

Rethinking Translingual as a Transdisciplinary Rhetoric: Broadening the Dialogic Space



Zhaozhe Wang

Abstract: This article proposes a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric that aims to complement, rather than confront, current discipline-specific discursive, linguistic, and cultural conventions. Specifically, the article reviews various lines of inquiry on translingualism in composition scholarship and identifies and accounts for the challenges and resistance to this orientation in practice. After defining translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric and conceptualizing what it means to practice it across disciplines, the author proposes tentative directions for achieving a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetorical norm in pedagogical spaces.

"I didn't translate the word, not because I couldn't find an English equivalent, but because I wanted my professor to understand its history," one of my former first-year composition students explained to me, pointing at the word "dàn mù" in his web design project report. Originally from China, he is now a junior student studying in the department of computer science. He came to me for advice on an assignment he was working on—reporting the rationales and procedures for creating a webpage function called 弹幕(dàn mù)—synchronous (real-time) live streaming commenting. Literally meaning "barrage," dàn mù was invented in Japan, and became widely popular across multiple live streaming platforms. It works like this: when watching live stream, viewers post their comments and project them onto the video. Hundreds of comments float on the video immediately after the viewers post them, and move like flying bullets as the video plays, creating a platform for viewers to interact with each other in real time while watching the video. The comments are mostly lighthearted criticisms on the video or live performance. The course professor left a question mark on the word "dàn mù" in his paper and suggested that he replace it with a more descriptive term. Yet he secretly disagreed, asserting that there was no more vivid term than dàn mù and that we should pay tribute to the word dàn mù since he first came across the term where it was widely used. Apparently, he was consciously aware of the interpretive challenge that his professor may have experienced yet insisted on the word choice for his own performative reasons—he mobilized a word that is popular among Chinese netizens in a different geographical, linguistic, and disciplinary sphere to mark his rhetorical ingenuity and refused to succumb to the disciplinary genre conventions that value clarity. Understanding his rationale, I suggested, "Since you convinced me that it's justified to use the term dàn mù, let's think of ways to convince your computer science professor. You would want to invite him to have a conversation with you rather than alienate him. So what about..." We talked about strategies such as using a footnote or endnote to provide a brief history of the term, or replacing it with an equally vivid term in English to create similar rhetorical effects and so on. Eventually, we agreed to use the term "barrage" accompanied by a screenshot of a barrage of comments in Chinese that illustrates the term.

The translingual negotiation that took place in my office reminded me of the "can able to" moment in Min-Zhan Lu's classroom, where a Chinese student from Malaysia deployed in her writing an idiosyncratic expression of "can able to" (450), which is an unconventional use of standard written English. The two writers both had the privilege to make meaning by adopting strategies at and beyond the textual level within the site of negotiation where they knew their linguistic differences would be valued. The major difference here, however, lies at the audience. The writer in Lu's class resolved the tension *with* her translingual-minded writing scholar-teacher at the very kairotic moment the tension arose, whereas my former student would eventually need to recreate the tension within a rhetorical space that values clarity and efficiency and that is less receptive to linguistic heterogeneity. The latter situation is by no means a singular case; rather, it's representative of a pedagogical concern shared by many practitioners who embrace a translingual approach to teaching writing that acknowledges and honors linguistic differences and challenges a monolingual ideology (Horner et al., "Language Difference"). To what extent, if at all, is a translingual approach transdisciplinary? In other words, to what extent does a translingual approach transcend disciplinary

boundaries and hold accountable gatekeepers in other professions as it does writing teachers? More importantly, how are we to negotiate translingual writing ethically and responsibly as writing teachers?

Bruce Horner, Samantha NeCamp, and Christiane Donahue, in their argument towards a translingual model of multilingualism in teaching and scholarship in 2011, are cautious enough not to be inclusive of scholarship outside of the field of rhetoric and composition (270). Yet I would argue that it is justified and necessary to go beyond preaching to composition scholars and practitioners who have direct contact with language, and acknowledge that language practices are always situated and play a part in shaping epistemological orientations across disciplines. Language facilitates knowledge construction, dissemination, and reproduction across disciplines; thus, translingualism presupposes transdisciplinarity. In practice, I suggest that translingual workers rethink translingual as a transdisciplinary rhetoric that aims to complement, rather than confront, the current discipline-specific discursive, linguistic, and cultural conventions. To work toward a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric, first, I review the line of inquiry and argument on translingualism in composition studies, and identify and account for the challenges and resistance to this orientation in practice and discuss its situatedness. Then, I define translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric and conceptualize what it means to practice it across disciplines. Furthermore, I propose tentative directions for achieving a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetorical norm: continue to question the stabilized-for-now dominant discursive conventions reinforced by disciplinary gatekeepers and experiment with translingual techniques in genres that are expressive in nature and hold low stakes. To conclude, I anticipate, from both within and outside our discipline(s), the challenges of introducing a translingual dimension within discipline-specific discursive frameworks. Dialogues between gatekeepers and novices should be encouraged to work toward a consensual translingual/transdisciplinary rhetorical norm.

Tension and Situatedness

Since its debut as an official call for a new paradigm in the 73rd issue of *College English* in 2011 (Horner et al., “Language Difference”), the construct of “translingualism” has undergone several terminological changes and consistent resistance within the field of composition studies and across related disciplines, such as second language writing (see Matsuda, “The Lure,” and Atkinson et al.). Initially proposed as an approach, translingualism assumed the ideological role of interrogating and confronting the “tacit language policy of unidirectional English monolingualism” while valuing linguistic heterogeneity as resources in multilingual writers’ written products (Horner and Trimbur, “English Only” 594, and Horner et al., “Toward”). Yet linguistic diversity as a site of confrontation, or in its pejorative form that has long shaped its identity—“linguistic deviation”—has its scholarly roots in the field since the birth of the 1974 *Students’ Right to Their Own Language* resolution. Min-Zhan Lu, in her 1994 article “Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone,” demonstrates what she terms a “multicultural approach to style” that foregrounds student writers’ agency in transforming discursive norms with idiosyncratic styles (447). Pushing further the argument of treating linguistic and cultural diversity as a resource rather than a deficit, Suresh Canagarajah, drawing from sociolinguistics and world Englishes, rethinks the pedagogical possibilities by proposing a “code meshing” model and “negotiation model” in composition classrooms that recenter the composing processes (“The Place” and “Toward a Writing Pedagogy”). The establishment of the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages in 2007 acknowledges the central role of language studies in humanities disciplines and proposes a specific outcome for language related majors—translingual and transcultural competence that “places value on the ability to operate between languages” (237). Over the past decade, translingualism has received growing attention in disciplinary scholarship and venues, including the annual convention of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Along with the shaping of its status as “an intellectual movement” (Matsuda, “The Lure”), translingualism has also experienced a neologistic “identity crisis,” marked by the sudden proliferation of derivative notions such as “translingual orientation” (Canagarajah, “Negotiating”), “translingual literacies” (Canagarajah, “Introduction”), “translingual practice” (Canagarajah, “Clarifying”), and the frequently referenced “translingual approach” (Lu and Horner, “Translingual Literacy”).

While embraced by several scholars as a linguistic turn of critical pedagogy in composition studies, the rather semantically equivocal construct of translingualism has invited divergent views from scholars working exclusively with multilingual writers in the field of second language (L2) writing. As a field of inquiry driven primarily by the need to address various issues that multilingual writers experience due to their linguistic and cultural diversity, L2 writing is concerned with and aims at facilitating multilingual writers’ transition into the university discourse community and disciplinary discourse communities and assisting them in achieving academic success. Within this pragmatic disciplinary scope, linguistic, rhetorical, generic, and stylistic differences, along with epistemological and axiological positions, are foregrounded as potential difficulties with which L2 writing scholars and practitioners need to help students grapple. As a result, the goal of a translingual approach may seem at odds with that of L2 writing, indeed, as stated in the “Open Letter to Writing Studies Editors and Organization Leaders” published in *College English* early 2015, “Translingual writing has not widely taken up the task of helping L2 writers increase their proficiency in what

might still be emerging L2s and develop and use their multiple language resources to serve their own purposes” (Atkinson 384). The terminological equivocality, unfortunately, has not contributed to easing the tension, and in turn, rendered the approach susceptible to criticism targeted not only at the confusion, but also the movement that lacks “a community of knowledgeable peers who can ensure intellectual accountability (Matsuda, “It’s the Wild West” 134).

Certainly, translingualism is well contextualized within a postcolonial and post-structuralist framework, and it is an intellectual product of a globalized, digitized, and mobilized approach to meaning-making, as claimed by The Douglas Fir Group including fifteen prominent scholars representing different theories in second language acquisition (SLA), “communication and meaning-making are often felt as deterritorialized... while language use and learning are seen as emergent, dynamic, unpredictable, open ended, and intersubjectively negotiated (19). As composition studies has claimed its emancipatory agenda, it is hardly justifiable for compositionists not to maintain that current L2 writing pedagogies serve to perpetuate the monolingualist ideology and a deficit model in its practices. However, the emancipatory power of a translingual approach to meaning making is itself limited, too—it seeks to transform the meaning-making practice but not the governing structures. Cushman recognizes this limitation in her critique, “Emancipatory projects in composition studies fall short of their social justice goals because they critique a content or place of practice without revealing and altering their own structuring tenets” (239). In other words, a translingual approach problematizes and complicates local meaning-making practices while leaving intact the epistemological structures that govern a variety of meaning-making activities in a global context.

Situated in a composition classroom as a pedagogical space for the realization of translingualism, especially a pedagogical space occupied by multilingual writers, composition teachers inevitably find themselves perplexed by the conflicting outcomes. On the one hand, to meet the institutional demands of serving, or rather, producing writers equipped with linguistic and rhetorical skills who are capable of autonomously making and creating meanings in future disciplinary studies, composition teachers are pressured to teach decontextualized and generic ways of composing in the university. On the other hand, as liberating as it may seem, a translingual approach might not demonstrate the emancipatory power it presupposes outside of its disciplinary realm. This discrepancy between local aspiration and global reality has contributed to and manifested itself in the tension between pedagogies based on pragmatism and critical theories. Charles Bazerman’s perception of disciplinary meaning-making underlies the tenets of translingualism yet cautions against its limitations, as his interpretive perspective “focuses on what a text does within local networks of activity rather than on what it says,” and it “considers the meaning to be constructed locally within the occasion of the text’s appearance” (“The Interpretation” 84). In other words, a text that is translingually interpretable in one rhetorical situation may not seem linguistically or rhetorically plausible in another. A translingual approach is always locally situated and activity-bound. Indeed, Canagarajah acknowledges the situatedness of translingual approach by maintaining that “the term translingual enables... the ability to merge different language resources in situated interactions for new meaning construction” (“Introduction” 1-2). In his article published in the 2016 special issue of *College English* that extends the conversation on translingualism, Canagarajah reiterates it by defining “translingual writing” as “a form of situated literate practice where writers negotiate their semiotic resources in relation to the dominant conventions of language and rhetoric” (“Translingual Writing” 266).

The situatedness of not only translingual writing but also writing practice in general assumes that each rhetorical situation is itself an activity system. As Elizabeth Wardle acknowledges in her extended discussion of university genres and transfer theory, “The activities of the FYC [First Year Composition] activity system and the activities in other disciplinary activity systems are, of course, different. The writing in each system serves the activities of that system. Separated from the activities the writing serves, the writing of one activity system will likely seem strange (even inexplicable) to an outsider” (“Mutt Genre” 781). If translingual writing is especially context-bound, to what extent can it attain what Canagarajah calls “context-transforming” (“Toward” 603)? Are we advised to only practice translingual writing locally or not practice it at all? Lorimer Leonard and Nowacek’s caution regarding the connection between transfer and translingualism provides reassurance: “though transfer and translingualism both index movement among contexts, practices, or meanings with their shared *trans* prefix, neither suggests a neutral carrying over of knowledge from one context or language to another” (259). In this sense, if we map disciplinary writing situations onto individual activity systems, what do we expect students to carry over to other activity systems through translingual practice? How do we expect a disciplinary audience, among whom some are disciplinary gatekeepers, to recognize, make meaning of, and respond to the deliberate or arbitrary translingual moments in student texts?

Toward a Translingual/Transdisciplinary Rhetoric

Considering the resistance from practitioners occupying a transdisciplinary space, I would like to take a cautious step back from the ideologically oriented arguments, and reconfigure the currently rather nebulous and tentative conceptualization of translingualism toward a more tangible and accessible definition, one that is more inclusive of writers possessing and practicing various linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary resources. To advance translingualism

in composition studies and its related language studies, and to consolidate its theoretical foundation as a legitimate approach, we should be cautious not to leave the resistance unaddressed, and we should by no means intensify the hostility or broaden the divide, as Christine Tardy laments, “current discussion of translingualism may be exacerbating the disciplinary division of labor that Matsuda (“Disciplinary Division”) wrote about years ago” (“Crossing”). Rather, we need to resituate the construct within a broader disciplinary, theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical scope, and reconstruct and reprofile our audience transcending the static disciplinary boundaries. Toward this goal, I propose a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric that aims to complement, rather than confront, the current discipline-specific discursive, linguistic, and cultural conventions. To rethink translingualism as a rhetoric as opposed to *the* rhetoric, I intend not to deny the mediational power of the disciplinary writing conventions. Rather, I frame it as a workable alternative that writers can add to their rhetorical repertoire. To rethink translingualism as a *rhetoric* rather than an *orientation* or *approach*, I intend to draft some tentative yet concrete norms for textual practices that foreground the performativity of linguistic codes that are embedded within a specific rhetorical situation. To rethink translingualism as a transdisciplinary rhetoric, I stress the importance of establishing a shared discourse that transcends the stabilized-for-now genre frameworks (Schryer, “The Lab”), activity systems, and disciplinary writing conventions. To rethink translingualism as a transdisciplinary rhetoric, I do not aim for the realization of a “decolonial potential” (Cushman 236), but seek to equip writers with an alternative set of linguistic tools to deconstruct, question, and alter the static textual conventions to achieve individual rhetorical purposes without necessarily compromising ethos or textual readability.

Here, I draft what I see as the tenets of a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric:

- A translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric is defined as a rhetorical and purposeful textual practice that draws from a writer’s linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary resources to perform a rhetorical action and achieve a rhetorical effect.
- A translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric acknowledges language, broadly defined, as the vehicle for knowledge construction, dissemination, and reproduction, and aims to complement, rather than confront, the current discipline-specific discursive, linguistic, and cultural conventions.
- A translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric seeks to enrich the pedagogical repertoire of not only writing teachers in composition studies, but also those across the curriculum and in the disciplines; it seeks to enrich the linguistic repertoire of not only multilingual writers, but also the conventionally termed “monolingual” writer; not only novice writers learning to write and writing to learn, but also professional writers writing in various disciplines and rhetorical situations.
- A translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric values the writer’s informed choice as to when, how, and to what extent he/she engages with it, and recognizes but does not valorize the orientation that sees “difference as the norm” (Lu and Horner, “Translingual Literacy” 585).
- A translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric stresses mutual understanding at the *textual* level between the writer and the reader without neglecting the rhetorical situation.

I will further elaborate on each of the tenets in the next section.

Translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric as a rhetorical and purposeful textual practice

A translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric draws from the theoretical foundation laid by translingual forerunners, including Lu, Horner, and Canagarajah, that highlights writers’ agentive role in making linguistic and rhetorical moves. Nonetheless, it calls for a reconsideration of the highly situated process approach where the agentive role is presumably manifested. In the field of composition studies, since its early days when scholars were attempting to push the theoretical frontier of translingualism and experimenting with different pedagogical models that are related to language and languaging, the paradigm shift from focusing on what writers *should* do to what writers *can* do has been put on the agenda. In theorizing the “negotiation model,” Canagarajah calls our attention to writer agency: “rather than treating writers as passive, conditioned by their language and culture, we would treat them as agentive, shuttling creatively between discourses to achieve their communicative objectives” (“Toward” 591). Likewise, Horner et al., in proposing a translingual approach, argue for “honoring the power of all language users to shape language to specific ends” (“Language Difference” 305). In the same vein, a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric presupposes, values, and foregrounds the writer’s agency represented in not only the composing and negotiation processes but also the textual product. Here, I adopt Lu and Horner’s (“Translingual Literacy”) definition of “agency” that is conceptualized within a “temporal-spatial” frame:

A translingual approach thus defines agency operating in terms of the need and ability of individual writers to map and order, remap and reorder conditions and relations surrounding their practices, as they address the potential discrepancies between the official and practical, rather than focusing merely

on what the dominant has defined as the exigent, feasible, appropriate, and stable “context” (591).

Lu and Horner’s definition of agency stresses the non-linearity of the processes of rhetorical decision-making, and the potential of deconstructing and reconstructing the rhetorical context. In Lu’s earlier classroom practice that sets out to explore the potential of translingualism, quoting West, she also sees agency as context-transcending: “the notion of ‘intention’ is presented as the decision of a writer who understands not only the ‘central role of human agency’ but also that such agency is often ‘enacted under circumstances not of one’s choosing’ (West 31)” (“Professing” 447). Since mutual understanding achieved through textual interaction is the objective of a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric, a writer’s agency is also context-informed. Thus, a context-informed awareness of the linguistics and rhetorical flexibility as well as the ability to create a context-transcending textual presentation lies at the core of a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric.

The situatedness of translingual practices is often reflected in pedagogical strategies focusing deliberately on the negotiation process, which renders itself subject to critiques of the de-emphasized social and contextual factors of writing in process approaches (see Bazerman, *Shaping Written Knowledge*; Berlin; Bizzell, *Academic*; and Trimbur). Canagarajah initiates an explicit call for a shift of attention to composing processes by claiming that “we would study the process of composing in multiple languages” (“Toward” 591). Broadening the concept of translingualism to include translingual literacy, he reiterates the centered role of process: “the translingual orientation moves literacy beyond products to the processes and practices of cross-language relations” (Canagarajah, “Negotiating” 41). While acknowledging the creative and generative power of a process approach in enacting translingualism in a composition classroom, I maintain, in turn, the textual presentation of the negotiation process as the material condition where a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric can be operationalized to achieve the goal of mutual understanding. This is because text is what ultimately mediates the writer’s agency across disciplinary writing activities.

The complementarity of a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric

A translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric does not aim to, following the emancipatory agendas, valorize language differences in writing realized through code-mixing/-switching/-meshing of diverse linguistic resources, based solely upon the rationale of challenging the dominant discursive ideologies while putting mutual understanding at stake. Rather, it is intended to complement the discursive repertoire and conventions across the disciplines and ultimately reach a context-transcending norm as to how translingual writing should/could be practiced. Matsuda, in his historical account of the “linguistic turn” in composition studies and critique of the scholarly enthusiasm for language difference in composition, identifies the issues with uncritical and unreflective valorization of a translingual approach: “the terms and concepts associated with the new linguistic turn have become so valorized that scholars are inhibited from critiquing these ideas lest they appear old fashioned or ideologically suspect... it can end up feeding the naïve, feel-good liberalism—you are OK as long as you join everyone in valorizing these terms” (“It’s the Wild West” 132). Therefore, a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric requires transdisciplinary efforts in defining and regulating translingual “techniques” such as code-meshing.

Since its inception, the translingual movement in composition studies has set its goal of resisting, challenging, negotiating, and transforming the dominant discourses governing the construction, dissemination, and reproduction of knowledge as well as the teaching of writing. This goal is evident in Lu, Horner, Trimbur, and a group of translingual pioneers. Lu reflects that she is “particularly interested in explicitly foregrounding the category of ‘resistance’ and ‘change’ when helping students to conceptualize the processes of producing and interpreting an idiosyncratic style in students’ own writings... [she] defines the writer’s attempt to ‘reproduce’ the norms of academic discourses as necessarily involving the reproduction—approximating, negotiating, and revising—of these norms” (“Professing” 447). Horner and Trimbur recognize the “tacit language policy of unidirectional English monolingualism”: “language use itself is reified and identified with a reification of language, located most commonly in writing, so that the variety, range, and shifting nature of language in use are reduced and restricted to the canons of ‘proper usage’ embodied in standard written English” (“English Only” 596). Canagarajah, too, argues that “what translingual pedagogies favor is deconstructing Standard English to make students aware that it is a social construct” (“Clarifying” 425). However, a social constructionist view, or in Berlin’s term, a “social-epistemic” view of knowledge construction sees language as the “agency of mediation” (488), and sees academic discourse as “constitut[ing] the academic community” (Bizzell, “College Composition” 197). Any unwarranted and unsubstantiated linguistic novelty in the name of challenging discursive conventions will likely pose a threat to the writer’s ethos and invite misinterpretation and misrepresentation from faculty and scholars outside of composition studies. A hypothetical yet realistic scenario would be a manuscript marked by its translingual elements being rejected by a chemistry academic journal, or an engineering student’s translingual lab report being marked as “incomprehensible.” Considering the resistance from outside the translingual circle, I argue that a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric aims to complement, rather than confront, the current discipline-specific discursive, linguistic, and cultural conventions.

Translingual as transdisciplinary

Translingual is, by nature, transdisciplinary. Initiated in the context of progressive education to understand and facilitate writing across disciplines in the early 1970s, the writing across the curriculum movement has gained its momentum over the past several decades, undergirded by Janet Emig's theory of "writing represents a unique mode of learning" (D. Russell, Thaiss and Porter, and Emig 122). The WAC movement has brought to the pedagogical frontline what David Bartholomae has called "the privilege of being 'insiders'" of "an established and powerful discourse" (408), that is, composition teachers are presupposed to maintain the expertise and obligation to prepare students for future disciplinary writing tasks. In the same vein, teachers teaching writing in the disciplines through writing intensive curricula or other types of curricula that require the completion of more writing tasks often find themselves explicitly teaching discursive writing conventions to help initiate students into a certain discourse community (see Bazerman, *Shaping Written Knowledge*, Herrington, and McCarthy). Within this institutional context, merely enacting a translingual rhetoric in a dedicated writing classroom, usually an FYC classroom, without examining the assumptions disciplinary audiences may hold, would result in ultimate dismissal of it, or worse yet, criticism and resistance from faculty members who hold distinct epistemological dispositions. As scholars of transfer theory have argued with empirical evidence, what is taught in an FYC classroom is different from and mostly cannot be transferred to disciplinary writing tasks (see Yancey, et. al., and Wardle). Furthermore, as Anne Beaufort's conceptual model of five knowledge domains that expert writers draw on shows, "discourse community knowledge" serves as the overarching domain entailed within the other domains—writing process knowledge, subject matter knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, and genre knowledge (18-19). She elaborates, "Based on a set of shared goals and values and certain material/physical conditions, discourse communities establish norms for genres that may be unique to the community or shared with overlapping communities and roles and tasks for writers are appropriated within this activity system" (Beaufort 19). This is to say that the mediational power of discursive genre conventions may suppress the intended transformative power of translingualism. Thus, a translingual rhetoric is, and should be, transdisciplinary.

It is worth noting that the term "transdisciplinary" is adopted here to characterize the translingual rhetoric I am proposing, rather than to set research agendas as to what the term is usually adopted for. I am inspired by Russell et al.'s discussion of transdisciplinarity that describes it as "a practice that transgresses and transcends disciplinary boundaries" (461), and the Douglas Fir Group's quotation of Halliday's call for "creating new forms of activity which are thematic rather than disciplinary in their orientation" (24). Therefore, the term "transdisciplinary" in translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric suggests a rhetorical practice that has the potential to be recognized, valued, and critically adopted across the disciplines.

With "transdisciplinarity" defined as such, a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric seeks to enrich the pedagogical repertoire of not only writing teachers in composition studies, but also those across the curriculum and in the disciplines; it seeks to enrich the linguistic repertoire of not only multilingual writers, but also the conventionally termed "monolingual" writers; not only novice writers learning to write and writing to learn, but also professional writers writing in various disciplines and rhetorical situations. Affirming language as the agency of discursive activities, a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric, while grappling with different discursive conventions through linguistic negotiation, is not grounded within any specific discourse community. Rather, it retains the potential to be shared transdisciplinarily as a linguistic and rhetorical norm.

Translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric values the writer's informed rhetorical choices

A translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric is not ideology-free; it assumes a specific orientation toward language, that is, language difference is seen "not as a barrier to overcome or as a problem to manage, but as a resource for producing meaning in writing, speaking, reading, and listening" (Horner et al., "Language Difference" 303). However, it does not aim to impose its orientation on any writer who decides to, or not to, practice the rhetoric in their writing. On the contrary, a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric, as the indefinite article "a" suggests, may be adopted at the writer's discretion to complement their rhetorical repertoire for their idiosyncratic purposes. It values and highlights writers' agency not as a multilingual user of language who demonstrates the versatility of composing with diverse linguistic resources, but as an informed writer who consciously chooses to, or not to, rely on a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric to convey their message. As Lu and Horner maintain when refining their original proposal of a translingual approach, "A translingual approach is best understood as a disposition of openness and inquiry toward language and language differences, not as a matter of the number and variety of languages and language varieties one can claim to know (Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur 311)" ("Translingual Literacy" 585).

While valuing the writer's informed choice as to when, how, and to what extent he/she engages with it, a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric recognizes but does not valorize the orientation that sees "difference as the

norm” (Lu and Horner, “Translingual Literacy” 585). To achieve this goal, a translingual/transdisciplinary pedagogy needs to, first and foremost, acknowledge the linguistic and cultural diversity, or in other words, translingual practices, that students present in their texts as the norm, and then explore and negotiate means of transforming them into transdisciplinary practices. Conceptualizing a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric as fundamentally respecting writers’ rhetorical choices may prevent what Matsuda identifies as an eagerness to “promote these valorized [translingual] ideas in their [composition scholars] scholarship and teaching that they often ask how these concepts can be used in their work without also considering whether, when, and why they should be used (Bean et al., 2003)” (“It’s the Wild West” 132).

Mutual understanding at the textual level

As argued in the previous section, a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric recognizes the negotiation process as its major component, but does not exclusively rely on the process as the sole site of practice. Rather, text is regarded as the manifestation of translanguality that assumes transdisciplinarity. Compositionists generally agree that writing is always discursively situated (see Bazerman, *Shaping Written Knowledge*; Bizzell, *Academic*; and Trimbur). Peter Elbow goes a step further and claims that “we can’t teach academic discourse because there’s no such thing to teach,” suggesting that academic discourse is not a single entity that can be taught and applied to different disciplines (138). Yet what often causes a discrepancy between writing in a writing class and in the disciplines is disciplinary teachers’ assumption, or expectation, that students have already acquired the discipline-specific discourses and are capable of conforming to discursive conventions. Ken Hyland’s qualitative data, for example, suggest that “this audience of faculty teachers generally want to see students write in disciplinary approved ways as a means of demonstrating their acculturation into the field” (250). As a consequence, an agreement reached through negotiation in a writing classroom as to what counts as a translingual practice may not be acknowledged and appreciated in a different disciplinary course, or worse yet, it may be frowned upon as an error. In this case, we as writing teachers, attempting to empower students with a translingual rhetoric, are actually doing them a disservice.

In arguing for a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric, then, we need to strive for mutual understanding at the textual level, as it is the consensual goal of written communication as a social action. Granted, translanguaging is empowering, as it “honor[s] the power of all language users to shape language to specific ends” (Horner et al., “Language Difference” 305); it “directly confront[s] English monolingualist expectations by researching and teaching how writers can work with and against, not simply within, those expectations” (Horner et al., “Language Difference” 305); it is “a form of situated literate practice where writers negotiate their semiotic resources in relation to the dominant conventions of language and rhetoric” (Canagarajah, “Translingual Writing” 266). Nevertheless, empowerment is fundamentally premised on textual interpretability.

Practicing Translingual/Transdisciplinary Rhetoric

In the above section, I elaborated on a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric that aims to enable writers to draw from their diverse linguistic and cultural resources in composing discipline-specific texts with full recognition from disciplinary audiences. Toward this objective, a translingual/transdisciplinary norm that transcends disciplinary boundaries needs to be established and agreed upon. Admittedly, a transdisciplinary norm cannot be justifiably constructed within any single discipline, and it is usually the result of a theorization of a community practice. Nonetheless, as disciplines that have direct contact with the study of languages, including its forms and functions, linguistics, composition studies, and any related disciplines, have the responsibility, expertise, and resources to initiate the change. Therefore, in this section, I draft tentative suggestions for the practice of a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric from the perspective of whether, when, who, and how.

Whether

Since translanguaging is conceptualized as a rhetoric, or in other words, a performative art aimed at delivering the writer’s rhetorical purposes, the writer maintains the discretion as to whether or not he/she practices it to create an intended rhetorical effect. Performance, as Gilyard opines, “can destabilize responses tied to fixed categories and can potentially undermine harmful standards” (287). When writers want to, need to, and have the ability to destabilize the status quo by drawing from their linguistic and cultural resources, they are justified to do so. It is worth noting, however, that whether or not writers comfortably practice this rhetoric may be attributed to the rhetorical context, genre, individual linguistic competence and disposition. Writing teachers, therefore, may be held accountable for explicitly discussing when and how to practice a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric, while being cautious not to impose a translingual ideology.

When

When to practice a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric is reliant on the writer's informed and critical assessment of the rhetorical context and their own translingual preparedness. Yet for writing teachers, when to teach a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric holds high stakes and is a kairotic issue. I recommend that writing teachers introduce the concept of translingualism along with the dialogic nature of composing in academia early during their course of instruction. Before engaging student writers in in-depth discussions of the stability and performativity of language, writing teachers need to fully investigate students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, through tactics such as demographic survey. This is to ensure that students have the opportunity to discover and articulate their own linguistic and cultural resources that may otherwise remain hidden, and to prevent possible linguistic or cultural marginalization. Following students' initial familiarization with the concept, teachers could initiate discussions on textual translinguality discussed extensively in the literature, such as code-meshing, code-mixing, and code-switching (see Young, Canagarajah, "The Place," Matsuda, "It's the Wild West"), in writing tasks that are expressive in nature and hold low stakes, such as autobiography. Gradually, translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric can be practiced within different rhetorical situations and in different genres created in the writing classroom in order to prepare students to write in the disciplines.

Who

Different stakeholders involved in teaching and/or assessing writing need to assume different responsibilities, yet meanwhile, communication between the stakeholders needs to be encouraged in working toward a translingual/transdisciplinary norm. Specifically, writing teachers are responsible for carefully planning courses that introduce translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric as an additional rhetorical strategy based on students' developmental stages, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and meta-awareness of discursive conventions. Writing program administrators need to regulate, but not standardize, individual teachers' pedagogical approaches to translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric. They also serve as the bridge between writing teachers and disciplinary faculty, who, then, are responsible for transdisciplinary communication through initiating workshops and other activities. Professional organizations in composition studies and in disciplines related to language studies need to collaboratively develop guidelines for the teaching and practicing of a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric, in which critical terminologies are appropriately defined and contextualized, translingual/transdisciplinary norms framed and justified, and assessment criteria established (Dryer, Lee).

How

Since mutual understanding at the textual level across the disciplines is the ultimate criterion assessing the effectiveness of a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric, translingual decisions, thus, should not be arbitrary. Rather, I stress that an effective translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric, if deployed in a text, should be based upon the writer's conscious rhetorical choice. The writer's deliberation is a defining characteristic that distinguishes a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric from a *translingual phenomenon* observed in all textual activities, or, in Bawarshi's words, "a fact of all language use" (245). Premised upon the writer's conscious decision, the specific translingual/transdisciplinary rhetorical strategy that the writer uses needs to be fully contextualized and justified within the rhetorical, disciplinary, and discursive context in which the writer is composing. To ensure mutual understanding across the disciplines, the writer, rather than the audience, needs to be accountable for reducing the interpretative effort that their audience has to dedicate, since it would be rather challenging, and it would impair the writer's ethos to tacitly require disciplinary audiences to decode idiosyncratic translingual rhetorics.

Stressing mutual understanding at the textual level is not an invitation to revisit the discussion of writer/reader responsibility in contrastive rhetoric (Hinds); rather, it is a call for "rhetorical attunement"—"a literate understanding that assumes multiplicity and invites the negotiation of meaning across difference" (Lorimer Leonard)—on both ends: writers across cultural differences and audiences across disciplinary differences. It also establishes the foundation for the development of "a rhetorical sensibility that reflects a critical awareness of language and a contingent and emergent rather than a standardized and static practice" (Guerra), not merely within our professional community of rhetoric and composition, but across broader disciplinary realms. To that end, we as writing practitioners are cautioned against adopting a celebratory orientation toward textual manifestation of linguistic exotics and against "leading [students] to think that we expect them to produce a particular kind of writing that mimics what we call code-meshing" (Guerra). Rather, we should aim for equipping students with a contextualized understanding of textual translinguality and the rhetorical toolkit to communicate the textual translinguality across disciplinary communities. To cultivate students' contextualized rhetorical sensibility and to facilitate their self-reflection on translinguality, writing teachers may begin with familiarizing students with discipline-specific genre conventions and expectations through engaging them in writing for different purposes and audiences. In so doing, students will likely build a meta-

awareness of translingual possibility in different discursive spaces. Literacy autobiography could be adopted as a means of prompting students to researching and critically reflecting on translinguality in their lived experiences (Canagarajah, "Negotiating"). Course readings could include texts "written *in* and/or *about* different linguistic and cultural contexts" (Wang). Assignments could be designed as an invitation for students to negotiate their textual translingual performance, if they so choose, directly with the teacher, who serves as a proxy for a disciplinary audience. When assessing students' translingual performance, students' ability to "analyze, adapt to, and transform the context" should be emphasized as the central criterion (Wang).

How Far Could/Should We Go?

Scholarly discussions on translingualism in composition studies created a bandwagon effect soon after linguistic issues had regained their prominence in the field, and have extended well into a new decade, culminating in multiple edited volumes and a special issue in *College English* [78(3)]. It has become a buzzword itself that entices scholars from different language-related disciplines to give it a definitive definition or to explore its potential applicability. Among the different voices, criticism and resistance abound. The criticism has often centered upon the volatility of the conceptual understanding of the term "translingual" as well as its ever expanding boundary, empty valorization of the concept, and its practicality in terms of helping multilingual writers (see Matsuda, "It's the Wild West," "The Lure;" Atkinson et al.). With the writing across the curriculum movement currently prevailing across writing programs at numerous institutions in the U.S., a pragmatic ideology has been constantly challenging the critical pedagogy that characterizes the translingual approach. In an attempt to resolve the tension, I suggested that translingual workers rethink translingual as a transdisciplinary rhetoric that aims to complement, rather than confront, the current discipline-specific discursive, linguistic, and cultural conventions. Then I framed and elaborated on the five tenets of a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric, and provided guidelines on whether, when, who, and how translingual workers, including different stakeholders, could practice this rhetoric.

Working toward a translingual/transdisciplinary norm necessitates collaboration among different stakeholders, and at the same time, poses challenges to them. Writing teachers may lack a firm grasp of the concept, may find the concept contradicting their own philosophies, may find the approach conflicting with their course outcomes, may have difficulty working with students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and so on. Student writers may resist this rhetoric for various reasons, such as personal linguistic disposition, etc. Writing program administrators may not be willing to or able to provide sufficient funding to hire translingual specialists and train writing teachers, and may dismiss it due to conflicting course outcomes. Professional organizations in composition studies may not see a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric as imperative or immediately beneficial. Also, disciplinary faculty who assign and assess writing may find it burdensome to appraise translingual rhetorics in students' writing before a translingual norm is agreed upon, which may weaken the argument on assessment validity, reliability, and fairness.

Would the challenges and resistance impede the practice of a translingual/transdisciplinary rhetoric and the progress toward a renewed norm? Highly unlikely. Scholars affiliated with different disciplines are actively engaged in contributing to the wealth of knowledge and in pushing the theoretical frontier forward. I'm optimistic that this alternative conceptualization of translingualism will create new pedagogical possibilities and invite new scholarly discussions.

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