**Transnational WAC at a new international branch campus in Korea:**

**A longitudinal project**

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My university is in the third year of growing its first international branch campus. Located in New Songdo City, South Korea--part of the larger Incheon metropolitan area near Seoul--the campus is, in turn, part of a growing shared global university campus that is, in turn, part of a growing city-scale experiment in "smart" urbanism. As a roughly US$35 billion project near Incheon International Airport, New Songdo City represents Korea's vision of itself as an international "soft power"--one that can attract foreign direct investment and position itself as a global economic and cultural influencer. Simultaneously, my university--like many others in the US--is keenly interested in "internationalization" as part of an overall effort to enhance its status among prominent research-extensive state university peers.

As one of the first faculty members to travel to the new campus, I was asked to teach a first-year seminar course and to provide writing center-style tutorial assistance to the first student cohort. I offered to provide writing across the curriculum (WAC) support for faculty colleagues as well based on the understanding that I was as interested in teaching colleagues about effective writing assignments as I was in helping students. A small series of pre- and in-service WAC workshops I conducted led to several research questions:

* What kinds of writing (genres, rhetorical exigencies, etc.) are instructors assigning in courses across the curriculum?
* How is writing being explicitly and implicitly taught in courses across the curriculum?
* How do students perceive/respond to the writing assignments and teaching?
* How do instructors respond to the students’ writing?
* What effects does students’ transition from the international campus to the US campus have on their own and on their instructors’ perceptions and responses?

Since I believe that the unusual campus, university, and urban context may be germane to these questions, I am situating my research not only in WAC but also in literature on transnational education and on the specific case of South Korea. (See below under "Key Theorists/Frames.") A critical narrative of my experience at the new campus highlighting connections to transnational movement and to Korea's relationships with other East Asian nations and with the US is forthcoming in *Across the Disciplines*.

In response to a survey of all Asia Campus students in Fall 2015 (roughly 110 total) about writing backgrounds and experience based on a similar survey conducted by Poe, Lerner, & Craig (2010), I received roughly 20 completed questionnaires. To ensure relatively even distribution across the existing undergraduate majors, I selected five student participants and set appointments to interview them face-to-face on my return to Korea in May 2016. I am planning on follow-up interviews with student participants in subsequent research visits in May 2017 and 2018, by which date all student participants should have arrived at the Salt Lake City campus for coursework there. I plan on an additional face-to-face interview at the Salt Lake City campus.

I also conducted an initial survey in Fall 2015 of faculty members/instructors, focusing on kinds of writing assigned, direct writing instruction/support, and patterns of response/correction. Based on student responses to initial survey questions about majors and about courses in progress, I also identified student participants’ specific faculty members/instructors for those courses and scheduled face-to-face interviews with them in May 2016 as well.

Data also includes samples of student writing across courses and samples of faculty/instructor commentary.

Analysis (using Dedooce) is qualitative, based on constant-comparative methods and guided by Grounded Theory approaches. Recursive readings of initial surveys, (transcribed) interviews, and student writing/instructor responses employ open coding, in which potential themes/patterns are identified and tentatively labeled. Analytic memos assist in articulating rationales for identifying initial codes. As more data is generated following submissions of student writing/instructor response and following the next round of interviews in May 2017, that data will also be open-coded. New codes will be compared to existing candidate codes and confirmed/disconfirmed as analysis shifts to axial coding stages. (See Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

**Preliminary findings**

[LOTS more data to get through before March, so I'll be updating this!]

**Institutional Description**

I'm conducting the bulk of this project at the University of Utah Asia Campus, an international branch campus of the U of Utah that opened in New Songdo City, South Korea, in Fall 2014. Students (predominately Korean nationals) complete 3 years of their undergraduate degrees at that campus and spend one year at the campus in Salt Lake City.

The university is one of four located on a shared campus that represents a substantial Korean government investment--itself part of a city-scale reclamation and development project begun roughly 12 years ago. As the campus continues construction of new buildings, so does the city in which it is located: in fact, the city is an artificial island being built with reclaimed land and expected to be complete by 2022.

I was one of the inaugural faculty members to teach at the new campus in 2014-15: I was approached to teach an experimental first-year seminar course on global citizenship and to provide writing tutoring. I committed to creating a writing center but also to providing writing across the curriculum support to faculty members representing the departments offering undergraduate majors there, including communication, psychology, and social work. (The university is adding undergraduate programs in city and metropolitan planning and in film and media arts in 2017-18.) I led a pre-service/pre-departure workshop introducing WAC concepts to faculty colleagues who were relocating to Korea with me, and I led two in-service workshops while in Korea. Near the end of the academic year, I recruited students to participate in a longitudinal and transnational study of the writing they are assigned in their majors, how they approach writing assignments, and how instructors respond.

I also see this research as a pilot to understand better the highly decentralized nature of writing instruction on the Salt Lake City campus. The university has an upper-division undergraduate writing requirement that students may satisfy in departments and programs across campus. Aside from a university-level committee that approves courses for that writing-intensive designation, there is virtually no coordination of writing across campus.

**Digest of Key Theorists/Frames**

Transnational education: many US universities are making broad claims about the value of "internationalization," but it is vital to understand specific challenges of pedagogical and research work across borders. Ninnes & Hellstén (2005) report that “[a]t the unglamorous ground levels of office and classroom, it could be argued that the internationalization of higher education is currently experiencing a moment of exhaustion brought on by increasing workload demands and seemingly insoluble pedagogical dilemmas.” Ninnes & Hellstén (2005) here point to a gap between visionary language about the promise of international educational partnerships on one hand and the experiences of students, teachers, and others learning and working to bring international visions to concrete reality on the other hand. Donahue (2009) argues that broad claims about differences between writing teaching and research in the US and in other countries can serve as “preliminary attention-getters” to raise awareness but that they “must be seen as tentative first steps in a deeper and broader questioning of contextual work, political influence, heterogeneous national contexts, dominant models, interdisciplinarity, and diverse research methods.”

WAC: the kinds of professional/disciplinary cultural differences relevant to WAC research are intensified in transnational settings. McLeod (2002) points to the important curricular realization that the US scheme of dividing general and specialist education at tertiary levels has few direct equivalents outside the country, which means students entering international universities may already be writing in disciplines from day one. Townsend (2002) cautions that curricular differences are not the only considerations in play and that US-based professionals working abroad “must understand much more than just WAC principles to engage in cross-cultural discussion about teaching and learning.” And using the earthy metaphor of “terroir,” Thaiss (2012) connects published profiles of international writing programs to “insight into the geographic, cultural, and personal histories and ambitions that have gone into” any international experience of writing education.

Longitudinal research: given the transnational nature of these students' education through their 4-year degree programs, a longitudinal approach is key to understanding their writing development. In addition, as Spack (1997) notes, short-term studies of literacy and writing can suffer from a lack of theoretical validity. The value of longitudinal studies has also been well articulated by Beaufort (2007), Haas (1994), Smoke (1994), Sternglass (1997), Wardle (2007), and others.

Korean economic globalization and English as an international language: any study of English-language education in Korea should account for that country's complex relationship with that language and with other nations, including the US. Since 1945, English’s role in South Korea has evolved from being the “language of the latest wave of occupiers” (Collins, 2005) to becoming a language that represents a desirable, if ambiguous, target for aspirational students and parents. Korea remains among the most ethnically and linguistically homogeneous countries on Earth (ethnologue.com; Jeon, 2009), but English education represents a huge government and private investment. Yet, as Collins (2005) and Jeon (2009) argue, assumptions that Korea has unilaterally “bought into” English as a periphery nation adopting “inner circle” standards is unsafe: Korea is indeed continuing to invest in, adopt, and adapt to English but on its own terms and with its own emerging standards.

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