

Literacy as Translingual Practice: Between Communities and Classrooms, edited by A. Suresh Canagarajah. New York: Routledge, 2013, 247 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-52466-7. (Reviewed by Hajar Al Sultan).

Juggling written academic discourse and undertaking arduous attempts to reproduce the so-called Standard Written English (SWE) sometimes engages bi/multilingual writers in an endless circle of self-negotiation and self-conflict. Most bi/multilinguals find themselves puzzling about the choice of using their own languages as a “resource” and conforming to the norms of standard written English, considering their first languages (L1) a “barrier” (Horner, Lu, Royster & Trimbur, 2011, p. 303). This compelling conflict and self-negotiation bi/multilinguals encounter in their academic writing experience is the heart of an overarching paradigm for language and writing research and teaching proposed for US classrooms (Horner et al., 2011). Recently, a translingual approach or a translingual *orientation* for writing and literacy has sparked ongoing, vigorous debates surrounding language diversity and difference in writing and literacy.

In *Literacy as Translingual Practice: Between Communities and Classrooms*, Suresh Canagarajah makes the argument for a translingual approach to writing and literacy as “situated, dynamic, and negotiated” rather than as “discrete entities” (p. 130). Canagarajah is an Edwin Sparks professor in the department of Applied Linguistics, English, and Asian Studies and Director of the Migration Studies Project at Pennsylvania State University. In this book, Canagarajah makes another contribution to the growing body of translingual research and pedagogy and further pushes the boundaries of traditional mono-, bi-, multi-, and plurilingual paradigms to writing and literacy. His previous book, *Translingual Practice: Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations*, highlights the prevailing confluence of globalization and power on the traditional monolingual orientation of English (which refers to the norms and conventions of written discourse) and on the emerging trend of *translingual orientation* (Horner et al., 2011, chapter three) to writing and literacy.

Following the traditional genre constraints of an edited book, Canagarajah organizes the twenty-two chapters under five main themes: premises, community practices, code-meshing orientation, research directions, and pedagogical applications. The applied linguist brings together leading interdisciplinary scholars to answer the questions of *what* and *how* the new emerging paradigm does for writing and literacy, with reflections on the translingual practices of local communities. The *whats* and *hows* presented in the scholars’ studies and perspectives are aimed at acknowledging the complexity of cross-language relations and “what it is like to live the multilingual reality” (p. 163), and at developing a more subtle understanding and knowledge of the translingual orientation. Each chapter attempts to expand the boundaries of the traditional linguistic monolithic approach to literacy and writing research and teaching for both multilinguals and self-identified monolinguals. This is an academically oriented text that is geared toward students, researchers, and practitioners across L1 and L2 composition, rhetoric and applied linguistics, education theory and classroom practice, and diverse ethnic rhetorics.

Drawing upon previous and current scholarly work, Canagarajah offers a comprehensive and informative introduction, in which he unpacks the major lines of the discussions undertaken in this volume and the ongoing trajectory of the translingual paradigm. Opening up the discussion in chapter two, Bazerman addresses the increasingly complex and dynamic multilingual and multicultural world and potential barriers to communication and shared knowledge that are forced by linguistic, social, and national variations at local, educational, and global levels. Given the complexity and diversity of communication and knowledge, Bazerman calls for literacy that goes beyond these barriers and that results in a more effective communication and integration within and across languages. In response, Wible in chapter four examines rhetorical practices of the World Social Forum and its international and regional meetings. The rhetorical practices of the World Social Forum appear to underscore the gains of developing “a border base of knowledge” about “cross-language practices” (p. 46) that help global participants to work with and across the borders of linguistic and cultural diversity.

In keeping with the discussion about cross-cultural communication and cross-language relations, in chapter eight Cushman further argues that “our monolingualistic assumption about knowledge, meaning, and rhetoric” (p. 92) that entails “fluency with the letter” (p. 93) cannot be taken for granted in a discussion of rhetorical practices (e.g., the Cherokee syllabary) that demand going beyond an alphabetic bias. Arguing against a monolingualistic orientation to literacy or writing in US multilingual and multicultural education, Donahue, in chapter fourteen, does a comparative analysis of writings of French and US university students and suggests that using cross-cultural analysis (non-US standard models) offers new lenses through which to see different perspectives and insights to US writing discourse or research.

Not far from the Cherokee syllabary, Angle Island poems and *hole hole bushi* (Young, chapter six), Indigenous colonial experience (Reyhner, chapter seven), Kenyan hiphop (Milu, chapter ten), linguistic practices of Lebanese people (Ayash, chapter nine), and literacy practices and learning experiences found across international borders (Sceners-Zapico, chapter seventeen) present additionally nuanced manifestations of translingual practices and “hybrid forms of learning” (p. 193). They all illustrate how multiplicity and reconstruction of new or existing rhetoric or linguistic symbols (from their own or the colonizer’s language) reflect a sense of self-negotiation and resistance against linguistic hegemony and colonialism of English or monolinguals ideology (Milu, chapter ten, Lorimer, chapter fifteen).

Toward the second half of this volume, its main goal of connecting community practices to classroom activity becomes very clear. Milson-Whyte (chapter eleven), Matsuda (chapter twelve), Jerskey (chapter eighteen), Young (chapter thirteen), and Pandey (chapter twenty), for instance, discuss how translingual literacy practices of local communities can serve to push the boundaries of a monolingual orientation and to acknowledge literacy practices of multilingual writers who are also “drawing upon multiple, rich rhetorical resources” (p. 207). Milson-Whyte, in chapter eleven, examines code-meshing and translingual

orientation and outlines potential gains and pedagogical and sociopolitical implications related to the application of code-meshing in US writing classrooms and other multilingual contexts. Arguing for the proposal of code-meshing in US writing classrooms, Young (chapter thirteen) explains that the aim is to counteract linguistic injustice and racial prejudice exerted by the hegemony of English and its monolingual ideologies on multilingual societies. He explains that conformity to “standard English only,” as it is the only path for linguistic, academic, and professional success, seems very rigid in a nation that is aggressively characterized as (multi-) cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and regional, and with a language that is recognized as the language of liberty and democracy.

On the other hand, to speak to translingual research challenges and its pedagogical applications and implications, Matsuda (chapter twelve) indicates that a language movement that aims to valorize a translingual approach to writing opens up a myriad of possibilities to US writing and college composition research and scholarship. Albeit by highlighting other terms associated with a translingual approach to writing, which includes “hybrid discourses, alternative discourses, world Englishes, code-meshing, translingual writing” (p. 132), Matsuda underlines the need for more soundly, cross-globally designed research and rigorous efforts concerning knowledge and understanding of a translingual orientation to writing and literacy. Poe (chapter sixteen) further emphasizes the need for disciplinary knowledge and disciplinary participation or “social-professional collaborative networks” (p. 177). Pandey (chapter twenty), furthermore, calls for an “applicable, multidimensional, and comprehensive” framework (p. 219).

In conclusion, Canagarajah works hand-in-hand with other leading scholars in an attempt to untangle the complexity of the term *translingual* and to “re-envision... writing and literacy through the translingual lens” (p. 1). As the book starts with a question—“what does ‘trans’ do to the language?”—it ends with another notable question: What does “re” do to our understanding of writing and literacy from a translingual perspective? Indeed, a plethora of verbs are linked with *re-* to underscore the urgency to rethink, reconceptualize, reimagine, reforge, reconsider, reconstruct, reconnect, and renegotiate the reality and the future of “the ongoing trajectory of a translingual approach to literacy” (p. 235). The scholars repeatedly emphasize throughout this volume that language difference is not a barrier, but rather a resource. As translingual practices are an inseparable aspect of everyday interactions and literacy practices of Indigenous and multilingual communities, as illustrated earlier, there should be room for translingual practices in multilingual US classrooms and other multilingual contexts. Hansen (chapter nineteen) goes further, indicating that a multilinguistic orientation and a translingual approach must be promoted among self-identified monolinguals to help them move out from the monolingual comfort zone, where languages other than Standard English are devoid in the multilingual world. In another attempt to underscore the importance of developing multilingual (and monolingual as well) writers’ “awareness or sensibility” toward language differences, Lorimer (chapter fifteen) highlights the term “rhetorical attunement” as a way of “acting with

language that assumes linguistic multiplicity and invites the negotiation of meaning to accomplish communicative ends” (p. 163).

Taken as a whole, a translingual approach—the new emerging and multifaceted paradigm—is the heart of discussion in this volume. Though each chapter contributes to understanding the value of a translingual approach “as a rhetorical and research concept” (p. 238), apparently more work is needed at macro and micro levels to help broaden and refine our understanding about this term and other associated terms, including “hybrid discourses, alternative discourses, world Englishes, code-meshing, translingual writing” (p. 132). As well, more work is needed to investigate the value of a translingual paradigm as “an instructional approach” (p. 238). Indeed, this volume further illuminates an urgent need for thorough, cross-disciplinary and cross-globally-designed research that explores how multilingual writers’ attitudes, multiple resources, knowledge, and strategies evolve as they are engaged in translingual practices. Future research must take extra steps in investigating the possibilities as well as the complexities of translingulism as a pedagogical approach. Looked at together, one might wonder whether the aforementioned leading scholars in this volume, who are from cross-disciplinary fields and are from different L1 and L2 compositions, had a space to draw on their multiple rich linguistic, social, and cultural resources and experiences to negotiate and/or accommodate their needs, their identities, and their voices, as they all advocate for translingual orientation to writing and literacy.

References

Horner, B., Lu, M.Z., Royster, J.J., & Trimbur, J. (2011). Opinion: Language difference in writing. Toward a translingual approach. *College English*, 73(3), 303-321.