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CODE-SWITCHING AND ITS CHALLENGES:  
PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSLANGUAGING IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

by  
Michael Spooner

A portfolio submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah  
2017

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of Alberto, whose full name I do not know.

Alberto was a Puerto Rican man who worked long ago with my father in a machine shop in Milwaukee. Alberto loved Spanish, his first language, and especially the way it was spoken in Puerto Rico. Even in their gritty blue-collar context, Alberto modeled the value of multilingualism, and he encouraged my young father to resurrect what remained of his high-school Spanish.

That was before my time. Years later, as a child in Alaska, I found a handwritten letter from Alberto that my father had saved. I stared at the Spanish words and tried to sound them out. I came back to the letter many times, and, at some point, I memorized Alberto's last line:

*No olvides la lengua bonita.* Don't forget the beautiful language.

Alberto, I am three times older now than my father was when you knew him, but language learning still fascinates us both. Thank you.

## ABSTRACT

Code-Switching and Its Challenges:  
Perspectives on Translanguaging in the EFL/ESL Classroom

by

Michael Spooner: Master of Second Language Teaching  
Utah State University, 2017

Major Professor: Dr. Karin deJonge-Kannan

Department: Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies

Structured in sections that represent the author's teaching perspectives and research perspectives, the portfolio comprises reflective pieces written at the end of the Master of Second Language Teaching program and other pieces written as coursework during the author's study in that program. In the first section, the author describes the principles that guide his own teaching and, in light of those principles, he reviews his experience as a learner, reports on observations of other teachers, and assesses his own performance based on observations done by others. The second section offers a set of four research papers that progressively develop and explore questions of code-switching and its potential for research-based application in EFL/ESL pedagogy.

A long history of bilingual pedagogy in ESL exists, the author points out, but has largely been neglected since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Current research in translanguaging and translingualism offer a solid rationale for effective use of learners' first language in EFL/ESL teaching, with particular attention to code-switching. His

position questions the traditional English-only classroom, arguing that monolingual policies are rooted in unexamined cultural fears and biases. The author suggests that a more appropriate balance can be achieved through teacher education based on examples in the research and in recent pedagogical work.

(186 pages)

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACTFL = American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

ALM = Audio Lingual Method

CLT = Communicative Language Teaching

CS = Code-Switching

DLI = Dual-Language Instruction

ELL = English Language Learner

ESL/EFL/EIL = English as a Second/Foreign/International Language

L1 = First Language / Native Language

L2 = Second Language

MATESOL = Master of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

MSLT = Master of Second Language Teaching

SATS = Self-Assessment of Teaching Statement

SCT = Sociocultural Theory

SLA = Second Language Acquisition

TBA = Task-Based Activity

USU = Utah State University

ZPD = Zone of Proximal Development

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One always owes more than one can say.

My sincere gratitude to my fellow students in the MSLT program. They have been so patient with the older student in the back, and I am beyond grateful for what I learned from them at every turn. I hope I never behaved in the ways that sometimes afflict nontraditional students, especially us older American white guys.

Many, many thanks to my committee members. Each of them has taught me more and inspired me more deeply than they imagine; individually, every year, they make a lifelong impact on *all* their students, and they have made the same difference to me. It is an honor to have been in their charge, and I hope that my work reflects well on them and on their wonderful program.

Finally, I want to acknowledge, even cherish, the debt I owe to my wife and fellow sojourner, who in so many ways has made this enriching adventure possible.

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE PORTFOLIO

Every path is unique, so let me offer a very brief narrative of how I came to the MSLT program at Utah State University.

In 1979, I finished a master's degree in American literature. Two years later, perhaps to redeem myself, I enrolled in an MATESOL program, and I nearly completed that program before life circumstances called me away. I regretted leaving language study behind, but as it happened, my work was in scholarly publishing, and in fields that allowed me to remain in touch with research and pedagogy in literacy, culture, language, composition, ESL, and other fields. By the time I applied to the MSLT program in 2013, my publishing career was nearly over, and grad school was 30 years in the past.

Finding this program, then, was a chance for me to close a circle, and I entered it thanking my lucky stars for the opportunity. To be sure, it was strange to be the nontraditional (older than the other students, the professor, the technology, windows, furniture), but that struck me as simple difference, something I should get used to. I had been exposed to some research and theory, but my fellow students brought far wider experience of teaching, of learning languages, of living in international contexts, and of other sorts of preparation.

There are more details where relevant in the pages that follow, but I think it might help orient the reader to know just this much about me here at the outset.

§

A portfolio offers a sample of one's work, but more than that, it is a selected and prepared sample. It is one's work tarted up. Accordingly, I have structured this portfolio to highlight a few themes that came to hold special interest for me across the many

subjects that one studies in this program. A reader will notice especially that I am drawn to sociolinguistic issues. Questions of pragmatics and of language alternation—code-switching and translingual theory in particular—are threads woven through perhaps every page that follows.

The Teaching Perspectives portion is called the center of the portfolio, and it includes several pieces. First, the Apprenticeship of Observation reflects on my own experience of language learning, especially in school, and invites comparison to what we know of language pedagogy in the current era. Next, in the Professional Environment, I offer a few brief thoughts on the context in which I would like to find myself teaching.

The longer, more detailed Teaching Philosophy Statement focuses on a handful of principles that guide my approach to the work and the profession of teaching. In essence, I argue that to teach a language is inherently to seek common ground. Language teachers connect people across cultures; we stand literally for mutual understanding.

Finally, this first section includes a discussion of my professional development through observation of other teachers and then a self-assessment of my own teaching based on notes from those who have observed me.

The second major section of the portfolio is Research Perspectives. This includes four papers written to fulfill course assignments in the MSLT program. These papers, essentially artifacts of my coursework, elaborate the themes of the teaching philosophy above by reviewing the relevant research literature and addressing the implications of this literature for my own teaching.

Of these, the first paper is a critical reflection on an experience I had early in the program while volunteering at a community ESL program. The essay describes how a

student and I subverted the school's policy to speak only in English and what there might be to learn from that. The second paper explores the area of pragmatics, with particular attention to conventions of greeting. In my view, greetings give us a glimpse of how cultural differences create misunderstanding, and of how we can recover from misunderstanding.

The third paper develops a proposal for an empirical study of code-switching in the classroom, a subject that is raised throughout the portfolio. It appears that most language teaching operates from monolingual assumptions about code-switching, and this paper represents how I might study the question if I had but world enough and time. Finally, in the fourth paper, I bring these several strands together in a discussion of translingual theory and research, which then develops into a pair of classroom lessons demonstrating what a translingual approach to EFL teaching might look like.

Following these four papers is an annotated bibliography, a review of some of the research literature relevant to the question of code-switching in the language classroom, with particular attention to the long-established convention of teaching only in the target language—i.e., forbidding pedagogical code-switching. The first section of this literature review looks at the research and theory base for target-language-only teaching (especially English-only), and the second half focuses on studies of classrooms where code-switching is in fact employed.

In the final portion of the portfolio, a short section called Looking Forward, I consider the professional directions I hope to take in the future.

## TEACHING PERSPECTIVES

## APPRENTICESHIP OF OBSERVATION

My father has always had interesting friends. To me as a child, he was never very interesting himself—just a quiet, stern, and very tall man, who drove a big delivery truck to pay for his tuition at the University of Alaska. But when I was in grade school, I began to notice that, as ordinary as my father was, his friends could be fascinating. On any Friday evening in the long Alaskan winter, you might meet one of them—a trapper, a student, a man from the villages—bumping knees with us around my mother’s table.

I have a particular memory of a man called Joseph Okadara, an international student my father brought home a few times when I was about seven. My mother warned me to be polite, because “Joe” was a guest in our country; he was from Nigeria, she said, and over there he was considered a prince. (Later, I learned this was not so, but it never diminished the impression he made on me.) Joe leaned down to shake my hand as if I were an adult, as if any boy in Alaska deserved the attention of a prince. On his cheeks, I could see the stripes of traditional scarring that he got when he was a boy like me. When he spoke, the consonants were percussive, the vowels were round and melodic.

“A very great pleasure to meet you, sir,” he said. “Can you understand me?”

“Yes, sir.” I said.

He smiled very broadly and squeezed my shoulder. “Ha! This is because your father help me to speak the English.”

§

My experience of language education in the public schools was typical for the U.S. in the 1960s. My teachers were behaviorists, trained in ALM: Students sat in straight rows; we



repeated the phrases spoken by the teacher; we memorized dialogues from the textbook and performed them in front of the class:

Hola, Isabel. ¿Como estás?

Estoy bien, gracias. ¿Donde está la biblioteca?

English was the language of Spanish instruction even during my eighth-grade year, when our teacher was a Mexican national. Students were never asked to work with each other on a task of particular interest to us. We followed the book. We filled in the blanks. Once a week, we sat in booths with fat headphones clamped to our ears, repeating pattern drills or answering literal comprehension questions after listening to a recorded story. Often, we spoke gleeful nonsense until the teacher's voice in the headphones snapped us back to the lesson. The only moments of spontaneity that I can recall from my early language education was when our teacher had fun with my name. "Meetch-ay-el," she would say. "Señor Es-Spoonerrr."

In college, I married a French speaker, and in grad school I took courses in beginning French. These courses were taught by graduate students who were advanced speakers of the language but not advanced teachers—and who worked from a syllabus designed in the 1970s. Homework included listening by telephone to a recorded mystery story: *Suivez la Piste!* and answering literal comprehension questions. Additionally, we would meet sometimes in a very early computer lab, where we used a programmed-learning module written for the Plato system. Here again, we sat in straight rows, but this time each of us faced a green blinking cursor on a 10-inch screen as we answered multiple-choice questions with A, B, C, or D. If we answered enough questions correctly, Plato would allow us to move on to a new section of the program.

I learned somewhat more from my wife's French-speaking friends. Sitting in a pizza restaurant, André the Romanian would tip his head toward a waiter across the room and ask me in a rude murmur, “Est-ce qu’il est p.d.?” or would shrug about the pizza, “*Bof. C’est pas dégoûtant.*” I struck up a friendship with one of my TAs, and one summer in exchange for café au lait, she met with me once a week for unstructured conversation in French. From my wife herself, I learned more, and especially internalized the Parisian shrug and pout: “*Bof. . .*” and three unforgettable phrases in domestic French: *bouge pas*, *touche pas*, and *tais-toi*. My French never grew past the beginner level, but it lasted longer than the marriage.

In the early 1980s, I studied toward an MATESOL degree at the University of Illinois, with a faculty that included Douglas Brown, Braj Kachru, and Sandra Savignon. There I was introduced to communicative language teaching, to concepts like contact language, communicative competence, and comparative discourse. It fascinated me. And it made intuitive sense that the teaching of language would be most effective when it was focused on the meaningful and the communicative, because language is fundamentally semiotic, and its employment is fundamentally the exchange and negotiation of meaning. A new job and new family pulled me away before I could finish that program.

As an adult learner, I have spent time in several Spanish-speaking countries, studying with my wife in language schools organized to offer "education vacation" experiences for Spanish learners. Our fellow students were often Europeans or Americans of college age, who were attending primarily to get study-abroad credit, to flirt, and to fiesta every night. Our teachers were L1 Spanish speakers, and they conducted class entirely in Spanish. I appreciated this, and although there was plenty of decontextualized

grammar drill and practice, I especially enjoyed the twenty minutes or so of conversation they included in each four-hour class period. I did notice, however, that students were never asked to talk to each other, let alone to choose a topic, solve a problem, achieve a task, discuss an issue, etc. “Conversation” consisted normally of the teacher pointing to a particular student and asking them what they did the previous night. (Fiesta.) Sometimes, the teacher would ask us to tell a story from our own country or relate a personal experience. In one country, our teacher made a point to adapt her lessons to subjects of interest to the students, and consequently, she took us on tours of the city, during which we spoke constantly about the culture, education, architecture, and history.

I loved learning from teachers who were native speakers, but even more, I enjoyed how the immersion experience outside the classroom provided opportunities for spontaneous and meaningful communication with strangers in shops, restaurants, bars, and other places. I watched the 2010 World Cup with the *gitano* owner of a corner bar in Salamanca, who passed me *chupitos* of aguardiente from under the counter. I chatted with my landlady in Ecuador about music and church and her grandchildren. I explained myself painfully to an unsmiling Mexican *doctora* about where I might have picked up a *parásito*, and listened to her stern warnings against drinking alcohol until I had finished the full course of the medicine.

For a time, my wife and I met once a week with a local teacher in Utah who tutored adult learners in Spanish. Our teacher was an immigrant from Mexico and a well-educated person, but again I was in a traditional classroom. As I wrote papers for the MSLT program on weekends, I was aware that I needed to finish painful deberes for Spanish class on Monday evening: substitution exercises in the subjunctive.

Throughout my experience of language education, without a doubt, I have learned from each of my teachers, and I have appreciated their multilingualism and especially their pride in their home language and culture. I don't regret the time spent, even learning in what I knew was an inefficient manner. Yet I have always left the language classroom wishing for a deeper linguistic and cultural experience.

§

When my father was 83, I told him that my wife and I were learning Spanish and hoped to live someday in Latin America. My father has left Alaska no more than six times since 1955, but his eyes lit up when I said this. "Nice," he said.

"You still have that letter from your friend Alberto?" I asked him. "I used to get it out sometimes and stare at the Spanish."

"Probably," my dad said. "But I don't know where it is."

"Who was he?"

"So," he said. "Alberto was a Puerto Rican guy I worked with at the Louis Allis Company in Milwaukee. We packed electric motors for shipping. His English was good—way better than my high school Spanish—but he preferred Spanish. Ha. He used to joke that Mexicans talk funny."

"I always remembered the last line of that letter," I said.

He grinned. "No olvides la lengua bonita!"

My father has always had interesting friends. I must remember to ask him about Joe Okadara.

## PROFESSIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Being a non-traditional student comes with a different set of hopes and dreams from those I might have if I were younger. That is, I entered the MSLT program as I was beginning to plan my retirement, so my professional target has not been a career so much as a career change. Personal enrichment has been a big part of what has driven me; life's surprises drew me away from the study of TESOL many years ago, so returning to it now is to come back to an intellectual place I have always regretted leaving.

In preparing to teach EFL/ESL, my purpose first of all has been to learn as much as possible about research-based practice, and then to seek opportunities in the short term to work with Spanish-speaking (and other) immigrants in the local area. At the same time, because I am committed to a translingual orientation, I have continued to work on my own proficiency in Spanish in both formal and informal contexts.

I find myself most interested in the pedagogy of the tutorial—teaching one-to-one or one-to-few. Successful work in this environment depends on the same sound principles of communicative language teaching that success in a classroom situation does, but I appreciate how it allows for (or perhaps even requires) more improvisation and more attention to the individual student's particular goals and needs.

There is a growing literature on teaching one-to-one with international students in college writing studies, especially in writing center pedagogy. As a publisher, I have had a hand in sponsoring some of this work, along with other work in multilingual rhetoric, translingualism, international writing programs, and anti-racist activism. I think my exposure to this work has enlarged my understanding of EFL/ESL/EIL speakers and has influenced my general orientation in favor of translingual pedagogies.

In the long term, my hope is to find a way to live in a Latin American country. There, I would hope to discover potential teaching positions either in a formal higher education situation or in a corporate training environment, working with adult professionals who need to improve their communication in English for purposes of business, government, or cultural exchange.

## TEACHING PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

### **Introduction**

Contemporary Americans are socialized to believe that ours is an exceptional nation, a chosen nation, and a culture entitled to lead the world. Although the phrase “American exceptionalism” is currently used to imply something different from its original meaning (Scheid, 2012), it has been part of U.S. political discourse since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Tocqueville, 2003). Some Americans even hold it as a religious doctrine (*cf.* 3 Ne 21:4, *Book of Mormon*).

How many Americans hold American exceptionalism as their default view was brought home to me shortly after the World Trade Center fell to terrorists in 2001. In the news at that time, for example, I heard Afghanis described as primitive, mostly illiterate, tribal peoples who live to fight. After a bombing at a KFC restaurant in Pakistan, U.S. Senator Henry Hyde asked rhetorically, “Why would anyone want to destroy a KFC?” A pundit heatedly opined, “We have the best marketers in the world; we just need to get out and improve our image over there.”

I wish that comments like those above were uncommon (“exceptional” in another sense), but they are echoed throughout our politics, education, news and social media, and our public discourse, especially at the time of this writing. A former Pakistani ambassador put it rather archly: “Americans sometimes make the mistake of thinking that the only thing they need to know about the rest of the world is: Whom do we shoot, and whom do we take to lunch?” (Haqqani, 2013). Touché.

As an American and a teacher, it shocks me that my fellow citizens see cross-cultural relations as a one-way exchange whose function is to replace other cultures with our own—whether via marketing, education, missionary work, or military invasion. It seems we are very much like the British Empire that planted us in North America 400 years ago. Still, and on a more encouraging note, Jakubiak and Smagorinsky conclude that these attitudes appear much less often among Americans with teaching credentials (Jakubiak & Smagorinsky, 2016).

I am investing myself in teaching EFL for modest reasons, none of which involve extending the American Empire or, on the other hand, rehabilitating the American reputation. I am drawn to it because the teaching of language represents a discipline that has played a vital role in civilization since before the Vedas were composed, or *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Today, language study is perhaps even more important, since cultural and commercial exchange—and warfare—can be effected instantaneously on a global scale. The study of language and culture probably *could* save the world if world leaders, especially those in my country, were willing to engage it.

I see any act of teaching as a sociocultural act—even a political act—with potential influence on individual learners. But I am no idealist. Teachers exist within institutional and cultural structures that, in all practical terms, deny them the power to change the world. Realistically, they are paid and empowered to do little more than reinforce the status quo. Not only that, but to change a student's mind (let alone the world) is far harder than it might seem. Brewer (2013) finds, for example, that even explicit curricular efforts to inculcate liberatory values among university graduate



instructors have little effect; the resilience of personal and cultural preconceptions is too powerful to overcome—at least via direct address.

My analysis of the data reveals that graduate instructors came to their first semester of teaching with powerful preconceptions about why people read, write, and engage in other literacy activities, and that these positions deeply affected their teaching. . . . I contend that each graduate instructor had one *primary conception* [of literacy] which acted as a kind of lens through which every other conception was viewed and filtered. (Brewer, 2013)

However, at least to teach a language is inherently to seek out others, and this can have its effect. Language teachers lobby in minuscule ways for enriching human lives. We expose students to worlds beyond their preconceptions; we connect people across cultures; we stand literally for mutual understanding—and thus for international peace.

### **Language learning**

Of course, teaching is not *only* sociocultural; clearly, it also enacts a theory of learning. However, I have the impression from most teachers I know, even those in higher education, that they are not deeply aware of the theoretical roots of their own teaching practice. Some are frankly impatient with theory; they prefer to live in the more physical, more vital, world of “what works” in the classroom. They are practical. But teachers do see theory as consequential, and they acknowledge that refinements in theories of learning over the last century have brought useful improvements to instruction. In the next page or two, I will briefly sketch the genealogy of the research that informs my own approach to instruction. Afterward, I will look at the pedagogy implied in that

scholarship, with attention to *roles* of teacher and student, *instructional design*, and the *affective environment* in the classroom.

Two competing ideas of how humans learn, behaviorism and constructivism, deserve special notice. Developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they both continue to influence pedagogies in language acquisition and other knowledge domains today.

### ***Behaviorism***

Behavioristic learning theory developed in the early mid-20<sup>th</sup> century from work in experimental psychology like that of Pavlov and (later) of Skinner. Behaviorists showed that controlling or manipulating environmental factors (stimuli) would cause a learner to internalize desired responses. (Desired by the experimenter, that is.) Although behaviorism does demonstrably produce effects, it is something of a stretch to call those effects *learning*; more accurate is to call them *training* or *conditioning*. Behaviorism perseveres today because it offers useful methods of creating cognitive change in learning situations where the goal is not knowledge creation but behavior modification, for example in some applications in special education or the military or animal studies. Applied to language learning—for example in the audio-lingual method (ALM)—behaviorism manifests in pedagogies designed (1) to create and reinforce speaking and writing habits that produce desired language structures, and (2) to prevent the learner from developing habits that reinforce errors. The focus is on language as a set of formal, manipulable structures; reproducing those structures without error is the measure of successful language learning. But behavioristic language teaching programs like ALM, even after decades of systematic application in schools, proved to be significantly less

effective than constructive, communicative pedagogies developed later (Hatch, 1978; Savignon, 1972; Swain, 1985)

### ***Constructivism***

Cognitive constructivism is a cover term for a range of theoretical positions taken by psychological researchers and learning theorists. Derry (1996) calls constructivism a metaphor that attempts to capture the nature of cognitive process, and suggests that it has consensus acceptance among educational researchers. Vygotsky's famous Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978) is a good example, as it emphasizes the role of linking new concepts to older ones already present in the mind of the learner. Schema theory likewise explains cognition in terms of linking or building bridges between new and old, and underlies the very influential pedagogical concept of scaffolding.

This constructivist understanding of learning, as it was developed through the 1970s and 1980s, offered a significant challenge to behavioristic learning theory. By all accounts, humans do not ingest big data like a computer. We do not upload decontextualized information and store it unaltered until we have reason to call upon it; rather, we learn by linking concept to concept in meaningful context. Cognition is for us a constructive and integrative process (Nassaji, 2007), and what we construct—perhaps most clearly when it comes to language acquisition—is *meaning*. Important for teachers of language is the implication here that learning is a developmental, painstaking, unconscious, recursive, and *slow* process (cf. the “givens” of Lee and VanPatten, 2003, p. 15).

Research in communicative language teaching (CLT) implies that language cannot be reduced to a finite set of formal behaviors and suggests that this is why the value of behaviorism for language learning is limited. Rather, CLT argues, language must be understood as an infinitely *negotiable exchange of meaning in context*, between persons with an authentic reason to communicate. Lee and VanPatten put it this way: “[O]ne thing remains clear: Communicative language ability . . . develops as learners engage in communication and not as a result of habit formation with grammatical items” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 51). CLT pedagogy, then, will deliver instruction via invented communicative situations—tasks, often—that require students to create, exchange, and negotiate meaning. Communicative pedagogies exploit the learner's attention to the meaning of the input—its content rather than its form. In a communicative situation, the need to respond is compelling, perhaps because humans are meaning-making creatures, perhaps because we are socialized to respond to communication. Either way, CLT aims to exploit a structure deep in the human mind, and this may be the key to its success.

### **Pedagogy**

Scholars and teachers of language attend to research in order to learn what are the current hypotheses and findings about processes of learning and, equally important, to reflect on how they can adjust their own pedagogy toward an ever more research-based practice. In second-language-acquisition (SLA) research published recently in English (in fact, for years), a consensus is apparent that communicative pedagogies are most appropriate and most effective. To adopt a CLT approach, however, requires a teacher to consider and potentially reconfigure a number of elements in the classroom. Among these are the

roles/responsibilities of teacher and student, the design of instructional activities, and the classroom's affective dimension.

### ***Traditional teacher and student roles***

An acquaintance of mine is a potter in Japan. He once told me that, when you are the apprentice of a traditional potter, “the master will teach you nothing; to him, you are a useful nuisance. But if you watch him closely, sometimes you can steal a technique from the master. Sometimes a tool.”

Any moment of instruction necessarily involves an encounter between persons with different levels of knowledge. Instead of rejecting traditional approaches automatically, it is useful to see them as designed to acknowledge, via roles, the differential between teacher and learner. The master knows worlds more than the apprentice; it is only good manners to honor this greater knowledge and even to invoke it formally in roles and responsibilities in the classroom. To do otherwise dishonors the wisdom of the teacher and flirts with chaos.

Still, a pedagogy that emphasizes or depends on hierarchical relationships can put effective learning at risk. Traditional language instruction configures the teacher as the dispenser of knowledge, essentially transmitting it in units at a predetermined pace and time from the head of the classroom. In this “transmission model” of education, the teacher is the source of knowledge, but, because the learner is positioned in a mostly passive role, receiving what the teacher transmits, the teacher also retains responsibility for learning. This reflects a behaviorist theory of learning, because the teacher provides not just the environment but all the stimulus, as well; if students don't learn, the teacher is accountable.

The master/apprentice model of instruction that my potter friend experienced is also a traditional one. But there, all responsibility for learning is given to the learner; the teacher is not only the source of knowledge, but might even withhold it, feeling no responsibility to convey it, because the learner is expected actively to “steal” it. If learning doesn’t occur, it is because the apprentice has made unwise, or perhaps too few, choices.

### ***Roles in Communicative Language Teaching***

One of the reasons that I find CLT persuasive for my own pedagogy is that it takes a middle approach to roles and responsibilities for learning. While the knowledge differential between student and teacher clearly exists in the same way it does in all teaching situations, the evidence from the SLA research we saw above argues that language learning happens less effectively through a transmission model, and more effectively in the context of meaningful communication between learners. Thus, a research-based pedagogy will not involve a great number of lectures, substitution drills, memorization/recitation, or decontextualized grammar instruction. Neither will it involve an aloof teacher, offering a negligent, sink-or-swim, learning environment.

In my own classroom, I strive for a balance of roles and responsibilities consistent with CLT. While my role as designer of the environment and facilitator of instruction gives me a crucial set of responsibilities, I want the student to feel a responsibility for learning, as well. Thus, I design tasks and activities for students that require them to communicate, to share and supply information, to negotiate meanings with other students and with me. Perhaps to steal an insight.

### *Instructional design and the affective domain*

It is a fundamental of good teaching to begin with the needs of the learner—in Vygotskian terms, to offer instruction that can extend the learner from his or her actual developmental level toward the level of potential development (Vygotsky, p. 86)—and this is a guiding principle in my approach to instructional design. Keying instruction to students’ developmental needs, I also aim to meet them in a subject area that will interest them socially, intellectually, or aesthetically.

Meeting students in areas where they are interested should not be confused with an effort to flatter or cajole students; it is a strategy founded on researchers’ understanding of brain development. Lee and VanPatten report that “Hatch (1978), for example, suggests that during communication, learners ‘negotiate’ or ‘regulate’ the kind of input they receive so that they obtain input suited to their individual needs” (2003, p. 50). “Negotiated” or “regulated” or “filtered” input is another way to name “intake,” that part of comprehensible input that learners actually “take in.” To adjust instructional design in such a way that learner intake is optimized responds to the argument of Sousa (2006) and others that the influence of affect on learning should not be underestimated. Affect is the domain of both motivation and anxiety, and the research is clear that more successful language acquisition occurs in an instructional environment where learner motivation is enhanced and anxiety is diminished.

Motivation is enhanced, for example, when student emotional investment is triggered by instructional activities that engage them socially—through role-playing, simulations of real-world situations, or nearly any communicative meaning-making task. In his review of brain research, Sousa (2006) reports that learners use emotion to focus

their learning and to judge what is important to learn. Further, he suggests that the most significant emotion-related trigger for student attention is *meaning*. It is well known, Sousa points out, that in the face of a physical threat, neurons associated with rational thought can be overwhelmed by the chemistry of fear, and abandoned. By similar neurochemical processes, emotion can reinforce or enhance retention of meaning. Accordingly, whereas traditional instructional paradigms (for example, behaviorism) hold that emotion has little place in the curriculum, Sousa argues that “we need to enlighten educators about how emotions consistently affect attention and learning” (2006, p. 47) both positively and negatively.

I have always been intrigued by the comment of Lee and VanPatten (2003) that what is important in instructional input is not its content but that it occurs in the context of an exchange of meaning. Effective input, they write, “is language in some kind of interchange no matter how trivial or how important” (2003, p.16). Echoing Sousa, this implies that the learner's attention to the meaning of the input is the key, because in a communicative situation—in an exchange of meaning whether important or trivial—learners feel the need to respond. Hence, any communicative input is motivating; this seems to be one of those axes where neuroscience and good teaching practice reinforce each other.

I wouldn't describe myself as an especially sociable person, but in the classroom, I gravitate toward small-group instruction, even one-to-one tutorials, in which task-based activities (TBAs) play a role. Even beyond the exchanges of meaning that are involved in TBAs, tasks cause learners to respond to the imperatives of that intersection of motivation and communication. TBAs enhance group cohesion, and this resonates with



the affective needs of learners. The sense of membership in a larger whole is itself motivational, whether that whole is an short-term study group or a whole profession. *Identity* is such a mutable and negotiable thing as we pass between and among relationships. What CLT teachers seem to intuit is that students will learn more effectively if they identify as members of a meaningful *joint* endeavor. Accordingly, in an L2 classroom, I look for points of commonality from which to build group identities. The matter often seems as simple as finding *any* common ground. Again, Lee and VanPatten's comment comes to mind that successful language learning will result from meaningful "interchange, no matter how trivial or important." A psychologist might say that it's possible, even in the forming and re-forming of small groups for random TBAs in a language classroom, that the identity factor can be engaged. We are here for this moment, collaborating on a joint project of meaning-making; no matter how trivial, how temporary, the *jointness* of the activity triggers an identification with others—an affective connection—that will enhance the learning of all partners.

### ***Teaching with Technology***

About 2.8 million years ago, some member of the hominid species *Homo habilis* smashed one rock against another, breaking the rocks to produce a cutting edge.

The first technology had been discovered: the technology of fracture.

—Eberhart, *Why Things Break*

I think I approach technology with more skepticism than my fellow students do. Maybe this is because I spent my childhood in a very rural place, where the most basic conveniences of my own culture (phone, electricity, plumbing) were simply unavailable. Like many people in developing countries, I am well-acquainted with technologies of

subsistence and bricolage—like the water bucket, the cast iron stove; like leather, rope, wood, and wire; the axe and machete. My philosophy of technology is rooted there.

So I would say that if Eberhart (above) is right about breaking rocks to produce a cutting edge, not only is fracture the first technology, but it also signals the most important thing to know about a technology: why it breaks.

The primal character of rock-chipping illustrates how invisible our technologies, our tools, can be. A tool seems natural, instrumental, not worth attention. Even a digital technology is rendered invisible when we call it a tool. “An app is only a tool,” one often hears in student discussions, “like a hammer.” Blake’s word of caution about this is well-taken: “[A]ll tools mediate our experiences . . . they are not value free” (Blake, 2013, p. 2); here he echoes a sociocultural understanding of tools. Even simple tools are not merely instrumental; they arise from a culture, and they express a culture, just as words do. As such, tools are fundamentally conceptual and mediational.

In Western culture, for example we take the Gregorian calendar as normative, neutral, and secular. But this same calendar clearly promotes Christianity when it is considered from an Islamic or a Chinese point of view, just as the Chinese and Islamic calendars express their own cultural history. That is where calendars fracture. And, in the same way, I would argue that we cannot know the proper use of any app or classroom technology until we can see why and where it fractures.

By fracture, I don’t mean simply the point where it no longer works for our lesson plan. I mean we need to think about what its pedagogical or cultural boundaries are, what its agenda is, and where its agenda departs from our own. Rubio’s work (Rubio, 2015.) confirms that no classroom technology is magical: the key to success in teaching with

technology is in the pedagogy itself. In fact, it is fundamental that we recognize ways in which the design of a technology privileges a particular pedagogy or learning theory. Many of the learning modules online, for example, whether for language learning or some other purpose, emerge from clearly behaviorist theories of learning (e.g., Duolingo, Rosetta Stone, LiveMocha). Others might be interactionist, sociocultural, or hybrid. Importantly, then, a teacher must discover the lines of possible pedagogical fracture in a given technology, and must evaluate them before integrating that technology to the curriculum.

What seems even more likely to remain invisible is the fault line of cultural fracture. In a practicum course, one of my classmates developed a lesson for teaching future tense (the tense of prediction) with Tarot cards or I-Ching. It sounded like an appealing ESL activity—playful, engaging, well-suited to the objective, and with a fun American cultural dimension. I thought I might try it in a practice lesson. But then it dawned on me that in the same classroom with me were Mormons, who avoid cards and divination, and Muslims, who avoid divination and iconic images. What seemed at first like “only a tool” now fractured along a cultural boundary that had at first been invisible to me.

We have to ask, then: What problems might we cause if we assign L2 students to use Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, or a blog? If a student is from a country that doesn't protect freedom of speech the way many democracies do, and we ask them to post in a self-expressive, freewheeling American style, we might expose them to retaliation by their home institution or government. Less seriously, while a young American teacher may see earning Duolingo *lingots* (a pun combining “language” and “ingot”) as fun and

motivating, this program clearly promotes a sort of baby capitalism and normalizes a juvenile American competitiveness. These are simple examples of zones of potential fracture that an L2 teacher needs to recognize.

For cross-cultural teachers, it seems to me, a philosophy of technology in the classroom requires, first of all, a cultural meta-consciousness. We need to recognize what we're asking students to do when we assign them to use our tools.

### **Translingualism**

Throughout this portfolio, the theme of language alternation and its role in EFL/ESL teaching emerges frequently, so I won't explore it in any depth here. But I should mention that I understand translingualism as a theory of, or an orientation toward, multilingualism. Translingualism sees languages not as isolable but as permeable, and the competence of a multilingual speaker not as multiple separate competences but as one integrated competence. In a sense, the suggestion here is that all language is one resource, and to speak of multiple languages is only to point to different general regions in a vast semiotic sphere.

It seems predictable that this theory would grow from sociolinguistic roots, especially from studies of languages in contact zones, and that it would have much to say regarding code-switching (CS), with implications for the language classroom. I address these ideas later in the portfolio, but here let me say that I take a pedagogically permissive stance toward codeswitching. The empirical studies that have been done (e.g., Gumperz, 1982; Sampson, 2012; Toribio, 2002) and the experiential reports of language teachers (e.g., King & Chetty, 2014; Schwartz & Asli, 2014) both suggest to me that CS has great value for the cognitive, the cultural, and the affective domains.

For these reasons, I generally resist the doctrine of target-language-only in the L2 classroom, though I do support the teacherly instinct to operate *primarily* in the target language. Working from a stance informed by translingual theory and by studies of how CS is actually used by multilinguals and by effective teachers, it seems to me that a teacher can find the right balance for any classroom. Ultimately, I would follow Li and Mahboob in the view that the appropriate use of language alternation in the classroom is a matter that should be taken up systematically in TESOL teacher education (Li, 2017; Mahboob, 2017).

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TEACHING OBSERVATIONS

MSLT students are expected to observe a number of classrooms through the course of the program, and to do so with a view toward what they might learn and apply toward their own teacherly development. Observation, then, is conceived as an opportunity for reflection, transfer, and growth, not as an assignment to imitate or assess another teacher. The explicit requirement for the current section of the portfolio is for the MSLT student to generalize from observations of other teachers and to reflect on the practice of those teachers in light of one's own teaching philosophy, as that is described in other sections of the portfolio.

An intriguing dimension of classroom observation is that one cannot be sure when observing another teacher that their classroom truly reflects their own teaching philosophy. I observed a second-grade English/Spanish dual-language (DLI) classroom that later became emblematic to me of this principle. While I was having a schoolyard conversation with the Spanish language teacher of the classroom, a student dashed over and asked her some urgent second-grade question in English. The teacher replied in English. As her student ran back to play, the teacher turned to me and grimaced, then laughed. "We are not supposed to let them know that we speak English," she said. "It's hard." I understood. We both found the moment humorous but symbolic. We were witnessing an unintended consequence of the common target-language-only policy in DLI programs. We agreed that the policy required her to project a false identity to her students, but we also acknowledged that, in her classroom at least, she had to live with this policy and this identity.

Neither of us in that moment articulated a philosophical position against the policy. However, as I make clear in other portions of this portfolio, my developing philosophy finds me more and more at odds with target-only policies as I consider the implications of translingualism research and the potential learning benefits to the student of a translingual pedagogy. I thought of that DLI teacher long after that conversation, as I was reading the work of King and Chetty (2014). In their research and in their review of other studies, King and Chetty find a strong thread of shame that runs through the comments of classroom teachers when they talk about how imperfectly they manage the target-only mandate (King & Chetty, 2014, p. 44).

Shame. South African teachers, King and Chetty report, feel a twinge of shame and regret, just as the Spanish-speaking DLI teacher felt, when they catch themselves turning to their students' L1. What is a shame to me is that this mandate puts a bilingual teacher in the impossible position of denying his or her own language identity, even as it denies the student the advantages of a strong bilingual model who can also affirm that student's own bilingualism.

#### §

Somewhere else in this portfolio, I mention a friend of mine who was a potter apprenticed to a traditional Japanese master; his experience of this tradition taught him to “steal” techniques from his master, and he smiled at the thought that sometimes it is a tool that a student steals.

In another part of my life, I am an aikido instructor. The pedagogical tradition of aikido also descends from the master/apprentice model, and a vital part of this tradition is to develop in the student a focused, engaged, self-disciplined, and dynamic awareness

during instruction. Materials from the Aikido Association of America offer this summary for the student: “It is an unskilled instructor who feels the need to explain every detail. . . . As your training progresses, you will gain the satisfaction of *discovering for yourself* aspects of our art. This is the transmission of knowledge *isshin den shin*, from mind to mind” (Aikido Association of America, 2010, p. 7). Informally, this is also called “stealing from your sensei.” It may be more a philosophy of learning than of teaching, but since observation is a learning experience, I find myself taking this approach as I observe other language teachers in their own classrooms. I am not above stealing from my students, either.

Observing a university Spanish classroom, I was impressed with not only the instructor’s relaxed and gentle affect, but also with particular techniques he used with his students. In one class, he built an entire integrated unit around a silent video cartoon. Students found the video intellectually engaging, and they found themselves disputing cultural meanings of the film, along with matters of filmographic technique, of sound track, and of visual narrative. All in (beginner/novice) Spanish.

The same teacher used a technique for targeting particular difficulties that his students were having with the textbook homework. Through this technique, students arriving to class could write requests on the board, and the teacher then improvised a mini-lesson responding to the student questions. I saw a great deal to steal in this teacher’s classroom.

Affect was a major inspiration in another classroom. The teacher there was consistently bright, cheerful, forward-moving, and well-organized. Her students spoke almost not at all in Chinese, the target language, but she carried on cheerfully avoiding



English, answering questions, asking questions, repeating, dispensing instructions, coaxing and cajoling as if nothing in the world was more fun than what she was doing. It made me tired to watch her, but I hope to steal some of that lively affect from her.

I spent a ten-week quarter as an aide in a local ESL program for adult immigrants, and there I found very little that I would steal. I discuss a signal experience from that program in one of the papers elsewhere in this portfolio. The pedagogy there depended on a standardized workbook that could have been written forty years ago: worksheets; readings with questions; decontextualized grammar instruction; culturally insulting scenarios for practice; no writing; no meaning-exchange in paired or group conversations. It was a surprisingly problematic pedagogy, based on a philosophy of language teaching that has effectively no support in current research. In one class meeting, I remember two other aides “helping” a Chinese student (who was also a visiting scholar on the local campus) to pronounce the word *train*. When he struggled with a particular phoneme, one aide began to shout the word—TRAIN! TRAIN!—as if saying it louder would be useful. The student responded in a louder voice but with the same phoneme problem. A second aide began voicing the word, too, and shortly I found myself in the middle of a three-way shouting match. Had I been the teacher, I would have escorted those aides from the room immediately. But the teacher made no mention of their performance while I was there.

For another example from this classroom, a Spanish-speaking student, JR, labored through a workbook section on how to buy a car in America, and then struggled with the comprehension questions, which required him essentially to find and repeat key words from the reading. Turning spontaneously from this drudgery, JR opened a conversation with me in English about the car he drives (its make, model, year, and mileage); he then

asked me what I drive, and he described a truck that he had recently bought for his son. In that one off-task conversation, JR produced more communication in English than he had done for the entire class period. It struck me that the program (and certainly the workbook) constructed its student as a new immigrant from an impoverished country, a person generally naïve and without more than a year or two of secondary education. The reality was that JR was a successful self-employed contractor whose own vehicle was worth more than the annual median income for a family of four in the US; he had moved to our town after living for twenty-five years in Los Angeles (the second-largest Spanish-speaking city in the world). The ironies were as unbearable as the workbook.

A school cannot provide a different sort of program for every different sort of student. However, a program can be flexible enough to accommodate the huge cultural differences between immigrant and native ELLs, between voluntary and involuntary ELLs, and many other relevant differences from learner to learner. Observing this program confirmed my philosophical bias toward teaching that is responsive, flexible, communicative, and learner-centered.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING

I invited two of my professors to observe me at different times during a semester when I was teaching an English conversation class. The class was offered through the Intensive English Institute of the Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies department, and the students were adult ELLs, on the USU campus as international visiting scholars, graduate students, or spouses of same.

It was both a multi-age and a multi-level classroom, with students ranging in age from their mid-twenties to mid-fifties and in English proficiency from novice-mid to intermediate-high (based on my own informal assessments). These ranges presented some challenges, but I soon discovered what was more important than any challenge. The students brought with them a truly impressive and fascinating range of life experience. Most of them had post-secondary degrees, though two of the most active did not. Two were climate scientists from Japan; one was a Polish medical doctor who had been working in Botswana for fifteen years; one was a Ph.D. student from Pakistan who was here to run experiments on 150 varieties of barley; another was an Ecuadorian mother of three and spouse of a visiting computer science professor; there was a linguist from Tatarstan; a young Chinese woman expecting her first child; and others. All of these students were self-motivated to improve in English, but had interests far broader than this. They were intellectually curious people leading complicated lives, and were willing to engage sincerely and openly with the interests of others. As a group, and as individuals, they showed a true learner's mind. I couldn't imagine a more perfect group for a conversation class.

I began to build into the course two themes related to this frame of mind. First was to bring the group's (and my own) common interest in language learning to the fore. I think I was simply working from an intuition that they would find this stimulating, but at the same time, as we will see throughout this portfolio, this is also congruent with the recommendation of translingual teaching practice both to affirm the home languages of students and to encourage meta-consciousness about how languages work—not only structurally, but in regard to culture, ideology, identity, and in other ways.

Thus, in some way, in every class period, the students and I spoke explicitly about languages, their beauty, their variety, their strangeness, how difficult they are to learn, how they can change one's sense of identity, how they interface with culture, or how they open different visions of the world. Even how they should be taught. This happened in small ways, as we spent a few minutes in each class learning and discussing contemporary English slang, especially the slang of young Americans in college. We looked at casual speech in greetings and farewells, insults, types of music, sports terms, media, politics, and so on. The students felt free to question me about perplexing words or expressions they had encountered outside of class. And it happened in larger ways, too. For example, I frequently brought into discussion the thoughts and experiences of Jumpa Lahiri, a contemporary writer who has left her primary language (English) behind, to dedicate herself to writing only in a language (Italian) that she is just learning. Language and culture was theme number one for us.

The second theme was simply the lives of these students as individuals. Since they were all far from home, they were interested to hear each other's stories of where they came from, what brought them to USU, what the future holds. Jing's pregnancy led

us to discuss baby names and naming in our home countries; pregnancy led us to discussions of other medical matters in which Eva, as a doctor, was expert; we frequently asked Tassaduqq to bring us up to date on his barley research. And each student was eager to tell others about his or her home country, its history, culture, and languages.

This is the context in which my observers visited the class.

Following the protocol established by the MSLT program (deJonge-Kannan & Spicer-Escalante, 2016), I shared with my observers individually my syllabus and a lesson plan for the day on which they were to attend the class, and I met in advance with each of them to review objectives and areas of concern. In one case, the observer video-recorded the class session and shared the video with me before I read the observer's notes. I met afterward with each observer to discuss their comments and to share thoughts on how I might integrate their feedback into my teaching.

I was gratified to see that notes from the observers confirmed that the themes of language and life were established as I had hoped. As part of the lesson plan for each class meeting observed (and of course for all class meetings), I took time to chat with each student as they arrived. These mini-conversations centered on the student's life and concerns—e.g., Tassadduqq's research, Catherine's children or her visa problems—and these moments additionally ensured that I was giving each student a few minutes of one-to-one meaningful conversation on personal topics. One observer commented, "T makes small talk with each S who arrives, draws Ss into conversation about topics relevant to their lives. As new words come up, T writes them on the board when they might be unfamiliar to Ss." In the second observation, my observer noted, "T is skillful at asking

questions that encourage students to talk. T is knowledgeable about current events that may be of interest to students. . . . T effectively uses humor and teasing.”

I called the lesson for the first observed class “Toys from Home.” It was built around unique objects that are used in my home state of Alaska, objects that the students likely had not seen before. But it also included a slide presentation on the place, the culture/s of Alaska, and the language/s. I designed it as a model for later presentations that the students would make about their own homeland/s throughout the semester. After the slideshow, I distributed the objects and asked the students to discuss in small groups what the objects might be made from and what they might be used for. Of course, my primary objective was simply to stimulate conversation, and the activity did this as the students compared impressions and developed a theory for the use of each object. In whole group discussion, they then offered their reasoning and conclusions.

In the second observed class, after the same introductory few minutes of conversation, one of the students took the lead by presenting a slideshow on his home country, and leading a question/answer session. He followed the model of my earlier lesson, except that he did not bring physical objects for the students to discuss in small groups.

In both cases, my observers commented favorably on the affective tone of the classroom and the apparent investment by the students. The first observer pointed out, however, that the slideshow was lengthy, and that this kept students in the interpretive mode for longer than would be ideal. And in the second classroom, the observer noted that I personally provided more interaction with the presenter (mostly questions) than any of the students did; like the first observer’s comment, this was a signal to me of an area

for attention. Each observer also suggested how they might address the problem. “Allow more time for paired or small group work, to make sure that everyone has ample opportunity for negotiation of meaning in English (interpersonal mode).” “Ask presenters to provide questions or prompts for the students. . . . Restate [other] students’ contributions more often to provide more comprehensible input.”

Slideshows indeed never seem to go as quickly as I intend, and in reviewing the video, I fully agreed with the observers that this is an area to get under control. Interpretive mode is needed, and my students mentioned more than once that my English was easy to follow. Intelligibility is of value to student gains in comprehension, but equally or more important is providing students with the time they need to produce their own English. And indeed, by working in interpersonal mode with other students, they spend time in interpretation, too. It occurred to me that, especially for the intermediate-level students, even to struggle with each other’s accents in pairs or small groups might in fact advance their comprehension more than listening so much to the teacher. I began to monitor myself much more closely about this.

Restating student contributions is something I had done occasionally but without a strong sense of why, beyond “did we all hear what X just said?” To put this matter in the context of comprehensible input reminded me that, although I could myself process the range of pronunciation in the classroom, this would be much harder for most of the students to do. More bluntly: I shouldn’t be so sure that students could always understand each other. Restating is an obvious way to address this. But it is also a delicate matter, because, for the sake of motivation, I wouldn’t want my restating to be seen as singling out one student’s pronunciation as a bad example for correction. I would rather correct by

modeling or in other ways. But I began to develop my repertoire of strategies for restating, so that I could manage the tension between the two important dimensions—comprehensibility and positive affect.

Feedback from observers, and especially from professional and well-grounded observers, is always welcome. I found the experience of these formative assessments delivered through the program's established protocol very useful. It was encouraging to see through others' eyes that my pedagogical values and theoretical convictions were actually evident in the classroom, and at the same time, it was motivating to have problem areas identified and solutions suggested.



## RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

## CRITICAL REFLECTION ESSAY

### **Solamente Inglés**

#### ***When Negotiation of Meaning is Subversion of the Assignment***

[T]he use of L1 during L2 interactions . . . is a normal psycholinguistic process that facilitates L2 production and allows learners both to initiate and sustain verbal interaction with one another.

—Brooks and Donato, “Vygotskian approaches to understanding foreign language learner discourse”

### **Introduction to the Critical Reflection Essay**

An experience of serving as an aide in an ESL classroom for adult immigrants (mentioned above in Professional Development through Observation) troubled me, but fortunately did so in ways that I found interesting. That is, I was put off by the pedagogy of the school, but I found myself trying to understand it at the same time.

I assume that the teachers there were told to “follow the book.” And the book was very traditional in its focus on grammar, vocabulary, literal comprehension of readings, and so on. It was not at all learner-centered (though this is very hard for a textbook to be), and it offered few opportunities for what one would call CLT strategies. In addition, the book emphasized the learning of life skills, and here, it adopted a strangely patronizing stance toward the student. Readings and comprehension questions emphasized things like simple arithmetic in shopping and personal safety in “your neighborhood.” The student was constructed as poor, uneducated, a recent immigrant, and hopelessly naïve, instead of as an adult learner with a good deal of life experience, or perhaps even a U.S. citizen already—which many of the students in this classroom were.

At another level, I supposed that many of the problems in this particular classroom might be “teacher problems,” a consequence of the school’s need to employ part-time, low-paid, untrained teachers. So, when the teacher explained to a student that one of the hardest things to learn in English was “pronunciation,” it made me cringe but did not surprise me.

I find in my notes from this aide experience that several times I had long conversations with students about their lives or other subjects of interest to them (children, family, exes, travel, sports, career, vehicles, home country), and in those

conversations, these ELLs had a great deal to say, and they were willing to wrestle with the language in order to carry on the conversation. On the other hand, when dealing with the textbook, they routinely lost motivation, distracted themselves, or just came to a cognitive dead end.

It was after working with a student in one such dead end moment that I began to draft the following paper. In describing and reflecting on the experience, I wanted to convey some of the pain and cognitive opacity that the school's English-Only policy created for the student and some of the pedagogical frustration I felt, too. I also wanted to see (at least in a preliminary way) if the research or pedagogical literature could help me understand that teaching moment. As I will relate below, the student and I conspired in a minor violation of the *solamente inglés* policy. In this brief essay, I was asking myself if I had made the right choice in subverting the assignment.

## Solamente Inglés

### *When Negotiation of Meaning is Subversion of the Assignment*

#### **Abstract**

A volunteer experience in a community adult ESL program provides a window into a troubling classroom and the exigence for this critical reflection. In particular, the essay explores an interaction with a novice ELL to see how it might speak to the “target-language only” doctrine espoused by this program (and by L2 pedagogy more generally). Drawing on a few key studies of code-switching and code-meshing, the paper looks for room in L2 pedagogy for the use of a broker language (e.g., the learner’s L1) to mediate learning, and it explores how such a position complicates orthodox “English-Only” practice in ESL. It concludes by advocating the use of strategic code-switching as both a theory-based tutoring technique and a respectful acknowledgement of an ELL’s multilingual competence.

*Keywords:* ESL, code-switching, code-meshing, pedagogy

#### **Introduction**

Sociocultural theory (SCT) in language acquisition suggests that even highly successful L2 learners are unlikely ever to develop to the level of proficiency where they can mediate higher order mental functioning—conceptual processing, for example—by means of the L2 (cf. Lantolf, 2011). This is something of a purist form of the SCT argument, but essentially it depends on a noncontroversial premise: that language is both culturally bound and the primary vehicle for higher mental processes. Because higher mental processes construct the screen through which human beings filter perception, and

because language encodes cultural understandings even as it mediates meaning for us, the strong version of SCT implies that our mental functioning faces a fundamental constraint in the cultural meanings carried through our L1. This is so fundamental a constraint, in theory, that we find it impossible to appropriate the cultural meanings of an L2 and to use them to mediate our higher mental processes.

One might infer from this view that a sort of economy of mediation exists in higher mental processes. That is, the theory implies that cognition exists within finite boundaries: once established in the L1, cognitive space for mediation is fully and permanently occupied, and is therefore inaccessible to an L2. Two or more languages cannot exist in parallel for mediational purposes, equally available to the speaker in a sort of repertoire model.

SCT may be right. But this view offers a disappointingly deterministic—perhaps even hopeless—prospect for learners of second languages. L2 learners and teachers understand that acquiring a second language is a long, complicated, and imperfect process, and that few L2 learners achieve superior proficiency in their L2. Although proficiency itself is a contested term, it does remain the ideal, a hypothetical, to which learners and teachers aspire. Were they to pursue the implications of SCT fully, L2 learning might look very different.

In this paper, I want to explore an experience that illustrated this fundamental SCT precept in action and at the same time raised questions for me about the conventional practice of using only the target language in the L2 classroom.

### Writing and Not Writing

As a farewell exercise on the last day of the term in the “level 3” ESL classroom where I have been volunteering, the teacher assigned her students to write thank-you letters to the donors that make the grant-supported school possible. This was the first and only time during the quarter that I had seen students asked to create a meaningful piece of writing for an authentic audience. There had been brief occasions in every class period when they were asked to converse with each other, to make meaning together in spoken English. But I had not seen any writing beyond workbook exercises.

In this last assignment of the quarter, the teacher appeared to believe that, as adults, her students would be familiar with the thank-you letter. She did not introduce it as a genre with its own purpose, form, or function. She did not model it or scaffold it or offer examples of the genre from other sources; nor was there time in the last 20 minutes of the term for the students to draft, seek feedback, revise, and so on. The teacher was asking them to perform a simple but culturally encoded communicative task on the spur of the moment, and it was no surprise to find that they were at a loss. They asked for a great deal of guidance: Who are we writing to? What should we say? How do we begin? Shall we write it to you? What’s this for?

“Just make it ‘To whom it may concern,’” she suggested. “And just say in your own words how much you appreciate the school, and how it has helped you accomplish your goals.”

Simple. Except that several students, whether from genre confusion or just difficulty with English, did not understand at all what the teacher intended, and they only grasped the assignment after conferring with other students, most of them in Spanish.

Once they comprehended her request—and even if they didn’t—they willingly engaged the assignment. However, at the same time, they badgered the teacher until she offered some specific possible phrasings to use in their letters. Formula phrases, one could say. Interestingly, I thought, the students seemed to have an intuitive sense of genre *theory*, though they were not prepared for the *particular* genre assigned, and they could see that they needed more information to produce a good example of it.

Having got the teacher to model some appropriate thank-you-letter phrases on the SmartBoard, many students copied these directly into their own letters. “The school has helped me to accomplish my goals,” began to appear in the papers around me. “I appreciate ELC so much.” As students recopied their work onto clean sheets of paper and handed them to the teacher, they said goodbye.

I don’t mean this narrative to sound judgmental of the teacher. Quite likely, the thank-you letter is a useful gesture for the school as an institution to make, and it’s a courteous one, and I thought perhaps the school asked all teachers to have each of their students produce one at the end of each term. In other words, I’m guessing that the task seemed not to be integrated with the curriculum because it wasn’t—through no fault of the teacher’s. Even so, as an assignment presented by her, I don’t think it went the way the teacher had expected. She was thinking it would be a quick piece for students to write from background knowledge of a more-or-less universal convention—showing thanks. That’s not unreasonable. But what struck me was that, background knowledge or not, the students had an intuition of genre, and of what Marianne Celce-Murcia calls formulaic competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007).



As teachers of second language introduce culture-bound protocols (speech acts and other routines), Celce-Murcia argues, they need to teach relevant formulae of target-language communication as well. Students in this class were looking intuitively for appropriate chunks of language that speakers native to Anglo American culture might use in the genre of a thank-you letter or the rhetorical situation of addressing unknown benefactors. They knew they must attend to this kind of competence in English, because otherwise they risked social dysfunction even if their spelling and grammar were correct.

I worked with one student, JR, for a few minutes as most of the class was departing. JR had suffered a major illness earlier in the term, and he had missed many classes as a result. It didn't take a formal assessment to see that this assignment was asking more of him than he was ready for. In terms of sociocultural theory, dynamic assessment explains what occurred between us as we interacted to locate JR within his zone of proximal development. But, in practical terms, JR and I simply discussed the assignment in a mix of English and Spanish, and we agreed that he would not be able to compose successfully in English within the time allowed. He was ready to give up.

### **Solamente Inglés**

In the orientation I was given on my first day at the school, I had been told that it was the policy of the school to speak only English with the students. Yet JR was perhaps the student closest to what ACTFL would call novice level, and the parameters of this assignment had pushed him to where he was nearly unable to produce any English at all. He was not anxious or afraid or angry. He understood the task and the concept of a formal note of gratitude; he simply didn't have words for the rhetorical situation of this particular task. It was a teachable moment, in a way. Had there been time—like a full

class period with multiple activities—one would have been able to introduce JR to a range of practical and conceptual knowledge related to letter writing in English, or at least to pass along useful knowledge of English formulae a la Celce-Murcia. But there was no time.

*Bueno*, I said. *Dime en español lo que quiere escribir, y voy a traducirlo en inglés.* (“Tell me in Spanish what you want to say, and I will translate it into English.”) Sitting near us, JR’s wife smothered a giggle with her hand—a giggle either at my Spanish or at the idea of cheating on the assignment. But JR spoke quickly to me under his breath. In less than two minutes, we had a workable thank-you note, and JR was copying it onto a fresh sheet of paper as if nothing unorthodox had happened.

I was ambivalent about working with JR in this way. Although I truly doubt that the teacher or the school directors would have been alarmed about it, what we did in fact subverted both the assignment and the teaching philosophy of the school. The ideal at the school, as at most ESL/EFL programs of which I am aware, is to work only in the target language. Target language dominance in the classroom is an obvious and worthy instructional practice that needs no defense, especially where communicative language teaching is the philosophy. I have no quarrel with this. All the same, in working with JR, I came to what seemed like a limit of the philosophy.

Negotiation of meaning, of course, is a fundamental not only of communicative language teaching but of communication itself. James F. Lee and Bill VanPatten offer an especially clear example of learners not having the resources to express themselves easily or to interpret what they were hearing in the second language. In their example, they point out, “both [the learner] and the instructor demonstrate a certain strategic

competence: Instead of abandoning the idea, they attempt to get it across in another way” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 52). Although Lee and VanPatten don’t take this position, it seems to me that where the learner and instructor share a broker language, even though they might prefer not to use it, strategic competence must include negotiating meaning via that language. In our situation, JR and I had exhausted the resources available in English. I could have supplied words, phrases, formulae, as the teacher had done, but JR was not comprehending what the teacher had already written on the SmartBoard; he had copied one short phrase with much difficulty and did not understand what he had “written.” My assessment was that were I to dictate more language, it would get JR no closer to understanding, nor would it help him finish the task—writing in English was that labored and confusing for him. In short, the situation had ceased being a functional writing assignment. Moving to JR’s L1 became the channel through which we could negotiate both the meaning of the assignment and his actual composing of it. When he understood the task, he was able to dictate quite quickly a more-than-acceptable note of thanks for the occasion.

Lan Wang (L. Wang, 2012, p. 31) identifies ten tenets of standard research-based instruction in university writing centers, where many international students seek help with their writing assignments in English. Wang’s Tenet Ten is “[The client] should think and write only in English” (L. Wang, 2012, p. 38). That is, even if they know the home language of their client student, American writing center tutors are taught to speak only in English when working with English language learners (ELLs)—just as they do with L1 English students. Wang writes:

In writing centers, monolingual English tutors are qualified and perceived to be appropriate to work with ELLs. It is believed that English-only enables ELLs to think in the target language with minimal interference from their L1 (see Cummins, 2007). Since students' native languages are excluded, translation has no place. . . . English-only tutoring is the default in all tutorial conferences. An ELL's L1 is not appropriate at any stage of writing. (L. Wang, 2012, p. 39)

This is orthodox practice, as Wang suggests, but it is contested by writing theorists who specialize in L2 writing. Suresh Canagarajah (2010), Bruce Horner, Min-Zhan Lu, and Paul Kei Matsuda (2010), as well as Wang herself, are concerned that the English-only convention may be alienating ELL students with its arguably imperialist presumption, and it may also be failing to exploit the cognitive advantages of multilingualism: “A bilingual person’s competence<sup>1</sup> is not simply two discrete monolingual competencies added together,” writes Canagarajah; “instead, bilingual competence integrates knowledge of two languages and is thus qualitatively different from monolingual competence” (Canagarajah, 2010b, p. 158). In arguing that pedagogy should understand even imperfect multilingualism as a cognitive advantage, interestingly, these researchers are in conflict not only with conventional practice, but also with Lantolf and the pure form of sociocultural theory that he represents. The sort of cognitive integration that Canagarajah posits is actually ruled out by a strict sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2011a, p. 28), just as the hope that drives the English-only pedagogy—that this practice encourages “thinking in the target language”—is also ruled out.

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<sup>1</sup> By “bilingual,” Canagarajah has in mind a proficiency short of the level that other linguists might define as such. He refers to international students whose L2 is in development at a level that allows them to succeed in university studies while still short of L1 comfort.

### **“Failure”**

Arguably, then, my one-to-one pedagogy with JR fails on two counts. On the one hand, from the perspective of preferred practice (not to mention school policy), JR will learn the cognitive moves of English more effectively if I work with him in English only. On the other hand, sociocultural theory offers an impasse of near-theological proportion: that is, even if I do leverage his L1—in fact, no matter what I do—JR will never learn the language well enough to “think in it.”

Yet, here we can deploy Canagarajah’s concept of integrated bilingual competence as a resource in strategic competence. For Canagarajah, “shuttling between languages” represents a distinct advantage of multilingual language instruction. JR and I certainly found it so. What Canagarajah (Canagarajah, 2010b, p. 159) calls an “inference model” of L2 instruction entails two theoretical problems. That is, by inferring an explanation of L2 usage via extrapolation from what is supposed about the speaker’s L1, this model suggests that the influence of L1 will so condition the learning process that L1 will displace the L2 from full integration—much as Lantolf predicts. This determinism is the first problem. Second, the inference model disregards the diversity of other mediations beyond L1 that also influence the production of L2; these would include especially rhetorical considerations such as purpose, audience, topic, rhetorical context, and genre. Canagarajah points out that we cannot “consider texts written in any genre, by any author, to any audience in [non-English] L1, as suitable to produce generalizations about language, and then apply them to explain . . . texts of any genre, author, audience, and proficiency level in English” (Canagarajah, 2010b, p. 159). There are far too many variables at play in any act of language use for such an inference to be credible.

Canagarajah rejects the logic of the inference model as monolingual thinking. His study of a single writer shuttling strategically between discourse practices of English and Tamil in multiple pieces of writing gives us the conceptual tools to entertain the idea that multilingualism is indeed different in kind from monolingualism.

One of these tools is in his concept of multilingual competence. Canagarajah's purpose is not to make this point, but it is easy to see that multilingual competence supports an alternative understanding of the interaction between L1 and L2 in ELL usage. If Canagarajah is right that multilingual competence is one integrated competence and not separable monolingual competencies, then we need to reconsider some of what is taken for granted especially in sociocultural theory. It opens the possibility that a repertoire model of acquisition actually is viable, as opposed to presuming the dominance of L1 in mediation no matter what. Furthermore, that repertoire is not additive—one language with its self-contained discourse, plus one more with its discourse similarly self-contained. Rather, the repertoire is cumulative and integrative, a single resource but double the size of either language.

Secondly, by setting his study in a sociolinguistic contact zone where Tamil and English have been influencing each other for two centuries, Canagarajah reminds us that language is not a static phenomenon—not even the Queen's English is. Contact languages make it abundantly clear that we cannot speak of English, or Tamil, or Spanish; we must speak of *Englishes*, *Tamils*, and *Spanishes*. LuMing Mao outlined the phenomenon of deliberate importation of Asian rhetorics to American English. He calls this a “togetherness in difference,” a gesture of resistance, in a way, that protects the purposes of the speaker as a member of a linguistic group that chooses not to leave

behind identity in the process of assimilation (Mao, 2006, p. 3). The title of Mao's book offers a quick example: *Reading Chinese Fortune Cookie*.

Vershawn Young's work on code-meshing brings this home to America as he advocates a radical linguistic democracy. "[E]very native speaker of English and every English language learner . . . has a right to blend accents, dialects, and varieties of English with school-based, academic, professional, and public Englishes, in any and all formal and informal contexts." Young calls for the day "when teaching English prescriptively ('These are the rules; learn to follow them!') is replaced with models of instruction for teaching English descriptively ('These are rules from various language systems; learn to combine them effectively') (2011, p. xxi).

Thus, as we think about the ESL/EFL classroom, we have to ask ourselves whose proficiency is the goal and how we can know when a discursal idiosyncrasy is an intrusion by an L1 and when it's a strategic rhetorical decision on the part of the L2 speaker. Although, in local moments, we can make some judgments, we can't know the answers to these questions with the certainty of theory. Multilingual competence and the material reality of language variation are simply at odds with idealistic pedagogical hopes and purist generalizations from theory. The stance of the classroom teacher or the language tutor needs to account for this.

### **Conclusion**

Reflecting on my experience with JR, I am left to wonder: Was my resorting to L1 with him a failure of ESL pedagogy? JR was a novice speaker of English, and it's clear he was not importing Latin American rhetorical tropes or discourse patterns into his English literacy to preserve a linguistic identity or to create a rhetorical effect. Quite

possibly, my choice to mediate in his L1 simply retarded his growth in L2; this should be clear. Or should it?

I'm left with two interlocking questions, one pedagogical and the other theoretical. JR is a multilingual speaker, albeit still a novice in his L2. How does second language teaching (in my case, tutoring) express its respect for multilingual competence—at any moment of development—in terms that honor what we learn from Canagarajah and other theorists? One way is to change how we understand the L1 in the L2-learning moment. We can elect to see it as a resource, a valuable fund of knowledge that is not simply additive or ancillary to the learner's developing grasp of L2, but integral to his/her cognition. Constructed this way, multilingual competence is different in kind from how an English-Only pedagogy tends to envision it. We begin to see that to ignore L1 may in fact cut off the learner from a useful mediatory resource. From the learner's point of view, to employ the first language in service of learning the second is merely a gesture of strategic competence. I can't find fault with this, especially in the context of the sort of breakdown JR and I were experiencing in our particular situation, with its flawed assignment, its time pressure, and JR's stalled mediation in L2.

Where a tutor has any competence in the learner's L1, then, I would suggest that resorting to L1 occasionally to broker mediation represents not only a valid pedagogical move, but one that is supported by sociocultural theory (since SCT argues that mediation occurs primarily in L1) and at the same time by sociolinguistic work like that of Canagarajah, Young, and others. Given the vital point articulated by SCT (cf. Lantolf, above), that mediation in L2 is very difficult even for advanced speakers, the sort of conceptual and communicative breakdown JR experienced is absolutely predictable.



When such a breakdown occurs, it would be an obvious pedagogical move to leverage the L1, where mediation primarily takes place.

Further, in spite of our pedagogical ideals, there is no doubt that experienced multilingual L2 teachers do employ the student's L1 quite commonly, perhaps especially in tutoring or small group pedagogy. Reflecting on my work with JR, I begin to see this not as a lapse in what should be a pure *solamente* L2 instruction, but as a truly strategic and pragmatic technique. Though used sparingly for obvious reasons, it reinforces an ethos of respectful acknowledgment of the ELL's multilingual competence, honors a view of all the learner's language (L1 *and* L2) as deeply integrated with cognition, and adopts a realistic, research-based stance vis a vis language change, language use, and student goals.

CULTURE PAPER

**Kiss me, Fatima**

*Cross-Cultural Greetings and Pragmatic Failure*

The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention.

—M. M. Bakhtin, *Discourse in the Novel*

"Isn't her real name Ultima?" Deborah asked. She was like that—always asking grown-up questions.

"You will address her as La Grande," my mother said flatly.

—Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima*

### **Introduction to the Culture Paper**

If language teachers by definition are engaged in reaching others across cultures, as I claim in my teaching philosophy above, then it follows that greeting others and understanding others' ways of greeting would be vital to them. The paper that follows originated in an experience of greeting a friend from another culture—a greeting that went wrong. I knew immediately where and why the fracture had happened, but the opportunity to examine the experience through a theory lens came much later, during a course in pragmatics.

As I had suspected, the literature shows that greetings are more nuanced than they may appear. Euro-Americans like me, for example, may toss off a perfunctory exchange in passing: a nod of the head, a quick “How’s it going? / Good. And you?” or even the lifted chin with a “What’s up?” No doubt this style expresses something about the cultural value we place on time, or the reticence we might feel toward self-disclosure. Many Americans give a great deal of positive value to privacy, individual autonomy, or “space.”

Alternatively, we also like the “Howdy, Stranger!” approach, the super-strong handshake, the slap on the back, or the “bro-hug.” Americans respect directness, physical vigor, and the lack of fear. Yet, unlike many people from Latin American or European cultures, we don’t normally kiss or embrace, except with close friends (or when inebriated).

In either case, our greetings are direct, brief, and perhaps simple-minded. My friend was from a culture where politeness codes are more elaborate, more careful, and more coded for gender. It’s a mistake to overgeneralize about her culture or mine,

however. As one of the studies I mention below will emphasize, the range of individual variation *within* cultures may be as wide as the range of difference *between* cultures. And this point is dramatized by an exchange with a different friend that I relate at the end of the paper.

Ultimately, meaning in pragmatics, as in language itself, is always constructed between interlocutors. As the opening and closing vignettes illustrate, a greeting always involves an instant of negotiation between individuals, and in that instant, individuals might affirm each other, might offend by accident, or might agree to observe or to violate conventions of their own culture.

## **Kiss Me, Fatima**

### ***Cross-Cultural Greetings and Pragmatic Failure***

#### **Abstract**

The paper considers a range of literature on the pragmatics of greetings in English, with attention to definitions, understandings of face, the question of cross-cultural universals, and the complications of individual idiosyncrasies in interactions. Grounding the review in personal experience of greetings gone wrong in an ESL context, the author offers a revised understanding of pragmatic failure, and suggests an enlarged concept of negotiation of meaning to acknowledge the uniqueness of individual interaction. Lines of interest for future inquiry are identified, along with potential implications for teaching in ESL/EFL classrooms.

*Keywords:* greetings, cross-cultural pragmatics, negotiation of meaning, identity, pragmatic failure, ESL/EFL

#### **Greeting Fatima**

I once spent a semester break in Mexico, living with a local family. The holidays in this Latino household involved far more relatives, of more generations, with more food, more wine, arguments, laughter, and certainly more warm embraces than I had ever seen. My own family was one part New England, one part Norwegian. Reserved and distrustful of pleasure, they could have been the supporting cast in the movie *Babette's Feast*. So I found the experience of this Mexican Christmas fascinating for cultural reasons, and I found it educational, but those values were truly the least of what I felt. Something like a shimmer of liberation went through me when an old woman, some *Tia*

of the family, took my hand and drew my cheek down to hers. *Feliz navidad!* And then her sister did the same. And they laughed at me for how tall I was, how embarrassed, and how bad my Spanish was. They patted my arm and handed me a glass of wine. *Feliz navidad!* I said to myself. I'm going to like this family.

When I returned to college in the US, the first school friend I saw was Fatima, a Moroccan girl. Fatima was a frequent partner with me on school projects, an L2 speaker of English, a Muslim, and a good friend. I was so happy to see her that impulsively I took her hand and pulled her in for *un abrazo* in my new, warm and liberated Mexican style. Fatima froze. She sputtered. Her eyes opened wide in shock. She could not speak.<sup>2</sup>

This was perhaps the beginning of my interest in the pragmatics of greetings. I can only hope that for most people, it doesn't take traumatizing their friends to help them realize that greeting customs are socially constructed and are constrained by culturally bound sociopragmatic uses and their meanings.

### **Greeting and Greetings**

Fundamentally, it is clear that to approach greetings or any study of pragmatics, one has to grant that language is dynamic, social, and *negotiated*. An utterance is always half someone else's. As DeCapua and Wintergerst put it, "Meaning is jointly constructed. . . . As speakers negotiate meaning, they need to be able to adapt their speech to the situation and to react appropriately to the messages conveyed by others" (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2004, p. 241). Messages both linguistic and pragmatic.

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<sup>2</sup> In telling this story, I have displaced names and certain historical details to protect the modesty of my friend, but the interactions and the pragmatic issues are accurately described.

A second premise seems obvious as well: Through the same speech act, different languages express different cultural norms. Greeting others, for example, is a speech act necessary and practiced in all languages, as far as we know; however, perceptions and meanings *conveyed through* greetings are culturally inflected, and can be very different across languages. DeCapua and Wintergerst allude to this difference via the anthropological terms *etic* and *emic* (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2004, p. 244). Greeting, as a speech act, is *etic*, transcultural, while greetings themselves—i.e., as they are locally formulated and expressed, and in terms of the nonverbal content they convey—are *emic*, culturally bound.

In that connection, Feller articulates a definition of greeting that seems both functional and well-grounded in cultural and psychological theory.

The minimal communicative pair, consisting of action and reaction, or “greeting” and “re-greeting,” normally forms the basis for any further communicative interaction between the interlocutors. . . . [T]he main functional concept certainly consists in its declarative nature, i.e., the establishment of some sort of social relationship. (Feller, 2007, p. 183)

There are many additional means available within languages for managing the contours of the relationship. For example, some offer the choice between a familiar second person pronoun and a formal one; this choice can sometimes be crucial pragmatically. Other cultures discourage use of the personal name when greeting one of higher status. But the key point here is that the act of greeting functions to establish or re-establish rapport. It opens access to the relationship.

### Universals and Individuals

The fact that all languages need ways to greet individuals suggests that greeting is a cross-cultural universal. At the same time, we know that different cultures greet differently; as Fatima taught me, greeting with *un abrazo* is not a universal. Feller, in conclusions from his pilot study of cultural differences in greeting among speakers of German, Peruvian Spanish, and American English, proposes some culture-specific tendencies. For example, he suggests that Peruvian greetings may function partly to promote “togetherness,” while German greetings appear to reinforce the privacy of the individual (Feller, 2007, p. 187). They appear so, but Feller emphasizes that these results are very coarse-grained and cannot be generalized to describe “what is really going on in actual language use” (Feller, 2007, p. 187).

These functions are, in the end, not defined by some sort of *enduring cultural system* but, on the contrary, by *each single individual*. . . . They are never understood in exactly the same way by each member of a specific culture and are constantly reinterpreted or even totally given up in day-to-day communication. (Feller, 2007, p. 187–88, emphasis added)

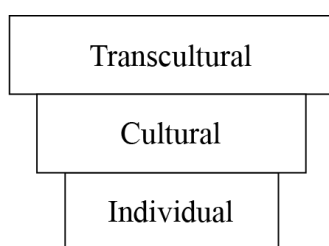
Thus, he emphasizes the counter-universalizing pressure that motivates individual speakers in each day-to-day interaction, wherein they might observe, abandon, or modify the cultural custom. An interaction becomes our own when—and because—we populate it with our own unique intentions. (Of course, Feller’s emphasis is complicated: he could be valorizing the individual because he is a native speaker of German.)

In his resistance to speaking of universalizing systems even within a culture, Feller aligns with those who depart from the tendency of Brown and Levinson (and



others) to emphasize transcultural maxims, constants, or principles. This tendency is evident even in the title of Brown and Levinson’s most famous work, “Universals in language usage” (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Leech reflects on criticism that has been leveled at Brown and Levinson in recent years. He points out that although it’s true they were guilty of some universalizing (and Leech has been accused of the same), they worked in an era when the field was very interested in regularities perceived across cultures (Leech, 2014, p. 81ff). Indeed, the fact that the field has now thought twice about claiming *universals* does not diminish the value of understanding cross-cultural *patterns*. Today, however, researchers describe these more cautiously (as we see in Feller). DeCapua and Wintergerst might call this an etic model—an approach to hypothesizing patterns from the outside. It may be a more useful way to think about “universals,” and in fact, since the *etic* is one half a dialectic, it suggests the need to study the *emic* as well.

Feller’s pilot study suggests a balance between the two. While heeding his warning not to universalize from his argument or findings, we can still infer three telescoping principles at work:



*Transcultural:* Greeting is a speech act with a similar function *across cultures* and languages—the function to establish rapport.

*Cultural:* At the same time, within a culture, greetings may enact *culture-specific* values.

Figure. Three principles of pragmatic interaction.

*Individual:* Further, the pragmatic impact of any particular greeting is *always also idiosyncratic*, determined at this level by individuals managing their unique interactions.

The tension that holds these three principles in play may be a useful model of the dynamic one can see in interactions even beyond greetings (e.g., farewells, invitations/rejections, status management).

### **Dynamics of Greetings**

Working from Feller's definition above, where greetings form the basis for further communicative interaction, greetings and farewells together can be said to frame an interaction. Sociologically speaking, they enact a ritual of opening and closing a period of mutual access, each of them serving vitally to preserve (or to threaten) face and to negotiate the potential for future access by both parties to each other. Farewells may in fact carry more value (and more risk) in that regard, since they "bolster the relationship for the anticipated period of no contact" (Goffman, qtd in Pinto, 2008, p. 374).

These functions are fairly intuitive. A cross-cultural study by Pinto reveals that some counter-intuitive options for greeting also exist (Pinto, 2008) in some languages. He observes, for example, that sometimes identical phrasing "can be used indistinctly . . . for both opening and closing encounters" (Pinto, 2008, p. 374). Some varieties of Spanish, for example, allow speakers to use a single phrase for both greetings and farewells (e.g., *buenos dias* and parallel forms), as can also be seen in Italian (*ciao*) and in some other languages. Pinto is interested in American English, where this is not so common, but one could note that in British and Australian English "good day" works this way, as well.

Even more counter-intuitively, a *non-greeting* may serve as a greeting. In traditional Nigerian cultures, Adamo tells us, to use the interlocutor's name in greeting would be inappropriate when the speaker is much lower in social status—younger, for example, a student, an employee, or in a position of lower authority—than the hearer.

Titles may be used, as in “good morning, Professor,” but Adamo notes that “a form of greeting such as ‘Good morning, Professor Olokun’ by a younger person or someone of lower rank or status is culturally and socially unacceptable” (Adamo, 2007, p. 45). To speak the name of another person is, for Nigerian cultures, a rather intimate gesture.

Using the personal name in greeting is an issue in other cultures, too, where traditional hierarchies are honored in generous negative face. In a fictional example, we notice that most of Anaya’s characters address the old curandera in his novel *Bless Me, Ultima*, by the title “Grande”; only those whom she considers intimate will use her personal name, Ultima. This approach, to combine Feller’s terms with Brown and Levinson’s terms (both rooted in Goffman), manages to balance the ritual function of opening access with the important business of preserving appropriate negative face.

Yet another permutation is the situation where a person of 1) lower rank but 2) relatively intimate relation needs to claim and manage both of these factors in greeting. This might be the case, for example, of a close employee with an employer, or of a child with a long-time family friend. Adamo writes that this condition is negotiated in contemporary Nigerian English by supplying diminutives—terms that in inner circle varieties of English (Kachru, 1972) would be used only within a speaker’s family. “These terms are not necessarily used for kinsfolk but to show respect for age and position, and some level of intimacy. As a result, younger persons might refer to older ones as, for example, *mummy*, *daddy*, *uncle*, and *auntie*” (Adamo, 2007, p. 45). This solution is perhaps analogous to the practice among speakers of inner circle English in “low church” religious contexts, who routinely deploy *Brother* and *Sister* as titles signifying both respect and solidarity. (African American church-goers add *Mother* in certain cases.)

“Passing greetings”—those greetings exchanged when time is very limited, when speakers are “literally on the run,” as Pinto writes (Pinto, 2008, p. 371)—can be seen to establish rapport in Feller’s terms. (To clarify, Pinto does not cite Feller; he instead adopts Goffman’s language of rituals that support or regulate social access.) A greeting like “Hello,” or “Hey there” even in passing works to acknowledge the relationship and maintain rapport, where to neglect the greeting would imply that the relationship is not valued.

Accordingly, passing greetings employ language formulations and pragmatic functions of greetings *and* farewells in *one utterance*. This unique duality highlights how their function is not identical to that of regular greetings; they do not (or are not intended to) signal a moment of regular access.

Pinto also notes the attention that some researchers give to particular aspects of the greeting or farewell interaction—aspects such as courtesy and sincerity. In this framework, passing greetings, because they are cursory by definition and are often delivered via formula, risk appearing to fail on counts of both courtesy and sincerity. And here Pinto intersects with Feller’s interest in the individual, because, as he points out, it can happen that the hearer of a passing greeting misses the “passing” cue, and mistakes the greeting for a move toward a typical moment of increased relationship access.

In real life interactions, distinguishing between regular greetings and passing greetings is not always an easy task. There may be cases when S [speaker] issues what he or she intends to be a passing greeting, but H [hearer] interprets it as a transition to increased access and stops to talk with S. (Pinto, 2008, p. 376)

American English may be especially susceptible to this awkwardness, since both regular and passing greetings often involve the “How are you?” formula. To L2 speakers, this greeting may appear to signal a sincere inquiry about the well-being of the interlocutor, but it is typically not intended as such by the American speaker, especially in passing. Accordingly, the speaker risks offending sincerity expectations of the hearer when using such a greeting.

Pinto notes other forms of American greeting, such as *Hello*, *Hi*, or *Hey*, that normally signal the opening of access, but in a passing greeting are used for the dual function of greeting-farewell, and hence go unanswered, as in a passing greeting pair such as, *Hey / What’s up?* He compares passing greetings in American English and Peninsular Spanish, and there Pinto finds very different cultural meanings embedded. Some greeting-farewell formulas in Peninsular Spanish, according to Pinto, interestingly offer the opposite approach to the American; that is, a customary closing is used instead an opening formula: *Hasta luego (See you later) / Adios (Goodbye)*. The Spanish intuition here seems to be that a farewell maintains rapport while precluding the inference that this is a moment of opening normal access.

### **Understanding Fracture**

To offer greetings in one culture from the emic assumptions of another may cause an interpersonal fracture that may be experienced by the receiver as shocking, confusing, offensive, or humorous; this is understood commonly as pragmatic infelicity, a failure in pragmatic communication. Mestre de Caro describes it as a sort of impossible demand made, for example, by a speaker who asks L2 to obey the rules of L1:

Thus, the formulation of highly ritualized everyday speech acts such as greetings . . . cannot obey a [simple] transposition from the native language or L1 into a foreign language (L2 or L3), so in the majority of cases, there will be an effect of “rareza” [strangeness or estrangement] . . . affecting comprehension between interlocutors, the course and equilibrium of the communication. (Mestre de Caro, 2013, p. 409, my translation)<sup>3</sup>

The effect on the “equilibrium of communication” that occurred between my friend Fatima and me is captured perfectly in the word *rareza*—awkwardness, strangeness, or estrangement. Months went by before the *rareza* between us faded.

One could understand this interaction in terms established by Brown and Levinson in the 1970s. They explored sociological concepts of “face” put forward even earlier by Goffman, and they interpreted these concepts for application to sociolinguistic contexts. Interested more in politeness codes than in greetings as such, Brown and Levinson might point out that in the exchange with Fatima, I embarrassed her by inadvertently threatening negative face; I did this by making physical contact with her, which of course is a taboo among traditional Muslim men and women. A simple American boy from the forest, I was unaware of such things.

Brown and Levinson might also say that her response threatened positive face for me, because she declined to affirm me by reciprocating in terms equivalent to those I initiated. Each of us, observing politeness codes appropriate to our own cultures, violated

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<sup>3</sup> Así, la formulación de actos de habla cotidianos altamente ritualizados como los saludos . . . no puede obedecer a una transposición de la lengua materna o L1 a la lengua extranjera (L2 o L3), pues en la mayoría de los casos habrá un efecto de “rareza” . . . afectando la comprensión entre interlocutores, el curso y el equilibrio de la comunicación. (Mestre de Caro, 2013, p. 409)

codes of politeness that were appropriate to the other's culture, and thus we fractured the social concord between us. Our rapport was damaged, and naturally, *rareza* was the result. I felt I had failed. In one sense, we both had failed.

If we use the language of failure, we have to ask whether an L2 learner can ever hope to master the pragmatics of the target language, or whether one is destined forever to fail, to be in deficit. However, remembering that culture is dynamic, language is mutable, and meaning itself is indeterminate, we may need speak of pragmatic appropriateness as something more nuanced than simple binaries like mastery/failure. We need to acknowledge that communicating, like learning, is always an exercise in approximation.

Here, Feller's careful attention to the individual speaker's contribution to the context of the speech act opens the possibility of a slightly richer understanding of pragmatic infelicity. "Each language provides the speaker with a set of different linguistic means," he writes, "including verbal as well as nonverbal means, to express the particularities of the social relationship of dialogue partners" (Feller, 2007, p. 183). The discourse of pragmatic failure presupposes a fixed standard—a predictable, teachable, rule-governed norm—against which a particular speaker's performance is to be judged. This is a deficit model of literacy acquisition; the learner is seen as in a state of deficiency, as one into whom knowledge must be deposited. But Feller implies a more moveable measure: different available means or options exist within each language to express what is needed, and individuals are free to improvise. Although he is fully aware of the role of culture in shaping the individual speaker and the speaker's choices, Feller

would argue that *idiosyncratic* factors, even genetic or biological ones, play a greater role than has been acknowledged (Feller, 2007, p. 187).

Feller does not imply that all “different linguistic means” available should be seen as equally valid or equally appropriate pragmatically, as a purely relativist position might suggest. Rather, Feller’s view is constructivist and contextual. What is received as appropriate will depend on multiple factors in context, some of which will be more generally conventional and some of which may be more idiosyncratic, creative, and contingent. “Language is not absolutely predictable,” he writes. “Where rules and conventions come to an end, the speaker is free to find new ways to communicate” (Feller, 2007, p. 179). Social distance between interlocutors, for example, would predict differential acceptance of an unconventional utterance. Prior relationship between interlocutors likewise would make a difference. The listener’s understanding that the utterance comes from a child or an L2 speaker may (or may not) widen the latitude for what is acceptable—not across the culture, but within the single interaction.

Mestre de Caro reports that her Colombian students learning French would sometimes combine the informal *salut!* with the honorific *professeur* (Mestre de Caro, 2013, p. 411). This can be seen as a mistake, as pragmatic failure, and I think Mestre de Caro sees it this way. But it might also be understood as experiment, innovation, or even play. It may be a millisecond’s pragmatic negotiation over what is possible between two individuals of different ages or social strata, or from two language/cultures, rather than as a violation of either cultural norm.

Of course, from the point of view of interlocutors in the moment (such as Fatima and I were), the experience of pragmatic rupture or infelicity certainly may feel like



“failure.” Loss of face may indeed occur. But my instinct is that a deficit model misses the point theoretically, and that pedagogically it discourages learners. In other words, like syntax and lexicon, pragmatics exists within a zone of negotiation and invention.

### **Pragmatics and Identity**

Mestre de Caro points out that it isn't a simple thing to establish and teach precise rules to L2 learners in order to prevent cross-cultural ruptures in pragmatic performance. She suggests that to teach pragmatics, one must bear in mind “some of the factors that guide and explain the use of a particular formula of greeting” (Mestre de Caro, 2013, p. 425),<sup>4</sup> among which are the communicative situation, time of day, the affective relation between speakers, the age of the participants, and so on. No doubt one must bear these in mind, but even so, “precise rules” may be out of reach. In addition, each of these is also a factor that Feller might tag as relating to individuality, especially the “affective relation.” What is ever more clear is that negotiating the domain of pragmatics is an ongoing, infinitely variable challenge.

LoCastro draws our attention to an especially subtle layer of influence on individual speakers, which must play a role in L2 or foreign language learning of pragmatics. This is quite simply the cultural identity of the speaker.

A learner's attempt to acquire and use L2 pragmatic norms may not indicate inadequate knowledge or fossilization of L2 development. Rather, learners may wish to maintain their L1 cultural identity. Just as human beings on a daily basis select the clothes they wear, the car they drive, and the friends they hang out with, so do they

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<sup>4</sup> My translation from “algunos de los factores que guían y explican el empleo de una fórmula particular de saludo” (Mestre de Caro, 2013, p. 425)

speak in ways to construct their identity as members of a particular group and show disinterest in belonging to another group. (LoCastro, 2012, p. 132)

Speaking in slightly broader terms, Adamo uses “nativization” to denote the process of inventing ways to supply English with pragmatic functions from non-English culture/s. In Adamo’s conception of the identity question, it is not as elective or ephemeral as it sounds in LoCastro’s framing above. Adamo considers nativization vital not only to individual but also to national identity, and even to cultural survival. In fact, she advocates a return to an indigenous language for the conduct of national affairs. Nigerians desire “a language made in Nigeria by Nigerians, with which they can express their cultures uninhibited” (Adamo, 2007, p. 45). But at the same time, she points out, for now Nigerians have no choice but to infuse as much as possible of Nigerian identity into the variety of English they speak. This nativization she sees as both spontaneous and deliberate, and it is needed to address the (pragmatic and other) shortcomings of English in the Nigerian cultural context. Accordingly,

Nigerians invest the English language with such cultural elements as are reflected in coinages, borrowings from indigenous languages, extensions of meaning, the use of politeness phenomena and so on because there is a vacuum that needs be filled—a vacuum created by the lack of opportunity to use and express themselves anywhere in their indigenous language(s). For this reason, they make do with the language that government and circumstances have thrust upon them by attempting to express their being in an alien tongue.

Adamo may or may not mean to imply that every L2 speaker is, in effect, being colonized. This is an interesting riddle, but probably the degree of voluntariness in

choosing one's L2 is relevant. That is, to elect to learn an L2 without coercion by government, colonizer, or circumstance would not be reasonably described as having a language thrust upon one. But in cases like that of Nigeria, where the colonial language had functioned not only as the language of overt oppression, but also as a *lingua franca* across numerous indigenous languages, and where those former colonies, for complicated sociopolitical reasons, have continued to conduct national business (government, education, law) in the language of the former colonizer, L2 users arguably might be said to have lost opportunity to express their cultural being in the tongue traditionally affiliated with it. That these users consequently nativize the L2 can be seen as a form of cultural repair and resistance. And, less politically, more academically, nativizing illustrates one of the dynamic phenomena at play in language contact.

And here, one can't help noticing how we trivialize cultural identity when we compare it, as LoCastro does, with choices in clothing and casual friends (LoCastro, 2012, p. 132). Even the "choice" of adolescent peer-group identity is a much deeper, less conscious, more complicated matter than she implies. This is surely more than slipping into a tee shirt. But LoCastro's point is well taken that the wish to maintain one's home cultural identity may take the form of selective resistance to pragmatic norms in a foreign or L2 culture. In Brown and Levinson's terms, a speaker may be defending negative face by doing so.

### **Potential Directions of Inquiry**

My friend Fatima no doubt knew that an embrace between boys and girls in an American college was perfectly acceptable, but this cultural norm was not something she was willing or able to internalize. Her choice not to "re-greet" me in an equivalent

manner was not a trivial one. Probably, it occurred at the subconscious level, and took a form less like “I shall construct a traditional Muslim identity on this matter” and more like “Yikes! What is he doing?!!” Further research in the dimension where *adjusting to pragmatics of a new language challenges the learner’s sense of identity* might, I think, lead to fascinating insights.

LoCastro alludes to another potential factor in learner resistance—the influence of cultural peers—when she relates an anecdote of one Japanese student shaming another for success in speaking English (LoCastro, 2012, p. 132). Similar pressure might come from family, friends, or others in the cultural cohort who may feel in some way alienated by what they see as the learner’s rejection of the home cultural identity. It strikes me that the interplay between a learner’s motivation to gain L2 proficiency and *affective influences from others* who resist this, would be a fruitful subarea for study within the above.

In this connection, we have to acknowledge the theory work of Canagarajah, (Canagarajah, 2010a, 2010b, 2013), who points out that L2 instruction usually proceeds from a monolingualist model, which assumes that the learner’s ultimate purpose is to perform the L2 in a way identical to how the hypothetical ideal native speaker would perform it. Not only might L2 learners resist cultural assimilation, says Canagarajah, they might improvisationally “shuttle” between L1 and L2 to import rhetorical or discursal tropes into their performance of one language or the other. As we look more closely at a multilingual or a repertoire model of language use, we have to acknowledge the *illusory nature of concepts like “native speaker,” “proficiency,” and “language,” itself*. This, too, is a fascinating (and potentially disturbing) direction of research.

There is no usage of a language without influences and contributions from others. Even if a person is able to say a language is first or second, based on affiliation, heritage, or expertise (to use the alternatives to “native speaker” proposed by Rampton, 1990), it is difficult to deny the ways in which its resources are shaped in interaction with others. (Canagarajah, 2013a, p. 440)

A final question might be *how might a theory position like this materialize helpfully in L2 teaching*, so that teaching takes fuller advantage of learners’ multilingual repertoire and offers L2 learning as something completely nonthreatening to L1 identity?

Language teachers conventionally describe an interaction between interlocutors as a negotiation in making meaning. I wonder if one might also claim that we are always negotiating with language itself, as we make meaning. This, too, involves both conscious and unconscious (and meta-conscious) choices, and is affected by perceived and unperceived influences. Language never stands still in history, nor do language users. We are always creatively improvising in linguistic and pragmatic domains from a vast dynamic repertoire, a repertoire that comprises L1, L2, and all our other *Ls*. Thus, every encounter with language involves reinvention, improvisation, and transformation of both the user and the language. Ultimately, language use is radically idiosyncratic. If this is a fair description of language, then our theory of *teaching* language has to come to grips with it.

### **Epilogue**

Later, I ran into Nasim, a Lebanese girl and the only other Muslim person I knew on our small campus. Nasim smiled and waved, and crossed the hall to greet me. I extended my hand cautiously, but then withdrew it.

“Sorry,” I whispered. “I made a huge mistake with Fatima just now.”

But Nasim opened her arms. “Oh, I don’t care about that stuff,” she said. “Give me a hug, you big doof.”

LANGUAGE PAPER

**Reconsidering Bilingual Pedagogy**

*A Research Proposal on the Potential of Codeswitching in  
Teaching Adult ESL/EFL Learners*

There is little indication that code-switching is merely a deviation from monolingual norms that will soon disappear. On the contrary, . . . the communicative uses of code-switching are more likely to increase.

—Gumperz, *Discourse Strategies* (1982)

### **Introduction to the Language Paper**

In its unique cognitive operation as well as its sociocultural roles and functions, code-switching (CS) seems to pose a dilemma for the L2 classroom teacher. While it makes sense that a student might often code-switch into the home language while learning the L2, it seems to many educators that to do so, at least in the classroom, will interfere with learning the L2. Conventional wisdom tells them that L2 is best learned as L1 was learned—via immersion, without potentially confusing input in other languages. On this logic, many ESL classrooms actually prohibit CS.

Phillipson and others have challenged this prohibition, relating it generally to colonialist needs of the British Empire historically and American globalizing designs in the contemporary world. No doubt there is truth in that perspective. But Macaro (2005) relates it also to something more basic: teacher monolingualism. The British during their imperial period and the Americans now, were and are generally monolingual cultures; without bilingual teachers, the learning value of CS goes unnoticed.

In the following paper, written for a research methods course, I proposed an empirical study of CS in the classroom. I was not (and still am not) prepared to undertake any such study. But it was enlightening to think about how one might design a valid comparison of the conventional English-Only classroom with a classroom in which CS was permitted, or even modeled and encouraged. With the experiences reported in the last two papers behind me, I was interested in seeing how it might be possible to test my growing intuition that an English-Only policy was neither research-based nor effective pedagogically.



## **Reconsidering Bilingual Pedagogy**

### ***A Research Proposal on the Potential of Codeswitching in***

### ***Teaching Adult ESL/EFL Learners***

#### **Abstract**

The proposed study hopes to illuminate the intersection where code-switching research, sociocultural theory, translingual theory, and the pedagogical tradition of English-only come together in the EFL/ESL classroom. In the literature on language pedagogy, the target-language-only tradition assumes that a second language is learned in the same way a first language is learned. On the other hand, sociocultural theories imply that an L2 learner will never fully integrate conceptual content encoded in the L2, regardless of pedagogy. However, code-switching research and translingual theory, where the relation between L1 and L2 is seen as dynamic, imply a challenge to monolingualism as a pedagogical model. The proposal here outlines an effects study that would compare a control English-only classroom with two experimental classrooms where language alternation is seen as an instructional resource. Thirty adult beginning EFL/ESL learners from Spanish language backgrounds would experience an identical curriculum taught by the same teacher. Pre- and post-tests would measure student progress in pre-identified vocabulary and formulaic cultural expressions. Hypotheses predict that students in code-switching-encouraged classrooms will outperform those in the control.

*Keywords:* EFL, ESL, bilingual pedagogy, second language teaching, mother tongue, code-switching, language alternation

## Introduction

Works in communicative language pedagogy (CLT) predominantly argue that the target language should be the *only* language used in an L2 classroom. In fact, according to some advocates of bilingual pedagogy, this has been the convention since the late 1800s (Butzkamm, 2003; Dodson, 1983; Macaro, 2005), and it continues to dominate foreign language teaching, whether in English or another language. In the state of Utah, for example, the statewide dual language immersion program formally requires the monolingual approach to both sides of its immersion program (Utah State Office of Education, 2012).

At the same time, as we will see below, theoretical work by some sociocultural theorists implies that a learner cannot use L2 to mediate higher mental processes—those processes that might embed cultural meanings. If this psycholinguistic conclusion is right, then logically, a language learner must use the L1 to find access to the cultural meanings of the L2. But this conflict between traditional L2 teaching and sociocultural theory creates a pedagogical impasse for the teacher. That is, in the classroom, the teacher is required to convey language and culture *only* in the L2 target language, yet is told by SCT that students cannot integrate these without using L1.

A tradition of *bilingual* pedagogy does exist, championed in the past by Butzkamm and others (Butzkamm, 2003; Dodson, 1972), but it seems to be honored more in its neglect than in its practice. Recently, however, there may be new support for bilingual teaching in scholarship on code-switching (CS) and translanguaging. It is well-established that CS is driven by sociolinguistic functions (e.g., Albirini, 2011; Ferguson,

1959; Fishman, 1971), and recent work on translingualism (Canagarajah, 2010; Horner, Lu, & Matsuda, 2010) further theorizes that a “multilingual competence” enables deliberate importing of discursal tropes mutually between L1 and L2—a facility that Canagarajah calls “shuttling between languages” (Canagarajah, 2010b). Both of these positions—bilingual pedagogy and translingual theory—imply that it may be worthwhile again to test the wisdom of basing L2 pedagogy on the model of L1 monolingual learning. Between the tradition of bilingual pedagogy and the current theory work in codeswitching and translingualism, there may be space to explore the effectiveness of shuttling between languages in the EFL classroom.

### **Research questions**

The proposed study locates itself at the intersection where conventional L2-only pedagogy, as practiced in CLT classrooms, conflicts with bilingual methods and with theories of multilingual competence. While maintaining a commitment to CLT pedagogy, this research asks,

1. Can effects of systematic, theory-based, bilingual teaching be perceived?
2. If so, can they be correlated with student gains in L2 learning?

### **Literature Review**

#### ***English-only, sociocultural theory, code-switching, and translingualism***

**Butzkamm**, in 2003, argued that employing the mother tongue systematically in L2 pedagogy had been discouraged and practically abandoned over the course of the twentieth century (Butzkamm, 2003). He pointed in particular to the development of communicative pedagogy in ESL/EFL as an influence in this trend. He implied further

that British and American monolingualism, perhaps consequent to a certain Anglo imperialism, played a role in reinforcing the practice (Butzkamm, 2003, p. 30). Offering ten maxims in support, Butzkamm argues that to model SLA after monolingual learning is mistaken, since the process and context for learning one's first language are fundamentally different from those of one's second. He systematically articulates the position that "The mother tongue is the master key to foreign languages, the tool which gives us the fastest, surest, most precise and most complete means of accessing a foreign language" (Butzkamm, 2003, p. 31). Butzkamm cites **Dodson** (Dodson, 1983), who, from a similar theory position, found that experimental subjects performed better when taught using bilingual methods than subjects in a control group taught via conventional monolingual pedagogy.

**Wang** identifies ten tenets of standard tutorial instruction in American university writing centers, where many international students seek help with their writing assignments in English (L. Wang, 2012, p. 31). Her Tenet Ten is that writing centers believe that the client should think and write only in English (L. Wang, 2012, p. 38). Even if they know the home language of the client student, American writing center tutors are taught to speak only in English to English language learners (ELLs)—just as they do with L1 English students. Wang writes: "It is believed that English-only policy enables ELLs to think in the target language with minimal interference from their L1. . . . An ELL's L1 is not appropriate at any stage of writing" (L. Wang, 2012, p. 39).

Holding Butzkamm and Wang in mind, we can turn to **Celce-Murcia**. In a 2007 refinement of her previous work, she develops the concept of *strategic competence* (Celce-Murcia, 2007). By this term, Celce-Murcia refers to "an available inventory of

communicative, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies” that language learners employ to enhance their own learning (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 50). L2 instruction must attend to strategic competence, she argues, because effective use of this available repertoire allows L2 learners to advance more quickly. Strategic competence is inherently metacognitive, which means that learners—especially beginning learners—must employ L1 to develop it. Here, Butzkamm and other advocates for bilingual teaching would agree with the implications of sociocultural and Vygotskian theory.

For example, sociocultural theorist **Lantolf** suggests that “L2 learners are unlikely to develop the capacity to use the L2 to mediate mental functioning, even when they can use it in social situations” (Lantolf, 2011b, p. 28). Lantolf’s argument is roughly that higher mental processes construct the screen through which human beings filter perception; and because our first language encodes and embeds cultural understandings even as it mediates meaning for us, L1 will always control our higher mental processes. Thus, he argues, it is impossible for learners to appropriate the cultural meanings of an L2 (like strategic competence) and to use them to mediate our higher mental processes. L1 will intercept and remediate those. Perversely, this is an argument that teaching an L2 is in some ways futile, and it further implies (though Lantolf does not acknowledge this) that some L2 instruction would be better conducted in the mother tongue.

What Wang and others describe as conventional practice, and what the Utah State Office of Education requires of teachers, is contested by theorists who specialize in L2 writing. **Canagarajah** (2010), for one example, suggests that the practice is arguably imperialist and that it fails to exploit the cognitive advantages of multilingualism: “A bilingual person’s competence is not simply two discrete monolingual competencies

added together,” writes Canagarajah; “instead, bilingual competence integrates knowledge of two languages and is thus qualitatively different,” allowing the speaker to “shuttle” strategically or creatively between L1 and L2 (Canagarajah, 2010, p. 158). In arguing that pedagogy should see multilingualism as a cognitive advantage, Wang and Canagarajah are in conflict not only with conventional practice, but also with Lantolf and the pure form of sociocultural theory. They are forwarding a translingual pedagogy.

However, especially in his concept of shuttling between languages, Canagarajah echoes a much older construct, one that **Fishman** refers to as “situation shifting.” In describing CS within one social network but across different situations, Fishman offers this definition: “A situation is defined by the co-occurrence of two (or more) interlocutors related to each other in a particular way, communicating about a particular topic, in a particular setting” (Fishman, 1972, p. 48). When settings change, so may topic, locale, time, role, or relationship, and, Fishman writes, “any *one* of these differences may be sufficient . . . to require that a different language variety be utilized in each case” (Fishman, 1972, p. 49). Thus, Fishman breaks with previous work that sees code as context-determined (e.g., Ferguson, 1959), and argues that it is driven by communicative function. It becomes sociolinguistically *crucial*, therefore, for interlocutors to develop a reliable sense of appropriateness—what Fishman (following Hymes and anticipating Celce-Murcia) calls sociolinguistic communicative competence (Fishman, 1972, p. 49).

**Bassiouney**, in her introduction to Arab sociolinguistics (Bassiouney, 2009), traces the contributions and influences of pivotal figures in CS theory and research. Analyzing her own data on CS in diglossic Arabic situations, Bassiouney is hospitable to Gumperz’s view that speakers exercise spontaneity and even creativity in CS. At the

same time, she acknowledges the value of Myers-Scotton's rule-governed Matrix Language theory and offers refinements of that theory. In the Arabic diglossic context, Bassiouney says, matrix language and embedded language are so intertwined that to distinguish one as dominant is impossible or moot (Bassiouney, 2009, p. 54). In her analysis of identity performance in CS, she intuits what Albirini will establish empirically, as well as the arguments of translingual theorists like Canagarajah.

The centrality of function over context in CS is reinforced and extended by **Albirini's** study of Arabic speakers (Albirini, 2011). Comparing speakers of Standard Arabic with Dialectal Arabic recorded in contexts of high-, mid-, and low-formality, Albirini establishes that not only do speakers switch codes within all contexts, but they also switch in both directions (from high to low code and from low to high) *within all contexts*. These results from a diglossic study are congruent with both Bassiouney's theory of multiple matrix languages, and Canagarajah's study of shuttling, where multilingual speakers deliberately import discourse strategies across languages. In addition, Albirini notes the important function of Standard Arabic in performance of identity—specifically a pan-Arab or a Muslim identity—a concept fundamental to translingual arguments like Canagarajah's.

From a position more grounded in the classroom, pedagogical theorists **Lee and VanPatten** offer an especially clear example of learners not having the resources to interpret what they hear in the second language. Unfortunately, their commitment to a conventional target-language-only classroom creates a tension for them here. When efforts to negotiate meaning in the L2 fail, they notice, “both [the learner] and the instructor demonstrate a certain strategic competence: Instead of abandoning the idea,

they attempt to get it across in another way” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 52). If learner and instructor share the learner’s L1, it clearly represents a resource in Celce-Murcia’s “available inventory.” Strategic competence, as Butzkamm, Fishman, and others argue, must include switching to that shared language, in essence, to broker the negotiation of meaning.

A study by **Uyar** suggests a different view. In his research with beginning EFL learners in Turkey (Uyar, 2012), he found no significant difference in grammar learning between a group of students who received strict English-only instruction and an experimental group whose pedagogy included regular instruction in Turkish. Uyar concludes that using L1 or only English are merely “two different approaches” (Uyar, 2012, p. 7). His study, however, had notable problems, including that it was limited to 6 hours of instruction with students who had had no more than nine previous months of education in English; in addition, the study measured only growth in grammar—an unlikely domain in which to demonstrate communicative advances.

**Auerbach** (Auerbach, 1993), in a meta-review of pedagogical studies and research reports, argues that the role of political ideology in privileging the monolingual approach has not been (or, by the time of her writing, had not been) fully examined in the U.S. literature on ESL/EFL classrooms. Looking particularly at adult ESL education, she finds numerous studies that conclude that to encourage L1 in the ESL classroom is both effective and necessary, especially for adult learners who come with limited literacy in their home language. To deny these learners the use of their L1, claims Auerbach, effectively forecloses not only their chance to learn English well, but to participate fully in the U.S. economy. Thus, she writes, to insist on English-only in the ESL classroom



“may impede language acquisition precisely because it mirrors disempowering relations” in U.S. society (Auerbach, 1993, p. 16).

From a more psycholinguistic perspective, **Brooks and Donato** argue that resorting occasionally to L1 is a normal, even unavoidable, psycholinguistic process that can indeed advance the learning of L2 (Brooks & Donato, 1994). Metatalk in particular they find valuable as learners engage each other in communicative tasks designed for the L2 classroom; but this classroom metatalk, they say, occurs very frequently in L1. Brooks and Donato stop short of taking a pedagogical position in favor of CS in the L2 classroom, but they do take a clear theoretical position that supports such a pedagogy. “[T]he use of L1 during L2 interactions . . . is a normal psycholinguistic process that facilitates L2 production and allows learners both to initiate and sustain verbal interaction with one another. In short, verbal thinking [in L1] mediates one’s relation with the new language and with language itself (in this case, the learners’ L1), and is quite necessary and natural” (Brooks & Donato, 1994, p. 268). They bring us back to Lantolf, in other words, but with a different spin on the impasse we see in his comment quoted earlier.

### ***Summary***

In the literature on language alternation in the EFL/ESL classroom, we see two grand narratives in tension, both reinforcing a monolingual model of language teaching. On the one hand, the conventional English-only tradition assumes that a second language is learned in the same way a first language is learned—via immersion—and thus, by approximating immersion, an English-only pedagogy will enhance language acquisition. On the other hand, sociocultural theory of language learning, rooted in Vygotskian psychology, argues that L1 and L2 represent two exclusive monolingual conceptual

systems; an EFL learner will never fully integrate conceptual cultural content encoded in the language—regardless of pedagogy. A third vector of friction appears in CS studies and in translingual theory, where the relation between L1 and L2 is seen as dynamic, not exclusionary, and where monolingualism as a pedagogical model is directly challenged. Language alternation is seen here as a strategic resource to both teacher and learner, because it draws upon the learner's emergent multilingual competence, employing and enhancing metacognition to advance L2 pedagogical goals. In this model, strategically CS to the learner's L1 becomes useful in the L2 classroom.

### **Purpose of this study**

The proposed study hopes to illuminate this space where sociocultural theory and the pedagogical prohibition against language alternation intersect with a translingual understanding of CS in the classroom.

### **Methods**

Thirty participants, adult beginning ESL/EFL students from Spanish-language backgrounds, will be drawn from a local grant-supported community ESL school for adult learners. In a dynamic assessment, researchers will pre-test the participants to establish their baseline knowledge of English vocabulary and communicative formulae (Celce-Murcia, 2007). To control for education and other background knowledge, the research team will stratify the sample, and will assign participants randomly to three groups.

These groups will be taught an identical curriculum by the same teacher (an advanced speaker of Spanish and English) for an eight-week unit with two 120-minute

class meetings per week, with reading, writing, speaking, and listening components focusing on meaningful and authentic contexts of language use. Although the full curriculum will be much larger than this, a finite corpus of English vocabulary and of functional formulaic expressions (a la Celce-Murcia, 2010) such as greetings, telephone conventions, and informal conversational tropes, will be the research focus. In classroom one, the teacher will speak only in English; in classroom two, the teacher will end each class period with a ten-minute informal summary in Spanish. In classroom three, the teacher will code-switch strategically at his or her discretion. Among the teacher's pedagogical moves will be what Butzkamm calls "sandwiching," "quick translations," lists of student-generated mother-tongue expressions and their equivalents in English, mother-tongue versions of high-interest English texts (e.g., chapters of Harry Potter novels), along with other techniques employed in his study (Butzkamm, 2003, p. 32).

The teacher will be a member of the research team, and a second member of the team will observe in each classroom, posing as a teacher aide or assistant. An important purpose of this observation is to confirm the kind and amount of L1 use by the teacher in each of the three groups of participants; secondarily, the observer's journal will become a source of rich description of the classroom environment, noting a range of interests, from the relative effectiveness of various pedagogical techniques to varying states of student motivation.

A post-study dynamic assessment of vocabulary and formulaic competence will be conducted, measuring particularly the vocabulary and expression corpus pre-identified by the research team.

## **Hypotheses**

Hypotheses for this research follow the results of related studies by Auerbach, Brooks and Donato, and Dodson. I would predict that, as in those earlier studies, deliberate and judicious pedagogical use of the student's L1 will result in gains on measures of vocabulary and formulaic competence. In the first experimental group, where the teacher summarizes in L1 for ten minutes at the end of the 120-minute class period, our hypothesis is that students will outperform the control group in both vocabulary and formulaic competence. We further hypothesize, in regard to the second experimental group, where the teacher, at his or her discretion, employs bilingual methods such as "sandwiching" and others developed by Dodson, that those students will outperform both the control group and the first experimental group.

## **Contribution**

Potentially, this study could challenge the orthodoxy in CLT of monolingual teaching in L2 classrooms. While not a critique of CLT methods (e.g., meaningful communication, task-based activities), the study may add weight to the use of L1 as a scaffolding resource for L2 learners, and thus confirm a commonsense teaching practice that, although it certainly exists, remains unauthorized.

## LITERACY PAPER

### **Writing Instruction for English Learners in a Translingual Classroom**

[English language learners] see learning to write well in English or in some variety of it, as a way up and perhaps a way out. Coming as they often do from rich traditions of literacy . . . they are also familiar with the aesthetic and intellectual rewards of writing and reading.

—Bruce & Rafoth, 2016

### **Introduction to the Literacy Paper**

Although I have never been a writing teacher, I do have a particular interest in writing, both in its theory and its pedagogy. But the study of writing as an academic discipline is pursued primarily in North America, and especially in the U.S., and there almost exclusively within English departments.

Other disciplines tend to see writing as a generic skill, and teaching it as the responsibility of the public schools. Even among teachers of ESL in the States, writing gets a different emphasis—and a lighter emphasis—than it does in the university writing program. Writing programs, however, are very much aware of ESL writers, since their institutions expect international students to perform with as much facility in writing for the academy as do students who are L1 English speakers. How to work effectively with L2 writers is an increasing concern of the writing studies discipline. Two of my interests come together at this point.

The paper that follows was written in an effort to consider the major theory frameworks that structure both L1 and L2 writing scholarship, along with the pedagogy they imply. In addition, I wanted to acknowledge how translingual theory complicates things for both L1 and L2 writing, and to see how a teacher might develop a reasonable balance across these three lines of inquiry.

## Writing Instruction for English Learners in a Translingual Classroom

### Abstract

The paper brings together three different strands of work on English writing research and instruction, with a view toward harmonizing them into a coherent translingual approach to teaching writing in the postsecondary EFL/ESL/EIL writing classroom. Five fundamental principles are drawn from the knowledge base developed over more than a century in English composition research (now often called Writing Studies); further, the work of researchers specifically invested in the writing of L2 speakers provides a contrasting, though not conflicting, perspective; and finally, recent translingual scholarship usefully complicates the other two. The paper develops two sample ESL writing lessons that demonstrate an approach to L2 writing pedagogy triangulating these three bodies of knowledge.

*Keywords:* L2 writing, translingualism, writing studies, instruction, ESL/EFL

### Introduction

What Bruce and Rafoth describe above represents a challenge and a conundrum for mainstream postsecondary writing programs where these authors teach in the U.S., even when those programs include teachers with experience teaching ESL. Conventional ESL writing instruction, like much L2 instruction, appears to proceed from a de facto deficit model expressed through a monolingual approach that tacitly (sometimes explicitly) prohibits students from resorting to their home language as a resource for learning the target language. The implicit colonialist impulse of monolingual pedagogy has been well-discussed in the literature, so here *I* will point out only that such an approach positions

students as functionally ignorant, illiterate, and inexperienced—which they are not—at the same time as it cuts them off from language resources that they carry with them. The “rich traditions of literacy” at their command are *a priori* ruled out of bounds, inaccessible.

In this paper, I explore this problem as it applies to instruction in writing. I do so by triangulating the knowledge base of composition theory with that of L2 writing instruction and with the growing literature on translingualism. I find where these three lines of vision intersect, so to speak, and from that point of focus, develop two writing lessons that exemplify an alternative approach to L2 writing pedagogy, one that harmonizes these three bodies of knowledge.

### **What We Know about Writing**

Scholarship in writing studies (still predominantly a U.S. discipline) has established a number of consensus points regarding the activity of writing. These are described in recent work as “threshold concepts” (Adler-Kassner and Wardle, 2015) and five of them are considered to represent major core understandings that define the discipline. I summarize the five concepts below, but, for ease of reference, here they are in a single list.

1. Writing is a social and rhetorical activity
2. Writing speaks to situations through recognizable forms
3. Writing enacts and creates identities and ideologies
4. All writers have more to learn
5. Writing is always a cognitive activity



Much the same could be said of language study, and transcending all, one can see the consensus that not just writing, but literacy itself is socially constructed, multimodal, and situational.

### ***1. Writing is a social and rhetorical activity***

Writing scholars have virtual unanimity, for example, on the view that all manner of writing is best understood as a social and rhetorical activity. This idea is counter-intuitive to many students and even teachers. In the lore of non-specialists, writing is essentially a matter of transcribing thoughts that appear in the mind. The focus of this traditional understanding is on the finished product of writing, which should be fixed in a form that meets a conventional standard of grammatical/mechanical correctness. Writing is seen as a straightforward skill, even a basic skill, and the lack of it is a constraint on a student's academic progress.

This is not how writing scholars and researchers see writing. Since the mid-twentieth century, research in writing has shown writing to be a fundamentally social and fundamentally rhetorical activity. Just as speaking connects one person to another in a relation with a purpose, writing also addresses an audience, and the writer aims to influence that audience. Whether writing a newsy email to a friend, a contract for a realtor, an article for a journal, or a poem to a loved one, a writer is seeking to engage another human being and to move them in some way. "Writers are engaged in the work of making meaning for particular audiences and purposes, and writers are always connected to other people" (Roozen, 2015, p. 17). Even writing for oneself is dialogic: in this case, the reader may be only a projection of the self, but the writer addresses that reader and hopes to influence them.

The social dimension of writing goes even deeper than connecting with an audience, because a writer also engages with antecedents and sources. Words get their meanings from how they are used by other people in other situations, and those meanings change as we employ them in new situations. In this way, we are always “writing back” to others and contributing to the long-term, dynamic process of making language. In regard to academic genres, Harris (2006) suggests that *all* writing can be seen as *rewriting*; in this, he is expressing what writing scholars have established throughout a wide range of work: that writing is always necessarily dialogic—i.e., social and rhetorical.

## ***2. Writing speaks to situations through recognizable forms***

The concept of genre is familiar to literacy, communication, and language scholars. In every instance of communication resides the question of how each interlocutor interprets both the communicative *situation* and the *form* of the communication itself. Is my friend telling a joke or a story? Are they asking me for a favor? Are they opening a long conversation, or are they just acknowledging me with a “passing greeting”? If I don't have time for conversation, what form should my response take? These are questions of genre.

Martin (2009), a linguist, points out that one should understand genre not so much as a choice of form but as a semantic choice within a social context; genre is one of the many ways in which people use language to live. That is, in context, form itself conveys meaning.

Scholarship on genre in writing studies takes a similarly functional and social perspective. Generally, writing is understood to address its audience through recognizable

gestures associated with defined audiences (different disciplines, for example) and with situations for which the reader would find the writing appropriate. A book report, for example, will not do when a research report is expected). Bazerman (2015) grounds his perspective of genre in the familiar concept of rhetorical situation. “Awareness of rhetorical situation . . . helps us to put in focus what we can accomplish in a situation, how we can accomplish it, and what the stakes are” (Bazerman, 2015, p. 36). This is what Bawarshi (2003) means when he argues that the force of genre is such that it does more than package its content; the genre actually constructs or “invents” the writer for the moment.

Unfortunately, students and teachers are often over-specific in their approach to genre in writing instruction, and they tend to reify artificial conventions of form into obligatory gestures and formalities. Such is the case with the century-old American "five-paragraph theme," a genre of writing that is by all accounts functional literally nowhere but in U.S. secondary schools. In contrast, the focus of current genre scholarship is on the diversity of the forms of discourse. For writing scholars, the point of bringing students to understand genre is not to help them build a repertoire of formal conventions that match particular school assignments. Instead, they want students to internalize the concept of rhetorical situation, and to develop an awareness of genre as a functional way to think about invention in writing and about how they might present or invent themselves in writing in different rhetorical situations.

### ***3. Writing enacts and creates identities and ideologies***

This idea is familiar to literacy, language, and writing scholars via sociocultural theory. To learn a language is to gain membership in a social group. Membership in a

social group confers an identity. With the constructed discourse of a group comes a constructed way of seeing the world—an ideology—because our discourse both provides and constrains what is possible for us to see, say, and think. In this manner, language builds ideological schema from which learners operate. Accordingly, through writing as through speaking, we engage and exercise our ideologies and identities. At the same time, although “instances of language use do not exist independently from cultures and their ideologies” (Scott, 2015, p. 48), they are not frozen or fossilized there. Subsequent languaging enlarges what is known to the learner, and growth occurs.

Although familiar and research-based, this social view of language does run counter to the commonsense of non-specialist publics, including education policy-makers, teachers, and even many scholars in non-humanities disciplines. The common idea that there is a single correct usage, a standard language, or a general academic discourse continues to be as persuasive as ever, and probably most language users inside and outside the academy assume language to be a neutral, transparent, unsituated conveyance for thought. Writing (like speaking) seems a general skill that one can master with a little instruction and self-discipline.

According to writing researchers, what is missed in the logic of standards is that a standard itself is a convention, and it, too, represents an ideology. This is a familiar concept to linguists, as well, and many EIL teachers are keenly aware that to impose a language standard on a student always also imposes an ideology and an identity—a point sometimes missed by education policymakers. This may or may not harm a student, but it does suggest the need to consciously affirm the student’s bond with or respect for the home language (Kim & Tatar, 2017). Whether the teacher chooses to attend to this as I do

or not, the point is that, in teaching writing, it is useful to understand the ideological and identity dynamics of language use.

#### **4. *All writers have more to learn***

With this fourth threshold concept, composition researchers take it as a given that all writers, not just student writers or L2 writers, can continue to develop. This is partly a function of human cognition—learning never really ends. But it is also a function of the physical world. We communicate with real physical human beings, and every authentic writing situation is different, making different demands on genre, discourse, lexicon, register, and pragmatics. Consequently—and this is crucial for teachers of writing to understand—“there is no such thing as ‘writing in general’; therefore, there is no one lesson about writing that can make writing good in all contexts” (Rose, 2015, p. 60). Instead, one learns over a long period of time how to select appropriate strategies for new writing situations. A more experienced writer may be better at this than a novice writer, but no single writer can hope to achieve terminal proficiency.

The idea of proficiency grounds much of the language-learning literature, and like the idea of a standard, it gives us a convenient way to talk about differences among learners; but in its logic, it is problematic. That is, the concept of the *proficient* works only as a foil to the *deficient* and the *sufficient*; as such, not only does it emerge from a deficit model of learning, it also depends on an ideal of full completion. This is where proficiency becomes untenable as a term of theory. All learning is provisional, so the idea of a terminal position, a level of mastery where development is fully achieved, is a fiction—useful, but impossible even semantically.

In another problematic shorthand, an idealized native speaker is our benchmark for proficiency and usually offered as the goal for L2 learners. Called the “native speaker fallacy” by Phillipson (1992) and “native-speakerism” by Holliday (2006), this benchmark presents a logical problem. L1 speakers are granted *proficient* or *mastery* status categorically as natives to the language (e.g., Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 177), in spite of the immense range of language competence represented among actual living native speakers. As translingual theorists point out, all speakers learn language in a zone where multiple linguistic traditions and conventions are in contact, so there is no perfectly homogeneous linguistic community in which one could become the ideal “native speaker” with full mastery of their language. The reality is—and even language scholars who are content with the idea of proficiency would agree—that no language user ever achieves terminal development.

This is what the fourth threshold concept in writing is about: all writers have more to learn.

### ***5. Writing is always a cognitive activity***

If writing is a social and a rhetorical gesture that requires the individual to choose and judge and build a strategy, then it obviously also requires cognition. Here the exterior social world meets the interior physical world of the human brain. A number of empirical studies in the 1970s and 1980s established that writing performance is inflected by such interior states as anxiety, shifting attention, idiosyncratic choices, identity configurations, and others (Emig, 1972; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Perl, 1979). It was through cognitive studies that writing scholars began to challenge the conventional view that poor student performance was related to mental or cultural deficits. From these studies, the field saw

the need to turn toward the explanatory value of social and rhetorical theories of the composing process.

Cognitive research today adds the important point that a two-way influence between writing and cognition exists; not only does how we think influence how we write, but how we write can influence how we think—cognitive states, such as memory, attention, goal-setting, and others are affected by writing (Dryer, 2015). Dryer takes this further: “[T]here is now substantial evidence that composing practices measurably influence . . . psychosocial and even *physiological* phenomena (stress and anxiety levels, recovery from trauma, immunological response, pain sensitivity, postoperative recovery, etc.)” (2015, p. 73, emphasis original).

As part of this return to an interest in cognition, some writing scholars emphasize the value of teaching *metacognition*, which can help students attend to important issues that transcend writing situations (e.g., genre, discourse community) and to learn to transfer and adapt writing strategies from one context to another. Dryer (2015) points to a convergence between a focus on the social in writing research and the refreshed interest in cognitive research: “The writing process is supported by a single system—the writer’s internal mind-brain interacting with the external environment” (Berninger & Winn, 2006, as cited in Dryer, 2015, p. 74).

### **Second Language Writing**

I find a great deal of epistemological common ground between these threshold concepts in English composition studies and many taken-for-granted concepts among second language acquisition scholars, but there are important differences, as well. For example, although the majority of composition scholars identify with humanities research and

methods, scholars of L2 writing have emerged primarily from the field of linguistics, especially applied linguistics. In their book-length review of research on L2 writing in English, Leki, Cumming, and Silva write that “This historical allegiance has resulted in . . . a more practical, less theoretical collective turn of mind, tending to nudge the field away from more ideological considerations” (2008, p. 61).

Indeed, as a collective, English compositionists have been very much occupied with ideological considerations. Employed predominantly in U.S. public institutions, they argue that it is a civic obligation to advance social justice in the classroom (Condon, 2012, and others). In contrast, scholars of L2 writing, possibly because they identify with a more transnational focus and constituency, generally hesitate to use the classroom to advance civic agendas associated with North American sociopolitical presuppositions. “[B]urning ideological issues in the U.S. . . . may simply be irrelevant to many internationals. In addition, . . . for those teaching abroad, discussion of ideological issues may [carry] social sanctions or even security risks” (Leki et al., 2008, p. 61).

Still, despite having followed “a different path” (Matsuda, 1999), research on L2 writing reveals operational understandings that have much in common with the threshold concepts in the field of writing studies discussed above. Fundamentally, like their L1 colleagues, L2 writing researchers conceive of writing as a social and rhetorical activity. L2 writing scholars also engage with the subject of identity work. Work in multi-literacies and in translanguaging specifically is bringing “expanding circle English” (Kachru, 1992) to the attention of the field of L1 writing studies and is building a case for greater attention to the voices, competencies, and identities of multilingual English learners (Canagarajah, 2010; Young & Martinez, 2011).



In addition to a general difference regarding sociopolitical agendas, L2 writing instruction departs from English composition in two notable areas.

***Differences in perspective: the role of writing in education***

First, although literacy itself is valued in cultures around the world, writing as a subject of instruction is not seen everywhere as meriting the attention that it is given in the United States. Reichelt (2011) describes at some length the problematics of directly importing U.S. writing pedagogy to the EFL classroom abroad. She references Hargan's study of American EFL teachers in Italy who emphasized American-style academic essays with their Italian students. "Essay writing is not a key feature of the Italian educational system, where oral examinations and oral reports are much more common. When students write their research projects in English, it is their *first academic research writing experience* in any language" (Reichelt, 2011, p. 15, emphasis added). In countries where a tradition of writing instruction exists, it may be focused more on close reading of literary texts, as it is in Germany (Reichelt, 2011). For a different sort of example, in China, rhetorical traditions stand in clear opposition to American-style academic argument writing (W. Wang, 2011).

While these international examples confirm a vital threshold concept of U.S. writing researchers—that writing always enacts identities and ideologies—it is an amusing irony that they do so at the expense of American-style writing instruction. Accordingly, L2 writing scholars advise writing teachers in non-U.S. settings to examine their presuppositions about instruction, classroom facilities, resources, time for instruction, class size, and other contextual matters—even about the importance of

writing instruction. Like writing itself, instruction always exists within a context, and it is not always the American context.

***Differences in perspective: defining core values***

Secondly, it seems fair to say that L2 writing instruction differs from “mainstream” English writing studies in its fundamental orientation toward theory. Instead of looking for disciplinary consensus around core theory concepts, L2 writing prefers to define itself in pedagogy. Leki et al. appear almost deliberately ambiguous on the question of the conceptual foundations of L2 writing research. These authors want to defer theoretical consensus, preferring to see the field as practical, local, eclectic, and pedagogically focused. “Indeed, one would be hard-pressed to identify *foundational concepts* that have aspired to provide a single, guiding basis *on which to organize L2 writing curricula* comprehensively” (Leki et al., 2008, p. 72, emphasis added). If by this they mean that there is no universal or universalizing *approach to teaching* L2 writing, then I would agree. But regarding foundational concepts, there is certainly a high degree of congruence among scholars on *the activity* of writing—and these surely do inform L2 writing curricula.

Leki et al. point in particular to three prominent theoretical orientations that emerge from L2 writing research, and they reveal significant overlap with the threshold concepts above. To condense and clarify their descriptions, I can see them this way (cf. Leki et al., 2008, pp. 74–75):

1. *sociocultural theory explains the roles of instruction*—e.g., in tutoring contexts, in dialogue journals, written reflections, and activities that require collaboration

2. *theories of language socialization explain how students develop language identities* through writing and through their experience of a wide range of social relations inside and outside of school
3. digital technologies have expanded how we understand literacy, so that today it includes *multimodal forms of literate activity*

Here I can see no serious conflict between the more general research base developed among compositionists and the more specialized interests of scholars in L2 writing. Research in L2 writing brings a deeper cross-cultural perspective to writing instruction than one sees in the U.S.-centric field of composition. Beyond this, however, their differences amount to a question of emphasis or focus. With the recent (and still emergent) work in translingualism, I find even more complication, and it is useful complication.

### **Translingualism and L2 Writing**

Translingualism, as a particular conception of multilingualism, emerges from research in critical applied linguistics. It argues that all speakers inhabit contact zones where languages continuously interact and language users negotiate linguistically across language boundaries. One could argue that this insight is implied already in sociolinguistics (cf. Kachru 1992), but translingualism appears to amplify it into an overt critique of several well-established and conventional ideas.

For example, more than has been done before, it challenges sociocultural theory's position that languages are more or less stable and more or less discrete from each other, such that certain cognitive processes are mediated almost only through a speaker's first language (cf. Lantolf, 2011). Translingualism would argue that multilingual individuals

draw constantly upon all their languages at once as a cognitive or semiotic repertoire. Macaro (2005) points to neurological evidence that this is so, specifically undermining the traditional view that languages are distributed in the brain via a coordinate, non-integrated, architecture.

Consequently, translingual theory challenges the monolingual lore of “language interference” that drives the pedagogy of target-language-only classrooms, and further represents a critique of the “native speaker” discussed above, which presupposes an impossible environment where one ideal uncontaminated language is spoken in a homogeneous environment (cf. Chomsky, 1986). On the contrary, translingual theory posits that language is inherently responsive to influence, and that the supposed boundaries between languages are permeable—a concept perfectly obvious to speakers who live in zones of language contact. In a manner of speaking, translingualism implies that “language” is one, and to speak of “languages” is only to point to general regions in the vast sphere of multi-language.

When they approach writing instruction, translingual scholars advocate bilingual, metacognitive, and meta-rhetorical approaches, suggesting that teachers should think of students’ multiple languages as semiotic resources, not deficits to be overcome or ignored. (See, for one example, Canagarajah, 2017). Students should apply their prior linguistic and cultural knowledge strategically as they acquire a new language, negotiate meaning, invent, and learn.

Scholars in L2 writing itself have no quarrel with the translingual theory of language—and certainly no objection to its critique of monolingualist traditions in language education. But L2 writing scholars argue strongly that translingualism is an area

of study very different from L2 writing and caution against conflating the two areas (Atkinson et al., 2015). They feel there is a tendency in translingual theory—which is an expansive idea—to subsume other fields and specialties. Translingual scholarship, they remind their readers, is not the same as L2 writing scholarship, and applied linguistics does not generally take up the subject of composition. How teachers understand the two is a crucial matter with implications for the very multilingual students with whom both fields are occupied.

### **What does translingual L2 writing instruction look like in practice?**

This tension between L2 writing and translingualism makes one wonder whether it is possible to build a practice that draws persuasively from both. What would L2 writing instruction look like if one could integrate principles from accepted writing theory (L1 and L2) with principles from translingual theory (including the challenge to monolingualist teaching)? Harmonizing the two appears to be one of the emerging riddles of scholarship in this area, and, consequently, not a great deal of work has yet been published on it.

As a starting point, however, Horner (2016) offers the key intuition that translingual teaching inherently encourages reflection and cognitive transfer in the student. This is an important pedagogical advantage (cf. threshold concept 5). An L2 writing teacher with a translingual perspective, Horner argues, will see “all language practice as action-reflection rather than . . . action about which one may or may not reflect” (Horner, 2016, p. 107). Teaching L2 writing in this way both affirms the student’s L1, authorizing her/his language as a resource for learning to write in L2, and

automatically invokes reflection and transfer. This is a significant shift in approach for writing instruction, and it is a liberating one.

Secondly, since, in the translingual conception, all speakers are constantly (unconsciously and in tiny ways) transforming language, a translingual practice of writing instruction would adopt “an orientation of acceptance of *variability as the norm*, and a *concern with communicative effectiveness* rather than with conformity to standards of correctness” (Horner, 2016, p. 122, emphasis added).

Although this position would raise concerns among teachers and policymakers who hold traditional views of correctness (“native-speakerism”), what it implies for teaching is both ethically vital and fully congruent with a communicative orientation to language instruction. Translingual teaching presupposes in the teacher a disposition of humility toward language and of patience toward students, the communicative emphasis on collaboration, negotiation of meaning, and communicative effectiveness. Instead of the error-averse instruction of traditional approaches, a translingual orientation takes an encouraging stance toward the ambiguity, miscues, and unconventional collocations that inevitably arise in the L2 classroom. The faith of the instructor is in the understanding that variation in language is the real standard, that language learning is a long-term process, and that negotiation of meaning—not enforcing a correctness defined by “native speaker” standards—is the goal.

Writing for an audience of elementary and secondary educators, García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) capture these general principles and dispositions in three key pedagogical ideas: *stance*, *design*, and *shifts*. They position each of these in relation to

what they call the dynamic translanguaging *corriente* in the classroom. They outline how they use these key terms:

A translanguaging *stance* sees the bilingual child's complex language repertoire as a resource, never as a deficit. . . .

[F]lexible *design* is the pedagogical core of the translanguaging classroom, and it allows teachers and students to address all content . . . in equitable ways for all students, particularly bilingual students, who are often marginalized in mainstream classrooms and schools. . . .

[S]hifts are the many moment-by-moment decisions that teachers make all the time. They reflect the teacher's flexibility and willingness to change the course of the lesson and assessment, as well as the language use planned for it, to release and support students' voices. (García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017, p. xiii, emphasis added.)

### **Sample L2 writing lessons**

The following L2 writing lessons aim to take account of the principles reviewed above from the contrasting worlds of research in L1 writing, L2 writing, and translingual theory, while developing writing activities for adult English language learners. They model for teachers a positive stance toward variability in language and other values that Li (2017) identifies as important for reconceiving TESOL teacher preparation toward a pluricentric EIL paradigm. This reconception may be a most important project for teachers (as I am) from the U.S., where the ideology of “native-speakerism” may be most difficult to dislodge. “While full-fledged implementations of EIL may take time, a crucial step

toward preparing teachers to move away from the native-speakerism model is to focus on developing knowledge and raising awareness of their personal attitudes toward English dialects and cultures” (Li, 2017, p. 255). The lessons below are designed to offer a teacher ways to initiate within themselves and their students the useful sort of personal exploration that Li recommends here. I see the lessons as compatible with Li’s three-step approach (p. 259) to promoting key goals in TESOL teacher preparation: developing awareness of and sensitivity to differences across varieties of English along with respect for other languages each learner might have.

In this way, the lessons also advance (in both teacher and student) a reimagining of competence in English like that called for by Mahboob (2017). By encouraging a conception of language as variable and dynamic, and by letting go of dependence on the ideal native speaker, I aim to enact something like Mahboob’s Dynamic Approach to Language Proficiency (DALP). “DALP posits that being proficient in a language implies that one has the ability to select, adapt, negotiate and use a range of linguistic resources that are appropriate in that context and which are not dependent on native speaker norms” (Mahboob, 2017, p 3). What Mahboob describes here is in many ways a rhetorical perspective, fundamentally compatible with the threshold concepts summarized above from composition studies.

Accordingly, these lessons enact the idea of a social core to writing that drives communicative language teaching, along with the above theory positions: the lessons invoke an authentic audience; they are knowledge-making activities that develop conceptual, cultural, or linguistic knowledge; they depend on rhetorical situations that create the need for negotiation with an interlocutor. Taking the pro-translanguage stance



of García et al., they also invite students to engage openly with their L1, treating it as a language learning resource through CS, comparative analysis, and reflection.

Although every writing moment inevitably assumes a unique rhetorical situation, teaching writing should also systematically exploit key principles of learning theory. The writing activities/lessons below use the same general framework whose large structural elements are based on Read's well-known "IMSCI" approach to writing instruction (2010). These structures (*Inquiry, Modeling, Shared practice, Collaboration, Independence*) are versatile enough for many different teaching moments, yet they are consistent, so that students will be able to internalize a predictable, non-threatening pattern across lessons. Read's *modeling* stage (2010, p. 48), for example, is an intuitive and very effective strategy at all levels of instruction. As students observe the teacher working aloud through a writing task, they consciously or unconsciously bring attention to the elements in their own writing (audience, purpose, relation, and so on) that they see their teacher attending to.

In both lessons, I open with the teacher previewing relevant potentially new vocabulary, language structures, cultural content, and triggering student background knowledge. Then the teacher models the task that the students will do later. Modeling is followed by shared/collaborative practice between the teacher and the whole class, before students begin working collaboratively in pairs or small groups. This consistent instructional frame, by its predictability, should reduce student anxiety and build confidence, and the gradual process that moves from teacher-modeling, through shared and guided work, to student independence, will function to build from the student's level

of competence (what is known), through the Vygotskian zone of proximal development, to consolidate a new level of competence (what is *not* known).

Throughout, in accord with translingual thought, the teacher takes advantage of opportunities to elicit student thoughts about language, vocabulary, rhetorical situation, etc., especially the differences in English from the ways of expression in their L1.

***Lesson 1: Intermediate-Low—narrative writing***

In its proficiency guidelines, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) describes the writing abilities of intermediate-low L2 learners this way:

Can write short messages, postcards, and take down simple notes, such as telephone messages. Can create statements or questions within the scope of limited language experience. . . . simple sentences on very familiar topics.

(AACTFL, 1999)

The following writing lesson is intended for adult intermediate-low English language learners. Its purpose is to provide practice for the student in generating a brief, simple narrative based on a video story, and to stimulate discussion of personal responses in small and large groups. For the teacher, possible additional applications would include either assessment or teaching of vocabulary, grammar, or cultural competence.

***Finding the story in a music video***

Writing takes time. Although I have developed this lesson for a 50-minute class period, because it focuses on a music video, a different video choice may require two class periods, or a shorter video—for example a television commercial—may be preferable, depending on students' language level and comfort with writing.

Access to the internet and some form of video screen (smart phone, laptop, projection) is assumed here, but the lesson could be adapted to situations with older or different video technologies.

Music videos offer opportunities for several different kinds of writing, whether narrative, descriptive, critical, interpretive, or simply responsive. Videos exist for all genres of music, and many commercial videos made for popular songs include a visual narrative that enacts or imagines a drama suggested by the lyrics of the song.

This lesson assumes the use of the official music video of the popular song “Bendita tu luz,” by the Mexican rock group, Maná (Maná, 2006). The video is available gratis on YouTube at this address and others <https://youtu.be/44kityInDvM>. In the four-minute video, a visual narrative of a budding romance is enacted, although the lyrics of the song itself are not narrative at all.

An English-language music video could be used here, and certainly in the course of a whole term, one would expect to use several kinds of videos in English. But a non-English video offers advantages, too. For one, it supports an international or transnational tone in the instruction, symbolizing that this is not an English-only classroom and that all languages are respected. Secondly, the purpose here is to respond to the visual narrative; the lyrics are not narrative, and if they were in English, the students might focus on “getting” them or allow their personal response to be confused by or over-determined by the lyrics.

#### *Modeling and shared practice*

After playing approximately 30 seconds of the video, the teacher stops to identify the video (i.e., the group, song title, etc.) as well as to acknowledge that it is not in

English. The teacher then draws attention to the visual narrative that has begun to unfold, and solicits preliminary student comments on that narrative—especially descriptions of the characters, the setting, and any actions that have occurred so far. The teacher explains that the class will be writing a brief narrative in English describing the drama they will see in the video, mentioning also that the class will view the video more than once, and that individual students or groups will have the chance to present their written narratives. The teacher solicits predictions from the students regarding what may or may not occur in the video, as a way to stimulate engagement and other affective dimensions.

At this point, the teacher restarts the video, and stops it at the same point. On the board or chart paper or other technology, the teacher models note-taking. This could take many forms (e.g., columns, lists, etc.) but the teacher should avoid modeling too much structure; speaking his/her thoughts aloud, the teacher simply demonstrates writing short accessible words and phrases: e.g., woman swimming, singers, blue sky, street. For some students, this will be culturally uncomfortable; therefore, free, impressionistic, even messy note-taking should be clearly authorized.

After playing the next 30 seconds of the video, the teacher asks the students for help in taking notes, by telling, in words or whole phrases, what they noticed in the video. The teacher simply records the students' contributions, taking the occasional moment to explain unfamiliar vocabulary or structures.

### *Collaborative and independent writing*

Responding to student preference, the teacher then plays the video either in full or in 30-second segments, as the students in pairs take notes in English. The teacher should

ultimately play the video in full one last time, so students can review the notes they have written.

The classroom should be noisy with talk as pairs discuss their notes and begin to shape them into a coherent narrative. It doesn't matter how the pairs organize the work between them, but the teacher should circulate, encouraging those students who are more reticent to contribute as fully as possible.

Ultimately, each pair of students will create a short paragraph narrating the visual drama as they understood or interpreted it from the music video.

### *Assessment*

Assessment is dynamic and ongoing, as the teacher circulates, offering targeted assistance for student errors, but focusing on the meanings conveyed in student writing and presenting a hospitable audience. At the same time, the teacher notes patterns of errors in grammar, vocabulary, or style that may be occurring with more than one writer. These can become the focus of follow-up lessons.

### ***Lesson: Advanced—Persuasive writing***

ACTFL describes the writing abilities of an advanced L2 learner this way:

Can write simple social correspondence, take notes, write cohesive summaries and resumes, as well as narratives and descriptions of a factual nature. Has sufficient writing vocabulary to express self simply with some circumlocution. May still make errors in punctuation, spelling, or the formation of nonalphabetic symbols. (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 1999)

The following writing lesson is intended for adult advanced English language learners. Its purpose is to provide practice for the student in collaborative writing of brief persuasions—written arguments—from personal background knowledge, but with supporting reasons and to stimulate discussion and comparison in small and large groups.

As such, the lesson will work within both presentational (writing, speaking) and interpretive (viewing, listening) modes, and will provide opportunities for the interpersonal mode, as well. In addition, the lesson involves multimodal work—in this case, viewing/listening to an interview video.

For the teacher, possible additional applications of this lesson would include individual dynamic assessment, or vocabulary, grammar, and/or cultural instruction.

*What's love got to do with it?*

I have a relationship now to three languages: the Bengali of my family, the English of my education, and Italian. And I think Italian is the only language I have really loved.

—Jhumpa Lahiri (Wallner, 2016)

Jhumpa Lahiri, an award-winning English language novelist, has recently brought a fascinating translingual issue to the attention of the world by learning Italian as an adult and then abruptly abandoning English in her published writing. Her most recent work, *In Altre Parole*, explores her passion for the Italian language, and in several interviews, she has discussed her experience of discovering this passion. The video *Jhumpa Lahiri: In other words* (Wallner, 2016) includes portions of such interviews, along with comments from Lahiri's colleagues and students.

The video is the centerpiece of this writing lesson, and offers a rich opportunity for L2 students to consider their own relationship to the languages they know and are learning.

*Modeling and shared practice*

To activate student background knowledge about their own multilingualism, the teacher plays the six-minute video, *Jhumpa Lahiri: In other words*, sponsored by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and available on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/ITshhsEq-tc>. The video offers a brief biography of Lahiri before focusing on her decision to leave the English language behind, at least in her writing.

Before viewing, the teacher makes clear a purpose—for example, a theme to which the students should pay special attention. This purpose may vary depending on the local needs or interests of the students, but the video is broad enough to support a discussion along several different paths. For example, students might listen especially to comments made by Lahiri or others in the video about being

- a “language exile”
- a “language orphan,”

and to consider these questions:

- why would Lahiri feel that way?
- when have I felt that way?
- why would learning a new language change that feeling for her?

Before playing the video, the teacher models note-taking via brief phrases on the board. This should be done in such a way as not to overdetermine the students’ own note-

taking; the point is to be sure that students feel they have permission to write in short, incomplete thoughts—which may not be customary in some cultures.

Vocabulary in this video should not be a problem for advanced students, but the teacher should pause the video at 1:40 to check students' comprehension, given the speed of the English, the different voices, and other complicating factors, and to allow students time to catch up with their note-taking. If they feel they have missed something important, the teacher should begin the video again at a point negotiated with the students. The teacher should advise the students that in certain places after 1:40 Lahiri will sometimes be speaking or reading in Italian.

The teacher should also allow students to interrupt the video with requests to replay sections as needed. A student interruption can be a good thing; it is (usually) meaningful and communicative. In a flexible translanguaging pedagogy, the point of the instruction is not for students to master a certain content or to get “right answers,” but to be sure that students are communicating in the target language any meaningful content. Thus, by simply expressing the felt need to rewind a video and to negotiate where to start it over, a student may advance as much in learning the target language as they would from any set of comprehension questions based on the content of the video itself.

Again, at the end of the video, the teacher should allow time for questions and brief replays of selected moments. At the same time, and throughout the activity, the teacher should be sure that students understand that their task is not to take down verbatim what has been said on the video, but rather to notice and understand what they feel are the most important ideas and comments made by various speakers in the video.



After viewing the video, the teacher should again take the role of model. On the board or via some other medium, the teacher should generate—with students' input—several ideas from the video. At least two of these should express some personal experience of language learning by the teacher. Thinking aloud, the teacher should circle three ideas generated and tag them in some manner as major or supporting points. The teacher's think-aloud might sound like this:

“So, in the video, when that student said [X], I thought that was very interesting. I am going to make that my number one point.” [Teacher marks 1 beside the relevant line on the board.]

“I had the same experience myself when I was learning [language], as I say here in my notes; so I'm going to make that idea my number two.” [Teacher marks 2 beside the related idea.]

“Now, [student] just said something that made a lot of sense to me, and it really ties 1 and 2 together. So I'm going to put that last.” [Teacher marks “last” beside the relevant idea.]

“So I know what's going to come first and I know what's going to come last. And in here, between number 2 and my last line, I'm going to add some of these other ideas in the list—if they work. I don't need to use them all. If I get two or three more, I'll be doing great.

“But first I'm going to write numbers 1 and 2 in a more complete way. Then I'll see what comes next.”

### *Collaborative and independent writing*

With a partner, students return to the questions in the original prompt and discuss what they feel are reasonable answers. They should be encouraged to relate their own personal experience as language learners to the experience and feelings expressed by

Jhumpa Lahiri and students in the video. Taking notes as they converse with their partners, students are engaging in invention and prewriting.

Independently, students should begin to shape and organize their thoughts into a coherent written draft as the teacher modeled, and to do so separately from their partner. Although they may agree completely with their partner on what is important in the video, students may need to be reminded that ultimately the task is an individual one; they will need to write at least a paragraph from their own point of view. The teacher may find it useful to remove the model as a way to encourage students not to simply repeat what the teacher has written, but instead to look to their own notes. This is a feature of writing in *inner circle* English-speaking cultures, but the teacher may or may not wish to make it important in any given lesson. Collaborative writing is both very useful for learning and is increasingly accepted even in individualistic English-speaking cultures.

#### *Assessment*

Before the end of class, when there are perhaps five minutes left, the teacher should gather all the written drafts from the students. These can form the basis of a formative assessment of individual students, along with the teacher's notes made while circulating among the partners and individual students during all of the above. In a subsequent class, students should be encouraged to share/present what they have written.

Writing, especially writing in a second language, can be a draining experience for students. The teacher might suggest a lighthearted, low-stakes task as a final activity. For example, the class might invent a Twitter hashtag for Lahiri's experience, or compose a tweet to summarize the main idea of their paragraph, or simply to offer a comment about the video.

## Conclusion

Research in the three areas under study here—L1 English composition studies, L2 writing studies, and translanguaging—is rich with complication and possibility. From the point of view of the L2 classroom, however, while there is *contrast* among these areas, we need not see a great deal of *conflict*. Specifically, one could argue that these contrasting strands of practice can be harmonized around a finite set of principles that translate well into instruction and integrate well with a communicative language teaching pedagogy.

All three of these areas of study view writing as epistemic and valuable for how it can support and enable cognitive transfer across instructional tasks. Scholars across these areas of research would also agree that authentic writing is communicative and social. They would rule out instruction that asks students to write for inauthentic audiences or simply to demonstrate mastery of language forms or conventions. Students can certainly perform in this manner, but to do so does not advance them in either the learning of their target language or in their comfort or facility with writing itself.

Researchers would agree that authentic writing will always be purposive and functional, directed toward a task. Writing to reproduce a memorized “right answer” is not useful. Decontextualized grammar exercises are not useful. Writing in the classroom should be as much as possible directed toward student interest rather than toward teacherly or programmatic convenience. Student-chosen writing topics, or topics that at least inspire some affective investment in the student writer, are more effective.

Ultimately, the pedagogical emphases of García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) show a good deal of promise. If teachers of postsecondary L2 writing take a stance of

respect toward the intellectual resources of multilingual students, design their classroom in ways that are flexible and integrative, and remain ready to shift their instruction as the needs of their group or their individual students emerge in the classroom, they will find themselves better able to keep the negotiation of meaning and authentic communication foremost. This is the approach that harmonizes best with research in writing on all three of the research strands I have presented here.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES

[I]n the recent past, scholars have challenged the strict separation of languages in classrooms, opening up space for what we are calling here the practice of translanguaging.

—Velasco and Garcia (2014)

## Introduction to the Annotated Bibliographies

Before reaching the midpoint of my work in the MSLT program, I began to find myself puzzled by the bias I encountered in the pedagogical literature in favor of target-language-only instruction—especially English-only, since that is my area of interest. Historically, I supposed, multilingual speakers must have often learned two languages at once, and even integrated the two as their competence in each one advanced. So the stance of handbooks like Shrum and Glisan (2010) or Lee and VanPatten, along with the monolingual mandates of state education offices (Utah State Office of Education, 2012), struck me intuitively as misguided. I was puzzled to observe that this same bias overwhelmed the lore of teachers. “It’s hard,” one Spanish teacher in a DLI program told me, “but [the students] have to think you only know Spanish.” An administrator said, “You do code-switching in the classroom, and they’ll stop learning. They’ll just wait for the translation.”

Could this be theory-based? I wondered. Was bilingual teaching discredited by research, or was this one of those misconceptions grounded in monolingual “commonsense”? Were there no studies of successful classrooms where teachers used the L1 strategically? Simple translation is one use of L1, but I suspected that other forms of code-switching (CS) would be more useful (and more common) in teaching. My informal hypothesis was that English-only policies were rooted more deeply in monolingual prejudice than in credible research.

An interest in this question became a major theme in my studies, and it took me to a scattered but surprisingly persuasive body of empirical research, theoretical discussion, and classroom experience, emerging since at least the 1980s. Across that literature, a

substantial argument appears that in fact the learner's "mother tongue" can be and should be used as an important resource to support learning of the L2. How does the field of ESL/EFL reconcile this knowledge base with the reality of the monolingual, target-language-only pedagogy that continues to dominate L2 instruction?

In the two bibliographies below, I tour through selected works and discover that the tension I was feeling has been in active discussion among language scholars and teachers for decades; I find further that there is a strong body of scholarship to support the strategic use of L1 (especially through CS, as opposed to simple translation) in L2 pedagogy, even though it goes unacknowledged in the standard professional works. These two bibliographies are necessarily limited, and they favor work published since 2000. Furthermore, they are eclectic, selected to allow me to sketch the intersection of what I see as three very different angles of view at work here: I find these points of view in sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and pedagogical research.

With the first bibliography, I situate the issue in scholarly context, with a focus especially on theoretical positions and empirical studies of CS. For the second bibliography, in search of a position that would be both supported by scholarship and persuasive to teachers, I turn to empirical and reflective/narrative studies of classrooms where bilingual teaching is in use.

## I Code-Switching in the Literature

### *Is There a Research Base for “Target-Language-Only”?*

#### **Defining Code-Switching**

Code-switching (CS) has been the object of serious linguistic study since at least the 1950s, and the field’s understanding of it has developed continuously. Unlike the cognitive process of CS, its communicative functions, and its instructional appropriateness, the *definition* of CS has not been a point of much debate. Still, I felt it was worth establishing for myself how language scholars use the term.

In Gumperz (1982), we find a serviceable definition: “Conversational code-switching can be defined as the juxtaposition, within the same speech exchange, of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 59). In emphasizing the communicative value of the practice, Gumperz goes on to write, “Speakers communicate fluently, maintaining an even flow of talk. . . . Apart from the alternation itself, the passages have all the earmarks of ordinary conversations in a single language” (pp. 59–60).

**Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain** refine this definition by sketching a useful distinction between two generic categories of CS function: “[1] discourse-related functions, which organize conversation by contributing to the interactional meaning of a particular utterance, and [2] participant-related functions, which are switches corresponding to the preferences of the individual who performs the switching or those of coparticipants” (Liebscher & Dailey-O’Cain, 2005, p. 235). Although there are other differences to perceive (e.g., distinguishing intersentential switching from intrasentential



[Appel & Muysken, 1987], or situational from metaphorical [Blom & Gumperz, 1972]), for my purposes in understanding the functions of CS and its potential for instruction, these two from Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain work well. Other scholars will add specificity, but generally these two categories will hold up throughout the literature.

Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain further point to a dominant theme in the treatment CS—the theme of *code-switching as a deficit marker* (p. 235). Thirty years earlier, Appel and Muysken had put it this way: “Many outsiders see code-mixing as a sign of linguistic decay, the unsystematic result of not knowing at least one of the languages involved very well” (Appel & Muysken, 1987, p. 118). They go on to argue that this view is mistaken, and they outline several CS functions as they were understood at the time they were writing. Despite their work and the work of many others before, the view of CS as a deficit marker persists today, or even dominates. We see it posed most obviously today in teacher lore as a matter of simple common sense. If an L2 learner switches to L1 (so the idea goes), it must be because they have not mastered the L2—they are in L2 deficit. To permit CS in the classroom, then, might allow the learner to fossilize in this deficit position.

In that sense, the proscription against classroom CS is intended to address learner needs; it is well-intentioned. But historically, certainly regarding ESL/EFL teaching, the concern to replace L1 with English is also the product of overt colonialist ideologies that associated English with social capital and the L1 with not only language deficit but intellectual deficit, too (see Butzkamm, 2003; Dodson, 1983; Phillipson, 1992). To learn the native language of the colony would stigmatize the colonist. Conversely, as a non-native speaker of the prestige language, the colonized speaker lived continuously with

stigma, and was categorically denied social capital. To code-switch carried the same stigma for either colonist or colonized. King and Chetty (2014) document the continued influence of this stigmatizing even in the present era (see below).

Blom and Gumperz (1972), in their study of CS in Norway, have already questioned the deficit stigma by 1972. By 1982, **Gumperz** is systematically building the case to reject it. “[C]ode-switching does not necessarily indicate imperfect knowledge of the grammatical systems in question. . . . Considerations of intelligibility, lucidity or ease of expression [are not] the main determining reasons [for code alternation]. Nor is educational inferiority an important factor” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 65). Rather, he argues, CS should be framed as a normal behavior of multilinguals, a behavior that is grammatically consistent, rhetorically potent, and communicatively resourceful (pp. 64–65). In this, he anticipates the findings of many later studies (e.g., Albirini, 2011; Bassiouney, 2009; Toríbio, 2002).

Interestingly, Gumperz’s approach is sociological—almost demographic—and for this reason, he associates CS especially with populations of immigrants and refugees, which he calls “minorities” or “ethnic minorities.” In doing so, although he does not mention these, he implicitly applies the concepts of the esoteric and exoteric: “It is this overtly marked separation between in- and out-group standards which perhaps best characterizes the bilingual experience” (p. 65). Further, he presumes that immigrant groups desire to assimilate (i.e., to move from out-group to in-group), and that the minority language will be displaced as assimilation moves forward. He does not imply that the minority language will disappear, but that CS will disappear between minority speakers and majority speakers.

This explanation may have been more obvious in the 1970s when his study was in progress than it is today, and in fact it describes the experience of many immigrant and refugee populations who arrived in the U.S. during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. To Gumperz, assimilation is normative—not imposed, but an inevitable process, and one desired by the minority population. He does not appear to imagine a world in which individuals (rather than populations) might practice a social or geographical mobility that would motivate CS, or in which a mixed code might arise, or in which speakers might be influenced in their CS by expressive purposes that are political, poetic, comic, educational, or other.

Nor does he account for populations called “involuntary immigrants” by Ogbu (1978), who are groups coercively transplanted or minorities in their own homeland such as indigenous (heritage-language) populations. Thus, he misses an opportunity to notice the use of CS in service of an oppositional identity formation, resistant to perceived hegemony. These concerns are emerging more clearly in work of 21<sup>st</sup> century scholars, especially translingual theorists.

However, importantly for a theory of CS, Gumperz does perceive the rhetorical complexity and flexibility that CS affords to the multilingual conversational repertoire. Gumperz puts his finger on a factor that becomes foundational for theorists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—that of cultural flexibility among multilinguals:

What distinguishes bilinguals from their monolingual neighbors is the juxtaposition of cultural forms: the awareness that their own mode of behavior is only one of several possible modes, that style of communication affects the interpretation of what a speaker intends to communicate, and that there are others with different communicative conventions and standards of evaluation that must not only be taken

into account but that can also be imitated for special communicative effect.

(Gumperz, 1982, p. 65)

Further (and very much in conflict with the policymakers of his Reagan-Thatcher era), Gumperz offered no support for the hope that English-Only could succeed as either pedagogy or policy.

There is little indication that code-switching is merely a deviation from monolingual norms that will soon disappear. On the contrary, with the increasing displacement of formerly stable populations and growing diversification of metropolitan centers, the communicative uses of code-switching are more likely to increase. (Gumperz, 1982, p. 64)

Canagarajah echoes this thought: “In fact, there is evidence of such practices in past modes of communication in pre-colonial and non-Western communities. I favor recovering a knowledge of these occluded communicative practices, and theorizing the continuities” (Canagarajah, 2013b, p. 10). Reviewing the terminology for a wide range of communicative practice in the global contact zone, **Canagarajah** suggests that linguists, teachers, policymakers, and speakers need a new paradigm for understanding how language works. The *monolingual* paradigm, he says, is actually a recent one, and it has obscured the value of an earlier model that accommodated realities of language learning and practice in the lives of real-world speakers.

The communicative modes I have referred to with terms such as codemeshing, crossing, and polyglot dialog require a new orientation to language studies. We have many other terms used by diverse scholars to represent their insights into cross-language relations in the global contact zones. Jorgensen (2008)

coins polylingual languaging to refer to children's playful shuttling between languages in Europe. Blommaert (2008) uses hetero-graphy for African literacy that involves a mix of different languages and semiotic systems. Pennycook (2010) adopts metro-linguistics for urban communication in which people adopt languages not traditionally associated with their communities for new identities. The Council of Europe (2000) has used plurilingualism to refer to the functional competence in partial languages it is aiming to develop among school children. I adopt the term translingual practice to capture the common underlying processes and orientations motivating these communicative modes. (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 6)

Referring to a similar list of diverse terms for cross-language relationships, **Horner and Tetreault** (2017) make the point that although such terms are not to be equated, they do reveal what Horner and Tetreault call "shared alignments." These alignments can be paraphrased<sup>5</sup> for brevity as the following:

1. The norm for communicative situations is *multilingual*
2. Boundaries between languages are *fluid*
3. Language use entails *mixing* across language boundaries
4. Such mixing is evidence not of user failure but of user *agency*
5. Language mixing likewise entails fluidity of user *identity*
6. Languages do not exist separate from the *social material world* of language use

(Horner & Tetreault, 2017, pp. 4–5)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> My paraphrasing.

<sup>6</sup> Horner and Tetreault offer their six "alignments" in the order I have them here, but they embed them within a rich discursive context that would distract from the

What is perhaps most evident here is that the critical orientation of translingual theorists, like that of sociocultural theorists, is grounded in language use. But the translingual view is that language itself is always fluid and emergent, just as all social conventions are, because language exists only as a function of human communicative purpose. With the term *translingual* practice or *translingualism*, these theorists suggest the shape of the new paradigm they call for.

We can make translingualism more concrete with these two fundamental concepts: 1) communication is larger than individual languages—it transcends them, and 2) communication also transcends language itself, because a speaker dynamically employs a wide repertoire of nonlinguistic semiotic resources alongside language (cf. Canagarajah, 2013, p. 6.).

In explaining basic translingual concepts to students, I ask them to visualize a sphere or a cloud in which they stand. Around them are a thousand stars, each one a node or point of intersection in a vast network. These nodes are *languages*; the cloud is *Language*. The image of *a language* as a discreet and static ontology does not obtain here, because all nodes are connected to other nodes, which are connected to yet others. What I try to emphasize with this image is that languages are not at war with each other, standing separate; they are in creative and dynamic interaction. Some of the nodes—Hindi, Iñupiaq, Spanish—might also connect to the student personally, while others might not. Thus, to learn a new language is a process of building a new connection, and in that process, the student brings to the connection all that they are continuously absorbing from other nodes. I then suggest an additional cloud—an enclosing cloud—to

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summary/annotative approach appropriate for this literature review.

represent non-linguistic semiotic systems that also influence communication, including symbols, icons, images, gestures, prosody, and so on.

The point of the cloud illustration is simply to help students recognize the nested interconnectedness of human systems for symbolizing. They begin to see that when we speak of a single language as if it were discrete from all others, we are employing a convenient illusion. But *using* a single language always draws from the common processes that exist throughout the sphere of human symbolizing. To make this idea conscious is the thrust of translanguaging, and as we will see, it has implications for a teacher's orientation toward CS in the classroom.

### **Situating English-Only**

The literature on language alternation in the EFL/ESL classroom reveals three master narratives in tension, two of which reinforce a monolingual model of language teaching. First, a very conventional English-only tradition assumes that languages are static and separate, and that a second language is learned in the same way a first language is learned; for this narrative, an English-only pedagogy will enhance L2 acquisition because it is thought to mimic L1 immersion. Second, sociocultural theory (SCT), rooted in Vygotskian psychology, suggests that L1 and L2 represent two exclusive monolingual conceptual systems. Cultural conceptuality does not cross codes, says this narrative (see Lantolf, 2011, for example); thus, logically, an EFL learner may never fully integrate conceptual content encoded in the English language, *regardless of pedagogy*.

A third and clear minority narrative emerges from CS studies and translanguaging theory as outlined above, where the relation between L1 and L2 is seen as dynamic, nonexclusive, and where monolingualism as a pedagogical model is directly challenged.

Language alternation is seen there as a strategic resource to both teacher and learner, because it draws upon the learner's emergent multilingual competence, employing and enhancing metacognition and cognitive transfer to forward L2 pedagogical goals. In this model, strategic CS becomes useful in the L2 classroom.

How did we get here, I wondered, and how seriously is classroom CS prohibited by the status quo? Tracing the history of ESL/EFL pedagogy, **Butzkamm** (2003) argues that it was during the early twentieth century when it became orthodox to ignore the mother tongue in L2 pedagogy. According to Butzkamm, the value of L1 in teaching ESL/EFL was not unknown previously, but it came to be explicitly discouraged as the British empire released its colonies around the world. Nations newly independent from the empire faced the practical need to maintain institutional structures—such as government, business, and education—whose functions had been conducted for a century or more in English. The alien English had forced culturally and linguistically different regions together into a sort of political unity, and had virtually excluded non-English-speaking institutions from international commerce. Commerce, at least, with the former empire, which was still very much the seat of economic power (Adamo, 2007). English had become an unwelcome necessity. As the narrator in Narayan's novella *The English Teacher* laments, the former colonies were “up against the system, the whole method and approach of a system of education which makes us morons, cultural morons, but efficient clerks for all your business and administrative offices” (Narayan, 1980, p. 179). The psychology of this would be a discouraging study, and we can see a hint of it in Probyn (2009). In what looks like a variety of Stockholm syndrome, he finds a strong theme of



shame among English teachers in South Africa who admit to sometimes switching into their students' home language in the classroom.

Butzkamm, following Phillipson, implies that not only imperialism, but simple *monolingualism*, too, has played a role in reinforcing the English-only practice (Butzkamm, 2003; Phillipson, 1992). Butzkamm points even to the development of communicative pedagogy in ESL/EFL as an influence in this trend. Communicative approaches, in reaction to earlier, less-effective pedagogies such as grammar-translation, emphasized the immersion classroom. But immersion—though it does pivot on communication—looks to L1 learning for its logic. That is, L1 learning is necessarily immersive, and it appears to be a natural and effective mode. However, Butzkamm argues that to model second language acquisition after monolingual learning is mistaken, because the process and context for learning one's first language are fundamentally different from those of later languages. "The mother tongue is the master key to foreign languages, the tool which gives us the fastest, surest, most precise and most complete means of accessing a foreign language" (Butzkamm, 2003, p. 31). That is, as we learn L2, language learners inevitably resort to what we know about language from having learned L1—our "master key." From this premise, Butzkamm develops ten maxims in support of a bilingual pedagogy, and he cites Dodson (1983), who, from a similar theory position, found that experimental subjects performed better when taught using bilingual methods than subjects in a control group taught via conventional monolingual pedagogy.

Holding this in mind, we can turn to **Celce-Murcia** (2007) for reinforcement from a different angle. In a 2007 refinement of her previous work on communicative competence, Celce-Murcia develops the concept of *strategic competence*. She adapts

from Oxford a definition of “strategies for language learning” as specific internal processes that students might independently use to advance their own learning of a second language. Celce-Murcia refers specifically to “an available inventory of communicative, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies” that language learners employ (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p.44). L2 instruction must attend to strategic competence, she writes, because effective use of this available repertoire allows learners to advance more quickly. “Thus, teachers should regularly integrate some strategy training and some discussion of strategies into their language classes” (p. 53).

Celce-Murcia suggests that the most productive strategies include cognitive, metacognitive, and memory-related ones, and mentions five such strategies that she feels are crucial. These include “*interacting*: strategies that include appeals for help/clarification, that involve meaning negotiation, or that involve comprehension and confirmation checks, etc.” (p. 50). We will see in Swain’s review of research (2012) that novice language learners regularly mediate their L2 learning by means of L1, speaking aloud to themselves in L1 about issues in L2—a process that Swain calls “*linguaging*.” And we will see in Brooks and Donato that “the use of L1 during L2 interactions . . . is a normal psycholinguistic process that facilitates L2 production” (Brooks & Donato, 1994, p. 268). Thus, it seems warranted to include translanguaging—and CS—among the language learner’s available repertoire of *interactional strategies*. Denied CS, one might say that a language learner’s strategic repertoire would be incomplete.

Here, we get closer to the intersection of translingual theory and sociocultural theory (SCT), because SCT offers an answer to why L1 is such a powerful strategic resource. Summarizing SCT’s core principles, **Lantolf** (2011) writes, “The central thread

that runs through most of SCT-L2 research since its inception . . . is its focus on if and how learners develop the ability to use the new language to *mediate* (i.e., regulate and control) their mental and communicative activity” (Lantolf, 2011b, p. 24). This emphasis on language-in-use emerges from the Vygotskian concern with the social and interactive dimension of language. Unlike cognitivist theory, SCT positions the theory of language outside the mind of the speaker, in the *activity* of language—i.e., the use to which a speaker puts language—and more generally in the social *interactivity* that it serves. One can see this SCT presumption in a famous expression by Bakhtin: “The word in language is half someone else’s. . . . [It] is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 293). To SCT, the import of language is that a speaker uses it to *achieve ends in interaction* with other speakers.

Reading Celce-Murcia, I find myself persuaded that CS belongs among interactional strategies in a general way, and one would expect Lantolf in his emphasis on interaction to agree. He might, but Lantolf’s description of SCT complicates this idea. In an especially significant and frustrating passage, Lantolf posits that learners are “unlikely to develop the capacity to use the L2 to mediate mental functioning, even when they can use it in social situations” (Lantolf, 2011, p. 25). That is, the *use* a speaker makes of their second language will not include the purpose of self-regulation—the activity of meaning-making. Lantolf’s argument is roughly that higher mental processes like making and integrating meaning construct the screen through which human beings filter experience, and because our first language encodes cultural understandings in the process of building this screen, our L1 will always control our higher mental processes. It will be impossible for learners to appropriate the cultural meanings of L2, since L1 will intercept and

remediate those. Perversely, this argues that teaching an L2 is in some ways futile: L2 will always involve a process something like translation. SCT must contend this even though, as Lantolf admits, the remediating process is instantaneous and not observable by experiment (except in children) (p. 26).

Throughout the studies reviewed below, it appears that L2 speakers do not predominantly employ a code-switch because they have inadequate grasp of one or the other language (Albirini, 2011; Canagarajah, 2010; Sampson, 2012; Toribio, 2010), yet from SCT one might infer that they do it for precisely this reason. Lantolf doesn't comment on CS per sé, yet it seems likely that he would explain it simply in terms of this displacement of L2 by L1 in higher mental processes. In the terms proposed by SCT, a multilingual or translingual repertoire seems impossible, and by extension all L2 speech would be functionally remediated or translated speech. Ironically, what this implies is that L2 instruction would be *better conducted in the mother tongue*, where higher order cognition is mediated.

**Swain**, reviewing a broad range of qualitative studies, gives many examples of how learners use L1 to mediate their emergent grasp of L2. She calls for more research to refine our understanding of when, during instruction, this might happen, but in summarizing one example of students composing in L2, she offers these comments.

So in this example, it's clear from the notes that the students did have the L2 proficiency to express their main ideas in French, but—and here's the key—the English [L1] mediated the development and the coherence of those ideas. In effect, their use of English helped them to focus on the task at hand and to organize their thoughts. It scaffolded their presentation in French. . . .

For this reason, students should be permitted to use their L1 for the purpose of working through complex ideas. In fact, it might be futile to ask students not to use their L1 when working through cognitively and emotionally complex ideas, as they will do it covertly in any case. (Swain, 2012, 41:00ff)

So, clearly, L1 does mediate while L2 is in emergent phases. However, Swain implies that at least the strong version of the SCT hypothesis about L2 does not leave things fully resolved. While she appears to be in accord with Lantolf as far as L1 learning is concerned, Swain also finds that languaging/mediation does in fact shift from L1 to L2 as the learner advances in competence with the L2. “Importantly, as L2 proficiency increases across grade levels and within grade levels, L1 languaging decreases and L2 languaging increases” (Swain, 2012, 33:00ff). Lantolf implies that “thinking in L2” is ultimately never possible, because higher mental processes cannot be achieved in L2, but Swain’s discussion suggests that the purist view of Lantolf should be modified.

But if Swain is right that mediating higher mental functions in the L2 can occur as L2 competence increases, then we have a paradox. On the one hand, because she takes a developmental view, she offers the hope that a student might indeed move toward thinking in the target language. Consequently, her discussion might be said to support traditional immersionist, target-language-only instruction. On the other hand, dynamic assessment within the zone of proximal development (an important SCT contribution to pedagogy) should find nothing objectionable in strategic pedagogical CS.

Developmentalism itself would suggest an openness to appropriate L1 use in support of L2 pedagogy *in early stages* of L2-learning, with gradual decrease of this support as the learner’s L2 competence grows. And ultimately, this is what Swain finds.

Target-language-only instruction is more vigorously contested by translingual theorists and by many who specialize in L2 writing. **Canagarajah** (2010), Horner (2016), and others suggest that a CS prohibition is arguably imperialist—a line of thought that, as we noted above, Phillipson and Butzkamm, if not Gumperz, introduced decades ago in regard to ESL teaching generally. Milu reports that “a course informed by the translingual approach can contribute to cultural and linguistic *decolonization*, especially for students with histories of colonization or various experiences of . . . prejudice and discrimination based on one’s use of language” (De Costa et al., 2017, p. 467).

In addition, as an inherently monolingual pedagogy, English-only neglects the cognitive advantages of multilingualism. Canagarajah (2010) makes the argument strongly that multilingualism develops an integrated semiotic repertoire from which a multilingual speaker draws automatically: “A bilingual person’s competence is not simply two discrete monolingual competencies added together,” he writes; “instead, bilingual competence integrates knowledge of two languages and is thus qualitatively different.” Multilingualism creates the conditions that allow the speaker to “shuttle” strategically or creatively between L1 and L2 (Canagarajah, 2010, p. 158). In later work, as we saw above, Canagarajah articulates bilingual or multilingual competence as one of the fundamental premises of translingual theory, pointing out that communication itself “transcends words and involves diverse semiotic resources and ecological affordances” (Canagarajah, 2013b, p. 6). The concept of multilingual competence represents a major point of friction, because the very idea of an integrated competence runs counter not only to traditional pedagogy, but even to established theoretical positions.

Adding refinement to our understanding of the expressive process of bilinguals, **Spicer-Escalante** (2015) finds significant differences when a bilingual speaker delivers the same personal narrative in two different languages, and when they do so in oral or in written form (Spicer-Escalante, 2015). In case studies of ten U.S. Spanish-English bilingual secondary students, Spicer-Escalante analyzes her participants' narratives in terms of Labov's Highpoint Analysis rubric. Her findings from the written narratives associate certain discursual patterns with English and others with Spanish, yet at the same time, she finds some patterns from one language in the narratives of the other. It was not Spicer-Escalante's purpose to explore this, so I don't want to imply that she would endorse my inferences. However, the presence of those patterns crossing into the "wrong" language seems strong enough to suggest that her participants were not importing them accidentally.

In regard to those written narratives, she writes "[O]ne can see that the presence of the abstract<sup>7</sup> is greater in the English versions than in the Spanish: the abstract appears in 60% of the English versions, while it appears in only 40% of the versions in Spanish" (Spicer-Escalante, 2015, p. 26, my translation).<sup>8</sup> This indeed makes her point—the different tendencies in each language are clear. But in my reading, the issue of translingual boundary-crossing is embedded as well: When 40% of the narratives in Spanish employ an English-derived discourse feature, it seems too high a number for the

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<sup>7</sup> I have translated Spicer-Escalante's word *resumen*, which might mean *summary* in most contexts, as *abstract* here, to reflect the English term that Labov used in his Highpoint Analysis rubric.

<sup>8</sup> "[S]e nota que la presencia del resumen es mayor en las versiones en inglés que en español: el resumen aparece en el 60% de las versiones en inglés, mientras que aparece solamente en el 40% de las versiones en español" (Spicer-Escalante, 2015, p. 26).

students to be doing this randomly. It reminds me of Canagarajah's own finding that Tamil/English bilinguals clearly "shuttled" between discourse styles in presentational mode (Canagarajah, 2010b).

At the same time, this is not to suggest that the students who employed an abstract in their Spanish narratives were doing so in full awareness that an abstract is associated with English, let alone awareness of their choice as a form of translingualism. It seems more likely, for one possibility, that they unconsciously related to English as the language of school (remember they were U.S. students) and resorted to an English pattern because it "felt right" when writing for a college professor. And even if they are choosing the English pattern without full awareness, their choice is voluntary. To ask the level of awareness or deliberation, in fact, seems a moot question. Following Gumperz's and others' emphasis on the communicative utility of CS, I think we have to assume that a lexical, rhetorical, or discursal choice for a bilingual is just as conscious or unconscious as it is for a monolingual. The only relevant difference is that the bilingual's repertoire comprises more than one language, which multiplies the available choices.

One cannot help being reminded of translingual theorists' claim that bilinguals employ strategies from each of their languages at will; of Toríbio's ambivalent code-switchers (see below); or of Albirini's finding (see below) that CS has functions relating to creativity, humor, identity, and many other deliberate rhetorical purposes.

### **What Does Code-Switching Suggest?**

The concept of shuttling between languages echoes *situation shifting*, an older concept that **Fishman** develops to explain the phenomenon of speakers from the same social network varying their language across different situations. "A situation is defined



by the co-occurrence of two (or more) interlocutors related to each other in a particular way, communicating about a particular topic, in a particular setting” (Fishman, 1972, p. 48). When settings change, Fishman writes, so may the topic, locale, time, role, or relationship, and, Fishman writes, “any *one* of these differences may be sufficient . . . to require that a different language variety be utilized in each case” (Fishman, 1972, p. 49). For example, a U.S. student may discuss an assignment with her teacher in very casual terms in the hallway, but may address the same assignment in a more formal register in the classroom.

Thus, where previous work (e.g., Ferguson, 1959) theorized that code was context-determined (e.g., formal/informal) and driven by function (e.g., lecture/joke-telling), Fishman suggests that context or function may be stable, but where a change occurs in the “situation” (e.g., a change in topic, time, role, etc.), the interlocutors may respond to that change with a change in language variety. Fishman’s point is that it then becomes sociolinguistically crucial for interlocutors to develop a reliable sense of appropriateness—what he (following Hymes and anticipating Celce-Murcia) calls sociolinguistic communicative competence (Fishman, 1972, p. 49). Conceptually, then, CS and translanguaging take language contact for granted, and they owe something to Fishman’s work on situation shifting, but they extend the analysis beyond situation, to develop a sense of language variation that is more nuanced and more rhetorical.

**Bassiouney**, in her introduction to Arab sociolinguistics (Bassiouney, 2009), traces the contributions and influences of pivotal figures in CS theory and research. While acknowledging that “the term CS can be very broad or very narrow, as are all terms in sociolinguistics” (Bassiouney, 2009, p. 29), she gravitates toward the broader

understanding. In developing her own stance toward it, she notes an important caveat about self-reports of CS. While bilinguals often report that they code-switch to supply a lexical gap—which would support the common-sense deficit theory and the related social stigma—Bassiouney advises skepticism. Below, we will see that Sampson (2012) finds only a small proportion of switching that is related to lexical support, and Bassiouney notes the same thing.

[W]hen they switch consistently, they usually do so for a specific purpose (Romaine 1995: 169). If we approach code-switching as a discourse-related phenomenon, then, we have to assume that it has sociolinguistic motivations. These motivations cannot be understood in terms of syntactic constraints only, although syntactic constraints are still crucial in that they govern where switching might take place. (Bassiouney, 2009, p. 29)

Bassiouney praises Myers-Scotton's theory that posits a (dominant) *matrix language* and an *embedded language* in any CS situation, with inferred rules that appear to govern the syntactic moves that a speaker may make between the two. This matrix language theory works well in situations where the two languages are typologically different (e.g., English and Arabic) or different enough. But in the case of very closely related languages (e.g., Dutch and German) or in a diglossic context (e.g., Modern Standard Arabic and Egyptian Colloquial Arabic), Bassiouney says, the theory begins to fracture as it becomes more and more impossible to distinguish matrix from embedded, or it is moot to do so (Bassiouney, 2009, p. 54). She suggests that in some cases, the two languages may even alternate in playing the dominant matrix role.

Analyzing her own data on CS in diglossic Arabic situations, Bassiouney is hospitable to Gumperz's view that speakers exercise spontaneity and even creativity in CS. And in her analysis of identity performance via CS, she intuits what Albirini will establish empirically, as well as the arguments of translingual theorists. Ultimately, Bassiouney describes the CS speaker as a speaker with a sociolinguistic repertoire, consciously or intuitively balancing personal costs and rewards, which may be pragmatic, audience-focused, or idiosyncratic. In any case, competence in CS must be learned. "There is always a link between the use of a linguistic code and its effect in a certain situation, and this is part of learning a language. . . . Within this framework, speakers as individuals make choices from their linguistic repertoire to achieve certain goals which are of significance to them" (p. 69).

In a study that clarifies the distinction Bassiouney notes between CS in the context of typologically different languages and CS among diglossic speech communities, **Albirini** (2011) locates it more specifically in sociolinguistic positioning: "The [diglossic] often involves two dialects that not only are historically and somehow structurally related, but also are tied by a distinct social relationship in terms of their value and contextual distribution in the speech community" (Albirini, 2011, p. 538). Further, he points out, "because bilingual and bidialectal varieties have sociolinguistically different relationships, the functions of CS in each of these contexts are necessarily dissimilar" (p. 538).

Albirini reviews a large corpus of lengthy recorded speech events to explore specifically the complementary sociolinguistic roles of high and low dialects—in this case, Standard Arabic and Dialectal Arabic. His study of Arabic speakers recorded in

contexts of high-, mid-, and low-formality confirms and extends the centrality of function in CS, and hints at how wide a range of function is available to CS speakers. Further, his results extend our understanding of the role of context in CS. Whereas the established view since Ferguson and Fishman has been that CS is largely bound (as discussed above) by context and situation, what Albirini finds through his more inductive analysis is that CS is not completely restricted by situation, but is responsive *within* situations to a speaker's rhetorical purposes of the moment. In a formal context, for example, a speaker might switch momentarily to low code in order to make a humorous point; in an informal context, a speaker might wish to associate with prestige—with education, for example—and will switch to high code to do so. Further, Albirini notes the important function of Standard Arabic (high code) in performance of cultural identity—in this case, specifically pan-Arab or Muslim identity—a concept also familiar to translingual arguments (Mao, 2006).

Importantly, Albirini establishes that not only do speakers switch codes within all contexts (high-, mid-, *and* low-formality contexts), but they also switch in *both directions* (from high code to low *and* from low to high) *within all contexts*. These results are congruent with both Bassiouney's theory of multiple matrix languages, and Canagarajah's concept of shuttling, where multilingual speakers deliberately discourse strategies across language boundaries.

Identity is also an important theme in **Toribio's** research on CS among US Latinos. As we noticed above, a significant social stigma is attached to CS in some quarters, and Toribio found it in Southern California, where she conducted extensive qualitative research with fifty Spanish-English bilinguals. Her participants expressed a

complex relation to their personal identity configuration, with an impulse both to reject CS as a low-prestige marker and a contradictory impulse to affirm their identity as a speaker who used CS very frequently.

[Yanira] does not deem it aesthetically ‘pretty’ but, rather, ‘bothersome’ to the ear and concedes that it neither enriches her interactions nor garners her respect from peers in the community. And yet . . . when asked whether Spanish-English CS reflects who she is, Yanira offers a resounding affirmation. (Toríbio, 2002, p. 98)

The dominant social stigma prevailed in [Guadalupe’s] assessment of CS as indicative of linguistic deficiency and loss, while more affective considerations valued and affirmed CS in granting her affiliation with two disparate linguistic and cultural worlds. (Toríbio, 2002, p. 115)

The commonsense assumption of the target-language-only policy is that CS will inhibit the acquisition of L2, but Toríbio’s research does not appear to support this view. She confirms that CS is a rule-governed sociolinguistic practice, not the symptom of a haphazard or lazy speaker. Confirming earlier work, Toríbio points out that “With respect to its linguistic form, code-switching is systematic and orderly, reflecting underlying syntactic principles” (Toríbio, 2002, p. 93). Her study affirms that bilinguals operate from a strong sense of grammatical convention when switching codes. Ironically, this means that CS—often stigmatized as inherently ungrammatical—might be done ungrammatically, itself.

Some of the most recent work in the area addresses not CS per sé, but “translanguaging,” a concept that addresses larger interactions among codes in the repertoire of multilingual speakers. Velasco and García (2014) describe it this way: “The

term [translanguaging] stresses the flexible and meaningful actions through which bilinguals select features in their linguistic repertoire in order to communicate appropriately” (Velasco & Garcia, 2014, p. 7). This definition would benefit from further specificity—for example: “a particular conception of the mental grammars and linguistic practices of bilinguals” (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015). However, like the image of the language sphere above, it implies that “language” is one repertoire, and to speak of specific “languages” is only to point to socially defined regions in the vast realm of available semiotic systems. Within this sphere, speakers inhabit contact zones where they select and employ lexical, syntactical, rhetorical, and discursal patterns, violating “language boundaries” at will. As such, write Velasco and García, translanguaging

is more than code-switching, which considers that the two languages are separate systems (or codes) and are ‘switched’ for communicative purposes. . . . It comprises a bilingual theory of learning, especially for language-minoritized populations. In fact, translanguaging becomes the framework for conceptualizing the education of bilinguals as a democratic endeavor for social justice. Teaching practices that jeopardize this reality essentially undermine the right to learn of language-minority children. (Velasco & García, 2014, p. 7).

No doubt, one can see the potential for a social justice argument here. At the same time, however, Velasco and García tend to over-identify bilingualism with socioeconomic distress and with ethnic minorities in the U.S. population—as does Gumperz (above). It is obviously important to identify such a demographic/political correlation where it does exist. But if one is building an encompassing theory of bilingual

learning, then that theory needs to apply convincingly to the bilingualism of non-U.S., non-minority populations, as well.

In addition, I don't see strong evidence in earlier work that CS "considers that the two languages are separate systems" in the sense that Velasco and García imply. On the contrary, judging by global themes, the body of work on CS reviewed here does *not* consider languages as ontologically separate, but rather theorizes CS as an alternation that occurs *because languages are in semiotic contact*. One could say the research reviewed here effectively views CS as a manifestation or expression of translanguaging as bilinguals constantly select from all semiotics at their disposal.

Further, there is some equivocation between terms like "translanguaging" and "translingualism," and it's not clear to me where Velasco and García stand. The word they use, "translanguaging," is a term that resonates with "linguaging," which Swain (2012) and other neo-Vygotskians use specifically for the self-talk process of novice learners as they mediate higher-order cognition aloud, in either L1 or L2.

Translanguaging, then, might be understood as bilingual languaging. But Velasco and García want to use "translanguaging" also to name "the framework for conceptualizing the education of bilinguals as a democratic endeavor for social justice" (p. 7). This is a very different, much more tendentious sense of things. One wonders, then, if we should use "translanguaging" to name a cognitive process or a political activism. Or something in between.

"Translingualism," as Canagarajah, Horner, and others use it throughout their work, is a theory of multilingualism. By this term, they mean to forward an idea that accommodates what both discourse analysis and neurological research show about how

the mind is activated by the needs of meaning-making in the presence of multiple languages. Their use of the term “translingualism” appears to overlap 100% with Velasco and García’s shorter definition of “translanguaging”: “the flexible and meaningful actions through which bilinguals select features in their linguistic repertoire” (p.7), but not with Velasco and García’s elaborated definition—which binds the term for a cognitive process to the authors’ own social agenda.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, there is a cluster of other terms in play within the literature: code-meshing, heterography, plurilingualism, metrolinguistics, even polylingual languaging (see Canagarajah 2013, quoted above). Those theorists who use “translingual” feel that this is the term that best represents the image of multilingual process that all of these other terms have in common. The center of the Venn diagram, in other words.

The point I’m making is simply that, until more of a consensus emerges, it is vital for writers, whether writing as empirical researchers or as teacher educators, to situate their particular usage carefully and clearly within the literature.

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<sup>9</sup> To be clear, I agree with Velasco and García’s politics; I’m only interrogating their semantics.



## II Code-Switching in the Classroom

### *Is There a Research Base for a Code-Switching Pedagogy?*

Introducing the complexity of the work of a language teacher, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson point to the need not only for pedagogical know-how, but for balance across an impressive menu of human dimensions. “[Teaching] is also physical, emotional, practical, behavioral, political, experiential, historical, cultural, spiritual, and personal. In short, teaching is very complex, influenced not only by these 12 dimensions *and perhaps others*, but also requiring their contingent orchestration in support of students' learning” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 12).

I experienced the “perhaps other” dimensions when tutoring a Spanish speaker in English conversation. It was one of those surprising moments when a teacher's perception of the student's need differs from the student's own perception. “Next week, shall we work on your PowerPoint?” I asked, knowing that she was preparing something big for a class. “Okay,” she said. “You need assign me *vocabulario* and *verbos*. *Y . . . la gramatica.*”

I found myself both at odds with my student and delighted with her—especially with the ironies in her comment. She was demanding vocabulary and grammar instruction, which were not likely to help her either in her conversation practice with me or in the ESL class for which she was preparing. Yet she directed me (her tutor, a man, and her elder) quite comfortably and even confidently, which showed her advancing toward greater competence in both English conversation and American culture. That she did so in a code-mixed utterance did not trouble me, and I did not correct her; she knew I

had enough Spanish to understand her, and she was negotiating meaning with the resources at hand. As her teacher, I was reminded of Larsen-Freeman and Anderson's comment about orchestrating dimensions, attending to the support needed by the student in the learning moment. I laughed.

“Well,” I said. “You know that I'm not going to give you exercises in vocabulary or grammar.”

“Grammar?” she asked.

*“La gramatica.”*

She wrote the word “grammar” in her vocabulary notebook.

Scholars of second language teaching **Lee and VanPatten** offer an especially clear discussion of how learners cope with beginner's resources in their second language. Exploring an example of a French student struggling to convey his meaning to his teacher, they make this comment: “Roger realizes from the instructor's response that he must reformulate his utterance, say it in another way, and eventually the *two* work out what Roger means to say” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 52). Roger, the student in the example, attempts to say there is no perfectly typical French person—“C'est ne Français typique” and “Ne personne est typique” (p. 52). In analyzing the example, Lee and VanPatten infer that Roger was “translating, in part, from English” (p. 52). His teacher models the correct form (*Personne n'est typique* [no one is typical]), and their communication can proceed.

The inference that Lee and VanPatten make may or may not be correct that Roger was translating from L1 (or “languaging” in L1 per Swain, or mediating in L1 per Lantolf); evidence for that seems ambiguous. However, since formation of the negative in

French is counter-intuitive for English speakers, the example did make me wonder what Lee and VanPatten would say if Roger had simply used a little CS: “No one est typique.” When efforts to negotiate meaning in the L2 fail, as they point out, “both Roger and the instructor demonstrate a certain strategic competence: Instead of abandoning the idea, they attempt to get it across in another way” (p. 52). Exactly. And if learner and instructor share the learner’s L1, it clearly represents another way to get the idea across, a resource in Celce-Murcia’s “available inventory.” Strategic competence, as Butzkamm, Fishman, and others argue, must include switching to that shared language, in effect to broker the negotiation of meaning. I continue asking myself why using this resource is not explicitly encouraged.

**Larsen-Freeman and Anderson** allude to what may be a changing climate in the field when they acknowledge more than once, “The restriction to avoid use of the students’ language has been challenged, with the students’ L1 not being seen as an impediment to, but rather as a resource for language learning” (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011, p. 225). These authors very circumspectly avoid taking a position on the question themselves, preferring only to survey available pedagogies—some of which *proscribe* the student’s L1 and some of which *prescribe* it. And in fact, where they refer to using the student’s L1, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson seem to have only translation in mind; CS as we have been describing it here is never mentioned in Larsen-Freeman and Anderson’s most recent edition (2011). But the point remains that in their book we see one of the very few acknowledgments by influential L2 teacher education texts that using the L1 might have an appropriate place in the L2 classroom.

The pedagogical (including the affective) value of employing the learner's mother tongue was brought home to me experientially while I was serving as a volunteer aide in an adult ESL classroom. In the essay "Solamente Inglés" (Spooner 2017), I describe the experience of working with a student who faced an assignment well beyond his zone of proximal development. JR understood the assignment, and he was quite literate in his L1. (In fact, he once taught me a new algorithm for checking my long division.) But "the parameters of this assignment had pushed him to where he was nearly unable to produce any English at all. . . . [H]e simply didn't have words for the rhetorical situation of this particular task" (p. 119). Words in English, that is. He did have Spanish words for it, and as we freely code-switched together in violation of school policy, we deployed his L1 literacy as an available resource in this context of situation. The experience of this student, I argue, illustrates how English-only pedagogy cuts off the learner from a useful mediatory resource. That a teacher—especially one who has even partial competence in the language of the student—might decline to use that language as a pedagogical resource, is incomprehensible to me.

Writing much earlier, **Brooks and Donato** (1994) support this argument. Their work emerges from Vygotskian sociocultural theory, and they make a point that I implied above when wrestling with Lantolf. If, as SCT suggests, a learner will forever use L1 to mediate higher mental processes, then teachers would be *well-advised* to leverage that dependence in the foreign language classroom. The evidence reported by Brooks and Donato is that resorting to L1 is, in fact, a normal and unavoidable psycholinguistic process for the individual. In this, their view is congruent with (though not identical to) Lantolf's. Unlike Lantolf, however, they suggest that this switching can indeed advance

the learning of the L2. With other researchers, they observe that, in the communicative classroom, metatalk among students is especially valuable. But this classroom metatalk, they point out, occurs very frequently in L1.

[T]he use of L1 during L2 interactions . . . is a normal psycholinguistic process that facilitates L2 production and allows learners both to initiate and to sustain verbal interaction with one another. In short, verbal thinking [in L1] mediates one's relation with the new language and with language itself . . . and is quite necessary and natural. (Brooks & Donato, 1994, p. 268)

Swain's work later (2012, reviewed above) would seem to confirm Brooks and Donato on this point, as she finds that language learners become incrementally more able to mediate higher-order thinking in L2 as time goes on. Thus, both Brooks and Donato and Swain put a different spin on the impasse we see in Lantolf's comment quoted earlier. Whereas Lantolf's stricter SCT offers an almost futile prospect for foreign-language teachers, these researchers suggest a more optimistic outlook. Brooks and Donato stop short of a pedagogical position in favor of classroom CS, but their theoretical discussion clearly supports such a pedagogy.

If we triangulate Brooks and Donato's argument with Swain's findings about "languaging" in L2, we begin to see a working model of what Canagarajah has in mind (above) when he says that bilingualism integrates knowledge of two languages. Neurological research suggests how this may work in the architecture of the brain (cf. Libben, 2000). Contrary to the traditional view that languages are organized separately or coordinately in the mind, a bilingual person constantly transits the assumed boundary between languages in the search for meaning, and this is because the mind itself

transcends that boundary. To the mind, we could say, *all language is one*—one semiotic resource. With this understanding, we are moving toward translangual practice.

And here, **Horner** (2016) offers a key intuition about language teaching. To teach from translangual assumptions, he implies, will inherently encourage reflection and cognitive transfer in the student. This is an important pedagogical advantage. An L2 teacher with a translangual perspective, Horner argues, will see “all language practice as action-reflection rather than . . . action about which . . . one may or may not reflect” (Horner, 2016, p. 107). Teaching in this way affirms the student’s L1, affirming her/his cultural identity and authorizing her/his language as a resource for learning L2, and it also inherently invokes reflection and transfer. This is a significant shift in approach from target-language-only, and it is a liberating one.

Secondly, Horner writes, language pedagogy needs to come to grips more seriously with the concept of variation. Code-switching, of course, is a manifestation of variation *within* the utterance itself, but the concept runs much deeper. It is no secret that, despite all efforts to freeze it in place, language is always in motion. Even within a community of L1 speakers, language variation is organic and constant. All speakers are constantly (unconsciously, in very small and ephemeral ways) transforming languages they speak. And this includes L2 speakers, as the language responds to the flow of miniscule innovations and attritions in *el vocabulario y la gramática*. To imagine that a stabilized form of a language exists, and that it can be preserved and enforced, is a fantasy. This is not a controversial idea, but it is resisted in many ways across speech communities, and target-language-only pedagogies represent an especially clear form of this resistance. For Horner, Canagarajah, and a growing number of others, such

pedagogies are not only unrealistic but they appear actually to inhibit language learning. Horner argues that a more translingual practice in the classroom would adopt “an orientation of acceptance of *variability as the norm*, and a *concern with communicative effectiveness* rather than with conformity to standards of correctness” (Horner, 2016, p. 122, emphasis added).

Although this position would raise concerns among teachers and policymakers who hold traditional views of correctness, what it implies for teaching is both ethically vital and fully congruent with communicative language teaching (CLT). A translingual orientation presupposes in the teacher a disposition of humility toward language and of patience toward students, very much like the CLT emphasis on collaboration, negotiation of meaning, and communicative effectiveness. Instead of the error-averse instruction of traditional approaches, a translingual CLT orientation takes an encouraging stance toward the ambiguity, the miscues, the unconventional collocations that inevitably arise in the L2 classroom.

This is not to imply that a language teacher cares nothing for conventions of structure, lexicon, pronunciation, and so on. Translingualism simply reorients a teacher away from error-aversion and toward a more reflective, transfer-friendly learning process. The faith of the translingual instructor is in her/his understanding that *variation* is the real standard, that language learning is a *long-term process*, and that *negotiation of meaning*—not enforcing correctness—is the goal. We will see more of this in García, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017).

**Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain** (2005) make a significant turn, one that perhaps previews a shift in the pedagogical stance of researchers who come later. In their work,

Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain choose to study the CS behavior not of teachers, but of students. Employing a term from the social theorist Etienne Wenger, Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain describe the classroom they studied as a functioning “community of practice,” and they relate to students as not only learners but as effective co-creators of the environment in which they learn. Importantly, they notice, the students—L2 learners—were using CS in the same way that bilingual speakers do outside the classroom, and although the teacher did far less of this, she did not prohibit it.

Much as Brooks and Donato recommend, the teacher appeared to consider CS a natural, necessary, and useful feature of the speech of multilinguals. Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain comment that under these conditions, the classroom becomes a “bilingual environment” (p. 235) and further, in contrast to the traditional monolingualist model, the explicit goal of the classroom becomes to *create bilinguals*, not to replace one language with another (even for the classroom hour), as in a subtractive model. Given such a goal, “then the aim of incorporating systematic code-switching behavior into the classroom is both worthy and appropriate” (p. 235). One might even argue that, if the goal is to create bilinguals, and CS is characteristic of bilingual speech, then *instruction in code-switching itself* becomes appropriate. Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain don’t go this far, but they do conclude the following:

[S]tudents manifest their conception of the classroom as a bilingual space through their code-switching practices. When given permission to code-switch, these students did not merely fall back on the L1 when they encountered a deficiency in their L2 learning; they also made frequent use of language alternation to indicate changes in their orientation toward the interaction and toward each other. They did



this despite the fact that the teacher did not deliberately model code-switching behaviour and, in fact, only rarely spoke [L1] to them at all. The particular functions of code-switching emerged as a consequence of the students' participation and membership in this community of practice . . . . Code-switching strategies similar to non-classroom patterns may be found only if the conditions are right—that is, if learners feel comfortable using both the L1 and the L2 in the classroom—and envisioning the foreign-language classroom as a bilingual space gives them opportunities to behave as fluent bilinguals do.

A study by Martínez (2010) adds more detail to the picture. Observing that bilinguals have an extensive repertoire, **Martínez** notes that in a classroom he studied, “Spanglish functioned as a semiotic tool that enabled students to accomplish important conversational work” (Martinez, 2010), and that speakers used it only where juxtaposition of elements from the second language embedded with the matrix language “does not violate a syntactic rule of either language” (Martínez, 2010, p. 126). As Sampson confirms later, Martínez finds very little CS for the purpose that commonsense observations allege. That is, in Martínez's study, students almost never switched into Spanglish as a way to sustain interaction when they were at a loss for words, sometimes called “crutching” or “crutch-like switching.” He suggests that—contrary even to students' own perceptions—crutching was not their primary motivation. “In fact, instances of crutch-like code-switching made up less than 2% of the total instances of Spanglish that I observed during this study” (Martinez, 2010, p. 131).

Like Martínez, **Sampson** (2012) is concerned with the viability of CS as a part of a responsible L2 pedagogy. His research looks for functions that learners aim to achieve

through CS in order to discover whether the common prohibition of L1 in the classroom actually has pedagogical value or not. Although Sampson's study must be seen as limited especially in regard to sample size, his results strongly suggest two important perspectives for teachers.

First, he found very little CS that could be related to the L2 proficiency of the speaker; teachers and program planners, in other words, are mistaken to believe that CS is a marker of a poor student simply avoiding the work of speaking L2. Second, and conversely, Sampson's findings "contradict the common assumption that since more advanced learners are able to perform more classroom functions in L2, they switch codes less frequently" (Sampson, 2012, p. 296). Switching, Sampson says, appears to derive from communicative objectives at all proficiency levels, a finding that intersects with Albirini's (2011) corpus study above, which also reported the primacy of communicative function. It further resonates with the findings of Spicer-Escalante (2015) and with Canagarajah's theory of deliberate shuttling by bilinguals, both also discussed above. Sampson identifies six different functions of CS among his participants, confirming those found by other researchers: a) lexical equivalence or semantic resource, b) metalanguage (procedural talk), c) floor-holding, d) reiteration, and e) socializing being the most common. As a sixth possible function, Sampson mentions: f) L2 avoidance (i.e., resistance where competence does exist), but he finds no instances of this in his own study.

In research on the uses of bidialectal CS among African American women teachers in an urban high school, **Sanders** (2010) finds functions that correspond to those above, but she emphasizes the use of CS as metalanguage (Sampson's second-most

common function), especially procedural talk or classroom management. An interesting and important dimension of the uses that Sanders found was to form interdependent relationships and a community-like atmosphere: “ground,” she calls it. By using students’ home languages during instructional time, the participants reinforced “a common culture, which created a cohesive learning environment that evolved into a community of learners” (Sanders, 2010, p. 84). In other words, Sanders finds an important affective function for CS in the classroom, and discovers that her participant teachers deploy it consistently.

Given even these few studies that confirm the instructional value of code-switching, one wonders why it continues to be treated as unorthodox or worse. One clue might be found in **King and Chetty’s** (2014) study of teachers in Cape Town. King and Chetty are particularly interested in an embarrassment they find even among teachers who use CS in ways that are seen as productive, and that, above, we have seen accounted for in research as diverse as Sampson (2012) and Brooks and Donato (1994).

For example, King and Chetty’s primary participant used the mother tongue lexically to enhance student uptake or in metalanguage (e.g., “did you hear that?” “Let’s continue.” “Is he the only one?” [p. 41]). Yet, she felt this as something of a failure. They note a similar embarrassment found by other researchers in South Africa. Probyn, for example, interviews teachers who report feeling as if they are “smuggling the vernacular” into their classroom if they allow the students’ L1 (Probyn, 2009, p. 123). It is as if teachers intuitively perceive the value of scaffolding via the students’ mother tongue, yet they also perceive CS as subversive or as culpable in some other way—a cause of shame. “But why then does Shandi choose to mix languages within a lesson?” they ask. “Why

does she deny doing so? Why does this dual reasoning exist in teachers' use of CS?" (King & Chetty, 2014, p. 41).

Writing in *TESOL Quarterly*, **Auerbach** (1993) opens a review of pedagogical studies and research reports with this remark:

As a field, we face an unwitting yet pervasive schizophrenia. . . . [W]ithin the confines of the ESL classroom, many of those who may oppose the English-Only movement on a policy level insist that their students use English as the sole medium of communication; teachers devise elaborate games, signals, and penalty systems to ensure that students do not use their L1 and justify these practices with the claim that use of the L1 will impede progress in the acquisition of English. (Auerbach, 1993, p. 10).

The energy behind English-Only as a grassroots political movement in the United States has diminished since Auerbach was writing, but it survives in state and federal lobbying groups, such as U.S. English. At this writing, the legislatures in 32 U.S. states have formally recognized English as the official language of government, and during the 2017 legislative year, Michigan will consider becoming the 33<sup>rd</sup> state to do so. A national "English Language Unity Act" has been reintroduced in the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R. 997) and in the U.S. Senate (S. 678) for the 115th Congress—which, at this writing, is the current session of Congress (U.S. English, 2017). The act would declare English the official language of the nation.

Should this xenophobic political effort succeed, it may prove to be a Pyrrhic victory for monolingualism in a rapidly diversifying nation. However, it illuminates the survival of precisely the monolingual thinking in ESL instruction that Auerbach laments.

It further illuminates the schizophrenia among teachers who may oppose English Only politically yet enforce it in their teaching; from above, they are under pressure toward monolingualism as matter of policy, and they have not seen the research that supports a measured bilingualism in ESL pedagogy. Thus, even with the turn toward DLI classrooms in the U.S. (a positive development), English-only remains the instructional policy in many states (Utah State Office of Education, 2012).

Auerbach sees this as unjust institutional policy, but, perhaps equally troubling to her, it appears an unjustified pedagogy. Looking particularly at adult ESL education, she finds numerous studies that conclude that to encourage L1 in the ESL classroom is both effective and necessary, especially for adult learners who come with limited literacy in their home language. To deny these learners the use of their L1, claims Auerbach, effectively forecloses not only their chance to learn English well, but to participate fully in the U.S. economy. Thus, she writes, to insist on English-only in the ESL classroom “may impede language acquisition precisely because it mirrors disempowering relations” in U.S. society (Auerbach, 1993, p. 16).

### **Seeking a Balance**

To find an appropriate use of CS is not a matter of inventing an ideal based on generic learning conditions. Instead, as in **Schwartz and Asil**'s research, it must be informed by a teacher's judgment of concrete social realities existing outside of school. Because Hebrew is the prestige language in Jerusalem where this study was conducted, Arab children are exposed to it even at home and are well-motivated to improve their grasp of it. On the other hand, Hebrew speakers are not so well motivated to learn Arabic. Teachers in the study accordingly made it a point to emphasize Arabic for certain

common and important functions within the classroom, in order to tip the balance toward exposure to Arabic, where the need was greater. “In summary, it was clear to us that the teachers attempted to speak more Arabic with both the Hebrew-speaking children and the Arabic-speaking children, especially commonly used sentences, for two reasons: to advance and strengthen Arabic among the Hebrew (L1) speaking children, and to preserve the Arabic (L1) of the Arabic-speaking children” (Schwartz & Asil, 2014, p. 27).

While Schwartz and Asil appear to move intuitively in the direction of the pedagogy called for by Canagarajah and Horner, there are others who are making conscious efforts. Writing teacher preparation materials for elementary and secondary educators, for example, **García, Johnson, and Seltzer** (2017) capture the general principles and dispositions of translanguaging in three key pedagogical ideas: *stance*, *design*, and *shifts*. They position each of these in relation to what they call the dynamic translanguaging *corriente*—the “current” or flow in the classroom—and they outline how they use these key terms:

A translanguaging *stance* sees the bilingual child's complex language repertoire as a resource, never as a deficit. . . .

[F]lexible *design* is the pedagogical core of the translanguaging classroom, and it allows teachers and students to address all content . . . in equitable ways for all students, particularly bilingual students, who are often marginalized in mainstream classrooms and schools. . . .

[S]*hifts* are the many moment-by-moment decisions that teachers make all the time. They reflect the teacher's flexibility and willingness to change the course of

the lesson and assessment, as well as the language use planned for it, to release and support students' voices. (García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017, p. 1)

Like researchers who work in the field of English as an international language (EIL), García, Johnson, and Seltzer clearly support an approach to TESOL teacher preparation that would inculcate a respect for not only the home language of students, but for that of teachers as well. Scholars like Li (2017) would include international varieties of English, too, as deserving of teacher acceptance and affirmation. Li promotes a thoroughly self-aware and reflective practice in the classroom.

Returning to Swain briefly:

And there's another reason for having [students use L1] overtly. And this is because you as a teacher can listen to what they're saying. What they're saying represents the processes they're going through to get there [to the current level of comprehension] . . . It's a great opportunity for teachers to build immediate target-language curricular activities that integrate language and content teaching.

### **Conclusion**

It seems clear in the research reviewed here that the question of CS in the classroom is not about whether to allow it, but how to use it most effectively. Despite the efforts of policymakers, schools, and teachers to prevent it, both experimental and theoretical work reviewed here suggests that prohibition is a futile effort. Multilingual speakers—whether emergent or expert—simply do alternate between languages at their command. With students, the prohibition is perhaps especially misguided, because languaging in L1 is vital to knowledge building and transfer. Recent neurological research not reviewed here supports the translangualist view that languages are treated by

the brain as a repertoire of semiotic resources. But in findings that should reassure traditionalists, Toribio and others confirm that the brain does not deploy those resources haphazardly: CS, like all language functions, is rule-governed.

If this is so, then appropriate teacher preparation approaches need to be developed that can, in Tian and Macaro's words, "offer formal classrooms a hook on which to hang principled rather than ad hoc L1 use" (Tian & Macaro, 2012, p. 369). Li (2017) and Mahboob (2017) likewise call for attention to the realities and benefits of CS in TESOL educator programs. Principles for the use of CS will not be found by pursuing a monolingual ideal based on generic learning conditions. But the research reviewed here suggests that general principles for teachers can be developed. The process of developing these and conveying them appears to have begun. It represents an exciting new frontier for language teacher education programs.



## LOOKING FORWARD

### Thoughts on Teaching, Traveling, and Voluntourism

“Can you imagine a worse shock for me? I came across a student of the English Honours who did not know till this day that ‘honours’ had to be spelt with a ‘u’!” . . . [Director Brown then] began a lecture on the importance of the English language and the need for preserving its purity. Brown’s thirty years in India had not been ill-spent if they had opened the eyes of Indians to the need for speaking and writing correct English! The responsibility of the English department was indeed very great.

—Narayan, *The English Teacher*

As I write this, I am in my last month of work before retirement. In the U.S., when you are about to retire, people constantly ask, “What will you do? Are you excited? Big plans?” I usually make a cultural joke: “Oh, I’ll travel,” I say. “Volunteer in the community. Get back to writing—finally.” Because that’s what retired Americans do. They travel, they volunteer, write their memoirs. “I don’t want to do any of this,” I joke, “but I’m retiring now, and that’s the law.” They laugh and let me off the hook.

This “Looking Forward” section provides the last opportunity for the MSLT student to write reflectively, and here the student is meant both to reflect and to cast ahead, to describe “what you are aiming for in your professional development,” as the portfolio guidelines put it.

I hate reflective writing.

No, I don't hate it. I love reflection for learning, and I try to practice it as a habit of mind. But I'm superstitious about plans. If you talk about "your aims," you will miss them; your plans will be defeated; that's how I feel.

Truly, what I hope to do in retirement is live in a Spanish-speaking country. I might like to find a position teaching EFL in or near a university, where I can improve my grasp of Spanish and continue to take part in the intellectual life of an academic community. I hope to read more in second language research, and I'm especially interested in the area of English as an international language.

But I believe deeply that a person from the U.S. should be careful about declaring a plan to teach English in a foreign country. Teaching language is teaching culture, and Americans have a reputation for doing this frivolously. After our missionaries, our military, our capitalist savior complex, our American students and retirees who set out carelessly to teach English as tourist volunteers—after all these—the burdensome question for a socially-conscious American abroad is: How does one live down what generations of casual imperialism has created?

Jakubiak and Smagorinsky (2016) study "voluntourism" as a variety of American exceptionalism. When he described America as "exceptional" in the 1820s, Tocqueville meant something more like "unique," but his phrase is the source of what became the America First ideology we have heard so much about since 2016. Voluntourism starts there. English-teaching voluntourism further reminds me that even EFL teaching—as fine a profession as that is—has its roots in British colonialism.

Because of all this, I approach my "plans" to teach EFL in Latin America with caution. I am no missionary for America First, and I have no interest in finding a gated

community, a “Gringolandia” where I can live with other gringos. I have no knack for tourism, and, as we have seen elsewhere in this portfolio, I make a resistant, subversive volunteer. So, if my hopes for an expatriate retirement do materialize, I would prefer to be a professional, working among professionals. I would like to travel quietly. And, of course, “I should get back to writing—finally.”

I return to R.K. Narayan’s *The English Teacher*, a novel that haunts me. Krishna, Narayan’s protagonist teaches the canon of British literature in a small Indian town, only a few years before independence from Great Britain. By the end of the book, Krishna has had enough of the empire, its culture and its control. He drafts a letter to Director Brown.

“This education had reduced us to a nation of morons; we are strangers to our own culture and camp followers of another culture, feeding on leavings and garbage.” . . .

“This is not what I want to say,” I muttered to myself and tore up the letter and stuffed it into the wastepaper basket. “There is something far deeper that I wish to say.”

I took out a small sheet of paper and wrote: “Dear Sir, I beg to tender my resignation for personal reasons.” (Narayan, 1980, pp. 178–79)

Sometimes I think that until Euro-Americans like me can understand what Narayan means here—rather: until we understand *that we cannot* understand—we will never be ready to teach.

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