

From the Guest Editors

Composition's "Global Turn": Writing Instruction in Multilingual/Translingual and Transnational Contexts

In our initial call for papers for this special issue, we asserted that composition has witnessed a surge in attention to the multilingual/translingual and transnational dimensions of higher education, a shift aligned with what Wendy Hesford described in 2006 as a "global turn" in our disciplinary research and explanatory frameworks. This shift or "turn" seems inevitable for us to engage, as colleges and universities recruit increasing numbers of international students and establish satellite campuses worldwide, the U.S. resident population diversifies in ways consistent with broader emigration and immigration trends, and discourse about higher education becomes more fully immersed in and responsive to global flows of individuals and cultures. In short, as U.S. institutions are becoming more globally minded so, too, are the people who work and learn there.

In addition, our own experiences in higher education have spurred our interest in exploring these topics with colleagues in the field. As part of a three-year grant sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Iraq, Connie partnered with English department faculty members at Salahaddin University in Erbil, Kurdistan, to negotiate curricular and pedagogical reform—meaningful work that invited critical reflection about the intended and unintended consequences of transnational collaborations in fostering institutional change. Meanwhile, Brian has taught college writing courses comprised of international and residential multilingual writers for several years and participated in a short study-abroad at the University of Malaga in Spain in order to better appreciate the situations of international students. Together, our experiences have shown us that there is no part of our professional or personal lives that can somehow "escape" the global, if that were ever even possible or desirable. Languages and cultures engage us daily, and we engage them with great appreciation for the diversity that enriches our own teaching and research.

As composition continues to address increasingly multilingual and international realities, the authors contributing to this special issue remind us that maintaining an appreciation of the relationship between the theory and practice, past and future, and global and local contexts of writing instruction remains a vital endeavor. In addition to the overlapping perspectives these authors share about the need for global attentiveness in writing and rhetoric, this special issue also highlights the presence of productive differences in the theoretical foundations, methodologies, and terminologies being used to address this need.

Included in this issue are five articles from teacher-researchers who share commitments to explore the multilingual/translingual and transnational aspects of writing and writing instruction and who develop ways of tapping into currents already present in our classrooms to further guide, refine, and reinforce them. It is our pleasure to introduce these articles here.

In their article “Translation as (Global) Writing,” Bruce Horner and Laura Tetreault draw on translation studies to both contest neoliberal appropriations that render translation an invisible process and to articulate an alternate framework that posits all writing as acts of translation. Horner and Tetreault argue that treating writing as translation not only helps students and teachers recognize language difference as a feature of all writing, but also reveals the translingual dimensions and implications of conventional writing practices, such as paraphrase and interpretation.

A key construct critical for the empowerment of multilingual students is agency, which Shawna Shapiro, Michelle Cox, Gail Shuck, and Emily Simnitt foreground in their article, “Teaching for Agency: From Appreciating Linguistic Diversity to Empowering Student Writers.” Acknowledging the resources multilingual writers bring to the classroom, as well as their needs and goals for English language development, these authors advocate pedagogical approaches that create opportunities for students to evaluate their writerly decisions not only in terms of language choice but also with regard to mode, medium, and genre. Extending the notion of agency outside of the writing classroom, this article also describes program policies that further support student choice and academic success.

“Negotiating World Englishes in a Writing-Based MOOC,” by Ben McCorkle, Kay Halasek, Kaitlin Clinnin, and Cynthia L. Selfe, explores the impact of a peer-review process designed to foster robust dialogue about individual and common language learning experiences as a means of empowering participants in a globalized classroom. Leveraging the principles of emergent pedagogical theory, these authors underscore the centrality of second language writing instruction for compositionists and demonstrate how MOOCs can serve as open, democratic spaces where assumptions about cultural, linguistic, and geographical difference can be made visible and, in turn, productively negotiated.

Lisa R. Arnold’s article, “‘This is a Field that’s Open, not Closed’: Multilingual and International Writing Faculty Respond to Composition Theory,” reports on a professional development seminar she organized at the American University of Beirut (AUB), where writing faculty studied “core” composition scholarship and gained insight on the cultural and linguistic assumptions shaping North American pedagogies and theoretical perspectives. Using rich descriptions of AUB’s writing program, faculty, and students to situate participant responses and reflections as practitioners, Arnold’s study illuminates the challenges faced

by—and, importantly, the values attached to—writing instruction in this multilingual, international university setting.

In “Negotiating Languages and Cultures: Enacting Translingualism through a Translation Assignment,” Julia Kiernan, Joyce Meier, and Xiqiao Wang present a multipart writing assignment in which English language learners translate texts—ranging from culture stories to scholarly articles—compare versions, and then critically reflect on their writing practices to build capacity for knowing and naming their individual language negotiation processes and, in turn, strengthen their translingual competences. Drawing from their own teaching experiences using this translation assignment, the authors demonstrate how writing about transnational and translingual experiences not only builds English language learners’ agency and develops metalinguistic awareness but also responds to the field’s call for asset-based, culturally sustaining pedagogical practices.

Our special issue also includes one course design: Ghanashyam Sharma’s “World Rhetorics,” which highlights a course designed to help internationalize Stony Brook University’s graduate certificate program in the teaching of writing. Sharma’s course is organized around a three-point axis of geopolitical/regional, historical/temporal, and thematic/ideational views. Through the lenses of history, sociocultural theory, and comparative rhetoric, this course’s unique framework invites students to develop a critical understanding of the world’s rhetorical traditions as not only situated within particular geopolitical and material contexts but also perpetually in flux and thus always open to revision and change.

Seven short essays comprise the Where We Are forum, a roundtable where scholars with diverse backgrounds and perspectives are invited to share their thoughts about the issue’s theme. Individually and collectively, these contributions from Rebecca Lorimer Leonard, Morris Young, Bo Wang, Kate Vieira, Amy Zenger, Jay Jordan, and Christiane Donahue promise to deepen readers’ appreciation of the questions and issues attending our understanding of writing instruction in multilingual, translingual, and transnational contexts.

Finally, we wish to thank Laura Micciche for enabling this opportunity and the CS team for supporting our efforts. This special issue would not have been possible without their thoughtful guidance and advice. We hope that readers will find these articles and essays as engaging and energizing as we do, and that this issue will lead to continued, vigorous conversation about the research and teaching of composition.

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Works Cited

Hesford, Wendy. “Global Turns and Cautions in Rhetoric and Composition Studies.” *PMLA* 121.3 (2006): 787-801. Print.