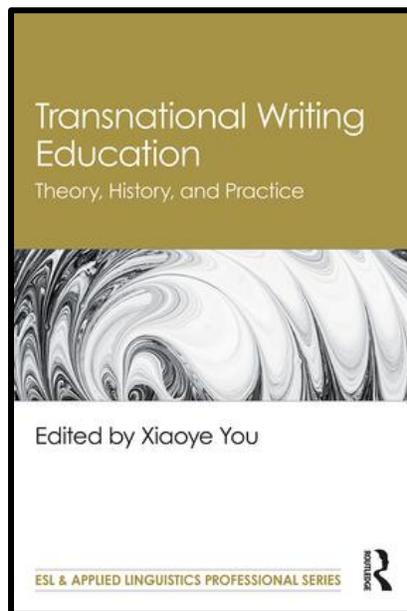


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## Transnational Writing Education: Theory, History and Practice By Xiaoye You

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Historically, writing education has been described as transnational, but in many contexts and practices, writing education has actually been cloaked in monolingualism and language ideologies (You, p. 7). Although many educators of writing claim to promote linguistic and cultural diversity, they still hold, perhaps subconsciously, language ideologies and beliefs. We see this when teachers emphasize “native” speaker norms as the “correct” way of writing. *Transnational Writing Education: Theory, History, and Practice* challenges the current state of writing education, particularly the hidden language ideologies that have been imbedded in our practice and the tendency to focus on a deficit model of language learning. This message is emphasized by the editor of this collection, Xiaoye You, who writes, “linguistic, cultural, and ethnic differences are not things to be contained, but matters to be respected and appreciated” (p. 6).

The authors of this collection come together to respond to the question, “how we might think about the global nature of writing education?” (Donahue, 2018, p. 21). The text challenges educators to encourage students to “recognize, negotiate with, deconstruct, and transcend national, racial, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries” (title page) and construct identities of their own beyond monolingual norms. Separated into sections on theory, history, and practice, the volume introduces readers to the relevance of transnational writing education, shows historical examples of the transnational model, and provides contexts in which the model can be put into practice in today’s writing classrooms. Xiaoye You begins the volume by explaining that the transnational framework is based on the pillars of: translanguaging, which emphasizes that the boundaries among languages are artificial and calls to attention how we use language; transculturalism, which refers to the cultural hybrid nature of our society; and cosmopolitanism, which is the ideology that all humans, though sometimes defined by race,

class, and culture, are part of the same larger community: humankind.

In the first section of the collection, “Theory,” these pillars, as well as critiques of current prescriptivism perspectives, are explored in detail. In Chapter Two, “Rhetorical and Linguistic Flexibility: Valuing Heterogeneity in Academic Writing Education,” Christiane Donahue describes the tendency among writing educators to compare and contrast rhetorical and discursive features of academic writing in different languages. What we need, Donahue argues, is to move toward embracing the complexity of languages and move toward a translanguaging model of writing education that asks questions about what writers are doing with language and why. Instead of looking at surface level differences of linguistic and rhetorical features, we need to consider how language is “doing its work” (p. 34). Donahue presents five potential models to guide educators in shifting to writing in a transnational context: translanguaging, metrolinguistic, plurilingualism, cosmopolitanism, and heteroglossia.

In Chapter Three, “Transnationalism and Translanguaging: How They are Connected,” Suresh Canagarajah discusses the connections between transnationalism and translanguaging. Canagarajah writes that “translanguaging is not about conforming to dominant meanings, but reconfiguring context through critical language use” (p. 43). Higher education policies and practices often promote diversity and inclusion, and aim to develop global citizens and communicators, yet higher education leaders and faculty are the ones holding onto monolingual ideologies. Canagarajah, and others in this text, argue that we need to deconstruct the tensions between languages and ideologies that influence and promote conforming to dominant language use. These practices negatively impact students’ participation in academic discourse by

limiting their abilities and causing them to lose their voice and agency as seen in a number of studies of minority college students (White, 2005; White & Lowenthal, 2011). In a transnational framework, students bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to tap into, not hide.

Anne Surma writes in Chapter Four, “Writing is the Question, Not the Answer: A Critical Cosmopolitan Approach to Writing in Neoliberal Times,” that Dewey’s ideas of democratic education and education as a means to better the public good are no longer present and have been replaced with the individual investment that is used for economic gain, job training, and private wealth generation. Surma writes that in our current educational climate, writing is often unengaging and lifeless. It is not seen as an art, but rather a tool to respond to market demand. This value is especially evident in the recent development of writing software such as *Grammarly* and *Turn It In* that treat writing as a transactional activity. These computer programs are not designed to raise questions or facilitate discussion of the context of the writing that Dohahue and Canagarajah, along with other authors of this collection, emphasize. Using a critical cosmopolitan approach, Surma challenges teachers to deconstruct aspects of globalization, including new technologies, and to open themselves to the possibility of an open world in which new, diverse cultural models can take shape and writing can again be a meaningful social practice.

Part Two of the collection, “History,” presents two historical accounts of the use of a transnational framework in writing education outside the U.S. In Chapter Five, “Translanguaging in Hiding: English-Only Instruction and Literacy Education in Nepal,” Shyam Sharma’s case study examines the official educational policy of Nepal and the push for English-only instruction as a “key” to a better life. This effort has not worked in that way. Instead it has

had negative effects in secondary and tertiary education in Nepal. Teachers are not fluent in English and are not able to explain lessons, making it difficult for students to write as well. With English-only instruction, students are not learning to write in their native language or English. Monolingual ideologies are creating more problems than benefits to Nepalese education. Instead of being a “key” to a new life, this type of instruction is limiting students’ potential for success in any language.

In Chapter Six, “Today the Need Arises: Arabic Student Writing at the Turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” Lisa R. Arnold analyzes samples of pieces in Arabic-language publications by students who attended the Syrian Protestant College, now the American University of Beirut. In these writing samples, students were incorporating translanguaging practices in their writing about writing (Wardle & Downs, 2014), a method or theory being explored in many writing programs at U.S. universities today. The writing Arnold reviewed reflects the students’ learning within the classroom and their broader understanding and use of language to make sense of power and focus on “best practices” for writing. Students used writing to negotiate educational and linguistic borders and question issues such as the value of content over mechanics and appearance over content, a particularly relevant topic in writing education discussions and practices today.

The remaining chapters make up the “Practice” section. Chapter Seven, “Potential Phases of Multilingual Writers’ Identity Work,” Shizhou Yang argues against the common thought that writing in a second language is a process of translating the “self” from the native language to a new one. Yang uses an integrated framework throughout her case study to explain the phases of multilingual writers’ identity work and reveal the tensions and rewards that students are faced with in the process. Similar

to other authors in this collection, Yang critiques previous studies on multilingual writers and the traditional dichotomies of “native” and “non-native” speaker identities. These are insufficient in a transnational writing education model and do an injustice to the complexity of multilingual writers’ identity work. Students use a series of performances, reflections, and reworking in their writing, which is where the identity work occurs.

In Chapter Eight “Effects of Study-Abroad Experiences on L2 Writing; Insights from Published Research,” Miyuki Sasaki investigates the effects of study-abroad experiences on students’ second language writing abilities compared to studies focused on other means in which writers acquire second language knowledge and skills. There have been few longitudinal study-abroad research studies focusing on study-abroad experiences such as this one. However, these studies can be critical to understanding the long-term effects of study-abroad experiences on language development. Sasaki reviews a longitudinal case study that followed five Japanese women who spent ten years abroad learning the English language and American culture. During their time in the U.S., and after their return to Japan, the women increasingly used L2 writing strategies, and researchers saw noticeable effects on the students’ writing strategies, writing quality, and use of rhetorical patterns.

In Chapter Nine, “From Activity to Mobility Systems: Tracing Multilingual Literacies on the Move,” Steven Fraiberg encourages educators to move away from deficit models and toward models in which diversity is seen as a resource. This chapter is the result of a case study on mobility systems and the construction of identity. The case study explored the unofficial spaces in which a student constructed her identity and a mobile literacy network through the use of multiple languages, technologies, and sponsors. Fraiberg’s chapter emphasizes the need for

a shift from focusing on students’ linguistic repertoires to spatial ones and presents strategies for educators to engage with and better understand how literacy practices connect to sociomaterial contexts.

Continuing the emphasis on the importance of technology-mediated transnational writing education (TTWE), Zhiwei Wu presents three issues in current research and practice that impede the enactment of TTWE projects as integrated components in writing education and proposes potential replacements in Chapter Ten, “Technology-Mediated Transnational Writing Education: An Overview of Research and Practice.” To make this shift, writing instructors and academia as a whole need to reflect on the current national, monolingual state of writing education and embrace cosmopolitan, multilingual, and multicultural frameworks. In order to be beneficial for students’ literacy development, TTWE should cross institutional, cultural, geographical, and linguistic borders. Under these conditions, students will have the opportunity to develop as communicators across platforms and modalities.

In Chapter Eleven, “English Teacher Identity Development Through a Cross-Border Writing Activity,” Yufeng Zhang writes that language education theories are shifting from traditional cognitivist second language acquisition frameworks to more sociocultural perspectives. As such, teacher identity is a growing area of research in foreign language education. Current teaching practices are influenced by traditional linguistic and cultural boundaries in which teachers still work toward students conforming to the target language norms. In order for teachers to develop transnational teacher identities, they need to adopt a multilingual and multicultural orientation in their pedagogy. Zhang’s study follows pre-service teachers from monolingual backgrounds who worked with college

students in a cross-border writing activity between American students and students at a Chinese university. At the end of the semester, their perceptions of ESL students' and their communication skills changed, for the most part. Some of the pre-service teachers reflected on and changed their practices as a result of their experience with transnational writing classrooms.

June Yichun Liu also focuses on practices involving web 2.0 technology in Chapter Twelve, "The Affordances of Facebook for Teaching ESL Writing." Facebook and other web 2.0 technologies are becoming more common in the writing classroom, allowing students opportunities to interact and collaborate in transnational settings. Using the new literacies approach, Liu examined an online community of 50 first-year students in a writing class in Taiwan. In this class, students used digital texts such as Facebook to develop awareness of genre and register. The students acquired language forms and conventions and used them in the online community, showing that technology can be a helpful classroom tool and a way for students to build translingual identities.

Scholarship on English academic writing (EAW) has traditionally been published in English language publications. However, EAW is an instructional practice in many countries where English is not the main language of publication. In Chapter Thirteen, "Teaching English Academic Writing to Non-English Major Graduate Students in Chinese Universities: A Review and Transnational Vision," authors Yongyan Li and Xiaohao Ma survey Chinese medium scholarship on EAW instruction for graduate students in Chinese universities. From the literature, the authors found that, similar to many U.S. institutions, graduate students from a range of disciplines, particularly engineering and sciences, participate in some type of English academic writing course during their first year of graduate school.

There is an increasing push for these graduate students to publish their research in English language journals, a priority that makes EAW courses critical to students' education and success.

The collection concludes with an epilogue by Brooke Ricker Schreiber, who reflects on her own experiences with transnationality and translingualism and advocates for a shift away from the standard English beliefs and practices that are present in the current state of writing education. Reemphasizing the perspectives of other authors in this text, Ricker Schreiber highlights the need to move beyond the assumption that we are communicating with a homogeneous community in our classroom in order to move to a transnational writing education model. Rather than pushing students to conform to codes of power, we need to embrace language diversity as well as students' individual experiences with language and writing.

In recent years, a number of universities have established and reaffirmed the importance of preparing globalized citizens. But what does this imperative really mean and are universities accomplishing this? The authors in this edited volume raise these questions and call on scholars in writing education to improve their pedagogies and rethink diversity within academic writing and academia as a whole. Translingualism is a fairly new term in the field, but the practice itself is not. This collection brings attention to the language ideologies held by writing educators, academia, and society as a whole and shows how a holistic, translingual, approach to language learning is a natural process that gives writers agency and improve communication.

The authors encourage educators to enable their students to recognize, deconstruct, and transcend boundaries of race, language, and ethnicity in the classroom. While the collection focuses on writing

education, translanguaging is important in academic contexts outside the English, composition, or even humanities courses. This text will be influential for writing educators, but before putting translanguaging pedagogies into practice, it is important that educators fully understand the concept for its intellectual value, not just as a social justice practice

(Matsuda, 2014). In addition to reading this collection, I suggest educators explore other key literature on second language writing and translanguaging to fully understand the processes and values.

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