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Ideology, Textbooks, and the Rhetoric of Production in China

This article examines a writing textbook published in the People’s Republic of China over two editions. I will argue that competing ideologies have constantly and in multifold manners dictated the ways this textbook was produced, disseminated, consumed, and reproduced—the rhetoric for a textbook’s production and existence.

The last two decades have witnessed the growth of several strands of scholarly interest in writing textbooks in the composition community. For example, Mary DeShazer examines sexist language in composition textbooks published during the second half of the 1970s. John Clifford, Lester Faigley, and Nedra Reynolds discuss how student subjectivity is constructed through composition texts. Miriam Brody, John Trimbur, and Kathleen Welch focus on cultural ideologies that have permeated composition textbooks. John C. Brereton and Debra Hawhee look at composition history as reflected in textbooks. W. Ross Winterowd and Elizabeth Miles explore relationships between two major entities in textbook publishing—the composition community and publishers. (Re)Visioning Composition Textbooks: Conflicts of Culture, Ideology, and Pedagogy...
You / Ideology, Textbooks, and Rhetoric

gogy, edited by Xin Liu Gale and Fredric G. Gale, and published in 1999, presents another collective effort along those lines.

In a fairly comprehensive review of composition textbook scholarship, Elizabeth Miles notices, using John Trimbur’s term, a prevailing “rhetoric of deproduction” in composition studies. In this rhetoric, textbooks are handled by textbook authors, textbook users, and textbook scholars with “the material conditions of their production and continued existence obscured or bracketed off from consideration” (13). She delineates four deeply rooted misconceptions about textbooks in composition studies resulting from such rhetoric: that textbooks could establish how writing is actually taught; that textbooks transcend local contingencies with material conditions; that only publishers, not writers, have interests in textbook publishing; and that textbooks are produced in similar modes to those of scholarly publications. Thus for future study of composition textbooks Miles suggests that interrogations be directed toward the process of their production, distribution, and consumption, all integral parts of any textbook’s existence, and that ultimately a rhetoric of production be developed in the composition community and textbook publishing business.

In response to Miles’s call for constructing a rhetoric of production in composition studies, in this article I attempt to study a writing textbook within her conceptual framework. That is, I shall examine not only the textual discourse in the textbook itself, but the entire discursive process as represented by the textbook, which includes its compilation, production, and dissemination. To enrich the discussion of textbooks in the composition community, I intentionally chose to study a writing textbook published in the People’s Republic of China, a rather different sociopolitical environment from that of the United States.

A College Handbook of Composition

The textbook under consideration has been the most widely used English writing textbook in Chinese colleges since the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76). Yingyu Xiezuo Shouce [A College Handbook of Composition], written by
Wangdao Ding et al., was first published in 1984 by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Beijing. Because of its wide use among English teachers and college students, particularly English majors, its second edition was released in 1994. During the past two decades, this book was printed thirty-six times and over 1.2 million copies were sold—leaving other similar textbooks far behind in both the number of reprints and of copies. Thanks to its time-honored popularity and substantial influence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing in China, this textbook deserves critical scrutiny in order to unveil a general picture of the complete discursive system as embodied in EFL writing textbooks in China.

First of all, it needs to be pointed out that although the book is called a handbook, from its conception to its consumption in different colleges in the 1980s, it is used primarily as a textbook in composition classes for English majors. In the preface to the first edition, the writers explain the origin of the book:

In order to strengthen the training of college students in English composition, we developed a relatively systematic composition course and wrote some teaching materials during the last few years [in the Beijing Foreign Studies University]. After some rearrangements and supplementation, now we have prepared this textbook.

During the last two decades, the majority of English teachers in China were underprepared in teaching writing. Once they chose the textbook, they would heavily rely on it in their teaching. In a still book-worshiping cultural environment, most students would read the book carefully if it was assigned to them as a textbook.

During the two decades since the textbook came into existence, China has experienced profound sociopolitical changes, such as moving from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, and the decentralization of Communist Party control in many domains of social life. Those often dazzling changes have unavoidably affected the discursive process of composition textbook publishing in China. To acknowledge such an impact, I will compare the two editions of A College Handbook of Composition and focus on some significant changes the writers make over the two editions. Those changes will be interpreted in reference to the material processes surrounding the textbook, i.e., its production, distribution, and consumption in the 1980s and 1990s.

Among the enormous changes made between the first and the second edition, some striking ones are immediately noticed when one skims over the
book. For example, there are 230 pages in the first edition, and the number of pages is almost doubled in the second edition. The contents of the second edition have been enriched accordingly. In addition to the base of eight parts in the first edition, i.e., “Diction,” “The Sentence,” “The Paragraph,” “The Whole Composition,” “The Summary,” “The Research Paper,” “Letters,” and “Mechanics,” two more parts, “Manuscript Form” and “Formal and Informal Styles,” are added in the second edition. And “Letters” is expanded into “Practical Writing” in the second edition, which includes notices, greetings, notes, letters, and curriculum vitae.

However, more valuable information comes from less conspicuous variances across the two editions. The question is how to sort them out so that the analysis can yield some insightful understanding of the rhetoric of composition textbook production in China. For the general Western public, China has been renowned as a country dominated by Communist ideology since the People’s Republic was founded in 1949. Following this reasoning, I will examine the textbook with ideology as a vantage point. In other words, I will take as the main focus of this article how ideology, or ideologies, has shaped both editions of the textbook in relation to the material processes during the two decades. As the discussion proceeds, I will argue that competing ideologies have constantly and in multifold manners dictated the ways this textbook was produced, disseminated, consumed, and reproduced—the rhetoric for a textbook’s production and existence.

**Ideology: A Classical Marxist View**

Before I scrutinize the variances between the two editions against an ideological screen, it is important to first define “ideology” as I will be using it here. Particularly relevant to the present topic is this question: What does ideology mean when this term is used in China? The concept of ideology does not originate nor does it end in Marxism; it takes different shapes among different people in human history. However, ideology as a philosophical and political term is still postulated in a classical Marxist sense in politics textbooks published in the People’s Republic. John McMurtry explains this by referring to Marx’s *German Ideology* (1845):
Ideology is conceived not as mental activity or belief as such but, [..] “men’s conceptions of themselves”: that is, men’s various articulated forms of social self-consciousness—from religious to economic, from moral and aesthetic to legal-political. (124)

McMurtry lists five defining criteria of ideology, according to Marxism: ideology is constituted of “formulated ideas”; it refers to “human matters or affairs”; its content is “materially unproductive”; it obtains “in a public mode”; and it is “subject to state control” (127–28). Of the five criteria, the last two are of immediate relevance to the present discussion of ideologies in China. As ideology exists in a public mode, when we study ideology, we should focus on any form of publication or public speeches that occur inside legal or political jurisdiction. According to the last criterion, ideology is controlled by the state in a class society. Thus the dominant ideology of a society is the ideology of its ruling class, which is held to control the state as its agency to protect its collective interest. McMurtry says, “Ideas that reach the public stage are, in fact, subject to effective control by established social power, state as well as economic” (130).

One way for the ruling class to control ideology is to conceal from the people the “scientific” conceptions of human affairs or distract their attention from them. According to Marx, the scientific way of conceiving human affairs attends to the economic “essence” of all historical society—the effective relations of ownership to society’s forces of production, class structure in relation to the ownership of the means of production, and laws of exchange between the ruling and the nonruling classes. The “scientific” manner entails two implications for this article. First, the present discussion of ideology should be contextualized in a specific historical moment in a certain human community, in this particular circumstance, Chinese society in the 1980s and 1990s; second, I shall examine both the economic relations and class relations in Chinese society.

Using the above criteria as lenses to understand ideologies in China within the last two decades, the Communist ideology, commonly conceived as the dominant ideology in China, appears to be a dynamic and open-ended term. It has never been static—it evolves along with the changes of the political, economical, and social situation in Chinese society, and becomes an ever-changing entity representing the interest of the ruling class, a population which is
not static either. To facilitate the discussion of ideology in this article, I will simplify the matter by labeling the dominant ideology in China as socialist ideology when the first edition of the textbook was published, and socialist ideology with Chinese characteristics when the second edition was released. As the discussion unfolds, ideologies in China will show more complicated features than these two labels can ever capture.


Before I open my discussion of the first edition of the textbook, a recapitulation of modern Chinese history before and around 1984 will be helpful. The People’s Republic was conceived in 1949 upon the ruins of feudal, colonial, and bureaucratic capitalist dominance, after the Communist Party–led armies had defeated the Nationalist Party troops during the civil war (1946–49). In the subsequent two decades, China established a comprehensive industrial structure, enhanced its agricultural productivity for its fast-growing population, and created a relatively egalitarian social system distinguished by the ownership of production resources by the state. However, threatened by the influence of the Soviet Union’s “revisionist” interpretation of communism and the capitalist “peaceful evolution” (a policy first advocated by John Foster Dulles in the 1950s) from the West, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) saw the urgency of initiating a cultural revolution. Mao Zedong, the then chairman of the CCP, believed that a material enrichment was not enough for China to enter a communist society. Only a cultural revolution would unify and strengthen the Communist goals within the people’s consciousness. “Mao’s privileging of culture, as a way in its inception to counter the economic determinism of classical Marxism, was eventually turned into a ‘culturalist’ determinism and essentialism” (Liu xi). As a result of the “Great Cultural Revolution” (1967–76), nationally planned economic construction was severely interrupted. After Mao’s death in 1976, China backtracked to pragmatism, emphasizing the importance of economic development for building a communist society. Ambitious long-term economic plans were adopted at the Eleventh Party Congress in August 1977; and the new CCP leader Deng Xiaoping steered the party to adopt an “open-door” policy for foreign investment and technology introduction into China in December 1978.

The economic reform began from the agricultural sector. Starting from 1978, farmers were allowed to contract with the state for the land and manage their own production under the most favorable local conditions, rather than
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In the first edition, the market-socialist ideology with Maoist legacy is evidenced most clearly in quotations from domestic and international writers as examples to illuminate rhetorical strategies. Those quotations make up about 15 percent of the total number in the book, and they are found in almost all parts of the book. For example, in Part 1, “Diction,” the writers quote a paragraph from Edgar Snow, an American journalist and one of the “friends of the Chinese People” talking about his impressions of Communists in China, to illustrate the importance of using details in calling up picturesque images in the audience:

General: I found the Communist was different from other people I had met.
Specific: I found repeatedly that the Communist would be able to tell everything that had happened in his early youth, but once he had become identified with the Red Army, he lost himself somewhere, and without repeated questioning you could hear nothing more about him, but only stories of the army, or the Soviets, or the Party—capitalized. (13–14)

Or as another example, the writers explain in Part 2, “The Sentence,” that nouns may be emphasized by using the adjective “very” preceded by “the/this/that” or a possessive pronoun. Then the exemplary sentence is “Lei Feng is the very model of Chinese youth. His very merit is his readiness to help others” (52). Lei Feng was a People’s Liberation Army soldier who died on duty in the 1960s, and ever since he has been erected as a model soldier by the communist government. His widely reported anecdotes before his martyrdom exemplified an ideal “red and expert” citizen in a socialist country—an individual who “subordinated all personal pleasure to the duty of serving the party and the people” with his or her developing professional expertise (Meisner, Marxism 129).
Examples loaded with subtle socialist sentiment are also found in Part 3, “The Paragraph.” The following paragraph, written by a student describing his “good” classmates, is quoted by the textbook writers to exemplify paragraph development by classification:

According to Comrade Li, the fifteen students of his class fall into three groups. Seven of them work hard and study well. They always get good marks in examinations and are often praised by the teachers. Li calls them “good students.” The monitor, the secretary of the Youth League branch, and the captain of the class volleyball team are quick in finding out what their fellow students are interested in or what they should do as a collective. They always organize proper activities at the proper time, so Li calls them “good organizers.” Four other students are very kind to their classmates, always ready to lend them a helping hand. They help to clean the classroom and the corridor even when they are not on duty. Li says that they are “good comrades.” “What about yourself?” someone asks him. “I’m a group by myself—a good observer.” (76)

Explicit political teaching, including morals and ethics, was found in more than foreign language classes during the 1980s; it was a vital part of one’s college education. Li Peng, then Chinese premier, reiterated the importance of political and ideological education in Chinese colleges in his summary speech at the 1986 work meeting of the State Education Commission (now Ministry of Education). He emphasized that

[i]deological and political work among students, teachers, and other faculty members of our institutes of higher education is a task determined by the nature of our socialist schools, and it guarantees success in developing specialised personnel with socialist consciousness. (Qtd. in Hu and Seifman 226)

The above three examples praising collectivism and the moral and ethical values in a socialist society, together with other examples of explicit ideological teaching for “developing specialized personnel with socialist consciousness,” disappear in the second edition.

It is interesting to note that amidst the explicit socialist rhetoric, hints of alternative ideologies are traceable in the textbook. In 1984, China was still dominated by dialectical materialist teaching in schools and was widely conceived to be an atheist country. However, there is a quotation about American Transcendentalism, a philosophy centered in an idealist epistemology, in Part 2, “The Sentence.” The following passage is from Explicit political teaching, including morals and ethics, was found in more than foreign language classes during the 1980s; it was a vital part of one's college education.
Walden (1845), by Henry David Thoreau, theorist and practitioner of Transcendentalism, and shows the emphatic effect of repetition:

Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in the extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! (51–52)

Nevertheless, Christianity is still portrayed in a somewhat negative manner in the textbook. In Part 2, “The Sentence,” the writers choose the following example to demonstrate confusing shifts in tense. While the statement about the play is accurate, it is noteworthy that the authors choose to focus on it in particular:

Confusing: Shylock loses his money and his daughter and in the end was forced to become a Christian. (Present tense shifted to past tense)

Consistent: Shylock loses his money and his daughter and in the end is forced to become a Christian. (43–44)

Another example implying negative connotations of Christianity is found in Part 4, “The Whole Composition.” A story about “salvation” is adopted by the textbook writers from Langston Hughes’s autobiography, The Big Sea, to show five important aspects of narration: context, selection of details, organization, point of view, and purpose. In the story, Hughes talks about his false conversion in a Christian church under peer pressure (107). In communist teaching, religion is always derided as “the opiate of the masses.”

Some social dissonances in the Chinese society of the early 1980s, or problems in ideological and cultural terrains caused by the Maoist legacy, are also captured in the textbook. As examples of argumentation in Part 4, “The Whole Composition,” the textbook writers choose two opinionated letters published in newspapers discussing Liu Sijia, the hero of a new but controversial novel, All the Colors of the Rainbow. The controversy occurred as a result of the repositioning of Chinese writers after the Cultural Revolution. In Maoist China (1949–76), writers were considered in Stalin’s term “the engineers of souls” with “a generally higher level of moral or political awareness” (Link 143). After Mao’s death, although fiction writing still had a strong didactic tendency, and “writers set forth morally correct and incorrect behavior in unambiguous fashions” (143), the teach-
ing of specific lessons gave way to more open-ended probing and reflection of Chinese social problems, and thus more sophisticated characterization of fictitious figures. One letter concludes against this tendency:

Nowadays there are some writers who create current youth images to cater to the so-called “complexity fever.” Under their pens, young men and women are portrayed as cynical and rebellious in their everyday lives, but in emergencies, they are all heroes and heroines.

This is a very harmful tendency. Stories describing such heroes and heroines will make readers think that someone who behaves badly doesn’t need to mend his ways and has only to wait for the “right moment” to do something great or admirable. We know only too well that in real life such a moment may never come to that person. (119–20)

The other letter ends with a different conclusion, supporting a realistic, complex treatment of life in literary works:

Liu is complex because life itself is complex; there can be no “black and white” judgments. Some readers are against complexity in characterization, but in fact complexity is richer than simplicity in literary creation, so long as the complexity is both artistic and realistic, and instructs as well as pleases the reader. (120–21)

The layout of the textbook also has its ideological bent. The first four parts of the book are structured in a hierarchy of linguistic layers, starting with words and ending with passages, as shown below (I omit some subsections under the main divisions and only keep those significant to the present discussion):

Part 1: Diction
   I. The appropriate word
   II. The exact word
   III. The dictionary
Part 2: The Sentence
   I. Sentence sense
      1. Elements of a sentence
      2. Sentence fragments
      3. The comma fault and run-on sentences
   II. Types of sentences
   III. Effective sentences
      1. Unity
      2. Coherence
3. Conciseness
4. Emphasis
5. Variety

Part 3: The Paragraph
I. General remarks
II. Ways of developing paragraphs

Part 4: The Whole Composition
I. Steps in writing a composition
   1. Planning a composition
   2. Types of outlines
   3. Writing the first draft
   4. Revising the first draft
   5. Making the final copy
II. Organization
III. Types of writing
   1. Description
   2. Narration
   3. Exposition
   4. Argumentation

Clearly, as in some popular composition textbooks in the United States at that time, the structure of this textbook reflects some strong traces of current-traditional rhetoric. Writing was taught as a scientific subject, and it was analyzed at different levels of the language structure. Discourse was classified into description, narration, exposition, and argumentation. Writing products were valued over writing process, which was usually treated as a linear phenomenon in composition instruction (Berlin). However, despite its popularity in composition textbook publishing in the United States at that time, current-traditional pedagogy was considered ideologically conservative by compositionists (Welch). How did such an ideologically conservative rhetoric find its way into Chinese colleges?

Current-traditional pedagogy in China has at least two origins. First, some older English professors were mostly trained in literature and current-traditional rhetoric when they studied under American or British professors before the People’s Republic was founded in 1949 (Xu 13–14). Second, academic exchange between China and the English-speaking countries after the Cultural...
Revolution, particularly with the United States, exposed a new generation of Chinese scholars to current-traditional pedagogy. For example, of the only ten references listed in the bibliography, seven of them are rhetoric and composition books published in the United States between 1971 and 1980. They are *American English Rhetoric* (Robert Bander), *The Random House Handbook* (Frederick Crews), *Heath’s College Handbook of Composition* (Langdon Elsbree, Frederick Bracher, and Nell Altizer), *The Little, Brown Handbook* (H. Ramsey Fowler), the *Harbrace College Handbook* (John Hodges and Mary Whitten), *Subject and Structure* (John Wasson), and *Practical English Handbook* (Floyd Watkins, William Dillingham, and Edwin Martin).

Such a large-scale simulation of current-traditional pedagogy in the United States was also grounded in the economic and educational situation in China. The economic reform and open-door policy stimulated people to learn from the West in order to speed up China’s modernizations. At that time, because of the resurging understanding of the importance of foreign languages in international communications in the open-door times, English writing, the least emphasized among the five language skills in the English classroom—speaking, reading, listening, writing, and translation—suddenly became a highly demanded skill in the mid-1980s. Learning English for practical use was unanimously the goal for the majority of Chinese educators and students. The writers of the textbook emphasize practicality as the aim of the writing course at the beginning of Part 4, “The Whole Composition”:

The basic aim of a writing course is to develop the ability to write whole compositions (or essays, theses, papers). Students attending this course are generally asked to write short compositions of five hundred to a thousand words on their life, studies, experiences, and views on questions they are interested in. They are seldom or never asked to write fiction, drama, or poetry. In other words, their compositions will mainly be prose dealing with facts. (82)

This exact wording is also found in the second edition of the textbook (144). However, the textbook writers do not completely embrace current-traditional rhetoric. In the preface, the writers warn the readers of due cautions they should take when using the book, and explain how they as writing teachers actually use it in the classroom:

The parts of this handbook are organized from small segments to larger segments; that is, they are ordered along words, sentences, paragraphs, and texts. But this
does not necessarily mean the order should be followed in the actual teaching. We usually teach how to write paragraphs and summaries in the sophomore year; different types of writing and letters in the junior year; and the research paper in the senior year. In terms of words, sentences, and punctuation, they should be discussed when necessary.5

And, further, in Section I, “Steps in Writing a Composition” of Part 4, “The Whole Composition,” the writers make it clear to the students that writing is a recursive process and revision is absolutely necessary—“Nearly all good writing is the result of much revision.” “In revising a composition, [the writer] should read and reread it several times, for it is impossible to notice all the errors and things that need changing in one or two hasty readings” (88).

After the dominant socialist ideology was packaged into the textbook, the book was published and distributed to different colleges through established channels sanctioned by the government. In the early 1980s, when Chinese colleges started to offer systemic writing courses to English majors, there were few English writing textbooks available from which to choose. The English Textbook Production and Evaluation Committee, responsible to the State Education Commission, decided what kinds of textbooks were needed, whom should be contracted to write the textbooks, and which publishing house should be assigned the publishing job (Li, Zhang, and Liu 485–86). The state-owned publishers decided the number of copies to be printed according to the production quota sent in by educational authorities. In a still centrally planned national economy, the state paid almost all the educational expenses for college students; colleges chose textbooks for the students from a publication list approved and compiled by a textbook committee working under the State Education Commission. At the beginning of each semester, students would receive textbooks that had been approved by the textbook committee and purchased for them by their colleges. It was through such a seamless discursive system of textbook publishing and dissemination that students became the subjects of “the Ideological State Apparatuses” (Althusser).


The economic reforms and open-door policy revived the forces of social production in China. During the two decades after their implementation (1978–97), China’s gross domestic product (GDP) grew by an average annual rate of 9.8 percent. There was a generous consumer goods supply and a growing demand for products. There also emerged some economic and ideological situa-
tions brand-new to the country as well. As a result of urban reform initiated in the fall of 1984, the ownership of state-owned enterprises has been separated from the operational functions, and the government is exercising less-centralized planning. The restructuring of state-owned enterprises into private enterprises produced massive layoffs in cities and towns in the late 1980s and 1990s, and led to intensified social dissatisfaction and cynicism. An increasing gap in personal income between urban and rural residents reached a ratio of 2.8:1 by the year 2000 (Xinhua). And greater economic discrepancies have been stretching between the coastal areas and the hinterland, as the open-door policy was first enacted on the east coast and then moved toward the interior. A wealthy group of entrepreneurs became the real beneficiaries of the economic reform (Wang 61).

The changes of economic structure and uneven distribution of wealth led to an intense and lengthy debate between orthodox hardliners and the pragmatic reformers inside CCP (1984–89). Their debate focused on how far China could go in adopting capitalistic techniques and still call itself socialist, and how to uphold socialist ethics and morality and prevent the corrosive influence of bourgeois liberalization (Wang 53–60). However, the debate did not yield any significant solutions to the social problems, which subsequently led to a democratic movement in 1989, “an egalitarian reaction against bureaucratic corruption and privilege, a liberating cultural radicalism, and a demand for political democracy” among students and workers alike (Meisner, Deng 467). This movement ended in a military crackdown and the Tian’ anmen Square bloodshed in June of that year. After the Tian’anmen event, the CCP became generally unified under the slogan of Deng Xiaoping’s Four Cardinal Principles (socialist road, people’s dictatorship, party leadership, and Marxism-Leninism–Mao’s thought) —political rhetoric completely inherited from the Maoist period.

With the introduction of stock companies with listed shares and liability, and the selling off of small and medium-sized state-owned enterprises that were once the mainstay of socialism, Jiang Zeming, the then CCP chairperson, justified the market economy as the primary stage of “building socialism with Chinese characteristics” (qtd. in Wang 63–64) in a speech made at the Central Party School in 1997. However, some China critics consider “socialism with Chinese characteristics” a camouflage, and call the current dominant ideology “market Stalinism,” or “bureaucratic capitalism,” which is different from the “free-market capitalism” in the United States (Meisner, Deng xi). The Communist Party is believed to be no longer representing the interest of the masses.
but that of the bureaucrats and nouveaux riches. Maurice Meisner, an internationally recognized China expert and historian, explains bitterly, “Those who savor historical irony cannot fail to note that the Communist regime at the close of the Deng [Xiaoping] era appears, in social reality if not in ideological rhetoric, as the creator and protector of Chinese capitalism” (xxi).

These drastic social and economic changes are well reflected in the second edition of the writing textbook. As a model of exposition, in Part 5, “The Whole Composition,” there is a student essay talking about the advantages of students’ working temporary jobs, which students traditionally would have sneered at. Continuous economic reform for building a market economy opened people’s minds to all kinds of economic activities that they could not imagine before in a centrally planned economy. The first paragraph is quoted here:

Several years ago, people were often a little surprised when they heard that a college student was doing a part-time or a temporary job. “Why? Maybe he is short of money,” they thought. Nowadays, lots of college students are working as tutors. Some serve as tour guides or do whatever work they can find during vacations. In big cities, students often put up advertisements on bulletin boards or wire poles near bus stops. Are they all short of money? Perhaps not. (184)

There are some writing exercises in Part 5, “The Whole Composition,” that directly engage the students in reflecting upon some current social issues, a feature that is entirely absent in the first edition. For example, an exercise for practicing comparison and contrast in expository writing asks the students to “write an essay on values of different generations concerning family, marriage, or education of children” (254). Then the editors provide some short essays written in Chinese for brainstorming. Some titles are “Generation Gap in Perception of Marriage and Children,” “Chinese People’s Moral Values,” and “Why Young Women in Shanghai Smoke So Much.” Each appears to be selected from some current Chinese newspaper.

Explicit communist or socialist teachings are hardly noticeable in the second edition. What is most noticeable in this edition instead is that Part 4, “The Paragraph,” and Part 5, “The Whole Composition,” are full of student essays on every aspect of students’ lives. Of the sixty-five model writings found in the two parts, twenty-three are written by students. The proportion is markedly higher than that in the first edition. Students’ experiences of the chang-
ing social milieu are richly portrayed in their writings. The following examples are paragraphs from two student essays illustrating “description of a place” found in the two editions. The first one, describing Chang’an Street in Beijing during the Cultural Revolution, is from the first edition:

When I passed the street two years later, I could hardly recognize it. It was a time when everyone was busy “making revolution.” The street was swarming with people. No traffic could get through. The grey wall was covered with big sheets of red and green papers, on which were slogans like “Down with . . .” and “. . . towering crimes!” I was pushed forward by the stream of people until I found myself in front of the red gate, which was shut. A big crowd was gathered there, listening to the speech being made by an excited Red Guard, shouting slogans, singing revolutionary songs, and reciting quotations from Chairman Mao. I was too young to understand what it all meant, and was greatly puzzled. (98)

This student essay is replaced in the second edition by another student essay, describing a free market that was almost nonexistent during the Cultural Revolution. A paragraph from the new student essay is quoted below:

Then I came to the vegetable and fruit stalls, which made up the busiest section of the market. A good variety of vegetables and fruits could be found here at summertime. Red tomatoes, green cucumbers, and peppers were put at the most conspicuous places. The sweet smell of the fruits—peaches, plums, muskmelons, and purple-colored grapes—had drawn many customers. The sellers were praising their produce in strong provincial accents and competing with each other by offering lower prices. Housewives would certainly drive a good bargain with the sellers before they really bought anything. (167)

Current-traditional rhetoric is still current in the second edition, with expository writing receiving more attention than other modes of discourse. In the first edition, the four traditional modes of discourse, i.e., description, narration, exposition, and argumentation, are each given similar weight in terms of the length of treatment. In the second edition, on the other hand, exposition is prioritized over the other three. Five expository strategies, i.e., illustration, division and classification, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, and definition, are dealt with in great detail. In the United States, the four modes of discourse assumed absolute dominance in the writing classroom in the 1930s, but by the 1940s exposition had become so popular that it was more widely
taught than the “general” modal first-year composition course. Into the 1950s the four modes were finally superseded by other systems of discourse (Connors 444). Why did the writers of the second edition choose to highlight exposition when it was no longer a theoretically favored organizing device in the United States? One explanation could be its great practicality in the market economy, as explicated by Robert Connors when he comments about the destiny of the four modes in the United States: “The very success of the modes—and the fact that exposition was the most ‘practical’ of them in a business-oriented culture—was destroying their power as a general organizational strategy throughout the thirties and forties” (450). By the time the second edition was revised and published, Chinese society had been experiencing a market economy for over a decade since the Cultural Revolution.

The continual dominance of current-traditional rhetoric also could be explained by local constraints in EFL writing instruction. George Xu offers a historical perspective on this phenomenon. Many English teachers learned to write on their own through reading and writing, because English writing was hardly taught when they were students in the 1970s and 1980s. They were not confident about their writing experience and had found current-traditional pedagogy the most effective in maintaining their pride in the traditional teacher-dominant classroom culture in China. “Instructors like to lecture on the four modes of discourse, the methods of development, the topic sentence, etc., excluding invention from their syllabus” (15). With a relatively low level of proficiency, students also feel comfortable practicing writing following rigid steps, for example, in expository writing: introducing the topic, writing topic sentences for the second, third, and fourth paragraphs, developing each paragraph according to the topic sentence, and drawing a conclusion.

Increasing academic exchanges with the United States also continued the influence of current-traditional rhetoric and other writing theories from abroad. Every year, the Chinese government sent thousands of carefully selected researchers and academics, including English teachers, to study abroad. As in the first edition of the textbook, the academic exchange with the United States can be traced in the bibliography section of the second edition. First, two books by Chinese scholars benefiting from the international academic exchanges were added to the bibliography list. One is *Functional Varieties of Present-Day English* by Wenzhong Hu, and the other *Composition and Rhetoric* by Xiahua Yang. In addition, seven more American and British composi-

The “business-oriented culture,” or ideology of the market economy, in contemporary Chinese society is also documented in the expansion of Part 6, “Letters,” into a whole new part, Part 9, “Practical Writing.” Besides letters, the textbook writers add instructions on four more subsections: notices; greetings, good wishes, congratulations, and condolences; notes; and curriculum vitae. The inclusion of curriculum vitae into the second edition seems natural for the social-economic situation in China at that time. Since the open-door policy opened China to direct foreign investment in 1978, by 1999 China ranked second in the world in direct foreign investment. Thousands of joint or foreign ventures were established every year, and the dramatically higher salaries paid by those ventures had made them the first choice among college graduates. Instead of waiting for the government to assign them a job, they could apply for jobs in the foreign ventures directly. Thus, following the Western manner of hunting for a job, a neatly prepared curriculum vitae became indispensable for college graduates.

In addition to its presence in the examples, writing exercises, and layout of the textbook, market-economy-oriented socialism—the new dominant ideology—also molded the discursive practices engaged by the textbook. In the late 1980s, market leverage was introduced into textbook publishing. Although publishing houses were still owned by the state, they were given much more freedom in deciding the kinds of books to be published according to market demand, contracting with authors, and marketing their books through more channels, such as local representatives and book fairs. They not only published different kinds of textbooks, but also a bounty of reference books, for a certain course. Students started paying tuition and other educational expenses. Colleges still chose and purchased the major textbooks for the students, but they had many more choices than before. And most teachers were involved in the process of choosing textbooks for the students. Students still studied textbooks assigned to them carefully, with assistance of the reference books that they could pur-

*Increasing academic exchanges with the United States also continued the influence of current-traditional rhetoric and other writing theories from abroad.*
Chase themselves. Again, student subjectivity was to be shaped by the discursive system brought in through the production, dissemination, and consumption of the textbook, a system loaded with socialist ideology with market-economy orientations.

**Conclusion**

Writing or editing an EFL composition textbook can be understood as making multidimensional decisions about whether foreign language education should serve the dominant economic structure or not, and how. The textbook writers will have to answer some specific questions. Should writing in English by students, minorities, or feminists be used as samples in the textbook? Should the structure of the book be current-traditional, or be more progressive and theoretically grounded? Should EFL students be taught expository writing or creative writing? Should teacher-student conferences and peer review be suggested as part of the teaching methodology when the textbook is used? Together with scholars in composition studies, second language writing scholars have discussed and convincingly illustrated the ideological leanings of those concerns (see McKay; Ramanathan and Atkinson). And as this article has demonstrated, those concerns were translated into specific, local decisions that the writers made in the writing textbook, determined and negotiated by their conceptions of “human affairs” in China; that is, their ideology.

Despite a sketchy picture of the two editions of *A College Handbook of Composition*, the above analyses have shown how ideology or ideologies in China shaped the ways the two editions were written, and also how profoundly the ways a discursive system was established through the production, dissemination, and consumption of the textbook. Just as Mas’ud Zavarzadeh and Donald Morton clearly show in their book, *Theory as Resistance: Politics and Culture after (Post)structuralism*, that courses, programs, and curricula in English departments in the United States are designed to produce “free subjects” for late capitalism, textbooks for EFL writing instruction in China exemplify a similar educational function. That is, Chinese educators affiliated with the “ruling class” will abide by the dominant ideology, either “socialist ideology,” “socialist ideology with Chinese characteristics,” or “bureaucratic capitalist ideology,” and set as their main task to produce workers to serve and maintain current economic relations.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Janice Lauer, Tony Silva, Christine Norris, Kevin Eric De Pew, Libby Miles, an anonymous reviewer, and Marilyn Cooper for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this article. I also want to thank Edie Cassell and Gigi Taylor for their help.

Notes

1. The Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press is an official organ of Beijing Foreign Studies University, which was founded by the Chinese Communist Party in 1941 during the Anti-Japanese War period. As the first foreign-language school established by the party, it has ever since played a leading role in promoting foreign-language education in China, abiding by “the glorious revolutionary traditions” of the party (Ministry).

2. In addition to the kinds of publication information normally found in books published in the United States, almost all books published in China contain the number of accumulated copies that have been printed since the printing of the first edition.

3. The translation is my own.

4. “Friends of the Chinese people” traditionally refers to a specific group of Western journalists, most of them Americans, such as Anna Louise Strong, Agnes Smedley, and Edgar Snow, who reported to the West about the Chinese Communist movement during and after the Second World War in a sympathetic manner.

5. The translation is my own.

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