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Defending Difference: Translingualism in the Composition Classroom

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DEFENDING DIFFERENCE: TRANSLINGUALISM IN THE

COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by

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ABSTRACT

Defending Difference: Translingualism in the Composition Classroom

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Translingualism includes 1. appreciating how people use language differences to produce meaning, 2. recognizing that all language is fluid, and 3. helping students and teachers question standard language ideology. Translingual pedagogy should be process-oriented rather than product-focused. Instead of focusing on the writing product matching or not matching the standard, translingual pedagogy should focus on questioning standard language ideology and being more flexible in our language beliefs. Additionally, most scholarship surrounding translingualism has focused on the multilingual community. This thesis expands on the scholarship by asking how translingual pedagogy must shift in a primarily white monolingual classroom. Also included is documentation of the development and implementation of a translingual curriculum in a Utah State University composition class. Discussion includes translingual assignments, how to teach composition concepts through a translingual lens, and some common challenges in this process. The hope is this document can help new teachers learn what translingualism is and how they can apply it in a composition classroom.

(69 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Defending Difference: Translingualism in the Composition Classroom

R. Elle Smith

Historically, writing teachers have conformed to standard language ideology. In other words, educators in the United States often emphasize Standard American English, and students have at times not been allowed to use cultural languages in the classroom. Many prevalent scholars and organizations have challenged standard language ideology in recent years because it separates people from their home languages. Some scholars believe they can challenge standard language ideology by allowing their students to blend all their languages in the classroom. This thesis investigates a broader approach to dismantling standard language ideology: translingualism. Specifically, this thesis outlines how a new teacher can learn about translingualism and implement it in a primarily monolingual composition classroom.

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R. Elle Smith

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INTRODUCTION

"What we do in the classroom should reflect and help set the pace for all of society."

-Y'Shanda Young-Rivera, *Other People's English,* 15

Currently, teachers set the pace for society when most students, despite their

varied backgrounds, are taught to read and write in Standard English using only Standard

English skills. In many English classrooms, students with another language they can rely

on are told to keep that language at home because it does not have a space in the

professional atmosphere of school. This attitude is passed down to the businesses and

careers of the world until Standard English is seen as the only professional language.

Because language is used to express and create culture these students are taught, they

must separate themselves from their culture to succeed. Recognizing this oppressive force

has caused linguistic justice, a call for accepting diverse languages and ways of knowing

outside of Standard English, to become a concern in English classrooms.

One prevalent scholar investigating linguistic justice in college composition,

Vershawn Ashanti Young, partnered with Rusty Barret, Y'Shanda Young-Rivera, Kim

Brian Lovejoy, April Baker-Bell, and Victor Villanueva to write *Other People's English*

in 2018. In this book, Young et al. work to dismantle the requirement for all students to

conform to Standard English. Young asserts in the introduction, "We believe that since

all languages and dialects are equal, only uneven racial, social, and/or power relations

within a society can allow any one dialect to become standard" ("Introduction" 11).

Other People's English analyzes methods of questioning these power relations in the

classroom. When I read this book, I felt a call to incorporate linguistic justice in my

composition classrooms. However, as a new teacher, I felt lost in applying Young et al.'s

techniques because my university's demographics seemed different from Young et al.'s. At Utah State University, most of my students are White and grew up in a monolingual environment. Young calls for a new approach to English education: "We… advocate that African American English speakers be allowed to blend African American language styles together with Standard English at school and at work. The term for this blending is code-meshing" ("Introduction" 1). Young et al. define this code-meshing approach in terms of African American English. When teaching a mostly White monolingual classroom, this method could be adapted into genre or convention mixing but equating that with a multilingual student's code-meshing borders on appropriation. *Other People's English* started my journey to understanding how to incorporate principles of linguistic justice in my classroom, culminating in writing this thesis. Rather than focus on code-meshing, I hope this document helps new teachers learn more about a theory that is one approach to linguistic justice in education: translingualism.

One way to start learning about translingualism is to start with the work of A. Suresh Canagarajah. In the *Literacy as Translingual Practice* introduction, Canagarajah focuses on the prefix *trans*. Canagarajah explains this prefix "moves us beyond a consideration of individual or monolithic languages to life between and across languages" (*Literacy* 1). In other words, instead of treating Standard English as a stable, consistent phenomenon, translingualism has us consider how language use changes depending on the speaker and context. If language is fluid, then all acts of communication are a "negotiation of diverse linguistic resources for situated construction of meaning" (Canagarajah, *Literacy* 1). Put simply, if we consider the wide variety of linguistic knowledge from text-speak, scientific language, emojis, graphics, tables, cultural

fluencies, etc., then we are all negotiating meaning amongst a variety of linguistic

standards every day. Translingualism calls for teachers to emphasize this negotiation

process when meaning shifts with "social and material contexts" (Canagarajah, *Literacy*

1). In other words, instead of relying on the standard to grant meaning, students should be

able to navigate why and how people transgress those norms to create meaning.

I felt a call to use translingualism in creating my composition curriculum because

I saw my students as possible perpetuators of the problems Young et al. wrote about

in *Other People's English.* If we treat languages as discrete structures with Standard

English at the top, we will continue the prejudice toward multilingual communicators. I

realized that my students are probably like I was unaware of the prejudice multilingual

communicators face and unable to communicate in situations that differ from the "norm"

of Standard English. Because translingualism involves accepting languages as fluid and

mixed, this complicates the power dynamics of consistently placing Standard English in a

position of authority. Translingualism is one method of applying linguistic justice while

still teaching students how to communicate.

I am not the only one concerned with applying linguistic justice to the teaching of

English. In July 2020, a special committee composed of April Baker-Bell, Bonnie J.

Williams-Farrier, Davena Jackson, Lamar Johnson, Carmen Kynard, and Teaira

McMurtry created the Demand for Black Linguistic Justice for the Conference on

College Composition and Communication (CCCC) during the Black Lives Matter

movement. This demand for Black linguistic justice calls for teachers to stop requiring

Black students to speak and write only in Standard English. Instead, teachers should

"teach Black students about anti-Black linguistic racism and white linguistic supremacy

instead" (Conference on College Composition and Communication, "DEMAND"). Similarly, many scholars like Young and Canagarajah are concerned with how teachers should change the way they teach English to multilingual communicators.

Teaching the power dynamics behind language use is a step forward in the movement of linguistic justice. I believe how teachers approach teaching these power dynamics changes depending on the demographics of their classroom. For example, teaching code-meshing to a classroom composed of primarily multilingual communicators could be liberating and emancipatory. However, doing so in a predominantly White monolingual classroom would be appropriation, but it could also confuse students into believing that because they can code-mesh, they understand the multilingual experience and the power dynamics of language use. The dynamics of teaching translingualism in a primarily White monolingual classroom have understandably not been the focus of translingual scholarship. Still, I believe this bears investigating because teaching the power dynamics of language changes when the students mostly do not have personal experience to understand those power dynamics. This thesis outlines how I created a translingual curriculum for a population of students who mostly do not have the personal experience to understand how the power dynamics of race and culture affect language use. In this thesis, I am not seeking to advance the scholarship surrounding translingualism. Rather, I aim to apply translingualism in a first-year writing class that is predominantly White and monolingual.

Firstly, I provide an entry point for new teachers eager to learn about translingualism in this thesis by organizing my literature review according to some commonly asked questions. The body of the thesis will outline my project, guided by the

principles of action research, where I created a translingual first-year composition curriculum and documented the process and problems of the assignment sequence. Next, I illustrate how translingualism can be applied to any composition concept and explain some challenges in teaching translingualism while considering my students' current beliefs about language. Finally, I conclude with some guiding principles for teachers to consider as they design their translingual curriculum. I hope new teachers find this a welcoming and informative space.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To create a welcoming space for new instructors, I organized this literature review according to some common questions about translingualism. The conversation surrounding translingualism has been ongoing for over a decade, so this literature review does not represent all the scholarship. Instead, it provides an entry point into the scholarly conversation while still representing the nuance of the discussion. In addition, the dialogue surrounding translingualism's effectiveness in the English as a second language (ESL) classroom is still ongoing. Therefore, my focus remains on translingualism as applied to the composition classroom rather than linguistics or ESL. My sections include a brief history on translingualism, the complicated definition of translingualism and its principles, why it is important in composition, and how translingualism relates to code-meshing.

What is the history of translingualism?

Translingualism was created in response to traditional methods of teaching writing that emphasize uniformity. Horner et al. explain, traditional methods

> take as the norm a linguistically homogeneous situation: one where writers, speakers, and readers are expected to use Standard English or Edited American English imagined ideally as uniform to the exclusion of other languages and language variations. These approaches assume that heterogeneity in language impedes communication and meaning. (Horner et al. 303)

In this traditional approach, language difference is a crucial problem for anyone labeled as socially different. If multilingual students demonstrate difference in their writing, it is

taken "as manifestations of the writers' lack of knowledge or fluency with 'the standard'" (Lu and Horner, "Translingual Literacy" 583). Lu and Horner argue this is contrary to students who are identified as "mainstream" because when they demonstrate difference in their writing, they are often deemed "creative innovators" ("Translingual Literacy" 583). However, if students who belong to a subordinate social group replicate the standard, it is perceived "as evidence of either their mastery of the privileged language or their betrayal of their home or first languages" (Lu and Horner, "Translingual Literacy" 583). Not only does this place a double standard on our students, but it also places both teachers and students in a challenging position of either forsaking cultural languages or being socially ostracized for not conforming to a standard.

Another word for this traditional approach to teaching English is monolingual ideology. When I say monolingual ideology, standard language ideology, or monolingualism, I do not mean the state of being monolingual. Missy Watson defines monolingualism as "a set of ideologies privileging SE [Standard English] as a variety at the expense of other varieties and assuming language differences ought to be kept separate, contained, suppressed, or eradicated" (96). This position of only teaching Standard English and dismissing other languages, cultures, and ways of knowing has also been called the English-only wall. Typically, this mindset causes students to reject translingual pedagogical strategies. As Ghanashyam Sharma explains in "Addressing Monolingual Dispositions with Translingual Pedagogy," "it is not students' linguistic identity or proficiency but instead their belief and disposition that impede their acceptance and promotion of translingual sensibility and competency" (17). Multilingual and monolingual students alike have most likely been raised in classrooms that

emphasize standard English and only standard English. Teachers incorporating translingualism into their classrooms must be aware of the monolingual ideology prevalent not just in administration but also in students' minds.

What are the principles of translingualism?

In the seminal article "Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach," Horner et al. summarize the translingual approach into three arguments:

(1) honoring the power of all language users to shape language to specific ends; (2) recognizing the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language both within the United States and globally; and (3) directly confronting English monolingualist expectations by researching and teaching how writers can work with and against, not simply within, those expectations. (305)

In other words, a holistic definition of translingualism includes 1. appreciating how people use language differences to produce meaning, 2. recognizing that all language is fluid, and 3. helping students and teachers question standard language ideology. Each of these principles will be expanded on in this section and how these principles are represented in translingual terminology.

Firstly, translingualism is an approach to language difference. Translingualism would have us treat language difference with curiosity rather than something to be removed. Horner et al. argue "When faced with difference in language, this approach asks: What might this difference do? How might it function expressively, rhetorically, communicatively? For whom, under what conditions, and how?" (303-304). This functions for both readers and writers. Typically, according to dominant language

ideology, when a reader comes across difference in writing, it is usually deemed a writer error, but in the translingual approach, "The possibility of writer error is reserved as an interpretation of last resort" (Horner et al. 304). The translingual approach does not mean that "anything goes." Instead, translingualism asks that any difference be examined for how it functions rhetorically. Rather than treat the standard as a bar students need to clear before they create unique language use, translingualism requires we interrogate the purpose and effects of language difference from the beginning. If we view language difference as an opportunity to create meaning, then language difference is no longer a deficit. The Conference on College Composition and Communication's call for Students' Rights to Their Own Language decries, "Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another" ("Students' Rights"). Translingualism extends this call: language difference is not just a right but also a resource.

The second principle of translingualism involves the fluidity of language. Canagarajah argues we should view language as more than words. Every piece of communication involves "other semiotic resources involving different symbol systems (i.e., icons, images), modalities of communication (i.e., aural, oral, visual, and tactile channels), and ecologies (i.e., social and material contexts of communication)" (*Literacy* 1). Lu and Horner call the social and material contexts the temporal and spatial elements in writing. Rather than viewing languages as discrete and stable, "a temporal-spatial frame treats all of them as always emergent, in process (a state of becoming), and their relations as mutually constitutive" (Lu and Horner, "Translingual Literacy" 587).

Viewing language as an emergent phenomenon applies not only to writing that embraces language difference by incorporating multiple languages and codes but writing that also appears to mimic the standard because the standard is fluid. Lu and Horner describe this using the idiom "you can't step in the same river twice." Replicating the standard is considered "same," but because of differing temporal and spatial contexts, it is also "different" (Lu and Horner, "Translingual Literacy" 589). Translingualism teaches students how to navigate the temporal and spatial context in all writing, whether it includes multiple languages or not.

Finally, the third component of translingualism is questioning language practices, even those that appear to replicate dominant standards. Translingualism asks, according to Horner et al., "what produces the appearance of conformity, as well as what that appearance might and might not do, for whom, and how" (304). Because translingualism embraces language difference, there is a misconception that translingual writing requires less responsibility from writers because they can ignore convention. However, translingualism requires writers to interrogate what the standard means and who it serves, thus calling "for more, not less, conscious and critical attention to how writers deploy diction, syntax, and style, as well as form, register, and media" (Horner et al. 304). To summarize, translingualism "acknowledges that deviations from dominant expectations need not be errors; that conformity need not be automatically advisable; and that writers' purposes and readers' conventional expectations are neither fixed nor unified." (Horner et al. 304). Rather than treating the standard as something stable, like outlawing emojis from academic writing, translingualism would ask "why are emojis inadvisable and when would be a good instance to use emojis in academic writing?" For instance, if one was

writing an essay about the many definitions of the heart emoji, then it might be illustrative to include emojis. Or if someone thinks an emoji perfectly describes the idea they are trying to relate, how could they use it and still convey meaning to your target audience? A translingual approach to writing has students rhetorically analyze context and audience rather than relying on the standard to do that work.

A new teacher researching translingualism for the first time should be aware that although Horner et al. outlined the principles of translingualism in the seminal article "Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach" in 2011, meanings of translingualism and terms associated with translingualism have shifted since then. Qianqian Zhang-Wu gave examples of the varied terminology surrounding translingualism. Translingualism can be

> defined as a 'disposition' (Horner et al.; Lee and Jenks; Lu and Horner),
> an 'orientation' (Atkinson et al.; Canagarajah, "Clarifying"), a 'tool'
> (Ascenzi-Moreno and Espinosa), a 'competence' (Jain), an 'ideological'
> stance' (Gevers), or a 'perspective' (Hartse and Kubota). (Zhang-Wu 123)

Translingual terminology has fluctuated so much that Sun and Lan analyzed how this language has changed over time. Because of increased concern of theoretical applications of translingualism outpacing pedagogical practice, *translingual practice* and *translingual pedagogy* have significantly increased from 2011 to 2020 (Sun and Lan 8). The term *translingual approach* has been used consistently since 2011, but Sun and Lan argue that "*translingual practice* emphasizes language use, and *translingual approach* stresses more on language ideology" (9). In other words, *translingual practice* relates to how translingualism is enacted in writing practices, whereas *translingual approach* stresses

the ideological differences between translingualism and standard language ideology. These are just a few examples of how translingualism terminology can be challenging. A new teacher researching translingualism should be aware that terminology differences often represent subtle changes in translingual theory and application.

What are some arguments against translingualism?

Translingualism has been subjected to much scrutiny. In "The Inevitable Mess of Translingualism," Missy Watson explains that while translingualism has questioned monolingual ideology, similar scholarship has been done in ESL and linguistic fields. Yet, there is a tendency when discussing translingualism to assume ESL and linguistic classes force students to conform to standard language ideology (Watson 88). Therefore, it is essential that as teachers continue the exploration of translingualism in composition, they also consider what research has already been done in similar fields.

Likewise, there is an assumption that because translingualism questions standard language ideology, it is not possible to teach the standard. After all, if there is no standard, than there are no rules. Watson summarizes,

> a focus on cross-language practices, while important and promising for opposing some monolingualist ideologies, could lead to pedagogy and scholarship that overlooks issues of race, oppression, and the spectrum of consequences that differently affect different speakers depending on their ideas. (86)

Many scholars worry that if we unequivocally valorize all language difference, we will do students the disservice of not teaching them the power dynamics involved and the consequences of not following the standard. Therefore, it is important to continue

translingual conversations past telling students the standard is arbitrary. Instead, as Watson claims, the power of translingual scholarship is "its focus on critically interrogating, with students in the composition classroom, the oppressive roots and consequences of language attitudes and practices" (86). The goal of translingualism is not to tell students they can simply ignore the standard, but it is the goal to interrogate the history and purpose of the standard in a writing class. I hope to tackle how to question standard language ideology in the composition classroom in the body of this thesis.

What is the importance of translingualism in the classroom?

Monolingual ideology understandably has dominated the teaching of writing. According to this ideology, if we all spoke and wrote according to the same standard, we would all be able to communicate better. However, this approach disempowers those who express diversity and ignores the cultural knowledge lost when we only allow dominant characteristics to be expressed. Linguistic justice is partly about accepting forms of diversity. Therefore, because a part of translingualism is questioning monolingual ideology, translingualism is one way to enact linguistic justice.

Translingualism confronts the power dynamics found in standard language ideology by opposing

> the practice of invoking standards not to improve communication and
> assist language learners, but to exclude voices and perspectives at odds
> with those in power. It treats standardized rules as historical codifications
> of language that inevitably change through dynamic processes of use.
> (Horner et al. 305)

Languages change through time, but with standard language ideology, only writers labeled as "mainstream" or from the dominant culture are allowed to demonstrate language difference. For example, words like "literally" and "tweet" have changed over the years, but "ain't" is still deemed a non-word. Y'Shanda Young-Rivera contends, ain't is

> used every day in the English language, has been around for centuries, is
>
> in the dictionary, and its meaning is well understood by the majority of
>
> English speakers. Yet, ain't has been deemed a non-word, all because its
>
> connotation is associated with the minority middle class. (116)

This is a small example of how English-only policies "operate as faux-linguistic covers for discrimination against immigrants and minorities: in place of discrimination on the basis of presumed national, ethnic, racial, or class identity, discrimination is leveled on the basis of language use" (Horner et al. 309). In other words, the myth of needing a standard language to communicate has led to discrimination against peoples that do not conform to that standard.

Translingualism questions the power dynamics of language use which helps mainstream students because we live in a globalized world with more connections across language differences than ever before. According to David Crystal, 750 million English speakers (roughly half of English speakers globally) did not learn English in an English-speaking country or former USA or British colony (68-69). Students will need to communicate with varieties of English and languages other than Standard American English sometime in their lives. Charles Bazerman meditates on this idea:

> Governance in a democratic spirit without the dominance of strong
>
> imperial nations is a complex affair, requiring communication,
>
> cooperation, and coordination at many levels and in many venues. It is our
>
> rewarding and challenging task to help people learn to express and
>
> recognize in their writing the great complexity of humanity, with all its
>
> desires, needs, knowledge, and visions carried in the many languages of
>
> the world. (24)

If instructors and students value democracy, then instructors need to teach ways of knowing outside of Standard English. In "Rhetorical Activities of Global Citizens," Wible uses the World Social Forum to illustrate democratic communication across language difference. At this forum, communities come together across language difference to solve global problems. Wible concludes, "rhetorical education should also develop in students the willingness to try as best they can to collaborate in creating mutual understanding with people speaking and writing in other languages" (43). Because students are entering a world that includes experiences outside of Standard English, instructors need to foreground patience in communication rather than efficiency.

Translingualism prepares students for the globalized world, thus increasing their agency in international communication and facilitating "writers' interactions with the full range of users of English and other languages" (Horner et al. 311). However, translingualism does not just benefit students who will communicate across different languages. Because translingualism teaches the importance of social and material contexts in communication, "translingualism teaches language users to assume and

expect that each new instance of language use brings the need and opportunity to develop new ways of using language, and to draw on a range of language resource" (Horner et al. 312). Instead of relying on the standard, students will be able to express more agency if they can depend on other linguistic resources to produce meaning. Sharma argues that agency

> manifests not only in deviations from the norm but also in all language
>
> acts the user makes deliberately; thus, conforming to conventional
>
> language standards does not mean a lack of agency nor the subordination
>
> of an individual's will to institutional demands as an unwitting, unagentive
>
> reproduction of dominant language norms. (Sharma 20-21)

Students need to understand the fluid nature of the standard and the power differences inherent in standard language ideology. If students have this knowledge, they will be able to choose between following or breaking the standard more consciously.

Learning that all language practices are "negotiations across asymmetrical relations of power" is vital to the monolingual and multilingual student alike (Lu and Horner, "Translingual Literacy" 586). Without teaching the power dynamics behind language use, we cannot "do full justice to the extraordinary art and risk involved in the deliberative language work of members of subordinated groups" (Lu and Horner, "Translingual Literacy" 586). Theorization about translingualism has thus far been focused mainly on its usefulness in teaching multilingual students, but

> until we see translinguality as relevant to and operating in the learning and
>
> writing of all writers, whether marked by the dominant as mainstream or
>
> nonmainstream, the art and struggle of writers from subordinated groups

will always be dismissed as irrelevant to the work of mainstream learners.

(Lu and Horner, "Translingual Literacy" 586)

To increase democratic values, teachers can use translingualism to teach the power dynamics of standard language ideology and who the standard suppresses. This knowledge is not just for the multilingual or the subordinate groups, but everyone. This teaching practice is linguistically just, but it will also help students understand the world outside the English-only bubble.

What is the relationship between translingualism and code-meshing?

There has been some debate about the connection between translingualism and code-meshing. Vershawn Ashanti Young, in his book *Your Average Nigga: Performing Race, Literacy, and Masculinity,* explained code-meshing as "based on what linguistics have called code mixing, to combine dialects, styles, and registers" (7). In other words, code-meshing is writing that blends multiple codes rather than keeping them separate. While code-meshing can be an enactment of translingual principles, it is not the only way students can incorporate translingualism. Translingualism, however, focuses more broadly on questioning monolingual ideology, understanding the fluidity of the language, and working with/against the power dynamics of language use. Some have mistakenly believed that teaching from a translingual perspective requires students to code-mesh. Perhaps the confusion has come from the term "translingual writing." According to the analysis of translingual terminology done by Sun and Lan, "translingual writing" has been used in different ways across the scholarship. Tanenbaum (2014) used "translingual writing" to mean any writing that was not done in the author's home language (Sun and Tan 8). Other scholars use "translingual writing" to refer to a process of negotiating

meaning across language difference. Someone entering the conversation might think "translingual writing" is synonymous with code-meshing and therefore a translingual approach necessitates code-meshing.

Sun and Lan explain the issue with equating translingualism with code-meshing: "Although code-meshing emphasizes the mixed-use of semiotic resources in writing, it is mainly product-oriented" (9). Sun and Lan cite scholars like Gilyard, Guerra, Lu, and Horner to explain that what is more important than the product is "how writers understand their use of various resources in the process of writing" (9). To emphasize process rather than product, Sun and Lan suggest the term "translingual practice" is better than "translingual writing" (9).

Requiring code-meshing in the classroom might side-step essential conversations about power dynamics inherent in language use. Lee and Alvarez summarize Gilyard when stating, "the discourse of translingualism can extend and produce an erasure of inequity and structural difference by treating all language difference as if it were the same form of difference or could receive the same form of assessment" (Lee and Alvarez 267). There are different consequences for code-meshing depending on what identities are associated with the author. Summarizing the Schreiber and Watson article "Translingualism ≠ code-meshing," Watson contends, "assuming translingual pedagogy requires students to produce visibly code-meshed texts incorrectly and problematically positions the pedagogy as uncritical and inconsiderate of students' needs and wants" (Watson 99). Many multilingual and monolingual students will want to learn how to reproduce the standard. Requiring students to code-mesh will ignore those desires while

also ignoring that translingualism is a process that can still produce texts that replicate the standard.

The question remains: what does translingual pedagogy look like when code-meshing is not required? In the next section, I outline the design and results of my project guided by action research principles to create and enact a translingual composition curriculum. Then, I give examples of translingual pedagogical activities as well as some challenges in teaching translingualism in a composition classroom. By the end, I hope that new teachers interested in linguistic justice will understand how to use translingualism to create their own linguistically just curriculum.

PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATIONS OF TRANSLINGUALISM

Overview of Research

Reading A. Suresh Canagarajah's *Literacy as Translingual Practice: Between Communities and Classrooms* affirmed my belief that translingualism should be taught to monolingual communities. Canagarajah clarifies,

> the term translingual enables us to treat cross-language interactions and
>
> contact relationships as fundamental to all acts of communication and
>
> relevant for all of us. In this sense, the shift in literacy is not relevant for
>
> traditionally multilingual students/subjects alone, but for 'native' speakers
>
> of English and 'monolinguals' as well. (*Literacy* 2)

Canagarajah's emphasis on the wide-spread domain of cross-language communication influenced my curriculum because I wanted my students to understand that all writing and reading involves contact across language difference. However, my primarily White monolingual students mostly do not have the personal experience to understand the power dynamics behind racially-coded language use, so I had to approach teaching translingualism differently than I would to a primarily multilingual classroom. Because translingual scholarship mainly focuses on multilingual classrooms, I created a project, guided by the principles of action research, to document my experiences teaching translingual principles to a predominantly White monolingual population.

Canagarajah claims translingualism is not about creating a new kind of literacy. Instead, according to Canagarajah, translingualism "is about understanding the practices and processes that already characterize communicative activity in diverse communities to both affirm them and develop them further" (*Literacy* 2). Canagarajah emphasizes here

that diverse communities are already finding creative ways to build meaning in their writing, so I required students to analyze multilingual texts. I wanted students to recognize that multilingual texts exist, and they need to learn how to understand these texts just like they would any text where they must negotiate meaning.

Through reading Canagarajah, I found the narrative to my assignment arc while my pedagogy journal, inspired by action research, involved documenting the enactment of that arc. With my assignments, I wanted students to develop a translingual disposition, which Canagarajah defines as including

> an awareness of language as constituting diverse norms; a willingness to
> negotiate with diversity in social interactions; attitudes such as openness to
> difference, patience to coconstruct meaning, and an acceptance of
> negotiated outcomes in interactions; and the ability to learn through
> practice and critical self-reflection. (*Literacy* 5)

These attitudes of patience and acceptance often do not come naturally to students raised with monolingual ideology. As I created a translingual curriculum, one of the challenges I had was helping students identify the beliefs stemming from monolingual ideology and help them think through these beliefs without being confrontational, didactic, or villainizing standard language acquisition. Another challenge I faced was that although most of my class was White monolingual students, there would still be students who have experienced language discrimination. Finally, I met the problematic proposition of teaching about linguistic justice to a population that was mostly surprised by the concepts while other students felt patronized. I discuss these challenges in part two: Challenges in Teaching Translingualism.

Action Research Framework and Study Design

I applied the principles of action research to guide this project. To clarify, I did not collect student work for analysis, nor did I obtain IRB approval to do so. Rather, I followed what Patrick Costello describes as action research. According to Costello, action research is a cyclical process that moves from planning an action, acting on that plan, observing the results of that action, reflecting on what happened, and planning further actions (7). Costello also describes the action research process as a series of questions: "what is happening in this educational situation of ours now? … what changes are we going to introduce? … What happens when we make the changes?" (9). Using a pedagogy journal, I kept track of this cyclical process from doing research, creating assignments, implementing those assignments, and creating changes in the curriculum as the semester developed. Each of my lessons was outlined in a PowerPoint and analyzed in the pedagogy journal. Finally, I used student feedback to change my lesson plans, and I kept track of those changes through my pedagogy journal.

Here is an example of how I followed action research as I prepared and taught my curriculum.

1) Planning an action

   a) I read A. Suresh Canagarajah's *Literacy as Translingual Practice: Between Communities and Classrooms* to learn about translingualism. I used this text to inspire my composition curriculum.

2) Acting on that plan

    a) I created the curriculum, and for my records, I annotated it with the translingual

        concepts each assignment introduced. Then, as I enacted that curriculum, I kept

        records of each of my lessons by outlining each lesson in PowerPoint.

3) Observing the results of that action

    a) Because I did not collect students writing, I documented my reactions and

        concerns to student questions in my pedagogy journal.

4) Reflection on what happened

    a) In my pedagogy journal, I noted my students' reactions to concepts and the

        language beliefs they had. I used these notes to revise future lesson plans.

5) Planning further actions

    a) Using my pedagogy journal, I identified the language beliefs my students had.

        Then, I used this reflection space to alter my lesson plans to connect what my

        students already understood to the language myth they believed.

At the beginning of this process, I outlined the questions I would be researching. The

purpose of this project was to:

1) Create assignments that would introduce concepts of linguistic justice and

    translingualism while still teaching composition concepts.

2) Track what concepts my students seemed to understand and where they struggled

    with the curriculum.

3) Outline the factors that inhibit the teaching of translingualism in a composition

    classroom of mostly White monolingual students.

        The goal was to increase the acceptance of languages outside of Standard

American English and teach students three primary translingual skills: 1. Approach

language difference with curiosity, 2. Know that language is fluid and context-dependent, 3. Question the power dynamics behind monolingual ideology. The purpose of this project was not to require code-meshing or analyze how to evaluate code-meshing in student writing.

Curriculum Overview

Here, I will briefly introduce the three assignments I created for my translingual curriculum. I include these assignments to provide context for my analysis afterward, but this is not the only way to create a translingual composition curriculum. This is one example of applying the principles of translingualism, but there are countless ways to improve upon this curriculum. I include full assignment descriptions in the appendix.

Assignment #1: Summary and Analysis

As explained by Ghanashyam Sharma in "Addressing Monolingual Dispositions with Translingual Pedagogy," students often object to translingual pedagogy, but not because they are "monolingual" or "multilingual." Instead, it is engrained monolingual ideology that will obstruct translingual pedagogy (Sharma 17). To understand what language beliefs my students held and to promote increased awareness surrounding linguistic justice, I created the summary and analysis assignment where students had to write a summary and analysis of either Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue" or James Baldwin's "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me What Is?" I chose both texts because they introduce linguistic justice topics and start conversations about language standardization and prejudice. Amy Tan writes about her experiences with her mother's "broken" English, her feelings about how we talk about imperfect English, and how her mother's English affected people's assumptions of both her and her mother. In the end,

she concludes that she loves her mother's English, and she hopes her Standard English still has the elegance of her mother's "broken" English. James Baldwin connects language and culture in his essay. Baldwin's essay can be challenging for students to understand, but Baldwin's message that people need a cultural language to express their cultural experiences is essential. Both texts helped start conversations about linguistic justice issues still prevalent today. This assignment helped me introduce what standard language ideology was and the effects of a traditional approach to language difference.

Assignment #2: Rhetorical Analysis

I utilized Alyssa Cavazos's article "Encouraging Languages Other Than English in First-Year Writing Courses" in creating my next assignment: a rhetorical analysis of multilingual texts. The goal in my and Cavazos's class was to "develop awareness of how rhetorical situations influence language practices in English and other languages" (50). Following the advice of Cavazos, I first introduced students to "Toward a Writing Pedagogy of Shuttling between Languages: Learning from Multilingual Writers," in which A. Suresh Canagarajah analyzes texts written by the same author on similar topics in multiple languages. Teachers can use this essay as an example of taking the author's culture into account when reading across language difference. After reading Canagarajah's article, students could choose to analyze either Vershawn Ashanti Young's "Should Writers Use They Own English?" or Gloria Anzaldúa's "How to Tame a Wild Tongue." Both these texts deviate from Standard English rules. Young writes in African American Vernacular English, and Anzaldúa incorporates varieties of Spanish along with English. In the assignment, I ask students to analyze the multiple audiences the authors are targeting and the various purposes of writing in multiple languages. By studying how

multilingual authors were able to create meaning according to their purpose and audience, students understood the translingual concepts of approaching language difference with curiosity and questioning standard language ideology.

Assignment #3: Investigating Language

The final assignment in my arc was a research project that emphasized how language is fluid and context dependent. As Lu and Horner argue, meaning develops according to context because language is fluid ("Translingual Literacy" 587). The last assignment, "Investigating Language," had students analyze how the temporal-spatial enactments of language affect public discourse by examining the context surrounding a term or phrase in a social issue. To illustrate, students could explore how phrases like "Black Lives Matter," "Defund the Police," or "Anti-vax" change over time and alter the overarching conversation. Through this assignment, many students were able to connect that there is assumed knowledge when people use certain terms or phrases, and this context-dependent language can confuse the conversation. For instance, the definition of "life" in the pro-life/pro-choice debate can prevent progress in the conversation surrounding abortion. By engaging in analyzing how language is context dependent, I engaged students in the translingual concept of the fluidity of language.

Composition Concepts through a Translingual Lens

Many concepts from composition can be reconsidered and enhanced when taught through the lens of translingualism. In this section, I focus on purpose and audience, reading/writing as acts of translation, and information literacy because this provides an entry point for new teachers to create their own curriculum. I demonstrate that my curriculum is not the only way to teach translingualism in the composition classroom.

After reading this section, I encourage new teachers to challenge themselves to find a composition concept and consider how the principles of translingualism could be used to revise lesson plans and curricula. I outline some of my successes in this section, but I also explain how I would change my curriculum in the future. I hope this demonstrates to new teachers that incorporating translingualism is an evolving process. As I discuss in my next section, this approach involves challenges. Despite these challenges, I have learned that the principles of translingualism – questioning standard language ideology, teaching the fluidity of language, and helping students negotiate meaning in instances of language difference – help students become better rhetoricians and more empathetic to contemporary language issues.

Language Difference, Purpose, and Audience

One principle of translingualism is treating language difference with curiosity rather than automatically assuming it is an error. I introduced this concept in my classroom by having students do a rhetorical analysis of multilingual writing. Some of my students were confused by Young's title "Should Writers Use They Own English?" and told me they assumed it had been an error. By the end of the unit, most of my students could articulate how Young's African American Vernacular English and Anzaldúa's Spanish insertions affected their purpose and target audience. This exercise is also a part of how I started questioning standard language ideology with my students. According to monolingualism, writing needs to look and read like Standard English, but this assignment demonstrated that following the standard is a rhetorical decision dependent on the time and space the writing appears.

A common writing exercise for composition classes is having students analyze the purpose or audience in a text. Unfortunately, students often struggle to identify the unknown purpose of an unknown author just as much as they work to identify the audience for their own texts. Walter J. Ong wrote about this phenomenon by describing the difference between oral and written communication. Ong explains, "Context for the spoken word is simply present, centered in the person speaking and the one or ones to whom he addresses himself" (10). In other words, perhaps students struggle to identify purpose and audience in writing because the audience is usually self-evident with oral communication, and they work to translate that to written communication. Summarizing Ong, Andrea Lunsford argues that because the audience in written communication is absent, writers must "fictionalize their audiences and, in turn, for audiences to fictionalize themselves - that is, to adopt the role set out for them by the writer" (20). In other words, sometimes readers must recognize they are not the target audience for a text and must imagine what audience and purpose the author had in mind. This can be a challenge for a demographic of students that grew up in primarily monolingual environments because there can be an underlying assumption that every writer has the same shared set of language practices. The phenomenon of believing everyone shares the same linguistic resources you do is what Paul Matsuda calls "the myth of linguistic homogeneity" (638). One way I broke this myth by assigning multilingual texts for analysis. However, in my classroom, I learned that students needed guidance in learning how to interpret texts that differ from the standard.

As I learned through my action research, the first step in teaching students a new approach to language difference is to model the process. This process emphasizes the

translingual principle of approaching language difference with curiosity. To teach students how to analyze language difference beyond simply dismissing it as a mistake, I had students read Canagarajah's "Toward a Writing Pedagogy of Shuttling between Languages: Learning from Multilingual Writers." Canagarajah illustrates how to analyze a text that demonstrates language difference. For example, Canagarajah analyzes a text written in Tamil that does not have a thesis statement. Rather than assuming this was an error, he considered the author's culture and concluded that in the Tamil culture, it would be regarded as talking down to their audience to include a thesis statement ("Toward" 593). Canagarajah's text accomplishes two principles of translingualism: changing how readers approach language difference and questioning standard language ideology. Considering cultural context puts a new spin on analyzing purpose and audience. In standard language ideology, any difference is an error, but using Canagarajah's text as an example, students can learn to analyze the purpose of the language difference they encounter.

I assigned the reading of Canagarajah's article to a discussion board, and through reflecting on my pedagogy journal I learned that students need more direction in understanding this article because of Canagarajah's dense sentences and academic language. If a teacher wanted to assign this essay, I would spend class time breaking down the parts of this article. Canagarajah's article covers many topics, and I believe students need help focusing on the aspects of the article that teach them how to approach language difference. Along with emphasizing how to negotiate language difference, this article provides an opportunity to analyze the purpose and audience of something that conforms to Standard English. Why does Canagarajah write so that novices cannot easily

understand him? Is this an example of how dense academic language is not always advisable or is Canagarajah meeting his purpose and audience with this language? Taking moments like this to pause and analyze the rhetorical moves authors make with their language use allows students to become more aware of their own language decisions, thereby connecting translingualism to the composition classroom. Understanding these rhetorical moves will give students more agency as they know their linguistic choices are dependent on purpose and audience.

A challenge in this approach is that it externalizes the belief of treating language difference with curiosity. When I use the term "internalize," I mean students should be able to connect the translingual approach to their own lives and writing. By having students analyze multilingual writing, it could appear that the translingual approach only works when reading published material. However, it is critical students internalize these beliefs for their own writing. When Zhang-Wu taught a translingual class, she broke it into three parts: "confronting English-only in the world, examining multilingualism in the local context, and reflecting on linguistic identities on the personal level" (128). My curriculum lacked in that final aspect: applying translingual concepts personally. Zhang-Wu helps students internalize these concepts by having students reflect on their own linguistic identities. When I revise my curriculum, I plan on having students apply the same ideas from the rhetorical analysis assignment to their own writing in a peer review activity. My students were able to identify how language difference in Young and Anzaldúa's texts helped them achieve their purpose and reach their target audience, but I did not see this same level of attention when giving peer review advice. I believe a worksheet where students identify a moment of language difference (whether it be a

grammatical error, some difference of genre convention, etc.) and analyze how this language difference functions on the level of purpose and audience will help students internalize this translingual concept.

All Acts of Reading/Writing are an Act of Translation

One of the principles of translingualism is treating error with curiosity rather than assuming it is an error. When discussing "negotiating language difference," it could seem like these feats of translation only apply to those that cannot or choose not to replicate the standard. It can be a challenge for students to internalize these concepts if they view them as only the concerns of the "other." However, through rereading my pedagogy journal, I have realized one way for these conversations to become personal for everyone is to teach that all acts of writing are acts of translation. In her book *The Construction of Negotiated Meaning: A Social Cognitive Theory of Writing*, Linda Flower contends, "Literate actions emerge out of a *constructive* cognitive process that transforms knowledge in purposeful ways" (2). The word "transforms" highlights that all writing, at the very least, consists of transforming our inner thoughts and knowledge for an external audience. Flower reveals, "this constructive literate act may also become a process of *negotiation* in which individual readers and writers must juggle conflicting demands and chart a path among alternative goals, constraints, and possibilities" (2). This unique combination of inner thought processes mixed with purpose, audience, and limitations means there is a lot to juggle when translating our internal knowledge.

This process of translating our thoughts to the page can be seen in composition concepts like summary and peer review. In my first assignment, I had students write summaries for either Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue" or James Baldwin's "If Black English

Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me What Is?" Although I challenged students to write objective summaries without personal commentary, each summary was different because their experience of the text was different. Some of their personal beliefs were often included in translating their text experience into an accurate summary. For instance, I noted in my pedagogy journal, some students used the term "broken" English when describing Amy Tan's mother's English without referencing that Amy Tan was uncomfortable with that terminology because it made her mother seem unfinished and substandard. Without referencing the connotations of "broken" English, it would be easy to imply that Amy Tan was ashamed of her mother's "broken" English. I believe it is easy for students and teachers to mistranslate Amy Tan's essay, probably without meaning to. I believe my students mistranslated the text because of their own experience of being ashamed of "broken" or "bad" English. Thus, that complex balancing act of translating inner knowledge can be challenging to disentangle, especially when the writing is supposed to be opinion-free. In the future, if I emphasize my students' summaries as an act of translation, it might have help students internalize translingual concepts more.

Peer review can also be a place to negotiate the act of translation, thereby allowing teachers to teach composition through a translingual lens. For instance, in the peer review of the Summary and Analysis essay, one of my guiding questions was if the student's summary of the chosen essay matched the peer's understanding of the text. If all acts of writing are about translating your experience, a peer reviewer needs to check that translation. This is not to say that any difference in translation needs to be labeled as wrong. Instead, students should ask questions and be curious about that difference.

Upon reflection, I realize that peer review can be a place to assess standards of translation. For example, one standard is that the paragraph's main idea should be expressed in the topic sentence. Rather than simply setting this as the standard, there can be a conversation in the classroom about why topic sentences are an excellent way to translate your ideas to the reader. In peer review, students can analyze the order in which their peer gives information in their paragraph. What is the effect if the student does not get to their point until the end of the paragraph? How could the paragraph be arranged to best translate ideas? These activities can demonstrate that "negotiating language difference" is not only for multilingual texts or multilingual people because all acts of writing are acts of translation.

Translingualism and Information Literacy

One principle of translingualism is questioning standard language ideology, which applies to information literacy because the dominance of the English-only wall influences how students choose and respond to sources. Approaching information literacy through a translingual lens means examining ways of knowing outside of English and how dominant language ideology might treat standard ways of knowing as inevitable. A translingual approach to information literacy requires we give students strategies "for moving out of their monolingual comfort zone and into negotiating language difference in a multilingual world" (Hanson 207). To illustrate, it might seem natural for students to find sources that match their personal experience, which might be dominated by White male voices writing in Standard American English. In fact, despite living in a globalized world, most students will search for information only in Standard English.

Unintentionally, students might be building a safe bubble that prevents them from seeing multiple perspectives.

The final assignment in my curriculum was a research assignment which was an opportune time to emphasize a translingual approach to information literacy. Instead, I used this assignment to underscore the fluidity of language. I spent considerable time explaining how to analyze a chosen term/phrase by helping students research their terms' fluid connotations, usage, history, and definitions. My goal is for students to be able to connect language, knowledge, and power with this assignment as they considered how the power dynamics of the people using the term/phrase affected the overarching conversation. However, the downfall of this assignment is there was an underlying assumption the word/phrase had to be English, and the conversation they investigated had to be in America. Therefore, I unintentionally reinforced the English-only wall. Upon reflecting on my pedagogy journal, I realize now I need to find ways to broaden students' knowledge bases or at least open their eyes to the broader world outside of Standard American English. Through analyzing my pedagogy journal, I realize this mistake demonstrates that focusing too much on one element of translingualism, like the fluidity of language, might mean missing opportunities to emphasize other principles of translingualism, like deconstructing the English-only wall. The following are some activities I found in my research that could help teachers analyze standard language ideology while teaching information literacy concepts.

One method offered by Joleen Hanson in "Moving Out of the Monolingual Comfort Zone and Into the Multilingual World: An Exercise for the Writing Classroom" demonstrates one way to have students move outside of the English-only barrier in their

research. The first step is to have students translate their search terms into other languages using software like Google Translate. For this exercise, it's important to emphasize the limitations of the translation software. For example, when selecting a website in a language other than English, the student will have to pay attention to elements like domain name in the URL, not just relying on the translation software. The first step to analyzing the source is not to paste the text into a translator. Rather, the student should assess their understanding based on genres of websites they are familiar with and multimodal information given from formatting and graphics. The students in Hanson's classroom did this exercise twice: once with a non-English language they are familiar with and once with a less familiar language. Hanson establishes, "The exercise was intended to challenge the expectation that all relevant, useful information would always be available in English" (209). I had students analyze how a word/phrase changes a conversation surrounding an important social issue in my class. However, in my pedagogy journal, I noted that in the end, the students wrote about their social issues as if the only essential parts of their conversation were happening in America. If I had included this activity in my lesson, it might have emphasized that the conversations they analyzed are happening worldwide. The activity offered by Hanson would have helped my students find perspectives outside of their experiences for their essays.

Ghanashyam Sharma recommends another activity in his essay "Addressing Monolingual Dispositions with Translingual Pedagogy." This activity requires students to choose a seemingly universal concept like "beauty," have students conduct an image search for their concept, and then identify patterns of what they find. For instance, searching for "beauty" might result in only skinny White women in makeup. The next

step of the activity is to add a country or cultural modifier like "Taiwan beauty." This can prompt "discussions about the complexity of language, difference in societies' and cultures' understanding of seemingly universal concepts, and why internet algorithms 'represent' ideas and images in certain ways" (Sharma 25). To illustrate, a search for "Black Lives Matter" might get different results for someone in China than someone in America. Using this activity would have been an excellent way to teach students how to deconstruct the English-only wall because it demonstrates that different demographics have different interpretations of the same concepts. This could have helped my students broaden their research past Standard American English. Activities like this will help students be more purposeful when selecting perspectives to represent in their research.

Challenges of Teaching Translingual Composition

The previous section emphasized challenges in teaching composition concepts through a translingual lens, while this section analyzes the difficulties of teaching translingualism in a predominantly white monolingual classroom not designated as a translingual one. Discussing race and power dynamics issues in society is challenging, and new teachers are likely concerned about how their students will react, especially if their students match the demographics at Utah State University. Although I reference my own approach to teaching translingualism in this section, I hope that teachers will be able to find commonality in their own classrooms here. Language issues can be a challenge to teach, but the difficulties of teaching translingual concepts are worth it if teachers reflect on their process of deconstructing monolingual ideology.

Teaching to the Majority: Talking Down to Multilingual Students

Many famous scholars have emphasized that translingualism is for everyone, not just for multilingual students. Canagarajah argues that the "trans" in translingualism transgresses the binary of mono/multi to emphasize that translingualism is for all acts of communication (*Literacy* 1). Canagarajah clarifies, "the shift in literacy is not relevant for traditionally multilingual students/subjects alone, but for 'native' speakers of English and 'monolinguals' as well" (*Literacy* 2). What has not been emphasized in the scholarship is that some principles of translingualism must be explained to White monolingual students that people of color or multilingual students most likely already understand. In the enactment of my translingual curriculum, I realized this creates a complicated dynamic in the classroom where I was explaining myths about language use to the inexperienced while those myths might have had a personal effect on multilingual students. For example, one of the myths I had to address in my class was the idea that people who speak imperfect English are not intelligent. Explaining these myths and experiences might be construed as "talking down" to the multilingual students in the class.

When Ghanashyam Sharma taught a translingual course, he used his multilingual students as resources. Sharma claims, "if there is a single student in the class (or just the teacher) who speaks more than one language, it is possible to enact translingual learning across distinct languages" (29). Sharma does this by calling on multilingual students to share their language experiences. For instance, he calls on multilingual students to ask them what they call "assignment" in their home country (23). However, I believe calling on multilingual students like this might be unintentionally other students. Especially considering that translingualism is about revealing hidden power dynamics in language,

by pointing out the multilingual students, it might be "outing" their disempowered status. Perhaps this can be mitigated if the instructor is also multilingual like Sharma is, but, as a monolingual instructor, I do not want to rely on my multilingual students to introduce translingual concepts.

There is an undeniable tension here: multilingual experiences are incredibly valued in a translingual course but requiring students to share could "other" them. My action research project caused me to reflect on this concern extensively. Ultimately, I think teachers should provide opportunities for multilingual experiences to be represented in the classroom, but not at the expense of othering multilingual students. One way to approach this is to broaden multilingual experiences to include regional or cultural language varieties. This way, when asking about experiences with language difference, those who have experienced prejudice with their Boston accent, for example, feel welcome to share just as much as someone who speaks multiple languages. This method still requires instructors to talk about power dynamics so that regional differences like accents are not equivalent to the multilingual experience. Another method is to provide texts that can speak to the multilingual experiences. Instead of pressuring multilingual students to challenge monolingualism, a teacher could ask, "How would Amy Tan or James Baldwin respond to that idea about language?" Connecting ideas back to a multilingual author honors multilingual experiences without othering students in the classroom.

Through analyzing my pedagogy journal and reflecting on my experiences teaching this translingual curriculum, something I realized that translates from Sharma's methods is emphasizing your positionality as an instructor. Sharma uses his multilingual

status to assign readings in Mandarin Chinese and speak to students in various languages. These capabilities lend Sharma credibility that, as a White monolingual instructor, I do not have. However, it is still important to emphasize my positionality. I wish I had taken the time in my first semester to emphasize that the linguistic experiences of people like Amy Tan and James Baldwin are outside my experiences, and those of my students who want to share their multilingual experience are welcome. From my privileged position, I will do my best to incorporate the voices of the multilingual experience in the classroom because they have been historically underrepresented, and they deserve a voice. Being direct about my positionality might have led my multilingual students to feel more accepted and welcome rather than alien as someone else explains their experiences to them.

An easy trap to fall into when teaching a majority White monolingual classroom is to villainize Standard English, which could ostracize anyone who identifies with Standard English. Missy Watson describes the perils of this, "using SE [Standard English] does not and should not equate to assuming it is superior, nor does it preclude us from working hard to demystify and deconstruct SE and the monolingualist ideologies that maintain its hegemonic power" (93-94). In other words, the goal of translingualism is to challenge monolingual ideology, not monolingual people or SE. The goal is to analyze the power dynamics embedded in Standard English. Still, if we represent language issues as a binary of multilingualism as "good" and Standard English as "bad," then we could miss opportunities to discuss why using Standard English could be a rhetorically wise decision based on the context.

After analyzing my pedagogy journal, I realized that terms like monolingualism and "White English," although used in the scholarship, might be misconstrued as villainizing. For example, a teacher might say they are trying to tear down the English-only wall or deconstruct monolingualism. Without an explanation, it might sound like the teacher is attacking monolingual people or people who only speak English rather than the institutions that treat English as the only path to success. Further, scholars like Vershawn Ashanti Young and April Baker-Bell use the term "White English" to establish that the standards of modern English were made by and for White people. However, without this explanation, it could seem like the instructor is saying Standard English belongs to White people. Likewise, if students of color identify with Standard English as their home language, they might misconstrue "White English" as a phrase taking their language away from them. Therefore, it is essential to translate some of the words and phrases of translingualism to avoid villainizing SE or alienating the students in the classroom inadvertently.

Internalizing Translingualism

One of my goals when assigning Amy Tan and James Baldwin for my summary and analysis essay was to introduce concepts of linguistic justice and assess current knowledge about language. Through analyzing my pedagogy journal, I realized although I was able to determine language myths my students believed in, and we had meaningful conversations about how language relates to knowledge and power, I inadvertently represented language issues as something only the "other" must experience rather than something everyone experiences. Zhang-Wu dealt with this challenge by having her students read a children's book written in Chinese and complete a comprehension activity

using only Chinese (129). She did this so her students would understand the multilingual experience of responding to assignments in an unfamiliar language. Zhang-Wu claims, "This paves way for them to translate their empathy of the linguistically minoritized to actions in tearing down the English-only wall" (129). However, I am unsure if my summary and analysis essay required students to experience Tan and Baldwin's frustrations. It perhaps fostered empathy, but I do not think students knew how to translate their empathy to action. In other words, upon reflecting on my pedagogy journal, I do not think my primarily White monolingual audience internalized translingual concepts.

One way to help students internalize translingual principles while still assessing knowledge on language practices is to assign a literacy narrative. The literacy narrative is traditionally an autobiographical essay about the author's experiences learning how to read and write. If the teacher does not emphasize the power dynamics of language use and literacy, the literacy narrative can inadvertently become a space for students to reiterate and reinforce standard language ideology. However, if the contextual elements of literacy are emphasized, it is possible to use this assignment to question standard language ideology and language myths. Amanda Sladek in "Literacy as Threshold Concept: Building Multiliterate Awareness in First-Year Writing" illustrates "understanding the social and contextual embeddedness of literacy brings about a new and more thorough understanding of composition as a discipline and the world at large, as it allows students to see the complex literacies embedded in all communities" (109). Although Sladek does not mention translingualism, defining literacy with social and material contexts emphasizes the translingual principle of questioning standard language

ideology. Sladek reveals that literacy narratives in first-year courses tend to replicate

standard language ideology, so it is essential to challenge myths like "literacy always

equals success" (109-110). If I had used a literacy narrative as my first assignment, I

could have still introduced the contextual elements of literacy by assigning Amy Tan and

James Baldwin, but then students would be required to think about how those texts

illuminate their own experiences, thus helping them internalize the translingual

perspective. By introducing and discussing the power dynamics of language use and

literacy while having students write about their own literacy narrative, students should be

able to translate their empathy into action because they are connecting these principles to

their own experience. For example, in my summary and analysis essay, my monolingual

students were asked to identify language issues the "other" must deal with. Still, without

connecting those language issues to personal experiences, students were probably

unlikely to take individual action against language issues or know how to do so.

Another way to help students internalize translingual concepts is to have them

think about their own linguistic identities and challenge what it means to be

"monolingual." In one activity, Zhang-Wu asked her students to create a portrait

"capturing their cultural and linguistic identities" (130). Zhang-Wu claims that although

most students self-identified as monolingual, their portraits were not one color. Students

included slang, regional Englishes, scientific language, and their parents' languages in

their self-portraits. Zhang-Wu claims that one of her students could "delink from English-

only and to put translingualism into practice in her academic writing" because of her new

identity as a multilingual student (130). This activity has the potential for monolingual

students to internalize translingual concepts because they will view themselves as more

complex than their previous "monolingual" identity. However, it is vital to discuss power dynamics with this activity. It is important to have students not just identify their linguistic identities but also analyze the power and privileges of that identity. A teacher could ask: what power and privilege comes from your linguistic identity? How do students navigate that power and privilege? When are linguistic resources considered a power or a deficit?

Although Zhang-Wu makes excellent contributions to the pedagogical applications of translingualism, this activity in a primarily white population should include a discussion about power dynamics, so they do not appropriate a multilingual identity. Just as incorporating code-meshing might flatten difference into appropriation, incorporating multilingual identity without discussing how people of color are treated differently in standard language ideology would do students a disservice. Therefore, it is crucial to help White monolingual students internalize translingual concepts, but this should not come at the cost of equating the White experience with experiences of people of color.

Naming Translingualism: To Say or Not To Say Translingualism

When teaching composition with translingualism in mind, it can be difficult for instructors to know if they should use the term "translingual" in class. After all, the class students usually sign up for is a composition class, not a translingual class. Some institutions have solved this problem by creating specifically translingual composition classes. Dylan Dryer and Paige Mitchell write about making a translingual composition class in their article "Seizing an Opportunity for Translingual FYC at The University of Maine." Their course description articulates that their "translingual section" is a section

of composition reserved for native English speakers and multilingual students alike. The course description even explains their purpose:

> The logic of the section is twofold: first we assume that monolingual native speakers of English and multilingual speakers of English have much to learn from each other; second, the rapidly globalizing workplace needs people who can negotiate in productive ways across multiple languages. (Dryer and Mitchell 139)

The work of justifying a translingual approach is built into the process of signing up for the course. For most of us, however, this work will need to be done in the composition classroom, where students might think they are signing up for more standard language ideology.

When I taught my curriculum, I shied away from using the term translingual because I did not want students to think I was co-opting the composition class with my own research, but also because I felt unqualified to use the term (a feeling I believe new teachers can empathize with). By teaching this way, I can attest it is possible to teach translingual concepts without using the term "translingualism," but by doing so, I limited my credibility and did not give my students the vocabulary to describe their knowledge. When I revise my curriculum, I plan on being more straightforward with my students early in the semester by defining standard language ideology and the scholarship demonstrating translingualism as another way to teach English. Doing this would help give me credibility when I challenge the ideology that students have probably been raised with. In addition, if I introduce translingualism as a theory in scholarship, it transforms

translingual principles as my own "crazy" ideas about English into ideas with theoretical and practical backing.

Additionally, after analyzing my pedagogy journal, I realize that it is vital to give students the language to express their knowledge and to reiterate the reasons behind a translingual approach throughout the semester. If students ever talk about what they learn in English class, it benefits them to have that scholarly backing to justify teaching English in ways that might at first seem to contradict standard methods of teaching English. Juan C. Guerra assigns Bruce Horner's opinion piece "Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach" to students the week before his class "so that we could use it as a lens through which we could read and discuss a series of journal articles and book chapters on language variation and language policy" (Guerra 229). Although Guerra's class is likely not a first-year composition class, having students respond to the literature surrounding translingualism is a great way to assess students' current knowledge about language while giving them the tools to critique language education. Further, this process of justifying the translingual approach needs to happen throughout the semester. I noted in my pedagogy journal some students expressed confusion about why I was assigning multilingual writing. Therefore, without tying the practice of translingualism to the theory and scholarship, students might not know why teachers are asking them to consider multilingual experiences, read and analyze multilingual writing, or research linguistic issues.

Conclusion

If I was nervous about using the term "translingualism" in my class after reading an entire book about translingual literacy, how can a new teacher feel comfortable

applying translingual principles in their composition classroom? For those that feel unqualified, I will cite Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner's introduction to the translingual edition of College English: "[Translingualism] is neither the lure, cure, nor threat that some might imagine. Rather it is an occasion for labor, the labor of revision that is always what we, in concert with our students, take up, and take responsibility for" ("Introduction" 216). My action research confirms this: translingualism is not a magic wand of linguistic justice that will solve the pains of standard language ideology overnight. So, to the new teachers out there, take courage. I recommend trying to incorporate linguistic justice into the classroom, evaluating the progress of the class, and revising based on those reflections

My pedagogy journal taught me that the process of reflection and evaluation is the best way to start incorporating linguistic justice in the classroom. The principles of action research helped me integrate translingualism into the curriculum. The more I documented and reflected on what happened in the classroom, the more I could think through how standard language ideology was affecting my class. Although I went into the class thinking I was disrupting the language beliefs of my students, I learned that I also had to disrupt my own engrained standard language ideology. Unfortunately, towards the end of the semester, I was not as thorough with my pedagogy journal and reflecting on how I was disrupting monolingual ideology. Without this constant vigilance, I fell into old patterns of how I was initially taught information literacy, and I missed opportunities to incorporate translingualism into conducting research. My advice to new teachers who want to integrate translingualism is to treat the process like an action research project. I recommend documenting lesson plans, keeping track of student reactions and

experiences, and using this documentation to question your methods and reflect on where you could incorporate linguistic justice topics.

My curriculum is certainly not the only way to teach translingual concepts. There is no set curriculum, and opportunities to dismantle standard language ideology will arise in the moment. Teachers who want to incorporate translingualism will need to be flexible to meet their students where their current language beliefs are. I have created a set of guiding questions for teachers to ask to encourage creativity and reflection as they develop their own translingual curriculum.

- What resources (librarians, academic scholarship, published syllabi, etc.) can I utilize when I cannot use my own experience to teach translingual concepts?

- Am I helping students without multilingual experiences internalize translingual concepts? Am I flattening racial and cultural power dynamics in the process?

- Are my students representing diverse perspectives in their writing? How can I help students represent knowledge outside of the American or Standard English experience?

- Am I providing scholarly backing for my translingual concepts? Are my students aware of the ongoing conversation surrounding linguistic justice?

- Am I "othering" my multilingual students while teaching translingual concepts? How can I involve both monolingual and multilingual students when discussing translingual concepts?

None of these questions have easy answers because linguistic justice issues are complex, and teaching translingual concepts requires research and attention to detail. Dedicating

time and energy to linguistic justice is an important and delicate practice. But change is never easy. I hope this thesis has given new teachers some tools to start their march toward justice.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Summary/Analysis Essay Assignment Description

SUMMARY/ANALYSIS ESSAY

Purpose of the Summary/Analysis Essay

Understanding an author's purpose is one of the most important aspects of academic

writing. If we have not truly listened to what another author has to say, we run the risk of

misunderstanding or contorting their views, often to fit our own opinion. Working to

understand someone else's claim requires us to rethink our perspective—or at least how

we articulate our perspective. Summarizing and paraphrasing also help us recognize

what we still don't understand about an argument, thereby enabling us to keep

questioning and re-reading rather than skimming and assuming. The analysis portion of

this assignment allows you to practice offering commentary on a text that you

summarized and requires you to use specific elements from the text to help contextualize

your analysis.

Format and Length Requirements

- Format: MLA style, 8th or 9th edition
- Length: This essay is broken into two parts: a 200–300-word summary and a 500–800-word analysis on either Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue" or James Baldwin's "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?"

Content Requirements

Summary

- A summary asks you to detail the main idea of the text and articulate the <u>message the author is seeking to portray to their audience</u>, without including your own analysis or opinion.

- A good summary fairly and accurately portrays the main idea of the text according to the author and should be written in a neutral tone with an explicit effort to eliminate opinion or bias.

- Remember: a summary details what the text is about, while an analysis details what the reader thinks and feels about a text. Again, in this first section, you should not include analysis.

Analysis

- Your analysis should be to a <u>specific concept or topic</u> from the text's argument.

- You will need to include summary, paraphrase, and quotations as you analyze the text, but these will be intertwined with your own claims.

- Be sure your analysis discusses elements of the text that you discussed in your summary.

Analysis Prompts

Consider some of the following questions as you prepare to write your analysis. <u>You do not need to answer all of these questions,</u> but they may help you as you consider how to craft your analysis:

- Who is the audience for this text? Are there multiple audiences? How do you know?

- What is the writer's purpose for writing? How do you know? How well did they accomplish this purpose? What did this author do especially well?

- Where does the author rely on lived experience and personal authority? Why do you think the author did this? How does this affect the author's rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, logos, etc?) Where does the author explore concepts of language, knowledge, and power? Support your observations with evidence from the text.

Appendix B. Rhetorical Analysis Essay Assignment Description

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS ESSAY

Purpose of a Rhetorical Analysis

Thus far, we have practiced summarizing and analyzing texts written in Standard American English. This rhetorical analysis will be on texts written in languages other than Standard American English. Rhetorical analysis evaluates how a text creates meaning by analyzing the author, their purpose, and their intended audience. This assignment considers the rhetorical implications of writing in a language other than Standard American English. We aim to unpack how and why the author made certain decisions to accomplish a specific goal.

Format and Length Requirements

- Format: MLA style, 8th, or 9th edition

- Length: 800–1000-word analysis of either "Should Writers Use They Own English?" by Vershawn Ashanti Young" or "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" by Gloria Anzaldúa.

Content Requirements

Introduction

- Introduce your chosen text. This should include the author of the text, pertinent background information about the text, or the purpose of the text.

Claim

- Develop a clear claim (thesis) that informs your reader how you will be analyzing the chosen text. Include specifics from the text to support your claim.

Focus on analysis

- The goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of the author's argument. You are not arguing over the subject matter of the text. For instance, if you choose Young's "Should Writer's Use They Own English?" you would analyze how and why Young makes his argument. You would not be writing about the merits of code-meshing.

Include Language as Evidence

- Because we are analyzing the purpose of using languages outside of Standard American English, it is important to pay close attention to the language used in your chosen text. Somewhere in your analysis, use the author's word choice as evidence for one of your claims.

Analysis Prompts

Consider some of the following questions as you prepare to write your analysis. <u>You do not need to answer all of these questions,</u> but they may help you as you consider how to craft your analysis:

- Who is the audience of the text? Are there multiple audiences? How do you know? How does the author effectively/ineffectively reach their target audience(s)?

- What is the purpose of the text? How do you know? How does the author effectively/ineffectively accomplish their purpose?

- What specific vocabulary does the author use? How might this vocabulary help them reach their target audience? How does this vocabulary affect their rhetorical appeals (ethos, pathos, logos)?

- Consider the connections between language and power. Does writing in an undervalued variety of English or incorporating a language other than Standard American English subvert expectations? How does writing in this language help the author reach their target audience or fulfill their purpose?

Appendix C. Investigating Language Essay Assignment Description

INVESTIGATING LANGUAGE ESSAY

Purpose of the Investigating Language Essay

This semester we have learned about the power of language and the words we choose.

We have focused on how neglecting undervalued varieties of English limits our

perspective and silences democracy. This assignment is about analyzing how the words

affect the ongoing conversation.

For this writing project, you will select a social issue to investigate, research the issue

using a variety of sources, and write an essay that focuses on how the language used

affects the conversation. For instance, how do the phrases "Black Lives Matter" and "All

Lives Matter" dictate the direction of the conversation? Where did these phrases come

from? Do they limit perspectives or illuminate the argument?

Research, Format, and Length Requirements

- Research: Your essay should cite a minimum of six sources; these sources should

  represent a variety of perspectives and genres.

  o A minimum of four sources should be secondary (secondary = journal,

    newspaper, and magazine articles; book chapters that interpret and

    analyze; political commentaries; etc.).

  o At least one of these four secondary sources should be scholarly (scholarly

    = peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters typically accessed

    through USU Library subscriptions)

      o   A minimum of two sources should be primary (primary = social media posts, photographs, comments, tweets, interviews, etc.).

- Format: Use MLA 8th or 9th edition.

- Length: 1,000-1,200 words

Content Requirements

Introduction

- Compose an introduction that defines your issue and presents your claim/thesis. Your introduction should define your issue and introduce some of the key conflicts and perspectives that help frame your understanding.

Synthesis of research

- Support the conclusions you present in your claim/thesis by connecting your sources. Generally, you do not want to organize your paragraphs source by source. A well-synthesized paragraph will have several sources speaking to the same idea.

- Your synthesis of the research should be more than one paragraph and contain consistent and specific evidence synthesized from your sources (summary, paraphrase, and quotes).

Research Prompts

After choosing your word/phrase to focus on, it can be hard to know what to research next. Here are some potential topics you could research:

- Connotations. Connotations of your term/phrase include the literal definition but also the ideas associated with your term/phrase. How do these different connotations shape the ongoing conversation?

- Usage. Who is using your terminology and how? Are people in power using your term/phrase? How do the power dynamics of who is using your term/phrase affect the ongoing conversation?

- History. Where did your term/phrase come from? Who is aware of its history? How does the history affect the current usage of the term/phrase?

- Differing definitions. How do different groups view your term/phrase? Who views it as effective rhetoric, who takes issue with it, and who views it as ineffective rhetoric?