



Multimodal and Translingual Composing Practices: A Culturally Based Needs Assessment Of Second Language Learners

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Abstract

As writing classrooms in the United States become increasingly diverse it is important to design assignments and curricula that motivate and inspire diverse populations. This research considers the benefits of co-mingling multimodal and translingual writing practices within first-year-writing courses populated by Second Language Learners (SLLs), and illustrates how drawing upon multimodal and translingual pedagogies not only engages SLLs, but also provides these students with a level of engagement that is not always tangible in the composition of traditional print texts.

Keywords

Translingual, Multimodal, Second Language Learners (SLLs), Food Culture

Introduction

In recent decades, society has become increasingly globalized; this is reflected in many aspects of our lives, but perhaps the most basic way this globalization is embodied is in the foods we eat. Whether walking down the aisle of a grocery store, Googling a recipe, or choosing a restaurant option—the variety of choices available is, quite simply, astonishing. Margaret Visser (1999), in considering society’s globalized diet, articulates, “we insist on having whatever is not normal or ordinary; creating nouvelle cuisine; grazing on a hundred ethnic cuisines; decorating our plates with vertical food structures; being playful and witty with our food” (p. 124). While shifting eating habits have been a common topic among mainstream food writers (Biltekoff, 2013; Nestle, 2007; Patel, 2010; Pollan, 2009; Schlosser, 2005), particularly in terms of the rise in obesity, food science, and food ethics, there has not been similar attention to the ways that this cultural shift can benefit us pedagogically. Yet, just like our palates, universities and colleges

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have embraced globalization, which is most evident in the rise in study abroad programs, international work-term placements, and the growing international student populations (Breen, 2012; Nahal, 2012; Shields, 2013; Wit, Ferencz, & Rumbley 2013). This paper addresses one way to use this diversification—this sharing and mingling of food culture—within writing classrooms.

This study suggests that the integration of cultural sharing, specifically an examination of food culture, within writing classrooms, in conjunction with a consideration of modality, positions Second Language Learners (SLLs) to develop critical thinking and literacy skills within three stages of a structured composing process—traditional print-based texts, multimodal brainstorming and composing, and digitally-based texts.

The outcomes of a food-based cultural artifact assignment sequence completed by SLLs in a transcultural-translingual writing course are analyzed to illustrate the ways that cultural sharing creates spaces for students to develop both their print and digital savvy. This assignment sequence uses what some may see as the very mundane topic of food culture to consider the social development of SLLs, particularly in terms of their shifting social identities. Students explore the capabilities of their social experiences in the building and sharing of knowledge across cultures, languages, and modes. While culture and language are central components of this assignment sequence, equally relevant is the movement from a single-authored print text to a group-authored digital text. A pedagogy-based examination of the uses of modalities within student texts illustrates that learning spaces that allow for a mingling of the globalized themes of language and culture are more beneficial to student knowledge-sharing and meaning-making when composing. Creating learning spaces seated in familiar cultural artifacts, such as food, also allows students to consider the ways their cultural knowledge is linked to language background, thereby emphasizing the translingual nature of critical inquiry at play in the language choices they make, as well as the ways in which their writing can cross spaces and create new meanings within multimodal texts

While pedagogical research that considers the shift towards a globalized, “multilingual norm” continues to develop in classrooms populated by SLLs, far less explored are the affordances of multimodal composition within these learning environments, particularly in terms of cultural content. This study illustrates that communicative practices seated in translingual and cultural inquiry position SLLs to utilize and aggrandize their diverse backgrounds as cognitive resources within multimodal composing processes. Encouraging movement between and across languages, cultures, and modes allows for the successful execution of multimodal texts—particularly in relation to audience comprehension of meaning and purpose—an outcome that is especially hard for SLLs to attain in traditional American-content based classrooms that focus on the composition of traditional print-based texts.

Using Food Culture to Bridge Translingual and Multimodal Scholarship

While exceptions are noted, Cynthia Selfe and Bruce Horner (2013) explain “despite their common points of origination, discussions of modality have remained largely separate from discussions of translingualism, to the impoverishment of both” (p. 2). Responding to this gap in scholarship as well as the argument that “practical realities and embedded power relationships” (Horner et al., 2001, p. 273) are what drive the

prevalence of English monolingualism and the production of traditional print-based texts within the composition classroom, this paper positions food culture as a way to engender connections between translingual and multimodal inquiry.

Food culture, in the scope of this study, is viewed as a writing topic that is fluid and culturally familiar. This familiarity allows students to imagine and compose texts that move beyond hierarchies of singularity, and move to explore cultural diversity, which serves to embrace *impractical* realities—a hunger for the exotic (in this case movement across languages and modes), rather than confinement within a singularized norm. Exploring the cultural and tangible relationships surrounding food provides practical opportunities in the development of translingual and multimodal writing, wherein inquiry into food culture percolates into a normalization of the translingual and multimodal as well. This research moves to provide one example of the “changes being made at the organizational level to rethink the ways in which English is represented in U.S. composition teaching, the design of writing programs and curricula, and the preparations of (future) teachers of postsecondary writing” (Horner et al., 2011, p. 271). To borrow from Charles Bazerman (1997) the genre of food writing is not just a form, but is a way of being that is framed in social action and consequently a situated environment for learning. As such considering the genres of writing that surround food culture through a translingual and multimodal lens potentially “shape[s] the thoughts we form and the communications by which we interact [including]...the familiar places we go to create intelligible communicative action with each other and the guideposts we use to explore the unfamiliar” (Bazerman, 1997, p.19). Writing about food culture (both the familiar and the unfamiliar) is a move that enables students to “recognize and articulate cultural experience, especially cultural difference” (Cognard-Black and Goldthwaite, 2008, p. 427) essentially fostering multidimensional inquiry and the creation of safe spaces for self-exploration and self-reflection—two necessary elements in both translingual and multimodal composing processes.

However, as Laura Gonzales (2015) suggests “any study that claims to use translingualism as a framework must provide a particular definition to be used in context of the data presented.” It can also be argued that as multimodality itself becomes increasingly tied to digital composition it is equally important to provide a clear understanding the characterization of this term. Both terms will be unpacked in this paper, beginning with the translingual and moving to the multimodal.

Suresh Canagarajah (2013) explains translingualism as involving multiple categories of speakers as well as various levels of language mixing (“Negotiating translingual literacy: An enactment,” p. 41). Understanding translingualism in this lens positions languages as fluid and constantly interacting and influencing each other—meanings and grammars are never static, but always mobile. Canagarajah further argues that the usage of the prefix ‘trans’ is central in the accommodation of “other semiotic resources, such as color, images, and symbols” (p. 41). Similarly, in “Lingua Franca English, Multilingual Communities, and Language Acquisition,” he describes translingualism as “practice-based, adaptive, emergent, multimodal, multisensory, multilateral, and therefore multidimensional” (2007, p. 924). Thus, modality and semiotics are central components of the translingual approach. Prefix usage is also central. Selfe and Horner (2013) recognize that “the “trans-” prefix as an alternative [to the “multi-“ prefix is] meant to focus on cross-language and mode work and the need for negotiation” (p. 6). In each of these understandings of language and modality, the usage

of “trans” is central in the encouragement of fluidity, interaction, and mobilization of social experience, which can be seated in language, modality, and potentially a host of other communicative practices.

Gonzales (2015, para. 6) further suggests that “translingualism offers a way to connect the socially situated conceptions of genre...with the flexible, audience-centered approach to teaching writing adopted by multimodal scholars.” Essentially, the interactive fluidity of both translingual and multimodal composing are what align these two frameworks, wherein strategies of each are not only complementary, but also work towards common goals of social development. Yet, approaches to multimodality, like translingualism, are not static. Selfe and Horner (2013) draw on two definitions, where the first is a set of material practices used to make meaning, and the second is a set of beliefs that said practices allow for movement away from singular and uniform standards (p. 6). In other words, while multimodal practice could be digital, there are also a range of practices available, which is a shared characteristic of translingual practice. As such, this paper works to consider the pluralistic tendencies of composing practices within translingual and multimodal frameworks, and responds to Selfe’s (2009) encouragement for:

teachers to develop an increasingly thoughtful understanding of a whole range of modalities and semiotic resources in their assignments and then to provide students the opportunities of developing expertise with all available means of persuasion and expression, so that they can function as literate citizens in a world where communications cross geopolitical, cultural, and linguistic borders and are enriched rather than diminished by semiotic dimensionality. (p. 618)

Consequently, multimodality and translingualism are positioned within this study, and the assignment sequence outlined herein, as a resource in teaching SLLs. Both these frameworks allow students to move beyond the singular Standard Written English of the academy and communicate with a globalized voice. As such the remainder of this paper will illustrate how assignments that enact translingual and multimodal composing provide students with a ripe platform to engage in critical thinking, reflection, and communication.

In order to critically engage with the composing process SSLs need access to a topic that is familiar to them, which brings us back to a discussion of food culture. An “eat, drink, and be merry” approach is usable, not because a course that considers food is easy, but because such a course allows for the introduction of critical inquiry to a topic that is in itself familiar and unfamiliar. Encouraging students to explore sameness and difference in the food traditions of themselves and their peers readies them to work from the position of expert and novice when composing. When used in the writing classroom, the theme of food makes it possible to unite student experience, identity, and history through multiple rhetorical lenses because food writing functions to elucidate common ground—pivotal memories and moments in students’ lives; thus, “from [the] rhetorical, we...discern the cultural” (Cognard-Black et al., 2008, p. 424). Critical inquiry into food is often ignored in academia because a “foods and festivals” approach is viewed as unintellectual and incapable of abstraction (McCaskell, 2005, p. 75); however, the fact that academic research concerning food spans the disciplines of anthropology to economics to biochemistry to history situates the study of food as inherently usable in a composition classroom populated by students with backgrounds that are varied both in

terms of culture and discipline. Ultimately, discussions of food are obvious only if allowed to be. When considering food as a topic of inquiry, it is the juxtapositions in experience that are most important because they reveal differences in cultural histories. Similar to experiences with language and modality, experiences with food are almost always intersecting—moving between, across, and within.

The shift to explore food culture via a translingual and multimodal lens is not a simple task, particularly because many teachers have a limited set of strategies for supporting translingual and multimodal learning. However, Nancy Hornberger et al. (2012) suggest that it is not necessary for teachers to master the many languages spoken by students in order for translingualism to function as a pedagogical benefit (p. 242). Similarly, Selfe (2009) argues “that a single-minded focus on print in composition classrooms ignores the importance of...other composing modalities for making meaning and understanding the world” (p. 617). While there is no doubt it would be useful for educators to have the ability to move across the many languages and modes that students enact on a day-to-day basis, they can create learning spaces that are open to the diverse social realities of students (many of whom are based within linguistic and semiotic pluralism), and broaden the context of U.S. composition “to a discipline directly confronting, investigating, and experimenting (Horner et al., 2011, p. 291). In other words, “the assumption of a monolingual and monomodal norm for composition—as communicative practice and terrain of study—is no longer appropriate” (Selfe and Horner, 2013, p.5). This project, specifically, provides one context for inquiry and pedagogical development. Food culture is used to emphasize relationships between translingual and multimodal composing practices. Perhaps it seems too simple to use food as the locus, but language and modality, like food, is messy. It is difficult to prepare a dish correctly the first time; yet, learning, experimenting, and moving within experiences and knowledges is necessary in order to create something delectable. As such, perhaps it is the metaphor of food that is most tangible to discussions of translingualism and multimodality our palates like our cultural and linguistic histories are in constant flux.

Research Site

The data was collected from students enrolled in a preparatory writing course, within a writing department, at a large research university in the mid-western United States. This department has devoted increasing attention to the academic success of SLLs, and over the last several years has redesigned its preparatory writing course to better support a number of categories of diverse learners. Implementing a transcultural and translingual theme wherein curricular and pedagogical changes were made to better serve the SLLs that enroll, as well as the incorporation of at least one digitally-based assignment are two examples of how this course has been modified. Annually this course serves approximately 900 first generation, heritage language, and English language learners. A primary outcome of redesign was “to demonstrate the near-term impacts such a teacher apprenticeship model and translingual, asset based curriculum might provide first generation and international student writers as well as preservice teachers and faculty members” (Trowbridge, 2014). Moreover, it is of note that this redesign aligns with the recent (2011, para. 9) MLA report “Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World,” which states:

translingual and transcultural competence...places value on the ability to operate between languages. Students are educated to function as informed and capable interlocutors...they are also trained to reflect on the world and themselves through the lens of another language and culture.

Similarly, Hornberger et al. (2012) maintain that “the welcoming of translanguaging in classrooms is not only necessary, but desirable educational practice” (p. 239), which is also echoed by Selfe’s (2009) assertion that students need opportunities to engage with multimodality and the “different possibilities for representing multiple and shifting patterns of identity...[and] expanded ways of engaging with a changing world” (p. 645). Thus, this program is an important site of inquiry due to its movement to “welcome” and “place value” on “translingual and transcultural competence[s],” and the many “shifting patterns of identity” that are potentially more accessible to students who are able to enact translingual and multimodal composing strategies.

The student work to be explored is a sequence of two assignments based on a cultural artifact, or a “dish history.” The first rendering of this assignment is a traditional text-based, single authored paper, which is allotted four weeks for completion (a quarter of the semester), and is the third assignment in a sequence of four that are based within the theme of transculturalism and translingualism. The second rendering of this assignment is a digital-based, group authored video project, which is also allotted four weeks for completion. Both assignments are based within group brainstorming and composing processes, which this research argues are important sites of student inquiry via translingual and multimodal interaction. As discussed, the theme of food culture was chosen because food writing works to position students in a role of authority, allowing them to choose what elements of their lives to include and exclude in the creation of a text. This topic situates students as experts, enabling them to compose in a subject area outside their teacher’s domain of knowledge, which is reassuring to students who are encountering writing at the post-secondary level for the first time, as well as writing in a second language (often for the first time). Therefore, these assignments, through considering food culture have two primary goals: topic accessibility (for SLLs), and practical strategies (for teachers)—with an overarching outcome of student engagement in the composing process, wherein students create texts that are nuanced in terms of self-reflection and critical inquiry culturally, linguistically, and modally. Attention to food, in terms of personal experience, allows SLLs to choose events that help them formulate who they are—to their teacher and other members of the class. The versatility available to students *and* teachers in the genre of food writing is central in encouraging the crossing of linguistic and modal boundaries. Essentially, the cultural artifact essay and the revision of this essay into a digital format work together to promote understanding and acceptance of cultural difference; classroom examination of student-authored texts, discussions and reflections on language and mode occur via a number of semiotic resources.

Student Writing: Translingualism and Multimodality in Action

At the core of this assignment sequence is communication, interpretation, and analysis—no outside research is required beyond interviews with family members, friends, and classmates. During the invention stages of this assignment sequence the class works together to create a list of brainstorming questions, students conduct peer

interviews, and students create a gallery of pictures and recipes of their chosen dishes (Image One). While each invention exercise is useful, it is the sharing of images that is often most beneficial in creating relationships between experience, text, and image. Consequently, we see “the classroom [as] a space where students explore [] their subjects



Image One

together, layering their knowledge...working collaboratively, they heighten[] their sense of audience as different modal opportunities offer[] a dialogue” (Rogers, Trauman, & Kiernan, 2010, p. 202). This creation of a gallery space positions students to inquire not only about the physicalities of the dishes—asking questions about unfamiliar ingredients and methods used in the creation of these foods—but also leads them to consider the role of language(s) in dish analysis and interpretation (Image Two).

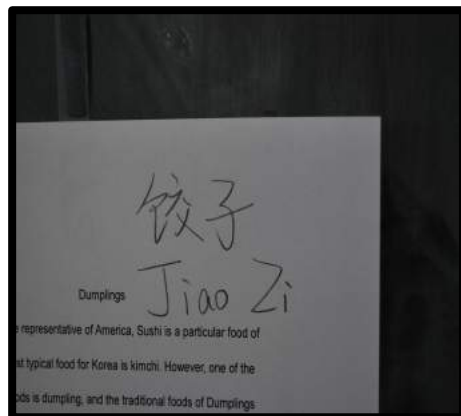


Image Two



Image Three

Additionally, because many of the recipes are provided in home languages (Image Three), students ask questions, provide answers, and create relationships between the familiar and unfamiliar through textual inquiry — essentially creating a shared text (Image One) that is translingual and multimodal in its movement between, across, and within languages and modes. This linguistic interchange aligns with the assertion of Angela Creese and Blackledge that the movement between “languages in a pedagogic context [allows multilingual students] to make meaning, transmit information, and

perform identities using the linguistic signs at [their] disposal to connect with [their] audience” (2010, p. 109), and the work of Hornberger et al. who explain that translanguaging allows students to “communicate and make meaning by drawing on and intermingling linguistic features from different languages” (2012, p. 240). Inherent to this sharing, however, is the presence of a gallery space (Image One; Image Four; Image Six) where both images and languages come together in a shared text. It is often the presence of images, either within the gallery or within a traditional print-text (Image Seven; Image Eight; Image Nine) that evoke the most interest in students during both the writing process and revision stages. While this sharing of language and imagery clearly allows self-identification with the dishes of peers as familiar and unfamiliar, it is the movement towards translanguaging and multimodality (Image Five; Image Six) in this simple invention exercise that is most intriguing.

Particularly noteworthy is that, although this assignment sequence begins mid-semester, and although students have been encouraged to bring home languages and



Image Four

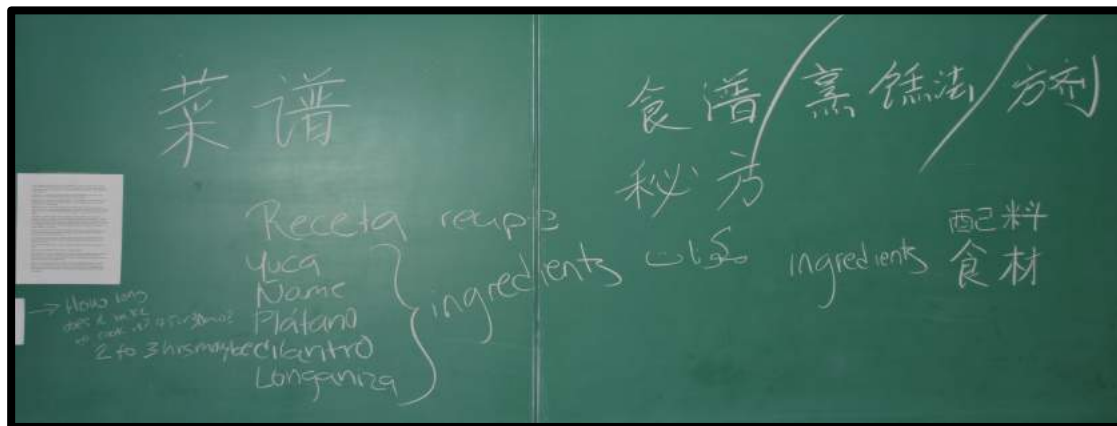


Image Five

images into their writing prior to this point, students often do not see the necessity until they begin writing their dish history. As assignments move forward, it becomes

increasingly obvious that in order to engage their audience awareness in writing, digital composing, and class discussion it is necessary to consider how their chosen dish is connected to home languages as well as images (Image One; Image Six). Moreover, this awareness, while not always realized in the print or digital assignment, is central to individual and group brainstorming and invention. As illustrated in the gallery images (Image One; Image Five; Image Six), the:

classroom became a space where students explored their subjects together, layering their knowledge...working collaboratively, they heightened their sense of audience as different modal opportunities offered a dialogue...and they complicated their awareness of the dynamic conversations at work in any given subject area. (Rogers et al., 2010, p.202).

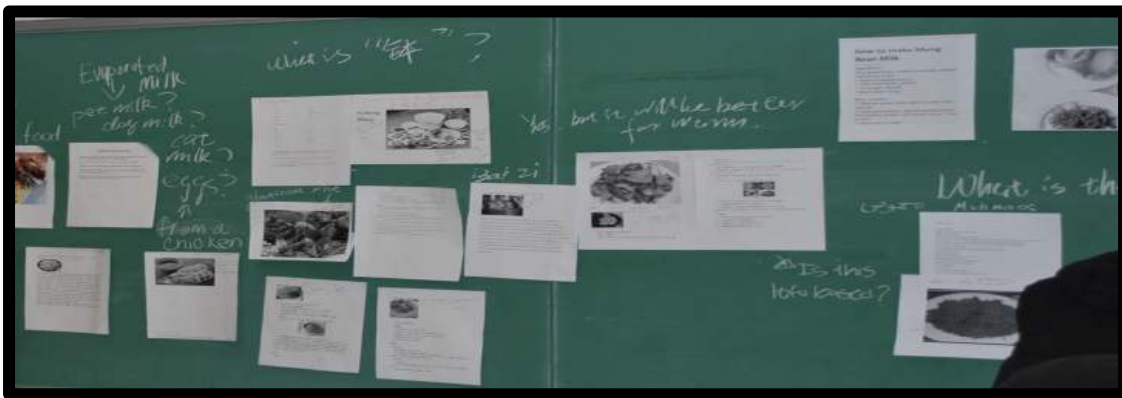


Image Six

The gallery-style classroom is a starting point for the digital video composition because it engenders awareness of the capabilities of images in explaining culturally specific topics. It is the incorporation of images into traditional print texts that generates elevated levels of peer inquiry (Image Seven; Image Eight; Image Nine), rather than reading about the food culture. The viewing of unfamiliarity — both via image and language — elicits the most questions and discussions. This research illustrates that it is this moment of the composing process, the mid-step between the production of a print and digital text, that offers the most opportunities for the mobilization of students' translingual and multimodal realities. It is in this invention space that social experiences and histories are brought to the fore, not only in written and oral questioning, but also in written and verbal responses. The topic leaves the page and enters into a liminal space that is home to shifting meanings and possibilities, and is most accepting of the fluidity, interaction, and mobilization of languages and modes. Conversely, composition of the print text and the digital text are more standardized and bounded. Students, in the creation of their print text and their digital text, are likely to draw upon the standardized expectations of what a print text should embody (e.g. one language, no images), or what a digital text should embody (e.g. one language, lots of images); however, while students move back into their fixed perceptions of genre expectation, there are a selection of print and digital essays that choose to negotiate movement between languages and images.

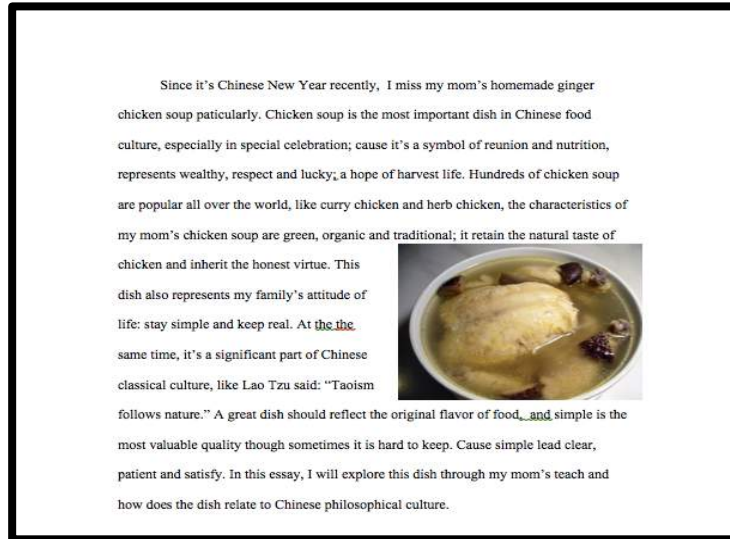


Image Seven

In terms of image integration within the print-based assignment, the most common move is to incorporate an image within the introductory paragraph (Image Seven), with little to no explanation of the dish components. It seems that the writers assume the simple inclusion of the image provides explanation; there is no need to analyze the image, by simply providing a picture they are explaining confusing elements of their dish to their reader. This also occurs when students integrate home languages into their essays, particularly when students describe cooking methods, ingredients, and culinary tools that do not have an English language equivalency. Students find that they cannot write about the dish in absence of these words or phrases (just like they cannot write the paper in the absence of an image), and as a result there is an “intermingling” of languages and imagery as students move to incorporate home languages and experiences into their primarily traditional Standard English language texts. For instance, in terms of translanguaging, a Dominican student incorporates Spanish to explain specific ingredient choices in her chosen dish: Sancocho.

I've never heard someone else using "naranja agria" (sour orange) with their Sancocho before, but who knows there's probably other traditional families like mine that tend to use this to give their Sancocho that sour and a bit biter taste...

And later, when discussing culturally unique ingredients, she again uses her home language:

Even though it is a very elaborated dish and that maybe they would not be able to find most of the dishes where ever they are like, plantains, Dominican Longaniza sausage, cilantro, Cubanelle pepper, cassava, yautia, sour orange and all that.

While these small interactions of home languages within an English language text are minimal they are important because they illustrate a mobilization of translingual literacies, which can work to enhance the quality of intellectual inquiry, as well as the quality and quantity of meanings and ideas produced within writing. On the other hand,

multimodality, or image inclusion, was standard throughout the student essays—images were included either in an introductory paragraph (Image Seven) or in a descriptive body paragraph (Image Eight; Image Nine).

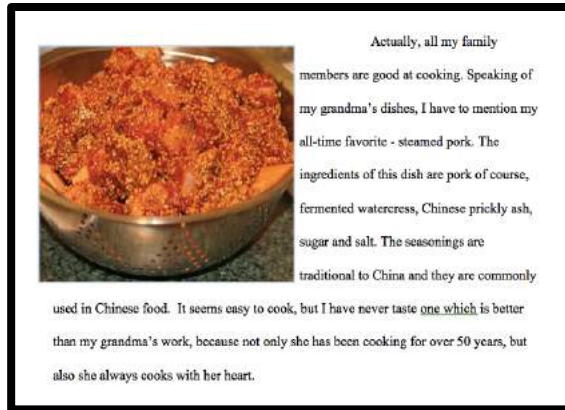


Image Eight

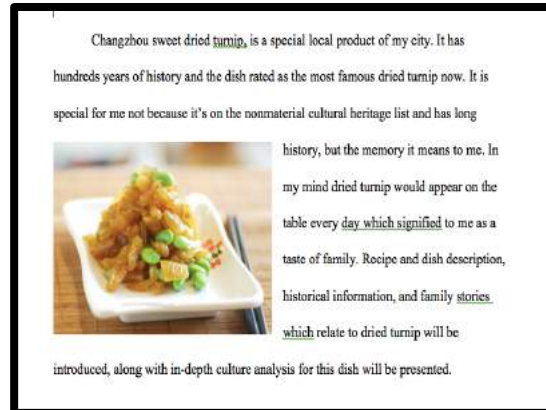


Image Nine

Generally, instances of translingualism and multimodality would not constitute the primary rhetorical move of these essays, personal experience and explication were much more common; however, it is important to note that a selection of students did use home language and imagery to provide stronger illustrations of their food culture experiences. Consequently, there is a need to consider how and why some students' written practices are moving towards becoming more fluid, while others remain static. Selfe and Horner (2013) align this fluidity to the fact that communicative practices outside the academy are confronted regularly with varied “digital communication technologies and global communicative networks” as well as an “increasing traffic of (exchanges and changes to) peoples and language practices” (p. 11). While this movement between language and mode is not a common practice within student writing, it is neither a practice that is going to fade away. The current reality is that SLLs are often more comfortable adhering to recognized standards, particularly when composing traditional texts. The sample of students who compose non-traditional texts do, however, create important sites of inquiry; the remainder of this essay will consider the work of these students.

Translingualism in the Print-Based Text

As discussed, there were instances of image inclusion within the print-based texts; namely, in introductory and descriptive body paragraphs (Image Seven; Image Eight; Image Nine). However, there were four instances of translinguistic sharing within the student papers sampled: usage of home language in the naming of the dish, the singular use of home language to refer to untranslatable information, Anglicization of home language throughout a text, and usage of home language throughout the text.

The most common usage of home languages within this assignment is in the naming of the food. In these instances, the entirety of the text is composed in English save the dish name, which is never Anglicized.

The first thing is that I want to introduce my family dish: “肉末蒸蛋”, which is a bowl with a layer of steamed egg on the top of the minced meat... I usually looked a family portrait and imagined the dish “肉末蒸蛋” cooked by my mother....Now I live in the USA, I cannot eat “肉末蒸蛋” from my mother.

Students most often choose not to Anglicize the dish name because the translated version does not represent the dish accurately. In some cases, students who are uncomfortable bringing home languages into their writing abandoned topics due to difficulties in the translation process. One student who wished to write about a tofu dish changed his topic, even though it was significant to him, because when he translated the description of the tofu, which was fermented, the English words he found included rotten, festering, and acidic—none of these words, he felt, properly characterized his favourite food. Thus, the ability to move between languages, even in the simple naming of a food, creates more access to writing topics for students.

The second example of translanguaging in this assignment is one-time usage. This occurs most often in the naming of a title, object, or idea that does not have an English language equivalency. Students who do not choose to translate these words and phrases, make this choice for multiple reasons; including, authenticity, accuracy, and cultural/linguistic legitimacy. Put simply, these students feel that translating in these instances would take away from the purpose of their writing (or meaning of the original text). In the first example, the student did not feel that there was a need to translate the title into English, as translation did not provide an accurate rendering of the ancient title:

In a traditional Chinese book which named “韩诗外传”, the book had already wrote that in the ancient sacrifice or ceremony, people should sit around one pot which is an ancient cooking vessel.

In the second example, the phrase was not translated because an Anglicized version was not exact, due to the historical nature of the phrase:

I guess the culture and history affect our dietary habits since back in ancient China, there was a name called ‘药膳’ for the dish with medical values which means the ‘dish treatment’. People at that time relied on this kind of dish to cure diseases or sickness. Until now, we still use the term ‘药膳’ and it is a common sense for us that we can be much healthier simply change the diet.

In these two examples students are choosing to use home languages because they associate these words and phrases as relics of an earlier time. This is compounded by the fact that (when Chinese is the home language) many of the one-time translations are words and phrases that come from ancient rather than modern Chinese, and are therefore more difficult for the students to grasp in both their home language *and* English.

The following example illustrates the Anglicization of a home language, where the student does not find an English language equivalency, but does translate the word into phonetic English:

When thinking about how to write this paper, what surprising [sic] me is that in almost every traditional festival, we have dumplings as a part, such

as *jiaozi* for spring festival, *tangyuan* for lantern festival, *zongzi* for dragon boat festival, and *yuebing* for mid-autumn festival... due to its round shape, *yuebing* symbolizes reunion (Chinese meaning of round is *yuanxing*, of reunion is *tuanyuan*, which have a common character *yuan*).

In such examples, students create a text that is familiar to their monolingual English teacher, at least in terms of appearance. Even when Anglicized, there is still a strangeness to pronunciation that is not addressed in these texts. However, what is illustrated is a hybridization of a home language/school language, which recognizes English as the lingua franca of the classroom, and is therefore imagined to be more accessible to the classroom audience where there is a diversity of linguistic backgrounds, but the commonality of classroom English.

The most nuanced form of translanguaging is when students bring their home language into a text, choosing not to translate, but rather to maintain home languages and explain meaning:

I used to complained to my mother that I am not good at making friends, my mom said: “君子之交淡如水,物以类聚,人以群分”, means do not need to be hasty to see payback from others, or change yourself to cater others; just maintain the real character and stay simple. Only people who appreciate your natural instincts can become true friends, like some certain group of people love simple, classical homemade chicken soup. And it's also traditional virtues of the Chinese nation, honest and real.

Here, the usage of home language is not fleeting; it occurs substantially in this excerpt, as well as throughout each paragraph of this and similarly structured student essays. There is not simply the inclusion of a simple word or phrase, but sentences that are then explained and analyzed. The inclusion of home language within these texts provides cultural authenticity. Time is taken to explain the importance of these words, not through an English equivalency translation, but through careful interpretation and rhetorical consideration of purpose. In this example, the sentence spoken by the writer's mother is not explained once, which would point to translation—a word for word rendering—rather than a nuanced consideration of the different meanings of the original text. The remainder of the paragraph works to explain this one sentence in a number of different ways. Directly following the quote, the reader is provided with three different ways to interpret the saying. This is then followed by a sentence that explains the saying in the context of the topic of the paper: homemade chicken soup. The third interpretation considers the sentence as a cultural artifact, describing how the words are a reflection of cultural values. Examples like this that work to unpack the complexity of home language words, phrases, and sentences are the goal when teachers encourage students to translanguaging; these goals, like many within a writing course, are not always reached by every student, but when they are they can provide unique learning moments for each member of the classroom.

Translingualism in the Digital-Based Text

Translingualism is primarily recognized, particularly among those who are unfamiliar with the term, as presented in the above section — the movement between, across, or within languages, also referred to as code-meshing. However, translingual

practices are not necessarily tied to language meshing, but are also theorized in terms of the “openness and inquiry that people take toward language and language differences” (Lu, Horner, Jones, Trimbur, 2011, p.311). When viewed in this way:

Textual meaning does not reside solely in language or text, but in all the resources of the text and context. There is thus a strong sense of performativity, as the content is not given but co-constructed...More importantly, the status of readers and writers gets redefined, as everyone is both a reader and a writer, sharing mutual responsibility in the construction of meaning. (Canagarajah, 2013, p.44)

The group dimension of the digital revisions of the original single-authored text based article is a central component in the digital compositions movement towards translanguaging. While language usage will be discussed in terms of video compositions, equally important will be the overall rhetorical choices made by the student groups as they revised and “co-constructed” their print texts into digital texts. There are a variety of levels of translanguaging analysis that could take place in this section; however, the focus herein will be on three instances of multimodal sharing within two student videos: translanguaging in terms of home language, sound choice, and image choice. The topics of the digital texts are Kimchi (Video One), which was created by a group of Chinese and



Please click this link to watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mVUggE8UuQ>
Video One

Korean students, and Peking Duck (Video Two), which was created by Chinese students.



Please click this link to watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObpOKnXLuk8>
Video Two

As with the print texts, there were not high instances of the crossing of languages within the digital texts. Overall, as illustrated in the provided examples, the most common usage of home languages within digital videos is in the naming of the food. However, dissimilar to the print-based texts the food is most often Anglicized in conjunction with the home language spelling; this move is evident in the title screen of Video One where “Kimchi” appears in both English and Korean. In many of these student compositions this is the only instance of language crossing within the digital text. The second example of translanguaging that appears in this version of the assignment is (like the print version) one-time usage of home language. To reiterate, this occurs most often in the naming of a title, object, or idea that does not have an English language equivalency. In Video Two at 00:51 and 00:59 viewers are provided two examples of this approach, where the names of two restaurants are provided in both home language and pinyin; however neither are translated into English. Similar to the print text, the students did not feel that there was a need to translate the title into English—translation did not provide an accurate rendering of the title. In the first example, the phrase was not translated because an Anglicized version was not exact, which again was due to the historical nature of the title; in the second example, the phrase is a person’s name and therefore does not have an English equivalency beyond pinyin. Again, as in the print texts, students are choosing to use home languages because they associate these as relics of an earlier time.

Extending the definition of translanguaging to consider “all the resources of the text and context,” “performativity,” and the mutual “construction of meaning” positions us to better understand how sound and image choice within digital composition informs translanguaging practice. In other words, a consideration of how students work together to “co-construct” meaning in a variety of modes lends to an understanding of modality and semiotics as a central component of the translanguaging approach. A translanguaging analysis of sound is more tangible in Video Two, where the Chinese students chose the American

classic “Kung Fun Fighting” as the soundtrack to their Peking Duck video. This choice is of note, particularly in comparison to the more generic Kimchi soundtrack, due to its attempt to unite audiences with recognizable cultural symbols. The students in this group were aware that their audience was mixed (both domestic and international), and therefore made rhetorical choices that would be inclusive to both audiences. While the audience listens to a distinctly American song, playing in English, they are viewing images that are distinctly Chinese. What this does is create a space that is both familiar and unfamiliar for all (or most?—there could be some well versed in both languages) audience members. For the domestic American students, the usage of a familiar song against unfamiliar imagery creates stronger connections and interest than in the Kimchi video where both the music and the imagery are potentially unfamiliar. Likewise, for the international students the unfamiliar song paired with the familiar imagery works to create similar pathos-based connections.

Imagery in the Peking Duck video works on a similar level; most of the images are culturally specific to Chinese nationals (e.g. images of places, cuisine, language, etc.). There is also the movement to include images of foreigners (e.g. Shirley Temple, Fidel Castro, George Bush, etc.), which works like the music to create fluidity across cultures. At the beginning of this video, the creators chose popular and culturally recognizable imagery in order to potentially engage an unfamiliar audience before they moved to culturally specific imagery associated with the chosen dish. However, in the Kimchi video, there is much less emphasis on audience connection. The video, while introducing various aspects of Kimchi within Korean culture, makes no move to cross borders and produce imagery that would engage a culturally unfamiliar audience. While there were a number of images illustrating the different types of Kimchi and the different eating styles, the movement to engage audience members is less accessible to those unfamiliar with Korean food culture and practices.

Finally, while both videos are well produced, viewers tend towards Video Two, which is more fluid and cross-cultural: it is a uniquely translingual text. The fact that Video One translanguages via not only language, but also sound and imagery is evidence that the translingual approach can be based within monolingual paradigms of language. It is not language, but cultural fluidity that makes this video translingual. This perspective echoes the work of Lu and Horner (2013, p. 585) who argue that “a translingual approach [i]s one that recognizes difference as the norm.” In terms of cultural fluidity, we see the ability of digital texts to embody translingual practice as superior to the basic print-based text in their multiple layers of translingual orientation, which exemplify the diversification of “other semiotic products beyond the code-meshed texts of multilinguals” (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 40).

Conclusion

Ultimately, this assignment sequences illustrates a pedagogy that positions translingual and multimodal composing processes as complementary, which responds to the call made by Horner et al. (2011) and Selfe and Horner (2013). While this move to engage SLLs in translingual and multimodal composing can be made in a variety of ways, this project uses the familiar topic of food to bolster knowledge-sharing and meaning-making between, across, and within cultures, languages, and modes. This topic is used as a starting point because discussions of food culture can cultivate learning environments

that promote both unification *and* division in terms of community and identity (Bloom 2008; Cognard-Black et al., 2008; Mintz et al., 2002; Visser 1999). Where creating connections between the culturally familiar and unfamiliar makes room for discussions of composition assignments that embody the familiar (e.g. print text) and the unfamiliar (e.g. translingual and multimodal texts). More importantly, translingual and multimodal composing, whether educators take on the theme of food, or one of the many other possibilities available to us, creates spaces for students to author texts that are meaningful to them as well as their classmates and the larger communities that they are members of. In terms of SLLs, classrooms that cultivate diversity are not simply places to learn, but they also provide environments that foster relationships between a community of peers, encouraging students to be critically reflective and grow intellectually. Culturally-based assignments provide practical approaches to promote translingual and multimodal ideologies within pedagogies, affording students a platform to explore how their many social realities are able to collide and manifest within the texts they produce.

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Appendix 1

Cultural Artifact Inquiry

Purpose...

In your third assignment, you will choose a “cultural food artifact” to write about. This assignment asks you to consider a dish history that holds meaning to you in terms of family culture. You will be expected to discuss the relationships between aspects of your food and family cultures.

There are three parts to this assignment, which do not have to appear in the order provided; however, consider arrangement, and how the order of information is central to the message your essay will provide. You are expected to include the following: (1) a national history of your dish, (2) a family history of your dish, and (3) a cultural analysis of your dish.

Invention...

In order to help you (and your readers) learn from your knowledge you need to carefully consider the ways that your chosen cultural artifact forms relationships between food, family, nation, history, culture, and language.

- Why is this dish important to you? What story does it tell about you?
- Who in your family prepares this dish? What about the preparation is important? Are there any elements of the preparation that are unique to your family?
- What is the history of this dish, both in your culture and in your family? How long has this dish existed? Is there a historical story that explains the origination of this dish?
- What does the message of this story say about your culture? What does this dish say about your culture?
- Are there any specific words associated with this dish? What are they, and if they are not English are they easy to translate why or why not? Or, do you even need to translate them, why or why not?
- Is there a specific literacy that you could associate with this dish? What does the ability to prepare and serve this dish communicate (in terms of culture and family)?

Remember: a central goal of this assignment is to describe the cultural impacts of this artifact on your life; you will need to offer your readers' moments of in-depth analysis and interpretation. It is important to remember that the artifact you choose to write about is important to you—if not, you wouldn't have picked it—but you will also need to spend time explaining (a) why you picked this artifact, and (b) why it is important to others.

Don't Forget...

- You need a thesis statement that is introduced in your first paragraph, and then repeated and returned to in all body paragraphs (and conclusion paragraph).
- The response draft of your essay should be two pages long.
- The assessment draft of your essay should be four to five pages long.

Appendix 2

Digital Video Project

Purpose...

In your third assignment, you will revise one of your CULTURAL ARTIFACT INQUIRY papers using a digital platform. A central goal is to consider how presenting writing using a new medium (video) will allow you to strengthen your original purpose and reach—potentially—a broader audience. Like all your assignments you will need to consider the social and cultural implications of your chosen topic, particularly in relation to digital media.

Part One

For this assignment you will be working in groups to create a digital video (no more than three minutes in length) that revises and revises a previous assignment. You will need to discuss, as a group, whose paper would be the most useful to revise (and distribute this paper to every member of the group); who your audience for this video will be; and how video allows you to come into “conversation” with a larger audience.

Part Two

Each member of the group will also have to write (their own!) two-page reflection paper where you address the choices you made and considered when transforming written text into a digital text (see below list of questions), as well as the specific contributions you made to this project. The central purpose of this reflection is to consider how the drafting, editing, and overall composing of the DIGITAL VIDEO assignment differs from the writing of the CULTURAL ARTIFACT assignment. It is important to make comparisons and contrasts based on how your understanding of audience, purpose, and meaning changes between these two assignments.

Invention...

In order to help you decide what topic to choose, what direction to take, and what to address in your reflection paper I have provided some questions to consider:

- How does the medium of video provide new opportunities to explain the thesis of this topic?
- How might your audience for this paper have different expectations, due to the medium of video?
- How does the medium of video affect how you communicate the purpose of this project?
- When creating transitions between ideas what are the similarities and differences when writing a paper and creating a video?
- When creating introductions and conclusions what are the similarities and differences when writing a paper and creating a video?
- What points are you able to make using video that were not available to you when you used written text?
- Does video change the meaning of your argument? How? Why?
- What is harder writing a paper, or creating a video? Why?
- What is harder working alone, or working in a group? Why?