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# Reconsidering Creativity and Modality with Japanese Writing

Emily Yuko Cousins, International Christian University [1]

**Abstract**: Multimodal composition is sometimes framed as enhancing students' creative expressive potential by offering more resources with which to showcase uniqueness and difference, compared to traditional print-based writing. Yet this raises the question of what assumptions about creativity shape our discussions of the imperatives of multimodal composition, and how these understandings may limit our recognition of and appreciation for other forms of creativity in composing. Drawing from translingual theory, I suggest that reorienting mainstream notions of creativity in our engagements with multimodality is necessary to avoid reinforcing approaches that privilege certain forms of difference over others. I look at unconventional Japanese script usage and calligraphy practices to forward alternative notions of creativity while foregrounding the materiality and creative labor involved in all composing. Examining non-alphabetic writing systems may help complicate both the ostensibly amodal identity of traditional alphabetic writing; cross-language explorations in composition can therefore have important implications for how we approach multimodality in our increasingly diverse and multilingual classrooms.

**Keywords:** creativity, multimodality, Japanese, calligraphy, translingual

[1] Emily Yuko Cousins is an instructor in the English for Liberal Arts Program at the International Christian University in Tokyo, Japan, and has previously taught academic writing in Bangladesh, Lebanon, and the U.S. She received her MA in English Studies at the University of Louisville. Email: cousins.emily@icu.ac.jp

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## Introduction

When assigning a literacy narrative in my first-year composition class one semester, I invited my students to "feel free" to include any photographs or images in their essays. Sifting through my students' final submissions, I was surprised, and slightly disappointed, to find that only a handful of them contained a visual of any kind. Later, while grading, I found myself confronting a personal bias: I couldn't help but perceive the students who had included a photo as having been "more creative" than those who hadn't. But this didn't feel fair. I knew my students were all capable of inserting an image into a Microsoft Word file—if I'd required it, I felt that most, if not all of them probably would have done it. But then, what would have been creative about that? Did the perception of "creativity" from the few essays-with-pictures, then, depend on the contrasting presence of an un-creative majority of essays-without-pictures? This experience compelled me to ask basic questions about how I understood creativity, to try to understand why I had associated creativity with certain forms of difference and newness—in this case, multimodal texts—over more familiar alphabet-only texts.

I did not expect that this line of inquiry would lead me to draw from my bicultural Japanese and American upbringing or my knowledge of the Japanese language, but this is the route I could not help but take in order to critically examine and reorient my assumptions about creativity. As an international student and GTA in the field of composition studies, this was one of many moments in which I have been drawn to Lila Abu-Lughod's (1996) halfie anthropology, which describes the positionality of halfies, or people "whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage," as "unsettle[ing] the boundary between self and other" (p. 466) while constantly "standing on shifting ground" (p. 468). When I describe Western and Japanese cultural[1] narratives and practices in this paper, I speak as an insider and outsider to both. This paper traces the particular journey I took in exploring notions of creativity and multimodality, and the examples of Japanese writing practices I encountered in this process were important pieces to the puzzle to help me revise my understandings. I share the puzzle pieces I worked with here, in hopes that they might help inform others' experiences thinking through creativity and multimodality.

When considering multimodal pedagogies in composition, particularly in the increasingly multilingual realities of our classrooms, I suggest that unless we pause to question our deeply ingrained assumptions about creativity we run the risk of continuing to privilege certain forms of difference – material consequences of which impact certain students and not others. This paper questions the ways in which historical Western cultural narratives, which associate originality with difference, newness, and technological innovation, are reflected in composition scholarship on multimodality. To do that, I examine orthographies and modal practices that differ drastically from English alphabetic writing and offer an occasion to look critically back at Western assumptions and composing practices with greater clarity. First, I give a brief historical overview of Western

understandings of creativity that pervade cultural awareness, including composition scholarship on multimodality. Then, I discuss translingual notions of language as local, social practice to help uncover alternative notions of creativity and by extension, multimodal composition. Finally, I offer cases in Japanese writing to illustrate creativity in imitation and sameness, and the instability of the separation between language and modality. With alternative conceptions of creativity, Western-informed compositionists might better understand, and possibly resist, the tendency to associate creativity with only the recognizably new and different.

## Creativity as Property and Fast-Capitalist Productivity

Modern conceptions of creativity, as understood in Western culture, can potentially be traced back to the sixteenth century when Renaissance thinkers began embracing the idea that humans had imaginative potential to "create" something from nothing: a shift that marked a departure from the prior belief that the power to "create" was reserved for divine action (Garrett, 2020, p. 3). In the eighteenth century, with the emergence of global capitalism, objects symbolizing refined taste were in high demand by those eager to distinguish themselves from the working classes (Haiven, 2014, p. 194). These artifacts, including paintings, novels, and the like, were viewed as one-of-a-kind, unique works of the isolated "creative genius." In the early twentieth century, as mass manufacturing allowed such cultural artifacts to be more readily accessible and thereby diminishing their rarity and cachet, creativity was further reinforced as the private property of only a select group of gifted individuals, with bodies such as academic institutions, museums, and grant giving foundations acting as gatekeepers of what qualified as high art (Haiven, pp. 196-197). As industrial capitalist workplaces demanded that workers just follow orders, critiques of the lack of opportunities for creativity circulated in public discourse, and by the 1950s and 60s creativity became something "for everyone," a notion bolstered by a rise in popular psychology discourses that reconceptualized the "modern self as creative subject" (Garrett, 2020, p. 6).

This widespread shift towards the idea of everyone having creative potential was, however, co-opted by corporations in the post-Fordist era. The reframing of corporate work as requiring creativity, and as a means through which individual creativity could be freely expressed, was a strategy to increase motivation in workplaces (Garrett, 2020, p. 6). Packaged as essential for problem-solving and innovation for success in the fast-capitalist workplace, creative thinking was increasingly marketed via self-help guides and workshops. In the new capitalist order, Gee (2000) notes, people "must see themselves as a 'portfolio' of rearrangeable skills acquired in their trajectory through 'project space'" (p. 45), able to quickly adapt and collaborate creatively and effectively with various communities. Corporations continue to uphold the image of the ideal worker as "artistic souls" in the new economy, "rely[ing] on our personal 'portfolio' of skills, passions, and

past accomplishments to secure short-term, no-strings-attached 'gigs'" (Haiven, 2014, p. 201). While current neoliberal economies compel workers to develop dynamic flexibility, there are also excessive demands for productivity. Martin (2007) examines the affinity between American work culture and manic behavior, pointing out that manic levels of productivity are being normalized as workplaces fuel the expectation that "a person's worth—not to mention survival—is defined in terms of his or her productivity"; in some extreme cases, firms "teach" people to be manic "to unleash creative potential" (p. 53). Contemporary notions of creativity thus conjure historical models of creativity special property of gifted individuals, while also locating creativity in everyone as untapped potential (and thereby placing responsibility on individuals to find and exploit their creative resources).

Similar conceptions of creativity and productivity resonate with the rhetoric sometimes used to describe multimodal composition in higher education. Imperatives for multimodal composing, often conflated with composing with digital technologies, are often understood as a sort of compensatory adaptation to ensure we do not disadvantage students by not giving them the tools for success in future digital, creative, collaborative work. Warnings have circulated in composition scholarship on assigning alphabet-only, paper-based, monomodal assignments as "outdated, even obdurate, in the face of practical realities" (Selfe, 2014, p. 485). Others have pointed to the "inadequacy" of monomodal texts (Takayoshi & Selfe, 2007, p. 2), echoing the sentiment that that "writing practices using words on paper-based text formats are necessary, but not sufficient" to keep up with the new digital environment in which multimodal texts is the norm (Mills, 2010, p. 251). Yancey (2004) stresses the necessity of multimodal approaches by reminding us that "technological change happens so rapidly that the changes to literacy are limited not by technology but rather our ability to adapt and acquire the new literacies" (p. 318) continuously brought forth by tech corporations. In light of such a rapidly changing landscape of communication technology, this pressure to incorporate digital, multimodal texts in the writing classroom can be perceived as an exigent response to help students "keep up." This imperative can induce fear and anxiety among instructors, especially when instructors are unfamiliar with the technology themselves (Borgman, 2019, p. 50). Adding to the pressure is the belief that allowing students to compose with multiple modes offers them more freedom and creative agency in self-expression, when contrasted with the constraints of alphabetic texts. Multimodal composition "affords compositional fluidity and encourages the exercise of personal agency" (Kitalong & Miner, 2018, p. 40); composing with multiple modes "provides more opportunities for agency…students are afforded both voice and the ability to play with logics" (Wood, 2019, p. 249). The importance of assigning multimodal assignments is thus often wrapped up in the desire to help students succeed in a competitive future workplace, one that rewards tech-savviness for projects and a capacity for self-expression through configuring multiple modes beyond alphabetic words on a page.

In reflecting on multimodal composition, I hope to examine my assumptions about creativity as recognizable *only* as newness and difference, while pushing back on the hype surrounding multimodal and digital composing as affording students more (and somehow better) opportunities for creativity than text-and-paper-based assignments. If assumptions about productivity and creativity are being driven by received historical notions of individuality and fast-capitalist imperatives, how might this potentially hinder the recognition of and devalue creativity in other forms and perpetuates inequality in the classroom? Next, I explore aspects of translingual theory which offer alternative ways of understanding creativity.

## Translingual Reconsiderations of Creativity

To strive for socially just approaches in our writing classrooms, one way to challenge the ways the corporate era has co-opted notions of production and creativity is to examine translingual notions of language as a valuable alternative that may help us avoid merely accepting and reinforcing assumed models. Foregrounding the labor involved in all language use, translingualism encourages us to foster an orientation that sees creativity and agency in composing practices that result in both sameness and difference: it "recognizes the inherent productivity operating in language "reproduction," the creativity operating in the "recreative"" (Horner & Alvarez, 2019, p.13). A translingual orientation towards language challenges the monolingual language ideology which purports that a language is a "clearly demarcated entity that has a name, is countable, and is the property of the group that speaks it" (Yildiz, 2012, p. 7). Monolingualism assumes that languages exist outside of language users as bounded and fixed sets of rules, whereas a translingual ideology provides a model with which language is understood as emerging from, and continuously shaped by language users. What we recognize as language conventions are the result of sedimentation of repeated practices (Pennycook, 2010, p. 46); languages are not fixed or static but are dynamic and undergoing constant negotiation as language users transform language through their practices.

One of the exigencies of translinguality in composition has been the persistence of a double standard where mainstream writers:

> whose writing deviates in recognizable ways from the norm are perceived as creative innovators, while deviations in writing by those identified as belonging to subordinate social groups are taken as manifestations of the writers' lack of knowledge or fluency with "the standard." (Lu & Horner, 2013, p. 583)

Like the historical pattern of granting creativity to only a select handful of gifted individuals, we continue defining creativity in narrow terms as attainable only with certain prerequisites, not only via recognizable uniqueness but also native-English fluency or

mainstream student status. A translingual language ideology attends to "creativity [as] simply the default mode of production of language" (Blommaert cited in Horner & Alvarez, 2019, p. 13). Pennycook (2007) importantly clarifies that although "repetition, even of the 'same thing,' always produces something new" (p. 585), we do not need to, nor should we try to discard the model of creativity-as-difference: it is a matter of reconceptualizing the term to make it more capacious. The point is "not that creativity should be seen as repetition rather than divergence, but rather that *it needs to be understood as both sameness and difference"* (p. 587). If we focus on the labor and processes of composers, we can better appreciate their productivity and creativity rather than fixate on newness and difference in final products.

When we apply a translingual lens to examining discussions of multimodal composition, one of the parallels that come to light is the critique of additive multilingualism and multimodality. Multilingual writing approaches have aimed to recognize and embrace linguistic diversity in the writing classroom, for example, through the promotion of code-switching or code-meshing in academic papers, "assuming the copresence of discrete languages and language varieties that can be called into audibility or visibility and usefully combined," while translinguality focuses on "synergistic relationships among emergent practices that may or may not neatly belong to previously discrete languages – and that may not be linguistic at all" (Jordan, 2015, p. 368). Thus, multilingualism is still be rooted within a monolingual model of languages as discrete, bounded entities, resulting in a perpetuation of monolingualism rather than a break from it (Makoni & Pennycook, 2006, p. 29). In parallel, "predominantly alphabetic print verbal compositions that deploy the occasional image or attached audio clip may simply reinforce an "additive" or ornamental disposition toward modality" (Horner et al., 2015, p. 17). Within a model where modes are discrete and countable and can be used to spice up a text, written alphabetic print will continue to be perceived as impoverished, inadequate, and monomodal, especially in light of newer, flashier forms of multimodal digital composing. But while mainstream narratives of modality suggest that modes have inherent affordances and limitations and prescribe specific viewing practices, the separation between multimodal and monomodal (alphabet-only) composition grows shaky when considering that writing has always involved layers of modal (visual, spatial, olfactory, tactile) dimensions (Lillis, 2013, pp. 21-41). Our perceptions of limitations and affordances of different communication mediums are historically, culturally shaped (Trimbur, 1990). Lastly, in additive multilingualism and multimodality there is a risk of reifying languages and other modes as if they automatically possess the same potentialities across all instances of use, regardless of differences in context: modes and "their 'effects'" are presented as "immune to and independent of human labor, as other than the (ongoing) products of that labor" (Horner, 2019, p. 265).

Foregrounding the labor and creativity of all composers through cultivating translingual dispositions is one way of moving toward a more socially just writing

classroom. Another piece of the puzzle, for me, included needing a more tangible way to understand creativity in sameness. Looking at Japanese scripts and writing practices offered up new dimensions to thinking about what language users are doing with language, and offered a fresh angle on the multimodality of English alphabetic texts. In the following section, I explain these cases of Japanese writing through a translingual lens, in order to further examine Western assumptions informing and limiting notions of creativity and (a)modality of alphabetic texts. I draw from examples to illustrate how: 1) Japanese scripts point to the fuzziness of the language-modality divide; 2) unconventional script usage serves as an example of negotiation of language and creative labor of all language use; and 3) calligraphy practices illustrate alternative notions of creativity as imitation and sameness.

## Modality, Creativity, and Japanese Writing

### *Japanese scripts challenge the language/modality divide*

The evolution of Japanese scripts serves to illustrate the translingual notion that language emerges from social practice, rather than only existing as an abstracted set of prescribed rules. Japanese is comprised of three main scripts: phonetic scripts of *hiragana* and *katakana*, and *kanji*, the ideographic script derived from Chinese. No indigenous writing system is known to have existed in Japan before the introduction of Chinese characters in the 4th century (Loveday, 1996, p. 6). Some *kanji* characters were designated to represent existing syllables in the Japanese language, and these gradually evolved into two additional phonetic scripts, ひらがな*hiragana* and カタカナ*katakana.* Textual artifacts such as diaries, letters, and poems from this time show that people wrote grammatical morphemes in increasingly simplified versions of designated *kanji*: for example, we can see fragmented versions of *kanji* in hurried marginal notes written by Buddhist monks (Taylor & Taylor, 2014, p. 286). Hence, the evolution of *kana* syllabaries was largely shaped by material constraints faced by language users, through sedimentation of repeated practices of writers not quite following all the proper strokes. From our limited spatial-temporal perspectives, our embodied understandings of language transformation and sedimentation remain abstract; it is difficult to grasp the effects of gradual processes of micro-sedimentations on what we tend to perceive as fixed language scripts and rules. Attending to historicity of languages and language practices can help show that writing systems are still just as dynamic, contested and contestable now as they were in the past, rather than having somehow stabilized.

Furthermore, Japanese scripts blur the line between language and modes, between word and image, supporting the notion that it may be “ultimately problematic to distinguish between language and modality” (Horner et al., 2015, pp. 14-15). Ideographic *kanji* convey meaning and may have multiple readings based on context. For example,

the *kanji* character for "water," 水 , is pronounced *mizu* when standing alone, and read *sui* when it is part of compound words pertaining to water—for example, 水族館 (*suizokukan*, meaning "aquarium"). Due to their ideographic nature, *kanji* carry both semantic and phonetic information simultaneously. Phonetic *katakana,* used to spell out loan words and onomatopoeia, have been compared to the use of italics in English alphabetic text to visually mark words from non-English languages (Tranter, 2008, p. 134). The use of *romaji* (Roman alphabet) in Japanese writing has effects similar to the use of decorative visual effects in English alphabetic text (color, images, etc.), as the presence of English in public Japanese texts often serves a purely emblematic function (Blommaert, 2010) or is considered a "design element" (Jordan, 2012, p. 134), not meant to be understood for its semantic content. Lastly, Japanese scripts each have their unique auras or are seen to connote certain moods, which can be compared to the use of different fonts "such as the Old English/Gothic font family's links to medieval or religious content in English" (Robertson, 2015, p. 206). Dense and angular *kanji*, for example, connote "concepts like erudition, literacy, rigidity, science, formality, and masculinity" (p. 206), based on its historical roots as being the script for the educated elite. *Katakana* connotes foreignness, while *romaji* evokes modernity and prestige. The visual modes embedded within the Japanese language collapses the language/modality divide, and can be compared to visual modes found in routine written texts in English, such as emoji[2] and other nonlinguistic semiotic resources such as font, letter size, spatial layout of pages, and visual effects such as bolding and underlining. Seeing how the Japanese writing system resists being easily categorized as purely linguistic helps us see, in turn, how alphabetic English-based texts are also not as monomodal as might be assumed.

### *A translingual critique of Japanese multimodality*

As mentioned earlier, one of the problems with discussions about multimodality in scholarship is the tendency to celebrate multimodal composition as automatically granting greater flexibility and creativity—that is, more easily able to individualize with multiple modes and more visually recognizable differences. A translingual view would caution that this runs the risk of reifying modes as possessing fixed affordances across contexts and distracts from attending to the creative labor and processes of the composer. Because each of the Japanese scripts are different visually and functionally and can be seen as having unique affordances, discussions of Japanese script usage at times resemble over-simplistic celebrations of multimodal texts in their ability to combine and harness the expressive potential of various modes while touting the uniqueness of the Japanese language. For example, Japanese writers have been lauded for "hav[ing] a potential for orthographic flexibility at their disposal which is not available in other languages" (Robertson, 2015, p. 205). The existence of multiple scripts is described as offering a "multiplicity of options," meaning that the "orthography itself offers greater scope for play than is possible in languages using a single alphabet, where users must play with different

fonts and colors or bend spelling conventions to achieve the same end" (Gottlieb, 2010, p. 395). Others also highlight the unique flexibility and open-ended nature of the Japanese writing system (Daliot-Bul, 2007; Kataoka, 2003; Miyake, 2007). Such depictions risk reifying Japanese by employing the same problematic additive view of modality found in celebrations of additive multilingualism and multimodality, where it is assumed that the increased availability of the scripts/modes alone, regardless of context, automatically contributes to greater flexibility and creativity in composing practices. As many Japanese language users would agree, within any context there are many factors—genre expectations, audience, conventions of use, tradition, time restraints—that influence language/modal practices and can make using Japanese feel just as inflexible as any other language when composing under monolingualist expectations for competence and proper usage. Japanese writers face pressures to meet conventional script usage expectations, just like English users make efforts to conform to standard academic English norms. And when students are given multimodal composition tasks, far from being a playground where anything goes, they will still often want to know what they are "supposed to do" and if they are meeting conventional standards.

While composing in Japanese often occurs according to rules and standards, there are also many examples of unconventional script usage in everyday writing in Japanese society. These include unconventional script choice in casual letter writing among young women (Kataoka, 2003) and "playfulness through transgressing established orthographic conventions" in emails (Gottlieb, 2010, p. 394) and cellphone text messaging (Daliot-Bul, 2007; Miyake, 2007). For example, when a word that is conventionally written in *hiragana* is written in *katakana* for a desired rhetorical effect, this usage can change, however subtly, perceived ideological affordances and constraints of the script, which may influence future use. This phenomenon of unconventional script usage illustrates a notion of creativity as emerging from recontextualization within language users' compositing practices with what traditional views would consider a single mode (linguistic). The scripts are continuously recontextualized and renegotiated with every usage, whether or not they conform to standards of traditional usage. Although language users may appear to be picking and choosing from a menu of scripts with fixed affordances (and may experience their composing process as such), this menu model provides a basis for questionable celebrations of Japanese language as uniquely creative and flexible. By contrast, a translingual/modal perspective helps us foreground how language users' agency in revising the modes/scripts themselves with every iteration.

### *Modality and creativity in calligraphy*

Finally, I explore conceptions of creativity in Japanese calligraphy to illustrate an alternative model of creativity which can be found in sameness and imitation. Calligraphy is an art form as well as a form of writing, primarily via visual, material and performative

expression. Nakamura (2007) notes that creativity in calligraphy is "one that does not oppose the original to the imitation but rather has imitation at its very source" (p. 80). Imitation in calligraphy is thus not viewed as mere replication, but reproduction of a tradition with every performance. In Japanese calligraphy, it is said that every piece of work is both a copy of an original and an original to be copied in the future. The calligrapher can be seen as carrying out a tradition through repeated practice that is both the same and different with every performance. Ingold explains how the "calligraphic line is "read" by reliving the gestural movement that gave rise to it, rather than by contemplating its final form" (p. 50). In the example of calligraphy, as is the case in other cultural traditions, imitation is "not the simple, mechanical process of replication that it is often taken to be…but entails a complex and ongoing alignment of observation of the model with action in the world" (Ingold & Hallam, 2007, p. 5). This model accounts for how people performing cultural traditions can still be seen as "creative," as the focus is on the processes by which people remake the tradition every time it is reenacted and sustained through each new reenactment. We might imagine, for example, a theater performance: we buy tickets with the expectation that the performance we are about to see is the same show as the performances before it. Yet we tend not to question performers' creativity because we are so focused on, and appreciative of the labor that goes into creating and bringing forth the particular reenactment of which we are an audience.

The example of calligraphy also resonates with calls within translingual scholarship which call for increased recognition of the dynamic interactions between human and non-human agents in all composing. Non-human centric ways of understanding creativity offer a break from mainstream Western notions of creativity as property and as occurring independently and in isolation, when in reality our creative composing practices arise from complex material interplay between networks of human and environmental actors. Non-human agents "play a role in supporting, facilitating, altering, and at times even thwarting or forbidding the production of a focal text, product, or performance," and recognizing this "allows us to move beyond human-centered or human-centric notions of agency, effect, and collaboration" (Shipka, 2016, p. 253). In the case of calligraphy, the materials that calligraphers work with—paper, ink, brush, and ink-stone—are seen as active participants in each composition (Nakamura, 2007). This removes agency from being solely possessed by the calligrapher to distribute it across the material modes that are a part of the composing process. Calligraphy is not "simply a matter of expressing the self through an artistic medium," and one's creative "style" is more than what is visible on paper: it can be found in the gestures that are developed over time in learning from and imitating a master's techniques, and in the idiosyncratic habits of engaging with the material modes in the composing process (p. 83). The materials age with time, which changes the nature of their agency: for example, older ink will have a slightly different engagement with the brush and the paper, in ways that are unpredictable to the calligrapher. The "interaction

between personal agency (the calligrapher and his techniques) and the agency of things (nature and materials) results in new types" of calligraphic works (p. 95). As understanding the creativity of calligraphy involves looking not just at the final product but gestural reenactment and the interplay of materials, creativity in multimodal composition can be recognized not only based on markers of visual difference in the final product, but also the creative labor of the composer, including their interactions with various materials, from pen and paper to keyboards and digital software.

## Conclusion

In what ways might we try to foster a greater appreciation for the creative processes that accompany students' composing, regardless of whether they result in visibly innovative final products or reenact and reinforce traditional academic writing practices? Fostering translingual dispositions and foregrounding the labor and processes of composers can help instructors appreciate students' productivity and creativity rather than fixate on newness and difference in final products. In the case of my opening anecdote, for example, I might ask students to reflect on their processes of choosing whether or not to include supplementary images, and possible effects either choice would have on readers.

Another step is recognizing creativity as a cultural, historical construct and the ways there may be a hyper-fascination with and demand for creativity and innovation in a competitive fast-capitalist workplace, which have occluded from view forms of creativity in sameness and imitation. If we conflate multimodality with only digital objects, "we neglect to consider how the uptake of older, and perhaps more familiar, varieties of language (both verbal and nonverbal, English and non-English), tools, techniques, and environments might be used in new ways, remixed, transformed" (Shipka, 2016, pp. 252-253). Composition instructors might choose to resist the anxious pressures of, and/or being swept up by the hype and exigencies of assigning digital multimodal composition. Instead, attention could be turned to how non-digital, seemingly monomodal compositions can be tapped to spark rich conversations about multimodality. It is perhaps from also these considerations that new conceptions of creativity may emerge.

Cushman (2012) calls for a "paradigm shift in the objects we study: moving away from alphabet *to* scripts, from literacy *to* meaning making, from writing *to* composing, from the letter as primary medium *to* many media valued equally" (p. 552). Expanding the scope of our explorations in language and writing to include non-alphabetic scripts and multimodal meaning making would open up new possibilities to make fruitful connections across previously separate conversations centered on language and modality. Furthermore, studying non-English languages, even briefly, can help instructors notice new dimensions of English composing practices or cultural assumptions that were previously taken for granted.

## Notes

[1] I am wary of the totalizing effects of using phrases like “Western” or “Japanese” culture, running the risk of perpetuating one of the “most problematic connotations of culture: homogeneity, coherence, and timelessness” (Abu-Lughod, 1996, p. 476). However, I use such terms with the understanding that cultures and languages are constantly performed, reinvented, and contested through practice, rather than existing as fixed, bounded entities.

[2] Emoji originated from the Japanese term 絵文字, roughly meaning “picture-letter,” which “straddle the conceptual line between ideogram and pictogram” (Stark & Crawford, 2015, p. 5).

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