

Writing in Central and Eastern Europe: Stakeholders and Directions in Initiating Change

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Abstract: This paper investigates the development of writing initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, an area where prior to 1989, writing in universities played a very minor role. Using data gathered from eight institutions that currently have writing programs of some sort, I identify three typical paths writing initiatives have taken. I show how the identity of the stakeholders involved in the introduction of such initiatives has resulted in writing being taught largely in English as a second language, and the teaching of writing in local languages has been widely neglected. Finally, I discuss possible measures to remedy this situation.

It is an aim of the CCCC National Language Policy "[t]o support programs that assert the legitimacy of native languages and dialects and ensure that proficiency in one's mother tongue will not be lost" (1992). While such a national policy focuses by definition on the US, where English is the principal language of the state and education, it should be even more self-evident that the great global power and reach of the English language should not repress the legitimacy of local languages or endanger *academic* literacy in other countries, where English is *not* the national language. This is not always obviously the case. Indeed, writers such as Phillipson (2001) and Skutnabb-Kangas (1999) have broadly argued that commercial, capitalist, post-imperialist forces drive a machine the main objective of which is to eradicate as many as possible of the world's languages from as many spheres as possible—including academe—to the benefit of English.

While much of the debate that Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas contribute to focuses around the teaching of English to speakers of other languages, the teaching of writing/composition¹ outside English-speaking contexts has received rather less scholarly attention. Much of the recent discussion on the "internationalization" of writing focuses on the internationalization of US WAC initiatives to other English-speaking contexts (e.g. Monroe, 2002; Emerson, MacKay, Funnell, & MacKay, 2002; Anson, forthcoming) or ensuring the rights and representation of speakers of English as a second language (e.g. Canagarajah, 2002; Lu, 2004). Indeed Zegers and Wilkinson argue that the internationalization of education *de facto* "implies education through English" (2005, p. 1). The issue of introducing or promoting writing and writing support in students' own languages or in the state language of education has received rather less attention at international level. An exception to this, Donahue (2009) has pointed out that in France, for example, a strong theoretical tradition exists that not only provides a foundation for writing, but indeed may be a source of scholarship from which US practitioners can learn, in other words that internationalization can entail movement of ideas in directions other than from the US outwards. The same is true to an extent of several other Western European countries (cf. Bräuer, 2002, regarding Germany), where writing is used extensively in education and where writing support in one form or another not necessarily resembling US models is growing.

Across the Disciplines
A Journal of Language, Learning and Academic Writing

wac.colostate.edu/atd
ISSN 554-8244

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This is much less true, however, of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (hereafter referred to as "the region" or CEE/fSU), where the development of writing as a taught subject is relatively new. Indeed until 1989, in most countries in the region there was effectively "no writing" in the sense that not only was writing not taught, it was only rarely used as a form of assessment or student activity in university courses, other than in the form of note-taking during lectures. Until then, the principle form of assessment in this part of the world was by oral exam. There was often a piece of writing prior to graduation referred to as a "thesis", or in the Soviet Union as a "referat"—but it was typically a summative literature review, the purpose of which was to demonstrate the student had completed and understood a certain amount of reading. It was largely assumed that students' ability to write this piece depended on their knowledge of the studied texts, not their writing skills. In keeping with the pattern of "continental" writing described by Rienecker and Stray Jørgensen (2003), writing was seen as an inherent ability one either had or didn't; there was no perception of the need to teach it, not least because it only became important once one had left the role of student and become a professional academic.

The fall of communism saw a huge influx of all things western into the countries and the education systems of the former communist block, a trend—and an ensuing regional-transnational conflict—that Zimmermann (2007) has outlined admirably from the point of view of women's and gender studies. Writing initiatives also began to appear in various forms, however, to date there has been no analysis of how these initiatives developed or why, or any consideration as to whether their development has been optimal.

As Donahue (2009) has lamented, the process of internationalization in writing studies is largely a process of transfer from the US to the rest of the world (see also Canagarajah, 2002, p. 44). As in any case of transfer of ideas from the centre to the periphery, those ideas may be transplanted into the new context with little effort to adapt them, or indeed with every effort to preserve their "purity" from local corruption—one of the origins of Zimmermann's regional-transnational conflict. Alternatively, they may be *translated*, that is, consciously or unconsciously, the original idea may be reshaped to suit the local context or culture and owned by the users in that context. The interests of the stakeholders involved in any process of academic innovation, both locals and outsiders, inevitably determine to a large extent how that innovation develops, consolidates and is institutionalized, or not. Because writing is a part of language, because ideas about writing come from countries where the dominant language is English, because the stakeholders from the center are often concerned with the promotion of English as such (cf. Phillipson, 2001), because those stakeholders rarely speak the languages of the periphery and therefore communicate with those who speak English, namely teachers of English as a foreign language, for all these reasons, the internationalization of writing is complicated in particular ways that merit further investigation.

In this paper, I argue that the identity of the stakeholders involved in the introduction of writing initiatives in the region has led to an internationalization whereby although the use of written tasks for assessment in local languages is gradually beginning to increase, academic writing is taught only through English. I suggest that in many situations this is suboptimal. I identify three typical developmental paths of writing initiatives in the CEE/fSU region and draw conclusions about the nature of their development, showing how the identity of the initiators impacts on the nature of transplant or translation. Finally, I discuss the challenge of implementing effective writing initiatives in local languages.

Profile of the Initiatives

The present research draws on data formally gathered from eight writing initiatives in six countries,^[2] supplemented with personal knowledge and informal data from my work as a consultant with universities in the region. These eight are not the only writing programmes in the region, indeed many state university English departments offer some form of English writing courses. Writing programs in American-style universities in Europe are rather fewer. Examples of the third group I identify, initiatives started by local academics, are very rare.

It is beyond the scope of this article to give a full overview of all eight initiatives investigated, nor indeed is this my purpose. For this reason, in this section I focus mainly on one US-style university, Central European University (CEU) with brief comparisons to other similar institutions. I then discuss more broadly the second group, state university English departments. Finally I focus particularly on two of the three initiatives started by local faculty.

US-Style Universities

I define a US-style university as one where, as well all courses being taught in English, the university will have some of the following: US accreditation, US charter, US-style curriculum, US grading system, a liberal arts approach, and some faculty from the US. Central European University is a graduate university of social sciences founded in 1991, with some 1540 current registered students in fifteen departments ranging from International Relations and Environmental Sciences to Legal Studies and History. The language of education is exclusively English, and the university is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education; more recently it has also become accredited by the Hungarian state. Both the student body and faculty are of very diverse origin. The former comprises 97 different nationalities, with largest single national group (Hungarians) accounting for only 20%, followed by Romanians (17%), the USA (6%), Russians (5%), Serbians, Georgians, Bulgarians and Ukrainians (4% each), and Germans, Turks, Slovaks and Azerbaijanis (2% each). The nearly 250 faculty come from 33 different countries, notably Hungary (40%), North America and the UK (20%), and Germany (8%), as well as France, Romania and Austria. While the diversity of CEU is especially strong, the Lithuanian Christian College (LCC) University and the American University in Bulgaria also exhibit very international student and faculty profiles. The main difference between CEU and these two institutions is that the former is a graduate university while the latter offer only undergraduate studies.

CEU, like other "American model" universities (cf. Anson, forthcoming; Schaub, 2003), is based on the idea of exporting US-style education to the rest of the world, and writing has been part of that almost since the founding of the university, for several reasons. First, about 90% students are not native speakers of English and therefore are expected to have problems coping with education in English, including writing. Secondly, the lack of writing as an assessment form in the region prior to 1989 meant that students had little experience of formulating ideas in writing even in their own language, and had difficulties completing the assignments their often US-educated professors set them. A consultancy commissioned by the university in 1996 marked a shift away from general English language teaching and a focus on specialized writing support, though the "Language Teaching Center" was not renamed "Center for Academic Writing" until 2003. Many of the staff of the Center have backgrounds in applied linguistics and ESL rather than English literature or Rhetoric.

The support offered by the Center for Academic Writing combines taught writing courses, individual writing consultations and collaboration between writing center staff and faculty in the disciplines both to help students meet their expectations and to guide faculty in providing the most effective and explicit assignments. In this sense, it fits the model that is often called writing support, which is characterized by two features: (1) specialized writing instructors take responsibility for the teaching of writing rather than faculty in the disciplines, and (2) these instructors work closely with faculty in the disciplines rather than independently, as is usually the case with first year composition courses. In this sense, CEU again differs significantly from American University in Bulgaria, which adheres closely to a first year comp model, but to a much lesser extent from LCC University, which changed four years ago from a first year comp approach to a more writing-in-the-disciplines approach, responding to perceived needs.

State University English Departments

It may be that significant differences existed between universities within and across the countries of the former communist block prior to the advent of communism, however, my own extensive experience in communist Hungary, Bulgaria, Soviet Estonia and Czechoslovakia suggests that communism was remarkably powerful in eliminating differences in university education not only between institutions but between nation states. One Czech academic, reading in 1991 my master's dissertation on reforming English teacher training in Estonia, written in 1990, commented that the weaknesses of the (Soviet) Estonian university education system were identical to those of the Czechoslovak system, in spite of the completely different history of the two countries prior to World War II.

From 1989 onwards, the British Council and various US organizations, including Fulbright, USIS and some US universities, were extensively involved in promoting the transfer of ESL teaching methodology, and somewhat later of writing as a part of English for academic purposes. During the 1990s there was scarcely a state university in Central Europe that did not have a British Council English language teaching specialist posted to its English department to assist in curricular reform. Being directly or indirectly involved in this process for four years in Bulgaria, Estonia and the Czech Republic, my assessment is that communication between these experts, who were seen and saw themselves as a team, revealed many similarities across institutions and very few differences. Where there were differences, these were typically the product of individual personalities that dominated English departments, whether these were more receptive or resistant to change. It is also true to an extent, in all disciplines, that flagship universities (such as Moscow State University and Baku State University) were and are highly conservative, while smaller, less influential universities (eg. the Azerbaijani University of Languages) have been much more keen to reinvent themselves and embrace innovation.

In the English departments of these state universities where foreign experts were active, like in the US-Style universities, teaching was generally in English, though certain mandatory general courses unconnected to the study of English were and still are taught in the official state language. Writing was a part of the teaching of English as a foreign language—that is, students were seen as being taught to write *English*, not to *write* as such. Composition, as it is understood in the States, was therefore not really identifiable in the early stages. Even now, because of the greater influence of the British Council, academic writing tends more to draw on theoretical approaches associated with applied linguistics, such as genre analysis (cf. Swales, Johns, Hyland), while concepts such as WAC and WiD are little known. Of the universities I examined, only Lviv in Ukraine possesses a writing center, principally as it was set up through collaboration with the University of Oregon. I am not aware of writing centers in any other state university English departments.

Initiatives in State Universities Outside English Departments

The three final initiatives I examine—Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia, Babes Bolyai University in Cluj, Romania and the Centre for Social Sciences at Tbilisi State University in Georgia—have all been significantly influenced in their development by Central European University. In Bratislava and Cluj, writing programs were set up by CEU graduates; in Tbilisi, I made several consultancy visits to help set up writing programs, working with local academics and administrators. Because of CEU's focus on the social sciences, all three initiatives are run by academics with backgrounds in these disciplines. In Bratislava, the language of the academic writing course, which is taught at graduate level, is English. While the university does offer some other graduate courses in English, notably as part of this graduate program, the official language of the university is Slovak. Babes Bolyai, which was the object of a merger of a Hungarian language university and a Romanian language one during the communist period, operates in several languages, offering 105 specializations in Romanian, 52 in Hungarian, 13 in German and four in English (Babes Bolyai, 2010). The academic writing course was initially taught in Romanian, as its founder, political scientist Romana Careja is a Romanian speaker, though since 2006 it has been offered both in Romanian and in

English. At Tbilisi State University Centre for Social Sciences, an academic writing course was initially introduced into the graduate program in English, as students were required to write a final research project in English. Subsequently an undergraduate writing program in Georgian was initiated. The syllabus and theoretical underpinning of courses in all three universities is heavily influenced by the approach at CEU, in that it is largely driven by genre analysis and writing in the disciplines.

The Interaction of Language and Change

Two interrelated issues can be identified across the region: choice of language, and the identity of the initiators of change. Because of their educational, disciplinary and cultural background, agents of change who introduce academic writing courses in the local language do so in a rather different way from those who introduce English writing courses. I discuss the implications of this below.

Choice of Language

Rarely have academic writing courses been *literally* translated into other languages, Babes Bolyai (Romanian), and the Tbilisi undergraduate course (Georgian) being the only ones I am aware of (I recently learnt of the existence of a basic composition course taught in Russian to first year economists at Samara University of Aeronautics but have not been able to learn more). In American-style universities, English is the official language of the institution and the language that permits internationalization, allowing these institutions to draw students from beyond the borders of the nation state they are located in—a requirement that is essential to their mission and usually to their financial survival. In state institutions, most writing programs are housed in English departments due to the history of methodological innovations in English as a foreign language. External stakeholders' interests thus led to the institutionalization of writing as a part of English language teaching. In the case of the British Council, this is very much a matter of policy in that it is part of the Council's role to "promote the UK as a global centre for education, knowledge, skills and creativity [and to] build relationships that strengthen the UK's position in these areas" (British Council, 2009; see also Phillipson, 1992, 2001).

So why did writing happen in the students' own language in Tbilisi and Cluj? The most obvious reason, particularly in Tbilisi, is that such writing as students needed to do as part of their courses (and my recent communication with Georgian academics suggests this is increasing) was in Georgian. As most students outside English departments have very low level of English proficiency, this is inevitable, and even if students did master English it would be somehow perverse to teach them in English in preparation for writing in Georgian. In some countries in the former Soviet Union, even in English departments, many students enter undergraduate studies with a proficiency in English barely adequate to follow a meaningful writing course in that language. In Cluj, with the improving level of students' English, since 2006 the course has been offered both in Romanian and English, the latter for the benefit of those students who take courses taught in English and those who plan to continue their studies in English-medium universities, and there has been significant interest in this option. Whether this will lead to a decline in the popularity of the Romanian course remains to be seen.

The second reason that contributed to the setting up of writing programs in the local language is less immediately obvious, namely that the initiators were not teachers of English but in both cases social scientists. (In Tbilisi, I as consultant supported this plan, and inadequate student English made the alternative impossible, but in other cases, a consultant might tip the scales against the instincts of the local initiators.) This brings us to the second point, namely the impact of the initiators on the development of writing projects.

Initiators and How They Work

As mentioned above, by far the most common initiators of writing programs are "foreign experts", both in the case of American-style institutions, and in most state university English departments. In state universities, these foreign experts are typically teachers of English as a foreign language, though in the case of LCC and Lviv they were US writing specialists with an English literature/Rhetoric background.

My research suggests that programs initiated by "foreign experts" are more likely to experiment with a range of western approaches. LCC University changed several years ago from a liberal arts first year composition approach to a more WID approach (Jen Stewart, personal communication, July 2006). Vilnius English department also experimented with 'new rhetoric', process writing and genre-based approaches (Laima Erika Katkuvienė, personal communication, May 8, 2008). My informant at Szeged justified the approach there by drawing on writing theory (E. Barat, personal communication, April 8, 2008). CEU has adapted its approach to its European, graduate context, developing a theoretical underpinning for its way of working (cf. Harbord, 2003). The people who teach in this context are informed about writing theory and are able to adapt and translate ideas.

In Slovakia, Romania and Georgia, the instigators of writing initiatives are social scientists. In all three cases, these are alumni or faculty of the institution who have studied at American universities, in the case of Bratislava and Cluj, at CEU. They return home with the desire to set up social science programs comparable to the ones they have been through, and they see academic writing as a necessary part of that, so students can do the writing assignments. What is interesting is that apart from the literal translation into the local language, these people do not adapt courses to the local context, they transplant them. The current teacher in the Cluj program, Cosmin Marian put it tellingly:

...our department had in the past visiting or Fulbright professors that used to teach this course... They developed a pattern and... I try to stay as close with the models that are accepted in the academic and research community in political sciences as possible. (personal communication, April 2, 2008)

In other words, the agenda here is the preservation of the purity of the model from possible local dilution or corruption. One of my master's students who studied at Cluj before coming to CEU commented, "the syllabus is the same, just in Romanian." This similarity is not entirely surprising, given that Romana Careja, the founder of the initiative, studied at CEU eleven years ago and was taught academic writing by me personally. On leaving CEU, Romana expressed a desire to set up a writing program in her home university on her return, which she must have done directly, as the program at Cluj has been in existence for ten years. The syllabus at Babes Bolyai would thus appear to be a carefully preserved version of her course syllabus at CEU.

One could claim, and the argument has been made by Peter Dral, co-initiator of the program in Bratislava, that the courses taught there and in Cluj, based on the CEU model, which is informed by both WID and genre theory, and specifically tailored to the needs of social scientists, do not need rethinking or adaptation to the local context (personal communication, April 11, 2008). Certainly, the students who receive the course in Bratislava are very similar in profile to those who come from Bratislava to Budapest to take the same course as part of an MA in a social science at CEU. This may be true; however, there remains a hazy boundary between social scientists' assessment that a course may not need adapting, or indeed *should not* be adapted to the local context (see Marian above), and their own questionable ability to adapt syllabus and teaching methods effectively in keeping with best practices in the field of writing theory. The team of social scientists I worked with developing the writing program in Tbilisi did indeed lack confidence regarding teaching methodology and curriculum design, and did not feel qualified to adapt these. They hoped that I

as "expert" would give them or at least help them design the ideal course that they would then teach indefinitely according to my instructions.

Teaching English or Teaching Writing?

In the light of the above discussion, two closely related issues emerge: whether and how to deal with the transfer of writing courses into local languages, and who is the best equipped to teach such courses.

Teaching in the First Language: Transferring Skills or Transplanting Culture?

While particularly for countries like the Netherlands, Scandinavia and to a lesser extent Germany, where students entering university generally already have a solid command of English, Zegers and Wilkinson's (2005) arguments about plurilingualism and the value of English education may hold, and in such countries, it may make some sense to teach academic writing in English. However, much of the world is not yet in the position of the Netherlands; in many parts of the world not only the majority of students but even the majority of academics have a very limited mastery of English. Quite apart from Skutnabb-Kangas's "ecology of languages paradigm" which sees "multilingualism and linguistic diversity" as a desirable alternative to "capitalism [and] transnationalisation" driving the domination of English (in Phillipson, 2001, p. 193), there are three less political and more rudimentary reasons why in such countries academic literacy should be taught in the students' first language, or at least in a language that students master fully.

First, there is nothing more disheartening and incapacitating than trying to express sophisticated thoughts in a language where limited proficiency makes one's ideas appear childish and trivial. Second, trying to master academic writing in a language one speaks poorly blurs the boundaries between problems with lower-order concerns (inadequacy of vocabulary and grammar) and the higher-order concerns that writing courses are usually concerned with, such as logic and clarity of thinking and expression. This conflation of English teaching and writing teaching perpetuates the naive belief that problems in writing are due to inadequate mastery of vocabulary and grammar. It thus brings the teaching of writing under the remit of those whose business is the teaching of English, with all the cultural-imperialist implications that Phillipson raises. At the same time, it promotes a product-oriented model of writing teaching (cf. Jordan, 1980) which ignores most recent scholarship on process and genre, and confines the teaching of writing largely to the selection of the right words and phrases to "plug in". While some more recent pedagogical efforts have also focused on plugging in the right words (e.g. Graff and Birkenstein, 2005), most scholarship on composition concedes that there is rather more to the matter than that.

Finally, and connected to both the above, teaching writing in an inadequately mastered language frequently confines the syllabus to basic issues, such as paragraph structure, simply because students' language competence does not permit them to tackle more complex issues. This is the main weakness of the writing program developed by US foreign experts at the English Department of the Azerbaijani University of Languages. Because the students' mastery of English is very limited, the syllabus mainly addresses paragraph-level and sentence-level issues. If the course were taught in Azeri, it is very likely that more sophisticated and more macro issues could be addressed. Indeed anyone who engaged with the idea of translating the course into Azeri would very quickly see that it is in reality an "English course" and one that is little adapted to local needs in writing. In sum, while English is the *lingua franca* of the international academic community, before students become fully fledged members of that community, to adapt slightly Barbara Seidlhofer's words, "[Teachers] should naturally always make themselves understood with the language which is best understood by all those involved" (University of Vienna, 2009).^[3]

If writing is a transferable skill, following the logic above it would be best taught in a language one masters, then transferred to a language one masters less well. But is writing in fact a transferable skill? A great deal of literature has focused on the topic of contrastive rhetoric and the differences of academic writing in different cultures (cf. Connor, 1996; Galtung, 1988) which might cause severe problems in transfer across

languages. My own students have also described the occasional undesirable consequences of over-zealous transfer of writing conventions from English into their mother tongue.

We can, however, reasonably make the assumption, as Bräuer (2002) does in importing the US model of the writing center to Germany, that many features of best practice that we are concerned with—such as the effective scaffolding of assignments, including clear instructions, a recognizable audience and purpose, adequate and constructive feedback and opportunities for revision and improvement—are not language specific any more than biology or business studies are language specific. Indeed, there is in some countries of the region a tradition akin to that in China, as mentioned by Townsend, whereby culture dictates a greater personal responsibility on the part of the teacher to help the student individually outside class time than may be typical in the US (2002, p. 140).

Once we come to the issue of genres and conventions of writing, these will indeed be culture-specific, though research I have conducted in the framework of another project with bilingual academics suggests that the conventions of English academic writing are increasingly influencing academic writing in other languages. In spite of this, one piece of evidence to hand does demonstrate the transferability of writing skills, albeit in the opposite direction. A recent survey of one cohort of CEU alumni (as part of US reaccreditation) assessed the transferability of skills from MA academic writing courses to the world of work and paid academe, eighteen months after graduation. The survey also asked whether skills that students had learnt in *English* writing courses at CEU had subsequently been of use *in their first language*. Of those who responded, 74% said that these writing courses *had* helped them write in their first language (41% claimed "considerably"). The fact that the writing course at CEU is strongly influenced by genre and WID theory makes it unlikely that students who claimed to be able to transfer skills to their own language were referring exclusively to the non-language-specific skills of drafting and revising.

If writing skills can indeed be transferred from English to the first language, it is not unreasonable to assume that they can also be transferred in the other direction. The transfer may not work the same way in both directions, and further research is needed on this subject. However, much of the very extensive pedagogy of English for Academic Purposes assumes that the transfer of cultural habits in writing from the mother tongue will influence (by implication negatively) students' writing in English. It is entirely logical to assume that if the cultural habits were similar to those of English because comparable principles of writing had been taught, the transfer would be both possible and positive.

If we do transplant concepts and structures of teaching writing from English to other languages, we need to move with caution to avoid the accusation of cultural imperialism (cf. Canagarajah, 2002). At the same time, we should not automatically assume that local faculty or administrators will be opposed to innovation. During a consultancy visit to Prishtina University in Kosova in 2000, I was surprised at the view expressed by Xhavit Rexhai, a professor in the English department. He felt Kosova needed to import "the English model" of writing into Albanian because teachers of Albanian language and stylistics were conservative and had rigid, old-fashioned ideas about good writing focusing on elaborate, complex syntax (personal communication, April 2000). Since then, I have heard similar views expressed about teachers of the national language—a mandatory subject in most former communist countries—in Georgia and Azerbaijan. The impression is that teachers of local languages are seen and often see themselves as guardians of the pure language, which may be under threat either from less cultured dialects or from foreign influence, in the past Russian, today more likely English. Nora Mzavanadze, a PhD student I interviewed for another project, described such a course at Vilnius University. The course "Language Culture" is mandatory for all undergraduates and is seen by students, in her words, as a "pain in the ass". It is not concerned with how to argue or how to write research but with how to avoid "barbarisms", which she described as including the use of wrong grammatical cases or word forms associated with low prestige regional dialects that might "resemble Latvian more than Lithuanian" (personal communication, March 29, 2009).

While one may wish to express mild alarm at such stigmatization of non-standard varieties of language, it is not my purpose here to question the claim that the elegant use of a language to convey finer emotions, whether through verse or prose, is part of national cultural heritage worthy of preservation. The same, however, is not automatically true of academic writing, not least because in academic writing the focus is more on the message and less on the form. While Galtung (1988, p. 38) has suggested that play of words and grammatical reversals are a key feature of some academic cultures, the *main* purpose of research writing in the social sciences in most languages remains the creation of new knowledge, not dazzling the reader with verbal repartee.

Social scientists, in contrast to teachers of the national language, seem rather less concerned about cultural heritage and more interested in obtaining effective tools for doing their job. Which culture these tools come from appears less important to them. Marine Chitashvili, the distinguished Georgian psychologist who founded the Centre for Social Sciences at Tbilisi University, framed this very well when I raised concerns about imposing the norms of English academic writing on Georgian. She said:

Georgian doesn't have its own culture of academic scholarship. The way we have written until now is the Russian way, which was imposed upon us as part of the Russian empire in the 19th century and the Soviet empire in the 20th. We have the choice to keep the Russian way of writing which is not ours, or exchange it for the Anglo-American way of writing, which is also not inherently Georgian. (personal communication, May 22, 2008)^[4]

I have heard similar views expressed by other Georgian social scientists. It seems then to be a defensible position for those who seek to bring writing to the region—comparable to that adopted by Holliday (2005, p. 14) in the context of the debate on teaching English as an international language—that the experience and strategies developed for teaching writing in English may be valuable tools that those from other cultures are at liberty to use in teaching writing in their own language in the ways they see fit to meet their needs, so long as we do not impose those models or preach their superiority. Once learners are in a context where they are learning to write for an English-speaking community, for example an American university, we may urge them to respond to their American readers' expectation by conforming to certain norms, but so long as they are operating in their own language, we have to respect that norms may differ, and that while local teachers of writing may well want to build on the long experience of writing teaching in the US, they will know best what to build on and how.

What I am suggesting is that we need to separate the teaching of writing from the teaching of English, whether English as a foreign language or English literature. Writing (or composition, or whatever the most appropriate correlate term in the relevant language may be) as a subject of study in its own right may provide a tool which is useful and relevant in other cultures. Tying writing to the English language, or worse to any aspect of Anglo-American culture, ties it to a bunch of cultural assumptions and associations that make it more problematic to implement without treading on cultural toes and getting caught up in Zimmermann's regional-transnational culture debate.

Who Does the Teaching?

The practical question remains as to who should have the job of teaching writing courses in local languages in the region. Three groups present themselves; none is without problems. The first is teachers of the local language. Unlike the situation in Germany, where teachers of German language and didactics are described as good potential partners in introducing writing (Bräuer, 2002, p. 70), the support of indigenous departments of local languages and stylistics in the region is less clear. These teachers, as described above, currently have a different agenda and a very traditional training. Not only would they need significant retraining, but they would be likely to retain emotional attachment to their former views. Equally

importantly, most of them do not speak English and thus have no direct access to US scholarly literature on writing. These two obstacles cannot be overcome without serious investment and restructuring.

The second option is teachers of English as a foreign language. This group has two advantages: they have more up-to-date methodological training, and more importantly, they are able to read the literature on writing theory in English, or to receive training in the US/UK. On the down side, they are *English* teachers. This makes it harder for them to dissociate themselves from Anglophile cultural baggage, both in terms of how they are seen by others and how they see themselves. It also lowers the face validity of their professed ability to do the job, as they are not formally qualified in the area they propose to practice. To the extent that writing courses are embedded in the disciplines, they, like the previous group, also suffer the weakness that Hansen and Adams (2010) point out, namely that they lack any more than the most superficial disciplinary knowledge, including knowledge of what preferred genres look like.

The third group of candidates are teachers of the discipline, that is, social scientists. Both the effective initiatives so far in the region that teach writing in the local language are taught by social scientists. To jump to the conclusion that faculty in the disciplines are the best candidates to teach writing courses, however, would be hasty. In all the social-science-driven initiatives (Romania, Georgia and Slovakia) the teachers gleaned their knowledge of writing teaching from (former) ESL teachers, in that they either followed writing courses at CEU or else employed a consultant from CEU. In other words, they are teaching something they themselves have (recently) learnt as students, not something they are formally qualified to teach, a state of affairs that, as discussed above, renders them less able to judge how and when to adapt their teaching or their syllabus to local contexts and needs. Particularly in Georgia, a trend also appeared that may be familiar to those working in WAC contexts in the US. Social scientists often feel that teaching writing is neither their area of expertise nor their real business. They not only feel on safer ground with their own discipline (cf. Hansen and Adams, 2010), but also that teaching writing as a subject is rather a low-prestige task. In my own university until recently, some departments employed their own academic writing instructors. These people had a background in the relevant discipline, but were almost always very junior in the department, and once they had climbed up the career ladder a little were keen to offload this burden on someone else. Interviews I carried out in a number of US universities in early 2009 suggested a similar response from some US faculty in the disciplines. In this regard, the development of writing in the region might more effectively concentrate on getting faculty in the disciplines to use writing effectively in their courses, whether for assessment or writing to learn (cf. Gottschalk and Hjortshoj, 2004) rather than asking them to teach writing courses.

As Bräuer (2002, p. 76) suggests for Germany, the most effective solution is likely to be achieved by these three groups working together to develop and institutionalize writing initiatives. Faculty in the disciplines have an important role because they are the ones who set the writing that matters, and they will need to work with writing teachers to ensure the genres set match as closely as possible those used in the discipline (Hansen and Adams, 2010). As regards the actual teaching of academic writing, however, the question is who is most easily and quickly retrained. I think ironically, in the *short term*, the people to retrain are the English teachers. The region is littered with people in NGOs and government organizations who used to be English teachers and have changed career. This is partly because English teaching offers such dismal career prospects in this part of the world, but also because proficiency in English is a valuable professional tool that often makes such people more adaptable and open to the opportunities of a globalized world. They need to understand, however, that they are retraining and refocusing certain skills they possess so as to do a different job, not just switching employers.

In the longer term, however, some teachers of the local language need to be retrained into the service of teaching writing. By "some" I mean that rather than trying to redirect the discipline of local language teaching and stylistics into being something else, an approach that challenges the authority of that discipline, a number of teachers should be seduced away from the profession and employed in the service of supporting faculty in achieving the writing goals of their curriculum. In other words, the teaching of

writing proper should not be turned over to existing departments of local language and stylistics as their domain; rather support courses should be created where the goals are dictated by the instructors in the discipline whose work is being supported.

Given the heritage of the Soviet system, where many countries have a range of ancillary courses at undergraduate level that are perceived as lightweight and irrelevant, a model that introduces writing in the form of non-discipline-related first year composition is likely to lead to its relegation to the ranks of "language culture", "national folk history"—burdensome irrelevancies students plod (or sleep) their way through because their elders and betters have deemed it to be for their good. Writing specialists, whether originally local language teachers or English teachers, need to learn how to work in close partnership with faculty in the disciplines, a tradition that hitherto has been largely absent in the region, where any form of inquiry by a colleague into one's work has traditionally been regarded with suspicion. Faculty and writing specialists need to see themselves as two halves of a team that prepares writers in the discipline, a re-visioning of academic roles that is perhaps one of the most difficult goals to achieve.

Most faculty in the disciplines will have limited experience in using writing in the classroom, or may not use it effectively: concepts of genre and process are both usually extremely vague, if they exist at all, and where writing assignments are set, they are often one-draft pieces on vague questions that are easy to plagiarize because they mostly involve knowledge telling. Writing teachers will therefore need to become WAC advisors who simultaneously provide help and expertise in the design and scaffolding of written assignments as well as in the use of writing-to-learn activities, but at the same time listen carefully to faculty's expertise on what kinds of writing need to be mastered in the discipline and how these might look (cf. Hansen and Adams, 2010).

Conclusion

In this article I have shown how the introduction of writing initiatives into in CEE/fSU region has been driven by international stakeholders whose agenda, explicitly or implicitly focuses on the teaching of writing in English. The development of writing initiatives in local languages has been largely neglected, with the consequence both that the resource of writing to learn remains untapped, and students from the region outside the discipline of English literature continue, when they do learn English, to come into the international education system unprepared for the challenge of writing.

While considerable caution needs to be exercised in translating WAC and WID to local contexts that are very different to the US, very many aspects of best practices in writing are not, or need not be, language-specific. The introduction of writing into the curriculum of universities in the region can best be achieved by a collaborative effort between retrained teachers of English, refocused teachers of local languages and faculty in the disciplines. WAC/WID programs in the US have a valuable role to play in providing input through those local individuals (mostly ex-English teachers and faculty) who have access to that input via English. However, just as translating US WAC to other English-speaking contexts needs considerable caution and rethinking (McLeod, 2002; Emerson et al., 2002), when it is to be translated into other languages proportionally more caution, rethinking and discussion with local stakeholders is required to ensure that models and approaches are effectively translated to fit the local context and needs.

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Notes

[1] I use the term "composition" reluctantly, as it is deeply rooted in the US context of liberal arts education, and for a reader from outside the US, at least, contains heavy connotations of first steps in essay writing. To the extent that they exist, European initiatives tend to use the word "writing".

[2] Central European University and Szeged University, Hungary; Lithuanian Christian College University and Vilnius University, Lithuania; Tbilisi State University, Georgia; Babes-Bolyai University, Romania; Comenius University, Slovakia; and Lviv University, Ukraine. Semi-structured questionnaires sent to program coordinators or directors were followed up with e-mail correspondence.

[3] Original German: "SprecherInnen (speakers) sollen sich natürlich immer mit der Sprache verständigen, die von allen Beteiligten am besten verstanden wird." My translation.

[4] She did, when I asked permission to quote her, ask me to add that her comments in no way apply to Georgian fine literature, which has a heritage of fifteen centuries.

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Complete APA Citation

Harbord, John. (2010, April 14). Writing in Central and Eastern Europe: Stakeholders and directions in initiating change. *Across the Disciplines*, 7. Retrieved from <https://wac.colostate.edu/docs/atd/articles/harbord2010.pdf>