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Inviting the stranger: Building pedagogical practice on the foundations of cosmopolitan thought

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Abstract: A key conversation among compositionists revolves around the topics of internationalization and global citizenship. One of the main pedagogical challenges that we need to tackle is how to teach writing as a way to bridge the familiar and unfamiliar, the known and the unknown. This paper argues that it is an ethical imperative for teachers to present writing as an encounter with the Other; an act of mediation that negotiates our desire for rootedness with an orientation for openness and 'contamination.' In line with the proponents of translingualism, who have called for renewed attention to linguistic and cultural diversity, I argue that a move beyond English only policies and ideologies of particularism can be sustained by building pedagogical practice on the philosophical foundations of cosmopolitan thought. Teachers who place emphasis on cross-cultural text negotiation, translation, and a reconceptualization of English as a lingua franca invite students to reflect on their role and responsibilities as users of English in times marked at once by increasing connectivity and phenomena of asymmetric inclusion in global dynamics.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism, Translingualism, International projects, Translation, English as a lingua franca

A rationale for pedagogical cosmopolitanism

Zygmunt Bauman (1990) writes that much of our social organization relies on a

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systematic effort to reduce the frequency with which hermeneutical problems are encountered while mitigating the horrors of indetermination. Refugees and immigrants often represent an incongruous synthesis of nearness and remoteness. The problem with these types of strangers is that they bring into the familiar circles of proximity the kind of difference that is usually understood and appreciated only at a distance. “Indeed,” writes Bauman, “the stranger is a person afflicted with the incurable sickness of multiple incongruity” (p. 150). This way of understanding the Other is tied to an ideological stance that is typical of the ideologies of particularism and nationalism, characterized by a tendency to collectivize friends and enemies while containing the threat posed by the incongruous stranger. “The national state,” Bauman observes, “is designed primarily to deal with the problem of strangers, not enemies” (1990, p. 153). Immersed in propaganda aimed at strengthening our sense of national identity, we tend to forget that ideas of purity and preservation have never had much to do with lived culture. Communities that seem to be natural and homogenous are in fact conventional and stratified, created ad hoc through political decisions. We reified the nation, a product of our own imagination (Anderson, 1983), into a discrete social entity that demands our exclusive and undivided loyalty and social commitment.

Similarly, standard languages, artificially constructed through political agency, are too often described as fixed communicative codes surrounded by an aura of prestigious antiquity that needs to be protected from change and contamination. Standardization can certainly be a positive force when it promotes collaboration and the exchange of information, but when standardization is invoked as an instrument to preserve a single, reified cultural identity, the result is an impoverishment of social life in terms of cultural dynamism (Milroy, 2001). The English Only movement in the U.S. draws from the common belief that standard languages should be supported lest they become corrupted. From this angle, the boundaries of linguistic correctness and propriety have to be protected in the same way as the physical boundaries of the nation-state are protected, with the goal of safeguarding the perpetuation of the hegemonic order against the corrupting influence of exogenous cultural forms.

As it were, one of the greatest challenges for our civilization is to balance a need to pin down our identity on one, clearly identified culture, with the need to be open to difference. From Diogenes to Cicero, from Marcus Aurelius to Kant, those who have embraced the philosophy of cosmopolitanism have tried to reconcile loyalty to restricted circles of family, friends, and neighbors with loyalty to humanity as a whole. Following this tradition of compromise, Beck describes cosmopolitanism as “having roots and wings at the same time” (2003, p. 17). Similarly, Appiah (2005) advocates for rooted cosmopolitanism, a paradigm based on the idea that there is no contradiction between being citizens of the world and being concerned for one’s fellow citizens. Contemporary reconfigurations of cosmopolitanism place emphasis on the central role of the dialogical imagination: the coexistence of rival ways of life in the individual experience which incites us to compare, reflect, criticize, and combine contradictory certainties.

Importantly, cosmopolitans think and live in terms of inclusive oppositions while rejecting the logic of exclusive oppositions.

An attitude of openness toward the unfamiliar, combined with a willingness to be engaged in local and translocal spheres of human interaction (Delanty, 2006), allows us to move beyond essentialist definitions of cultural identity based on the association between standard languages and national character. Those who embrace the main tenets of cosmopolitanism break away from the shackles of cultural essentialism and particularism to cultivate a new sense of allegiance to humankind and a new sense of identity as an ongoing social construction (Vertovec & Cohen, 2002). Within the frameworks of translingual and transnational composition, a cosmopolitan approach to the teaching of English composition can help teachers and students rediscover the value of cultural mediation and appreciate the transformative power of contact, cooperation, and 'contamination.' The importance of celebrating 'contamination' as opposed to purism has been emphasized by Appiah (2006) in a compelling argument in which he questions the idea of "preserving cultures" on the grounds that cultures are not stable and immutable entities. Rather, cultures are in a constant process of transformation due both to internal developments and external factors such as contact between social groups. Appiah's target here is the belief that primordial/authentic cultures can be disclosed through a sort of archeological search. The problem with this fallacious reasoning is that the search for authentic cultures can be compared to peeling an onion: how many layers are we supposed to peel away before we find a pure cultural core? How far back should we go? The same questions could be asked about languages, which are often understood as the most important constituents of cultures. Can we dig our way through English to find a pure version of this language? Should we stop at the invasion of the Angles, Saxon and Jutes? But these groups of people spoke different varieties of Germanic languages—which dialect should we pick as the most authentic one? We cannot answer these questions convincingly because there is no such thing as linguistic purity, which leads us to conclude that the idea of cultural purity is also a myth—a myth perpetrated to justify efforts at constructing and reproducing a national identity at the possible cost of our ethical duties as cosmopolitan citizens.

While I agree with the general sentiment behind Galinova's (2015) statement that students should have many opportunities for a consistent inquiry into "the significance of cultural differences and ways to overcome cultural barriers" (p. 21), I believe that this recurrent emphasis on "barriers" to overcome tends to reinforce the idea that cultures are separated by clearly identifiable boundaries, boundaries that are natural, rather than artificial and constructed. I am not saying that we should not acknowledge differences between people, but we could at least combine this approach with an investigation of how individuals and groups establish links and cooperation to achieve common goals. By resisting a representation of identity as formed in opposition to what is perceived as foreign, we can steer U.S. students away from feelings of superiority to other cultures and nations produced by particularism and chauvinism. A cosmopolitan approach to the teaching of writing revolves around the goal of stimulating interest, attention, and recognition for unknown languages, unfamiliar rhetorical traditions, and different customs. Students need to be taught about the importance of taking an interest in cultural codes before they can attempt to decode the signs produced within a specific system of signification. As exposed as we are to a diversity of messages launched across what Appadurai (1996) calls "mediascapes," we all need to develop an ability to situate these messages in the specific contexts in which they were produced before we can attempt to interpret them.

However, education on global citizenship does not end with the recognition and appreciation of difference. Rather, it requires that students actively engage in conversations with those who they see as strangers with the aim of finding common ground to tackle common problems. While differences are acknowledged, they never take the center stage due to a shift in focus toward accommodation, dialogue, and cooperation. I agree with Canagarajah (2013a) when he observes that in the global contact zone the process of communication starts with a recognition of the plurality of norms and a willingness, on the part of the interlocutors, to expand their repertoires "without assuming that they can rely solely on the knowledge or skills they bring with them to achieve communicative success" (p. 43). But if stage one is characterized by an appreciation of difference, stage two should see interlocutors "strive to achieve their shared objectives through their divergent codes" (p. 43) by finding, I would add, how their divergent codes and related ways of thinking can overlap through accommodation. My own emphasis on mediation echoes Canagarajah's (2013a) view of negotiation as a process that invites students to shift from habitual norms of spoken and written expression to a translingual sensibility characterized by a willingness to experiment with new codes to achieve mutual understanding and find common ground.

Within this philosophical framework, my first goal in this paper is to establish a connection between a pedagogy based on cosmopolitan values with the call for a translingual approach in the teaching of writing and composition. With its recognition of the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language, its promotion of multilingual education, and its conceptualization of differences as resources that can enhance the quality of interactions, the translingual approach appears to be aligned with many key principles of cosmopolitanism. In the section that immediately follows, I will review the basic tenets of the translingual approach to explain how they can inform curricula designed to promote a cosmopolitan worldview. Next, I will illustrate three pedagogical strategies that invite students to recognize otherness, develop new ways to cope with difference, and understand communication as mediation. Finally, in the last section of this paper I will offer some considerations on the importance of scaffolding the learning process through reading assignments and class discussions that place emphasis on the hybrid nature of the English language and the constructed quality of seemingly natural associations between language, culture, and identity.

The translingual approach: Writing as an activity of mediation

In a position paper published in the *Journal of Advanced Composition*, Gary Olson (1998) defines postmodern ethics as “the encounter with the Other” (p. 46). Because we bring our own agendas in our interactions with strangers and foreigners, Olson adds, more often than not these interactions are characterized by dissymmetries of power and culture between individuals. Consequently, how we negotiate our encounter with the Other is a weighty responsibility, and precisely what ethics is about. In perfect alignment with Olson’s stance, one of my main goals is to argue that a capacity of being hospitable communicators is a central ethical dimension of being literate in our times. I believe that emphasis on particularism, nationalism, monolingualism, purism, and cultural preservation can be counteracted through a pedagogy that invites constant reflections on the formative value of cross-cultural conversations through a balanced mix of readings on cosmopolitan thought, workshops on English as a lingua franca, and international projects. In other words, we need to provide monolingual students in the U.S. with opportunities for confrontation and collaboration with peers who speak a different type of English and often use unfamiliar communicative strategies to build rapport and establish trust.

In U.S. institutions of higher education, a move away from cosmopolitan approaches to language pedagogy can be traced back to the transition from the classical curriculum to writing instruction in English (late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries). The abolition of requirements in Greek and Latin marked a shift away from translation and translingualism to focus on standard American English as the only language worthy of study for a successful life. Horner and Trimbur (2002) present this pedagogical turn as characterized by a tendency to conflate specific national affiliations with specific languages, cultures, and identities. While language is inherently an unstable entity in constant flux, it has come to be understood—particularly in the U.S.—as a fixed, idealized entity removed from the vagaries of time, place, and use. In overt opposition to this narrow understanding of language, Horner and Trimbur, with Lu and Royster, recently proposed a return to a translingual approach to language teaching (2011). To de-emphasize what they call the “bankrupt notions” of “standard English speaker” and “Standard Written English,” they invite teachers of composition to consider how language norms are flexible and adaptable, and how difference represents a resource, provided that teachers investigate what this difference can do, and how it might function rhetorically.

At the foundation of the translingual approach is the idea that ‘monolinguals’ are not an ontological reality (Horner et al., 2011). What this means is that we all shuttle between codes, registers, and discourses to communicate effectively in a variety of situations. But if it is true that we all have multilingual competence, it is also true that we are often unaware of our communicative resourcefulness. We do not realize that this innate ability to mediate and negotiate meaning could be further enhanced by paying more attention to what we do with language and why. In contrast to the traditional monoglot approach to writing instruction, the expression “translingual fluency” is an umbrella term for an approach that aims at stimulating students’ “deftness in deploying a broad and diverse repertoire of linguistic resources” along with a heightened “responsiveness to the diverse range of readers’ social positions and ideological perspectives” (Horner et al., 2011, p. 308). To clarify, advocates of the translingual approach call for a move beyond the teaching of standard American English to open a space for a range of regional and functional varieties of English that offer equally sophisticated expressive resources.

Composition teachers who have embraced appropriateness as a guiding principle for verbal interaction cannot fail to see that different rhetorical situations call for different ways of using language. Following the conventions of standard American English does not necessarily make a text more accessible to readers who are non-native speakers of English. Sometimes it might be wise to break the rules of formal style to enhance the clarity of a message for a specific audience. Research into the use of English as a lingua franca, for example, suggests that pragmatic strategies such as increasing the degree of redundancy both in spoken and written communication can go a long way to disambiguate meaning (Seidlhofer, 2011). Similarly, writers who create documents that will be translated in other languages can facilitate the work of translators by avoiding noun-stacking (phrases composed of a sequence of three or more nouns stacked one after the other), which is perfectly grammatical in English, or by using syntactic cues (Kohl, 2008) that make it easier for translators to identify parts of speech and analyze the structure of a sentence. Syntactic cues can often be omitted without making a sentence ungrammatical as in the example “Ensure the power switch is turned on.” However, translators will find it easier to decode and translate the more syntactically explicit version “Ensure that the power switch is turned on” (these examples are from Kohl, 2008, p. 13). What I am trying to say is that students need to develop competence in multiple functional Englishes to be able to communicate effectively in a variety of situations. As concerns regional varieties of English, workshops on phonological, lexical, and syntactical variability can prepare speakers of standard American English to communicate more effectively with a wide range of users of English. Students who develop and compare multiple forms of the same message have an opportunity to reflect on what each version does on a pragmatic level. In other words, they understand why it is important to constantly adjust their communication style to accommodate diverse interlocutors and achieve a variety of communication goals.

The Achilles’ heel of many arguments in defense of the translingual approach is the tendency to identify the exigence for this paradigm shift in pedagogy in the fact that international student populations are rapidly growing in U.S. universities. If the rationale for implementing the translingual approach is that our classes are now diverse and multi-ethnic, what should teachers do when all their students belong to a relatively compact speech community? Should they just set aside the translingual approach and return to it when contexts are more appropriate? The truth is that native speakers of English need to understand how to use language in a global age at least as much as non-native speakers need to improve their fluency in standard English. It is native speakers' lack of practice in intercultural communication, rather than non-native speakers lack of fluency, that often causes miscommunication and misunderstanding in contact situations. In other words, all users of English need to acquire communicative resources that can allow them to follow translocal and globalized trajectories of education and mobility (Blommaert, 2010). Students, in particular, should explore ways in which they can export their locally acquired resources to other places and spheres of society. In this connection, the role of teachers is to bring students to realize that a good mediator should dispose of a complex array of tools to ensure mutual understanding.

In the sections that follow, I will draw from my personal experience as a teacher of ESL, English composition, and technical writing in two different countries (Italy and the U.S.) to illustrate three strategies that can help bridge the gap between calls for a global turn in the pedagogy of English (Hesford, 2006; Donahue, 2009) and classroom practice. My goal is to offer tentative answers for a question that Shapiro, Farrelly, and Tomas (2016) posed in a post that recently appeared in the official blog of the National Council of Teachers of English: "How are the day-to-day actions we take in the classroom linked to the goals of global citizenship?" While I agree with Carrie Kilfoil (2016) that "translingual composition" and "transnational composition" should not be conflated, I believe that if we want to implement a translingual approach with the goal of promoting global citizenship, we need to borrow practices and aims that are typical of transnational composition. In particular, we need to build networks with teachers and a variety of classes in other nations to expand our conceptual and pedagogical horizons while encouraging students to collaborate in cross-cultural teams. When translingual emphasis on the heterogeneity of linguistic and rhetorical practice joins forces with transnational emphasis on creating new networks and communities of practice, the classroom becomes the base for the exploration of different declinations of otherness.

With Appiah (2006), I am urging that we take an interest in other civilizations and promote 'contamination' beyond the sphere of the local to produce transnational forms of exchange and cultural production. A transnational approach guarantees that we do not fall into the trap of cultural protectionism, which is associated with the idea that teachers should somewhat enforce diversity or preserve traditional cultures. Because cultures are made of continuities and changes, purity and authenticity are mirages that exist only in our imagination. We can better serve our students by making a case for 'contamination' while celebrating the transformations that occur when we invite strangers into our lives. A cosmopolitan approach to the teaching of writing revolves around the creation of multiple opportunities for exchange and collaboration between groups of students from diverse cultural backgrounds. While non-native speakers of English will find new possibilities to make their voices heard to redress power asymmetries in English language use, native speakers will be encouraged to step out of their linguistic and cultural comfort zone to establish a more egalitarian dialogue and more participatory forms of writing. A pedagogy inspired by cosmopolitanism should incite students to compare ways of life, reflect on rhetorical traditions, negotiate communication, and mediate meaning as key steps toward an effort to think and live in terms of inclusive oppositions. The question is not to brush aside difference, but the acknowledgement of difference should always be accompanied by a search for commonalities and an attempt to build bridges between languages and cultural traditions.

Pedagogical Strategy One: Collaborating in cross-cultural virtual teams

Many projects that involve international collaborations between students have been described in the last ten years (Anderson et al. 2010; Klein & La Berge, 2012). The pedagogical import of such forms of collaboration have also been emphasized in studies that analyze the dynamics of cross-cultural virtual teams (Flammia, 2012; Flammia, Cleary, & Slattery, 2010). An example of a grassroots organization that promotes cross-cultural collaboration is the Trans-Atlantic and Pacific Project (TAPP), launched in 1999 by Bruce Maylath and Sonia Vandepitte (Humbley et al. 2005; Maylath, Vandepitte, & Mousten, 2008). The TAPP is organized in the following way: Students enrolled in writing classes in the U.S. create texts in English and then send them to students majoring in English and translation in a variety of international universities. Typically, instructors pair up classes in technical writing based in the U.S. and translation classes in overseas universities. Technical writers and translators are strongly encouraged to use a variety of communication platforms (e.g. email, instant messaging, video conferencing, etc.) to exchange information and collaborate in both the creation of the target text, and the revision of the source text. All the TAPP instructors present writing and translation as activities that greatly benefit from shared authorship and iterative cycles of feedback and revision. Importantly, translators are invited to take on the role of beta-testers whose function is to assess the clarity, accuracy, and overall usability of the documents created by the technical writers.

Students involved in the TAPP learn how to manage complex projects; how to work in virtual communicative environments; how to work effectively in cross-cultural and cross-functional teams; how to prepare texts for translation and localization; and, finally, how to build on cycles of feedback to improve the usability of technical documents. Growing scholarship on the TAPP shows how learning outcomes such as teaching writing as process, or having students appreciate the benefits of collaboration and shared authorship are punctually met in a variety of different iterations of the project. But the added value of the TAPP is in the way this project promotes attitudes of openness while stimulating curiosity for other cultures, languages, and rhetorical traditions.

Writers who receive requests for clarification from translators understand how their writing strategies and language habits are a product of conventions and rhetorical traditions that are anchored in American culture and do not necessarily have an equivalent in other cultures. For example, an American writer involved in one of the instantiations of the TAPP projects that I organized at North Dakota State University (NDSU is the central hub for TAPP projects) was surprised to see how a translator would refuse to use the Italian formal equivalent for *kill*, i.e. *uccidere*, in the sentence "Start with plants that are more difficult to kill." A native speaker of Italian, the translator felt that *kill* had no place in a set of instructions on how to grow a vegetable garden, no matter how reassuring the writer was in explaining that the use of *kill* in the source text was unmarked and conventional. The original sentence was rendered as "Inizia con piante che muoiono meno facilmente" (back translation: "Start with plants that do not easily die"), with the idea of killing replaced with the idea of dying. The lesson learnt through this conversation between speakers of different languages was that even technical communication often entails acts of rhetorical mediation. As they travel across various locales, information and ideas have their contours reshaped so that their semantic intention can be preserved or disrupted in a way that is at once functional and acceptable.

Rhetorical shifts such as the one described above tell compelling stories about differences between rhetorical traditions. As they collaborate with translators, students understand that human beings tend to make culture relevant in different ways and for different purposes. It is not so much a question of linguistic relativism—the idea that our behaviors are determined (strong version) or influenced (weak version) by our native language and culture. Rather, the question is why we *do* culture: What makes us emphasize cultural differences in specific contexts of communication? A cosmopolitan approach to writing instruction will not deny that cultural differences might complicate the communication process, but it will not reify these differences either. Teachers and students will not accept cultural differences as essences; rather, they will study what makes us *do* culture, i.e. what makes us put the limelight on differences rather than commonalities in certain communicative contexts.

First as a student enrolled in an International Technical Communication class at North Dakota State University, and later as a teacher of both first-year writing and technical writing classes (NDSU and Penn State Behrend 2013-2017), I have had several opportunities to assess the benefits that international collaboration can bring to both students and teachers, especially in terms of metalinguistic and metapragmatic awareness. In the remainder of this section, I will briefly describe a simplified version of the TAPP that I organized in a first-year writing class during the spring semester of 2013 (for a detailed analysis of this project see Verzella & Tommaso, 2015). The project involved undergraduate students enrolled in an English composition class at NDSU and graduate students majoring in English enrolled at two Italian universities, Università di Chieti-Pescara and Università del Molise. The language proficiency level of the students in Italy, all native speakers of Italian, ranged from B2 (upper intermediate) and C1 (advanced) according to the Common European Framework of Reference.

The task of the American students, all native speakers of English, was to write a profile of an influential leader (widely known politicians, activists, thinkers, researchers, etc.) for a global audience of non-native speakers of English with the purpose of informing and entertaining. Once a first draft of these profiles was complete, NDSU students had to send them as email attachments to their TAPP partners in Italy, whose task was to provide feedback on such issues as clarity, readability, and rhetorical appropriateness. Finally, students from both sides of the Atlantic entered a process of text-negotiation. In other words, they were asked to collaboratively rewrite passages that posed problems of intelligibility or rhetorical effectiveness.

During the class discussions that I conducted at different stages of the project, my students had plenty of occasions to reflect on the feedback received from their peers in Italy. We had stimulating conversations on how the use of idiomatic expressions was resented by the readers; how the ubiquitous use of the fuzzy verb *get* often impeded comprehension; or how the use of unconventional phrasing, while often a sign of creativity on the part of writers, caused decoding problems to global readers of English texts. My students also observed how Italian students appeared to appreciate the use of Latinate words and expressions in place of Anglo-Saxon vocabulary (e.g. *determine* instead of *find out*, or *continue* instead of *go on*). As research on English as a lingua franca shows (Seidlhofer, 2011), accessibility and portability of content in new locales are not so much related to the selection of simple words (a relative concept), as to the ability to anticipate needs, attitudes, and reading skills of target audiences. The use of Latinate vocabulary in a text conceived for English learners who are native speakers of Italian is clearly a sign of linguistic and rhetorical sensitivity; a way to embrace hospitable communication practices. When I introduced my students to the layers of the English language in a 20-minute presentation on the transformations of the English, I did not ask them to use Latinate vocabulary in their profile; but some of them did ask about the “connections” between Latin and Italian since they knew from the start of the semester that they would collaborate with native speakers of Italian.

Class discussions also touched on the topics of cultural appropriateness and the pragmatics of intercultural communication. The fact that an Italian reader censured the labelling of composer Antonio Vivaldi as “a decent guy” allowed us to exchange ideas on the concepts of rhetorical appropriateness and cultural sensitivity. While the feedback offered by Italian students was rarely tinged with reflections on differences in rhetorical and cultural traditions, national pride appeared to be triggered by what was perceived as a slighting of an Italian artist. From the reader’s perspective, the chatty and informal style used by the American student signaled a lack of recognition for a quintessential Italian artist, degraded to the rank of “decent guy.” As concerns pragmatics, we frequently paused on the strategy of hedging in readers’ feedback. We observed how the Italian students tended to soften the impact of their statements through expressions such as, “You could consider revising…”; “If I were you, I would probably…”; “There seems to be something wrong here…”; and many other linguistic realizations whose function is to preserve face. With regards to the American students' pragmatic resourcefulness, I focused on email exchanges to invite them to reflect on how they managed (not always consciously) to mirror the rhetorical moves and styles adopted by the Italian students. In this case, my primary goal was to foster meta-awareness on how a relationship of trust can be established through rhetorical accommodation and pragmatic strategies such as paraphrasing and reformulation. Even a simple parenthetical definition such as "third year student" after the word "junior" can go a long way into facilitating comprehension for international readers.

When we consider how native speakers of English often lack knowledge of their intended audience and meta-knowledge of how their language works; we cannot fail to see how feedback offered by the Italian students played an instrumental role in stimulating reflections on rhetorical grammar. On the metacognitive level, the American students gained new rhetorical insight on what they do with language and why. Even more importantly, they gained an understanding of how a wealth of pragmatic strategies can be used in intercultural communication to invite diverse audiences in the conversation. One of the central tenets of cosmopolitan philosophy is a willingness to engage the Other in dialogic relationships that eschew hierarchical forms of collaboration. Students who gain an understanding of languages as flexible repertoires of resources that can be manipulated in many different ways will be more prepared to negotiate meaning on a linguistic level and mediate real or perceived differences on a cultural level.

Pedagogical Strategy Two: Reinstating translation in English composition

We owe to the members of the New London Group (1996) a compelling case in favor of a pedagogy of multiliteracies that focuses on how individuals negotiate cultural and linguistic differences. Effective citizenship, they argue, requires that we interact using multiple languages and communication patterns that cross cultural, linguistic, and national boundaries. More recently, the exigence to explain how theory and research in the field of composition should inform academic policies and programs spurred a group of compositionists to collaborate in the identification of threshold concepts whose disciplinary significance is widely recognized. The product of this collaboration, the book entitled *Naming what we know* (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015), offers a classification of threshold concepts into one metaconcept and five overarching concepts.

One of these overarching concepts states that "writing is a social and rhetorical activity" (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015, p. 17). In the entry curated by Kevin Roozen, we read that authors are never isolated, and writers always draw upon ideas and experiences of countless other writers in their creative process (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015, p. 17). It can be argued that this characteristic of writing evokes similar characteristics of translation as an activity that establishes relationships between different authors and rhetorical traditions. In a related entry on writing as a process of addressing, invoking, and creating audiences, Lunsford observes that, especially in the digital age, consumers of information can become producers as well. The collaborative and social nature of literacy, she adds, “allows for greater agency on the part of both writers and audiences” (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015, p. 21). In this scene of communication, translators can be seen as consumers who absorb, manipulate, and repackage information for the benefit of new audiences. Another threshold concept, presented by Russell, explains how writing “mediates—comes between, intervenes in—the activity of people” (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015, p. 26). This definition perfectly captures one of the key functions of translation: It is through iterative cycles of writing and translation that people coordinate their activities and effectively exchange ideas across time and distance. Finally, Paul Kei Matsuda argues that in today’s globalized world “it is more important than ever to see the negotiation of language as an integral part of all writing activities” (p. 69). In any writing context, he adds, “the audience will likely include translingual individuals—those who grew up using different varieties of the target language or another language altogether” (p. 69). I see this statement as an indirect call for the incorporation of translation theory and pedagogy in the field of English composition on the grounds that translation is the quintessential form of linguistic negotiation.

Based on these conceptualizations of writing, one would expect that the idea that all acts of reading and writing are related acts of translation and negotiation had inflicted a mortal blow to pedagogical and programmatic orientations influenced by the ideologies of monolingualism. And yet, despite repeated calls for the internationalization of composition studies, interest in translation is still scarce in English departments across the U.S. In my nine-month-long job search (August 2015-April 2016), I noticed how descriptions for positions in English composition include basic writing, creative writing, professional writing, multimodality, digital humanities, and many other compelling areas of study, with the notable and tell-tale exclusion of translation theory. To address this gap in writing programs and pedagogy, I argue for reinstating the place of translation in our curricula by setting up collaborations between cross-cultural virtual teams of writers and translators. But for these types of international projects to be effective, teachers should provide adequate scaffolding on translation theory. Within a cosmopolitan approach to writing pedagogy, the introduction of key notions of translation theory aims to show students how texts that they see as firmly embedded in a single cultural context are often the product of complex processes of borrowing, adaptation, and negotiation from texts situated in many different contexts. Translation is only the most direct and overt form of adaptation, but many other instances of silent collaboration between writers from different cultures and different times can be identified and discussed by students and teachers in conversations aimed at recuperating the value of shared authorship and the idea of the constant cross-cultural exchange that has always inspired various practices of composing.

The remainder of this section will consider two ideas on how to prepare writers to collaborate with translators: I will first illustrate how both literature and composition teachers can make translation a core aspect of their curricula; second, I will offer an example of a type of class activity that empowers multilingual speakers while stimulating native speakers of English to act as cultural mediators.

Rather than bringing up translation problems extemporaneously, teachers should systematically invite students to reflect on the fact that many rhetorical concepts evoked in composition courses have been conceived and developed in a remote past and in foreign languages. The concepts of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*, for example, or the Roman concept of *decorum*, are not domestic products, but foreign ideas that have been gradually assimilated by mainstream pedagogical theory. This incorporation entailed a restructuring of these concepts, whose meaning and value are now different. The very way in which we use these concepts has changed and evolved as layer after layer of different interpretations enriched the texture of the original ideas. This means that all the concepts and notions that we teach to our students are translations (adaptations of materials that have been circulating for centuries in Western culture). When compared to the domestication of translated literature obtained by inscribing British and American cultural values in foreign texts while treating English as the transparent vehicle of universal truths, a pedagogy of translation helps students understand how the translating language and culture are valorized through the situated practice of translation, how translated texts often express interests (and sometimes hidden agendas) of certain domestic groups, and, finally, how translations reinvent texts for different audiences and rhetorical situations. I agree with Venuti (1998) when he argues that a pedagogy of translated literature (a pedagogy that reveals the foreignness of literary works written in languages other than English) allows students to go beyond a view of culture as monolithic and unchanging, and toward an appreciation of the way in which our lingua-cultures are open spaces in which different histories, languages, and experiences intermingle amid diverse relations of power.

Another way to scaffold international writing/translation projects is by encouraging multilingual speakers and international students to think of words and expressions used in their native languages that they find very hard to translate in English. When I organize these types of activities, my goal is to have students collaborate to unpack the complex and multifaceted meaning of the selected foreign expressions with the goal of rendering the same meaning in English. For example, in one of my English composition classes, a native speaker of Russian introduced the concept of *avos*. This student argued that *avos* does not have an equivalent in English, even if some near synonyms (e.g. “happy-go-lucky,” “counting on a miracle,” “blind faith in divine providence,” “pot-shot,” “hit-or-miss,” etc.) can partially recapture the original meaning. By presenting the classroom with this translation problem, the speaker of Russian broke free from the persona of incompetent speaker of English to play the role of language expert as she evaluated the translating solutions proposed by her classmates. In their turn, native speakers of English appeared to be eager to accept the challenge of finding an original way to render the concept of *avos* in English, and ready to accept a non-native speaker of English as a language expert. The challenge of translating a foreign concept into the English language proved to be an intriguing activity for my students; an activity that encouraged them to understand communication as an act of negotiation that requires mediation skills, patience, good will, open-mindedness, and flexibility. Even more importantly, when non-native speakers take a more active role in English classes, native speakers cease to see them as incompetent users. Patronizing attitudes give way to the urge to establish a more authentic connection with the stranger, based on the understanding and appreciation of both commonalities and differences between cultures and languages. Once again, this attitude of openness and curiosity for alternative cultural and rhetorical traditions enacts a cosmopolitan approach that recognizes both the cultural diversity and the interdependence of peoples in our world.

Pedagogical Strategy Three: Introducing students to English as a lingua franca and corpus consultation

Many scholars who have espoused the philosophy of translingualism propose to include the study of varieties of English in the college composition curriculum (Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011; Bokor, 2011). When compared to calls for a world Englishes approach, calls for introducing workshops on English as a lingua franca (ELF) have gained less traction in composition pedagogy. In fairness, it is hardly surprising that teachers show scarce interest in ELF when one considers how difficult it is to define and describe this function of English. While some linguists have tried to define ELF according to an identifiable phonological and grammatical system (Jenkins, 2000; Jenkins, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2004; Breiteneder, 2005), others (Canagarajah, 2007; Matsuda & Friedrich, 2011) understand ELF as intersubjectively constructed in specific contexts of interaction (i.e. a language that cannot be described a priori). But if we move our focus from differences to commonalities, we find that scholars generally converge on the idea that ELF is a language of secondary socialization that allows users to interact with individuals outside their primary social space and speech community. In Seidlhofer's words, ELF is "any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option" (2011, p. 7). Because ELF speakers cannot depend on a pre-constituted form for meaning, in each interaction they activate pragmatic strategies that help them negotiate their variable form. In this way, they act as cultural mediators who are trained to meet their diverse interlocutors at crossroads between different languages and cultures.

If we want to prepare students to be effective communicators in global contexts, we need to make them aware that they need to constantly adjust their linguistic performance if they want to reach diverse audiences. By inviting students to read, analyze, and possibly re-enact transcriptions of ELF interactions, teachers can show

how multilingual speakers resort to a vast array of pragmatic strategies to preempt miscommunication. The reason why misunderstandings are relatively rare in ELF interactions (Seidlhofer, 2004) is that interlocutors have a tendency to translate the same idea in different linguistic realizations to improve the chances that at least one of the formulations will be understood by the interlocutors (Mauranen, 2007). With reference to the pragmatic skills of ELF users, Hülmbauer, Böhringer, and Seidlhofer (2009) place emphasis on the way interlocutors "gauge each other's levels of linguistic and pragmatic competence and adjust expectations on the linguistic and pragmatic levels" (p. 32). In a study of ELF interactions in academic contexts in Finland, Mauranen (2006) observed that participants in ELF interactions often try to preempt problems of understanding by resorting to comprehension checks, explanations, and a striking willingness to cooperate in the co-construction, or collaborative completion, of utterances. To signal their willingness to accommodate others, speakers go as far as modifying their communicative behavior to mirror that of their interlocutors (Cogo, 2009).

As native speakers of English learn to identify these pragmatic strategies through direct instruction, workshops on ELF, and international projects, they understand why they cannot expect speakers of other languages to meet them in their own linguistic comfort zone. They learn that misunderstanding is less likely to occur when speakers and writers make an effort to develop audience awareness. But they also understand how to fine-tune their listening skills by activating their receptive multilingualism (our ability to understand more languages than we can speak). Workshops that invite students to analyze transcriptions of ELF conversations promote an awareness of how mutual understanding can be achieved through cooperation, interpersonal sensitivity, and cognitive and behavioral flexibility, rather than enforced dependence on standards. In Canagarajah's words, "meaning doesn't arise from a common grammatical system or norm, but through negotiation practices in local situations" (2013b, p. 7). Cosmopolitan citizens understand that communication is not a one-way road in which proficient users of English talk *at* less proficient users without making an effort to talk *with* them through a process of calibrations and adjustments that establishes a linguistic ground for a more equal exchange of ideas. The overarching aim of a cosmopolitan pedagogy, then, is to open a space of inclusivity, diversity, and equity in which people can establish relationships based on openness and a commitment to interdependence.

Moving from theoretical to more practical considerations, examples of ELF interactions can be retrieved from databases such as the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE). This corpus, compiled under the direction of Barbara Seidlhofer, comprises one million words of transcribed spoken ELF from professional, educational and leisure domains and various speech event types. For teachers who prefer to encourage translingualism through a world Englishes approach, the best resource is the Corpus of Global Web-Based English (Glowbe, 1.9 billion words in size) that allows users to see the frequency of words and a variety of grammatical constructions in 20 different national varieties of English. When we invite students to determine whether words, expressions, and idioms commonly used in American English have currency in other varieties of English by consulting Glowbe, we help them understand that American English is but a variety of English. In other words, we encourage students to negotiate their writing according to the needs of diverse audiences.

I believe that students who independently investigate language corpora are more likely to develop an awareness of the relativistic nature of language norms. Both native and non-native speakers of English who probe into language databases to find evidence of patterns of use across varieties, registers, and genres of English become aware of the fact that much language can be seen only in terms of more or less likely, more or less conventional; that our verbal utterances are never simply correct or incorrect, but should be assessed in terms of their effectiveness in a precise rhetorical situation and across a spectrum of likelihood and acceptability. To put it schematically, corpus consultation is a new literacy that can enhance writing instruction by developing students' cognitive abilities (hypothesizing, guessing, and reasoning) and their ability to take on the role of independent researchers who can explore questions concerning the use of words, expressions, and grammatical constructions across varieties and functions of English.

One of my students, for example, was curious to find out whether the idiomatic expression "low hanging fruit," commonly used in American English, has currency in varieties of English used across the globe. She conducted her query in Glowbe and found out that "low hanging fruit" is rarely used in the varieties of English spoken in India, Pakistan, and many Western African countries. Another student found out that the expression "off the top of my head" is also highly idiomatic since it is rarely used in the varieties of English spoken in Africa and Asia. In the class discussions that follow this type of investigative work students have an opportunity to reflect on how important it is to use English mindfully even when their interlocutors appear to have a strong command of the English language. Like any other cultural product that travels across the globe, English is always localized and somewhat indigenized to better suit the communicative needs of specific populations. There is no such thing as a Standard International English; even academic English, one of the functions of English that is most rigidly codified, might have different conventions across the wide spectrum of disciplinary fields and transnational communities of practice that use this lingua franca. This means that English can unite people, but it can also divide them when interlocutors are not willing or capable of negotiating their linguistic interactions to accomplish their communicative objectives.

Among the factors that complicate the adoption of corpus consultation in writing classes are the limited availability of computer labs and the scarce familiarity of writing teachers with computational linguistics. This last problem is perhaps the most difficult to solve. Many writing teachers have heard about online language databases but are not sure how these new digital resources can be used in a writing classroom. They have a point. Research into the pedagogical use of the methods of corpus linguistics in first year or upper level writing classes in the U.S. is still in its infancy. This means that it is necessary to promote further research into ways in which corpus consultation literacy can help reinforce translingual pedagogies. We need to understand how to prepare students to work with corpora, what kind of activities can help them explore languages autonomously, and what kind of corpora should be made available for research. Results from these lines of research will eventually lead to the establishment of a sound theoretical and pedagogical foundation for the integration of corpus consultation into writing instruction.

Conclusion

Composition teachers should encourage students to understand how important it is that we do not impose our language and rhetorical conventions on our interlocutors, especially when these interlocutors are ‘strangers’ with low literacy levels in English. Native speakers of English should not use their proficiency to press strangers into cultural assimilation. Communication should never involve the attempt to indoctrinate others into normative orthodoxies that are socially and politically particularistic. Rather, it should be rooted in a willingness to open channels for the voice of strangers to be heard. In stark opposition to particularism and nationalism, cosmopolitanism sees communication as an act of recognition of the Other that prepares the ground for equitable, non-hierarchical, and sympathetic relationships and interactions. But to reconceive communication as an act of recognition and mediation, we need to debunk the idea of exclusive national or cultural identities to promote more open and multi-dimensional self-understandings. In Hobsbawm’s eloquent formulation, “human mental identities are not like shoes, of which we can only wear one pair at the time” (1996, p. 1067). By interrogating the concept of a single, exclusive, and unchanging cultural/social identity, as well as the idea that identity is formed in opposition to what is perceived as foreign, we invite students to appreciate difference, hybridity, and heterogeneity as fundamental traits of the human condition. All the key attributes of the cosmopolitan mindset, from other-orientedness and empathy to oneness in diversity, rest upon our ability to see the word in terms of inclusive oppositions while rejecting the logic of exclusive oppositions (Beck, 2003).

Galinova (2015) is right on mark when she observes that the cultivation of a cosmopolitan outlook in students requires “laborious and persistent efforts in making the distant, the different, and the unfamiliar more tangible and more deeply and spontaneously experienced” (p. 26). A single workshop, a sequence of poorly connected activities, or a set of reading assignments on intercultural communication or global citizenship cannot lead students toward a critical reassessment of orthodoxies that are repeatedly reproduced. A course that aims at fostering global citizenship education should be designed around readings and activities that create numerous opportunities for meaningful encounters with otherness. Rather than confronting students head-on with their presumed misconceptions on language, culture, and identity, teachers should delineate trajectories of study and research that can lead students to gradually see the value of embracing a dialogical imagination: A willingness to compare and combine contradictory certainties to constantly negotiate values and beliefs. A good way to introduce the themes of hybridity and difference in the writing classroom is to present the English language itself as a multilayered language that bears traces of several stories of encounters between different peoples. Far from being a pure language, the product of a clearly identifiable ethnic group, English is a mixture of languages (mainly Anglo-Saxon, Old-Norse, French, and Latin) that reflects the diversity of the people who contributed to shape its phonetic repertoire while constantly recalibrating its grammatical structures and expanding its lexical range. Modules on the history of English could prepare students to tackle more controversial debates on the interrelationships between language, identity, and culture, which would offer good scaffolding for modules on cosmopolitan thought and global citizenship.

Within a pedagogy that celebrates all forms of diversity as the norm of the human condition, activities that expose students to linguistic and cultural difference, workshops that invite multilingual speakers to take center stage as experts in mediation, and international projects that call for the negotiation of writing can prepare students to interact more effectively and respectfully with diverse interlocutors. Students who see communication as a form of mediation will also be better equipped to appreciate the transformative and at times generative power of contact and cooperation. The most engaged students will also understand why it is important to integrate neoliberal emphasis on individual achievement and the acquisition of technical skills with an understanding of education as a space of critical reflection and a process of civic and political socialization. With Giroux, I believe that to be literate “is to undertake a dialogue with multiple languages, discourses, and texts of others who speak from different histories, locations and experiences” (1992, p. 2). This idea of a constant confrontation with the Other, or the stranger, lies at the core of a pedagogy of diversity and inclusivity. As students learn how to collaborate in cross-cultural teams; as they learn to conceptualize English as a shared repertoire of resources without owners; as they reflect on translation as a process of mediation between cultures and languages, they make important steps toward global citizenship. They learn that human beings are not simply products of specific cultural environments that function as a prison-house for thought and expression. Far from it: human beings have the power to constantly refashion cultural and social identities, as well as the ability to manipulate languages and adjust communication practices to establish relationships based on equality and reciprocity.

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