How Industrial Professionals Engage in TC Teaching Programs in Chinese Universities

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Agenda

- About speakers
- Background
- A pilot teaching program at Fudan University
- A service-learning program at Tongji University
- Q&A
SATC (Shanghai Association of Technical Communicators)

- 2 writing competitions
- Non-governmental & non-profit
- 7 offline activities
- 90+ members
- 1500+ followers
- Feb. 2nd, 2016
Monica Xie

- Co-founder of SATC
- Senior technical writer
- TC lecturer of Fudan University
- Former employee of IBM and Microsoft
Celine Yan

- Co-founder of SATC
- Documentation manager
- TC tutor of Tongji University
- Former employee of Huawei
Background
Background

- Industrial side
- Educational side
Industrial Side

- IBM
- Microsoft
- Huawei
IBM

- **2004**: 1st Information Development (ID) team (Shanghai)
- **1999**: China Development Lab (CDL)
Microsoft

- **2006**: 1st User Assistance team (Beijing)
- **2003**: Microsoft Advanced Technology Center
- **2001**: Microsoft Research Center Asia
- **1998**: Microsoft Research Center China
Huawei

- **1988**: Company established
- **1995**: Documentation Department (Documentation + Translation)
Observation

- The establishment and growth of R&D centers will increase the demands on technical documentation, and thus technical writer positions.
- TC has been recognized as a profession in both foreign and domestic enterprises since the late 20th century.
Educational Side

- Visiting scholars to China
- Visiting scholars from China
- Chinese universities
Since the late 1990s, scholars from the U.S. have visited and taught technical communication to Chinese educators and students.

But technical communication was not recognized as an academic course by Chinese universities at that time.
Scholars from China

Almost at the same time, Chinese teachers who went to American universities as lecturers and visiting scholars were exposed to technical communication courses and programs.

A few of them went back to China, and tried to offer technical writing courses in their home universities, with little success.

-- CAROL M. BARNUM AND LI HUILIN

Volume 53, Number 2, May 2006 • Technical COMMUNICATION
Chinese Universities

In 2000, no Chinese university offered technical communication as an academic course or program.

-- Daniel D Ding, Technical Communication I Volume 58, Number 1, February 2011
Reasons

- Misinterpretation of “technical communication”
- Misunderstanding of “technical communication”
Current Situations

Industrial Side

- TC is recognized as a profession in both foreign and domestic enterprises.
- Technical writers with different educational backgrounds had TC training provided by their employers.
- The first group of technical writers now have more than 10 years' experience.
- Industrial companies have demands on TC candidates to ensure the quality of products and documents.

Educational Side

- TC has not been widely recognized as an academic program or discipline.
- Graduate students do not have a TC educational background.
- Visiting scholars are a great resource but cannot cover most of the demands.
- Students are not well prepared for the TC job market.
Since 2007, universities started to invite technical writers from industry to teach technical communication.

In the meanwhile, school faculties and visiting scholars provide educational assistance to technical writers.

With a joint effort, technical communication has been recognized and finally enters the classrooms of Chinese universities.
A pilot teaching program at Fudan University

Monica Xie
FUDAN

• Founded in 1905
• Located in Shanghai, China
• Top 1 in Shanghai, top 5 in China
In a FUDAN Way

- F – Fundamental
- U – Unique
- D – Designed
- A – Applicable
- N - Native
Fundamental

- Teach basic **TC concepts**
- Equip students with basic **TC skills**
- Enhance students for the **job market**
- Train students to be **technical writers**
Basic TC Concepts

- Technical writing and Technical communication
- Differences between technical writing and general writing
- Structured writing and DITA
- MSTP (Microsoft Style of Technical Publication)
- DQTI (Developing Quality Technical Information)
Basic TC Competencies

- Start with two job descriptions
- Let students analyze and discuss the required competencies
Basic TC Competencies

- Language skills
- Technical skills
- Communication skills
Goal

- Teach basic TC knowledge
- Enhance students with basic TC skills
- Prepare students for the job market
Unique

- Students
- Lecturers
Students

**Major:** Master of Translation and Interpretation, English Department

**Grade:** Grade one

**Number:** 8 to 23 students

**Educational Background:** Language (>50%)
Lecturers

**Profession:** Technical Writer

**Experience:** 10+ years

**Educational background:** engineering and/or language
Because of these goals and characteristics, we designed:

- Course
- Examination
- Homework
Course

Reference textbook
Process of tekom’s competency framework
Language: English
Frequency: Once a week
Duration: One semester
Course

- Lectures
- Classroom discussions
- Case studies
- Role-plays
- Hands-on practices
- Group activities
Examination

- Writer
- Presenters
- Raters – Teachers and guests
Students

1. Create a user manual based on requirements.
2. Present the manual and writing process to the class
Panel of Judges

- Youlan Tao: professor of English
- Xiaoli Li: Visiting scholar of Dayton University
- Wenqing Zhao: professor of microelectronics
- Yuanming Song: student of Chinese literature
- Xiaoxue Zhang: doctor of English
- Monica, Rebecca, Kay: lecturers
Homework

- Apply theory to practice.
- Practice makes perfect.
Homework

- Analyze audience by creating a persona.
- Collect information by performing researches.
- Write instructions for different audiences and purposes.
- etc.
Applicable

- Homework: Apply theory to practice
- Hands-on exercises: Authoring tool, diagram tool
- Apply TC minds to daily life.
- Company visits
Hands-on Exercises

- Structured authoring tool (30-day trial)
- Create and publish a book
Apply TC Minds to Daily Life

- One student found the instructions in the metro station is misleading.
- She designed a new one according to DQTI.
Company Visits

- Visit industrial companies
- Talk to technical writers
- Observe how they work
Native

- Cultural differences
- Native teachers
Cultural Differences

- Thinking patterns
- Study habits
- Social behaviors
Thinking Patterns

- Analytical
- Western mind is educated and trained to dissect an idea into elements for analysis

- Relational
- Chinese mind focuses on the relationships between events or objects and their given signs or symbols.
Study Habits

• Research-based
  • Western students are trained to learn knowledge via research.

• Memory-based
  • Chinese students are educated to learn knowledge by memorization.
Social Behaviors
More Cultural Differences

Meinung

Contakte

Pünktlich

Party
Native Teachers

- No cultural differences
- No language barriers
- Familiar with western culture
Feedback

This course has benefited me a lot – I used to be less exposed to technical things, but now technology has opened a new door to a new field. I think the most important and precious thing is **the change of thinking mode**.

I think the biggest change since I took the technical writing course is that I now focus more on my own **user experience**. Specifically, when I use a product now, I consciously **think from a user’s perspective**: since the ultimate goal of product design is to help customers, why don’t I use the product to best serve myself? That is, I am now learning to **communicate with products**.
Summary

- The program is considered a success, and we have received positive feedback from both students and faculty.
- The aim to equip MTI students with basic TC competencies has been achieved.
- However, the shortage of TC faculty and teaching materials remains. We, as industrial professionals, will work with universities to close the gap.
A Service-Learning TC Program Embedded in English Writing Course at Tongji University

October 24, 2017

SATC
Grow with TC in China
Agenda

1. About Tongji University
2. Course Overview
3. Program Implementation
4. Assessment
5. Benefits
About Tongji

One of the oldest and most prestigious universities in China
- Established in 1907 by the German government together with German physicians in Shanghai
- A comprehensive university located in Shanghai
- In Chinese, Tongji suggests cooperating by riding the same boat
Course Overview

Practical English Writing Course with TC feature
Course overview

Name
Practical English Writing Course

Essence
Technical writing

Audience
English major students at Tongji University

Duration
A semester, 2017.3.6-2017.6.22

Frequency
2 course hours per week
3
Program Implementation
In the classroom & Out of the classroom
Who were involved in this program?
1 company
A local company
Focuses on TC authoring tools and solutions

50 students
Two classes
Juniors of English major

1 teacher
Professor Li, Tongji University
The designer of this program

10 tutors
Industry professionals from Huawei, IBM, Microsoft, HP, and other local companies
What was the main task of this program?
A Real Project

Write a user manual for a DITA-based online writing tool.
How did we implement this program?
In the Classroom

Including but not limited to

- 1. Orientation
- 2. Design
- 3. Meeting minutes
- 4. Diagrams
- 5. Project report
- 6. CV

40% of the total score
Out of the Classroom

Learning & Presentation
Students researched TC, DITA, etc.
Gave presentations for what they learned

Project introduction
By the product manager of the tool

STARTUP
Out of the Classroom

Site Visit & Discussion
All of the teacher, students, and tutors visited the company
Communicated and discussed with each other

Task Assignment
The teacher and tutors had call conference
Divided the manual into 5 parts corresponding to 5 groups
Made project plan (each group)
Out of the Classroom

5 Writing & Editing & Publishing

- Students wrote
- Tutors reviewed
- Students modified
- Students printed the final version
Assessment

A career interview
Assessment

Final examination
A career interview

Score (60% of total score)
Composed of 3 parts

Score

Manual

Interview

CV

40%

40%

20%
Benefits

A win-win situation
Benefits

Win-Win

For teacher

More oriented towards TC requirements

Facilitate the development of TC

For students

Teamwork awareness

Responsibility

TC skills

User-centered thinking

A draft of user manual

Comments for improving the product

For tutors

For company

For teacher

For students

For tutors

For company
Glad to Grow with TC in China
References

• Design and Practice of Course with TC Features—Case Study of Practical English Writing Course at Tongji University, by Li Mei (2017)
Contact Us

If you are

- Authoring tool provider, and you can provide some trial licenses for educational purpose,
- TC educators, and you’d like to visit Chinese universities
- Publishing house, and you have good textbooks to recommend
- Hiring technical writers in China

Contact us

Email: shtechcomm@163.com
Thanks!

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