. Wolff, 2002), is intended for students and their enculturation (or lack thereof) into academic discourse communities, we use the term *contact zones* specifically for the dialogic space where writing faculty must reside in order to communicate with faculty from other disciplines. To date, scholars have described these "zones" as largely conflict-ridden and problematic. Similar to Norgaard (1999), we argue that interdisciplinary contact zones alert us to the need for more cultural knowledge about disciplinary practices and goals, particularly with regard to writing processes and writing instruction. Arming writing faculty with preemptive knowledge, we hope, will allow us to embrace and manage conflict more successfully for the success of both students and professors working with interdisciplinary writing initiatives.

Russell (1990) suggests that implementations of interdisciplinary writing program initiatives have not been successful because they "resisted the fundamental organizing principle of academia, the compartmentalization of knowledge" (p. 53). Farris (1992) reframes the source of conflict that often accompanies the implementation of interdisciplinary writing programs as writing specialists' attempts to "colonize" disciplinary discourses and pedagogies. Furthermore, Farris asserts that WAC

specialists must gain an ethnographer's first hand knowledge of culture specific knowledge and use that knowledge to move beyond colonizing disciplinary writing practice and pedagogy to "transforming such cultures" (p. 120). As Mahala and Swilky (1994) point out, however, any notion of WAC initiatives as colonizing specific disciplines must be reconciled with the power imbalance between those often involved in implementing and executing such a program and tenured faculty in most disciplines. Mahala and Swilky extend Farris' call for authentic knowledge of disciplinary writing practice and pedagogy, suggesting that WAC specialists create spaces "where differences between ways of knowing can become visible and debated" (p. 56). Importantly, Mahala and Swilky, as well as Farris, resist assumptions of disciplinary relativity in terms of effective writing pedagogy. Segal et al. (1998) also advise faculty to "join the ... conversation" (p. 85) of practitioners in the nonacademic community in order to avoid co-optation of discourse communities.

In this study, we use interviews to engage faculty across disciplines regarding their disciplinary symbols, heroes, and rituals in relation to discipline culture and writing philosophies and practices. Unlike Dick and Esch (1985), we do not approach faculty as students who require our conversational input but rather as peers whose perspectives on writing in their disciplines are crucial to the success of interdisciplinary writing programs. Geisler (1994) describes how students progress from novice to expert in the ways they negotiate different "problem spaces" (p. 38) in the academy. Similarly, we hope that disciplinary knowledge based on cultural interviews will assist writing faculty in their journey to expert knowledge about views of writing in a wide variety of disciplines.

The Interviews

In order to accomplish our three-pronged goal of awareness of disciplinarity, knowledge of specific discipline characteristics and methods, and development of skills to address culture shock in the contact zone, we interviewed representative members about the symbols, heroes, and rituals in their discipline, especially as they relate to writing. We chose eight individuals from disciplines representing the range of Becher and Trowler's (2001) four-part taxonomy of academic cultures, as identified in Fig. 1.

Figure 1: Becher & Trowler's (2001) Taxonomy of Cognitive Dimensions and Discipline Representatives Interviewed

Hard	Pharmacy (33.24)*	Biology (58.30)
	Nursing (23.02)	Computer Science (38.59)
Soft	Psychology (38.55)	History (55.35)
	Management (1 hr., 2.57)	Classics (46.44)
	Applied	**Pure**

*Length of interview

All interviewees were either tenure-track or tenured faculty at a private, master's comprehensive university in the southeastern US who had earned their terminal degrees within the last ten years; five interviewees were women, and two were African American. All interviewees were recruited by one of the researchers, who served as WAC director at the university, who asked them if they would be willing to discuss their disciplines for a research study. The WAC director/interviewer was new to the position and wanted to gather information that would be useful in re-shaping the program to maximize participation and cross-disciplinary interest while reducing the persistent disgruntlement

with the writing program. Thus, this study represents participatory action research (Whyte, 1991) in that (a) the individuals being "studied" (i.e., university teachers) were conscious participants in the research and (b) the goal of the research was to study an identified problem (i.e., differences in culture led to misunderstandings about university writing instruction) in order to solve it. We sought to achieve a *maximum variation sample* in terms of academic culture; in other words, we interviewed individuals representing the entire range of cultures within the specific academic institution being studied (Lindlof, 1995). Further, we attempted to use a *typical case sample* in terms of faculty demographics (i.e., 50% female individuals and less than 25% minority individuals) and experience (i.e., tenured or tenure-track individuals) at this university (Maxwell, 1996). This is a small case study, and our intention is to theorize how typical WAC approaches to faculty across the curriculum may impede rather than facilitate productive dialogue.

Qualitative research interviews were conducted because our study "focuses on the meaning of particular phenomena to the participants" (King, 1994, p. 16). The interviewer's goals included (1) establishing a rapport that would encourage the informant to feel comfortable enough to speak freely; (2) eliciting information about discipline specific symbols, heroes, and rituals as a means of investigating academic cultures; and (3) gathering evidence about specific topics within the discipline (notably the meaning of membership and success, as well as descriptions of controversies) and the role of writing and learning to write in the discipline. An interview guide was used to help the WAC director "list ... topics which the interviewer should attempt to cover in the course of the interview" (King, 1994, p. 19), thus ensuring the comparability of information from all eight individuals (see Fig. 2). In the spirit of participatory action research, however, interviews were unstructured: different participants discussed topics in different orders and spent more time on some topics than other participants did.

Figure 2: Interview Guide

- Tell me about your discipline: what does it mean to be successful in your field?
- Tell me about the most successful member of your discipline.
- Tell me why you chose this discipline.
- Tell me a story about a controversy within your discipline.
- How do members of your discipline communicate with each other informally?
- How do members of your discipline communicate formally? What is most valued? Why is it most valued?
- Describe the role of writing within your discipline.
- Tell me about the most successful (or unsuccessful) writer in your discipline.
- Tell me how you learned to write as a member of your discipline. What are the qualities of the best written work within your discipline?
- How is written work created and by whom? How do novices learn to create work meeting your discipline's standards?
- How quickly is written work disseminated? How frequently do members of your discipline produce written work? How long is their written work?
- What aspects of writing do you feel compelled to teach students in your class?

All interviews were conducted by the WAC director in the interviewees' offices and were recorded. (The size and location of the recording devices were unobtrusive.) Informants readily agreed to recording the conversations and, in accordance with human subjects research standards, agreed to

allow the recordings and subsequent transcripts to be used for research purposes. The interviews were conducted during a four-week period in the spring of 2006 and lasted from 23 minutes to just over one hour. (Fig. 1 reports specific times for each interview.)

All recorded interviews were transcribed for analysis in keeping with Edwards' (1993) suggestions for creating transcripts that are both "authentic," meaning true to the communicative event, and "practical," meaning "most likely to reveal the properties of interest" (p. 6). The researchers worked independently to immerse themselves in the data, taking notes and identifying major themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After several discussions of these themes, two researchers worked independently to categorize (a) how the interviewees define "good" writing and (b) how they believe writing is learned. Additional discussion of the categorization with a third researcher provided results for which there was unanimous agreement. In the following sections, we present our interpretation of these eight interviews as a means of learning the language of writing within discourse communities across campus.

Writing Quality in the Contact Zone

One way that writing faculty have tried to establish common ground with multiple disciplines is to underscore that we all want our students to be good writers. Conflict arises, though, when faculty cannot agree on what constitutes good writing. In fact, it is when we categorize disciplines based on their members' views of "good writing characteristics" that we run the risk of reductive stereotyping, such as "the sciences only care about format and statistics" or "the humanities want elaborate, long sentences in first-person." Writing scholarship to date has verified disciplinary differences and similarities in our views of "good" writing (e.g., see Fishman & McCarthy, 2001).

Another way writing faculty have approached interdisciplinary discussions about writing is through establishing how disciplines define good student writing in order to find common ground with colleagues. Not surprisingly, however, such an approach has led to conflict as well as discipline stereotyping about views of writing (Fulwiler, 1984), that is, a re-entrenchment of the sciences *versus* the humanities. For example, some early literature on WAC encouraged expressive writing (Fulwiler, 1980), such as using journals across the curriculum in order to expose students to different forms of writing and avoiding an overemphasis on "correct English" (Knoblauch & Brannon, 1983). Maimon (1986) advocates disciplinary collaboration to encourage critical thinking so that all disciplines will be more conscious of teaching their students about audience awareness and other rhetorical-based strategies. Maimon (1986) suggests forming a community of cross-disciplinary learners through examining a student's work in progress because "[w]hen scholars in a variety of disciplines all study the same academic paper, the text becomes a prism refracting fundamental issues in education" (p. 11). This approach allows questions about potentially divergent disciplinary characteristics of good writing to come to the surface.

Potential for conflict is easy to see in interviewees' definitions and descriptions of "good writing." For example, two professors mentioned conciseness (biology and psychology), whereas two others mentioned appropriate use of jargon (pharmacy and management) as representative of good writing in their disciplines. Three professors praised creativity and originality in disciplinary writing (management, history, and classics). Clarity was mentioned by four professors (computer science, pharmacy, history, and classics). While our study is too small to generalize about the various disciplinary definitions, our analysis suggests that these faculty members entertain differing opinions as to what constitutes good writing (see Table 1 for results).

Table 1. Interview Results Related to Good Writing

Characteristics of Good Writing	Hard/Pure		Hard/Applied		Soft/Applied		Soft/Pure	
	Bio.	CS	Pharm.	Nurs.	Psych.	Mgmt.	Hist.	Classics
Rule-based	X	X	X	X	X			X
Conciseness	X				X			
Appropriate & accurate jargon			X			X		
Clarity		X	X				X	X
Well organized	X	X	X		X		X	
Fact-based		X	X	X	X			X
Original/ creative						X	X	X
Interpretive/explanatory	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Integrity	X		X				X	X
Process approach	X				X	X	X	

If we accept disciplinary stereotypes, we will not be surprised that all four of the professors interviewed from disciplines that fall within Becher and Trowler's "hard" taxonomy of cognitive dimensions (specifically, biology, computer science, pharmacy, and nursing) indicated that "rules" were important. On the other hand, we may be quite surprised to learn that two professors from "soft" disciplines (psychology and classics) also expressed concern for how "rules" are used. Several commented on the need to adhere to strict formats (e.g. APA formatting: nursing, psychology; use of headings: biology) and to be grammatically correct. As the nursing professor states, *you are expected to write well…. Certainly we correct everything that's written according to grammar and sentence structure and that kind of thing.* Furthermore, good organization and appropriate content were consistently mentioned as characteristics of good writing by our interviewees. The pharmacy professor stresses the importance of organization: *…by the time you start using all these terms and putting them together, it's easy to get everything mumbled and jumbled. So organization is a big part of it; it's a key for success.* In describing writing in psychology, the professor stated that *it tends to be a very concise information-rich form of writing.* Stereotypical impressions of writing in some disciplines can tempt us to focus on areas of potential conflict and miss shared impressions of good writing. Importantly, it matters less whether such stereotypes are applicable; rather, by framing our discussion around such pre-conceived beliefs, writing faculty may be creating conflict unnecessarily.

Moreover, workshops, interviews, and surveys that inquire only about how faculty define good writing and that incorporate stereotypical depictions of disciplinary writing reinforce boundary lines at interdisciplinary contact zones. As Table I demonstrates, however, the response of individuals in our study contradict discipline stereotypes that characterize the sciences as predominantly occupied with rule-based report-type writing and the humanities as largely concerned with more creative or interpretive writing. For example, all interviewees, with the exception of the computer science professor, indicated the importance of interpretation and explanation as a characteristic of good writing. The biology professor, for instance, valued and tried to teach students to *extract important ideas and write about it concisely without using somebody else's words… to unite all of these ideas into one paragraph*. Synthesis leads to knowledge creation; students must be able to interpret previous research in order to provide a *spring board* for their own ideas. The psychology professor emphasized the need to *interpret* research results and notes that in *conceptual articles…there may be a little more room for creativity.* The history professor lamented the loss of historical narratives and promises that his next book *will be true to the facts, but it will also be creative.* Similarly, the classics professor criticized some European archeologists for failing to interpret, expressing preference for the American and British practice of providing *a theory, explain*[ing] *it within some context, giv*[ing]*some understanding of what it meant* (with *it* referring to any newly discovered artifact). Such shared practice can offer fertile ground for writing faculty.

Needless conflict occurs in the contact zone when faculty from the disciplines feel forced to qualify or "defend" their definition of good writing "against" that of the writing faculty. Some disciplines are labeled as problematic or difficult to get along with, and dialogues may be stymied. In order to encourage open interdisciplinary conversations about the teaching of writing, we feel it is crucial to extend the dialogue beyond the characteristics of good writing, beyond the "text" aspect of the rhetorical triangle, and into a richer discussion that extends the conversation in the contact zone to include ideologies of learning-to-write. We take up this topic in the following section.

Learning-to-Write Ideology in the Contact Zone

For purposes of our study, we adopt a model of learning to write that is categorized as *text-based, writer-based,* or *social-interactive*. We believe this tripartite categorization is consistent with the most influential learning-to-write models. For instance, Berlin's (1996) categories—cognitive, expressionistic, and social epistemic—divide rhetorical ideology along Aristotelian lines of reality (i.e., text-based), encoder (i.e., writer-based), and decoder (i.e., reader-based or social). We use Nystrand's (1989) concept of "social-interactive" rather than "reader-based" to capture the notion that "readers are constrained in their interpretations by their sense of the writer's purpose" (1989, p. 77). By including interview questions about how faculty learned to write themselves and how they think their students learn to write (in addition to what faculty value as good writing), we were able to uncover some of their learning-to-write ideologies.

Writing faculty may balk at the occurrence of text-based and writer-based ideologies, especially notions of innateness, trial and error, and mechanics instruction. A colleague with a writer-based view of how writing is learned that emphasizes innateness provides little common ground for writing faculty to build rapport. In our interviews, only one professor expressed this belief, saying *I think some if it's just people are gifted in certain areas. I can't explain it—how much is nature and how much is nurture* (computer science interview). Belief that writing is learned essentially through trial and error provides marginally more common ground for negotiating the contact zone of discipline expertise and rhetorical expertise, but it still represents a core view that learning to write is an individualized and "magical" process that resists instruction and coaching. Two of the three interviewees who expressed writer-based views also voiced other views, although we suspect at least

one may have been influenced to do so by the interviewer's role as WAC director (*I'll be honest with you. I know the theory... that you know... I know our core is set up to try to help the student get to the point where they're good writers, and I'm certain it helps do that. I also know it's not entirely successful which again I'm sure is one of the reasons you're doing all of this...*) (computer science professor).

Belief that learning to write is an innate talent or involves trial and error, however, may result from faculty frustration when dealing with students' texts rather than any steadfast belief. After all, faculty do teach, indicating a belief in learning, and these eight interviewees all teach writing intensive courses. It may be easier to throw up our hands and say "I did my best; he just couldn't learn to write" or "she should have learned to write before getting to college" than to engage the idea that we don't know how to help students learn to write within our disciplines, especially if writing is viewed as a "tool" of our discipline and subsequently that teaching writing is somehow extraneous to and indeed interferes with real teaching in the discipline.

While writer-based views focus too narrowly on one angle of the rhetorical triangle, text-based views limit attention to a different angle. Text-based views of how writing is learned stress issues such as mechanics, format, or generic expectations. From this perspective, we see an overriding concern with correctness, a rather simple and narrow notion that student writers should learn "the right" rules and formats in order to be "good writers" and, moreover, that these "correct" writing behaviors can and should be learned prior to college or at least within the confines of first year writing courses. As the nursing professor stated, *At the level we teach, when you're a sophomore at* [this] *university, you are expected to write well.* Anything that is not "correct" indicates a student writer's need for remediation and implicates earlier writing instruction as failing to "ensure" written competence. While the writing faculty member does not want to ignore the importance of writer cognition and text-based expectations when interacting with colleagues across campus, he or she does want to locate those expectations within a rhetorical situation. As another example, the classics professor described her text-based view of how writing is learned:

> . . . for me, it's reading, internalizing that and just doing a lot of it myself, of thinking about the styles that I admire and trying to approximate that in my own work, so it's more on a model of what I read in trying to copy it

Again, the writing faculty member may dismiss this professor's approach as problematic because it considers the value of reading as primarily a template search rather than as a heuristic method of a writer reflecting and then writing. However, explicit instruction in re-creating moves that the writer makes within a given text are generally required and, actually, have a time-honored place in the field of writing instruction.

We find it encouraging for writing faculty that four interviewees mentioned **process** as an important aspect of writing. Perhaps this indicates that interdisciplinary contact is affecting attitudes across campus, that attention to the various stages in the reiterative practice of writing is beginning to be accepted as part of the academic culture of faculty members in other disciplines. All interviewees expressed in some way that writing involves both skill (rule-based, fact-based) and art (interpretive/explanatory, clarity), indicating at least some consensus that creating effectively written text is a complex task. Table 2 shows the results of our analysis of what our eight interviewees said about how writing is learned. These results seem far more instructive to us than those related to writing quality because they get at the ideological differences that form the foundation of substantive conflict—and perhaps unexpected convergence—between writing faculty and other faculty across campus.

Table 2. Interview Results Related to How Writing is Learned

Ideological View	Views of How Writing is Learned	Hard/Pure		Hard/Applied		Soft/Applied		Soft/Pure	
		Bio.	CS	Pharm.	Nurs.	Psych.	Mgmt.	Hist.	Classics
Writer-based View	Innate gift (at birth)		X						
	Trial and error (during undergrad or grad program)		X	X					X
Text-based View	Mechanics instruction (in primary/secondary school)	X	X		X				X
	General reading (during primary/secondary school)		X				X	X	X
	Using models (during doctoral program)						X		
Social-interactive View	Feedback and revision (during undergrad, grad, or post-doc program)	X	X			X	X	X	
	Socialization (during primary/secondary school and doctoral program)	X					X		

We found that the more we allowed the faculty to talk about their writing-to-learn ideologies, the more disciplinary stereotypes broke down. For example, Table 1 shows how the computer science faculty member favored a more mechanical approach to writing: rule-based, clear, well-organized, and fact-based. On the surface, then, this colleague's approach to writing seems at odds with the process approach advocated by most writing faculty. However, Table 2 shows that this professor mentioned that learning-to-write is a natural talent (a writer-based ideology), and then later in the interview, he revealed that revising is an important part of learning to write. Thus, his ideology appears, at the end of the interview, to be better aligned with contemporary writing pedagogy than we might expect. Conversely, we might assume that a history professor's learning-to-write ideology would more closely match that of the writing faculty member's. However, our interview with the history professor uncovered an approach that was largely text- and writer-based. This professor states that learning to write effectively is *learning to think and write and communicate in a very simple way so that people will understand what you mean and won't have to guess what your ambiguity is.* Such an approach to writing pedagogy privileges the author and the text and is only rhetorical in the sense that he advocates revision because *You may not get it right the first time, the second time, maybe not the tenth time.*

Writing, from an interdisciplinary perspective, considers and is learned within and through the social interaction implicit in all angles of the rhetorical triangle: between the writer and the audience via the text. A rhetorical perspective values processes such as feedback and revision but extends to social interaction within and across discourse communities. Colleagues who identify with this social interaction model (Nystrand, 1989) are likely to be the easiest for writing faculty to deal with. For

example, when the history professor criticized the discipline of history for being unreceptive to its audience, *you have these people writing about…you know, nuns that are lesbian nun bikers with tattoos, that's such a narrow focus that we lose sight of the big picture*, he appears to be concerned with more than issues of "innate" skill and correctness; he is interested in engaging and "invoking" an audience (in the sense of Ede and Lunsford, 1984), of working within and through the more complex rhetorical situation.

It is somewhat surprising, given our own disciplinary stereotypes, that the biology and management professors expressed more social interactive ideology in their views of learning to write than did other faculty members. Within the ideological constructs of their disciplines, however, this observation is less startling. Both view their disciplines from systems perspectives. For example, the biology professor described her discipline as *about the interrelationship of organisms or individuals or systems on many, many different levels* and identifies the goal of biologists as to *elucidate something that I haven't understood before in a way that I am confident in and in a way that other people can appreciate*. This goal encompasses a complex socially interactive situation where the biologist/writer strives to communicate an idea/message to an audience (either real or evoked) in the context of explaining and understanding an intricately connected environment. Similarly, in describing his field of organizational behavior, the management professor said that he is trying *to give* [managers] *some higher level of comfort that if I structure this way and I behave this way, I'll get this reaction. And it's not an exact science and it's not going to be a hundred percent, but cutting down on the variance is what you're trying to do*. Thus, writing for management is arguably both skill and art that involves a manager performing in certain ways in order to convey a particular message to an audience within a given rhetorical situation.

It is important to note, however, that faculty in most disciplines do not use the same terminology as writing faculty (Fulwiler, 1984) even when describing a similar ideology. For example, the biology professor did not use terms such as *socially interactive* and *communicative context* or *rhetorical situation*. Instead, she described her learning to write for her field as *an apprenticeship system. … I was the apprentice, and I had these journeymen writers who were helping me*. Moreover, in describing how she teaches students to write like other biologists, she did not use terms such as *exposure* or *immersion*, even though she begins teaching students to write by immersing them in the discourse of the discipline: *the first thing that I do is I give them a cluster of papers, and I tell them you have to pull all these things together into less than a page… You have to find a thread that ties them all together, and you have to unite all of these ideas into one paragraph. Because that's how we write.* Thus, she demonstrated the ideas of social interaction and of writing within a complex rhetorical context; she just used different terms to describe them. Our point here is that writing faculty need to engage other faculty in extended dialogue in order to identify and understand commonalities on which to build rapport within interdisciplinary contact zones with hopes of moving toward productive conflict.

For example, a writing faculty member who must work with the nursing professor may at first be dismayed by a forthright assertion like this: *I don't know that I teach a specific writing skill to them. It's an expectation when they come to us. You write, and you write well.* Although this interview was the briefest, lasting some 23 minutes, it offers much information about the professor's commitment to nursing and to teaching. She embraced the nursing school's attention to writing, proudly claiming that *Writing is extremely important. We have writing totally across our curriculum.* Critical thinking and problem-based learning are important in her teaching practices, and writing is one way to have students both engage and demonstrate knowledge. While she seemed focused on "correcting mistakes," she was also leading students through a writing process that is typical of the nursing program. Papers are not just written for one course; they are often started in one class and carried

over to subsequent courses, growing in complexity with added research and practical knowledge. These activities are not so distant from the process and socially interactive models of writing instruction that many writing faculty value. The reiterative curriculum can provide common ground for meaningful dialogue, providing a productive base that contrasts starkly with the initial bald-faced assertion.

Conclusions

We have argued that, although the importance of dialogue among stakeholders in any interdisciplinary writing program effort is well established, simply *creating* a forum for dialogic communication may not be enough to assure success. Because of the strong history of interdisciplinary conflict, we see such dialogue within the context of a contact zone and argue that prior work on culture provides a foundation for dealing with/in disciplinary contact zones. In particular, we believe that the "culture shock" of writing faculty working across the curriculum can be averted by helping writing teachers develop a better understanding of colleagues in other disciplines and their attitudes toward writing.

Within the contact zones of WAC, we must resist both colonizing and being colonized, opting instead to create spaces for real dialogue. We must enter such zones fully aware that our epistemologies will differ from those of our colleagues, perhaps especially those from other disciplines, and we must be willing to engage in dialogue to order to uncover rhetorical commonplaces between or among our ways of knowing. While our study is small, our interview data suggest that when writing faculty limit interdisciplinary discussion only to characteristics of good writing, discipline stereotypes are reinforced and true dialogue is restricted. In contrast, when writing faculty discuss learning-to-write strategies with faculty in other disciplines, the results reveal commonalities about writing ideology. The point is not to determine whether most members of one discipline hold certain beliefs about writing and more importantly learning to write but rather to encourage writing faculty to move beyond the customary explanation and categorization of what constitutes good writing and to move instead toward recognizing how situated both writing and learning to write are.

By learning about others' values, particularly regarding how they define and practice writing, we can move beyond notions of interdisciplinary writing specialists either intruding on or succumbing to disciplinary expertise, claiming instead ways of enriching WAC studies, extending WAC initiatives, and forming interdisciplinary networks for pedagogical expertise. This learning stems first from an active awareness that, although disciplines do differ, difference does not mean communication stasis; second, from knowledge that these "other" disciplines may not be as different as we assume; and finally from skills that writing faculty can use, namely engaging dialogue beyond good writing characteristics. Extending the conversation in the contact zone to include ideologies of learning-to-write can create far more meaningful discussion about interdisciplinary writing by blurring the cultural boundaries.

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