



## Afterword

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While the interest and activity in writing research is global,  
the responses are local.

—*Bazerman, et al., 2009, p. ix*

I want to say a few words about what I think are the three main strengths of this collection. First, the collection follows a trajectory set up and supported by some of the best researchers in the world; second, it does not take lightly the implications for English-language dominance in global contexts; third, all of these chapters honor those global contexts in admirable ways, even when collaborating across continents.

Following the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) Summer Institute at Stanford University (US) in 2006, Cecelia Hawkins, who was then posted at the Texas A&M writing center in Doha, Qatar, invited me to visit Education City. While I was there, Hawkins hosted writing teachers and writing center/learning center directors from the region; the outcome, after spending two days talking together, was the start of the Middle East-North Africa Writing Center Alliance (MENAWCA). While president of IWCA in 2007, I was privileged to recognize MENAWCA as an official regional organization within IWCA. This moment opened up opportunities for many of us to join groups from all over the world, not as the writing center experts from the United States, but as true partners in an effort to create a global community of writing center leaders. Terry Zawacki's keynote address at the MENAWCA conference in 2012 is described in this book's introduction as another such moment of opportunity and awareness, moving us toward developing more intentional research and publication and thus nurturing a global writing studies movement. At the same time, researchers like Charles Bazerman and others were creating a larger space for this larger conversation through conferences such as Writing Research Across Borders and through collections of research, such as *Traditions of Writing Research* (2010) and *International Advances in Writing Research: Cultures, Places, Measures* (2012). Granted, this summary is based on my experiences with these places and people, conferences and texts; I am sure hundreds of researchers are right now contributing to the growing literature on teaching writing in "global contexts"

(Lillis & Curry, 2010).

One productive result of all the work outlined above is found in the book you are reading, where a particular research stance has emerged, one grounded in valuing all the varied linguistic skills student writers come with, first and foremost, and one that regards language negotiation as pedagogical, not problematic. Included in this stance is deeper engagement with methods and participants, preventing, as Christiane Donahue (2009) warned, “‘internationalizing’ efforts that remain stuck in a-historical, a-contextual, and highly partial modes of intellectual tourism” (p. 236). The researchers here have acted as responsible global citizens, embodying a “rhetoric of respect” (Rousculp, 2014) as they engage with communities of writers in the Middle East-North Africa region. Perhaps some have even achieved a level of engagement Suresh Canagarajah (2013) calls “radically other-centered” (p. 41).

The researchers here (clearly following the lead of the editors’ sensibilities) avoid colonizing moves in their interactions by foregrounding over a dozen different contexts and acknowledging that the “imposition of English on non-native speakers of English has raised the issues of linguistic and cultural hegemony” (Uysal, Chapter 2, this volume). So while we will learn about new classroom strategies or new language policies, this collection emphasizes that making knowledge through interaction with this text and then in our own communities requires that we not lose sight of context. In *Decolonizing Educational Research*, Leigh Patel (2016) explains this responsibility:

In addition to being answerable to learning and knowledge, educational research is answerable to context. . . . However, being answerable to context does not only mean attending to the historical and ongoing destruction of colonialism. Additionally, it means attending to the ways that humans . . . engage in learning. . . . Being answerable to context dynamically helps to illuminate what kinds of knowledges are important. Projects of systemic social change cannot pursue knowledge without regard to the context they are trying to change. (p. 78)

Most writing centers and composition classrooms in the US share something in common: the staff and students are predominately white English speakers. In some cases, it matters little to an institution that this scene prevails in spite of amazing diversity within our student populations. Unfortunately, in the US many see “non-native” speakers as a growing problem and not a linguistic gift. In the MENA region, writing specialists have moved way beyond U.S. discussions of EFL, EAP, ESL, and the like. This recursive

discussion in the US “keeps us stuck in old thinking that is tied to an ideology few sociolinguistic scholars would still espouse” (Nebel, Chapter 1, this volume). Those who work most often with student writers (in classrooms or writing centers) need to cultivate superdiversity if we are not already right smack in the middle of it.

Among the new social formations are contexts of learning in higher education where there is now a mixing of people who geographically, socioeconomically, and linguistically might otherwise never have come together. Recognizing the challenges and opportunities of this phenomenon allows us to explore previously held constructs in a new and fluid space that should necessarily invite a shift in thinking to meet the complex characteristics of context and time. (Nebel, Chapter 1, this volume)

Nebel’s message is an important one for us to hear, especially in U.S. higher education. Uysal pushes us even further, beyond classroom teaching, to consider the impact of a global English imperative on scholarly writers from the MENA region. As more and more writing specialists work with faculty writers, we will need a fuller understanding of the evolving publishing demands and markets and what those markets are saying about language in this “post-monolingual world” (Nebel, Chapter 1, this volume). The extent of co-researching/co-authoring in this collection is remarkable too, and I can only imagine the impact each individual researcher made on their research teams in terms of language exchanges and sharing diverse ways of knowing. In the midst of research collaboration, Theado, Johnson, Highly, and Omar uncovered hidden assets by working across institutions: “Merging pedagogical preferences and practices produced new instructional approaches that better suit [our] teaching contexts” (Chapter 7, this volume). Many researchers in this collection have taken admirable risks in crossing transnational borders to improve curriculum and pedagogy. They have designed studies to learn directly from faculty and students how the tension between teaching content and teaching language (especially in those English-medium universities) influences the perceptions of academic challenge (Miller & Pessoa). It may surprise some that the very same issues we talk about in the U.S. context are being studied in the MENA region: student preparedness for academic literacy, plagiarism, the value of creative and reflective writing, and more.

How will this collection impact me, someone who has visited the region and has some understanding of the contexts and issues? What I am now noticing, as an editor of *The Writing Center Journal* and as a professor who is de-

veloping a new graduate seminar called Composing Leadership, is that I need to take this book into that work. The writing center folks who read the journal and the graduate students who take the seminar will benefit from seeing the scope of research projects undertaken by the authors in this collection. They need to see how integrative the thinking is about writing in multiple settings; and they need to see how collaboration across institutions and continents works. And I realized that while thinking about possible readings for the seminar (designed to prepare future writing program administrators, writing-across-the-curriculum program directors, and writing center directors), I had been eagerly waiting for the moment when the first big wave of research from this region would hit our shores. In addition, the faculty fellows who work on our Writing Enriched Curriculum project will be reading several chapters from this collection to inform their understandings of WAC/WID models in very different settings.

Finally, what I have been most impressed with is that each chapter contextualizes its own political landscape, from the locations where language policy and language-learning pedagogies are mediated, to the curricular, where critiques of aims and practices are designed to respond to particular contexts. Communities of writers are always communities in context; I have come to believe all writing *is* community writing. Collective efforts, such as this edited edition, have contributed to supporting and recognizing writing researchers from all over the world while furthering a stance that seems especially important for those of us working from the west to take—that resisting the western, Americentric, Anglocentric, or Anglophone influence is achieved through understanding global communities in context. Based on the evidence presented by these researchers, I believe we do share these commonplaces: that writing research is educational research; that writing is potentially transformative for student writers (as well as for writers of research); and that we study writers and writing to acknowledge and ultimately improve the contexts in which writing is taught and produced. In *Emerging Writing Research from the Middle East–North Africa Region*, readers can find evidence that these shared commonplaces, as valued within contexts, will bring us closer to knowing each other.

## References

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