

Three Attitudes Towards My Bilingual Writing

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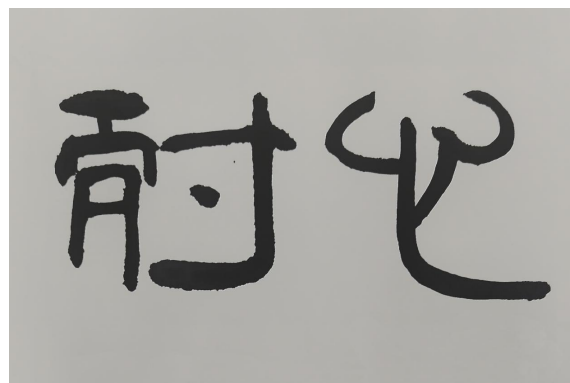
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Enthusiasm for writing has lasted for more than 4000 years in China. Indeed, Chinese people regard writing as a sacred thing. An old Chinese proverb says that “after seeing the sunrise, you should always keep to the dawn,” which means you must insist on finishing things you do. Thus, Chinese writers are not allowed to be distracted when they are creating their work, especially when they practice calligraphy, the strictest form of writing in China.

When I created the calligraphy compositions shown in this essay, I adhered to three Chinese attitudes towards writing from ancient times to the present: being patient, persistent, and curious. And I found that it also makes me effective in writing in English when I use these skills.

Patience



“耐心 (Nai Xin)” translated into English means ‘patience.’ The Chinese analyze the words based on their written symbols. “耐” means the rule. In addition, “心” means heart.

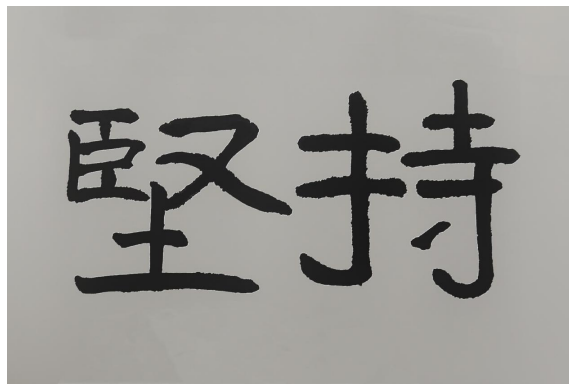
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²Writing across the University of Alberta (WAUA) publishes undergraduate student writing from Writing Studies courses at the University of Alberta. You can find WAUA online at writingacrossuofa.ca.

Thus, “耐心” encourages writers to write at a peaceful pace and follow their hearts. In English, the dictionary definition for patience is “the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious” (Oxford University Press). Both of those attitudes make me write more effectively. When I do calligraphy, I need to be patient and attentive. Otherwise, the lines I write will become thick and thin. The quality of my compositions depends on my writing attitude. I will stop writing when I feel emotional and impatient and have no idea how to continue with a fancy thesis. If I start to write with a gentle attitude, I can write my thoughts in a lively way.

This opinion is reflected in the article “In Praise of the Humble Comma” by Pico Iyer (2001). Iyer (2001) highlights that “punctuation, one is taught, has a point: to keep up law and order” (para. 2). Writers must follow the rules in writing if they want a structured essay. It is important to always write the introduction and thesis statement at the beginning of an essay. This principle also applies beyond punctuation. If I make an outline and research patiently before writing an essay, the content and structure will not be wrong. Writers need to be confident so that they can produce more effective work under rational and patient conditions.

Persistence



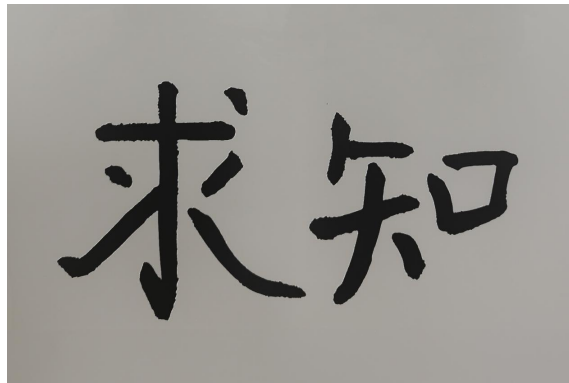
“坚持 (Jian Chi)” in English means ‘persistence.’ Chinese people use this word to encourage others to continue working. They generally believe that the decisions must be completely wonderful. The first symbol in the word “Jian Chi,” “坚,” describes a scene that a person stands on the ground (土) and writes again and again (又). In addition, “持,” tells people that they need to keep doing their work. Putting those symbols together explains that being persistent in writing can help people find inspiration.

In Chinese, each word symbol may have more than one meaning in the different dynasties. Therefore, calligraphers need to research dictionaries to find the correct Chinese

symbols they want to use. I must stand my ground and search again and again for the definition of Chinese symbols every day to produce good calligraphy for people.

It is the same concept when I write in English. When I am editing my essay, I only edit one of the paragraphs for one day. Then, I have more time to think and keep editing. Being persistent and trying, again and again, results in a higher quality of writing. Also, it helps me to release pressure when I am creating compositions.

Curiosity



The third word that Chinese people attach importance to in writing is “求知 (Qiu Zhi),” which translates into English as ‘curiosity.’ The symbol of “求” means to request, and “知” is knowledge. In Chinese schools, teachers say that “after you have enough knowledge, you should continue to explore more.” Our teachers believe only new objects can arouse the students’ curiosity and help them create more amazing writings. In China, there are thousands of ways to write Chinese symbols. Therefore, Chinese people have to gain a thirst for knowledge during writing. Otherwise, it is hard to find the correct form. They need to explore the time, place, historical background, and origin of each stroke on a word. Only then can they judge the correct use of that word in writing.

When writing an essay, students need to be curious to find all kinds of materials and resources to prove their point of view, or else it is hard for them to write their essays specifically. As composition scholar Donald Murray (1995) writes, “this experience--observation, thought, or feeling--has not existed until I write it. As writers, we must value our response to our world” (p. 83). Writers should be curious about the world and keep exploring new things.

Learning the writing process and techniques of other authors makes me curious. When I learn new writing skills, I put my new ideas into upcoming projects. For instance, writing in Chinese and English requires two different methods. For instance, people cannot copy others’ work and add those to their work in English. Under this situation, reading excellent

essays and resources becomes the only way for me to ask questions. I ask myself: Why is this a good essay? How can I write like this? Being curious allows me to reflect on my content effectively and write in different writing styles that I have never tried before.

Conclusion

Even though the writing requirements are different in each country, the attitudes toward writing are the same. Writing with patience makes us feel calm and joyful; persisting in writing every day helps writers find the related materials when they need them; curiosity makes us explore more knowledge and writing styles. More importantly, I can be more effective when I follow those three writing habits. Throughout history, Chinese teachers have stuck to these three attitudes toward writing and learning. Although it is hard for me to hold all three writing attitudes, they push me to write better next time.

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