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## Encouraging Languages other than English in First-Year Writing Courses: Experiences from Linguistically Diverse Writers

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# Encouraging Languages other than English in First-Year Writing Courses: Experiences from Linguistically Diverse Writers

Alyssa G. Cavazos

First-Year Writing (fyw) courses are ideal writing spaces where students' diverse identities and language resources can flourish for specific rhetorical purposes. While research has focused on multilingual students' language and writing practices, little attention has focused on self-identified multilingual students' perceptions of language difference in fyw. Because fyw courses are an integral space in students' writing experiences and an ideal place to counter English-only ideologies, this article focuses on self-identified multilingual students' perceptions of how they negotiate language practices in academic contexts in higher education and how they perceive the role of languages other than English in fyw. Self-identified multilingual students' perceptions of language difference can inform pedagogical practices in fyw that align with students' identities as linguistically diverse writers.

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Language difference in first-year writing (fyw) has been an issue of discussion since before the creation of the *Students' Rights to Their Own Language* policy statement, published in 1974. As Geneva Smitherman notes, composition scholars either expressed concern or hope for the implications of the statement on the teaching of writing. While acknowledging language difference in fyw would hopefully be the norm rather than the exception, the reality is that English-only ideologies continue to exist, especially in relation to the learning objectives of fyw. As the current anti-immigrant political rhetoric continues, fyw educators have an opportune moment to collaborate with linguistically diverse writers to resist discriminatory rhetoric through inclusive writing practices.

As a college writing educator at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) on the Mexico/U.S. border, I work with students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. My pedagogical approach reflects social justice and equity by encouraging all writers to draw on their writing and language histories. Juan Guerra reminds us that "anyone who is going to ask students to use their lived experience to write themselves into being in college classrooms and other communities of belonging must be willing to do the same" (2-3). To make sense of my students' experiences, I examine my linguistic and pedagogical background since my lived experiences with translingual writing shape how

I conduct research and teach writing. When I was in my writing course as a first-year college student at an HSI on the Mexico/U.S. border in fall 2002, the writing instructor assigned an essay that asked us to describe a space. I decided to describe Ruben's Grocery in McAllen, Texas, where my parents worked. Mi mami, the secretary of the store, manages payroll and billing responsibilities, and mi papi was responsible for organizing the produce section. The store carries products from Mexico and other Latin American countries. Naturally, el español is the norm in this espacio, and in my essay, I used Spanish words, such as cabrito, aguacates, agua fresca, and colorido, among others to represent the meaning I was making as an active participant in this space. My writing teacher's feedback focused on how I should write in English only. As a first-year college student, I didn't question her motives, as it was an English class, but I see now that I was instructed to assimilate into the dominant discourse regardless of my purposeful attempts to merge languages in my writing. My attempt to write while illustrating what Gloria Anzaldúa refers to as a "tolerance for ambiguity" through the coexistence of languages failed. If my writing teacher would have encouraged me to reflect on my translingual attempts to make meaning of a nuanced environment that directly opposes the university space, I could have further developed critical thoughts on the implications of living, studying, and using language in a border region. While the teacher shunned my use of Spanish, the essay nonetheless represents my desire to develop a healthy dialogue between the bordered and translingual spaces I was attempting to negotiate—my home and academic communities.

The teacher's feedback was a critical moment in my college experience, especially as a first-generation college student. My interest in developing linguistically inclusive pedagogies in fyw courses emerged, in part, from this moment. While teaching as a doctoral student at Texas Christian University, where about 70% of the students are white, I was made aware of my difference, racial and linguistic, which was a challenging realization. This experience led me to inquire about language diversity in English composition in my doctoral dissertation, for which I investigated how self-identified bilingual Latina/o academics in rhetoric and composition negotiate language difference in their profession (Cavazos, *Latina/os*). Through conversations with new and established Latina/o academics, I wanted to learn how I could succeed in the field of rhetoric and composition as a linguistically diverse writer. After earning my PhD and securing a tenure-track job at the same HSI I attended as an undergraduate and graduate student, I was committed to continue with this line of scholarly inquiry. As someone who learned English as a second language and as a bilingual academic, I was intrigued by how multilingual students experience the first-year writing space.

Scholarship in fyw has emphasized multilingual students' language and writing practices, particularly in developing pedagogical approaches and frameworks that build on students' writing and language agency (Canagarajah; Cavazos et al.; Guerra; Horner et al.; Kells, Balestar, and Villanueva; Lormier; Lovejoy, Fox, and Weeden; Shapiro et al.; Wojahn et al.; Wolfe-Quintero and Segade). However, little attention has focused on how self-identified multilingual students articulate their perceptions of diverse languages in fyw. Understanding how multilingual students perceive negotiations of language practices in higher education and the role of languages other than English in fyw is critical to developing linguistically inclusive pedagogies that align with students' language and writing realities.

### **University Context**

According to the Office of Statistical Analysis and Institutional Reporting at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), during the academic year 2013-14 when study participants were either freshmen or sophomores, the University of Texas-Pan American (one of UTRGV's legacy institutions), an HSI located on the Mexico/U.S. border, had a student population of 20,053, 88% of which self-identified as Hispanic or Latino and 51% as being fluent in Spanish. In the same academic year, 2,532 students were enrolled in either first or second semester fyw. Of the students enrolled in fyw courses, 91% self-identified as Hispanic or Latino and 67% as being fluent in Spanish. Students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds are diverse. In any given fyw class, students might self-identify as second language learners, monolingual English speakers, bilingual and biliterate fluent writers in English and Spanish, semi-bilingual, and as fitting other "categories" of linguistic knowledge (Charlton and Charlton). In the same academic year, 38.5% of the total faculty members at the institution self-identified as Hispanic or Latino, and 51% of faculty members who taught fyw courses self-identified as Hispanic or Latino. Faculty members who taught in the fyw program during the 2013-14 academic school year included teaching assistants, lecturers, tenure-track, and tenured professors. The institution does not collect data on faculty language background.

### **Data Collection**

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I sent a call for participation e-mail to two faculty listservs and asked faculty to share the call with their students. I noted that I was interested in talking with students who had taken both fyw courses and who self-identified as bilingual or multilingual, terms I defined broadly since I was interested in students' experiences with a variety of languages. While I distributed the call on several occasions,

only five students responded to my interview request. No incentives were provided. I conducted one face-to-face interview with each participant during the fall 2014 semester lasting between 45 minutes to one hour. The interview consisted of questions about their language and writing experiences at home and in the community, in their fyw courses, and in courses across academic disciplines, especially pertaining to their academic major (see appendix). The students who participated in the study were sophomores or juniors, and all had already taken and passed both of their fyw courses. To encourage recollection of memories in fyw, I asked for direct and concrete examples of class projects. All students who participated in the study self-identified as bilingual or multilingual; they all know English and use Spanish in diverse home and school contexts. Pablo was a sophomore computer science major and mathematics minor; Monica, a sophomore mass communication major; Jasmine, a sophomore Spanish major and medical Spanish minor; Sofia, a junior majoring in English with a minor in Mexican American Studies and learning Arabic as third language; and finally, Victoria, a junior and nursing major (all names are pseudonyms).

### **Research Questions and Research Positionality**

Two critical questions guided my analysis of interviews: (1) How do self-identified bilingual/multilingual students describe and perceive their experiences with languages other than English in first-year writing courses? (2) How do they negotiate their knowledge of multiple languages in a variety of contexts? Once interviews were transcribed, I coded the transcripts to identify themes informed by the research questions. Three major thematic findings emerged, leading me to analyze participants' experiences, perceptions, and negotiation strategies in higher education: multilingual practices as academic linguistic resources, contextual rhetorical awareness of language difference, and language difference alertness in fyw. This approach prevented me from making broad generalizations that may not have aligned with all students' linguistic experience in higher education. Informed by the themes, I structure the findings based on the research questions, first discussing multilingual students' descriptions and perceptions of their experiences with languages other than English, and then addressing their negotiation practices in diverse linguistic contexts. Insights from these participants, though limited, can inform how fyw may function as a space where students can cultivate their linguistically diverse identities as writers.

Because I identified the themes using a grounded-theoretical approach, as Michael Quinn Patton recommends, allowing the themes to emerge directly from the analysis of personal interviews, students' perspectives are central to the current article. Additionally, as an English language learner, I recognize

my positionality as a researcher. Embracing my multiple languages and identities in fluid and evolving ways influences how I ask research and interview questions and how I analyze interview transcripts. As someone who has been silenced and made to question my writing abilities and the legitimacy of my first language, I understand the importance of listening to different voices as we aim to design pedagogical approaches that respond to the linguistic and cultural realities of students in our fyw courses.

### **Perceptions of Language Difference**

Sofia, a junior English major and Mexican American Studies minor, shares, “In [the second semester fyw course], I never encountered the option to use Spanish. Even though the class was a great course, we never spoke about that. The only time we spoke about Mexican American Studies or Spanish was in [the instructor’s] introduction where she told us what she wrote for her master’s [thesis].” Sofia recalled that she was unaware that a student could use Spanish or investigate Mexican American issues in a master’s thesis. While the content of the course did not focus on language difference, the professor sharing her experience with Spanish provided Sofia with a new perspective on the purpose of academic writing. Monica, a sophomore mass communication major, shared that she enjoyed her first semester fyw course: “I loved my [...] class. It was modeled around the World Cup. Our projects were mostly readings and then we wrote a discourse community memo.” She further shared that the use of languages other than English was “neither encouraged nor discouraged.” She explained, “The professor is white. I don’t think he speaks much Spanish. Some professors say, ‘you can throw Spanish in there; it’s okay.’ He never said that but he never said, ‘oh, you can’t write Spanish.’” Although it is problematic to assume that a person may not know a language based on his or her appearance, Monica’s assumption is not different from the image of the student as native English speaker that Paul Kei Matsuda describes. Matsuda argues the tacit policy of English monolingualism exists due to “the relative lack of attention to multilingualism in composition scholarship” (637) and a perception of college composition students as “native English speakers by default” (637). Monica’s assumption may also be a result of an education system that has privileged the use of English as the dominant language in academic contexts. Most importantly, the assumption, from faculty or students, that English is the default language prevents conversations about how other languages function within fyw.

The rhetoric of deficiency, unfortunately, is prevalent in many fyw courses, especially in conversations concerning writers from traditionally underrepresented groups. Victoria, a junior and nursing major, shared, “[Professors] don’t say: ‘oh, you speak two languages. That’s great.’ They focus more on the

content of the course. It's not of their interest if students know two languages." In focusing on content exclusively, professors may ignore how students might draw on other language resources to make sense of the content. Victoria shares experiences in one of her fyw courses: "I felt by myself. I felt secluded. If I would say anything in Spanish it would just be awkward to use Spanish. If I wanted to make reference in Spanish, I couldn't because they wouldn't understand." While we might assume that at an HSI students' multilingualism would be perceived as a resource, the reality is that English continues to be privileged as the language of instruction and learning in higher education, particularly in fyw courses. Subsequently, students may never see their linguistically diverse competence as a resource in academic contexts.

Due to institutional demand for academic writing, multilingual writers may perceive that their native language is discriminated against. Pablo, a sophomore computer science major and math minor, explains, "My Spanish language has been unconsciously discriminated against. [Professors] don't discourage it, but they don't encourage it. So, they just leave it there. It's just there. They assume it's there." He continued, "They don't praise it. They don't look down upon it. It's unconsciously discriminated against because you're not allowed to use it as much as compared to English." Because some of his professors do not acknowledge the presence of other languages as valuable knowledge, Pablo feels he is driven to choose one language over the other. He explains, "I discriminate against my own language even though I wouldn't want to. Sadly. In a way, I am pushed to doing that." Pablo's realization indicates that institutions of higher education subtly assume that English is the primary language all students use to make knowledge, which is evidence of what Matsuda defines as the "myth of linguistic homogeneity" (638). Pablo's perceptions of his instructors' views toward Spanish demonstrate that professors may subconsciously perceive content knowledge in English as separate from content knowledge in Spanish or any other language. Instructors may assume students' lack of knowledge based on a linguistic difference that does not align with standard English in students' written text, and in these instances, students might be driven to choose one language over another in academic contexts as Pablo experienced.

Participants' perceptions of their instructors' language background were central to how they navigated languages. Because Sofia is minoring in Mexican American Studies, she has encountered multiple opportunities where instructors encourage the use of Spanish. She reflected, "I think most professors I've had are really good at incorporating Spanish, maybe not on the assignments, not all of them on the assignments, but in conversation, in forums, in discussion, in bringing in a focus, a perspective from the Mexican American side." While Sofia's coursework focused mostly on Mexican American Studies, Sofia also acknowledges that most of the professors' monolingual backgrounds may

pose challenges to using Spanish. Sofia reflected, “Our professors aren’t bilingual or professors aren’t from the area at times. So, how can they encourage us to speak a language they don’t know or how can they encourage us to be proud of a culture they don’t know?” Sofia’s concern extends beyond the professors’ linguistic repertoire; in fact, it has to do with instructors designing linguistically inclusive pedagogical approaches. Sofia raises another important issue, “It would be nice if we had more teachers who are from [the area] who are bilingual themselves. You want to see more people like you so you know that you can do that too.” She identifies one of the most critical situations in institutions of higher education: faculty diversity, or lack thereof. Sofia’s university is an HSI, but as Sofia suggests, the ethnic, racial, or linguistic background of faculty may not reflect the student population, a point that is underscored by the 38.5% of faculty who self-identified as Hispanic or Latino during the same academic year these interviews were conducted.

### **Negotiation of Language Difference in Diverse Rhetorical Contexts**

Participants’ perception of their language abilities as academic resources influences their decisions regarding when, where, and how to use diverse languages. As writing instructors, it is critical we understand and learn with our students about how they negotiate among diverse languages and cultures. Doing so will enable us to develop pedagogies that enhance students’ consciousness of their multilingual writing abilities. The participants in my study demonstrated rhetorical awareness of how diverse personal or academic contexts influenced their linguistic choices. Students’ high regard for their native language may facilitate their interactions with academic writing expectations. Jasmine, a sophomore Spanish major and medical Spanish minor, reflects on her experiences with Spanish and English:

At home, it’s all Spanish. My mom doesn’t know any English. Now that I am taking my major classes I actually get to speak Spanish a lot more, which is something I like. I feel like my vocabulary is bigger when it comes to speaking Spanish. For essays, I’m taking a Spanish Literature class, so we get to read a lot of books in Spanish and then we discuss [and] write all in Spanish.

Because Jasmine desires to become a translator, she realizes the rhetorical value of expanding her Spanish and English vocabulary, and her ability to switch among English, academic Spanish at school, and informal Spanish at home illustrates her rhetorical astuteness. From a different perspective, Victoria acknowledges the challenges inherent in negotiating diverse languages: “[My] parents and grandma [are] very influential. Yes, speak Spanish. Yes,



speak English, but don't overlap one or the other. Don't speak one language more than the other, keep it balanced. That way you don't have barriers [such as] chopped [language], so I can be smooth in both languages." Because her family encourages an equal and well-balanced use of both languages to avoid using language that may be perceived to lack fluidity, Victoria may be more prepared to engage and continue developing her knowledge of both languages equally in an f2w course that recognizes language difference. Monica, in contrast, shared, "I can't say that I have a safe language [...] if I'm talking with someone [whose] Spanish is better than mine, I go back to English because that's my safe spot. [If] there's someone who doesn't know Spanish well, I speak Spanish because that's my dominant language." Monica's rhetorical assessment helps her decide what language will help her achieve a level of comfort and feel "safe." She also shared one of the primary reasons she often uses Spanish with her friends:

At the university, I am doing a lot more English. There isn't much Spanish writing. Maybe that's why my friends and I use more Spanish because there's no longer a Spanish class where we're reading novels, so I do that on my own. I read on my own and I write Spanish on my own, so it balances it out.

If Monica did not see a value in her continued use of Spanish or would not perceive it as a safe language depending on the situation, she would simply not use it for these purposes.

Participants often found ways to incorporate the use of languages other than English in their writing projects. Jasmine learned English as a second language, and during her first year as a college student, she was placed in a remedial English course. She explained, "[I]t was a remedial class because I couldn't write in English. If I would have written in Spanish, it was pointless for the class. I just took it as we're writing in English. I guess also because in high school that's what is expected of you; I was still in that [frame] of mind." Jasmine's perception of English as the expected language in academic contexts is possibly due to the tacit English monolingual policy Bruce Horner and John Trimbur reference. Jasmine noted that she did not mind the focus on English, as she needed to learn how to write well in English to continue with her coursework. While it is crucial that we recognize students' writing and language learning goals as we create linguistically inclusive writing spaces (Shapiro et al.), we should also remain cautious and avoid privileging English as the only language students should be expected to use.

Jasmine emphasized that once she developed confidence in her written use of English, she made a conscious choice to link English and Spanish in all

her courses either by translating from Spanish to English as she composed or by conducting research in Spanish. For instance, in her second semester fyw course, she conducted research on translation practices between English and Spanish for her major research project. She noted, “It was mainly written in English. The only times when I wrote things in Spanish was when I included quotations of what [interviewees] said or examples of how [Spanish] translates into English.” She continued that her writing instructor’s feedback on her use of Spanish was as follows: “If you’re going to use another language, use quotations and explain what it means, so they can understand it.” Although her project was written primarily in English, her professor’s acceptance of Spanish in her essay suggests that he not only created a space for language difference in the classroom but also understood the significance of Jasmine’s project for her future career as a medical translator. While the professor’s actions can be perceived as reasonable considering the topic of Jasmine’s project, other professors might have suggested for her to include only the translations in English without any reference to Spanish. Although this instructor asked Jasmine to translate the interviews to English, which might be perceived as perpetuating the myth of linguistic homogeneity, he not only appears concerned for all readers having an equal opportunity to understand both languages but also provides Jasmine with opportunities to practice translation.

Pablo and Victoria noted that in their first semester fyw course they were not encouraged to use languages other than English. However, they both emphasized that in their second semester writing courses, they reflected on their early literacy and language practices and thought about language usage as they identified a context, audience, and purpose for their research project. Pablo explains how the literacy projects in his second semester fyw course helped him utilize his language abilities:

What I learned is that if you express your language, you are able to appeal to the audience that you really want to appeal. I used English and Spanish on [Facebook posts] in order to help [my classmates] practice their translation and try to understand both languages and how one translates into another. So, they can see translation is not word for word. Phrases can be translated differently.

His writing teacher not only created a space for Pablo to use Spanish comfortably, but she also ensured Pablo developed rhetorical tools, such as awareness of audience, purpose, and translation practices. Similarly, Victoria shared that

In [first semester fyw], it was more general, writing essays. For [second semester fyw], I learned a lot more because of the projects; [they] made me think a lot more. The first project was about my language. I

start[ed] learning to speak in English in kindergarten and it was hard for me to say words in English. I started my project using words in Spanish and then in English because I was encouraged to write in Spanish by my teacher [...] I could express myself in both languages. It's important because sometimes you have thoughts in Spanish that make more sense than in English. If I wanted to express myself in Spanish, if I had more process of thoughts, I can just say it and I don't have to translate the whole thought into English.

Victoria was encouraged to explore her literacy history through a multilingual lens, which allowed her to make sense of her early literacy experiences. By beginning to write her literacy project in Spanish and subsequently incorporating English words, she illustrates for her readers her early literacy experiences, learning Spanish first and then English in kindergarten. Victoria's experience illustrates the need to offer students the freedom to communicate meaning and make new knowledge in a variety of languages. Both Pablo and Victoria articulated not only the benefits of using languages other than English in their major projects in fyw but also how they negotiated language choices as they became aware of audience and purpose.

Participants demonstrated a sense of agency over their language and writing practices. Monica reflected, "I don't think I've ever felt that I had to give up a language. Maybe I don't write in Spanish in my English essay, but because I speak both of them fluently, I'm writing in English but I'm thinking of the things in Spanish." The way multilingual students describe their academic language experiences indicates their astute rhetorical knowledge of how language difference functions in their academic writing experiences. Additionally, Monica also shared how she uses her knowledge of Spanish to make sense of challenging words when reading in English, and she asked if she could open one of my books to a random page to provide an example. After reading one of the paragraphs, she shared, "This word, 'methodological.' Metodología in Spanish. There isn't a negative thing knowing more than one language. It helps me in every way even at work." Even though she had not encountered the word "methodological" in the past, she immediately knew what the word meant because one of her Spanish professors had introduced and discussed it in class. Monica's use of English and Spanish as she reads and writes is an indication of her rhetorical awareness of how both languages help her academically.

To leverage challenges students may encounter in diverse communicative contexts, they often draw on their rhetorical and linguistic resources as they negotiate language expectations. Pablo's critical use of English and Spanish as a mathematics tutor provides him with opportunities to connect with his audience, predominately mathematics students who learned English as a second

language. He explained, “Lo explico en español pero uso terminologia muy basica o uso analogias para explicar unos terminos que no tengo idea como se digan en español [...] because I don’t have training in mathematics in Spanish.” While Pablo does not have academic training in higher level mathematical concepts, he draws on analogies or definitions of concepts to communicate with his intended audience in the context of tutoring. When Pablo explained how he uses Spanish during math tutoring sessions, he found it appropriate to provide this explanation in Spanish, which indicates not only his level of comfort in using diverse languages but also his rhetorical awareness of the tutoring situation in Spanish. In a similar experience, Sofia described her rhetorical abilities when she shared, “I am impressed with the brain. I was writing an assignment in English and reading in Spanish while holding a conversation in Arabic with a friend. At one point, I lost track of what language was spoken where and everything was making sense. Once you speak a language, you just speak it and your mind adapts.” If, as writing instructors, we develop activities and projects that elicit awareness of cross-linguistic moments, we can create spaces that challenge academic English monolingualism. As the experience of the participants in this study indicate, students constantly engage diverse languages and linguistic practices, and they can further develop these linguistic abilities through direct and purposeful alignment with fyw curricula.

### **Linguistically Inclusive Pedagogies**

As fyw instructors in the current political climate, we must learn from and with multilingual writers as we explore how different languages enhance academic learning in equitable and inclusive ways. As Ofelia García argues, we must open “espacios for different people to act equitably in their worlds through their own languaging” (256). Because one of our primary objectives as fyw instructors is to teach rhetorical awareness, we can design writing assignments that invite students to consider genres and audience from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Working with multilingual writers in fyw should not be perceived as significantly different from working with writers we may traditionally consider “monolingual.” Informed by the rich conversations with the participants in this study, scholarship on translingual writing, and my pedagogical experiences, I offer linguistically inclusive learning objectives for fyw coursework. While I share some of these pedagogical implications and recommendations in previous publications (Cavazos, “Translingual”; Cavazos et al.), here I expand upon the implementation of these linguistically inclusive pedagogies through detailed descriptions within the fyw classroom context. I do not intend to suggest a set curriculum or portfolio of static practices because, as Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner claim, translingual writing is “not to be understood as stable but as also subject to and in need

of continual recreating/rewriting” (216). In an environment conducive to a translanguing pedagogy and to translanguaging practices, students are:

1. encouraged to analyze their language abilities as rhetorical resources
2. exposed to language difference in multiple academic and community contexts
3. invited to compose in diverse languages and discourses for a variety of audiences

### *Language Abilities as Rhetorical Resources*

Multilingual writers possess diverse literacy and language abilities that serve as rhetorical resources in fyw. Literacy histories or narratives are common assignments in fyw courses, and as Christina Ortmeier-Hooper suggests, they are an excellent tool for instructors to learn about their students’ experiences (414-15). For multilingual writers, literacy histories can be especially empowering, as they develop a sense of agency in relation to their experiences with language and literacy. In turn, for writing instructors, students’ literacy histories offer insights on how students navigate diverse linguistic contexts, which can inform pedagogical practices in writing instruction. One of the undergraduate writing courses I developed while a graduate student at Texas Christian University focused on language diversity. One of the projects asked students to reflect on and analyze their literacy and language practices in a specific community-based situation, a slightly different take on the traditional literacy narrative. Students were encouraged to think about a rhetorical experience when the language they used was significant in persuading or connecting with others. This project enabled students to become conscious of their rhetorical and linguistic choices while “repositioning” them through their writing and the rhetorical situation they experienced. One of my international students, who learned English as a second language, described her linguistic experience as a volunteer teacher at a local reformatory in her hometown in China. By integrating English and Chinese, the student learned how her use of music, poems, and a Chinese dialect facilitated her interaction with the audience through cultural and linguistic identification. Most importantly, through peer response conversations, students can teach each other about their respective languages, especially as they explain concepts that may be more effectively communicated in another language. Through this process, we engage all students in cross-linguistic exchange of ideas and knowledge, thereby recognizing the rich insights and unique perspectives all students are capable of sharing.

## *Language Difference in Academic and Community Contexts*

A second learning outcome in my translingual writing pedagogy aims to encourage all students to develop awareness of how rhetorical situations influence language practices in English and other languages. Many scholars have argued for the benefit of a cross-language pedagogy that helps students reflect on their identities and languages (Guerra; Horner, Lu, and Matsuda; Horner and Trimbur), and pedagogical examples contribute to these scholars' call to continue developing translingual pedagogical approaches in the writing classroom. Additionally, like the writing about writing curriculum developed by Doug Downs and Elizabeth Wardle, we can expose students to conversations in the field on cross-language relations in composition studies by inviting them to contribute to these conversations as they draw on their personal experiences and research expertise in languages other than English (Cavazos, "Translingual").

When I first introduce students to rhetorical analysis, I begin with a discussion of "Toward a Writing Pedagogy of Shuttling between Languages: Learning from Multilingual Writers," in which A. Suresh Canagarajah analyzes the rhetorical practices of a multilingual academic who writes about the same topic in different languages and contexts. Canagarajah's piece is a precise example of the type of rhetorical analysis I expect students to engage in as they examine their own and other writers' language choices. Canagarajah analyzes the introductions of three articles written in two languages, English and Tamil, by professor Sivathamby. Students read Canagarajah's article for homework, and in class, we work in small groups to identify the rhetorical practices (i.e., civic ethos, humility ethos, academic ethos) Canagarajah analyzes in Sivathamby's three different articles. We focus on how Canagarajah links audience and purpose to his rhetorical choices and how he uses examples from Sivathamby's work to further support his main claims. The in-class guided discussion of Canagarajah's piece serves as a foundation for students as they write their own rhetorical analyses of course readings, which include "How to Tame a Wild Tongue" by Gloria Anzaldúa, "Mother Tongue" by Amy Tan, "English Only and U.S. College Composition" by Bruce Horner and John Trimbur, "Should Writers Use Their Own English?" by Vershawn Ashanti Young, and *Students' Rights to Their Own Language*. The exposure to language difference in readings provides students with awareness of a multiplicity of rhetorical and linguistic strategies as they analyze how the authors' use of language contributes to argument and purpose.

Rhetorical analysis of language use further leads students to conduct research from multiple perspectives, including sources in languages or dialects other than Standard American English. In a translingual writing course, we can

encourage students to conduct research in other languages, especially sources that will allow them to analyze an issue from multiple views. They may even consider collaborating with bilingual peers, friends, or family members to analyze the most relevant scholarship. In the second project in my fyw course, I encourage students to conduct an analysis of oral and written use of language on an issue they are interested in. One project that stands out to me is that of a student who demonstrated interest in the U.S. tariff imposed on tires imported from China. The student analyzed speeches and interviews with politicians and economists from the U.S. and China who addressed this issue. This student took advantage of her knowledge of Chinese and English to provide a detailed analysis from various perspectives and rhetorical contexts. She effectively used our initial discussion of Canagarajah's analysis of Sivathamby's use of language in different contexts to analyze how various stakeholders discuss the same topic (in this case, U.S. tariffs imposed on imported tires from China) in a variety of languages and contexts. The analysis and conclusions the student made, especially concerning the economists' arguments and sense of audience, represent knowledge and skills the student would not have developed in a course not focused on language difference. For those in class who do not know Chinese, we learned through peer response the meaning and connotations of words used in Chinese media. A translingual pedagogy requires that we trust our multilingual students and let them teach us about their languages, analyses, and strategies. Through small shifts in our pedagogy, we can encourage students to see content knowledge in English and other languages as working together.

### *Compose in Diverse Languages and Discourses for a Variety of Audiences*

One of the goals in fyw is to help students become rhetorical users of language. When we ask students to think about their audience, purpose, and medium, we should also be open to the possibility that our students' intended audience may not consist of English-only users. Students should compose in a variety of discursive and non-discursive forms including in languages other than English. As we design writing classes, we should create espacios where students draw on their full linguistic repertoires to read, analyze, and write. In one of my fyw classes, I asked students to design a public document for a specific audience and purpose informed by their literacy narratives and their research inquiry on literacy education. I asked, "Who would benefit from knowing about your literacy experience?" One of my students asked in Spanish, "Ms., yo se a quien le importaría leer sobre mis experiencias. A mi sobrina. Pero, lo que pasa es que ella solo habla español y apenas está aprendiendo inglés. Quiero escribirle una carta. ¿Como le hago?" The student was concerned that her intended audience, her eight-year-old niece, only spoke Spanish as she was learning English as a second language. The

student wanted to write a letter to her niece, but she didn't know how to approach the assignment because she was enrolled in an English composition course. I responded: "Escribele la carta en español. She's your audience." The student wrote a heartfelt letter to her niece in Spanish in which she validated her niece's knowledge of Spanish and introduced her to specific concepts on language diversity from course readings and her own research in an eloquent and linguistically conscious approach. Students also wrote a reflective analytical piece and interpreted their choice of specific phrases, anecdotes, and examples. Through a reflective analysis, multilingual writers may articulate why they chose to use a language other than English. A reflective analysis is an ideal place for students to use all their language resources as they make sense and process their language choices.

As I learn from self-identified multilingual faculty and students how to design linguistically inclusive teaching espacios, I realize that I should model for my students how I use my language resources when I conduct research, write for academic and community audiences, and deliver presentations or speeches (Cavazos, "Multilingual Faculty"). I often share two authentic situations in which I used my knowledge of English and Spanish to reach my intended audience in my local community. The first is a speech I delivered at a Naturalization Ceremony and wrote about in the *International Journal of Bilingualism* (Cavazos, "Translingual"). Second, a keynote address I delivered to parents of students who are learning English as a second language. Students analyze these two pieces and we identify specific rhetorical strategies and language resources that proved critical in achieving my purpose and reaching my intended local audience. By sharing how linguistically diverse writers engage in translingual practices, we create rhetorically beneficial and personally meaningful writing espacios with our students (Cavazos, "Translingual").

## Conclusion

To counter dominant ideologies about academic writing and challenge discriminatory rhetorics in the current political climate, we must view multilingual students as rhetors working in diverse languages, contexts, and communities. When pedagogical approaches expose students to multiple languages and the rhetorical value of diverse discourse communities, students develop a sense of identification within academia. One of the most important strategies in a translingual pedagogy is the practice of listening to and trusting students' voices, experiences, and aspirations as they engage all their languages, identities, and cultures. Multilingual writers should not feel secluded or obligated to hide their diverse language knowledge to do well in higher education. If students are not provided with opportunities to develop all their linguistic capacities, it is possible they may never see their languages as resources when



they write in different contexts. By listening to our students' and our own translingual writing experiences, we can develop effective writing pedagogies and partnerships that focus on learning with rhetorically aware translingual writers, professionals, and citizens.

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## **Appendix**

### Interview Questions Protocol

1. General Background: What is your academic major and how did you choose this major? What do you hope to gain from your university experience? What do you envision as your future professional career? How many languages do you know? What do you consider to be your first/second language?
2. To what extent do you read, write, and/or speak languages and/or dialects other than English, including variations of English? In what contexts do you read, write, and speak these languages or dialects?
3. How would you describe your writing experiences in first-year composition (English 1320, 1301, and/or 1302)? What kind of projects did you compose? What challenges/successes did you encounter? What kind of feedback did the teacher/peers provide? To what extent were you encouraged to use languages other than English in your writing and/or research practices in these courses?
4. What type of writing do you engage in within the university context, across academic disciplines? What kind of feedback do you receive from your instructors? How do you respond to their feedback? To what extent have you written and/or conducted research in languages other than English in school? Outside of school?
5. How do you think teachers across academic disciplines perceive your knowledge of languages/dialects other than English or varieties of English?

6. How would you describe your experiences—successes and challenges—in balancing multiple languages and dialects in school? What do you see as an asset and/or barrier? What strategies do you enact in balancing diverse languages and/or writing contexts? Who, what classes, or institutional structures sponsored your achievements and challenges in your use of multiple languages?
7. Throughout your education, to what extent do you think you had to give up other languages or dialects in order to succeed in writing at school? Outside of school? What effect does this have on you now?
8. To what extent do you perceive your knowledge of languages other than English as a resource/strength when you write in school? Outside of school? To what extent do you perceive your knowledge of languages other than English as a barrier or challenge when you write in school? Outside of school? What specific anecdotes and/or writing assignments do you recall?
9. How do you think friends and family members perceive your knowledge of languages/dialects other than English? What specific anecdotes do you recall?
10. To what extent do you believe your knowledge (e.g., read, write, speak) of languages/dialects other than English will help you in your university experience, future professional career, and within the community?
- 11. Final Comments:** My research study consists of learning how bilingual or multilingual first-year composition students perceive language difference and how their experiences with language difference help and/or hinder their writing experiences in a variety of contexts. Do you have anything else to add that would enrich this study, future research, and/or bilingual and multilingual students' personal and academic success?

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