

Fall 2018

Crossing Divides: Exploring Translingual Writing Pedagogies and Programs

Gina Wrobel

The Ohio State University, wrobel.31@osu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/communityliteracy>

Recommended Citation

Wrobel, Gina. "Crossing Divides: Exploring Translingual Writing Pedagogies and Programs." *Community Literacy Journal*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2019, pp.104-108. doi:10.25148/clj.13.1.009095.

This work is brought to you for free and open access by FIU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Community Literacy Journal* by an authorized administrator of FIU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact dcc@fiu.edu.

Crossing Divides: Exploring Translingual Writing Pedagogies and Programs

Edited by Bruce Horner and Laura Tetreault

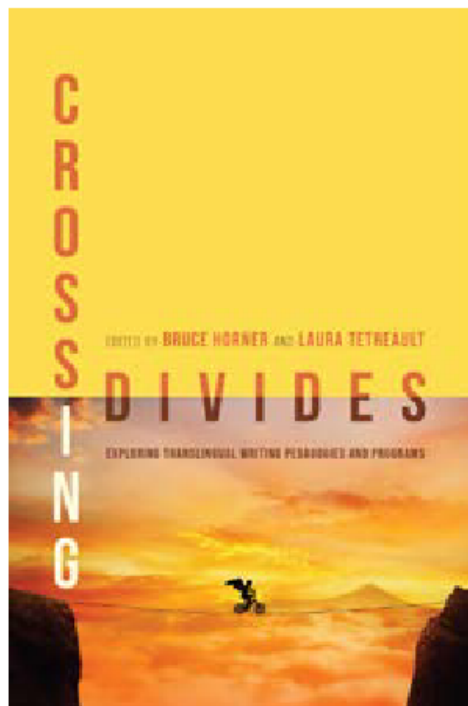
University Press of Colorado, 2017. 224 pp.

Reviewed by Gina Wrobel

The Ohio State University

In this edited collection, Bruce Horner and Laura Tetreault explore a variety of contributions that introduce and discuss translingualism and its application. Based on the CCCC 2013–14 preconvention workshops on “Crossing Divides I and II: Pedagogical and Institutional Strategies for Translingual Writing” and after the special issue on “Translingual work” in *College English*, 2016, comes this collection. With twelve chapters, divided in four parts, it makes a valuable contribution to the emerging discourse of translingual research and practice.

The first part of the book, “Theorizing Translinguality in Writing and its Teaching” offers different theoretical perspectives on translingual writing, which frame the more practical aspects of parts two and three. Part four is comprised of different responses to the previous parts, which demonstrates the critical and self-reflective choices the editors made when organizing this collection. In the introduction, Horner and Tetreault address the dominant discourse in US college writing research and teaching that views language difference as “differences in the varieties of English” or as “differences in the specific languages of students”—a diversion from so called standard English (3). Those perspectives operate with an underlying monolingualist ideology, still present in schools and a range of institutions today. Research on translingualism criticizes monolingualism, “the language ideology that dictates a single, reified language and social identity for all” (4). Such views are questionable as they deviate from actual language practices and thus constitute challenges for students, faculty, and a range of stakeholders. The contributors to this book participate in the emerging counter discourse by providing a new response to language difference that is based on Pierre Bourdieu’s warning against the ideology of monolingualism and previous research on translingualism (i.e. Canagarajah; Horner et al.). With a focus on language use and language difference in teaching, pedagogy, placement testing, assessment, and everyday practices, this book moves beyond a mere critique of teaching and research practices.



In chapter one “Toward a New Vocabulary of Motive”, Juan C. Guerra and Ann Shivers-McNair guide the reader with an overview of vocabularies and motives of social and ideological approaches to language difference (Monolingual/Monocultural, Multilingual/Multicultural, Translingual/Transcultural). In addition, they provide a brief history of efforts that challenge monolingual views. Among these, multilingualism, which is discussed and critiqued by the authors as a concept that continues to contemplate languages as separate and thus does not go far enough to challenge monolingualism. To go beyond and challenge those concepts, the authors draw from quantum physics theories to suggest a view of language difference as entanglement. This functions as their basic understanding of translingualism, which “challenges notions of languages as discrete systems within which people operate and instead emphasizes the dynamic, situated nature of language practices” (26).

In chapter two “Translingual Practice, Ethnic Identities, and Voice in Writing”, Sara P. Alvarez, Suresh Canagarajah, Eunjeong Lee, Jerry Won Lee, and Shakil Rabbi represent a critical viewpoint to translingualism that acknowledges and values translingualism as language use and practice, but does not romanticize it. The authors examine concerns about adapting translingual perspectives with regard to ethnicity and heritage. Narratives on four of the authors’ own experiences of ethnicity through translingual practice convey a more personal and tangible articulation of translingualism and provide implications for teaching.

Part two is comprised of three different examples of “Pedagogical Interventions” (chapters 3–5). Chapter 3 “Enacting Translingual Writing Pedagogy” by William B. Lalicker introduces two translingual writing course proposals, where first-year native English-speaking (L1) and non-native English speaking (L2) students engage in writing activities in one classroom. Lalicker developed both writing courses as part of an exchange program between a university in the US and China, with a course taking place in each of the two countries. The author takes a critical stand while describing both course syllabi and the course implementation at the US university. His criticism and reflections on the divide between writing programs and institutions consequently results in his call for a transformed understanding of study abroad as ‘transnational experience’ and for a combination of transnational, transcultural, and translingual courses to make study abroad available for everyone.

Chapter four “Who Owns English in South Korea?” provides a different example of pedagogic intervention. Here, Patricia Bizzell discusses the role of English and expat English teachers in South Korea. Drawing on the notion of ownership and on Horner et al.’s translingual model, she suggests that English is not owned by any particular nation and that speakers of a language do not need to be nativelike or fluent to be considered a speaker of that language. To illustrate this, Bizzell describes her own experiences and those of other expat teachers in South Korea. With her examples, Bizzell portrays a diverse linguistic environment in South Korea that shows pride in the Korean language and ownership of English on the one hand and an awareness of the importance of English and its entanglement in South Korean culture and everyday practices on the other hand. In contrast with the situation at Bizzell’s college in the US, where translin-

gualism merely exists outside classes and through language requirement, the diverse linguistic environment in South Korea leverages translingual opportunities.

In chapter five “Teaching Translingual Agency in Iteration”, Bruce Horner emphasizes an emergent translingual approach in comparison to an eradicationist and an accommodationist approach, introduced in his earlier work (Horner et al.). According to Horner, a translingual approach does not perpetuate monolingualism and does not view language difference as option but as “inevitable feature of all writing” (88). Based on his own constructive strategies and activities that focus on language difference in writing—mixed-language writing and double-translation—he explores and problematizes the relationships between language ideologies, policies, and practices. In mixed-language writing, students engage in writing and reading mixed language texts. In double-translation, students translate words and phrases from English to a ‘different’ language and back to English, to break with the underlying assumption that there is an equivalent in each language. Examples of students using different types of dictionaries and exploring different meanings for one word in one language demonstrate the unconventional but translingual notion of double-translation as a different approach to language difference.

Part three presents four examples of “Institutional/Programmatic Interventions” (chapters six through nine) in translingual writing, which could be applied in various contexts and—through its practical focus—addresses and benefits program coordinators and teachers in particular. In chapter six “Disrupting Monolingual Ideologies in a Community College”, Katie Malcolm problematizes the divide of writing courses for beginning college students in native and non-native speakers of English, its underlying monolingualist ideology, and the consequences of extra costs and financial problems for non-native speakers of English. Based on acceleration programs such as ALP (accelerated learning program) and CAP (California Acceleration Project), the author and her colleagues developed and implemented an acceleration program at their institution. The new course was designed as a blended course with face-to-face and online sections. Students from various linguistic backgrounds and English courses engaged in translingual writing practices by exploring and negotiating assignments and readings from their other English classes. Particularly useful are Malcolm’s descriptions of course assignments, grading, peer feedback, challenges of the program, and how the translingual goals were met.

In chapter seven “Writing Assessment as the Conditions for Translingual Approaches”, Asao B. Inoue discusses the necessity and possibilities of fair writing assessments. Drawing on DSP (directed self-placement) and labor-based grading contracts, Inoue shows examples of how writing assessment can be fairer, i.e. by giving more power to students and focusing on what students are doing rather than on the outcome. Inoue’s concluding suggestions on how DSP and labor-based grading contracts can create good conditions for translingual pedagogy and provide possibilities for translingual writing and its fair assessment are useful.

In chapter eight “Seizing an Opportunity for Translingual FYC at the University of Maine”, Dylan B. Dryer and Paige Mitchell describe the experiences and complications of planning, teaching, and assessing a first-year composition class (FYC) at

the University of Maine. The authors share points to consider and applicable tips for other programs that plan to implement, teach, and assess translingual composition courses. Drawing on student work from nine translingual FYC classes, where native and non-native speakers of English engaged in various writing assignments and peer feedback, Dryer and Mitchell describe students' difficulties and success in exploring different perspectives and explain how and why assignments were redesigned. Several examples from raters' receptions, student portfolios, reports, and responses provide helpful information on how students and teachers adapted and perceived translingual composition courses. The authors conclude with a call for a translingual section in teacher training and for new teaching assistants. Their illustrations on how their findings can be fruitful in teacher education will be beneficial for future implementations.

In chapter nine "Becoming Global: Learning to 'Do' Translingualism", Chris Gallagher and Matt Noonan point to a trend of universities to go global that involves international collaborations, communications, and institutional branding. Using Northeastern University as an example, both authors illustrate—from their perspectives as writing program director, instructor, and peer leader—implications of institutional branding for writing programs and efforts to engage in translingualism in a writing program at a globalizing institution. They tell a story about how to "do translingualism" (162) by looking at challenges and shifts coming from the institution, at students' and teachers' practices in teaching, writing, and reading and how they negotiate meaning and language difference. The authors conclude with a plea not to brand the university as translingual but rather to orient writing classes in a translingual manner.

The final part of the book offers three different responses from different perspectives to the previous chapters. In chapter ten "Crossing, or Creating, Divides? A Plea for Transdisciplinary Scholarship", Christine M. Tardy addresses definitions and understandings of translingualism in the previous chapters. As translingualism recognizes what happens in most people's and students' lives, Tardy embraces and values this emergent field. However, she problematizes the pedagogical application of translingualism and the use of a new term for course forms that have existed similarly before. She emphasizes the importance of crossing or 'ignoring' disciplinary boundaries in order to be informed and engaged in anything that seems relevant to one's research and interest. From this standpoint, she criticizes the lack of 'crossing disciplinary divides' in the book, which neglects research from applied linguistics, L2 writing and second language acquisition (SLA). However, she highlights the importance of this book for an understanding of translingualism in practice, for the interrelations between language, identity, agency, genre, and discourse, and the value for teacher education. Tardy particularly focuses on teacher education by advocating for a "metaknowledge of language" (184) among teachers and students, which could help teachers better understand and draw on students' multiple linguistic resources.

Chapter eleven "The Ins and Outs of Translingual Work" by Thomas Lavelle emphasizes the importance and difficulties of translingual work, the unfair treatment in classrooms based on monolingual ideologies—as discussed in the previous chapters—and calls for more agency for writers. Looking at translingualism from a mathematics and physics

perspective, he criticizes the lack of inward-directed work (i.e. core translingual commitments) in the book that is dominated by outward local translingual practices.

In the final chapter Kate Mangelsdorf picks up on Paul Matsuda's critique regarding the search for the meaning of translingualism. She states that "translingual programs and pedagogies are still in search of their own practices" (199), which portrays 'translingualism as practice' or 'translingual work' as an emerging field that is in need for input from various scholarly fields. According to Mangelsdorf, misunderstandings of translingualism—as something that counts for L2 and multilingual users only—are well considered and problematized in the previous chapters of the book. Thus, in this last chapter, she suggests a pragmatic and comprehensible description of what translingualism entails: "a key feature of translingualism is that *all* language users are translingual, not just those who know more than one language, because all utterances are fluid, relational, and contingent" (200). She concludes by drawing on earlier calls for integrating translingualism into teacher education, which shows that translingual writing programs require teachers who value and understand translingualism and are able to apply translingual theories.

Looking at this edited collection as a whole, it crosses institutional divides and national boundaries by presenting examples of translingual writing pedagogy and interventions in various institutions and countries. Regarding the editors' goal of this collection, which is to "explore translingual writing pedagogies and programs by crossing institutional disciplinary divides" (7), one question remains: Are they crossing divides of the disciplines? Picking up on Tardy's critique in chapter ten, this collection brings together many scholars from writing studies and only a few from applied linguistics. From this, I understand that there are still disciplinary boundaries to cross or—as Christine Tardy puts it in her response—to ignore. Crossing or ignoring divides can happen by opening and inviting in the discourse scholars from all fields that engage in and research writing. By making use of these resources, researchers and practitioners from various disciplines can gain a better understanding of translingualism and translingual writing and advance translingual research and teaching in particular. The collection offers insights to scholars and teachers working in literacy studies, second language acquisition and second language writing, and writing studies. Readers of this book will appreciate and benefit from insights, examples, and suggestions in all chapters to build upon and continue to "approach language difference differently" (Horner 91).

Works Cited

- Bourdieu, Pierre and John B. Thompson. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Canagarajah, Suresh. *Translingual Practice: Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations*. Routledge, 2013.
- Horner, Bruce, et al. "Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach." *College English*, vol. 73, no. 3, 2011, pp. 303–21.
- Matsuda, Paul Kei. "The Lure of Translingual Writing." *PMLA*, vol. 129, no. 3, 2014, pp. 478–83.