

**TRANSLINGUAL PEDAGOGICAL
PERSPECTIVES**

*Engaging Domestic and International
Students in the Composition Classroom*

**EDITED BY
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INTRODUCTION

Alanna Frost, Julia Kiernan, and Suzanne Blum Malley

As Claire Kramsch (2018) has argued in “Trans-Spatial Utopias,” “Translanguaging reveals the deep relations that have always been there between codes, modes, and modalities but have been occulted by the artificial borders set up by nation-states, disciplines, professions, and linguists” (109). The exploration of those relations and their borders has, indeed, “captured [the] imagination” (Wei 2018, 9) of scholars in a wide range of fields connected to human communication. The construct of translanguaging, investigated by linguists, educators, and writing studies scholars,¹ describes the negotiations of and between language users who seek communicative clarity by drawing on a repertoire of semiotic resources. Such practices have long been evident in everyday communication, such as when people negotiate business contracts, share stories with friends, order food, shop, or text their mums. Since the early 1990s, sociolinguists and applied linguists studying language use in such exchanges have often presented their research as a direct challenge to the hegemony of English-language standards and a monolingual ideal. In such critiques, translanguaging troubles named language systems (e.g., Standard Written English as a dynamic and unfixed version of English) and historic separatist theories of language use (e.g., code meshing, code mixing, and multilingualing) and challenges the theory that languages are discrete systems at all. Such systems create “artificial borders,” as Kramsch (2018, 108) describes, and they prescribe a socially constructed, fixed set of codes that do not reflect the reality of usage. A trans perspective on languaging, in contrast, posits that “users treat all available codes as repertoire in their everyday communication, and not separated according to label” (Canagarajah 2013, 6), implying fluid and evolving repertoires of semiotic resources users continually draw from to make meaning.

This collection addresses the *lure* (Matsuda 2014) of translanguaging for writing studies scholars in relation to college-level, English-medium composition classes in the United States. As a discipline, rhetoric and composition has long wrestled with the complicity inherent in the

promotion of institutional and public narratives of the existence of a standard English. Many reflections on the merits of the concept of translanguaging in the writing classroom begin by noting that the history of disciplinary attention to students' language use began in 1974 with the publication of the "Students' Right to Their Own Language" by the Conferences on College on Composition and Communication (Gilyard 2016; Horner et al. 2011). The political language statement, crafted by writing studies scholars concerned with the role of the institution in both homogenizing and denigrating the dialects of diverse US students, remains relevant in contemporary translanguaging scholarship. For example, its premise is noted by Jerry Lee and Christopher Jenks (2017), who assert that "assumptions surrounding standardness, correctness, and legitimacy of a particular variety of English are not inherent to the language itself but sustained through the work of institutional agents such as public education" (320). Politically and theoretically, then, there is widespread acknowledgment in writing studies that our collective adoption of translanguaging in the writing classroom supports the modification of our standard charge, which has historically been to instruct and measure English-writing performance. Notably and problematically, that performance is assessed against the "bankrupt" concept that there is one English against which to measure (Horner et al. 2011, 305). This conundrum leaves rhetoric and composition scholars at an important moment as we collectively evolve our theory and explore ways to open our praxis to greater awareness of the affordances of a translanguaging disposition.

We remain mindful that the affordances of translanguaging are intertwined with tenets of existing critical pedagogies. Importantly, contributors to this collection describe classroom practice and assignments framed by the construct of translanguaging as practice. Translanguaging itself, according to Li Wei (2018), "is using one's idiolect, that is one's linguistic repertoire, without regard for socially and politically defined language names and labels" (11). Importantly, this collection does not promote an investigation of translanguaging practices as evidenced in student writing with visible use of labeled idiolects, for example. Rather, the focus of the collection is on showcasing the ways translanguaging is used as a construct that undergirds continual and socially flexible language practice. It offers classroom practices and assignments that facilitate students' understanding of an essential, possibly intangible, facet of translanguaging theory, which, as Wei asserts "is not conceived as an object or linguistic structural phenomenon to describe and analyse but a practice and a process. It takes us beyond linguistic systems and speakers to a linguistics of participation" (7).

As editors of this collection, we have actively sought to counter the use of translanguaging as a catchall for language diversity, and we have worked to productively demonstrate our awareness that the term has been criticized fairly as a “popular neologism” (Wei 2018). Scholars working in second language writing have thoughtfully critiqued the uncritical adoption of translanguaging (Atkinson et al. 2015; Wei 2018; Matsuda 2014) and as Thomas Lavallo asserts in the afterword of this collection, translanguaging as a threshold concept presents definitional “difficulties.” Heeding such critiques, we adopt an emerging, writing studies epistemological lens for translanguaging as *disposition*, which Bruce Horner, Min-Zhan Lu, Jacqueline Jones Royster, and John Trimbur (2011) describe as “openness and inquiry that people take toward language and language differences” (311). The writing studies translanguaging disposition toward language and languaging has evolved to include calls for reexamining writing research using a translanguaging lens (Gilyard 2016; Trimbur 2016), creating awareness that “in translanguaging writing the process of negotiating assumptions about language is more important than the product” (Matsuda 2014, 481), carefully describing the assessment practices a translanguaging writing curriculum should employ (Dryer 2016; Lee and Jenks 2016), and ethically investigating the translanguaging practices in multilingual communities (Bloom-Pojar 2018). The writing studies disposition lens, then, reinforces the call for a more thoughtful and considered process for developing the “descriptive adequacy” applied linguist Li Wei (2018) describes as the first step in creating the knowledge necessary for a “perpetual cycle of theory-practice-theory” of translanguaging as a practical theory of language (12).

One of the primary challenges inherent in bringing complex theories of translanguaging as continued process into writing-classroom practice is that a translanguaging disposition resists simple definition and straightforward implementation. Lee and Jenks (2016) emphasize this key difficulty, noting, “Although composition can become a space that facilitates opportunities for students to ‘do’ translanguaging dispositions, these dispositions are constitutive of a constellation of highly complex sociocultural issues and experiences and therefore cannot be expected to be actualized or articulated in a preconceived and uniform manner” (319–320). In response to this challenge, we do not attempt to present in this collection a unified process for teaching translanguaging or a static and definitive catalog of translanguaging attributes. Rather, the range of terms in the work our contributors share highlights the complexity we are trying to showcase while providing pedagogies that develop a translanguaging disposition and are replicable and adaptable for

a variety of learning opportunities in postsecondary, English-medium writing classrooms, writing centers, and writing programs populated by monolingual and multilingual students. By providing descriptive and reflective examples of the “changes being made at the organizational level to rethink the ways in which English is represented in US composition teaching, the design of composition and writing program curricula, and the preparations of (future) teachers of postsecondary writing” (Horner, NeCamp, and Donahue 2011, 271), this collection moves to fill the gap between the range of theoretical inquiry surrounding translanguaging and existing translanguaging pedagogical models for writing classrooms and programs in the United States.

Our contributors affirm that it is necessary to more fully engage pedagogies of translanguaging and translanguaging because our legacy (and overwhelmingly monolingual) approach to English does not do what our increasingly multilingual student populations demand of it. And, while this collection aims to offer a variety of approaches to the teaching of diverse learners via a translanguaging disposition, it also moves to interrogate the affordances and constraints of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy through each chapter’s inclusion of curricular strategies and specific writing assignments. As we note above, readers may identify some of the approaches to writing pedagogy described in each chapter, particularly those that engage critical pedagogies, as approaches to teaching writing they already employ. Clearly, asking students to investigate language ideology is not an innovative suggestion; however, we argue, a translanguaging disposition, when taught as a rhetorical strategy, reimagines traditional approaches to writing assignments and opens new spaces for student responses to them in important ways. What contributors to this collection bring to the table is the added notions that languages do not work in discrete systems, that we are always languaging, and that such negotiation is a central part of both monolingual and multilingual students’ writing processes. To stress, these chapters contribute to the important conversation on the ways translanguaging has made its way into our writing classrooms.

The eleven chapters in this collection consider teacher, student, and institutional perspectives in the development and implementation of translanguaging pedagogies and are divided into two parts, beginning with translanguaging pedagogies enacted within first-year writing and ending with a consideration of translanguaging pedagogies in interdisciplinary contexts. In this way, the collection develops out of a focus on single classroom activities to a wider lens that considers translanguaging pedagogies across courses, writing centers, and writing programs. Each chapter

offers detailed descriptions of translingual-oriented teaching, including an overview of the institutional context and linguistic makeup of both the department/program and participants (e.g., students, teacher-researcher, etc.); an analysis of the ways each approach fits into current theoretical conversations about translingual composing practices; descriptions of classroom practices and experiences; and considerations of the limitations, challenges, and uptake of the pedagogies offered. Additionally, chapters close with detailed appendices that provide assignment prompts, as well as other necessary information for readers to fully adopt and adapt these strategies into their own classrooms.

Part I, “Enacting Translingual Pedagogies in First-Year Composition,” offers focused snapshots of work being done across a number of first-year writing courses in various US universities and colleges. These chapters are especially useful in that they offer a spectrum of both scaffolded and stand-alone assignments that engage a translingual disposition. The following paragraphs offer brief chapter overviews in order to orient readers to what contributions may be most useful to their own teaching.

The collection opens with Shyam Sharma’s chapter, “Addressing Monolingual Dispositions with Translingual Pedagogy,” which contends that the hegemonic proliferation of a Standard Written English dispositions in US writing programs, “the monolingual regime” (chapter 1), remains one of the central barriers to engaging pedagogies that invite and privilege translingual communicative competence. Sharma thus offers writing-classroom practice that positions “*translingual* pedagogy as a means toward larger educational goals,” so that students understand they are not only simply indulging in non-SWE writing but learning to interrogate language and literacy practice and policy. Sharma emphasizes the need for both top-down and bottom-up promotion of a translingual disposition. Moreover, given the growing diversity of student populations across postsecondary institutions, this opening chapter is important in surfacing the various contexts where translingual pedagogies thrive due to emphasis on diversity of knowledge across cultures and societies, as well as rhetorical traditions and practices.

In chapter 2, “Criteria-Mapping Activities and the Transformation of Student-Teacher Relations in the Composition Classroom,” Daniel Bommarito and Emily Cooney use criteria mapping (an adaptation of literacy mapping) to consider how classroom discussions of language differences can enhance students’ agency and learning. Using this approach, the chapter emphasizes A. Suresh Canagarajah’s description of the translingual negotiation entailed in any communicative act and employs Bob Broad’s (2003) concept of dynamic criteria mapping to

weave “the negotiation of language directly into the fabric of the curriculum. In this way, language negotiations are not an afterthought, tacked onto a ‘language neutral’ curriculum—rather, such negotiations *are* the curriculum.” The chapter contends that this approach invites a recognition of linguistic diversity, makes this diversity visible, and allows for pedagogical flexibility.

In chapter 3, “Unity in Diversity: Practicing Translingualism in First-Year Writing Courses,” Ming Fang and Tania Cepero Lopez present case studies of three instructors as they work to enact a translingual orientation in their first-year writing classrooms. Offering a descriptive analysis of instructor engagement with redesigned curricula, Fang and Cepero Lopez reiterate one of the premises in this collection: that there is no one way to foster a translingual disposition. Rather, there are key tenets that support translingual pedagogies, including holding “diversity as the norm, creating opportunities for linguistic negotiation, and encouragement of rhetorical dexterity.” This chapter is a useful starting point for instructors who are developing translingual courses and assignment sequences. The authors examine how adaptation is an inherent tool in the development of a translingual disposition within a common course and offer personal adaptations “filter[ed] through the lens of each instructor’s professional interests, as well as their personal linguistic and cultural background.”

In chapter 4, “Keepin’ It Real: Developing Authentic Translingual Experiences for Multilingual Students,” Norah Fahim, Bonnie Vidrine-Isbell, and Dan Zhu bring together translingualism and neuroscientific approaches in order to surface connections between translingualism as a theoretical approach that views languages as fluid, and neurological studies that support the brain’s movement towards fluidity across languages as it seeks optimization. The chapter presents a series of activities designed to allow students to define translingualism for themselves and make rhetorical decisions about their own access to their various linguistic resources. In this way, Fahim, Vidrine-Isbell, and Zhu advocate for learning environments where multilinguals can engage their different selves and linguistic repertoires, which in turn engages students’ diverse languages and encourages students to practice their authentic multilingual voices.

In chapter 5, “An Integrative Pedagogy of Affirmation and Resource Sharing,” Gregg Fields advocates for connecting translingualism to pedagogies designed to help students evaluate and reevaluate their linguistic resources, as well as the cultural and experiential knowledge that undergirds these resources. Fields argues that this approach, which

is encapsulated in an integrative translingual pedagogy, leads to a pedagogy of affirmation, a linguistic healing of sorts, not just for traditionally defined bilingual, multilingual, and nonnative speaker students but even for students who traditionally are considered monolingual or native speakers. This chapter describes Fields's pedagogical moves and strategies in order to surface how instructor support and student engagement with a variety of linguistic resources invite students into a process of reenvisioning and reevaluation.

In chapter 6, “‘Hay un Tiempo Y un Lugar Para Todo’: Students’ Writing and Rhetorical Strategies in a Translingual Pedagogy,” Esther Milu and Mathew Gomes explore the redesign and implementation of a linguistic autobiography assignment. The authors position their research as a coming together of an “integrationist theory of translingualism and transmodality” and describe how this assignment positions students’ language(s) and languaging as the central topic and site of inquiry. In examining student interaction with (and fulfillment of) this assignment, Milu and Gomes affirm and extend scholarship regarding the beneficial outcomes of pedagogies informed by transmodal and translingual theories of language and writing. Additionally, their chapter illustrates how inviting modal and linguistic experimentation can help students develop a translingual disposition as part of their rhetorical sensibilities.

Part II, “Enacting Translingual Pedagogies in Interdisciplinary Spaces,” broadens the focus of the first section beyond first-year writing and, in one case, beyond the traditional US classroom. This section provides a wide range of translingual perspectives, including international contexts, multisited ethnography, writing center tutoring and training, and courses outside the first-year writing framework.

These chapters are especially useful in that they offer a kaleidoscopic cross-section of the work being done outside the first-year writing classroom. As editors, we suggest this second section is most useful in its attention to fluidity of engagement with a translingual disposition across learning contexts. Again, the following paragraphs offer brief chapter overviews in order to orient readers to what contributions may be most useful to their own teaching.

The second section begins with Mark Brantner’s “Writing on the Wall: Teaching Translingualism through Linguistic Cityscapes.” Brantner’s study builds upon a literacy-autobiography assignment (similar to that discussed in Milu and Gomes’s chapter); however, his chapter offers an interesting distinction from the work in Part I in that his research and teaching, while developing out of US theory and practice, is situated

in an international context. In his examination of a literacy landscapes assignment, Brantner describes how translingual approaches can be positioned to invite students to explicate their own lived realities of linguistic division. This chapter's recognition of the mobility of resources students bring to their negotiation of linguistic heterogeneity provides a framework for faculty to ground their assignments, lessons, assessments, and teaching in the concrete conscious (and unconscious) practices students engage in.

Building upon the negotiative practices in chapter 7, Brice Nordquist's chapter, "Translingual Literacy and the Mobile Labor of Recontextualization," considers the value of understanding and tracing mobile literacies for both translingual theory and pedagogy across in-school and out-of-school contexts. Nordquist highlights that "linguistic mobilities necessitate perpetual translations. These translations involve not only linguistic transactions but also social, economic, geopolitical, and cultural transactions across asymmetrical relations of power" (chapter 8). This chapter emphasizes the mobility of meaning enabled via linguistic diversity and describes how a translingual disposition is able to illuminate the fluctuating, internally diverse, and intermingling character of languages.

In chapter 9, "Writing-Theory Cartoon: Toward a Translingual and Multimodal Pedagogy," Sonja Wang engages with a different student audience: college students enrolled in a bridge writing course. In this chapter Wang presents an assignment in which students are invited to draw writing-theory cartoons that represent key ideas, assumptions, and approaches they associate with experiences with multiple languages and literacies. Her analysis of student responses describes how the assignment creates opportunities for students to attend to the interrelationship of semiotic systems as part of the rhetorical repertoire essential for translingual negotiation. Like the work of Brantner and Nordquist, Wang's assignment can be understood as inviting mobility through the opportunities created for students to reflect on language differences and translingual relationships in light of broader contexts of transnational experiences. These findings extend conversations in writing studies concerning the unique affordances of multimodality to develop metalinguistic awareness and translingual disposition, known contributors to successful writing practices.

Chapter 10, "Translingualism as Methodology for Peer Writing Consultants-in-Training," focuses on the ways translingual practices can be taken up in nonclassroom learning environments. The author, Naomi Silver, describes the introduction, and subsequent revision, of

a unit on translanguaging within a semester-long training course for undergraduate peer writing consultants. Like many of the chapters from Part I of this collection, Silver focuses on integrating translanguaging approaches within a mainstream, or traditional, writing studies context; within this chapter we see how translanguaging can be offered as a module rather than the exclusive theme (as seen in Julia Kiernan’s chapter [chapter 11]), and this addition of translanguaging as a topic module also points to the elasticity of translanguaging as a pedagogical approach. Also important to this chapter is the reasoning behind integrating translanguaging; Silver characterizes the writing center as having “a strong commitment to social justice principles, which includes seeing students’ language differences as resources to be mobilized in pursuit of their own communicative purposes.”

The closing chapter, “A Framework for Linguistically Inclusive Course Design,” also considers the role of translanguaging approaches in bridge writing programs. Julia Kiernan considers the pedagogical benefits and drawbacks of developing and implementing a semester-long transnationally themed writing course open to and accepting of translanguaging dispositions. Through exploring the linguistic gaps in current approaches to traditional curricular design, this research offers a framework for reassessing, reimagining, and redesigning writing pedagogy. An examination of student reflections points to the usability of linguistically sensitive curricula within US writing classrooms, particularly in terms of the placement of value on translanguaging competences, which in turn reflects a shift toward asset-based, culturally sustaining pedagogical practices.

NOTE

1. As editors, we recognize that the growing interest in and exploration of translanguaging as a construct is linked to assumptions that undergird our collective understanding of complex languaging and literacy practices. We believe part of this exploration is the acknowledgment of the many points of contention surrounding translanguaging and a translanguaging approach from different lenses in rhetoric and composition (Bou Ayash 2013, 2015; Donahue 2013; Horner 2010; Horner and Kopelson 2014; Horner and Lu 2007, 2012; Horner et al. 2011; Horner, NeCamp, and Donahue 2011; Horner, Selfe, and Lockridge 2015; Jordan 2015; Lee and Jenks 2016; Lorimer-Leonard 2014; Lu and Horner 2013), second language writing (Leki 2003; Matsuda 2006, 2013, 2014; Matsuda and Matsuda 2010; Matsuda and Silva 2011; Silva 1993; Shuck 2010; Spack, 2004; Thaiss and Zawacki 2006; Zamel and Spack 2004), education (García and Wei 2014), and applied linguistics (Canagarajah 2002, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2018; Firth 1990, 2009; Firth and Wagner 1997; Kachru 1986; Kramsch 2018; Kramsch and Whiteside 2007, 2008; Park and Wee 2013; Wei 2018), as well as the points of conversation and shared stances toward opening our disciplinary languaging theories and practices beyond

an insistence on discrete language systems. While the contributors in this collection do not always reach back into this rich history, as editors, we fully acknowledge that without the work of those cited above, this collection, and the valuable insight of the contributors, would not be possible.

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