Volumes in *crosspol* represent and foster practical and theoretical conversations between high school and college writing teachers, a group we see engaging in more crossover activities that are productively collaborative, inventive, and synchronized. We believe the articles in each issue speak to at least three distinct stakeholders—high school writing teachers, college writing teachers, and writing students in both educational contexts. We also believe these articles are accessible and challenging, blending what we can learn from research with what we know about compelling writing and what we want in engaging classroom activities and materials.

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SUBMISSIONS
We welcome traditional and multimodal submissions that situate the teaching of writing in diverse contexts (e.g., the traditional classroom, hybrid courses, dual-enrollment, AP/honors classes, developmental classrooms, practical writing courses, online courses, four-year colleges, community colleges, career colleges, adult-oriented degree programs, worker education courses, prison classrooms, and GED courses among others). Prospective authors are encouraged to explore the influences of identity, socioeconomic status, and life experience as well as institutional realities and cultural influences on teaching and learning. We are particularly interested in submissions that blend research and theory with teaching practice and learner experience. All submissions should contribute to the knowledge and pedagogies of writing, reading, literacy, and learning.

Prospective authors may submit traditional print essays, multimodal compositions, or webtexts.

If you have general questions about submissions or if you’re a prospective author wishing to discuss a project for submission, contact an editor at crosspol.ed@gmail.com.

At least two anonymous readers will evaluate each submission and make a recommendation regarding publication. Prospective authors will be contacted soon after their work has been reviewed. crosspol will email a return receipt to inform an author that his or her work has been received and is under consideration.

TECHNICAL GUIDELINES
1. Submissions should be sent electronically to crosspol.ed@gmail.com.
2. All submissions should include a text and a practical document.
3. A cover letter accompanying each submission should include an author’s name, institution, position, preferred email contact, work phone (with extension if necessary), and address.
4. Manuscripts and webtexts should not include authors’ names or contact information.
5. Current MLA or APA guidelines should be used for formatting and documentation, depending on authors’ disciplinary expectations.
6. Authors whose submissions include references to individual students or samples of student writing should consult with their college Institutional Review Boards regarding the possibility of needed approvals or waivers.
Authors are responsible for collecting and saving permissions from students whose writing appears in a crosspol submission.

7. Acceptable submission forms: MS Word or other word processing formats, webtexts, and texts that include embedded multimedia elements. Images may be in .jpg, .gif, .png formats. Videos must be submitted as files, not as links to external sites (e.g., YouTube).

8. Links to external sites may appear only as in-text references or citations in a reference lists. Web-based examples used to illustrate key ideas or arguments should be included in the text as embedded images, screen captures, video files, etc. Multimedia content hosted at an external site should be submitted as a file that can be hosted on the crosspol site.

9. All multimedia content should be either the author's original work or work that is available for use under a Creative Commons license.

10. Submissions should be uniformly accessible in current versions of multiple browsers (e.g., Safari, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Google Chrome).
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In order to respond to multilingual, global realities, we must be committed to engage in collaborative efforts across cultural and linguistic differences.

Randall W. Monty

Letter from the guest editors

Triptych 1

Diversity and Reflection

There is a 90% chance of
When we first came up with the theme and drafted the call for proposals for this special issue of *crosspol*, we hoped that writers would capitalize on the opportunity to incorporate the conceptual frameworks, political exigences, and linguistic realities highlighted in border studies and apply them to focused studies of the social, pedagogical, and logistical boundaries connecting secondary and postsecondary education.

In that call, we argued that, “The presence of multiple languages and dialects in border contexts and the language experiences of linguistically diverse writers provides teachers and students with opportunities and challenges as they engage writing in personal, social, educational, professional, and community situations where audience, purpose, and language vary.” We did not anticipate how prescient such a stance would prove to be, as the current political moment, not just in the United States, but in much of the English-speaking world, is one that seems to be pointing away from ideas that are important to us as researchers and people. These values include promoting pedagogies and policies of linguistic diversity, critical thinking, equitable access, and safe inclusion in our campuses and communities. Indeed, since our call was made, issues of social justices have been at the forefront of national and local discussions of education: Teachers and students in Arizona sued to overturn House Bill 2281, bringing to federal court a challenge to a law that was specifically passed as a direct reproach of Mexican-American studies programs. The U.S. Department of Education rescinded protections for victims of sexual assault on college campuses. In our home state of Texas, individuals can now carry concealed handguns on community college campuses (the law went into effect at four-year colleges and universities a year prior), while the anticipated “transgender bathroom bill,” which would have required people in the state to use public bathrooms—including those in K12 schools and at postsecondary institutions—based on their “biological sex,” failed to pass during Texas’s biennial legislative session.
Initially, our focus in this special issue emerged from our shared scholarly and pedagogical interests in border theory and language diversity in writing instruction as well as our institutional context. As our institution, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, aims to become a “highly engaged bilingual university,” we are increasingly interested in exploring our roles as college writing instructors and the implications that the transition from high school to college writing has in our region. Beyond our local context, we were eager to learn what others are doing in their research and teaching as they explore what it means to teach writing within and across social, academic, political, and linguistic borders. With these motivations as guides, we envisioned the special issue as a space for processing and reflecting on how to (re)design classroom pedagogies to ensure linguistically diverse writers’ succeed across a range of educational and community contexts.

This special issue of crosspol includes projects that investigate and reflect on the ways in which like-minded individuals prepare for and enact instruction with different types of student groups. As we aim to respond to our institution’s goal to become a “highly engaged bilingual university” and challenge our nation’s current political and educational realities, we are inspired by our colleagues’ personal experiences, research, pedagogies, and collaborations across borders, languages, and communities.

Our personal experiences with literacy oftentimes influence how we perceive and engage language difference in academic and community contexts. In “This is My Story of Language,” Francisco Guajardo explores how his personal language journey continuously shapes the ways he approaches instruction and collaboration with local community organizations and school districts in efforts to build linguistically inclusive environments for students across educational settings, from elementary school to college.

Similarly, in order to respond to multilingual, global realities, we must be committed to engage in collaborative efforts across cultural and linguistic differences. This can include shifting the physical locations of these interactions, such as with the service learning project detailed in, “Re-Imagining Linguistic Competence and Teaching Towards Communicative Trajectories in Transnational and Translingual Spaces of Today’s Global Reality.” Here, Maria Houston explores how moving the classroom space outdoors and into a natural environment can facilitate cross-cultural epistemological practices across linguistic borders.

Lesley Chapa, in “A Change in Thought. A Change in pensamiento,” challenges linguistic borders as she explores how she negotiated meaning across different languages. Through a thought-provoking reflection of her literacy and language experiences, Chapa demonstrates how multilingual writers can use all of their language resources to learn, reflect, and create new knowledge through writing in educational contexts that privilege monolingual and language separation ideologies. Additionally, through a documentary, she invites future educators to
negotiate meaning through a translanguaging pedagogical approach to teaching writing.

Reflecting on when, where, and how writing takes place provides us with a renewed perspective on how we can foster inclusive and successful writing environments across academic and community contexts. In “‘Out in the Open and Free:’ Nature-based Settings and Literacy Learning at Adventure-Risk-Challenge,” Merrilyne Lundahl investigates how nature-based settings enhance students’ attitudes and motivation in literacy learning, and she explores implications for developing pedagogies centered on community-engaged and nature-based writing environments.

The place where writing occurs is essential to building pedagogies, activities, and writing projects responsive to context, region, and language specific needs. Gabriel González Núñez, in “Crossing Linguistic Borders: Teaching Writing Skills in Two Languages to Translators-in-Training,” explores the unique pedagogical needs of a translation program located on the Mexico/U.S. border focused on training future translators. Providing a framework for translation pedagogy in Spanish and English, the author repositions writing instruction as one centered around the acquisition of cultural, stylistic, and rhetorical tools.

Finally, Mark Dziedzic and Gretchen McClain interpret the concept of border as a way to draw attention to the institutional barriers separating high school and postsecondary writing instruction. “Engaging in Writing Dialogue: High School to College Writing Symposium” details the authors’ efforts—replete with a cache of replicable and modifiable resources—to bring writing instructors from across this divide into a shared physical space that promotes collaborative-cross-level dialogues.

At the same time that we were making the final arrangements and edits for this special issue, members of the UTRGV community were endorsing diversity and responding to the current political moment in some creative and impactful ways: faculty from the Asian Studies minor program hosted the inaugural Southwest Texas Asian Symposium, stakeholders from across the university participated in the annual MultiLinguaFest, while students and faculty participated in a solidarity walkout in protest of the proposed repeal of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals act (DACA) and requested a Dreamer Center at UTRGV.

Viewed in light of events such as these, the topics and issues addressed in this special issue help provide context for the theoretical, pedagogical, and practical work that educators are doing with and for multi- and translingual writers. They also reveal the types of borders that exist between and among elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions, helping us to identify and understand these new sites for epistemological work. They give us cause to consider how physical spaces inform, advance, and inhibit different types of writing work and learning. And, most importantly, these articles reify the need to resist racist and discriminatory educational policies, and to advocate for linguistic and cultural inclusivity, including promoting safe educational environments for all students.
My summers spent in and with the land have educated me. I still deplore thinning peaches, but I have an understanding of life and nature that makes my heart race. Every day that I begin before the sun is to my benefit. With this teacher, I have become a better student, not only of school, but also of life.

Francisco Guajardo

This is my story of language as a stranger's acquisition: stale and new.
This is My Story of Language
Francisco Guajardo

We were told not to speak Spanish in school when I was growing up in the '70s and '80s, though the “don’t speak Spanish” in schools was complicated by that time.

Place and Context

The history of the US-Mexico borderland provides the context for my story of language. I was born in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas to Mexican parents who had only scant formal schooling. Still, Papi and Mami believed in the idea of school and encouraged their children to value literacy, education and learning. They left their home in Mexico and brought the family to Texas because they felt their children would find greater opportunities in the United States, and the greatest opportunity in their mind was education. My parents brought us to the rural community of Elsa, next to Edcouch, where we landed on the last day of 1968. We would settle there, as my father found gainful employment as an agricultural laborer and my mother as a baby sitter and school cafeteria worker.

When we arrived, the Edcouch-Elsa community was largely agricultural, and had been since its origins early in the 20th Century. A two-tiered economy had evolved, where Mexicans and Mexican Americans comprised the laboring class and Anglos largely made up the ruling class (Krochmal, 2016; Montejano, 1987; Zamora, 1983). Social and political institutions mirrored this bifurcated socio-economic and political system. The system did not go unchallenged, however. The month before our arrival, in fact, more than 140 Chicano students at Edcouch-Elsa High School staged a school walkout to protest the racial injustices they saw in the school, and even in the community at large. The resistance included a specific challenge to the language oppression Chicano students experienced in schools, where they were persistently forbidden from speaking Spanish. Students wanted to be able to speak their “mother tongue”; they wanted Mexican American Studies courses to be taught in school; and they wanted bilingualism to be given a higher value (Guajardo and Guajardo, 2004). In short, we arrived in a community where oppressive practices against Mexican Americans were in full use, but young people were similarly in a full out challenge of those practices.

That was 1968, the same year the United States Congress passed the historic Bilingual Education Act. A short time later, my parents would enroll me at Edcouch Elementary School, interestingly, a school that had been racially segregated until just
15 years before. The social system of the early to mid century in this community resembled the Jim Crow conditions of the Deep South. This was the context that my family stepped into. It was a complex, yet rich socio-cultural backdrop in which my stories of language would play out.

Method

The following stories are stockpiled in my treasure trove of stories, which I’ve been packing through the years. My father and mother were the chief inspiration for this, as they raised my brothers and me through a steady diet of cuentos, parabolas, y anécdotas. I’ve been a conscientious documenter of my parents’ stories; I have an oral history collection of both Papi and Mami that spanned 20 years for Papi, and Mami and I are into our 25th year of capturing her oral history. I have learned a great deal from that experience, including growing increasingly conscious of my own story. Beyond my parents, I have found the great privilege of reconnecting with some of my grade school teachers, who I sought out when I returned home to become a teacher. I also consult an oral history project I have led during the past several years. I’ve found my stories, as I listen to how others reflect on their stories. My development as an educator has benefited from that process, as has my growth as a writer, and even my professional identity have been significantly guided by the exploration of my story.

The stories in this introduction also come from my review of certain documents, such as my “Pupil’s Cumulative Record” (PCR) stored in the archives at Edcouch-Elsa ISD. It’s the “report card” of sorts that contains my grades, test scores, and other personal information from the day I enrolled in Edcouch-Elsa schools to the day I graduated. The PCR includes narrative descriptions each of my teachers wrote as they described my performance and progress from Kindergarten to 5th grade—the other years only show grade scores and test scores. The descriptions present a snapshot of specific times in my life and provide a window through which I make meaning of my language development. Nicely nestled in my treasure trove, the PCR happens to be surrounded by an array of stories that I dust off and share, as I attempt to use my story of language to set up this special issue of Crosspol.

Elementary School

When I walked into Ms. Martínez’s kindergarten class on August 31, 1970, the Bilingual Education Act was just beginning to make its way into South Texas schools. Edcouch Elementary had been selected as an experimental campus, and Ms. Martínez’s classroom was one of the lab classrooms. As per guidance from the Bilingual Education Act, students who were not English speaking would be instructed in their native language. Fortunately, my kindergarten teacher had the language capacity to follow the dictates of this new education policy, and she taught
most of my classmates and me in Spanish. Ms. Martínez was a sweet teacher, who greeted me in Spanish and as she told me many years later, she delivered instruction and facilitated class in Spanish, and in English, as the situation required. Ms. Martínez would set me on the right path. At the end of the year, she wrote in my permanent record: “Frankie is a dedicated, conscientious & bright boy. Was one of the best readers (Spanish) I had. Can do addition problems with ease. Did not know English at all, but is doing fairly well.”

It turns out I could read in Spanish when I was in kindergarten. Ms. Martínez noted that, but she more importantly facilitated the development of my literacy by building on my existing Spanish language abilities. My parents were my first literacy teachers. Papi was a steady consumer of El Mañana, the regional Spanish language daily, and often read sections to us. He also read to us from books he kept from his grade school days in the 1940s. The story of Pablito, the Mexico boy who grew up en el campo, was a favorite of his (Guajardo and Guajardo, 2017). My mother read from her Bible daily, and often recruited us to take part in her daily rosarios. The readings and the rosaries comprised my early literacy experiences. Ms. Martínez simply built on those experiences and provided even greater advantage by teaching me in Spanish.

My 3rd grade teacher, Mrs. Waggoner, also commented in her end-of-year qualitative assessment of me by writing: “classwork far above average. Speaks and writes Spanish.” I had built a literacy foundation in Spanish. My English would follow and then catch up. The foundation had been laid, but it could have easily been slowed, if the Spanish instruction was not supported the following year, when my 1st grade teacher Mrs. Longoria continued to teach me in Spanish. In a personal testimony some 20 years after my 1st grade experience, Mrs. Longoria shared with me that she simply followed the methods prescribed by the new Bilingual Education approaches to teaching. “They just made sense to me,” she said, “because it’s how I raised my own children, and they grew up proficient in both languages.” Indeed, Mrs. Longoria and Ms. Martínez set me up for success, just as my parents ensured that literacy and care and love were amply supplied at home.

Ironically, Ms. Martínez also assigned to me the name “Frankie,” her attempt to Anglicize me, as she did for “Joe,” “Mary,” and “Terry,” all kindergarten classmates. José, María, Teresa, and I grew up together, and we benefited from the love and care of our elementary teachers. As they helped us build literacy skills, they also encouraged the process of cultural assimilation. While they taught us in Spanish, they really preferred that we read and write in English. “I’m thankful the new bilingual practices came in,” recalled Mrs. Longoria, “but we all believed in the way we were taught—that English was more important. We believed our primary duty was to teach you to read and write in English.” There was a cultural and linguistic complexity in our elementary education, even if as young kids we probably were not thinking about issues of identity—were we Mexican, American, or what? But we
were thinking about issues of language, because that was at the core of how we
communicated with family, friends, teachers, and coaches. These were (and continue
to be) issues we dealt with growing up along the border. These issues are the crux
of Anzaldúa’s borderlands analyses. She expounds upon them in a nuanced
borderland language. She writes in English, in Spanish, and in a combination of the
two. Therein, she encourages us to forge our own linguistic and cultural identities
and to own our own language (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Coming Home

I left home at 18, enrolled at the University of Texas at Austin, and declared
as an English major. I became immersed in literature, mostly American and British. I
fancied Shakespeare, Hawthorne, Twain, the Bronte sisters, and even studied at
Brasenose College in Oxford. While abroad I experienced an epiphany and found my
course of study. Even as I appreciated English literature, I also longed for
something more familiar. I searched for deeper meaning, and a closer connection
between lived experience and literature. Homesick and forlorn, I longed for the
stories of Papi and Mami, the cuentos de mis tíos y tíos, y familiares. When I arrived at
JFK Airport on my return connecting flight, I called my father from a pay phone. I
asked him about the stories he and my mother had raised us with, and asked him if
he had written them down. He said no, and when I asked if he would, he began at
the age of 52 a six-month process of penning his autobiography. To this day my
father's collection of stories is the most meaningful piece of literature I have thus
read, and the most life-changing writing assignment I have thus given. The act of
asking, the act of writing, and the process of making meaning of my father's
autobiography have been among my most formative language development
experiences. After I completed an undergraduate degree in English and a graduate
degree in History, I came back home to teach at my alma mater. More important
than my time at Oxford and better than graduate seminars at UT, the lessons I
learned from my father provided the most relevant training, as I began my tenure as
an English teacher at Edcouch-Elsa High School. I was inspired.

One of the first assignments I gave my Edcouch-Elsa students was to write
an autobiography. I recall sitting in my study at home reviewing their work, and
weeping. My students’ stories moved me emotionally. Their use of language moved
me. I felt a sense of connection with them. They wrote experiences familiar to me,
they were descriptive, they were honest, and they were authentic. They wrote about
things they knew: family, immigration, work, struggles, and triumphs. A few students
wrote more eloquently than others, but they were all real—raw, genuine, and fresh.
Their stories had meaning, even when they were often lacking grammatically and in
structure and organization. But I felt I could address the technical issues of grammar
and structure and organization—in due time. The power of the student work was in
the development of authentic student voice, just like my father expressed his
authentic voice in his autobiography. My father’s work provided the appropriate
guidance for my work as a teacher. As my students explored their lives through
writing, they demonstrated authenticity, and I had tapped a source of veritable
student power.

I used this approach to teaching writing, reading, and other life skills to
launch a college preparation program at Edcouch-Elsa High School. Beyond helping
students with SAT scores and building their academic records, students’ most
important skill set focused on finding the language through which to craft their own
story. As students built that skill set, their life stories would forge pathways into
higher education. Working with teachers, students, and parents, we built a college
preparation program that helped hundreds of students gained admission into the
University of Texas Pan American (UTPA). Our students found power in their
stories as they competed for scholarships and admission into rigorous programs at
UTPA. Students also gained admission into the big state schools in Austin and
College Station, and some even found admissions into very selective universities.
Several dozen students from E-E HS—all autobiographers—gained admission into
Ivy League and other highly competitive universities across the country. Our students
emerged as strong candidates because they were smart, but also because they came to
understand themselves through a course of study that placed their lives at the center
of the learning process. They became community based researchers, investigators of
their family stories, and curious about their own identities. When one student, a
migrant farmworker named Myrta, submitted her admissions essay to Brown
University, she wrote, “My summers spent in and with the land have educated me. I
still deplore thinning peaches, but I have an understanding of life and nature that
makes my heart race. Every day that I begin before the sun is to my benefit. With
this teacher, I have become a better student, not only of school, but also of life” (Guajardo, 2005). In my letter of recommendation, I said to the Brown
Admissions Committee, “You cannot afford to reject Myrta’s admission, because she
will enrich your student body like few others can.” Myrta was admitted to Brown and
graduated four years later, as a writer.

Language and Culture in Higher Ed

My first year in graduate school at UT Austin I took a course on Chicano
Narrative with professor Ramón Saldívar. It was the year Gloria Anzaldúa published
Borderlands: The New Mestiza, and the year my father wrote his autobiography. Reading
Anzaldúa next to my father’s writing helped me make sense of my stories. My father
modeled descriptive narrative and a storytelling form that made his prose vivid and
accessible. Anzaldúa offered an expansive critical framework informed by history,
race, culture, gender, and language. Both provided inspiration and utility. Both were
also important intellectual and instructional guideposts, particularly as I thought
about how I used language, and how I would be as a teacher.
Anzaldúa’s Chapter 5 especially provided a historical context for language, politics, and education in South Texas schools. When I read the “How to Tame a Wild” chapter, I was provoked just like when I read Acuña’s *Occupied America* (1972) or Paredes’ *With His Pistol in His Hand* (1959), historical and anthropological works that placed South Texas and South Texas people in a different light than how they had been depicted in the mainstream historiography. In these works, Mexican American people were described as proud, hard working, and dignified people, much like how I understood my parents, my brothers, my relatives, and my neighbors. Anzaldúa similarly problematizes perceptions and practices relative to language use, specifically the language of the US-Mexico borderlands. When Anzaldúa describes the infamous “speech test” administered to her and to Mexican American students who enrolled at Pan American University in the 1960s (a practice that began well before the ‘60s and persisted well into the ‘70s), she asserts that language oppression was part of the institutional policy of the university. The case is confirmed by the historiography and the research on schooling in this borderland region (Blanton, 2004; San Miguel, 1987; Guajardo and Guajardo, 2004). Anzaldúa’s “Wild Tongue” argument as a symbol of language injustice is also triangulated in compelling ways by a range of oral histories conducted with elders from the region that tell stories of being punished and demeaned for speaking in Spanish in schools. “I got punished for speaking my mother tongue,” (Guerra, 2013) said one elder, “*Me pego la pinche vieja cuando me pescó hablando español*,” (Billescas, 2013) said another. It’s a consistent story that elders tell of growing up Mexican in South Texas.

We were told not to speak Spanish in school when I was growing up in the ‘70s and ‘80s, though the “don’t speak Spanish” in schools was complicated by that time. Students at Edcouch-Elsa High School challenged overt language oppression practices in 1968 when they staged their historic walkout, in part to protest “don’t speak Spanish” practices in schools. The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 was being implemented when I entered kindergarten in 1970, and socio-cultural and linguistic changes were set in motion as school districts across South Texas adopted Bilingual Education as a program to help Spanish-speaking children succeed in schools. The new bilingual education practices purported to treat Spanish and bilingualism with much greater respect, rather than to marginalize Spanish in the interest of a language and cultural assimilationist program. It was the dawn of a new era in South Texas schools, and in many parts of the country.

On the other hand, there was also vigorous resistance to new approaches of language learning in schools. Pan American University continued with its “speech test” well into the early 1970s. Former University of Texas Brownsville President Julieta García tells the story of the first job she found out of graduate school, when she was employed by Pan American University in the Speech Department. Part of her job, she said, was to administer the dreaded speech test, an instrument effectively instituted to dispatch Spanish-speaking students to remedial Speech for the purpose...
of rehabilitating their speech patterns (García, 2016). Other factors contributed to the resistance, including the impact the “don’t speak Spanish” experience had on Mexican Americans who suffered from those practices in previous generations. Many of them made deliberate decisions to raise their children as English-speakers only, and often kept them from becoming Spanish speaking, or bilingual. New teachers and school administrators who would lead schools in this new era were directly impacted by the historical trauma of language oppression, and in the name of protecting children from being victims to language oppression, these teachers and principals would side with English only, assimilationist practices. So as bilingual education was being rolled out, there was stiff resistance. There continues to be resistance almost half a century later (Billescas, 2013; Guerra, 2013).

Nevertheless, the forces of change had gained traction. As Pan American University phased out its speech test, it also ushered in a new Bilingual Education program in the College of Education in the early 1970s (González, 2013), and through that program thousands of bilingual teachers would be trained, a process that continues in earnest until the present day. Today, the same college is a leader nationally in training teachers prepared to engage in bilingual classrooms at all levels. And the most startling change today is that the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley—formerly UT Pan American and UT Brownsville—is in the process of transforming itself into a bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate public university. The origins of this development are found in the pioneering work of UT Brownsville President García, who led an effort throughout the 1990s and into the new century to build bilingualism and biliteracy into the fabric of that university. As that experiment gained vibrancy, the University of Texas System made a decision to merge UT Brownsville and UT Pan American, but the momentum built to transform higher education through linguistic and cultural work carried over. It’s a bold and perhaps even revolutionary declaration to posit that the same university that instituted a “speech test” in order to fix the “wild tongue” of Spanish-speaking students would be the same university that would embrace and purport to become bilingual. The contours of history are indeed compelling.

As UTRGV commits to modeling itself as a bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate institution, the B3 Institute is charged with facilitating that transition and has developed a set of strategic priorities to realize its work. The strategic priorities call for (1) collaboration work faculty to provide coursework delivered in Spanish or bilingually and through culturally relevant and culturally appropriate approaches; (2) incentivize research focused on issues of bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy; (3) and engage internal and external constituents to promote the value of bilingualism, biculturalism, and biliteracy. The three strategic priorities address the issues important to the purpose of Crosspol, as writing, language development, and finding voice for young students can be areas of focus through teaching, research, and service. The goal of helping students find their voice can be elusive, so B3
developed a series of learning exchanges through which we explore specific learning modules to help students find their writers’ voice, and hopefully find greater success as writers.

The B3 Institute worked with undergraduate students and faculty members to create a training manual comprised of a series of professional and personal development exercises that will explore with faculty members a series of strategies and pedagogies to help students find their stories and voice. One module, for example, focuses on understanding the history and culture of the Rio Grande Valley, a region uniquely situated as a contested space politically, economically, culturally, and in a perpetual search for meaning. This module guides faculty members and others through an inquiry process intended to find one’s place in the Valley. A second module focuses on “your story of language,” an exercise that asks participants to engage in a process much like what I am doing with this essay—to search for the episodes in my life that inform my language development. Another module challenges faculty members to know their students. Through this training, the B3 Institute encourages faculty members to participate in at least one home visit to a student’s home. This is a bold experiment in higher education, as home visits are typically practiced only through the K-12 educational process. But this action is not without precedent. B3 has participated in this process through its partnership with UNIDOS por RGV, a consortium of nonprofit organizations that span the Valley. University faculty and staff have found the home visits as a critical learning experience where UTRGV faculty are able to build relationships with students, and to learn how to best approach teaching, learning, and research with their students.

The B3 Institute is building working relationships with specific schools districts such as Edinburg CISD, Brownsville ISD, and PSJA ISD through which it engages Social Studies and Language Arts teachers in a series of similar learning exchanges. Public school teachers and school leaders engage in similar professional development as they delve into the history and culture of the Valley, as they think critically about their story of language, and as they engage with students’ family through home visits. B3 has also forged significant partnerships with community-based organizations such as UNIDOS por RGV, where these training modules have thus yielded noteworthy results. Participants in these learning exchanges have been exclusively mothers of children enrolled at all levels of the educational pipeline, and they have engaged in the process with deep enthusiasm. In one session, a mother even penned a letter to UTRGV President Guy Bailey, and several months later, she recited from her letter when the President attended an UNIDOS/B3 event. She said, “Presidente Bailey, you quiero que usted nos proteja a nuestros hijos y hijas. Mi hija es DACA student, y yo me preocupó mucho por ella.” The President responded graciously, and thanked the mother for displaying such strength and confidence. The B3 Institute will continue to build on its professional development work with both internal and external partners, and we expect to grow the network of participants.
Making Sense of the Stories

My story of language is a work in progress. I probably code-switch a little less than I used to, though not when in conversation with my brothers, or with old friends. I learned Spanish first, then learned English in school, and then strengthened my English simply by being immersed in the culture. I learned English from listening to baseball games on the radio, watching football on television, watching sitcoms on school nights—at least after we bought our first television set in the 1970s. I developed language with my brothers through a bilingual modality, so we moved in and out of English and Spanish, and even produced coded language that only we understood. I often felt like writing in that same way, but that was not really encouraged in school.

Through the work of the B3 Institute we encourage teachers and university professors to dive deeply into their own stories, because it can help them guide their students go through similar processes. When Ladson Billings developed her theory on culturally relevant pedagogy more than 20 years ago, she argued that culturally relevant teaching is nothing more than good teaching (Ladson Billings, 1995). It happens when teachers link principles of learning with the lives of children. Through her ethnographic work, she found that students wrote with a greater sense of purpose when assignments were connected to their life experiences (Ladson Billings, 2014). I taught at Edcouch Elsa High School, my alma mater, for a dozen years and like Ladson Billings, I found that my students felt more empowered with their use of language—in public speaking, in writing, or through their art work—when what they wrote had personal meaning (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2016). As I’ve engaged in teacher training in different parts of the country, the lessons of culturally relevant pedagogies speak to teachers, parents, and students. The challenge they often find, however, is that the standards often conflict with employing these approaches. But creative teachers figure out ways to connect with students and still produce outcomes deemed successful by the state.

I feel a deep sense of privilege to have grown up in a place where I developed as bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate. Even if my parents were fluent only in English, they still supported our development as bilingual children. They also needed that, because we often were responsible for negotiating wages with the English speaking Anglo farmer in Keeler, Michigan who could not communicate with my Spanish-speaking parents. My older brothers did most of the translation, mediation, and negotiation, a potentially humiliating circumstance my parents dealt with by keeping their head up and showing us there was no shame in figuring things through the assistance of their children. We gained great agency, as we helped our parents find their way in English speaking environments, even as we also saw our parents rendered relatively helpless. But they always kept their head up and exemplified dignity and integrity in everything they did.
My parents loved words. My father was a storyteller, while my mother loves to recite her rosary, and often offers side commentary to enhance the experience of the rosary. They helped my brothers and me to appreciate words, to love language, and they encouraged us to communicate in ways that made sense. To this day, my mother challenges us to “no le hagan como los gringos; hablen en español!” Most importantly, my parents modeled language intended to raise children in respectful and dignified ways. They saw language as an honorable process, and encouraged us to use it well, con respeto y dignidad. That was important modeling for me as I became a teacher, and it is modeling that I continue to follow as I work in higher education, and as I help to transform my university into a bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate institution. I have learned language from the best teachers: my kindergarten teacher Ms. Martínez, who placed her faith in a new bilingual program; my first grade teacher Ms. Longoria, who thought that raising bilingual and biliterate children in schools was a good thing; the intellectual prowess of people such as Anzaldúa, Paredes, and Acuña. But the most important intellectual mentor for me was my father, José Angel Guajardo. He and my mother took good care to ensure that we were well fed, well cared for, that we appreciated words, and that we understood our stories. It turns out that was the best training for language development, but also for life.

The challenge [teachers] often find, however, is that the standards often conflict with employing these approaches. But creative teachers figure out ways to connect with students and still produce outcomes deemed successful by the state.

REFERENCES


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Re-imagining Linguistic Competence and Teaching Towards Communicative Success in Transnational and Translingual Spaces of Today’s Global Reality
Maria Houston

Transnational communicative competences are becoming keys increasing employability in the global workplace…Transnational communicative competences are not a construct and is, therefore, not easy to assemble into a teachable and researchable model. They are more a process in and by themselves.

A Job Interview Scenario

“Ok. See this text right here?” He asked, pointing at an email on the computer screen.

“Yes,” I responded.

“Translate it. Don't be nervous. Do the best you can. I know how stuff works. So, if you just point me in the right direction, I will get the technicalities.”

“Ok,” I replied.

I looked at the first sentence. All I was able to understand was that someone failed to order proper types of something, and the warehouse had 50 pieces of this stuff now. I knew I had to explain what that stuff was. In Russian it said “поплавок”: the bobber on the fishing rod. It didn't make sense because I was interviewing for a job of an interpreter at an aluminum factory. On top of this, I did not know the English equivalent for “поплавок.” I had to explain a fishing bobber as an oval or round plastic object that helps to see when fish bites. I used body language to aid myself.

As soon as my future boss heard the explanation, he knew that the text was referring to a float used for metal level control in furnaces. He said he understood the email perfectly and that I did an excellent job. Since the day of that interview, I have worked in various functions in corporate settings, from an interpreter to a training and development specialist at a large international company, moved to the U.S., received a doctorate, and am currently teaching freshmen composition at a four-year college. My corporate background in Training and Development, and graduate degrees in TESOL, Composition, and Adult Education inform my interdisciplinary and pragmatic lens at communication instruction at a college level. This article is my contribution to push the academy towards practice-based curricula, with outcomes relevant to the diverse, virtual, multimodal, and multilingual professional global
landscape we live in today.

Transnational Communicative Competences (TCC)

In the highly competitive global society of today, transnational and translingual encounters are frequent at workplaces (Ardichvili). According to a 2013 report by the British Council, more than two-thirds of international employers related that their associates have frequent encounters with transnational colleagues. In addition, over half of the respondents conveyed that their employees frequently meet with partners and clients overseas (British Council). As a result, employers expect their associates to have the competence to navigate multiple cultures and linguistic domains successfully. Such competence is often referred to as “intercultural” or “communicative” (British Council). Since the term “intercultural competence” does not encompass the complex linguistic and rhetorical dimensions of transnational and translingual encounters, in this article, I will adopt the term “transnational communicative competences” to discuss strategies and competences utilized by speakers/writers in transnational and translingual communicative encounters—verbal or written—to successfully negotiate meaning across nations and languages.

Transnational communicative competences are becoming keys for increasing employability in the global workplace. Vertovec pinpoints the path to success in the super diverse reality through communication: “those who successfully negotiate, making choices among their various cultural and linguistic belongings, achieve mobility” (80). Therefore, transnational communicative competences help gain a lucrative career and a desired lifestyle. As college professors, we strive to educate our students beyond a subject or academic literacy, for life, rights, and effective citizenship “with the pursuit of long-term economic and social well-being” (Warriner, 102). With this being said, understanding transnational communicative competences and their developments is crucial for college educators, especially English instructors, who have a privilege of seeing transnational and translingual interactions unfold in their diverse composition classrooms when peers read, discuss, and negotiate meaning in writing.

Current college classrooms are unarguably diverse and present vast opportunities to explore and develop transnational communicative competences so important for college graduates today. In his recent book titled “National Healing”, Professor Claude Hurlbert proposes composition classrooms as platforms where the rhetorics of the world engage, the study of meaning, experience, and creation takes place (Hurlbert, 19). He continues by warning English educators of the West to “start to learn beyond our comfort zones”, “to start to learn about the world” (19). Hurlbert believes composition classrooms have a unique potential in developing the world-focused mindset in opposition to the “homegrown purity” mindset towards language and communication, which will allow students to unlock the negotiation of
meaning across languages and contexts and see the “meaning of the variety and wakefulness, of options and decisions, the meaning of being human in our equal searches for the meaning of our lives” (19). When referring to the goals and outcomes of meaning negotiation, Hurlbert recognizes that in addition to linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical trajectories of transnational communicative competences, there is also a socio-political trajectory. He implicitly defines the success of transnational and translingual encounters beyond mere information transfer. In Hurlbert’s interpretation, such encounters are successful when the outcome is a constructive dialogue and a peaceful world. Multilingual writing scholars and applied linguists are in alignment with the above viewpoint. Canagarajah (2015), Kaur (2009), Pennycook (20017) and others warn against information transfer as the only targeted outcome of a transnational and translingual communicative act. Moving beyond pragmatics and conversation analysis, applied linguists focus on the ability of interlocutors to negotiate beyond conversational turns to broader social and ecological dimension (Canagarajah, 2013, 107). Hence, teaching towards transnational communicative competences means teaching beyond a linguistic clarity or information transfer towards open-mindedness, understanding and appreciation of variety and difference.

**The Trajectories of Transnational Communicative Competences**

Transnational communicative competencies are not a construct and is, therefore, not easy to assemble into a teachable and researchable model. They are more a process in and by themselves. Molina discusses a communicative competence formation model applied in an ESL classroom (2013). She adopts the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) definition of communicative competence or competences as “those which empower a person to act using specifically linguistic means” (Council of Europe, 2001). The council breaks communicative competence into the following components: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic. Such a breakdown brings into a traditional linguistic definition the complexities of contexts of communication (sociolinguistic component) and the interlocutors’ abilities to navigate discourses and rhetorics in various interactions (pragmatic component). At first sight, this seems to be a sound modal. However, Molina points out that the taxonomy of communicative competence developed by the Council is detached from the realities of human communication and does not illustrate “how competences separated and classified below interact in complex ways in the development of each unique human personality” (67). Canagarajah takes the complexity into account and formulates a notion of a performative competence as “dynamic and reciprocal strategies translinguals adopt to respond strategically to interlocutors and spaces with diverse norms in contact zones” (174). He argues for a situatedness of any meaning-making and poses to avoid constructs when discussing communicative competence and talk...
of it more in the sense of “trajectories”. As such, the notion transforms into a process and an experience unfolded at a specific moment in time and cannot be taught as a mathematical formula.

Cumulatively, I argue that transnational communicative competences is a more sound lens to adopt when exploring transnational encounters and teaching towards successful communicative acts across borders and languages. Such lens accounts for linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural components of communicating transnationally and translingually and, as a result, approaches global communication more realistically than purely linguistic (accuracy-based linguistic competence) or purely cultural (inter-cultural and cross-cultural competence) models. In addition, this model moves away from a singular notion of “competence” to the plural, “competences”: multiple, varied, contextual, and practice-based. It deems important to veer away from decontextualized constructs and emphasize the continuous process of competences development through practice. Finally, when we target the development of transnational communicative competences in classroom settings, we teach students to not only accurately convey information, but to constructively negotiate meaning to achieve desired outcomes with respect to national cultures and rhetorics and, thus, to maintain and promote peace in the world. While we cannot teach transnational communicative competences per say, we can offer our students opportunities to practice communicating (orally and in writing) across languages and borders and, as a result, develop an array of strategies and competences along the following three trajectories of transnational and translingual communication: linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical.

**Linguistic Trajectory Reimagined**

When assembling transnational teams to undertake a company project, human resource specialists focus on the participants’ English proficiency. Fagerstrom and Andersson point out that the failure of such teams as well as the roadblocks towards their success stem from the employees’ limited English proficiency which manifests itself in errors in task descriptions when communicating with team members orally, confusing email messages, heavy accents, and so on (Fagerström & Andersson). Measurable linguistic proficiency in four skills (grammar, writing, reading, and speaking) is up to this day a key focus of EFL/ESL/EAP instruction and major international testing giants (TOEFL, IELTS) that grant access to jobs and educational opportunities worldwide. Limited English proficiency - not knowing enough vocabulary, weak sense of sentence structure, grammatical errors, accent, etc. - disturbs the minds of not only employers with international presence, but also their employees. As users of English often coming from expanding circle countries, we fear that our “non-native” linguistic abilities in English will hinder performance on the job. Going back to my job interview, I clearly did not have enough vocabulary to handle the translation task. Neither did I have contextual knowledge to properly
decipher the content of the email I was asked to translate. I may have used inappropriate sentence structure to explain myself as well. Nevertheless, I stepped into the process of meaning making and meaning negotiation to achieve the communicative outcome desired by both myself and my interlocutor. Donahue explains that in transnational context how we choose to encounter other and different is “vital to how we can make progress in the world” (149). Thus, what contributes to our success in transnational encounters is our stance on “the other”, our attitude to difference. Are we able to build off of the linguistic resources that we have? Can we capitalize on “errors” we make? Can “errors” aid meaning making?

Canagarajah points out that “paradoxically”, those engaged in transnational encounters contract space “for acceptance of differences, not a sharedness”, and, as a result, negotiate actively (2013). Moreover, the scholar poses that lexical and idiomatic differences can help achieve intelligibility. One of the students engaged in a conversation with eight more peers from different countries in Canagarajah’s study kept using non-shared idioms, such as “at the bottom of the budget”, in his monologues. I noticed a number of Chinese students in my freshmen composition classes did the same when composing and sharing narratives with their peers. Particularly, I remember the metaphor of a “note sheet” that attracted attention of my domestic students in the narrative of their peer from China. Such non-shared idioms in both cases motivated peers/interlocutors to probe for meaning with more enthusiasm during a conversation. As a result of such probed negotiation, both parties achieved more than just information transfer, they gained knowledge by capitalizing on their linguistic differences.

Canagarajah poses that in the context of language diversity “meaning doesn't arise from a common grammatical system or norm, but through negotiation practices in local situations” (7). Often times, as research shows, deviations from norms do not inhibit the outcomes of communication. Such a position is crucial to adopt when interacting transnationally. In his book on translingual practice, Canagarajah presents an analysis of a large group discussion in the English contact zone that occurred among students of various linguistic backgrounds. The analysis shows that regardless of deviations from the norms of Standard English (grammatical errors, flawed sentence structure, use of non-shared idioms, and interference of various accents) the students were able to negotiate meaning successfully and achieve desirable result-discuss and assign roles in a team project. Donahue conducted a comparative study of French and American students’ writing in English. She analyzed their essays as they were transitioning into college. She poses that once she worked passed linguistic issues in the essays of the French students, she found that both groups of students negotiated, appropriated, resisted, and adapted their way into college writing using quite similar rhetorical moves (Donahue 147).
Both Donahue and the students, participants in Canagarjah’s study, chose to adopt an open-minded attitude to difference and the other. They all chose to focus on the outcome of written and oral interactions and higher-level choices and strategies that were employed by interlocutors in transnational encounters and contexts to achieve their rhetorical objectives and communicative goals. By doing so, they re-imagined linguistic proficiency as ability to look beyond one system and draw from multiple systems (grammatical, lexical, phonetic, etc.) to achieve communicative success (assigning roles on a team project and better understand how students in two different countries transition from high school to college writing).

To sum up, while measurable linguistic proficiency in four skills and the focus on correctness and “native-like” still occupy the minds of employers and English educators, those of us working in contact zones and laboring with language are re-defining error and difference. Errors are becoming resources that offer learning opportunities for everyone engaged in a transnational encounter and difference leads to a more active and engaged negotiation of meaning. Additionally, to the disappointment of many of us, a certain score on TOEFL or IELTS deemed appropriate by designers of testing solutions and the educational industry may not necessarily help users of English achieve desirable communicative outcomes. Similarly, having “native-like” proficiency or being a “native speaker” is not enough to succeed in transnational encounters. As communicators we make choices, pull resources, and behave appropriate to a specific context and communicative task. Transnational encounters demand from us to have knowledge beyond one language and one culture. They demand that we can engage various linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural repertoires into a constructive dialogue. Putting practice into educational context, English educators and composition instructors need to offer students opportunities to explore their various linguistic resources and practice negotiating meaning with the focus on communicative success, unique to each specific encounter.

Cultural Trajectory

Similar to the linguistic trajectory of transnational communicative competences, the cultural trajectory directs us to regard difference at a qualitatively new level. Communication with regards to various national cultures may inadvertently create and reinforce stereotypes. Such stereotypes occur not only on the interpersonal level, but also at the institutional level and often hinder learning outcomes. For instance, research shows that students who come from Japan are stereotyped at the U.S. colleges. Nakane and Ellwood (2009), in their comparative study of silence as non-participation among Asian students, find that western educators link the students’ academic success with active participation in class (Ellwood & Nakane). Such participation, according to the western educators, is expressed orally during in-class discussions. At the same time, Japanese students, as observed by their western instructors, tend to remain silent in class. While being
silent, in the minds of some western instructors leads to failure or poor performance, Japanese students view talk in the classroom settings as “timewasting”, “lacking consideration for other students”, a “face-threatening act for the teacher”, or a “face-threatening act for themselves” (Ellwood & Nakane). Thus, “silence” has become a marker of students’ of Japanese ethnicity in the western educational contexts, which is faulty, stereotypical, and not supported by empirical evidence (Anderson; McVeigh; Miller). Reflecting on the above study, culture is often viewed as a static set of values and behaviors representative of a nation at a geographical level (“all Japanese are silent in class”). Furthermore, a foreign national culture is often regarded as different and, as a result, non-transferable and not acceptable in the western educational settings- as demonstrated in the study by Ellwood and Nakane. Such a perspective on what constitutes the notion “culture” leads to the creation and reinforcement of stereotypes. How should we perceive “culture” through the lens of transnational communicative competences? How should we respond to “national culture” and “national cultural differences” in transnational and translingual encounters?

I pose that in understanding “culture”, we need to embrace the complexity of this multilayered concept. Researchers pose that there are at least six levels of culture: individual, team, functional, organizational, identity group, and national (TMC). When we look at culture from a perspective of plurality, stereotypes become harder to create. The plurality lens dictates that every single one of us is a mix of multiple cultures which are interconnected and interdependent. The national culture that we carry (Japanese, American, Russian) is the one formed historically in the context of the countries we are from. It is what mostly tends to be separative in diverse environments when we classify those coming from abroad as “the other”. As a result, how we approach negotiating meaning across national cultures often decides the communicative outcome of an encounter. National culture is embedded in the national rhetoric; it is, hence, important to explore its roots, developments, and current values and problems. While national culture with its shared history, traditions and even certain values seems to be a more tangible layer of the “culture at large”, it is a living organism that changes overtime to adapt to the demands and goals of the society today. It incorporates national traditions, national languages, and is only one part of who we are. Hofstede points out, “knowledge sharing, communication, and learning in organizations are profoundly influenced by [national] cultural values of individual employees” (2001). A number of companies working across various national cultures consider it crucial to provide their employees on transnational teams with cultural training aimed at understanding key business and social values, traditions, and rhetorical moves of each national culture involved in the project (Bennett et al.). Bennett et al. present that sixty percent of all companies with international presence headquartered in the U.S. provide their employees with cross-cultural training focused on the awareness of national cultures (239). Hence, in
transnational and translingual communication, it is important to understand what national culture interlocutors belong to, how they associate themselves with it, and in what ways it may impact communicative outcomes. Discovering and discussing national culture and understanding similarities and differences among values key to communication in various national cultures often leads to successful meaning negotiation. Additionally, such an awareness on the part of all involved in communication is vital. Going back to my definition of a successful transnational communicative act, it is not only knowledge or information transfer that it aims at, but also a stepwise construction of a sympathetic, caring, aware, and a peaceful global environment. Canagarajah cites studies where successful transnational sales team negotiations were preceded by a whole-team conversation about important historical, social-cultural peculiarities, and rhetorical choices assigned to sales negotiation discourse in the two national cultures involved in the encounter (2013). Such reciprocal constructive discussions of differences and similarities that occur prior or in the beginning of a transnational encounter are crucial in creating a safe and productive space to communicate transnationally. Discussing cultural and rhetorical differences is important in the educational contexts where multilingual students negotiate meaning orally and in writing. For instance, during peer readings of narratives, students in my multilingual freshmen composition classes take time to discuss rhetorical moves pertinent to their national cultures as well as various aspects of national and other cultures that emerge in their texts. Discussions of non-shared metaphors, naming practices in specific national cultures, such rhetorical moves as humor, prayer, framing paragraphs with rhetorical questions, code-meshing, cultural symbols, etc. are referred to by students as “best moments of the semester”; they add depth and uniqueness to students’ writing, help students ask questions related to rhetoric and meaning and develop strategies for communicative success. Most importantly, such discussions demonstrate that the national aspect is only one layer of “culture at large”. Canagarajah warns against a homogeneous orientation to cultures and ethnicities as well as classifying those as “different” and “conflicting” with western academic communities (2002). It may seem that attention to the peculiarities of the national cultures of interlocutors dominates in transnational and translingual professional and academic contexts. Such attention is important but it should not downplay the multilayered nature of “culture at large”. All levels of culture play a role in meaning making processes of individuals. National culture can be looked at as a starting point for the discussion of a common ground before the communicative act takes place. Assumptions, stereotypes, values, and traditions critical for each particular communicative encounter in each context need to be discussed for it to be truly successful. Interlocutors should make attempts at framing interactions with such discussions before engaging in high-stakes negotiations and projects. Coming into interactions with assumptions not discussed among interlocutors may lead to the strengthening of stereotypes and failure to
communicate meaning at in a truly effective manner. Transnational encounters should help representatives of various cultures, national and others, learn to develop the open and inquisitive mind towards culture and rhetoric. To properly handle cultural differences, the lens of multiplicity needs to be adopted when looking at a multifaceted culture of each individual involved in an interaction. Pedagogically, students need to be provided with opportunities to discover and discuss their various cultures, negotiate differences, develop strategies to make meaning and sustain constructive dialogue.

Rhetorical Trajectory

Claude Hurlbert points out that in order to re-focus our teaching on variety and develop a more intellectually satisfying educational model, we need to study the rhetorics of the world. Currently, there are very few studies that discuss world rhetorics with the goal of bringing those to college classrooms. Contrastive rhetoric scholars attempted to conduct and disseminate work on communicative behaviors and rhetorical patterns of natives of various national cultures. However, Contrastive Rhetoricians are heavily criticized by a number of Composition and Multilingual Writing scholars for their homogeneous orientation to culture, focus on conflict between the students’ national cultures and western academic discourse community, and, finally, limitations in research methodology. However, as everything else, the field has evolved and brought forth new considerations for transnational communications research. The New Contrastive Rhetoric today is “an interdisciplinary area of applied linguistics incorporating theoretical perspectives from both linguistics and rhetoric” (Connor, 494). It expanded its methodology and qualitatively changed its view of literacy. The field has gone beyond the paragraph as unit of analysis to better explore how and why we communicate. It is an important starting point to understand how national rhetorics have historically been shaped and continue to shape reflecting societal realia. A number of scholars in Business Communications take the work of New Rhetoricians seriously when researching transnational encounters. There are studies discussing cultural thought patterns, rhetorical values, and foundations of various world rhetorics with the goal of helping international companies improve communication quality. Thus Ardhcivili et.al. argue that national communicative traditions and cultural values of individual employees significantly impact successful knowledge transfer within international companies (94). Ardhcivili and his colleagues from four different countries conducted research to examine the effect of national rhetorics and cultures on knowledge sharing behaviors of Russian, Chinese, and Brazilian employees based on the universal criteria in international comparisons of cultures (Hofstede). They found that there are indeed differences as well as similarities in the values, principles, and patterns of national rhetorics in virtual communications among the population of the three countries. For instance, Russians valued communication by email and preferred this indirect interaction to the face-to-face encounters similar to Chinese, but in contrast
to Brazilians. Additionally, in-group mentality and “us” versus “them” strongly
dominated virtual interactions within the Russian office. However, it changed when
Russians communicated globally and referred to their organization with a sense of
loyalty and pride using the “us” pronoun. Such patterns and values could be
explained from the perspective of a national culture and national rhetoric, looking at
it historically or chronologically. Russian rhetoric stemmed from oratory speeches of
Orthodox priests aimed at the implementation of Christianity. Values of the Russian
national rhetoric historically have been: call for kindness, expressivity and
emotionality, respect for the written word, and humility. With the time, Russian
rhetoric developed into a tool to bring up patriotism: the love for the Tsar, country,
and the Russian language. Interestingly, in the current day and age, Russians come
back to their rhetorical foundations when bringing Rhetorica, the study of Rhetoric,
into the grade school curriculum with similar purposes. As it is explained on the
website of the Russian Ministry of Education, rhetoric is a key subject of the newly
designed “Curriculum 2020”. It is planned to be taught in grades one through eleven
with the goal of “the realization and internalization by students of the following
system of values: life of a person, the values of a family, patriotism, solidarity,
kindness, and truth” (Ладыженская). Thus, historically, Russian rhetoric has been
influenced by such national ideas as love of the land, the rulers, and the language.
Coming back to the research findings of Ardchivili et al., Russians built messages
that clearly defined inner and outer circles and exemplified the love and pride of the
employees for their company.

As Donahue argues, translingual model of communication is a “rhetorical
model important to the work of composition broadly speaking” (149). Russian
rhetoric and its conceptualization contributes to the position taken by Kaplan and
others: rhetoric reflects certain cultural values at a given time in a given society.
Therefore, it is necessary to be aware of histories, cultural values, and thought
patterns represented in the various rhetorics of the world in order to engage in
meaning making across nations at a qualitatively different level. Canagarajah posed,
“what enables translinguals to achieve meaning despite the fact that they all start with
their own codes is their openness to negotiate on equal terms” and ability “to
connect learning with use in their interactions” (p.176). Canagarajah sums up the
above in his notion “cooperative disposition”. Cooperation, I believe, can be
achieved in translingual interactions when all sides are aware of how they may be
different and the same when constructing communicative messages. In the end of
the day, transnational communicative competences target outcome beyond efficiency;
it directs us towards a genuine cooperation, orientation to and understanding of
variety: its formation, history, and current societal values and concerns negated
through rhetoric. While cultural training is provided by sixty percent of American
companies with international presence, American colleges need to be the
frontrunners in such instruction. The International curriculum initiatives that
currently predominantly offer costly study abroad opportunities or foreign language instruction (Thorne) should be complemented by various, classroom based and virtual, transnational and translingual initiatives aimed at allowing all students to participate in translingual encounters and develop key competences and strategies to successfully negotiate meaning in today's complex and demanding, culturally and rhetorically, communicative reality.

Transnational Communicative Competences: a Pedagogical Response

According to the NAFSA poll conducted in 2010, “international education is vitally important to the success of today’s young people in navigating a competitive international landscape, thriving in the global workplace, and leveraging their talents and skills in ways that move the United States forward in an increasingly connected world” (4). Unfortunately, the public sees foreign languages and study abroad programs to be often the only components of international education promoted in the American colleges. There are multiple opportunities of teaching about the world and for the global workforce in college classrooms. As a composition instructor, I use texts composed by freshmen in my multilingual and domestic composition classes as platforms for making and negotiating meaning across languages, cultures, and borders.

Pennycook explains, “Not only does translingualism allow us to unlock the texts with a text but it also opens up the complex processes by which individuals use the texts to reflect their often contradictory and conflicting subtextual personal, social and historical ideas” (Dovchin, Sultana, Pennycook 2015). This argument establishes a composition class, where various texts are constructed, shared, and discussed by a diverse group of students, as a space where transnational communicative competences get scaffolded. Writers work with texts that are, at their core, personal and contain histories, values, and norms of their respective cultures. These texts both unlock and shape who we are as communicators especially when we are offered to negotiate those texts with diverse audiences.

In order to unlock transnational and translingual perspectives towards communication and literacy in my multilingual freshmen composition classes, I designed a practice- and feedback-based Peer Reading and Response assignment conducted in the process of composing students’ personal narratives. As part of the Personal Narrative assignment, students are asked to write a five to ten-page story focused around a memorable event in their lives and the question, “What are you burning to ask the world?” The students are encouraged to set their narratives up around their countries and places of birth and context-specific social, political, and other issues that may have a transformative impact on the class community. Topics for such narratives include but are not limited to female genital mutilation in Mali, rebel movements in Libya and seemingly peaceful little towns in the Middle East, over-diagnosis of mental illness in the U.S.; intellectual freedom, digital privacy, poverty, media wars in specific contexts, etc. The more diverse the class is, the more
interesting and challenging the topics are. I argue that the process of composing personal narratives at its peer reading and response stage allows students to develop competences to communicate strategically along the three trajectories: linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical, and helps them shape their transnational and translingual communicative competencies in unique ways.

Peer reading and response is an integral component of the composing process in all of my composition classes, domestic and multilingual. The assignment is designed to help students focus on the making of meaning in a text versus corrections for the sake of grammar and form; as such it promotes curiosity, community, and “cooperative disposition” when discussing stories, language, culture, and realities in which students of various backgrounds live and write. Peer readings of students’ narratives encourage creativity in negotiating meaning and experimenting with language and rhetorical and literary means of constructing effective messages for multiple varied audiences. In the first week of the semester each student is scheduled to read one page from their personal narrative to the class and receive peer feedback. Students sign up to read their pages picking the day that suits their plans and pace. A three to five-week period is allocated to peer reading and response process within one academic semester. No more than three students get scheduled to read their pages on the same day. Readings and discussions take the whole class period, are guided by the instructor and followed by whole-class discussion session. The physical layout of the class is changed for the readings. The desks, initially arranged in straight rows to resemble a traditional classroom, are moved to the back; the chairs come up front, and get put in a circle. Readings have strict rules. The authors are to provide the instructor and all peers with a copy of their narrative page a class before they are scheduled to read. Peers are instructed to leave a minimum of five text-specific comments on the narrative page: two starting with the words “I like”, two meaning-focused improvement suggestions (How would it change your meaning if...?), and a brief letter at the bottom of the page with a general, non-text specific comment related to the whole text, addressing the author by name, and accompanied with a signature. The Letter may contain anything the reader would like to say to the author as a result of the reading experience. Typically, those “Letters to the Author” contain words of encouragement, praise, and understanding. A handout is provided to all students in support of the Peer Response Assignment. Emphasis is made on reading peers’ texts as if they were a piece of literature or any other types of texts that students read, discuss, question, and praise on a day-to-day basis. When reading peer’s drafts, students were encouraged to markup spots that were interesting, fascinating, different, unique, and, as a result, successful; they were also prompted to circle words, sentences, phrases, fragments and portions of texts, textual and non-textual elements, etc. that were not clear, or hindered intended meaning as readers perceived it. In their comments, the students were encouraged to stay as specific to the text as possible and explain in
detail what and why they found successful or unsuccessful in peers’ narratives. Grammatical and mechanical errors were explained to be the prerogative of the instructor and writing center tutors. Students were asked to not focus on the above in their comments unless the meaning is profoundly negatively impacted by mechanical issues present in the narratives. In the latter case, the students were required to explain in what way the meaning was affected by the error and provide a concrete improvement recommendation.

Negotiation of meaning across languages, cultures, and rhetorics in the course of Peer Readings begins on a peer response page in the form of peer comments. When commenting on the writing of one another, students focus not only on how language works to construct meaning, but also how rhetoric adds to the ability of a text to touch the reader. It can be argued that peer comments are not a part of the negotiation process due to the absence of an interlocutor. However, it is necessary to point out that the comments launch the negotiation process which continues when the comments are read, reviewed, and incorporated into the paper fully or partially, or ignored. It further continues when the comments are discussed in class during the peer reading process and beyond. All of the participants of the negotiation process make choices as to how they approach meaning making. Notably, each student receives comments from all of the peers and may synthesize receptive outcomes of their texts, become aware of multiple perspectives as to how the text is received and could be renegotiated for a shared meaning situated in the context of a particular class.

Peer response does not teach students formulas to become successful at communicating various ideas to various audiences, it teaches them to recognize, appreciate, and navigate diverse communication styles, patterns and practices as well as diverse backgrounds and histories of peers/audience effectively in order to make meaning. The Peer Readings and Response Assignment, when focused on meaning negotiation and not correction, guides students along the three communicative trajectories in the following ways. Within the linguistic trajectory, it teaches them to focus on meaning and not form, leveraging traditional “errors” as opportunities for meaning-making, which is very important in transnational interactions. Additionally, peer readings encourage students to problem-solve utilizing non-verbal resources when engaging in post-reading discussions. Peer readings promote open-mindedness to the students’ national traditions and realia and, within the communicative trajectory, teach them to acknowledge that authors belong to various cultures personally and professionally.

Students’ comments and Personal Narratives often focus on composing to increase awareness of their national cultures and the cultures of peers by means of writing. As a result of peer readings, students recognize that texts and non-textual elements involved in negotiation of meaning need properly framed for transnational communication. Framing includes gaining and sharing the knowledge of cultures and
rhetorics involved in a composing process at an appropriate level of detail. Finally, this assignment allows students to peek into the rhetorics of the world and see how various messages are constructed in the texts of their peers, how units of texts work together to reinforce, persuade, entertain, etc. It allows them to recognize rhetorical devices and appeals new to them, understand, and, often, appropriate new rhetorical patterns and choices to vary their own repertoires. As a result, Peer Readings and Response Assignment teaches students a variety of communicative strategies and helps develop their various transnational and translingual competences along the linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical trajectories.

Peer Readings and Response Assignment focused on negotiating meaning translingually and transnationally can be applied not only in multilingual composition classes or ESL sections of freshmen composition courses. With college classrooms getting more and more diverse, and with our understanding of literacy and culture expanding, such an assignment may be conducted with success in any English course at a college level. With the prior class discussion focused on multiple dimensions of culture, multilingualism as not necessarily related to foreign languages but encompassing dialects, professional jargon, etc. and, finally, rhetoric as specific to a locality, the above assignments can be offered to domestic student audiences with the same success in order to help them develop their competences and repertoires to communicate successfully with vast audiences across languages and geographies. Furthermore, in domestic educational contexts, it is recommended, using the virtual space of blogs and other interactive New Media, to partner with students in writing and language courses in a different country to compose, read, and respond to Personal Narratives.

Such an exposure will allow for the domestic student population to truly experience the challenges of transnational encounters and discover ways and means, including those afforded by the interactive New Media, to negotiate and make meaning across languages and national cultures. Regardless of the backgrounds of the students we teach, we need to be mindful of the current professional landscape of today’s global world with its demands and complexities. In such an environment, educators and administrators at four year colleges must pursue practice-based curricula that incorporate assignments to imitate the communicative challenges of the professional world as well as involve plenty of instructor and peer feedback to help shape the students’ transnational communicative competences and acquire transferrable skills and practices along linguistic, cultural, and rhetorical dimensions of transnational and translingual encounters. Such curricula focus will ultimately benefit not only the students, educators, and institutions of higher education by improving employability, access to resources, expanding horizons, and ensuing development through global partnerships, but also the global world in making it more peaceful and productive.
Peer response does not teach students formulas to become successful at communicating various ideas to various audiences, it teaches them to recognize, appreciate, and navigate diverse communication styles, patterns and practices as well as diverse backgrounds and histories of peers/audience effectively in order to make meaning.

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Overview
This assignment is grounded in the idea that the meaning of a piece of writing comes prior to its form. In other words, instead of focusing peer feedback on writing mechanics and other issues that pertain to the “nuts and bolts” of writing, we will direct our thoughts and feedback to the meaning of what we write first. We will focus on reading and not reviewing the work of one another. This is not to say that the form will be ignored. Meaning can be lost and/or obscured by the imperfections of form. Moreover, grammar and writing mechanics represent you and your academic and other identities. Therefore, the form cannot be neglected.

General Instructions
During peer readings you will be invited to read a page of your story in front of the class. You will know the date of the reading- we sign up for readings in advance. Please bring enough copies of your page a class prior to the date of your actual reading. You will distribute those copies to your peers and myself. You will receive pages with peer feedback back. It is expected that you will look through them at home and revise your writing incorporating some of the feedback provided by peers. Each page with feedback will be graded. You will receive a maximum of 40 points for pages with your feedback as a result of the readings.

What feedback is to expect?
You are to leave four comments on the margins of the one-page single-spaced paper. Your comments need to be specific. Circle the spot in the text that you choose to comment on. Your first two comments should start with the words “I like”, the other two – “How would it change your meaning if “or “What if”.

On the back or at the bottom of the page you should leave a paragraph long comment- a short letter/note for the author. You can comment on your general impressions of the text, your connection with it, and your wishes to the writer. Begin the letter with the name of the author. Sign your name at the bottom.

How to come up with feedback?
Start by reflecting on the following questions:

Think of how you read a book, article, a twitter post or anything else that draws your attention. How do you read outside of class? What thoughts come to your head
when you read FB or twitter posts? How do you engage with those texts? What is
the nature of your inner monologue inspired by those texts?

What can you say about those Twitter posts? What do you like? How are they
composed? Do they make sense? Do you have further questions? Finish the
sentences below:

I like the way you…
I like how you…
I like the…
HWICYM/What if you started by…
What if you included…
What if you changed…
What if you added…

A Page with Feedback: Example

Sonya
I could not stop reading your essay. You have a talent. Everything on this page
screams of pain—ongoing, upcoming, and slowly starting, etc. You are your pain. You
have lived and reflected on it so many times that it became a photo, a story, a
metaphor. You objectify it and, at the same time, it is within you. This is truly a
captivating text. I feel that I got in and under your skin and experienced your pain.

Jim

I like this sentence. It sets a friendly, conversational tone and engages
the reader.

I like the metaphor. It pinpoints the intensity and severity of illness.

What if you added a title to this image?

What if you started the sentence with the text and embedded the original image / screenshot of it?

Sonya
I could not stop
screams of pain—
have lived and re-
metaphor. You ob-
captivating text. I feel that I got in and under your skin and experienced your pain.

Jim
I thought that English would be the only language I "needed" to have a successful academic experience. But to my pleasant surprise, estaba equivocada. I was wrong. The classes I had randomly chosen for my first semester have taught me valuable life lessons that I will probably carry with me for my entire career.
A Change in Thought. A Change in pensamiento.
Lesley Chapa

My Spanish comprehension facilitated my English learning. Little did I know that that would be the last time (in a long time) that I would use all of my language resources in an educational setting.

Having a dual identity in the United States is a fragile thing to care about. My parents, like most immigrant families, sacrificed their careers in Mexico in hopes of giving their children a brighter future. Their pockets were empty upon arrival, but their hearts swelled at the thought of having their hijos succeed in the most successful nation. Pero dudo que mis padres, llenos de buenas intenciones, esperaban que sus hijos perdieran su identidad al recibir una educación. However, I doubt my parents expected their children to sacrifice their identity in exchange for an education. The literacy education I received from grades K-12 emphasized that English and Spanish could only exist in different spheres. Spanish was to only be used at home. Whereas English symbolized formality, eloquence, intelligence, and should be used in all public settings—school especially. Years later, I would learn that my thoughts had been dictated by mentiras.

Growing up I was an exceedingly curious child. Borderline obnoxious really. I was the type of kid that would ask things like “¿Porque el cielo tiene que ser azul?” or “¿Porque veo solamente de mis ojos y no con los ojos de los demas?” Teaching me to read was the only solution my mom found for these endless questions. Whenever we would go to the local super mercado, she would sit me in the carrito and would find me an easy children’s book to read before tackling her long shopping list. That seemed to have effectively done the trick during my early years. I’d fully immerse myself in the stories and would learn English phrases like “I do not like green eggs and ham.” Aunque en nuestro super mercado no vendian jamón o huevos verdes…yo me fije. Although I was not a fluent English speaker when I was younger, my mother ensured that my brothers and I could speak Español. She was a teacher in China, Nuevo Leon, Mexico before she gave everything up to raise three rascals in el otro lado. In her eyes, it would be una desgracia (a disgrace) if she failed to teach her own children her native language. She would sit me down each afternoon, on our plastic wrapped sofa, with a ginormous book entitled “Un tesoro de cuentos de hadas.” She would read the story, explain unknown phrases, and emphasize the spelling of simplistic words. She also used “una técnica de visualización” that she had perfected with her own students in Mexico. My mother would use all of the quirky illustrations to facilitate my understanding of her explanations. “Mira este es el lobo feroz. Vest Lobo se escribe L-O-B-
"O. Y se ven así como en este dibujo." Before she knew it, I began to read all of those stories on my own. But when I entered la primaria, I found myself struggling with English. Even though I knew the basics of the green huevos con jamon, no sabia lo suficiente para comunicarme con los otros alumnos. Mucho menos con la maestra. Everyday was a challenge for me. Proper English consisted of dozens of incomprehensible rules. But sooner or later I caught on. Siertas palabras en mi idioma eran muy similares (similar) a las palabras en ingles. My Spanish comprehension facilitated my English learning. Little did I know that that would be the last time (in a long time) that I would use all of my language resources in an educational setting. I think it is important to mention that I grew up in a small town in The Outskirts of Nowhere, Texas. Due to the size of the population, there was not a great sense of diversity. For the first few years of school, I did not speak Spanish often. Actually, I did not speak at all. I was a painfully shy kid. But when the 3rd grade rolled around, I had a decent grasp on both languages and I slowly started coming out of my shell. During that time, I met Samantha.
Balderas. La única otra estudiante que hablaba mi idioma. The only other student that spoke Spanish. I was over the moon. I finally had a friend I could resonate with in both languages. We would chat in Spanish during our free time and giggle over the most bizarre things. But one day Samantha Balderas didn’t go to school… Alamejor estaba enferma o algo pero eso no importa. My 3rd grade teacher found that to be the perfect opportunity to establish a mentality that would hinder my literacy development for the next nine years. She pulled me out of class, leaned down to my height and told me, “I have noticed that you and Sam have become very good friends recently. I also noticed that you two speak Spanish together in class. That needs to stop. Whenever you speak in Spanish, your classmates feel left out. I am sure you would not want to feel that way, right?” Me quedé muda. Regresé a clase y no hablé por semanas. Aunque la maestra pensaba que ella le estaba haciendo un bien a los otros estudiantes al decirme eso, ella no consideró mi punto de vista. Ella no consideró que ala mejor yo, como alumna Mexicana, me sentía aislada por los otros alumnos que solo hablan inglés. Sentí que mi cultura, mi identidad, y mi voz fue rechazada para complacer a los demás. I was left speechless. I apologized for my actions como si yo hubiera cometido un crimen grave and returned to my seat. From that day forth, a wall was not the only dividing force between Mexico and The United States of America. A barrier had been established between both of my cultures, identities, and language resources. My K-12 teachers emphasized time and time again that el lenguaje de mi madre should only exist en el hogar. Whereas English would be the only language that would help me achieve any form of real success en este lado.

Other than my 3rd grade teacher, the most influential “Sponsors of Literacy” in my life were my high school English teachers. In the article “Sponsors of Literacy,” Debora Brandt coins the term “sponsors of literacy” to define, “figures who turned up most typically in people’s memories of literacy learning: older relatives, teachers, priests, supervisors, military officers, editors, influential authors” (Brandt 167). In my case, my high school teachers dictated the development of my writing. The main objective in every course was to achieve a high score on the final AP exam. We were expected to memorize formats, transition words, and even possible arguments. Our personal perspectiva was not to be incorporated into our writing. El desarrollo de ideas was expected to be completed in English. El borrador del ensayo was expected to be completed in English. Any other thought process outside of the course expectations was deemed to be incorrect. No excuses! These pedagogical methods reinforced the idea that a monolinguistic system was the only correct way to teach students to properly wield the English language and master any academic field. En la clase no había espacio para otros pensamientos. No había espacio para otra identidad. Ironically enough, my Spanish teachers viewed their courses the same way. En la clase de español no se aceptaba el Inglés. “Aquí solamente se habla, se escribe, y se piensa en español! Dijen el Inglés para otras clases,” my spanish teachers would say. Esta división en pensamientos y perspectivas profundamente afectó la manera en que yo
veía the development of one’s literacy. This experience led me to believe that bilingual individuals had to have multiple lexicons, mentalities, writing styles, and identities to be successful in the United States educational system. Para mis clases de español tenía acceso a mis memorias de México para inspirar mis ensayos. Whereas in my English courses, I was expected to use my understanding of the country’s value system to develop my arguments. I was also encouraged to expand my lexicon to accommodate incomprehensible words such as discombobulated or cacophony to enhance my voice as writer. Cuando en realidad mi voz no era tan compleja y confusa. Mi voz era una composición de experiencias únicas y dolores que enriquecieron mi alma. But those things were deemed irrelevant and informal during my high school career. There was only one correct way to write. One correct way to think. One correct way to be.

Pero como dice el dicho, “Todo por servir se acaba.” I entered college believing that it would be similar to high school. I thought that English would be the only language I “needed” to have a successful academic experience. But to my pleasant surprise, estaba equivocada. I was wrong. The classes I had randomly chosen for my first semester have taught me valuable life lessons that I will probably carry with me for my entire career. My Rhetoric and Composition I teacher, Dra. Alyssa G. Cavazos, introduced the idea of “translanguaging” into my life. According to the article “Codemeshing in Academic Writing: Identifying Teachable Strategies of Translanguaging,” written by Suresh Canagarajah, the author describes translanguaging as “The ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system” (Canagarajah 1). In other words, it is when a person utilizes all of their language resources in order to facilitate their pensamientos (thought process) and enhance their ability to bring significado (value) into their writing. This learning strategy is not only useful for a person’s literacy development but also para el desarrollo de identidad y para ser más comprensivos de las personas que nos rodean. The thought of utilizing writing as a way to better understand our community and ourselves was coincidentally reinforced by my U.S History II professor, Mr. Edward Wallace. During the first week of school he emphasized the importance of reflection. He mentioned how it is easy to become blinded by hubris. The only way to combat that was to write…. in any way we felt comfortable in, in order to reflect upon our actions and motivations. No tenemos que reflexionar de cierta manera. There is no format. No tiene que ser en English. El punto es usar todos tus language resources para poder evaluar tu mentalidad and become a better person. Now language resources do not strictly encompass different languages only. For example, there are different Englishes. [I know, I didn’t think that was an actual term until it was explained to me by Dra. Cavazos]. Diverse Englishes include speaking styles that deviate from Formal English, the use of slang, jargon, or simply mixing languages. Learning about translanguaging in college has made me realize that being multilingual should not be seen as a burden. Al contrario, poder diversificar mi manera de pensar y resolver problemas es
una fortaleza. On the contrary, being able to diversify one’s thought process and problem solving strategies should be seen as a strength. This has also changed how I value literacy in general. Writing is no longer a boring quehacer that has to be structured de cierta manera in order to be deemed worthy of a high mark. Reading is no longer about mindlessly skimming through the text in order to extract information that I will later regurgitate in my essays. Por fin me e dado cuenta que no necesito sacrificar mis opiniones o mi identidad para ser exitosa. I finally realized that I do not have to sacrifice my opinions or my identity in order to be successful. Pero yo tuve suerte. Suerte que tuve la oportunidad de recibir una educacion despues de la universidad y llegue a tomar la clase ideal que cambio mi mentalidad. But I was lucky to have had the correct circumstances align perfectly in order to reawaken the writer within me and rediscover the value of literacy education. However, people should not have to spontaneously reach these groundbreaking conclusions during their post-secondary education. Translanguaging strategies should be introduced at an early age in order to prevent people from feeling discouraged by their own abilities—from feeling conflicted with their cultural identity. The moment the American educational system begins to embrace their population’s diversity, will be the day that academic results skyrocket. When individuals begin to feel comfortable and accepted, they will lose the fear of fracaso. They will actually begin to aprender por el puro gusto de aprender instead of focusing on obtaining a certain grade. Especially when it comes to writing because if “the pen is mightier than the sword,” then why shouldn’t people be encouraged to use all of the wacky colores they own?

Nonetheless, I do not regret my literacy experience. Esa adversidad me hizo mas fuerte y me enseno lecciones valiosas sobre la escritura y mi identidad. With a combination of time, luck, and effort I grew to realize that my voice as a writer was not improved by jumbling big words into a passive argument. On the contrary al usar mis recursos de lenguaje, mis experiencias, y mis propios pensamientos I can manage to resonate with a more diverse audience. Porque los argumentos mas impactantes en mi vida fueron esos donde reaccionaba con la frase, “Wow that is me! This person is literally writing about my experiencia!” Now I can only pray that by leaving a piece of my corazón in this narrative I can provoke a change in pensamiento in someone else’s mind.

Writing for Change: A Public Document

Para mi último proyecto en la clase de Rhetoric and Composition I, yo decide crear un documental sobre el significado de translanguaging. Although the research I conducted in my second project did not revolve around this theme, it did in fact influence my decision. What I found in my research was that many professionals had conflicting opiniones sobre translanguaging porque nadie sabía claramente que era eso. In the report entitled “A Holistic Approach to Multilingual Education: Introduction,” written by Jasone Cenoz and Durk Gorter, the authors highlight the fact that multilingual students should not be expected to emulate the “native
speaker.” They explore this notion by saying “... multilinguals and learners who are in the process of becoming multilingual should not be viewed as imitation monolinguals in a second language or additional language, but rather they should be seen as possessing unique forms of competence, or competencies, in their own right.” Pero estos autores no consideran que translanguaging is a pedagogical strategy that can be practiced by everyone. No solo los que saben hablar diferentes lenguas. It’s also for them folks that know howta speak in different Englishes, y’all know what I mean? Due to this misunderstanding, I found it essential to create a documentary that expressed the meaning of translanguaging. Porque es necesario que las personas sepan que significa algo, antes de poder implementarlo en una clase o en sus vidas.

I chose to convey this message through a documentary format. This specific format was selected porque me ayudaría comunicarme mejor con mi audiencia. Yo quería que este mensaje llegara a las pantallas y a los corazones de estudiantes universitarios que find themselves pursuing a career in education or in English. Seleccioné este grupo como la audiencia de mi mensaje because I feel as though it would be easier to revolutionize the educational system if the new coming staff members had intentions of changing the status quo. I think it might be difficult to change the minds of stubborn educators and although young children are quite impressionable - I fear that they’d forget over the years. Entonces yo creo que los chicos universitarios son el grupo perfecto para mejorar el sistema educacional. Which brings me to the reason why I chose to follow a documentary format. I chose this format mainly because most college students have a smartphone of some sort. Whether it’s the newest one on the market or an older model, almost everyone has internet access at their fingertips. Almost everyone has developed some sort of addiction with their phone, and I think it would be easier to reach my audience with a video rather than an infographic or other platform.

Entonces, al crear el documental decide comenzar con imágenes que estimularán los sentidos de mi audiencia. I included clips of campus and of students walking through its hallways. I wanted to establish a direct conexión con los estudiantes de UTRGV. Comencé con escenas relacionadas a mi mensaje y con una breve introducción. However, it was important for me to include interviews of my professor and peers in order to show that other individuals from different backgrounds also share my beliefs. Both my professor and my classmate have had completely different literacy experiences. Yet they are both able to agree upon this topic. It’s not just some random message I have conjured up simply to earn a grade. It a real educational issue that could affect the lives of many students around the nation. However, I do understand that are more than a few limitations within the genre of my choice. Normally documentaries attempt to convey a vast amount of information in a short amount of time and in an interesting way. This can lead the filmmakers to place a greater emphasis upon a single perspective rather than objectively exploring all sides with a scout’s mindset. Pero esto no significa que todas
las personas del mundo están de acuerdo con este método de enseñanza. According to the research I conducted, there are many people who view translanguaging as a negative thing. An opinion piece entitled “Letters and Comments,” written by Ascenio et al., shares multiple perspectives on an article that advocates against multilingual books or resources in public libraries. Bert Chapman, one of the authors, agreed to the by claiming that providing a diverse selection of books “…encourages Hispanic immigrants to remain isolated in a linguistic and cultural cul-de-sac” and that “Libraries should be at the forefront in promoting English-languish reading and instruction to immigrant communities.” In other words, there are professionals who believe that translanguaging will only limit multicultural students from fully assimilating into the American way of life. The problem with that mindset is that our educational system should not feel entitled to morph their minority students into something they are not. Rather, they should encourage students to embrace their diferencias para mejorarse como estudiantes y como personas.

También decide mezclar both of my languages en el documental. La razón más obvia por eso es que… de eso trata el mensaje!! El propósito de mi proyecto es demostrar la importancia de poder expresarse uno con all of one’s language resources. What better way to lead than by example? For example, towards the end of my video I included a call to action statement that says “Are our perspectivas sobre la escritura willing to change?”. No solo quería demostrar como se practica el concepto de translanguaging, but I also want to encourage my audience to negotiate meaning. I want them to take an interest in the concept and work alongside the material. Whenever I presented my project to my classroom one of my classmates asked me why I did not choose to include Spanish to English translations in my video. To which I responded, “Well for the same reason I did not translate it from English to Spanish. Or from both of these languages to French, Korean, or Japanese. I want my audience to work for the meaning.” That is what translanguaging is all about. It’s not just about diversifying people’s writing, but it’s also about encouraging intellectual empathy and engaging all groups of people into one’s work. Although that is something I did not blatantly explain in my video, I hope it is something that becomes more clear once my audience members seek to learn more about translanguaging.

In the video itself I included various clips. La mayoría de las escenas coinciden con lo que estoy hablando en el video en sí. Pero en algunas de las escenas I decided to include clips of different forms of writing through my computer screen. Whether that be a text message or a tweet or my literacy narrative. I wanted to show that translanguaging is something that is multifaceted. It is a strategy that can be used in almost all aspects of daily life. However, in the clips it is evident that whenever I decide to incorporate mi otro lenguaje en mi escritura my computer doesn’t take it too well. It identifies this new language as foreign. As something que no pertenece en esa oración. Which is funny, because if I had made an entire sentence in Spanish
my computer would not have tried to autocorrect me. Although it is a minor detail in the grand scheme of my video I thought it was important to incorporate it as it was. Rather than making it seem as though my computer had not considered that to be an “error”. This shows that the barrier between languages can be seen everywhere in very subtle ways. In ways many may not even take the time to notice.

Through this project I hope to establish a clear definition of “translanguaging.” It is important to know WHAT translanguaging is in order to establish negotiation strategies, grading policies, or classroom expectations. The definition of the term is the foundation. It is what will guide and validate a teacher’s actions/pedagogical philosophy. I also hope to have inspired whoever it is that comes across this video. I hope people understand the message I attempted to convey and I hope they can see the importance of translanguaging through the short documentary that I created.

In other words, there are professionals who believe that translanguaging will only limit multicultural students from fully assimilating into the American way of life. The problem with that mindset is that our educational system should not feel entitled to morph their minority students into something they are not. Rather, they should encourage students to embrace their diferencias para mejorarse como estudiantes y como personas.

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Texas Education Agency. “Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading.” Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part II. Chapter 110.

There are many routes to improving writing and ARC capitalizes on them. Grace and Kamilah received individual support, took their writing through multiple drafts, got specific and timely feedback, had a sense of audience and purpose, and wrote from prompts that drew on concrete aspects of their physical environments and emphasized the self.

"out in the open and free": nature-based settings and literacy learning at adventure-risk-challenge

lundahl

"out in the open and free": nature-based settings and literacy learning at adventure-risk-challenge

merrilyne lundahl
“Out in the Open and Free”: Nature-based Settings and Literacy Learning at Adventure-Risk-Challenge
Merrilyne Lundahl

Out there we were just out in the open and free and now we’re in classrooms where it’s a little bit more enclosed. You feel like you’re in a little box trying to think, but out there in the whole wilderness where we were, it was a little more open and easier to think really well. (Enrique, Adventure Risk Challenge Participant)

Just as “setting” is often defined as the background where action occurs in literature, setting is often in the background in education practices and research despite intuitive notions that setting impacts learning. Many scholars and practitioners in English Studies have made the public turn, taking their curriculum and pedagogies outside of the classroom and into local communities (e.g. Flower, 2008; Mathieu, 2005). Still others assume the value of field experiences, service learning, and place-conscious education (e.g. Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Waters, 1996; Brooke, 2003; Reynolds, 2004). We know that what happens in our classrooms is a tiny portion of the learning students do. Shirley Brice Heath (2002) describes learning as life-long, constant, and not singularly defined by the setting of school. She explains: “Outside the physical barriers and arbitrary limits of education, the concept of learning unrestricted by time and place is an ancient and instinctive one” (vii). “Time and place” is the most basic definition of setting, and I am interested in understanding how setting impacts literacy teaching and learning. What does it mean when students perceive themselves as “enclosed” in a classroom or “out in the open and free” in nature?

I work from the premise that settings influence social relationships, affective experiences, and cognition, all key aspects of literacy learning. Some students are alienated from learning due to their negative associations with school spaces and school literacies; dramatically changing the learning setting has potential to reconnect students with literacy learning. I make this assertion based on a study I conducted on a literacy and leadership program, Adventure Risk Challenge (ARC). Participants like Enrique experienced shifts in their literacy-based practices, attitudes, and identities, and moving from “enclosed” classrooms to “out there in the whole wilderness” seemed to facilitate those shifts by providing new, often enabling experiences and messages.

As a qualitative researcher seeking to understand a holistic system, I saw relationships among setting, social dynamics, curriculum, and pedagogy as symbiotic
and associated, not causal. The interpretation of my data suggests that, at ARC, nature-based settings encouraged empathetic social relationships, allowed for positive emotions, and made it easier for students to think and write. Taken together, these effects contributed to implicit, positive messages about self, literacy, and learning. Although the literacy practices students engaged at ARC were not significantly different from the literacy practices of school, students articulated a very different experience of those practices at school and ARC settings. In this article I focus on nature-based settings as a mediator of students’ literacy learning and draw from my findings to suggest opportunities for enhancing student learning.

Background & Methods

ARC is a nonprofit organization that serves California high school students, most of whom are English Language Learners, Generation 1.5, eligible for free and reduced lunch, and will be the first in their families to attend college. ARC offers 24- and 40-day summer programs; students live at basecamps within the University of California Natural Reserves system and go on multi-day backpacking expeditions in the Sierra. The organization describes itself as an “integrated literacy and leadership” program; the academic literacy components include instruction and practice in language, reading, writing and speaking. The leadership components of the program are primarily located in the outdoor adventure curriculum, which includes rock-climbing, kayaking, rafting, a challenge/ropes course, and backcountry travel.
I investigated ARC because I was interested in its claims of integrating literacy, civic aims, and place. I worked closely with ARC leadership and my institutional review board to plan a robust and ethical study. My research design saw ARC as a case study, and I used ethnographic methods such as participant observation and interviews. I embedded with ARC during the spring and summer of 2015. My participant observation included the role of grammar (now Language Power) instructor, which involved adapting the grammar curriculum for a shorter course and delivering it through seven, hour-long lessons. Additionally, I took charge of students’ independent reading time, helping them select books and having informal conversations with them about reading strategies and interests. These formalized roles were important for reciprocity and also enabled me to be more authentically integrated into the organization. As a participant observer, I also took part in the backcountry all-staff training trip, a backpacking orientation trip with staff and potential student participants, the preparation work prior to students’ arrival, all of the students’ basecamp days, their rock climbing and ropes course experiences, their final backcountry expedition, and the post-course debriefing. Throughout these experiences I took field notes; because I sometimes was so immersed as a “participant,” my field notes included jottings throughout the day that I fleshed out during spare moments. These field notes were coded for emerging themes and led to the development of interview questions.

After completing the participant observation, I conducted 19 semi-structured interviews with ARC alumni and two with ARC instructors. Interviews were transcribed and coded as part of my analysis; I consolidated codes into categories of community, emotion, pedagogy, place, self, and writing, and worked to develop a theory about the impact of nature-based settings on students’ writing.
Implicit Learning: Hidden Curriculum of Settings

Settings implicitly communicate messages to learners, but there is little research investigating what messages students take from nature-based instructional settings. A useful framework for thinking about the role of setting in shaping student learning is the idea of a hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum exists alongside and underneath a formal curriculum and refers to the transmission of values, attitudes, beliefs, and habits that work to socialize children in ways that, at minimum, maintain the status quo. In English Studies, scholars have looked at the hidden curriculum in relationship to genre (Finke, 2004) and testing (Booher-Jennings, 2008), but much of what critical pedagogy and rhetoric does can be seen as uncovering hidden curricula and working to expose power relationships and to enact more socially just pedagogies. In the preface to *The Hidden Curriculum and Moral Education*, editors Henry Giroux and David Purpel explain that while it is generally assumed that schools socialize and there exists a hidden curriculum, what is actually worth investigating is the “function and consequence of such a curriculum” (ix); my study considers the “function and consequence” of a hidden curriculum in nature-based settings.

The connotation of “hidden curriculum” is usually negative as the “lessons” students learn from schooling tend to stifle identity, reinforce arbitrary structures, foster dependency on authority figures, and eliminate self-reflection in addition to maintaining systems of injustice. In contrast to my participants’ experiences at high school, the “hidden curriculum” of nature-based settings at ARC impacted students’ literacy learning in positive ways. They escaped the oppressive messages of their high-school environments and had powerful, often corrective, experiences that allowed them to take up more enabling messages about self, literacy, learning, and future opportunities. Those messages, and the differences between school and ARC settings, are summarized in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Settings</th>
<th>ARC’s Nature-Based Settings</th>
<th>Role of Setting at ARC</th>
<th>Implicit Messages from ARC Settings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>Inspirational</td>
<td>Community-building; self-reflection &amp; identity development; aids in generating ideas &amp; concentration; elicits positive emotions; mandates relevant transitions and structures; facilitates toggling between concrete &amp; abstract; integrates experiences</td>
<td>Who I am and where I am are related; I care about and for a place; I have many strengths; I can take responsibility for my actions in this place; I can think of things to write about; subjects are interrelated; we are all just human animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Risky</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrelevant to curriculum</td>
<td>Major curricular component</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Setting and Implicit Learning at ARC and at school*
Nature-based Settings as a Pedagogical Aid

All of my informants, regardless of their initial strengths going into the ARC summer program, reported changes in their writing. Grace, who recently became the first college graduate in her family, participated in a 40-day summer course. She explained that ARC offered her “a very intimate space to work on my writing skills… Now I am a better writer. I feel very confident.” Another 40-day alumna and first generation college graduate, Kamilah, described a drastic change in her attitude about writing after ARC: “I [hated] writing before. Now it’s one of my strongest [subjects].” There are many routes to improving writing and ARC capitalizes on them. Grace and Kamilah benefitted from how ARC works with students to improve writing: they received individual support, took their writing through multiple drafts, got specific and timely feedback, had a sense of audience and purpose, and wrote from prompts that drew on concrete aspects of their physical environments and emphasized the self. Their writing and their feelings about writing developed within a community of writers and within a context of rapport between teachers and students. Students at ARC write a lot, they read their work, and through reading instruction, they pay attention to the moves of published writers. In writing studies and education, we recognize the value of these practices and work to implement them as much as possible into our various pedagogies. The writing instruction Grace and Kamilah received at ARC is not exclusive to nature-based settings. However, ARC instructors have an additional pedagogical route to aid in writers’ development: nature-based settings and time.

Over the past two decades the value of “nature” has received more scholarly and popular attention. Empirical studies in the fields of health and urban planning suggest, for example, that green space leads to a greater sense of well-being (Maas, 2006) and that people heal more quickly when they can see plants (Ulrich, 1991). In a review article that sought to categorize the intangible benefits of nature to humans, Russell et al (2013) conclude that, “The effects of nature on mental and physical health have been rigorously demonstrated, whereas other effects (e.g. on learning) are theorized but seldom demonstrated” (473). In the following sections, I draw from my findings to shed light on how nature-based settings impacted literacy learning through social, affective, and cognitive domains.

Nature-based Settings and Relationships

Organizations like ARC have different constraints than formal school settings: programs can organize around a specific and limited mission, participants have made the choice to be involved, the instructor-to-student ratio is lower, and instructors and cohorts of participants spend more time together. At ARC, nature-based settings were used to facilitate community building and positive self-
development. The associated dynamic I observed, and that participants spoke to, was one of greater empathy and a sense of freedom in being oneself. Participants experienced the social setting of ARC very differently than their school settings: they were encouraged to get to know people across differences and to be more open about themselves. Setting was instrumental in building community, both through the wilderness and literacy components of the program.

I define community building as deliberate strategies to encourage perspective taking, enhance empathy, and develop interpersonal communication and conflict resolution skills. These are not dependent on a wilderness setting, but ARC used setting to build community. The settings and activities, like backcountry travel, required strong teamwork. Participants must work together to find appropriate routes, campsites, kitchens, and bear hangs, and then they work together setting up shelters, cooking meals, and storing food. They work together to cope with blisters, avoid dehydration, and maintain a pace that works for the group while meeting goals like reaching sites before dark or making a peak ascent. Molly explained, “It’s all about helping each other. Like if we don’t help each other, we’re never going to get to where we’re going to go.”

Backcountry travel also encouraged conversations. When I asked Sebastian about the notion of freedom that many participants referenced, he responded by talking about a social freedom:

I think the sense of freedom comes from just being free to talk about whatever you want, whatever is on your mind, especially when you’re hiking for a long amount of time. … just let those walls down and get to know each other.

I remember hiking, and we would hike in a single file line, and I remember … just kind of talking in between us, so I guess it’s like a freedom to talk about whatever you want and get to know each other even though you’re completely strangers.

For Sebastian, time on the trail encouraged conversation and helped build friendships and a larger sense of community. Participants often crossed the lines established in their high school social orders: Mexican, White, African American, and Asian kids became friends, as did students in honors classes and those in special education; students with significant trauma in their backgrounds became friends with those of very different backgrounds; kids who had never stepped out of line connected with those who had criminal records. One alumnus explained that the setting acted as an equalizer: “When a group of people, like twelve of us are in nature together, it gives you the idea that we’re all human beings, we all have the same feelings, we all have the same thoughts.”

Relationships at ARC were also forged through the curriculum components that focused on communication and self-awareness, and these curricular aims often
drew from nature-based settings. Participants moved naturally between adventure activities, academic work, self-reflection, and group discussions. One English lesson that brought together self, community building, writing, and setting was Heavy Rock/Light Rock. A seasoned English instructor, Jess, described that she worked to “incorporate the setting into the teaching, so that where [students] are is integral to what they’re doing.” The goals of the lesson include teaching metaphor and simile. Students identify burdens and values in their life through comparison to a heavy and a light rock in the surrounding environment. The prompt includes directions to “describe what weighs you down in life” and asks, “Is there any heavy part of yourself or your life that would like to leave behind/not have to deal with anymore?” for the heavy rock, and for the light rock students are invited to describe “what makes you happy in your life” and to think about goals (English Journal s15, 2015). This is a lesson that sets the stage for much of the sharing ARC students do, and participants talked about how impactful it was to hear the personal stories of their peers and how they learned that you should “never judge.” Many of my participants also talked about feeling like others “had my back” in a way they hadn’t experienced before. Though they struggled to articulate it exactly, participants had a sense that the setting of this lesson allowed them to be more open in sharing. One alumna, a refugee from a war-torn country, told me that the settings helped with relationships because “there was so much more trust” and being in nature allowed people to feel a sense of peace and freedom.

The settings of programs like ARC can shift relationships between instructors and students. In the summer I was a participant observer, Ezra emerged as one of the group’s natural leaders. He was charismatic, athletic, and wise. When he seemed bored, disengaged, and would distract others in my language power class, I recognized that “grammar” was an aspect of ARC that challenged and frustrated him—he gave up easily, was convinced he couldn’t get it, and acted like he didn’t care. In a school setting, my evaluation of him would likely be less favorable than what it was at ARC. Instead, I could see that he experienced the class as mundane and he didn’t know how to transfer the lessons from high-intensity, dramatic activities to everyday challenges. Being with Ezra in different settings and witnessing his strengths kept my expectations and engagement high.

For some students, classroom settings automatically create antagonism between themselves and the teacher. This was the case for Alberto, who explained:

“I feel like in the classroom, a student goes in with the mindset to go against the teacher and just be another person…when they go into a classroom they go in with this mindset of I have to act this way or I have to say these things or I don’t have to participate…”

The sense of having to be a different person did not follow Alberto to ARC, where he felt respected as himself and could offer that to others. Molly respected her ARC instructors because she saw the setting they had her in as a privilege:
You’re sitting outside in nature, laying down on this yoga mat in the middle of trees everywhere, and you’re doing school. Like, we wouldn’t fall asleep because we know to respect them, because look at where they have us, we are enjoying having these privileges.”

Nature-based settings at ARC, from the challenges the setting provides to the time and space students find within those settings, helped students forge relationships with peers and teachers that felt supportive and authentic.

Nature-based Settings and Positive Emotions

Most models of the role of emotions in learning indicate that emotions like interest and challenge facilitate learning, while emotions such as high anxiety inhibit it (e.g. Bazerman, 2011; Pekrun, 1992). Studies in motivation and education indicate the importance of “competence, autonomy, and relatedness” and suggest that when these are missing, learning suffers (Ryan and Deci, 2000). My participants reported experiencing feelings that enhanced their learning, such as connection, gratitude, and self-confidence. They reported that the nature-based settings at ARC often led to a sense of peace, freedom, and inspiration. Participants’ feelings map onto several components of well-being including meeting innate human needs of autonomy, competence, purpose, growth, and identity (Russell et al, 2013). School, however, was not a place participants associated with a similar sense of well-being. Instead, they felt judged, invisible, “like a cog in a machine,” antagonistic, and bored. Such negative feelings at school may have led to negative expectancies and attitudes about school literacies.

Many ARC students did not identify as readers, writers, or see themselves as competent in the English language. Kamilah “hated writing essays.” Grace was “very sensitive with [her] grammar” and “just such a poor writer.” Luis explained that when he went to ARC, his “writing skills weren’t that good, my speech, my talking wasn’t that well.” He “wasn’t a very strong student, but [he] also didn’t really try or
ask questions because [he] felt stupid.” These participants credited dramatic changes to ARC; Kamilah started to identify writing as one of her best subjects, Grace discovered value in informal writing, and Luis gained confidence in speaking up. Though delineating direct relationships between settings, affect, relationships, and the whole of students’ experiences at ARC is not possible, I suggest that the positive feelings participants attributed to their nature-based settings helped facilitate literacy gains.

Participant discourse about natural settings eliciting positive feelings aligns with what studies from psychology to urban planning and much of human history suggests: being in nature, even with its potential physical discomforts, feels good. It often alleviates stress and puts people in contact with feelings of awe, gratitude, belonging, and a sense of calmness or peace. When I asked Enrique why he thought setting may have been important to his learning at ARC, he replied, “This is kind of cheesy, but just the beautiful positivity going around.” Alberto reported that, “nature helped me a lot to have my thoughts unroll because I wasn’t worrying about anything.” Loie asserted, “writing in nature is always easier” because your mind “goes to peace” and “it feels right.” Participants expressed how the freedom and peacefulness they felt in nature “gets your mind flowing.” Sofia described how setting impacted her writing:

I could just [do] writing, like creative writing, like the detail. … It was because I was out there exposed to a different environment, the trees, writing peacefully…. You find a nice rock, a nice view. On one side there’s a sunset that’s bright and beautiful. On the other side, it’s all gloomy. It touches your feelings and inspires you to write different things.

Sebastian, when reflecting on what he remembered from writing in the various settings at ARC, explained:

…you sit on a rock or a log, and you’re just thinking, and it goes back to being reflective of whatever experiences you’ve been through. It’s also inspiration… It’s almost like bliss. There’s quiet, there’s birds. … It’s just a setting that inspires ideas. … It’s just peaceful.

When students experienced positive emotions or relief from painful emotions, their writing often flourished. It opened the door to inspiration and helped students generate ideas.

When participants contrasted ARC with school settings, they indicated that their schools prohibited a sense of freedom or autonomy and provided few opportunities for inspiration. Chloe talked about being “forced to go to school” where she “[felt] like it’s just the same thing over and over everyday.” She compared writing at ARC to writing at school:

It just felt really cool writing out in the wilderness. In a classroom it’s way different. It’s just four walls, and a whole bunch of people. I can’t really think
when I’m in a classroom. When I went out there I felt like I could really write, and express myself how I wanted to.

My participants’ positive feelings in nature helped them experience writing tasks differently, and some took up messages about literacy learning as more pleasant and something they were able to do with greater ease. They experienced “freedom,” “bliss,” and “inspiration” while doing academics in nature that they did not encounter in school.

**Nature-based Settings and Cognition**

My participants also reported being more creative, more energetic, and having higher concentration when working outside. Chloe was one of many participants who credited nature-based settings with greater ease in thinking. She explained that writing outside “would give [her] more stuff to write about.” It allowed ideas in in a way she didn’t experience in classrooms, where she “can’t really think.” When I asked Enrique to elaborate about the “beautiful positivity” and being able to think more clearly, he explained:

> I think it’s just the fact that you know you’re outside, and that … Pretty much you’re just in an infinite space now. So you just feel kind of … Your mindset is just easier to wander and go out there. You’re more open to everything and just willing to take everything in and concentrate as well as you can.

For Enrique and so many others, ARC was associated with freedom. He makes a shift from the external environment, which is “infinite” and open, to himself—he personally becomes more open. The external space seemed to allow participants like Enrique to feel more at ease internally. Willingness to engage the processes of learning, including frustration, expanded with more space. For all students, and perhaps particularly for those like Enrique who have an individualized educational plan, the willingness to tolerate frustration, to not shut down in the face of difficulty, is key to learning.

One way of understanding these students’ experiences is by turning to research on nature and attention. Attention Restoration Theory (ART) posits natural settings require a less-demanding type of attention than the attention required by academic literacies, called directed attention. Directed attention is essential in information processing, and it “requires effort, plays a central role in achieving focus, is under voluntary control (at least some of the time), is susceptible to fatigue, and controls distraction through the use of inhibition” (Kaplan 170). Writing and other literacy tasks, particularly if not in one’s first language, require directed attention that is difficult to maintain and leads to mental fatigue. According to ART, being in natural settings allows for this direct and focused attention to be “restored.” Experimental design studies have demonstrated that time spent in different types of
environments—walking in a park vs. along a busy street, for example—influences subsequent attention. The result is that “after an interaction with natural environments, one is able to perform better on tasks that depend on directed-attention abilities” (Berman, Jonides, and Kaplan, 2008). Participants at ARC are continuously interacting with natural environments; they may be taking intuitive breaks that refuel their attention for the cognitive demands of writing.

Interesting surroundings also led to better description and fueled creativity, something Naomi and her peers experienced. She offered the example of a writing exercise from the first expedition, when the group was at

…This one lake and there was this dead white tree reaching upward to the sky. It was really cool looking; it looked like a claw I thought, and we were describing it and everybody came of with these different descriptions, whereas if you were in the school and you asked someone to try [to describe] the wall, they’d be like, ‘white brick.’

Importantly, the settings helped students manage distractions, particularly those from technology and social media. Josiah explained that the setting made it so participants were “isolated from the rest of the world, you know it kept us away from phones, computers, so it kept us really on track to concentrate on what we were doing.” He also suggested a type of mindful presence:

You just felt like you’re just here and now, there’s nothing to distract you and so I think it’s really helpful and that’s one of the things I remember, that it was just really helpful to be outside because you get to focus and it’s peaceful and it’s quiet.

My participants’ discourse revealed synergy and integration, where settings created positive feelings and provided novelty to enhance students’ experiences of writing. For some students, the settings offered concrete topics to write about, and the curriculum invited them to go back and forth between their direct experience and more abstraction. The settings also facilitated greater concentration, both by eliminating distractions and by allowing for attention restoration during and after the highly demanding, directed attention required by writing.

**Switching the Setting: Creating Spaces for Enabling Messages**

David Orr (1993), an environmental studies and education scholar, articulates the hidden curriculum of built campus environments. He argues that the spaces of classrooms and lecture halls “do little to lift the spirit, stir the imagination, fuel the intellect, or remind us that we are citizens of ecological communities” (227). The natural settings of ARC do what built environments, including schools, do not. But what does that mean for the masses of students and teachers who do not have access to places and programs such as ARC? As I conducted my research, I wondered what it meant to teach and learn in settings perceived as “open and free”
or “enclosed.” My participants attributed their “open and free” nature-based settings to positive feelings and better thinking, and I noticed how the setting provided opportunities for community building and self-reflection. Students indicated they strongly valued the relationships they developed at ARC, and that sharing time and place—and the experiences fostered by their settings—was integral to forming those relationships.

A major pattern of responses from participants in my study suggests that a key impact of their ARC experience was a shift in beliefs about their literate selves. Some participants saw themselves as ready to take the risk of being the only Hispanic in their AP or honors courses, some started thinking for the first time that college was possible, most started to view writing as more of a process and began to feel more confident in themselves as English Language Arts students. They could look around and generate ideas; their own observations and experiences could make for compelling writing. Peers, teachers, and larger audiences responded encouragingly to their work. They experienced writing in a more relaxed setting and writing just felt easier. These changes seem to be a result, more than anything, of well-established, effective writing pedagogies. I have had many students in my first year writing courses indicate similar changes in their beliefs about themselves as literate beings—and those courses were taught in classrooms on college campuses.

Nature-based settings at ARC helped students write for all the reasons (and likely others) I’ve described. Because most practitioners won’t be teaching in settings like those at ARC, what seems a valuable postulation is that changing the setting—from high school to a summer program, or from high school to first year writing in college—invites students to counter some of their negative associations with high school. Secondary teachers, fighting against those associations, might design their classroom spaces and create learning experiences that invite novelty. The less “school” like the school, the better students might be. Better still is to draw from Attention Restoration Theory and the growing research on green space—open windows if we have them, and decorate with plants and posters of natural places. We can use setting as an active participant in our teaching. Writing marathons, like those Casey Olsen runs for his students in Montana, powerfully impact student writers. And wherever we are, we should work to build relationships.

Writing and other literacy tasks, particularly if not in one's first language, require directed attention that is difficult to maintain and leads to mental fatigue. According to ART, being in natural settings allows for this direct and focused attention to be “restored.” Experimental design studies have demonstrated that time spent in different types of environments—walking in a park vs. along a busy street, for example—influences subsequent attention.
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borders are folded and unfolded interstitially stitched and unravelling thru translation; rhizomes wash up with

gabriel In essence, one of the challenges faced in training natural bilinguals on the border is teaching them to move away from said border as they write across language varieties. The linguistic border they inhabit is a physical place but also a linguistic space where English and Spanish bleed into each other…
Crossing Linguistic Borders: Teaching Writing Skills in Two Languages to Translators-in-Training

Gabriel González Núñez

If one is to engage in the teaching of translation, it may be worthwhile to have an understanding of what translation is. The challenge lies in that, like democracy, translation is very hard to define satisfactorily.

1. Introduction

The term border can mean many things. It implies a boundary of some sort. Take political borders. The world is filled with them. They delineate the boundaries of states. These boundaries often serve as a line of demarcation that separates us from them. Political borders tend to be seen as the outer edges, the periphery, of political entities which are often defined by traits such a shared history, culture, and language. At least that is how they are usually understood from the center. But at the border, standing in the periphery, this space that serves as a boundary is perceived differently. It is not a sharp line of demarcation in the sand but a place of transition. It is a place where elements from two histories, cultures, and languages blend together to create a third option, one which may be situated in either side of the border but that borrows freely from both.

Institutions of higher education located on such borders can use this feature to their advantage. They can take the particular skills that students on such borders possess and build upon them. A clear example of this is to be found in The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley’s (UTRGV) Spanish/English translation program. Students walk into UTRGV’s translation courses with key assets, including their bilingualism, and are trained to become translators and interpreters. They are trained to stand at the border and look to one side and then look to the other side, away from the periphery, from the third option. This becomes especially evident as they learn to expand and perfect their writing in two languages. Translators are, after all, in the business of producing texts for individuals who either want to or, more often, need to access certain information through translation. This requires that students learn to write like monolingual professionals in not one but two languages, and then in not one but countless varieties of those languages. This paper will explore that process. First it will comment on the role of translation in the classroom. Then it will consider the profile of students in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, a political and linguistic border, who choose to study translation at UTRGV. And finally it will describe how UTRGV’s translation program builds upon the skills
brought by said students and trains them to become professional writers in both English and Spanish.

2. Translation in the classroom

If one is to engage in the teaching of translation, it may be worthwhile to have an understanding of what translation is. The challenge lies in that, like democracy, translation is very hard to define satisfactorily. On this point, it can be said that an objective definition of translation may not be possible because no definition of it can be all inclusive or uncontested (Chesterman & Arrojo 152). However one chooses to define translation, there is at its core the idea of the transfer of meaning. At its essence, translation is about taking a message and moving it across some sort of linguistic border so that it can be accessible to those on the other side of such a border. This is evident in the three types of translation generally identified by translation scholars, namely interlingual translation, intralingual translation, and intersemiotic translation (Jakobson 114). In interlingual translation, a message in language A (say, Spanish) is rendered in language B (say, English). In intralingual translation, a message in a variety of language A (say, English legalese) is rendered in a different variety of language A (say, Plain English). In intersemiotic translation, a symbol (say, a traffic sign) is rendered in a different coding system (say, in written English). All of these very different types of translation take a given message and transfer its meaning from one language, language variety, or coding system to another. Translation, then, can be a number of different things, all of which share the common element of transfer (the trans- in translation). For purposes of this paper, the discussion will focus on interlingual translation, as defined above.

Such translation can be useful in a classroom setting. Of course, how translation is used will depend to a great extent on the purpose of the activity at hand, which in turn will depend on the kind of classroom the students find themselves in. There are at least three types of classrooms where translation can, or must, be used. These are the second-language-acquisition classroom, the composition classroom, the translator-training classroom. The role of translation in each of these classrooms should briefly be considered before moving on.

Translation can be used in the second-language acquisition classroom. In other words, it can be employed as a pedagogical tool for 2L acquisition. This statement should be qualified, because starting in the 18th century, translation as a tool for language teaching became shunned (Pym et al. 12-13). Translation in this sense was understood very narrowly to mean exercises where dictionaries were used to translate specific sentences or words, etc., a method which was construed to be

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1 Translation scholars have long understood that there is some uncertainty to meaning, that it is not fixed per se, but translation can take place nonetheless due to the many different ways meaning can be built and negotiated (see Pym 2010:90-113).
the opposite of natural methods of language learning (ibid. 12-14). As natural methods of language learning became preferred for second-language acquisition, this type of translation activity became the sort of thing instructors could be laughed out of a room for. Starting in the 1980s, however, scholarly publications have been reporting on the use of translation in the second-language acquisition classroom more favorably (ibid. 14-26). Translation in these studies is understood to encompass a broader range of activities (e.g., the creation of subtitles) linked to intercultural competence. This use of translation can provide “a communicative activity that can enhance the learning of an L2,” especially as combined with other teaching approaches (ibid. 135).

Translation can also be used in the composition classroom. Here translation can be employed as a pedagogical tool for developing writing and other skills. Specifically, translation becomes “an analytic framework” for student reflection on the writing process (Horner and Tretreault 21). This use of translation in the composition classroom derives from the idea that all communication, all speaking, all writing is at its core an act of translation. Thus, using translation exercises in the composition classroom helps students understand how meaning is constructed and negotiated, which in turn can lead to discussions on power and its associated dynamics (ibid.: 18-19). This type of translation is neither that used in the second-language acquisition classroom nor the type that translators-in-training engage in (Pennycook 43). Rather, this type of translation derives much of its value from its accompanying reflective exercises, which can help develop “a repertoire of skills towards productive negotiation with linguistic codes, identities, and cultures” (Kiernan et al. 102).

Finally, translation can, actually must, be used in the translation classroom. Here translation is not a means to an end, as in the previous two classrooms, but rather the thing itself that is being taught and learned. Thus, the objective of the translation classroom is usually to help produce “qualified and highly competent translators – transforming students with certain language competences into professionals able to translate, localize, revise, etc.” (Gambier 164). Translation is ever-present in this type of classroom, as becoming a highly competent translator requires a great deal of practice. Translation activities in such a classroom can be process-centered (carrying out specific translation-related processes), situationally oriented (simulations of, or immersion in, real-world, translation-related situations), or text-based (working with different text types) (ibid. 164-167). This type of use of translation is quite different than that which might be found in second-language acquisition classrooms or composition classrooms. This paper will focus on the translation classroom and not the other two.

Clarifying which type of classroom this paper addresses is important, because the interests pursued by translation in each of these classrooms are different. And if different interests are being sought, different pedagogical approaches can be
justified. In the case of the second-language acquisition classroom, translation activities are combined with other teaching methods in order to serve the interest of teaching students a language they do not yet master fully. In the case of the composition classroom, translation activities are designed to serve the interest of teaching students something about the writing process itself. Some scholars feel, additionally, that the composition classroom is a good place for bilingual students to develop “fluid border identities” (Flores & García 248). This is an identity interest. It is part of a movement in the United States to bring multilingual perspectives into the composition classroom (Kiernan et al. 89). Finally, in the translation classroom, exercises are carried out in the interest of turning bilinguals into professional translators. This implies the development of specific translator competences, including the ability to function as professional writers in at least two languages. While there is some overlap in all of these, the interests sought in each of these classrooms is different enough that the approaches to translation must of necessity be different. This means the type of translation activities carried out will be different. Of these three, this paper will focus on the third type of classroom. And more specifically, it will focus on helping students develop professional writing skills in two languages, namely, Spanish and English.

3. Translators and linguistic borders

There are many political borders in the world, and due to different language policies adopted by some neighboring states, a good number of these political borders also become linguistic borders. These linguistic borders, however, tend to not be air-tight. Often, language contact becomes a fact of life in such borders, as populations move back and forth to engage in commerce, visit family and friends, and look for employment or other opportunities. Such is the case of Brownsville, a border town on the U.S. side of the U.S.-Mexico border. In this city, language contact is taken for granted by all its inhabitants, as Spanish and English are heard openly in its streets and houses. In Brownsville, a largely diglossic society has developed in which most residents speak both languages, albeit with varying degrees of fluency (González Núñez, “Law and Translation”; see, generally, Valdés). Brownsville has developed into a community in which “being bilingual is vital to daily communication” and even educated professionals will use both Spanish and English (Mejías et al. 121-122).

Thus, in border towns such as this one, with its vibrant bilingualism and uncontested diglossia, individuals are often raised as natural bilinguals. In other

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2 National languages are, to a great extent, political constructs that arose from different concerns centered around nation-building (see González Núñez, “Translating” 3-5). Thus, when a country like Mexico chooses to make Spanish its de jure official language and a country like the United States chooses to make English its de facto official language, the use of Spanish in Mexico and English in the United States expand from their respective centers of power toward the periphery. It is at the border that these constructed linguistic communities come face to face and bleed into each other
words, they are raised in situations of simultaneous bilingualism where children are exposed to two languages from birth and learn both at the same time. In the case of Brownsville, children grow up hearing and learning, to one degree or another, the local varieties of English and Spanish. Depending on one’s perspective on how to achieve a linguistically just society, this situation may be interpreted as being potentially problematic (see, e.g., Weinstock) or as something to be built upon (see, e.g., De Schutter). No matter what side of the issue one takes in the debate about bilingualism in certain linguistic communities, there is no question that an opening is provided in terms of educational opportunities. Namely, natural bilinguals can be trained to use their linguistic skills as an asset to themselves and their communities.

With this insight in mind, college professors in Brownsville have been teaching courses in translation to local students for three decades. Currently, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) has both graduate and undergraduate programs in Spanish/English translation and interpreting. Most graduate students in UTRGV’s program are not from the Lower Rio Grande Valley, where Brownsville is located. In a striking contrast, undergraduate students who declare their major to be Spanish Translation and Interpreting are almost universally from the Lower Rio Grande Valley, either because they were born there or because they have come from neighboring Mexico and have taken up residency in Brownsville or nearby areas in “The Valley,” as the region is referred to. Thus, undergraduate students in UTRGV’s translation program inhabit a border space, both politically and linguistically—they physically often cross the border, and additionally, they continually move back and forth between Spanish and English without much though.

In this sense, they are well-positioned to become translators. They exhibit varying degrees of bilingualism, which is a bare minimum requirement to become a translator. They also are in a position to gain an understanding of how two cultures operate, namely, Mexico’s and the United States’. For translators, the ability to move back and forth between cultures is as important, if not more so, than the ability to move back and forth between languages. Translators are not simply replacing words in one language with words in another. Rather, they are trying to communicate a message across languages and cultures. Translators take a text created in culture A and then recreate that text in culture B. Thus, when Suzanne Jill Levine translates Julio Cortázar from Spanish into English, she must have a profound understanding of the culture that Cortázar is writing in so as to have a full grasp of what Cortázar means to communicate; additionally, she must have a thorough understanding of the

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3 As any introductory textbook on translation will quickly point out, translation and interpreting are two different activities (see, e.g., Child 1). Translation refers to the written transfer of meaning between languages and interpreting to the oral transfer of meaning. This distinction is lost to most individuals outside the language services industry. (This paper is about writing skills in naturally bilingual students, so it will not focus on interpreting)
American culture that will receive her translation, including the expectations of readers, so as to know how best to communicate Cortázar's messages. Then she can recreate, in essence rewrite, Cortázar in a different language and culture.4

Undergraduate translation students from the Lower Rio Grande Valley can be taught to do this, because they have the advantage of seeing the world from what Pym has termed an “interculture” (see Pym, “Method” 177-192). An interculture is the “beliefs and practices found in intersections or overlaps of cultures, where people combine something of two or more cultures at once” (ibid. 177). This is not to be confused with multiculturalism, which is the co-existence of several cultures within one geographical space (ibid.). There is plenty of evidence that Brownsville is an apt example of such an interculture. It goes beyond people growing up with two languages. The evidence can be found in the blend of cultural traditions. For example, people here celebrate Halloween on October 31 and then on November 2 celebrate Día de los Muertos. The most important local celebration is called Charro Days, and its main parade proudly shows off cheerleaders and marching bands alongside horse-riding vaqueros and chinas poblanas. The evidence of interculturality is also etched into the city’s linguistic landscape5, as billboards and other commercial signs appear in English, in Spanish, or in some mix of both languages. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. This photo shows charros, elegant horsemen from Mexico’s center and West, in a parade that includes the all-American tradition of marching bands and cheerleaders. Notice also the signs in the back, including one that reads ‘Welcome to Mercado Juárez’ and another one that reads ‘Centro Naturista Fame.’ This photo, taken in 2016, provides visible evidence of Brownsville’s interculture.

4 For an interesting look at the work of literary translators and their keen insights on cultures, see Levine.

5 The term “linguistic landscape” is used to describe “the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region” as a way to provide insights into the different linguistic communities in said territory or region (Landry and Bourhis 23).
Because Brownsville and its surrounding areas constitute such an interculture, undergraduate students training to become translators are physically situated in the middle ground between two cultures, in a place where Mexican and U.S. cultures bleed into each other. They can be trained then to move from this place-at-the-border into one direction or the other. This includes training in the writing conventions that are employed not in the interculture itself, not in that third place, but in the Anglo-American and Latin-American cultures between which the translators will move texts.

4. Training translators on physical and linguistic borders

Translators need to be many things, only the most basic of which is that they need to be bilingual. There is some controversy as to what it means, in terms of cognition, to be bilingual. The traditional model of bilingualism is one where “speakers are said to ‘add up’ whole autonomous languages or even partial structural bits of these languages” (García & Wei 12). In this model, the bilingual brain has L1+L2. Recently, a more dynamic model of bilingualism has gained traction. This newer model “posits that there is but one linguistic system […] with features that are integrated […] throughout” (ibid. 15). In this model, the bilingual brain has L1/2. Thus, bilinguals may at times act like monolinguals, but in their brain there is simply one language system (ibid.). It is hard to know with certainty which of the two models more accurately describes what happens inside the bilingual brain. The topic itself “stirs up a hornets’ nest of contradictory research findings” (Pym et al. 23). Whatever bilingualism may look like inside the brain, individuals who work in the translation profession have long concluded that bilingualism is merely a starting point (see, e.g., Johnson).

Beyond that starting point, translators need to be able to do many things competently. On this topic, scholars in the field of Translation Studies have developed a good number of models of translator competence, which for purposes of this paper is to be understood as the set of skills exhibited by expert translators in producing professional translations. In an insightful paper, Kelly (2002) provides an overview and analysis of the major competence models. These include a wide range of different competences, and in all of them, the ability to produce texts of a certain

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6 The term “translator” in this article will be used to refer to a professional who makes a living by translating written texts for clients. This is different from an “interpreter.” Interpreters work with the spoken word, while translators work with written texts. In this paper, no mention or thought will be given to the training of interpreters. While there is a lot of overlap between these two activities, only translators are required to write. And writing is what’s relevant for this article.

7 This brings to mind the well-known quote: “Essentially, all models are wrong, but some are useful” (Box & Draper 1987: 424). Studies conducted on this particular issue do not seem to conclusively settle which of the two models is more accurate, so the more helpful question seem to be which of the two models is more useful for specific purposes.
quality in the target language\textsuperscript{8} is present in one way or another. For example, Wilss (1976) includes “productive competence in the target language,” Roberts (1984) lists “qualité d’expression de la langue d’arrivée,” Nord (1991) speaks of “competence of text production,” and Pym (“Translation Error Analysis”) describes “[t]he ability to generate a target-text series of more than one viable term (target text\textsubscript{1}, target text\textsubscript{2} ... target text\textsubscript{n}) for a source text” and the ability to choose the best one (Kelly 10-13).

Thus, translators are, among other things, writers. Ultimately, what the paying client wants to receive from the translator is a written text. Translators who cannot provide texts that meet the expectations of their clients will need to find a different line of work.

Now, students on the border who would be translators come into the classroom with an important asset—their bilingualism. But, as stated above, that in and of itself is insufficient—students need to be trained to develop a number of competences, including writing skills in the language into which they will be expected to translate. Translators in training have traditionally been instructed to translate only into their A language, or the language they are more competent in, usually their native language, but the reality on the ground is that translators often work into both their A and B languages (Pokorn 37-38). And, of course, there are translators for whom it is difficult to tell which language is their A language. Thus, translator training programs should train students to develop writing skills in at least two languages. For students in UTRGV’s undergraduate translation program, that means that their bilingualism, whatever it looks like, needs to be built upon to develop writing skills, in both Spanish and English, that meet the expectations of a wide range of clients.\textsuperscript{9}

As stated earlier, these students are for the most part the result of an interculture, and this is reflected in a particular student profile with particular language skills. Based on the population of students taking introductory translation courses in UTB/UTRGV\textsuperscript{10} between 2014 and 2016, some observations can be made regarding the linguistic skills that such students initially bring into the classroom. For the most part, these students are natural bilinguals who live on the U.S. side of the border (the occasional student will live in Matamoros, Mexico, and cross over the

\textsuperscript{8} The term “target language” refers to the language the translator is drafting their translated text in; in other words, this is the language into which they translate.

\textsuperscript{9} These clients will generally expect that the documents translators produce meet the writing conventions of a specific speech community. For example, if a translator is tasked with translating a Spanish company’s escritura de constitución for filing before the US Securities and Exchange Commission, the translator will be expected to draft a document that is similar in style and tone to any set of articles of incorporation drafted by an English-speaking lawyer in the US.

\textsuperscript{10} On August 2015, The University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) was merged into The University of Texas Pan-American in order to create a new university known as UTRGV. UTRGV’s Translation and Interpreting Programs were transferred into the university from UTB only.
bridge). All of them have done some schooling in English, often the bulk or even all of it (it is rare that they have not done at least their high school in the United States). Some claim English as their A language and others claims Spanish, while occasionally a student will struggle to distinguish which of the two is their strongest language. Generally, the variety of English they speak can be termed Chicano English\textsuperscript{11}, even if a few students acquired English as a second language after grade school. The variety of Spanish they speak can be described as Mexican-American Spanish\textsuperscript{12}, with the exception of the few students who live in Mexico and speak Mexican Spanish. Additionally, no matter what language is dominant for them individually, students often engage in code-switching, moving seamlessly and effortlessly from Spanish to English and vice versa. It is in this extensive practice of code-switching that the interculture becomes audible evident.

In this interculture, students are used to hearing Spanish and English mix and interact in different contexts. This is sometimes reflected in the translations they produce, especially early on in their coursework. What becomes evident in these texts is that, in the students’ minds, the distance between stylistic and rhetorical elements in English and Spanish is greatly reduced. One might argue that there is a convergence of stylistic and rhetorical elements. This is a faithful representation of the linguistic setting that the border offers to them, and of course, there is nothing wrong with such writing in and of itself.

The challenge lies in that in the translation classroom students need to be taught to write not just for the interculture but for cultures far removed from their daily experiences. This might include writing for highly educated monolingual speakers in Madrid, middle-class women in Buenos Aires, or low-income Spanish-speaking residents of inner city Dallas. Translators need to be able to reproduce the language that will most effectively communicate with an array of communities of speakers, many of which have their own stylistic and rhetorical elements that range from the use of very specific words to the frequency of repetitions in a given text.

Thus, translation students on the border need to be exposed to a wide range of geographic, social, and situational varieties of their working languages. In essence, one of the challenges faced in training natural bilinguals on the border is teaching them to move away from said border as they write across language varieties. The linguistic border they inhabit is a physical place but also a linguistic space where English and Spanish bleed into each other in ways that are vibrant and effective in their own context, but the texts competent translators are expected to produce are generally not meant for such a place; rather, they are usually meant to be read by monolingual speakers of other varieties of Spanish and English, where the lines of demarcation between the two languages are more clearly drawn.

\textsuperscript{11} For a definition and analysis of Chicano English, see Santa Ana.

\textsuperscript{12} For a description of Mexican-American Spanish, see Valdés.
In order to help students develop writing skills in both languages, UTRGV's undergraduate program in Spanish and English translation takes a two-pronged approach (see Table 1). The first prong consists in strengthening their monolingual writing skills. To achieve this, students are required to take writing courses in both languages. The requirements include two writing courses in Spanish and one writing course in English. The reason students are required to take one more writing course in Spanish than in English is because most of these students have developed more standard writing skills in English through primary and secondary education on the U.S. side of the border. In addition to this requirement, students must select a number of elective courses from an approved list which includes an additional writing course in Spanish and up to three additional writing courses in English. In short, students will take a minimum of two writing courses in Spanish and one in English and a maximum of three writing courses in Spanish and four in English. These requirements are intended to develop monolingual writing skills, which is essential for translators in training.

Table 1. Courses in UTRGV's Spanish/English translation major that help develop writing skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses in monolingual writing</th>
<th>Mandatory</th>
<th>Elective</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPAN 3300 - Advanced Spanish Grammar and Composition I</td>
<td>SPAN 3302 - Creative Writing in Spanish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPAN 3301 - Advanced Spanish Grammar and Composition II</td>
<td>ENGL 3342 - Technical Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students must choose one of these three: ENGL 3343 - Business Communication</td>
<td>ENGL 3344 - Advanced Composition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGL 4344 - Writing for Lawyers</td>
<td>ENGL 4344 - Writing for Lawyers</td>
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Courses which include instruction in writing across languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>SPAN 2389 - Academic Cooperative - English/Spanish Translation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRSP/SPAN 3342 - Advanced Spanish to English Translation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TRSP/SPAN 3343 - Advanced English to Spanish Translation</td>
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Even so, on the linguistic border the challenge for training translators is that students often amalgamate elements from both languages, particularly in terms of style and rhetoric. For this reason, a second prong in UTRGV’s approach to training translators in the Lower Rio Grande Valley becomes necessary. This second prong is helping them write from one language into the other while respecting each language’s standard writing conventions. This is achieved by including writing components in the introductory translation courses. These courses are requirements for the major, and while they do not focus exclusively on writing, their curricular design includes helping students distinguish between stylistic and rhetorical elements in both languages. There are three introductory courses in Spanish/English translation, and each of them builds the skills of writing across the languages in a different way. The next few paragraphs will describe how this is achieved.

The first course in the sequence is SPAN 2389. This course is an introductory course in English-to-Spanish and Spanish-to-English translation for bilingual students. It is assumed that students possess basic grammar and writing skills in English (obtained at least in high school) and in Spanish (obtained at least through SPAN 2313, a pre-requisite). The course focuses on general translation notions, basic instruction for translating into English, and basic instruction for translating into Spanish. Students work at the sentence level only, and teacher efforts are focused on helping students learn to separate the two languages in their minds. The most important objective in this course is to help students realize that translating is not about changing words from one language to another but about transferring the meaning behind those words in a way that will make the most sense to the readers, generally monolingual speakers of English or Spanish, for whom they are translating. In essence, this course, while not about writing, is geared toward developing skills that will allow students to write across the linguistic border. This is achieved through helping students learn to specifically distinguish areas of contrast between their working languages. Students are instructed that it is neither necessary nor usually desirable for professional translators to reproduce English syntax and grammar in Spanish or vice versa. For example, they are shown that often the Spanish indirect object must be translated as the English subject (see Example 1) or that the passive voice in English does not need to, and often should not, be translated as a passive voice in Spanish (see Example 2). Thus, the students in this introductory course learn that in order to write adequate sentences in Spanish or in English, they need to stop thinking in the structures of the other language. This is not always simple for them to do, because they see the source sentence and seek to imitate that sentence in the target language simply by changing words across the linguistic border. Learning that Spanish and English often express the same idea through different vocabulary, syntax, and style can be difficult. Some students actively resist moving away from the structure of the source language. For that
reason, skills for writing across the languages are addressed in the following two general translation courses.

Example 1. Spanish indirect object translated as English subject
Spanish:   Esa actitud me da fastidio. (Indirect object: me)
English:   I am disgusted by such an attitude. (Subject: I)

Example 2. Different Spanish options for the English passive voice
English:   Trees were planted.
Spanish:   Los árboles fueron plantados.
           Se plantaron árboles.
           Plantaron árboles.
           Alguien plantó árboles.

In the two courses that follow, students move in one direction only. They now work beyond the sentence level, with texts ranging from 200 to 400 words. TRSP 3342 focuses on translation into English. The curriculum for this course includes, besides a great deal of instruction on translation, specific instruction on writing in English. Specifically, students are given instruction about a) the characteristics of English prose and b) how to revise texts in English. Due to the short duration of the 15-week semester, instead of providing students with an extensive review of English prose, the course focuses on areas where it diverges from Spanish. Specifically, students are taught that modern English prose values the joining of ideas through simple clauses and coordinating conjunctions, i.e., parataxis, while Spanish prefers more explicit connections between ideas through embedded clauses and subordinating conjunctions, i.e., hypotaxis (see Washbourne 328).

In order for students to actually appreciate this, they are presented with real-life examples of texts in Spanish and English that help illustrate this difference. In the Teaching Artifact annexed to this article, one such example is shown. An authentic text in Spanish is presented alongside an authentic text in English. In order for the styles to be as similar as possible, the texts come from two heads of state, namely, Guatemala’s President Pérez Molina and the United States’ President Obama. Additionally, both were uttered at the same event, the Seventh Summit of the Americas held in 2015 in Panama City. Further, both texts deal, in their own way, with the warming up of relations between the United States and Cuba. Then students are asked to work with the Spanish text first. Specifically, they are asked to count how many sentences and words comprise the text. In this case, they indicate they find a single sentence with 45 words. At that point they are asked to spot the subordination that makes such a sentence possible. Then they are asked to count the
words and sentences in the English text. They find 43 words divided among five sentences. At that point they are asked to identify the simple clauses and the coordination that make these sentences possible. With environmentally valid illustrations such as this one, students can see English parataxis and Spanish hypotaxis in practice.

The next step is to instruct students on how to recreate such parataxis in English. To do this, students are provided with a long English sentence that resembles Spanish in its structure. This one is 97 words long and has only one period, the one at the end. (The sentence was artificially created by combining a number of sentences from the same English text used earlier.) Students have to rework the sentence into a paragraph through the use of simple clauses and coordination. They are specifically instructed that the meaning cannot change. After they have all attempted it, the teacher and his or her students analyze different student-generated options. This exercise helps students break away from the syntax and punctuation of Spanish in order to create more authentic, and generally more adequate, texts in English.

Students are also taught to revise their English prose. They are asked to do this in two steps. The first is an editing phase, where they read a text they produced in English and compare it, sentence by sentence, to the Spanish source text. At this stage, they are expected to focus on places where meaning was either added or lost in
the translation process. In the next phase of the revision process, they focus on style, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Because Spanish style tends to be more elaborate than style in English, students are taught to revise their texts using part of Lanham’s “Paramedic Approach” to revising prose (1-21). In class, students read from Lanham, and then they are provided with a series of sentences that need to be revised using this method (see Table 2). This is a particularly helpful method to revise texts translated from Spanish into English because Spanish sentences tend to include more prepositional phrases than English, and the Paramedic Approach helps eliminate some of this from the English texts produced by students. Through this process students begin to understand that English is not like Spanish in that the former prefers parataxis and avoids structures that include long strings of prepositional phrases. This helps students’ English writing sound less like Spanish and more like English.

In TRSP 3343, students move in the opposite direction. They begin with texts in English and produce versions in Spanish. This course focuses mainly on different translation procedures. It also deals with aspects of Spanish grammar which are different from English grammar and may present translator pitfalls. More importantly for purposes of this paper, it also includes instruction on stylistic features that are specific to Spanish writing. Once again, the semester’s short duration makes it impossible to provide students with a comprehensive overview of Spanish stylitics and rhetoric. Consequently, the focus is on a) the way Spanish creates cohesion and coherence and b) the way Spanish texts tend to be structured. Regarding the first of these two items, the work students do is based on observations found in Lopez Guix and Wilkinson. Students are taught that a text has cohesion when each element in a text is related to other elements in the text. This is achieved through, for example, exophoric references, endophoric references, repetition, parallelism, etc. (Lopez Guix & Wilkinson 213). Additionally, they are taught that a text has coherence when there is some sort of progression of ideas, the text is not self-contradictory, etc. (ibid. 231). In order for students to appreciate how this plays out in English and Spanish, they are shown authentic texts in both languages. The texts were created in comparable circumstances. They come from two heads of state, in this case, Venezuela's President Chávez and the United States' President Obama. Further, both texts come from each author's first inaugural address. Students are divided into groups, and each group is tasked with a different activity: group 1 underlines all elements of cohesion in the Spanish text, group 2 underlines all elements of cohesion in the English text, group 3 underlines all elements of coherence in the Spanish text, and group 4 underlines all elements of coherence in the English text. Then the class is brought together so that each group may present their findings. The teacher moderates the interaction to make sure that each of the elements mentioned during instruction is included and correctly instructed.
Students are also given some basic instruction on some observations regarding contrastive rhetorics between Spanish and English. To do this, students are introduced to the idea that monolingual “speak[ers] of different languages use different devices to present information, to establish the relationships among ideas, to show centrality of one idea as opposed to another, to select the most effective means of representation” (Kaplan, “Contrastive Rhetorics” 140-141). To help students visualize this idea, Kaplan’s own doodles are used.\(^\text{13}\) (See Figure 2.)

![Figure 2. “Doodles” showing Kaplan’s (“Contrastive Rhetorics” 15) understanding of how rhetorical structures can vary from culture to culture.](image)

In order to help students think through the implications of this, students are asked to mentally move away from the interculture and travel from a monolingual, English-speaking culture to a monolingual, Spanish-speaking culture. To do this, the teacher asks them to recall their English courses prior to coming to college, specifically the five-paragraph essay (sometimes known as a three-tier essay). As they do, they become aware that they have been instructed, as is typical in school systems where English is the medium of instruction, that a good essay is built by creating an introductory paragraph, developing and supporting the main thesis, and closing with a conclusion. This linear way of writing essays reflects a positivist approach to writing: the rules are written by those in authority and then writers in training are instructed to follow those rules. This is, of course, not the only way to build an essay, but the cultural assumption is that the linear presentation of ideas is the best way to develop such ideas. This implies that the responsibility of properly communicating a message falls on the writer. Switching cultures, students are then instructed regarding\(^\text{13}\) Students are warned this is not a scientific description of cultural thought patterns. It is a simplified illustration which can be criticized on several grounds, including ethnocentrism. Students are shown the doodles simply as a helpful illustration, an approximation, and not as a scientific description. Kaplan himself has indicated that “I tried to represent, in crude graphic form, the notion that the rhetorical structure of languages differs [...] it was not my intent then, and it is not my intent now, to claim more for the notion than it deserves” (Kaplan, “Cultural Thought Patterns” 9). That is precisely the key, that students understand that rhetorical structures in English and Spanish are different.
how the Latin or Romance world deals with writing. Here, the approach is less positivistic and more intuitive. In the Romance world, including countries were Spanish is the medium of instruction in schools, it is generally assumed that good writing is the result of good reading. Writers learn to write not so much through instruction about how to structure essays and so forth but rather through reading other writers and learning to emulate the way they structure their ideas. Reading and writing are understood to be “las dos caras de una misma moneda” where by reading the student learns how to decode messages and by writing the student learns how to code them (Valverde 83). Thus, erudition is understood to result in good writing. This places the responsibility of properly understanding a message on the reader.

By the time students finish these three introductory translation courses, they have received instruction on how to write across languages. This requires them to first understand that writing from English into Spanish or from Spanish into English often requires the discarding of the syntax and grammar of the source language. To some individuals, especially those not trained in translation, this concept can be hard to come to terms with, so plenty of practice at the sentence level becomes necessary. Students are then given specific instruction for writing into English and for writing into Spanish. This includes learning to see parataxis in English and hypotaxis in Spanish, as well as distinguishing between the stylistic features of good prose in English as contrasted to good prose in Spanish. Through contrasting examples and directed practice, students begin developing different writing skills for two different languages.

5. Conclusion
This paper has argued that linguistic borders are also cultural borders. But they are not sharp lines of demarcation. Instead, they are places where one culture fades into the other. They become a middle space, a place where cultural and linguistic elements from two different cultures meld into an interculture. One of the traits of this interculture as found in Brownsville, Texas, is a high incidence of natural bilingualism. A number of naturally bilingual students walk into translation classes at UTRGV. They have a basic building block for becoming translators, which is their ability to switch back and forth between languages. Other important translator competences include the ability to write professionally in at least two languages—translators are, after all, professional writers. This ability must often be developed in naturally bilingual students, because their upbringing in an interculture makes it hard for them to intuitively distinguish between what is seen as good writing by monolingual speakers of English on the one hand and what is seen as good writing by monolingual speakers of Spanish on the other.

To help students learn to tell “good English” apart from “buen español” when writing, translator trainers at UTRGV take a two-pronged approach. The first prong is simple enough: have students take writing courses from English faculty and
writing courses from Spanish faculty. The second prong takes a contrastive stance. Along with other translation instruction, students are taught how English and Spanish differ stylistically and rhetorically. The focus is clearly on the differences, so that students can learn to move from the periphery, where intercultures are found, to the center in both Spanish and English. This is achieved through a simple method of lecturing, showing examples, and guiding students in practice. This method is intended to help students develop strong writing skills in two languages through highlighting where the languages are dissimilar.

By the time students are in the final of their three introductory translation courses, something begins to happen. Some students stop resisting the idea that good writing in English and in Spanish follow the same rules. They stop feeling that a sentence in Spanish should be worded exactly like a sentence in English (and vice versa). Instead of looking for ways to simply move words across languages, they start thinking in terms of ideas and concepts. When faced with a sentence in the source language, they begin to wonder how to present the same idea in the target language while complying with the expectations of monolingual readers in that target language. For example, a string of three short sentences in English might become one highly subordinated sentence in Spanish. The results of this training are seen when students are no longer afraid to completely alter the syntax of a Spanish sentence as they write it in English.

What this all means is that on the U.S-Mexico border, the natural bilingualism of many students is an asset that can be developed into professional writing skills in both Spanish and English. Thus, the population of areas such as the Lower Rio Grande Valley is well situated to become proficient in not one but two different sets of writing skills. This can result in professional and also personal enrichment. In other words, their bilingualism should be seen as an asset with great potential. Developing that potential takes hard work and willingness on the part of both the student and the instructor, but the results are well worth the effort.

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Translators need to be many things, only the most basic of which is that they need to be bilingual.

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REFERENCES


The notions of being affirmed and validated were possible because people felt safe and secure to consider what other instructors were sharing and to share their own practices.
The term “College and Career Readiness Standards” is likely seared into the consciousness of every educator who has taught at the middle or high school level in a US classroom anytime in the last five years. Educators have been subject to professional development trainings dedicated to “unpacking” the standards, aligning curriculum to the standards, and the development of common assessments for evaluating students writing for college readiness. These professional development sessions often are led by representatives from the state department of public instruction, school administrators, or outside consultants who are knowledgeable about what is in the standards. While these may be laudable tasks led and facilitated by people with extensive knowledge of the standards, they leave out an essential component: college level writing instructors sharing their insights about what skills and dispositions students need to find success in writing in the post-secondary world.

This fundamental flaw in the system was one of the factors that led Gretchen McClain to take a leave of absence from her job teaching high school English in 2014 to pursue her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Gretchen felt a disconnect between what she was being told was “college ready” writing and what she thought her students needed to be successful writers in college. Gretchen entered her graduate studies intent on exploring what it means to be a “college ready” writer and what she could do as a high school teacher to help her students make a smoother transition to the writing demands and expectations at the collegiate level.

From her days teaching high school and through the conversations she had with other teachers during her time with various Greater Madison Writing Project programs, Gretchen knew other k-12 teachers shared many of the same questions about what it meant to be a “college ready” writer. What caught her off guard was that when she began talking with her new colleagues in the first year writing courses in the English department at UW, they too expressed similar questions about what writing, writing expectations, and writing instruction looked like at the high school level. It was this newfound understanding that a lack of understanding existed at both the high school and college level that eventually led to the creation of our high school to college writing symposium in 2015.

**Guiding Principles**

We did not know exactly what should be done about the lack of opportunity for high school and college writing instructor to dialogue, but we knew we needed to do
something. While unsure of exactly what we would do, we were committed to two underlying and foundational principles guiding our work:

- There are many ways to teach writing. This day was not going to be about the “right” way to teach writing. Instead, it would be a chance for good writing teachers from each level to share their guiding principles, beliefs, and practices as a way to generate conversation about the what, how, and why in regards to our teaching of writing.

- Teachers from across grade levels can and should learn from one another by openly sharing and discussing their teaching practices. This symposium could not be another chance for teachers to be talked at and/or talked down to about their failure to adequately prepare students – this had to be a collaborative day where high school teachers had a chance to learn more about the writing teaching and expectations at the college level and college writing instructors had a chance to learn more about what and how writing is being taught in the high schools.

With these two principles guiding the work, we set out to create an experience that would benefit both high school and college writing teachers, would allow both sets of teachers to develop a better understanding of where their students are coming from or going to, and would lead to better writing experiences for students.

We began working with the faculty members supervising the first year writing program in the English department and decided that a one-day symposium would be the optimal format. While all would have preferred a longer, more sustained effort, we knew one day was likely all we would be able to get people to commit to during the school year.

**Format**

Knowing we would have teachers for only one day, we decided to break the day into three sections and to focus on a particular theme for each part of the day. After much discussion with high school teachers in our Writing Project, faculty from the English Department, and graduate teaching assistants, we decided the three areas of focus would be:

1. the standards, objectives, philosophies, and beliefs that drive our teaching,
2. what and how we teach writing in our classrooms, and
3. how we assess student writing and provided feedback that moves writers.

Focusing in on these three areas would allow us to discuss the why, what and how we teach, as well as how we evaluate our effectiveness. While we understood the three themes of the day are intimately entwined with one another and in many ways are inseparable, we felt pulling them apart and focusing on each area individually would
allow for the most focused and substantial discussion about three overarching topics to successful writing classrooms.

In addition to what would be discussed at the symposium, how to facilitate the discussions on the topics was going to be equally important. With a stated purpose of having collaborative, cross-level discussions, it would be important that knowledge from all levels was represented and respected. It was decided that brief panel presentations followed by more intimate cross-level small group table discussion was the best way to create a cross-level collaborative environment for the day. Each of the three sections for the day would follow the same format: a 30-minute panel with five people each doing a brief presentation, followed by 40-minutes of cross grade-level table discussions.

(See the links for ARTIFACTS 1 & 2 for additional details on the time structures and the guiding questions for each focus area panel.)

The panels would allow us to identify teachers from various contexts and with particular knowledge or expertise related to each topic we wanted to highlight and ensure everyone was heard. To maintain the focus was on “college readiness,” not just writing in the UW-Madison English first year writing courses, each panel would include at least one writing teacher from a local high school, UW-Madison, and a two-year technical school or community college. In addition, we would identify and invite panelists from other four-year universities, the state Department of Public Instruction, college writing centers, embedded undergraduate writing fellows, teacher preparation faculty, and instructors teaching writing intensive courses outside of the English department. In order to situate both the overall program goals and the specific goal of each focused session, potential panelists were provided with a description of the day, the panel focuses, and a set of sub-questions related to the guiding questions for each panel.

(See the link for ARTIFACT 3 for more details on the program description and the guiding questions and sub-questions provided to panelist.)

If the panel presentations were meant to share information and provoke thinking, then the table group discussion were meant to be the place where teachers could dig deeper, discuss how what was presented would/would not work in their particular contexts, and share experiences and questions with one another. Like the panels, table groups were purposefully mixed to ensure that there were as many different teaching levels present at each table. Table group discussions would bring more voices to the conversation and would encourage everyone to move beyond listening to sharing with teachers from other schools and grade levels.
In order to keep the table group conversations focused, Greater Madison Writing Project teachers would purposefully be seated at each table in the room and would function as table group facilitators if needed. While we expected there to be little problem with teachers talking about how and why they teaching writing in the ways they do, we also wanted to make sure the conversations, as much as possible, stayed focused on the theme for the session and grounded in practice. At the conclusion of each table group discussion time, the table group facilitator would be responsible to provide a brief overview/highlight of their tables discussion. Several minutes for responses to the table group highlights, questions to the panelists, and general follow-up questions were also allotted before drawing each session to close.

The symposium would end with closing remarks and feedback, but before the closing, there would be half hour for team planning, individual follow-up or connections with presenters or other teachers, and/or individual reflection/planning. While a half an hour wouldn’t be as much time as desired, we did feel it important to dedicate a period of time at the end of the day for action planning so the enthusiasm generated during the day could be translated to actionable classroom practices.

Sample symposia programs, email invitations to potential panelists describing the panels and guiding questions, and symposium feedback forms are included in the appendices. These appendices provide additional details and insight into how the program was scheduled, what was discussed, and how feedback was collected from those in attendance.

Lessons Learned:

Fast forward three years and three symposia and much has been learned about bringing together high school and college/university writing instructors to discuss what it truly means to be a college ready writer, what we can do to better prepare students for the writing they will be expected to do in at the post-secondary level, and how at the post secondary level we can build on the work taking place in high schools. During those three symposia we have heard over 250 writing teachers share their teaching practices through panels and table group discussions. In addition, we have reviewed the written feedback from all three years, engaged in follow-up conversations with attendees, and reflected on what we have learned. From this we identified four recurring themes that stand out and will continue to guide our work as we go forward with the venture to bridge the gap between high school and college writing. We use quotes from the most recent symposium attendees’ feedback to introduce and exemplify each of the key lessons learned.

1: “I was inspired by speaking with the college folks because they made me feel like I am on the right track. I am certainly walking away better informed,
and I have a list of next steps that is heavy with ideas for improving our writing.”

“I have a much better understanding of the concerns of k-12 teachers and also about how students make the leap from high school to college.”

Time to discuss teaching writing across grade levels is valuable and desired. As a National Writing Project site, we have a foundational principle and belief that the best teachers of teachers are other teachers, and the feedback from the symposia confirm that hearing from teachers at other levels was fruitful for both high school teachers and college instructors. The consistent across the evaluations from the three years has been the value of gaining first hand knowledge regarding what is happening and what is expected at other levels. Participants commonly wrote about gaining new understandings, being enriched, inspired, and more informed. In addition to gaining insight into the writing and expectation across grade levels, symposia attendees also talked about how discovering there is shared language, approaches, beliefs, and struggles across grade levels created an affirming and validating experience.

2: “Best value: time to talk honestly and examine some vulnerabilities.”

It is of the utmost importance to establish a climate that is supportive, trustworthy, and collaborative. From the outset – in planning, in setting up panels, and during the welcoming and opening section of the symposia – we tried to make clear this was to be facilitated as a learning experience for all involved, not a blame game from upper level teachers to lower level teachers as too often is the case when cross grade level discussions happen. Our panelists modeled how to talk honestly about the strengths and weaknesses of their approaches to teaching writing, their pedagogical practices, the systemic structures of the institutions that promote or hinder writing, and the writing abilities demonstrated by their students, and table group facilitators worked to maintain the collegial and supportive conversations in the small group discussions. The notions of being affirmed and validated were possible because people felt safe and secure to consider what other instructors were sharing and to share their own practices.

3: “Nice combo of ‘experts’ and discussion time. Beneficial to hear ideas and have moments to process info with other teachers.”

The format of panels followed by small group discussion is conducive to making sure all levels are heard by all and all voice have a chance to be heard. The panel presentations ensured everyone in the room had the opportunity to hear each of these perspectives. On the other hand, the small group discussions allowed everyone the opportunity to contribute their own experiences and practices and consider how what was shared could influence future teaching.
There was general consensus and appreciation for hearing from panels and then having time to discuss in small, cross grade level groups. As can and should be expected with any such event, a few people wanted to hear more from the panelist, while others wanted more time with small group discussion. However, those sentiments were expressed by relatively few and they were equally split between those that wanted more panel presentation and those that wanted more time in small group.

4: “I loved having a mix of people in our small group.”

Teachers have precious limited time to collaborate, even with colleagues in their own department, and we have seen teachers usually want to be together with colleagues from their own schools when they attend. This is understandable, and in most instances something we would want to encourage, but with our stated goal of cross grade level discussion, it was imperative to have people mix it up. The first year we simply asked people to mix themselves, and it was ineffective. The feedback at the end of the symposium indicated that too many tables lacked a diversity of teaching levels and the panel presentations were the only time they heard much from teachers at other grade levels. Years two and three we started the day with assigned table groups and then asked all the post secondary teachers to move before session two and all the high school teachers to move before session three. We found this strategy worked to ensure all table groups had various levels represented and also made sure participants were able to hear from a larger number of attendees.

While assigning tables and moving people throughout the day has helped ensure cross grade level discussion, we still struggled to have enough diversity of teaching contexts because we have not had enough instructors from technical colleges, two-year campuses, and other four year universities to have each represented at every table. Drawing a larger, more expansive college/university representation to future symposia is necessary to ensure the goal of cross grade level discussions take place in table groups.

Unintended Lesson

Lessons learned in teaching are rarely contained to what was planned, and that was the case when an unplanned but nonetheless fortunate event fell into our lap. One of the university writing instructors was scheduled to teach class during the final session of the day. Not wanting to miss out on the symposium or cancel class, he asked if his class of undergraduates could come sit in on the symposium. Wanting to do what we could to keep as many university writing teachers participating, we decided to invite the undergraduates to attend the final panel and sit in on the discussion.
Having the students attend turned out to be a good decision that led to an additional important, and often missing, voice added to the conversation. The students shared with the teachers what they found most valuable from their high school writing experiences, what they wish they had gotten in high school, and what they have experienced as writers at the university level. While there were obviously no questions about the students on the evaluations, many teachers, both those at the high school and college level, talked during the final question and answer and comments session how much they enjoyed having the students and their first hand experiences as part of the conversation.

Just as increasing the number and diversity of post secondary writing teachers is a goal, so too is considering ways to bring more student voice to the symposium. If we are going to critique professional development for missing out on teacher voice, then we also ought to hold ourselves to the standard and find more ways to hear from students what they believe it means to be a “college ready” writer and what instruction they feel has helped or hindered their own preparation and successes in writing.

Final Thoughts

The symposium was developed to address a need, and the large attendance and positive reviews indicate it is addressing the need. While questions about how teachers translate the symposium discussions into classroom practice and if these discussions impact school/district level policies, feedback from the three symposia indicates teachers on both ends of the teaching spectrum leave the symposium better informed about writing and writing expectations across levels. The symposium is not a cure-all for enhancing writing instruction and/or preparation for writing at the post secondary level. Instead, we see it as just one step in the long journey to create an open and on-going dialogue between the levels and a model of what is possible when collaborative professional development is well planned and facilitated. Obstacles to more cross-level collaborative conversations remain – time, money, teaching loads, etc. – and we continue to explore ways to address these obstacles because we have seen the value which these collaborative conversations bring to all involved.

Artifacts in Action

ARTIFACT 1: Symposium Workbook
ARTIFACT 2: Symposium Schedule
ARTIFACT 3: Symposium Invitation
ARTIFACT 4: Survey of Writing: Secondary Level
CHRIS ROBERTSON

Chris Robertson joined the University of Texas (UT) faculty as an assistant professor of mathematics in 2003. He received his BA from the University of Texas at San Antonio and his PhD from Rice University. Robertson has taught a variety of courses in mathematics from arithmetic through advanced undergraduate and graduate courses. His scholarly interests include the history of mathematics, the teaching of mathematics, and the role of mathematics in public policy. Robertson is the current editor of the Texas Mathematics Project News, a newsletter that covers mathematics education news. He is also involved in outreach programs, including the UT Mathematics Circle and the UT Science Olympiad. He is known for his expertise in teaching strategies and his ability to connect mathematics to real-world applications.
MARIA HOUSTON
Maria Houston has served in a number of managerial and teaching roles in Adult Education in and outside of the United States. She received her MA in Instructional Design and a PhD in Composition and TESOL from Indiana University of PA. Her current research agenda and professional mission extend to the design and implementation of transnational collaborative programs and curricula as well as composition pedagogies viable in current professional multi-cultural, -lingual, and -modal communicative reality. In her current role of an English Instructor at Notre Dame College in Cleveland, she is responsible for teaching a variety of Composition and English Linguistics courses across a number of degree-bearing and certificate programs.

MERRILYNE LUNDAHL
Merrilyne Lundahl is an assistant professor of English at Southern Oregon University, where she teaches courses in literature and writing, works with preservice teachers, and co-directs the Oregon Writing Project as SOU. Her research investigates intersections of place, literacy, and rhetorical education.

GRETCHEN MCCLAIN
Gretchen McClain is a high school English teacher in De Forest, Wisconsin, and a graduate student in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She has always been interested in how her instruction has, if at all, helped students in their next level of writing, and she is pursuing this line of questioning for her dissertation. Most of her students are too nice to tell her to her face that they don’t do well in composition classes once they get to college, but two years teaching introductory writing courses to first year college students has left little doubt for Gretchen about struggles her former high school students face upon entering the university. Whether teaching writing at the high school or college level, the opportunity to work one-on-one with students and talk about their writing ignites Gretchen's classroom passion. When Gretchen becomes the Secretary of Education, standardized curricula and tests that fly in the face of good writing instruction will be outlawed.

 Alyssa G. Cavazos is an Assistant Professor of Rhetoric, Composition, & Literacy Studies in the Department of Writing & Language Studies at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. She grew up in Hacienda El Barranquito, Nuevo León, México and immigrated to the U.S. with her parents when she was eight years old. She received her BA and MA in English from the University of Texas–Pan American and
her Ph.D. in Rhetoric and Composition from Texas Christian University. She is a recipient of the 2017 University of Texas Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Award. Her research interests include: translingual writing, multilingualism across communities, border rhetorics, and Latina/os in higher education. Her research appears in the *International Journal of Bilingualism, Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, Journal of Latinos and Education, Language and Education, Journal of Borderlands Studies* and forthcoming in *Across the Disciplines: A Journal of Language, Learning, and Academic Writing*. Her work reveals the need to investigate how multilingual writers use their language resources to navigate diverse writing contexts in order to design linguistically responsive and inclusive pedagogies.

**RANDALL W. MONTY**

Randall W. Monty is an Assistant Professor of Rhetoric, Composition, & Literacy Studies in the Department of Writing & Language Studies, and the Associate Director of the Writing Center at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. He earned an BA in English Textual Studies from Syracuse University, a MA in English from the University of Texas–Pan American, and a PhD in Rhetoric & Writing Studies from the University of Texas at El Paso. His research interests include writing center studies, critical discourse studies, border studies, social media and mobile writing, and soccer. His book, *The Writing Center as Cultural and Interdisciplinary Contact Zone* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), is a mixed methodological study of writing center disciplinarity. He has also been published in *Computers and Composition, WPA: Writing Program Administration*, and in the collection *Linguistically Diverse Immigrant and Resident Writers: Transitions from High School to College* (Routledge). In the article, “Building Rhetorical Theory through Discursively Constructed Borders” (*Journal of Borderlands Studies*), he and co-author Alyssa G. Cavazos developed a methodological framework for comparative analysis of discourse across different border regions.

**Art for crosspol 3.1**

This issue’s art is a series of hexagonal triptychs that combine re-purposed digital pieces from earlier *crosspol* issues, diagrams of brains on language, article excerpts, and original riffs. Feel free to cut out one and fold it in four dimensional space for a nifty desktop sculpture:)
CROSSPOL 4.1 - the art issue
accepting submissions through September 1, 2018

FOR THIS ISSUE, WE ARE CALLING FOR RESPONSES TO PERHAPS THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION IN OUR FIELD: WHAT DOES TEACHING LOOK LIKE?

We are seeking photo essays (one to five photos) accompanied by brief essays of 1500 words describing your pedagogical and theoretical response to what teaching looks like.

A note on the photos: we are looking for photos that
- are creatively framed (i.e., photos shouldn't be blurry or otherwise difficult to view);
- somehow capture some essence of what it means to teach or to be a teacher.

Some interesting questions to address might be, but certainly aren't limited to, the following:
- What does teaching look like from the teacher's point of view?
- What does teaching look like from the student's point of view?
- What does teaching look like from the point of view of other stakeholders (administrators, parents, businesses, college admissions, politicians, the community-at-large)?
- Are there perspectives or frames that depict what teaching looks like that are unconventional? Beautiful? Without people in them?
• What types of teaching are valued in transitional contexts by instructors, students, and other stakeholders?
• How does teaching shape students' attitudes towards learning?
• How does teaching improve or undermine students' abilities to write?
• What other ways does teaching impact students' minds and lives?
• What approaches to and forms of teaching motivate students based on their values and patterns of engagement?

We hope this call will generate many submissions and potentials for conversations. We are interested in publishing work by high school English or writing teachers; college writing teachers; and collaborations between the two. Additionally, we are interested in incorporating student voices in innovative and compelling ways. Anyone interested in writing a collaborative piece but unable to find a partner should email us at crosspol.ed@gmail.com, and we will try to facilitate a collaboration.

We will accept project submissions for this themed issue through September 1, 2018, and we will respond to submissions by January 15, 2019. If we request revisions, you'll need to resubmit by May 6, 2019.

crosspol: a journal of transitions for high school + college writing teachers is a peer-reviewed online journal that welcomes both traditional and multimodal projects. You can find more details on the journal, including submission guidelines, at crosspol-journal.com. Please direct any questions to Andrew and Colin at crosspol.ed@gmail.com.