



Review of “Literacy as Translingual Practice: Between Communities and Classrooms”

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With the publication of this important edited volume, the pendulum in composition scholarship seems to have swung far away from the feverish conformity to the English monolingual ideology to a radical, concerted movement of challenging and even resisting this prevailing ideology. The idea of construing literacy as translingual practice, as the title suggests, results from this intellectual movement. More specifically, this practice encourages the creative meshing of diverse linguistic codes as well as semiotic resources, with the hybridization of texts being the eventual goal. As such, it is the “transformative capacity” (p. 2), not simply the competence of meshing languages per se that counts.

Geopolitically, in the context global citizenship typified by diaspora, migration, political dynamics, and transnational political, economic and cultural relations, a radical reorientation in literacy practice is not only vital, but is also called for. Thus, this edited volume is highly germane and certainly welcome.

Partitioned in five parts – each consisting of several chapters penned by potent forces in the field of L1 and L2 composition – this volume aims to cast light on how the notion of the translingual can empower multilingual students in their communicative practices amid the domination of English monolingual ideology in composition pedagogy and scholarship. The term also “enables us to treat cross-language interactions and contact relationships as fundamental to all acts of communication and relevant for all of us” (p. 2).

The first part of this volume tries to refine the theoretical premises undergirding the notion of translingualism. Charles Bazerman’s chapter seeks to show the connection between the social imperatives and writing practices, asserting the import of the former in the production and reception of texts. Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner’s chapter examines the presence of a writer’s agency in the translingual approach to writing, highlighting that the recognition of agency in this approach is of benefit for subordinated groups of students to meet the expectations of the academic discourse community which favors standardized English in writing. Both Scott Wible’s and LuMing Mao’s chapters address the rhetoric of translingual communication by taking into consideration the relevance of semiotic resources from diverse languages and cultures in the rhetorical processes. These two chapters stress the importance of re-contextualizing these

resources for accomplishing one's communicative purposes in light of one's history, traditions, and cultures.

The second part centers on issues of translingual practices in diverse multilingual communities. This part illustrates a host of insightful examples of vibrant practices of merging and blending codes in different multilingual communities through diverse multimodality of texts. Morris Young's chapter, taking spaces for the rhetorical production, provides compelling evidence of the existence of a creole discourse, a mix of Asian American rhetoric. No less interesting is Esther Milu's chapter, which draws on translingual practices in Kenyan hip hop that creatively and critically meshes the Kenyan language with stylistic types of both standard and non-standard English. The last three chapters, written separately by Joy Reyhner, Ellen Cushman, and Nancy Bou Ayash, provide similar translingual practices occurring in different multilingual societies. While Reyhner and Cushman examine the products of meshed texts as a result of the development of traditions and literacy of the native American, Ayash shows the vibrancy of translingual practices in sociolinguistic landscapes in Lebanon and reconnects them to mainstream literacy pedagogy.

The third part is concerned with how the notion of code-meshing orientations is perceived by different scholars. As the term is still in its infancy, it should come as no surprise that it generates more heat than light among scholars in composition scholarship circles (see Matsuda, 2014; Atkinson, et al., 2015). Thus, while appreciating the emergence of the novel notion of code-meshing in composition pedagogy, Vivette Milson-Whyte and P. K. Matsuda, in their separate chapters offer a note of caution for not blindly accepting and applying the notion in writing classroom uncritically. The valorization of a new term without a comprehensive understanding of it, they argue, will undermine the efforts of those working to develop the term. As Matsuda warns, "while the enthusiasm for the new approach to language issues is necessary in order for the movement to take off and make an impact on the fields as a whole, it also needs to be balanced with critical reflections in order for the movement to become sustainable" (p. 132). Yet, Vershawn Ashanti Young's chapter offers a strenuous defense against the attack launched toward the idea of code-meshing. As the first scholar to coin the term, Young responds to objections to and criticisms leveled against the use of code-meshing as a strategy in writing. With her provocative tones, she exhorts multilingual writing teachers and students to "keep code-meshing," hence the title of her chapter.

In the fourth part, new directions for researching multilingual practices are explored. Christiane Donahue's chapter reports a study on how her research subjects' (from France and the United States) efforts to negotiate during writing result in an understanding that all language use is always in the process of translation. With this in mind, she suggests that multilingual and polyliterate approaches to teaching writing are needed. In a similar vein, in her chapter, Rebecca Lorimer narrates an interesting case history of three multilingual speakers negotiating for meaning in achieving their communicative goals – an act she calls "rhetorical attunement" (p. 163). The last two chapters were written by Mya Poe and John Scenters-Zapico. Poe attempts to seek the connection between disciplinary writing and professional practice. Drawing on notions of legitimate peripheral participation, she reported a rhetorical development of a multilingual student in professional writing. Her observation leads Poe to conclude that writing is always shaped by spaces beyond classrooms and facilitated by a writer's collaborative efforts with peers and mentors. Scenter-Zapico's chapter emphasizes the usefulness of the concepts *sponsors* and *gateways* in better understanding translingual experiences of students and teachers. The concepts, he argues, "can guide us ... in attempting to redefine how we teach learners who bring rich ways of learning that are intermixed and hybridized" (p. 193).

The final part is devoted to the pedagogical applications of translingualism. Maria Jerskey opens this part by stressing the important role of literacy and language brokers in helping multilingual writers develop their translingual literacy, and then suggesting how the literacy brokers program can be implemented. In her chapter, Joleen Hanson devises an online writing exercise whose purpose is to engage students in negotiating meanings across language differences, while Anita Pandey unveils a useful pedagogical framework, abbreviated as STEPS (Structure,

Theme(s), Etiquette, Purpose, and Style), for fathoming translingual discourse across linguistic levels and shows how it can be applied. Aimee Krall-Lanoue’s chapter offers a translingual approach to treating student writing errors. From this approach, Krall-Lanoue argues that student errors should not be judged as something harmful, but rather as differences in expectations, language use, and writing genre. Finally, Dorothy Worden concludes the discussions in all the chapters by offering critical reflections – a perspective from the ground floor.

Upon reading this volume, readers can surmise that the intellectual movement initiated by the proponents of translingualism is indicative of the disenchantment with the English monolingual ideology, and at the same time, of the avid promotion of the “translingual norm” (Horner, NeCamp, & Donahue, 2011). While such a movement augurs well for the composition scholarship in the context of global citizenship, and thus needs to be applauded, serious pedagogical and political challenges abound. Pedagogically, not all students and teachers are well-informed about translingual literacy. Further, doing translanguaging requires mature linguistic and rhetorical dexterity, which apparently not all multilingual students and teachers are capable of doing. Politically, English monolingual ideology is ubiquitous and widespread, posing a great challenge for the translingual movement to smoothly seep into writing pedagogy and scholarship. Furthermore, as Worden reminds us, “linguistic discrimination carries on, despite our new theories, limiting which language resources are deemed legitimate in which contexts” (p. 237).

Indubitably, this volume has generated insightful perspectives worthy of the attention of students, teachers, and researchers who speak languages other than English. Loaded with political messages, albeit surreptitious, all the chapters in this volume invite readers to a critical reflection on the relevance of bringing their agency and identities while writing in a second language or other languages as well as of challenging and even resisting the *status quo* for the sake of egalitarian literacy practices.

Despite illuminating in terms of theoretical accounts of translingualism, this volume should have included chapters on how student writings can be assessed in view of translingual practice. It is commendable that theorization on translingualism continues to spark new light, but theoretical accounts on how multilingual student writings can be assessed remains in the dark. Of particular importance here is what writing rubrics are suitable for use in writing assessment. Addressing issues related to the assessment of writing is as equally important as exploring the application of translingual practice in the teaching of writing, as some of the chapters in this volume have demonstrated.

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