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Developments in Multilingualism and Translingualism for
Composition and Rhetoric Studies.

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Abstract

This article examines policies and practices on Multilingualism and Translingualism in composition pedagogy. Multilingualism is the total verbal repertoire in different languages spoken by an individual. Translingualism refers to the varieties of discursive and communicative practices of multilingualism in negotiating the uses of linguistic resources across speech communities not necessarily marked by geographical location. Extant literature exists in the literature, and these scholarly contributions have different implications for monolingual and multilingual writing composition instructors and students. The presentation points out important arguments and theories on translingualism to trace its inception and highlight the advantages of multilingualism for international students/and writing students. This paper further examines the differences and implications of policies and practices in the field concerning two multilingual cases in the US and the UK. It concludes that most models are dissimilar in arguing that language difference is not a disability, but a motivation for unique expression and originality in composition studies.

Introduction

There are two major kinds of bilinguals; additive and subtractive. These two kinds produce different sets of abilities and skills in the acquisition of the L2 (L2 is used here to represent any or all the languages after the L1). While additive bilingualism retains and maintains the linguistic repertoire of the first language and acquires the second

language without interfering with the first, subtractive bilingualism is a multilingual situation where the L2 affects the development or maintenance of the L1, resulting in the partial or substantial loss of the first language. Peregoy & Boyle (12) assert that, in additive bilingualism, the speaker is competent with reading and writing skills in both languages. This argument implies that for subtractive bilinguals, the speaker does not possess equal competencies in the languages spoken. As Blackledge & Pavlenko put it, the inequality in language competencies results in the construction, negotiation, and renegotiation of identity in multilingual (201). These implications of multilingualism impact the writing composition class and students' freedom of expression that encapsulates the diversities associated with speaking multiple languages. Bartholomae identified the characteristic of resistance to "commonplaces", familiar territories, and similar ideas in writing as important for writing students to obtain proficiency (134). When students oppose the writers that precede them, they become experts by contributing a divergent opinion, critical thought, and effective composition on the same subject matter, thereby asserting their unique voice in the body of existing knowledge on the subject. His argument aligns with Bekrieva-Granni's study which analyzed the case of Malaika, a French-speaking girl who entered the United States and became a case of subtractive bilingualism, in that she lost her competence in the pronunciation (speaking) and grammar (writing) in French (249). I compare her case with a Nigerian Doctoral Student in the United Kingdom, Akeem. My interview revealed that he possesses competence in both English and Yoruba (a native Nigerian) languages. He claimed that he made conscious efforts to communicate constantly with his friends at home in Nigeria to maintain his ability to speak Yoruba. People think through languages, the affordance of bilingual skill for Akeem, he says, is his ability to think through multiple languages and critically examine situations in diverse ways. This skill set impacts his fictional compositions as a literary writer.

Learners are motivated by different factors to pick a second language; occupation, personal, migration, marriage, slavery, trade, or colonialism. These factors

determine the extent to which the second language is acquired. Eniola, a Nigerian high school teacher in Turkey recounts his experience with teaching English to Kurdish students and the need for him to learn some knowledge of Kurdish to codeswitch between English and Kurdish when the need arises. However, he stated that the native stories taught about the immediate society in English provide the students more to write about than the stories about English societies taught to Kurdish students through English textbooks.

Teaching English to a linguistically heterogeneous population also reveals power hierarchies among societies. Norton argues that teaching other languages in English "reveals unequal relations of power and negotiation of a sense of self in and across different contexts (5). These negotiations change over time and space to suit the social realities in specific contexts, especially as the students advance as composition students and begin to venture into the labor market. Language and identity are highlighted by Blackledge and Pavlenko to be of socio-psychological and poststructuralist implications (209). The former view identities as stable and unchangeable, while poststructuralists theorize identities as multiple, dynamic, and subjective. These are mutually constitutive because they serve as identity index markers and linguistic modes for expressing oneself. The question then lies in the ability to assimilate these identities in the composition class-leading to acceptance by the writing instructors.

Further, Evans, in highlighting the advantages of multilingualism, asserts that multilingual competence plays a significant role in students' academic performance (3). Age impacts the acquisition of competence in the L2, but additional language learning has a positive effect on first language literacy, including greater use of learning strategies. While Evans speaks of learning generally, writing is a skill that is central to all academic studies. Using English as a medium of instruction leads to improved proficiency in learning the English language. In the case of Akeem, he studied in Nigeria up to his Masters Degree, the language of instruction in Nigeria is English being a Commonwealth country where social cohesion and integration for academic

competence and conversational language proficiency are encouraged, this impacts his multilingual competence and academic achievement in the sciences and as a literary writer.

Jordan (3) argues that all language users are directly or indirectly multilingual, either in speech, classroom contact, or interaction with others in settings of multiple language contacts. He asserts that more recent media broadcast networks including CNN and the BBC have patronized local content from Africa and Asia to achieve global reach. Though, there is a significant imposition of the privileged varieties of the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand that have had significant impacts on global English-language teaching. Three examples from Nigeria include BBC Igbo, BBC Hausa, and BBC Yoruba. Stories of the lived experiences of Nigerians who speak varieties of Pidgin English, Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba Englishes are given voices and a platform to showcase their social realities in compositions on topics that range from education, politics, religion, entertainment, gender oppression, culture, music, art, fashion and possible contents that tell the Nigerian story. The implication of these efforts diminishes the power imbalance that results from labeling some varieties as standard and others non-native or L2 speakers of English as sub-standard.

This project also decentralizes the power hierarchy of dominant Englishes, empowering Nigerians with the right to their language, as is the resolution in the theory of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) that put knowledge to work in writing instruction.

An extension of the CCCC resolution opposes the traditional ways of understanding and responding to language differences that are incongruent with the record of language use in classrooms in the United States and the world being predominantly multilingual rather than monolingual. When languages intermingle within a society, a translingual approach to teaching writing becomes pertinent. The authors point out that difference in language is not a barrier to overcome or a problem to manage but is a resource for producing meaning in writing, speaking, reading, and listening. As they argue further, "this approach interrogates

the implication of differences and how it functions expressively, rhetorically, communicatively, and for whom?" (54). This argument marks a shift in multilingual studies among teachers and scholars of composition and the language art to see diversity not as a weakness but, as a strength, especially in the writing class.

The CCCC resolution may be limited to the US experience but the authors extend their coverage to differences within and across all languages, insisting that language varieties are "fluid and areas resources to be preserved, developed, and utilized" (55). This approach encourages open-mindedness among scholars and teachers who are co-researchers to embrace diversity in a deliberate attempt to capture real-world social realities, paying critical attention to how writers deploy diction, syntax, and style, as well as form, register, and media as writing deviation and not errors. Conformity to the conventions of writing does not amount to communicative competence and universal standard performance but linguistic competence, which is mythical, and only one of the types of competencies to be attained by a language expert.

A translingual approach allows for negotiation of the standardized rules in the contexts of specific instances of writing. Horner et.al offers three thrusts of the translingual approach: (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 monolinguals expectations by researching and teaching how writers can work with and against, not simply within, those expectations. This viewpoint holds promises for the future of writing students or international students generally who are multilingual in terms of writing and teaching in English with key strategies that can define one's writing career.

Emrah compares the grammar strategies of multilingual to reveal the difference between multilingual and bilingual learners in constructing grammar strategies (1). The author hypothesizes the argument that multilingual have superior grammar strategies when compared with bilinguals as they have linguistic knowledge of one more language.

Using three groups of bilinguals; two coordinate-additive bilingual groups, and a balanced bilingual group, he compares his population with a group of multilingual in English, Turkish, and French languages. The recommendations they offer are relevant for instructors of multilingual and bilingual classes. Multilingual superiority in language learning manifests in three ways, flexibility in switching strategies, aptitude in modifying and identifying new strategies, and using implicit learning technologies Cenoz (193). Corroborating Cook, Emrah (1) states that a multilingual person has a stereoscopic vision of the world from two or more perspectives that enable them to be more flexible in their thinking and are not restricted to a single world-view but also have a better understanding that other outlooks are possible. This point resonates with Akeem's argument about his ability to think through more than one language and how this skill impacts his creativity.

Paradowski (3), in support of the benefits of multilingualism in terms of cognitive superiorities, added that the schema theory of knowledge is created and used by learners to organize knowledge structures. Multilinguals possess larger schemas in which manifest as cognitive superiorities in abilities to; parcel up and categorize meanings in different ways in new language, be better language learners in institutionalized learning contexts because of more developed language-learning capacities owing to the more complex linguistic knowledge and higher language awareness, display generally greater cognitive flexibility, better problem solving and higher-order thinking skills, have improved critical thinking abilities, have a keener awareness and sharper perception of language, multilinguals are also able to adapt to different cultures providing intercultural competence, and they can expand their personal horizons being simultaneously insiders and outsider to see their own culture from a new perspective not available to monoglots, enabling the comparison, contrast, and understanding of cultural concepts and finally, to better understand and appreciate people of other countries, thereby reducing social friction emerging from racism, xenophobia, and intolerance. These points, in my opinion, summarise the

arguments of Translingual scholars in the study of trans-linguaging.

Kulavuz-Onal & Vásquez argue the advantages of multilingualism to social media. Facebook embraces translingual practices in educational telecollaboration, using an online global community of English as a foreign language (EFL) educators (240). The study explores how the online space reacts to the emergence of new patterns of cultural, communicative, and linguistic practices. This research serves as a new global contact zone and responds to when, how, and by whom Spanish or Arabic is used as linguistic resources by members of a group and the emergent functions of Spanish and Arabic in the Facebook group created for English practice only. Online multilingual practices mark a shift in the study of translingualism to the virtual community, giving the subject a global reach. Following Lam, the author argues that networked online communities allow transnational groups or individuals to interact and create avenues for people to engage in linguistic and social practices that are unique to these environments (008). He examined the language practices of a bilingual Chinese–English chat room that provided a context of language socialization for two young Chinese immigrant teenage girls. Lam (44) found that a mixed-code variety of English that included writing in Romanized Cantonese was adopted and developed among the girls and their peers to construct their relationships as bilingual speakers of English and Cantonese. The reason for the adoption of two languages is to establish that both girls are bilinguals in Cantonese and English. Lam observed that Romanized Cantonese served other types of rhetorical purposes, such as creating humor, interpersonal address, and role shifting. This study is relevant to translingualism based on the capacity to provide common grounds for the participants to construct an identity that allows them to acquire more skills in the two languages.

In comparing translingualism to L2 classrooms, Williams and Condon argue that teaching form and genre are particularly contentious. Translingual theorists, who might be unaware of research in second language writing, believe that these elements are taught in second language classrooms

without tolerance of linguistic variation (2). This study highlights the deep-rootedness of translingualism in rhetorics that makes it difficult for second language teachers to disaffiliate from exclusionary rhetorics. Also, there is the argument that current second language writing theory recognizes linguistic variability, and the interdependence of form/genre and context may rule out the viability of translingual theory. The authors raise a valuable concern regarding where to draw the line between acceptability and unacceptability in the translingual pursuit of respect for language variety. I believe this point is salient in the sense that accuracy in communication is fundamental in composition studies. Program coordinators, research organizers, and instructors may have to earmark criteria for translingual borders that would make multilingual students maintain the lane of requirements in a specific writing instance to ensure the relevance of the multilingual writers' creation to the objective of the writing class.

Supporting William and Condon, Atkinson et al. examine the inconsistencies between the second language (L2) writing and translingual writing. They argue that though translingual theory and L2 writing raise concerns about non-native varieties of Englishes in an attempt to include cultural diversity, translingual writing at a midpoint between the fields of composition studies and L2 writing. This clarification is significant to defining the boundaries between L2 writing and translingual theorists in scopes and contribution to composition studies. Though the authors share similarities, their arguments are different and impact the outcome and perception of multilingual writers' compositions.

Pennycook's critical pedagogy (253) offers additional support for translingualism and the need for inclusion of language varieties and exclusion of privileged standard varieties in the writing class for both teachers and students. They argue that such dichotomies accentuate social inequities and the problematizing of writing practice. Teaching from a critical stance will open grounds for different perspectives on a specific subject that will allow the students to express their opinions from multicultural points

of view. This writing strategy increases chances for originality in writing composition classrooms. Also, multilingualism as a writing strategy mitigates the dangers of language prescriptivism and points the students' attention to performative communication.

Matsuda contributed to talk on institutional policies of "Linguistic Containment" that secludes ESL students from mainstream composition classes (641). Marginalization stalls creativity because students will begin to prioritize correctness than content to gain approval in the composition class to fit into the norms and expectations. Matsuda adds that, by implication, ESL classes are perceived to be discriminating against multilingual students. Similarly, Larsen-Freeman in "Grammaring" posits students have the right to choose their means of expression in writing in her teaching of form...meaning, and use (251). Her emphasis on contextual writing seems to be a pragmatic approach to writing which is encouraging but seems to be a repetition of existing arguments. However, her ability to link form to context introduces a different practice that could be situated between grammar and pragmatics.

Halliday and Hassan's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) extends the argument of Larsen-Freeman in that it fuses grammar and use it as the crux of a semiotic tool in discourse. Their study also reaffirms the function of context in writing and advocates the flexibility of strict norms on grammatical forms. From a feminist perspective, Ritchie and Boardman (597) equate difference with originality and how women have been stifled into writing like men to gain the attention and recognition that the female voice cannot offer. This replication of masculinity by women reinforces patriarchal domination and the systemic oppression of women mirrored through the writing class.

Corcoran (54) analyzes an assignment sequence and classroom practices in a first-year composition class in the SEEK program at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. The City University of New York (CUNY) which is largely diverse linguistically, culturally, and racially is assessed in the translingual approach to college writing. Corcoran offers

best practices that instructors can readily apply to their local institutional settings. They include; students composing case studies based on their ethnographic observations of their linguistic repertoires and speakers in their communities and students contextualizing observation within relevant research about language and linguistics. Following Matsuda's argument, the SEEK program record profiles its students as unfit for mainstream complex English classes and first have to take a universalized "English" class. This activity marginalizes multilingual students and delegitimizes students' multilinguistic proficiency, furthering racism and social divides.

Samy Alim's notion of Critical Hip-Hop Language Pedagogies (CHHLPs) changes the game on translingual studies in that they view the school as a primary site of language ideological combat, and this model exposes the ideological conflicts within particular educational institutions" (64). He highlights the difficulty students considered to be with minority face with linguistic practices amidst monolingual institutional conventions and policies. CHHLP becomes a pedagogical tool that collates the linguistic struggles of students by themselves, optimizing class dialogue and community-centered writing projects. The implication is to re-orient institutional-wide writing programs on ways to teach multilingual class college-level composition. Also, rhetoric instructors would benefit from paying critical attention to how monolingual ideologies can perpetuate racial divides in "mainstream" first-year composition courses.

Shor's position offers a nuanced observation regarding these social realities that impose limitations on the linguistic lived experiences of multilinguals. The ability to negotiate these linguistic practices as common sense than theoretical applications shows the students' readiness to counter any such impositions experienced day-to-day. The author identified the gap that helps students develop a meta-vocabulary through which they can analyze and critique everyday practices. While this concept seems promising, the author invests in engaging multilingual students in coping strategies that caters to social and linguistic divides.

Conclusion

The reviewed scholarship in multilingualism and translanguaging reveal the numerous contributions and development in advocacy for inclusivity in the writing class. Syncing writing class to social models reflects the experiences of non-native writing students in a monolingual setting and the advantages of diversity in these institutions. This study can change the systemic inequalities identified in composition studies to encourage the acceptance of multilingual students' imagination and creativity in writing classes globally. Though the media is seen to embrace these diversities, linguistic plurality remains a challenge for monolingual scholars, teachers, and students who do not see diversity as a norm, and would rather devalue dualistic thinking by perceiving translanguaging as disability. The view of American English as a universal language variety requires a translanguaging reorientation through implementation of some of the practices reviewed in this study and/or a push for enacting decolonial pluralistic language practices.

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