

- I. Title:** *Train the Tutor-ESL Workshops: Strengthening resources for Chinese international students, their instructors, writing consultants and peer tutors.*
- II. Audience:** Peer tutors and writing consultants at campus writing centers; faculty who supervise these centers; English/English as a Second Language instructors; writing faculty; university faculty who increasingly encounter international students in general, and Chinese students in particular.
- II. Goals:** Writing Center tutor training; faculty development.  
To engage university communities in learning more about Chinese students who matriculate at US campuses. To support faculty, peer tutors and writing consultants who teach/tutor or encounter Chinese students on campus.
- Understandings/student learning outcomes:**
- a. The university community will engage in learning more about Chinese students who matriculate at US universities to better understand and address their learning needs.
  - b. Training sessions provide student-centered learning by intentionally focusing on ESL needs of our international students.
  - c. Educators and tutors will learn about their international students' educational and cultural backgrounds and better understand their language/cultural issues.
  - d. The university community will understand how and why differences in culture and academic preparation affect academic writing.
  - e. Those on the "front lines" will learn approaches that can assist ESL students in general, and Chinese students in particular, with their academic writing needs.
  - f. Faculty, writing center consultants and peer tutors will be able to identify common skill area challenges so they can anticipate and predict, and ultimately help students of other languages become self-corrective, self-sufficient, and more proficient writers of English.
  - g. These sessions will contribute to the social growth of American students by building cultural bridges. Tutoring students from other countries nurtures a better understanding of cultures and prepares students to lead and serve as global citizens.
- III. Essential questions:**  
Below are some essential questions gathered from UDM students and writing faculty. (These include "frequently asked questions" gathered prior to and during past *Train the Tutor: ESL* sessions at UDM.)
- We have seen a dramatic increase in students from China on campus. What are the circumstances that lead them to study in the US? Why is international enrollment growing so rapidly?
  - What are some of the differences in learning style, writing and classroom culture?
  - Is writing a major research paper required before students reach the university?
  - How is the education system in general different in China than in the US?
  - What are the linkages between classroom culture and academic writing?
  - Is plagiarism understood universally, and are the various contexts for plagiarism the same from one country to the next?

- I've heard that Chinese students begin studying English in the third grade. Why are so many students in my English course exhibiting basic grammatical problems in their academic writing?
- What are some common challenges of Chinese writers?
- I notice that a common error is with the use of gender (a girl named Ginger is identified as "he" throughout the paper). I reviewed a paper with the article "the" inserted before every noun (even when it did not belong there). How can I not focus on a lower order element (like grammar) when these errors are strung throughout the paper?
- What are the higher order elements to focus on when critiquing a paper and offering advice? How do you suggest I negotiate between the two?
- How does a student's native language affect second-language acquisition?
- What kinds of language interference can I expect to see in a paper written by a Chinese writer?
- What are some tips to help tutees in a ½ hour to hour-long tutoring session?

## **VI. Learning Activities:**

**Writing Center/Learning Center director and ESL instructional staff officiate these sessions.**

- Discuss intake processes and procedures of the writing lab or tutoring center.
- Have peer tutors/consultants/faculty provide comments, concerns, questions prior to the presentation. Select a few of these questions to address during the presentation.
- View and discuss Power point presentation: *Train the Tutor Workshop: Strengthening resources for Chinese ESL students, their instructors and peer tutors.*
- Breakout session: role-play tutor/consultant and tutee. Switch papers and partners.
- Critique and use tips to help "tutees" improve their papers during these sessions.
- Optional: Preview and discuss "Writing Across Borders" (url below), have students visit website to review frequently asked questions prior to viewing.

## **VII. Supporting Materials:**

Lara Wasner's Powerpoint Presentation: *Train the Tutor ESL Workshops: Strengthening resources for Chinese ESL students, their instructors, writing consultants and peer tutors.*

### References Cited

Internet links:

<http://opendoors.iienetwork.org>

<http://www.stanford.edu/~pgbovine/chinese-english-mistakes.htm>

<http://cwl.oregonstate.edu/writing-across-borders>

## **PROJECT NARRATIVE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE), "educational and cultural exchanges are the cornerstone of U.S. public diplomacy and an integral component of foreign policy." In its annual report on international education, *Open Doors 2009 Report on International Exchange online* (<http://opendoors.iienetwork.org>), IIE reported growing international student enrollment as a worldwide trend, with international enrollment in US universities in 2009 at an all-time high

(671,616 international students are enrolled at US colleges and universities), representing an increase of 8% in 2008/09. New enrollments are up by 16% nationwide, the largest percentage increase in international enrollments since 1980. China is the second leading sending country (up by 21%: total of 98,510).

During a turbulent US economy when colleges and universities are raising tuition and fees, many US institutions face declining domestic enrollment. The fight to maintain domestic enrollment at private four-year universities is exacerbated by growth surges at community colleges – an affordable option for families struggling to make ends meet as their college-age students head off to college. Community colleges offer the first two years of college at a fraction of the cost of four-year institutions. Both public and private US universities are actively recruiting international students, hiring third party recruiters/agencies in China, and signing partnership agreements with Chinese universities to address enrollment shortfalls. The largest growth in joint degree programs has been private universities entering joint partnerships with Chinese universities in what both institutions find to be a win-win partnership. Benefits to Chinese universities include the quickening of education reform – a movement that infuses western educational philosophies into Chinese higher education curricula. As part of education reform, new “National Curriculum Standards” that mirror “western” educational models, philosophies and best practices, are being implemented in schools throughout China. China’s Higher Education Institutions (HEI’s) are touting “student centered” education that encourages students to be “innovative and creative” in addition to “eastern” lecture-style traditions and rote memorization. China’s Ministry of Education is at the helm of these plans and policy changes in education, as China’s reforming and opening policies transform a closed society into an open one, and as it jockeys for position as the global leader in education. Although plans are in place to open several new universities in strategic areas of the country, a shortage of seats now remains in China’s HEIs. There are currently 20.21 million college and university students and 24.76 million general secondary students looking forward to graduating from high school -- a potential shortage of roughly 4 million seats. International recruiting provides an option for some Chinese graduates to seek education outside of China. Many of these students have studied English since primary school, and so seek an education in an English-speaking country. Many come from families who are part of China’s growing middle class and can afford to study abroad. Some students even choose to bypass China’s national entrance exam (which determines their college eligibility) as an option to become college educated. Even if they fail the national test, students now have options abroad.

For US colleges and universities that seek to internationalize college campuses -- and for those colleges and universities struggling with enrollment -- looking to college students outside the US remains a solution to strengthen enrollment during tough economic times..

University of Detroit Mercy in Detroit, Michigan (a member of the Association of Jesuit

Colleges and Universities) is part of this nationwide trend, seeing a dramatic increase in Chinese student enrollment since 2007-08, mainly due to joint partnerships and through the hiring of a recruiter in mainland China. Although Chinese students (from mainland China) now comprise the largest population of international students on campus (aside from Canadian students), English placement test scores amongst this population have been consistently lower than other international populations. All international students who apply to UDM are required to demonstrate English competency using a standardized test, and those who fall below are certain benchmark are required to enroll in – and complete -- intensive English prior to beginning their programs of study (either on a part-time or full-time basis as determined by placement). However, many English language learners require ongoing ESL support. In order to keep pace with the growing international enrollment, and the students' ongoing language needs, university programs are beginning to work together to implement a web of English language support that includes tutor training, faculty and advisor training as well as an international student orientation programs. As a means to improve academic writing (and grades) throughout the year, students are encouraged to seek help in UDM's Writing Center (which provides scheduled ½ hour consultation sessions with peer tutors, many of whom are English majors) and UDM's Learning Center provides hour-long peer tutoring in English. Visits have increased several-fold within the last two years. According to UDM's Writing Center Director, up to 60% of students visiting the center each week during academic year 2009-10 spoke Chinese as their first language. Students are allowed to – and often make -- multiple appointments per day, which often overwhelms tutors.

In 2008-2009, University of Detroit Mercy's Language & Cultural Training Department began implementing ESL tutor training to address the surge in international students and their English needs. These sessions enhance tutoring intake and performance, address linkages between language and culture, and identify commonly-made mistakes. Part I addresses trends in international enrollment, provides a “snapshot” of students and cultural overview, addresses differences in educational preparation and classroom culture, and identifies ESL common skill area challenges. Part II gives tips for handling ESL intake and is largely contextualized: students review the common grammatical mistakes made by speakers of other languages (in this case, Chinese), learn to anticipate these errors, and role-play during a 60 minute-session using authentic writing samples and applying newly-learned tips.

Surveys revealed that trained tutors can apply learned strategies in a practical context. Focusing on relevant differences between the two written languages may help tutors predict and understand why Chinese students repeat critical mistakes, helping those tutored become self-corrective, self-sufficient, and more proficient writers of English.

In Fall 2009-10 and 2010-11, writing teachers (both full-time and adjunct faculty) also participated in part one of the training. Surveys indicated that the linkages between culture,

academic preparation and language – as well as understanding and anticipating common problems -- were important to share with faculty at large. After participating in the Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar in China, I revamped the training, adding a “student snapshot”, fast facts, and integrating many facets of culture I learned about firsthand (through lectures, conversations, and observations) while I was in China. By further elaborating on academic preparation, I hope to help faculty better understand who their Chinese students are -- and their differences in learning style. I have run two tutor training sessions since, presented part one to the College of Liberal Arts & Education’s Council of Chairs, and have been invited to present at an upcoming Brown Bag Lunch focusing on retention. Facilitating understanding will help our university – and others who teach large numbers of Chinese students – know our students and help improve our international students’ learning experience. The benefits are multifold and speak to US universities’ missions to internationalize in many ways.

**Benefits:**

- By intentionally focusing on our international students’ needs we contribute to the social growth of students by building cultural bridges (tutoring students from other countries nurtures a better understanding of cultures, and prepares students to become better US and global citizens).
- Empower tutors to help instead of “tuning out”: Handling students with ESL needs can be frustrating and time-consuming without the right ESL-centered communication tools. Better communication helps identify specific problems, offers immediate help and produces better long-term results.
- Provide opportunities to remediate severely ESL- challenged students: Center directors would know how to identify and refer struggling ESL students for further language training.
- Tells a “success story”: Chinese students would report back to friends and family the quality support they’re receiving at UDM.
- Positively impacts international enrollment and retention: Good academic support helps foster a good relationship with partner universities and their students (fewer students will flunk out due to ESL problems that can be remediated with the right support); provides potential for increased Chinese student enrollment (and overall international student enrollment).

**COURSE OF INSTRUCTION**

**Part One – Powerpoint presentation**

**Audience: tutors, writing center faculty and faculty-at-large)**

- Fast facts
- Student snapshot
- Language & cultural linkages
- Elements of writing
- Commonly-made errors
- Tutor tips

**Approximate time: 1 hour (presentation review)**  
**10-20 minutes (discussion and Q & A)**

## **Part Two**

**Audience (mandatory for writing consultants and peer tutors)**

1. Pair off in teams of 2 to review the section on Chinese Speakers in Learner English. Each team will select a sub-section (starting with *Orthography: reading and writing, p. 313*) to review. Each team will explain the differences (contained in their sub-sections) with the other tutors. As a group, categorize these into higher and lower order elements.
2. Peer tutors/writing consultants will work in pairs to “role-play” a tutoring sessions. Center director distributes samples of students’ writing (*with names removed, if using authentic papers!*). Tutors will review papers with students, assess them for higher and lower order elements, and make recommendations accordingly.

**ANTICIPATING THE ERROR HELPS US/OUR STUDENTS CORRECT THE ERROR.**

Remind tutors to do the following:

- Review the Tip Sheet
- Review the common English mistakes made by Chinese speakers. (visit Philip Guo’s website: <http://www.stanford.edu/~pgbovine/chinese-english-mistakes.htm>)
- Remember to focus on higher, then lower-order elements.

**Approximate time: 1.5 hours**

**Optional (but encouraged): Review of Writing Across Cultures – 30 minutes**

**Homework: visit website and review frequently-asked questions – 30 minutes**

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