



# Writing in the Devil's Tongue: A History of English Composition in China

*Xiaoye You*

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Until recently, American composition scholars have studied writing instruction mainly within the borders of their own nation, rarely considering English composition in the global context in which writing in English is increasingly taught. *Writing in the Devil's Tongue* challenges this anachronistic approach by examining the history of English composition instruction in an East Asian country. Author Xiaoye You offers scholars a chance to observe how a nation changed from monolingual writing practices to bilingual writing instruction in a school setting.

You makes extensive use of archival sources to help trace bilingual writing instruction in China back to 1862, when English was first taught in government schools. Treating the Chinese pursuit of modernity as the overarching theme, he explores how the entry of Anglo-American rhetoric and composition challenged and altered the traditional monolithic practice of teaching Chinese writing in the Confucian spirit. The author focuses on four aspects of this history: the Chinese negotiation with Anglo-American rhetoric, their search for innovative approaches to instruction, students' situated use of English writing, and local scholarship in English composition.

Unlike previous composition histories, which have tended to focus on institutional, disciplinary, and pedagogical issues, *Writing in the Devil's Tongue* brings students back to center stage by featuring several passages written by them in each chapter. These passages not only showcase rhetorical and linguistic features of their writings but also serve as representative anecdotes that reveal the complex ways in which students, responding to their situations, performed multivalent, intercultural discourses. In addition, You moves out of the classroom and into the historical, cultural, and political contexts that shaped both Chinese writing and composing practices and the pedagogies that were adopted to teach English to Chinese in China. Teachers, students, and scholars reading this book will learn a great deal about the political and cultural impact that teaching English composition has had in China and about the ways in which Chinese writing and composition continues to be shaped by rich and diverse cultural traditions and political discourses.

In showcasing the Chinese struggle with teaching and practicing bilingual composition, *Writing in the Devil's Tongue* alerts American writing scholars and teachers to an untimely English monolingual mentality and urges them to modify their rhetorical assumptions, pedagogical approaches, and writing practices in the age of globalization.

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