

The “Translingual Turn” in Rhetoric and Composition: Bridging the Divide between Theories and Practices

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“The Discourse of Linguistic Diversity in and around Composition: Mapping Rhetoric, Policy, and Practice”

Jonathan Hall

“Overcoming Barriers to Faculty Multicompetence: Why Writing Teachers Need to develop Literacies in Multiple Languages (and What Prevents Them from Doing So)”

Ghanashyam Sharma

“Translating Success: Academic Transition Narratives of Multilingual Students as Teaching Tools in the Writing Classroom



**The Discourse of Linguistic Diversity
in and around Composition:
Mapping Rhetoric, Policy, and
Practice**

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My goals in this presentation

- ❖ Present context for the “translingual turn” in Rhet/Comp
 - disciplinary trends and language ideologies
- ❖ Broaden conceptions of what it means to be advocates for linguistic diversity and metalinguistic awareness
 - *What other tools besides “code-meshing” might belong in the “translingual toolbox”?*
- ❖ Promote student-centeredness and self-reflexivity in regards to how we respond to language difference

Where I'm coming from

- Background in TESOL/L2 writing
- Researcher in educational linguistics
 - Refugee/immigrant students transitioning into higher education
 - Writing pedagogies that tap into cultural and linguistic resources (and promote global citizenship)
- Teach courses in Writing and Linguistics
 - Mixed groups of L1/L2 writers
- “Critical pragmatist” (Pennycook, 1997)
 - Teach the “codes of power” (Delpit 1988)—while still asking students to think critically about those codes.

Language ideology in CCCC Position statements: How “progressive” are we?

Students’ Right To Their Own Language [SRTOL] (1974, 2003)

- that NCTE affirm the responsibility of all teachers of English to assist all students in the development of their **ability to speak and write better** whatever their dialects;
- that NCTE affirm the responsibility of all teachers to ...**provide the opportunity for students to learn the conventions of what has been called written edited American English**

Ebonics Training and Research (1998)

- “We strongly support the call for additional research on how educators can best build on existing knowledge about Ebonics **to help students to expand their command of the Language of Wider Communication (“standard English”)**...

CCCC National Language Policy (1988, 1992)

“English-only” and “official English” policies are
*Unnecessary, Unrealistic, Educationally Unsound,
Unfair/dangerous, Counterproductive*

Policy Goals

- To provide resources to enable native and nonnative speakers to achieve **oral and literate competence in English, the language of wider communication.**
- To support programs that assert the legitimacy of native languages and dialects ... (as well as foreign language and heritage language programs)

Teaching Second Language Writing (2001, 2009)

“We urge writing teachers and writing program administrators to:

-Recognize and take responsibility for the regular presence of second language writers in writing classes, **to understand their characteristics, and to develop instructional and administrative practices that are sensitive to their linguistic and cultural needs.**”

“Writing programs should encourage instructors **to perceive their institutional roles as guides that will help all students develop their academic literacy** by identifying the strengths and the issues that need the student's attention.”

Alternative discourses/multi-modal writing: Challenging standard language ideology?

Multiple Uses of Writing (2007)

“...writing instruction is being called upon to multiply its vision and expand student abilities, **to move outward from its traditional emphasis on academic contexts and forms** to include public, cross-cultural, professional, personal, and artistic contexts and forms.”

“...the Conference on College Composition and Communication affirms that **many genres and uses of writing** must be taught well in the nation’s schools, colleges, and universities”

“Code-meshing”

THE PRAGMATIC RATIONALE

- Students need to be prepared to write in a multilingual world
- “Code-meshing” is common practice among multilinguals, and is therefore a useful rhetorical strategy

THE PROGRESSIVE RATIONALE

- Code-meshing is a way to challenge oppressive “standard language ideology” and “monolingualist” assumptions
- Acceptance and encouragement of code-meshing demonstrates value and respect for linguistic diversity

Bonus: Code-meshing might give monolinguals the opportunity to experience the feelings of marginalization often felt by their multilingual peers!

What do MY students (multilingual and monolingual) have to say about “code-meshing”?

Not very pragmatic

- Besides in creative writing, when will I need this? Who’s the audience?
- What other “codes” am I (a “monolingual”) supposed to use?
 - Should I try to find a way to use “crick” in my paper?
 - “Is WASP a linguistic community?”
- I’ve never been taught to do this!!

Not very progressive

- How does this empower anyone?
- What’s wrong with learning standard academic writing (i.e. “codes of power”)?
- Where’s the research on student responses (including resistance!) to this?

NOTE: Some of these arguments have been raised in recent publications
e.g. Guerra, 2012; Lu & Horner, 2013; Matsuda, 2013; Habib & Zawacki, 2014;

Other ways to “go translingual”

“Languaging about language”

- “The English Language in a Global Context”
- “English Grammar: Concepts and Controversies”
- “Language and Social Justice” (e.g., language discrimination)

Siczek & Shapiro, 2014 in Cox & Zawacki [Eds]- WAC Clearinghouse

Shapiro & Siczek, forthcoming and at AAAL tomorrow 😊

Collaboration with foreign languages

- L2 writers as foreign language tutors (with cross-training in WC!)
- [Translingual Magazine](http://translingual.org) (translingual.org)

Emphasis on rhetorical flexibility

- Writing (and speaking) for a public audience
- Written role-play (Shapiro, 2009)
- And yes, sometimes code-switching --e.g. “[Reflexiones en bilingüe.](#)”

What we need to keep talking about...

1. How can we better articulate our stance(s) on “linguistic diversity” in Rhet/Comp?
2. How can we draw on research in other fields (e.g. linguistics) to inform our understanding of language?
3. What would a “critically pragmatic” stance toward translingualism look like in research and practice?
 - More focus on student needs and perspectives
 - More self-reflexivity and “practicing what we preach”
 - Less dichotomous thinking about pragmatist (assimilationist) vs. progressive (deviant/resistant) approaches

References/Further Reading

Critical Pragmatism

Pennycook, A. (1997). Vulgar pragmatism, critical pragmatism, and EAP. *English for Specific Purposes*, 16(4), 253-269.

Also see work by **Benesch, Durst, Delpit, and many others—incl John **Dewey!**

Translingual approach

Horner, B., Lu, M-Z., Royster, J., and Trimbur, J. (2011). Language Difference in Writing: Towards a Translingual Approach. *College English*, 73 (3), 303-321.

Also see work of many other scholars—e.g. in **Canagarajah, 2013 [Ed]**

<http://www.translingualwriting.com/> <http://caitlah.cal.msu.edu/itrn/bibliography/translingualism/>

Recent critiques/reconsiderations

Guerra, J. (2012). From Code-Segregation to Code-Switching to Code-Meshing: Finding Deliverance from Deficit Thinking through Language Awareness and Performance. *LRA Yearbook*, 61.

Habib, A. S., & Zawacki, T. (2014). Negotiating “Errors” in L2 Writing: Faculty Dispositions and Language Difference. In Cox & Zawacki (Eds.), *WAC and Second Language Writers...* The WAC Clearinghouse.

Lu, M. Z., & Horner, B. (2013). Translingual Literacy, Language Difference, and Matters of Agency. *College English*, 75(6), 582-607.

Matsuda, P. K. (2013). It’s the Wild West Out There: A New Linguistic Frontier in U.S. College Composition. In **S. Canagarajah (Ed.)**, *Writing as Translingual Practice in Academic Contexts*. Routledge.

Thank you!!

These slides, my CV, and links to teaching resources for courses referenced here, are available at

<http://shawnashapiro.com/>

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