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## Translingual Conversations: Interrogating Default Whiteness in College Writing

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# Translingual Conversations: Interrogating Default Whiteness in College Writing

By

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## DEDICATION

To the memories of L.B. Long, Grace Hagood Downs,  
Becky Crockett, and Logan Boone.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the careful direction of my director, Chris Holcomb. His generosity with his time and wisdom, his thoughtful and kind mentorship of my writing, and his tireless, steady encouragement have made the dissertation-writing process—dare I say it?—kind of *fun*. I also owe special thanks to my committee members: Tracey Weldon introduced me to sociolinguistics and guided me through several IRB submission processes, making the interview projects that inform much of this dissertation possible. She, Christy Friend, Jay Jordan, and Hannah Rule have always been generous with their time when I sought feedback on my scholarship, recommendations for sources, or guidance on surviving and thriving in academia.

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Much of this dissertation is based on interview projects with colleagues who volunteered their time to discuss their professional and personal experiences and beliefs

with me. They all even agreed to do extra reading for my projects, no insignificant task for busy teachers and scholars. I'm forever grateful for their contributions, as I am for the student who generously allowed me to use one of her essays as the basis for professional discussion with colleagues and analysis in my own writing.

My grandmother, Dorothy Adkins, was the first person to encourage me to pursue a Ph.D. Or maybe she was just the first person I listened to. Sometimes I do take her advice. My grandfather, Howard Adkins, my mother, Gail Adkins Boone, and my cousin Michelle Boone have all acted as role models and cheerleaders. My little brother Thomas Boone urges me to put on my "You Can Do It" hat, sends encouraging texts and memes, and always knows how to make me laugh. He and my mother have always been there for me when I faced self-doubt. My eldest brother, Logan Boone, is no longer with us, but I still carry the memory of the many much-needed pep talks he gave me over the years. I wish he knew how much he helps me to this day.

My husband Dan is, quite simply, the best husband a woman could ask for, and then some. He moved to South Carolina with me so I could pursue my Ph.D., has listened to me talk *ad nauseum* about rhetoric, pedagogy, and language ideology, and keeps me fed and hydrated when I go on writing binges. He's also proofread my papers, driven me to and from the airport so I could travel to conferences, and run to campus to meet me outside my classroom when I left my presentation materials at home. Our cats Gladiator and Pickle have provided a (mostly) calming influence during long hours of reading and writing. I can't imagine a better way to get through graduate school than by living with my sweet husband and our darling critters.

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how language ideologies influence composition, both in disciplinary approaches to language difference and in individual instructors' attitudes about language correctness and appropriateness. The dissertation presumes that all natively-spoken varieties of human languages are inherently systematic and valid, and that from a linguistic standpoint, contrary to popular belief, no variety is "better" than another; moreover, beliefs about language correctness intersect with structural racism and therefore contribute to inequality. Popular beliefs about the superiority of Standard English (SE) and academic discourse, both based in white, middle-class communicative practices, still influence composition; so this dissertation is particularly interested in how instructors engage with student work that uses nonprestige varieties of American English, most notably African American English (AAE). It presumes that composition instruction will be more equitable and anti-racist if teachers allow more sociolinguistic research and scholarship on linguistic variation to influence their pedagogies and assessment. The dissertation is influenced by the *translingual* approach, which promotes appreciation for linguistic diversity, the cultivation of diverse linguistic repertoires, communication across linguistic boundaries, and challenges to harmful myths about language competence. After the establishment of the theoretical framework and exigence in the first chapter, the second chapter provides historical context by outlining four major approaches to language difference in composition: eradicationism, assimilationism, pluralism, and

translingualism. The third chapter differentiates between two connected writing practices: code-switching, currently prominent in composition instruction, which requires the use of the language variety considered most appropriate for a context; and code-meshing, a newly articulated practice, which enables writers to blend two or more codes. The chapter then explores the warrants underlying arguments in favor of code-meshing. The fourth chapter explores how white instructors' prior experiences contributed to their responses to a code-meshed student essay incorporating AAE conventions, and the fifth chapter traces how a different group of white instructors used narratives to reconcile their prior experiences with newly-encountered scholarship on linguistic diversity and translingualism. Finally, the sixth chapter draws on interview data and professionalization research to make recommendations for promoting awareness of linguistic diversity and translingual scholarship among college writing instructors.



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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Unlike race, we have no national public dialogue on language that recognizes it as a site of cultural struggle....Language, no doubt, is a significant form of ‘symbolic power.’ Yet its central role in positioning each of us and the groups that we belong to along the social hierarchy lies largely beneath the average American’s consciousness.”

— H. Samy Alim and Geneva Smitherman, *Articulate While Black*, p. 3

As part of my research for this dissertation, I conducted a series of interviews with several college writing instructors (the methodology and results of the study are discussed in Chapter Five). One of my participants was Barry,<sup>1</sup> a white, middle-class, thirty-something Ph.D. student in American Literature, with seven years of experience teaching composition at numerous institutions. Barry was from the South and described his speaking style as a blend of Standard English (SE)<sup>2</sup> and Southern (White) English, but considered his writing strictly SE. During our discussions, Barry frequently referenced his first teaching experience: after earning a master’s degree in his early 20s, he worked as an adjunct instructor at a technical college where his students were predominantly African-American adults returning to school to earn professional

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<sup>1</sup> All study participant names are pseudonyms.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term Standard English (SE) to refer to the variety of English most traditionally valued in the academy and in education. Many scholars use the term Edited American English (EAE), but I prefer SE because *standard* highlights the prestige placed on SE and its relatively normalized nature, and includes not only writing but the valued *speech* patterns associated with white, middle-class Americans. I suggest that EAE is a form of SE, but should properly only refer to writing—as speakers do not typically have the opportunity to *edit* their speech. I am primarily concerned with written texts, but will also at times be concerned with perceptions of SE and non-SE speech. For the sake of variation, and because SE tends to be considered prestigious and/or mainstream, I will sometimes use *prestige* or *mainstream* as synonyms for *standard*.

certifications in the aftermath of the 2008 financial collapse. Barry described his failed attempt to incorporate SE writing instruction into his teaching and adherence to SE conventions in his assessment. His students, he said, vocally resisted and challenged the value of written SE, asserting it wasn't something they needed or cared to learn. In the following story, he recounts one particular, memorable exchange:

Barry I can clearly remember one day I had,<sup>3</sup>  
I had one of these like overhead lessons,  
you know...  
and I had one girl who for every rule,  
she would ask why?  
Like why do we have to do it that way?  
And I was-  
I don't know,  
I mean it's just the way you have to do it {laughter}.  
You know,  
that's what MLA or whatever governing body has decreed,  
and they were kinda almost making a joke out of it.  
You know a lot of the other kids were kinda snickering,  
and again not kids,  
they were grown-ups {laughter},  
they were adults.  
But they thought it was kind of absurd.  
But you know it was,  
it wasn't so much the white students.

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<sup>3</sup> Transcription conventions: I use a transcription style modified from that favored by sociolinguists such as Mary Bucholtz, incorporating aspects of MLA citation conventions to better suit readers in composition studies. Text in parentheses ( ) indicates an uncertain transcription; a comma (,) indicates that the speaker paused very briefly; a period (.) indicates the speaker paused after falling intonation, and for slightly longer than after a comma, suggesting the end of a single utterance. Question marks (?) indicate the same as periods (.), except after the speaker voices or cites a question. Information in {braces} indicates important nonverbal action, including {laughter}; a single dash (-) indicates self-interruption on the part of the speaker. Ellipses (...) indicate the removal of part of a single utterance or (...) of removal of text includes part(s) of more than one utterance. Brackets [ ] indicate substitution of synonymous wording needed to make the meaning clear, e.g. if the speaker uses a pronoun but the noun is required for reader understanding; brackets [ ] are also used to obscure information with the potential to compromise confidentiality, e.g., New York City would be replaced with [major American city]. Transcriptions from the Fall 2015 dataset (as in Barry's discourse here) includes "filler" words such as "um" and "like." Longer transcripts are presented in this chart format, broken up by pause, self-interruption, or interruption or cross-talk by the interlocutor. Shorter transcripts are presented within the regular text, as with shorter quotes in MLA.

Barry I don't want to make it strictly a racial thing,  
but,  
most of the students who questioned it,  
or (who) just kind of refused to abide by it,  
tended to be uh,  
older black women.

Barry had to acknowledge that he couldn't make an argument for SE other than that he believed a distant authority had established the rules. This indicates that Barry's theory of language correctness was, in James Paul Gee's terms, a tacit theory.<sup>4</sup> A *tacit theory* is something taken-for-granted, something that we don't think we need to question because it is common sense, something pretty much everyone within our social network believes (Gee 15-20).

Barry also explained that the age difference between him and most of his students made him hesitant to impose his understanding of correct English:

Barry I had a lot of older black students who sort of spoke a Gullah  
dialect...  
and that would sometimes show up a little bit in their writing....  
I wasn't always quite sure how to address that....  
I felt a little bit scared,  
too.  
I didn't want to offend anybody.  
I didn't want to tell a 55-year-old black woman that she couldn't  
write like that,  
when she had been talking and writing like that her whole life.  
It was a weird dynamic because they were so much older and more  
experienced in the world than me.

In this story, Barry implies that his respect for his students as his elders, people with more work and life experience than he had, contributed to his decision to defer somewhat to their judgments about language, their confidence in the validity of their language. He

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all citations from Gee are from the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of *Social Linguistics and Literacies*.

also found that, though they resisted his attempts to impose SE, the students embraced the opportunity to read, discuss, and write critically about literature. Disturbed by his inability to convincingly articulate the value of SE to a skeptical audience, and reasoning that the students—who primarily worked, or sought future work, in careers that didn’t emphasize SE—were correct in asserting that SE wasn’t necessary for them, Barry decided not to grade based on, or teach, SE at all. As long as he could understand what the students were saying in their papers, he reasoned, he did not need to mark down a grade because of what he would normally perceive as errors.

In later teaching experiences at predominantly-white four-year institutions, though, Barry found that his students didn’t question SE, indicating that they probably shared his tacit theory of correctness. He also commented that he figured they had more need for SE, as they lived in predominantly white worlds and had career goals in white-collar professions. For these students, Barry did spend class time on SE writing conventions and included adherence to those conventions in his grading rubrics. But the conflict he’d faced at the technical college lingered in his consciousness. Early in our first interview, he said “I do expect a certain polished correctness when it comes to essays and other major writing assignments. (But) I’m not sure if I could really uh argue for the value of that...in terms of like intrinsic, inherent value.” He explained that he had signed up for my project, which asked him to read and discuss texts on language issues in composition, because he saw it as a learning opportunity.

Like Barry and me, the overwhelming majority of college writing instructors are white<sup>5</sup> (CCCC Language Policy Committee; National Center for Education Statistics);

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<sup>5</sup> Eighty-three percent of respondents to the 1998 CCCC/NCTE *Language Knowledge and Awareness* survey were white (CCCC Language Policy Committee); in the 2003 academic year, 38.8% of full-time

and as a group, writing teachers tend to be comfortable with SE writing conventions. In a 1998 survey of NCTE and CCCC members, “[o]verwhelmingly, respondents described their language now and in the past as ‘Standard American English most of the time’” (CCCC Language Policy Committee 12). How many of us think to question the primacy of SE in writing, or the accompanying conception of a paradigmatic “academic discourse” that favors white, middle-class ways of communicating (Frye; Gee; Inoue; Kim and Olson; Smith “Introduction”; Zenger)? If a student questions these expectations for college writing, do we dismiss them, or allow them to productively trouble us? What disciplinary and cultural trends have shaped our beliefs about language variety,<sup>6</sup> and what happens when we encounter conflicting arguments about what we might call, broadly speaking, good writing? And how can we reimagine professionalization to better equip composition teachers—who are usually graduate students and adjuncts from outside the discipline of composition—to, as the *Students’ Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL)* resolution asked us to do four decades ago, “have the experiences and training that will

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faculty in English and literature were white men, and 46% were white women, for a total of 84.8% full-time faculty in the discipline who were white; for part-time faculty in English and literature, 29.5% were white men and 58.5% were white women, for 88% part-time faculty who were white (National Center for Education Statistics).

<sup>6</sup> A note here on my use of the terms *variety*, *dialect*, *language* and *code*: I use the term *variety* as a synonym for *dialect*; additionally, though I am conscious that, for good reasons, linguists do not draw a strict distinction between *languages* and *varieties/dialects*, I use these terms in the layperson’s sense. The layperson’s understanding of these terms has a notable impact on our ways of perceiving, talking about, and regulating language, including within composition studies; they also serve as useful shorthand. So *language* will often refer to a linguistic system generally identified by a label like Spanish or English, and *variety* or *dialect* will tend to refer to sub-systems of those languages, e.g. Puerto Rican Spanish and Mexican Spanish, or African American English (AAE) and Southern White English. The more general term *code* will serve as a synonym for *language*, *variety* and *dialect*. Finally, though the term *language* will often refer to perceived-discrete codes like Spanish or English, I also use the term to refer to the general concept of language use, which includes use of different varieties (e.g., in describing someone as a mainstream or minoritized language user, or in discussing language policy). Frustratingly, but fittingly, the word *language* is polyvalent and simply does not have one fixed, stable, easy meaning. I strive to make my meaning clear in context.

enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language”  
(19)?

This dissertation is my attempt to address some of these, and related, questions. I set out to explicate the often tacit theories and ideologies that contribute to composition’s approaches to linguistic diversity. I also explore several overtly articulated theories that composition scholarship has introduced or adopted from sociolinguistics, and argue for the recently articulated, still-evolving *translingual approach*. I explore scholarly debates within and about translingualism, including disagreements over teaching methods and terminology, as well as competing theories about the substance and purpose of the writing form often called *code-meshing*. I also use human-subjects research to find out more about how composition instructors conceive of good writing, the experiences that inform these conceptions, and what happens when they allow their preconceptions about language—which are often tacitly theorized—to be troubled by new ideas that conflict with their preconceptions. Finally, I draw on this same human-participants research and on prior scholarship to make suggestions for what I call *translingual professionalization*, the training of teachers to work effectively with students from a wide variety of linguistic backgrounds and to powerful rhetorical ends. My hope is for my work to contribute to a more equitable vision of writing in higher education.

In this chapter, I introduce how ideology, theory, and narrative intersect as concepts that can help us understand beliefs about language variety. I then describe the distinction between what I call, after Gee, the Linguist’s View of language and the Layperson’s View (my own term here, though it has probably been used before). I draw on composition history and theory to recount how, despite composition’s attempt to use

the Linguist's View to promote equity and linguistic awareness in college writing, crediting nonstandard varieties<sup>7</sup> of language with the same respect automatically accorded to standard varieties, the influence of the Layperson's View has hampered this progress. I enumerate several specific problems related to this disconnect, including the undue influence of whiteness and the shortage of good training in linguistic diversity available to composition instructors. Because much of this dissertation deals with perceptions of African American English (AAE<sup>8</sup>), I explain my rationale for focusing on this variety.<sup>9</sup> I then provide a preview of each succeeding chapter, and conclude this chapter by articulating why I believe my intervention contributes a new and valuable perspective to composition research.

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<sup>7</sup> The term *nonstandard* refers to any variety of a language other than that considered standard. For example, while SE is considered the standard variety of English, there are numerous nonstandard varieties, including many forms of African American English, Appalachian English, Hawaiian Creole, Latino/a Englishes, etc. Nonstandard varieties are as inherently regular and systematic, and provide as many resources for speakers, as standard varieties (Lippi-Green; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes). For the sake of variation, I will sometimes refer to nonstandard varieties as *nonmainstream* or *nonprestige*.

<sup>8</sup> Instead of *AAE* for *African American English*, some scholars use the term *AAL* to represent *African American Language*, taking the view that the variety spoken by a majority of African-Americans is distinct enough that it should be considered a separate language. Another rationale is that labeling *AAL* a *language* gives it more prestige than labeling it a dialect of English, as languages hold more cultural capital than dialects in the popular imagination (whereas from a strictly linguistic, academic standpoint, the difference is nonexistent—both dialects and languages are systematic, rule-governed ways of communicating). While I am certainly sympathetic to this view, I use the term *African-American English* because I believe it emphasizes the close relationship between AAE and other varieties of English. Moreover, AAE and other American varieties are generally mutually intelligible, and I hold to the “mutual intelligibility” rule of thumb, under which varieties that are mutually intelligible—meaning that speakers can, with a bit of effort, understand and make themselves understood to each other—belong to the same “language.” I also worry that using *AAL* runs the risk of positioning African-American students as non-English users, which is certainly not the case. Finally and I think most compellingly, most AAE users consider themselves speakers of English (Mufwene cited in Britt and Weldon 812).

<sup>9</sup> Strictly speaking, there are many varieties of AAE; it has tens of millions of speakers throughout the United States (Ball, “Evaluating” 225), so there are many regional, socioeconomic, and age-related variations, including standard African American Standard English (AASE) (Spears cited in Britt and Weldon 806) and Middle-class AAE (MCAAE) (Britt and Weldon). I use the collective singular term AAE for the sake of convenience, and because most of the scholarship and interview data cited in this dissertation deals with AAE in the singular. However, I am aware, and ask the reader to be aware, that just as use of the word English does not erase the fact that there are many Englishes, the use of the term AAE does not erase the fact that there are many African American Englishes.



## **Ideology, Theory, and Narrative**

When we talk about beliefs and attitudes, we are talking about ideology, theory, and narrative. If I use these terms in ways that seem to overlap, it is because the concepts they describe are difficult to entirely differentiate. This is particularly the case with *ideology* and *theory*, two terms that both describe beliefs of which we are often unconscious until we interrogate them.

Barbara Johnstone defines *language ideology* as including “beliefs about linguistic correctness, goodness and badness, articulateness and inarticulateness...beliefs about the role of language in a person’s identity...beliefs about what the functions of language should be, [and] who the authorities on language are” (*Discourse* 66). That is, *language ideology* encompasses multiple intersecting beliefs about language, its speakers, structure, uses, and place in the world. It is possible to read *language ideology* as connoting beliefs that problematically favor the prestige variety, and Milroy and Milroy suggest that has been the case in much past discussion of language ideology (162-3).<sup>10</sup> However, they assert that the term *ideology* should not be used to malign certain belief systems as “embody[ing] a false consciousness or a misguided world view” (163). Instead, they emphasize that everyone has some kind of language ideology, including linguists and laypersons, because “[a]ll social actors view the sociolinguistic world from the perspective characteristic of their group. *There is no absolutely neutral perspective—no view from nowhere*” (163, original emphasis).

With the term *theory*, Gee makes an argument similar to Milroy and Milroy’s. Theories, Gee argues, do not only belong to specialists, but to everyone (11). “All claims

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<sup>10</sup> One such example is Lippi-Green, who defines *ideology* as “the promotion of the needs and interests of a dominant group or class at the expense of marginalized groups, by means of disinformation and misrepresentation of those non-dominant groups” (67).

to know,” he argues “are based on theories” (16). He defines a theory as “a set of generalisations about an area...in terms of which descriptions of phenomena in that area can be couched and explanations can be offered” (16). That is, theories help us understand the world; they help us decide what to believe in and where to look for information: “Theories... ground beliefs and claims to know things. They tell us how and where to look for evidence and what counts as evidence” (16). Helpfully, however, Gee differentiates *tacit* and *overt* theories.<sup>11</sup>

*Tacit* theories are often based in so-called “common sense.” When someone holds a tacit theory about something, they “will, in all likelihood, deny they have personally ‘studied the matter’” (Gee 11). Studying a matter connected to a tacit theory seems unnecessary, because the tacit-theory-holder “will be reinforced in their belief by much of what they have read in the popular press, seen on television, and been told by reputed ‘experts.’ This all contributes to the ‘obviousness’ and ‘everyone knows that’ quality of the belief” (11). Many non-specialists’ theories are tacit, and though they are often flawed (particularly regarding language, as we will see), tacit theories are not necessarily factually incorrect. My beliefs that the earth revolves around the sun, and that the measles vaccine carries more benefit than risk, are both tacit. I cannot really explain those beliefs beyond pointing out that they are based on experts’ opinions, and that they are “common sense.”

In contrast, *overt* theories are those the theorist can explain beyond invoking common sense. For an astrophysicist, the belief that the earth orbits a star we call the sun

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<sup>11</sup> Gee also distinguishes between *non-primary* and *primary* theories (20-23). Though these two terms do not appear to have the *exact* same meaning as, respectively, *tacit* and *overt*, Gee often uses them synonymously (15-23). For the sake of convenience, I read them as synonyms and only use the terms *tacit* and *overt* here.

is presumably overt; for a physician, the safety of the measles vaccine is based on overt theorization. An overt theory “come[s] from that person’s own reflections on and research into the matter, carried out in discussion and debate with others” (Gee 20); the overt theorist has “allowed their viewpoints to be formed through serious reflection on multiple competing viewpoints” (30). Overt theories tend to be the domain of specialists. I will argue in this dissertation for the importance of explicating tacit theories, and generally find current, overt theories about language to be more compelling and persuasive than popular tacit theories; however, there is not one perfect, correct overt theory on every issue. It is possible for there to be more than one compelling overt theory available, and just as disagreements arise because one person has an overt theory and another person has a conflicting tacit theory, debates between reasonable people may be based on conflicting overt theories. Similarly, tacit theories are not automatically “wrong,” and overt theories are not automatically “right.” Vaccine skeptics have usually done quite a bit of research into and reflection on the issue of vaccines, and can provide many reasons for the belief that certain vaccines cause autism (Mnookin). The belief that the sun revolves around the earth was also once based on an overt theory.

The tacit/overt distinction is not a strict dichotomy. Gee argues that it “is best seen as a continuum. A theory can be more or less ‘tacit’ (or more or less ‘overt’ ...we are talking about a continuum with ‘very overt’ at one pole and ‘quite tacit’ at the other end)” (20). My vaccine theories will become more overt if I find myself in a situation where I need to argue with vaccine skeptics, but my vaccine theories will still be less overt than those of an epidemiologist. And as theories become more overt, they might change. Barry’s initial, prescriptive theories about language correctness were tacit, but as he read

scholarly research on language variation, and as we discussed the subject together, his theories became both more overt and less prescriptive.

The main difference between *ideology* and *theory* seems to me to be that *ideology* is a more superordinate term that can encompass multiple theories. Though a line isn't always clear, I will attempt to use the terms in a way that reflects that distinction. More important is that both terms name ways to understand the world and are the domain of both specialists and non-specialists. Moreover, both are informed by *narratives*; we tell narratives to help make sense of our world (Ochs and Capps), and language is no exception, as "speakers construct narratives to explain observed linguistic phenomena" (Milroy and Milroy 162). *Narrative* is a polyvalent word, encompassing many forms of storytelling and historicizing, but I use it in this dissertation to describe individual, group-constructed, or culturally-shared stories that contribute to, reinscribe, or challenge different theories and ideologies.

### **The Layperson's View**

Though not every layperson (meaning here someone who does not study linguistics, either as a specialization or to inform their professionalization in a different field) holds the same language ideologies and theories, I condense them here for the sake of convenience. Lay beliefs about language are often based in "common sense," and "[i]f a belief is said to arise from 'common sense,' the implication is that it need not be subject to further scrutiny and analysis" (Milroy and Milroy 135). Many myths about language persist for this reason, and because, as Lippi-Green points out, "Myths are magical and powerful constructs; they can motivate social behavior and actions which would be

otherwise contrary to logic or reason” (44). The power of myth may help explain why some tacit theories are so persistent.

Some popular language myths relevant to this dissertation include: the myth that a dialect is an inferior form of a language, and results from flawed attempts to speak the language correctly (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 8); the myth that dialects are “lazy, illogical, or sloppy” (Van Herk and Miller 519); the myth that languages become less logical over time because of corruption by uneducated people, so older forms of language are better than newer ones and experts are needed to stop, or at least slow, the deterioration of the language (Gee 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 17); the myth that the standard variety of a language, which is rightfully determined and used by educated people, is the *correct* variety (Gee 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 17); the myth that some varieties of language are more “capable of expressing complex or abstract ideas” than others (Van Herk and Miller 518); and the myth that there is an ideal form of a language called the *standard*, and it is “more ‘correct’” compared to other forms (Van Herk and Miller 519), that this standard is “good, pure, clear, and rule-governed” (486).

These and other myths often lead people to make incorrect assumptions about others based on their written or spoken use of language. Gee describes the “bad English belief,” a common tacit theory (16). The “bad English belief” holds that it is possible for a native speaker of English to speak English incorrectly on a regular basis. Gee gives an example of the “bad English belief” in response to an African-American seven-year-old girl, Leona’s, brief utterance, “My puppy, he always be followin’ me” (qtd. in Gee11). To help make sense of the sentence, a person who holds the “bad English belief” might use a narrative like “This child does not know how to speak English correctly....This is

probably because she attends a poor and neglected school and comes from an impoverished home with few or no books in it” (11). Holding the “bad English belief,” the layperson concludes that Leona “doesn’t really know the language, despite the fact that it is her language” (11).

### **“The Linguist’s View”**

As Lippi-Green reminds us, “[l]inguists do not form a homogenous club” (6). However, generally, linguists would tend to disagree with the above myths. Gee points out that from the perspective of linguistics, “both standard and non-standard dialects are marvels of human mastery. Neither is better or worse” (14). In contrast to the layperson’s response, Gee describes how a linguist might interpret the sentence “my puppy, he always be followin’ me” (qtd. 11). Instead of presuming Leona speaks her native language incorrectly, a linguist, in constructing their narrative, would draw on what they have read about concepts such as universal grammar, language variation, African American English, and the difference between perfective and imperfective verbs (12-13, 17), ultimately concluding that the sentence “is grammatically (‘correct’) in this child’s variety of English” (17) and that “[t]his sentence can’t...be used to argue that her language variety is inferior to Standard English” (17).

In contrast to the dialect “myths” cited above, some commonly cited rules, or in Lippi-Green’s terms “linguistic facts of life” (5), are that “[e]veryone who speaks a language speaks some dialect of that language” (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 7)—that is, SE is as much a dialect as AAE, Cajun Vernacular English, or Appalachian English. People learn their dialects from their communities, and each variety is inherently “systematic and regular” (8); so differences between nonstandard and standard varieties

aren't the result of errors in producing SE, but in correctly following the grammar of the variety being used. Instead of devolving, language is inherently variable and continuously changing over time (Lippi-Green 6), a natural occurrence in a language with living native and native-like speakers who modify and innovate to adapt to new needs (such as by coining new words) or for other complex phonological, syntactic, or paralinguistic reasons. Though the standard is a valid variety, it is not the only legitimate variety and is not more correct than any other.

The Linguist's View takes into consideration the role of power in determining which languages and varieties acquire prestige. In a brief summary of SE's rise to prominence in the U.S., Gee explains:

[I]t is an accident of history as to which dialect gets to be taken to be the standard. Standard English has its origins in the power of a fourteenth-century merchant class in London....Because of their growing economic clout, their dialect spread for public business across the country. It became the basis of so-called 'Received Pronunciation' ('RP') in England, and eventually gave rise to Standard English in the United States. A reversal of power and prestige in the history of the United States could have led to a form of AAVE<sup>12</sup> being the standard. (14)

Standard languages don't acquire prestige because they are inherently better, but because they are spoken by people who acquire prestige.

### **The Value of Explicating Tacit Theories**

When a policy dispute arises because of a clash between claims based on, respectively, tacit and overt theories, it becomes necessary to explicate the tacit theory in order to have a sound debate. And in some cases, explicating a tacit theory can cause a

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<sup>12</sup> Some researchers I cite use AAVE, for African American Vernacular English.

person to realize the theory is based on faulty information. Studying basic linguistic science debunks many myths. When you understand the inherent logic of AAE, it is harder to argue SE is better—you realize that SE’s prestige comes from people *thinking* it is better, and, hopefully, this realization raises issues of racism and injustice. Gee argues “some generalisations that underlie claims to know are [not very] secure and can damage people” (16). This, Gee argues, is the case for the “bad English belief,” as holding it can cause us to incorrectly view a native speaker of English as deficient. Taking an optimistic view of human nature, Gee suggests that someone who holds the “bad English belief” probably does so as a tacit theory. If they really engage with the available research on the matter, they will have to drop the bad English theory, because: “I believe any thoughtful and critical study in this area, study that allowed itself to be debated and challenged by people holding alternative theories, would not, in fact, reach the bad English theory” (21).

The distinction between tacit and overt theories helps us interrogate the reasons we hold certain positions. Do I believe X because I have studied the matter closely myself, or because it seems obvious? Have I avoided questioning X before, because it is a theory I instinctively like, and nothing in my personal experience inclines me to doubt it? Gee argues that “[o]ne always has the ethical obligation to explicate...any theory that is (largely) tacit...when there is reason to believe that the theory advantages oneself or one’s group over other people or other groups” (17). According to Gee, if I hold the tacit theory that SE is the best form of English, and I happen to be among a group of people for whom SE comes easily, and have been rewarded for being good at it, it is my responsibility to further interrogate the theory.



## Standard English and Academic Discourse

When we think about language attitudes, we may first think about beliefs about the micro-level of language, issues like grammar, syntax, and spelling, as in the belief that *ain't* is or isn't an acceptable negative present tense form of the *be* verb. However, I am concerned in this dissertation about language attitudes at the macro-level, as well. It can be hard to draw a strict line between micro and macro, but fortunately that isn't really necessary here. When I use the term *macro-level* regarding language, I am talking about discursive moves affecting the organizational structure of a piece of writing, decisions about what to use for evidence, rhetorical patterning, and so on. As Bizzell explains, linguistic diversity “moves far beyond the issue of whether or not a nonstandard dialect can be employed. The alternatives are far more diverse than that, including different dialects, essay forms, cultural allusions, authorial personae, and more” (“Preface” x).

Tacit theorization and common sense affect popular ideas about language at both the micro and macro level. However, I suggest that more overt theorization goes into beliefs about macro-level discourse. Though SE is the prestige form of English in the U.S., SE itself is often tacitly understood, and difficult to examine because it is a “moving target” (Zuidema 347). Wolfram et al. point out that “There is really no single dialect of English that corresponds to a standard English” (qtd. in Zuidema 347). So SE is usually defined negatively:

Americans find it easier to specify what is *not* standard than what is; the standard of popular perception is what is left behind when all the non-standard varieties spoken by disparaged person such as Valley Girls, Hillbillies, Southerners, New

Yorkers, African Americans, Asians, Mexican Americans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans are set aside. (Milroy and Milroy 151)

Similarly, Trimbur points out that “[s]tandardization derives its authority not by discovering and codifying formal systems that somehow reside *inside* language but by going unmarked and escaping critical attention” (“Translingualism” 225). SE is tacitly defined not by what it is, but what it *isn’t*.

Academic discourse, though it is also somewhat murkily defined, is easier to define in the positive—by what it does need to include as well as what it doesn’t. A child who is a native speaker of English doesn’t need to be explicitly instructed in English sentence construction. They do, however, learn from school about the thesis statement at the end of the introductory first paragraph, the attribution of sources in MLA or APA style, the rule about not using “I” or “you,” in formal writing, etc.

The dominant style of academic discourse, however, still bears problematizing, especially as it relates to race.<sup>13</sup> The dominant academic discourse in the U.S. is often quite useful to learn, but it is no more neutral or objective than SE, and no more inherently superior to non-dominant, or for lack of a better term “alternative” discourses (Bizzell, “Intellectual”) than SE is to AAE. As we’ll see, the dominant notion of academic discourse in the U.S. is informed by white, middle-class ways of thinking and communicating. Thus, students from these backgrounds have a head start and may be much more comfortable in these traditions than students from non-dominant backgrounds (Gee; Inoue). In particular, in this dissertation, I’m interested in how AAE rhetoric is

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<sup>13</sup> As many scholars (e.g., Bonilla-Silva; Inoue; Ratcliffe) have observed, race is “socially constructed” (Inoue 25); Ratcliffe argues, “*race*...is a fictional category possessed of all-too-realistic consequences. It has no scientific grounding but functions with tremendous ideological force” (13). When I use the term *race* it is as a shorthand for what Inoue calls “racial formations—material bodies that are racialized” (29).

perceived by instructors. For composition to be truly pluralist or, to use the more recent concept, *translingual*, we need to have some familiarity with non-dominant discourses at the micro *and* macro levels, and in both cases we need to become less rigidly prescriptive readers, instead of trying to force all students to write in ways that come easier to white students and white readers. We need to expand our view of academic discourse beyond the “linear,” particularly when to minoritized language users, and even many mainstream language users, the dominant academic language “may seem to the student to be distant, impersonal, unnatural, and voiceless” (Palacas, 55).

### ***Students’ Right to Their Own Language, Pluralism, and Translingualism***

In 1971, the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) saw the need to address a “crisis in college composition classrooms...caused by the cultural and linguistic mismatch between higher education and the non-traditional...students who were making their imprint upon the academic landscape for the first time in history” (Smitherman, “CCCC’s Role” 359). To this end, the organization established a ten-member committee, including AAE scholar Geneva Smitherman, “to draft a policy resolution on students’ dialects” (358). The policy statement was published in a special issue of *College Composition and Communication* in Fall 1974, along with a supplemental background statement and bibliography of relevant sources. The statement, which was adopted by CCCC membership at the annual meeting in 1974, consists of one short paragraph:

We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style. Language scholars long ago denied that the myth of a standard

American dialect has any validity. The claim that any one dialect is unacceptable amounts to an attempt of one social group to exert its dominance over another. Such a claim leads to false advice for speakers and writers, and immoral advice for humans. A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialects. We affirm strongly that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language. (*Students'* 19)

Although the statement did not once mention the word “English,” or the names of any other languages or specific varieties, with those 131 words the CCCC made its position clear: that there is more than one way to speak English, that nonstandard dialects of English are not “incorrect,” that any attempt to suppress dialect diversity is quite simply un-American, and that English educators should be prepared to promote linguistic diversity.

Immediate reaction to the resolution was mixed and vocal, with some critics saying it didn’t do enough to support nonstandard English users and others claiming that it indicated CCCC’s surrender to the dread forces of bad grammar (Smitherman, “CCCC’s Role” 361-2). Additionally, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), CCCC’s parent organization, did not adopt or endorse the resolution; instead, it created its own modified version which emphasized the importance of SE (371). Yet ultimately, *SRTOL* has survived as official CCCC policy for over four decades.<sup>14</sup>

As further explored in Chapter Two, although *SRTOL* has had an important impact, it has not become the law of the land in composition. Pedagogies and assessments

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<sup>14</sup> *SRTOL* has even been around long enough for its history to be muddled—the NCTE is often mistakenly given credit for the creation of the policy (Smitherman, “CCCC’s Role” 371-373).

that suppress nonstandard varieties still thrive (Bizzell, “Preface”; Balestar). But *SRTOL* is the best known of many sociolinguistically-influenced efforts by educators in the 1960s and 1970s to promote linguistically equitable pedagogies (Wible, *Shaping*; Lamos), and composition scholarship focused on promoting linguistic equity in assessment and policy, and theorizing new ways to incorporate linguistic diversity into pedagogy, has never really gone away (e.g., Inoue and Poe; Smitherman and Villanueva; Young and Martinez). Instead, composition scholarship has expanded to include research on alternative discourses and multilingual writers (e.g., Schroeder et al.; Horner et al., *Cross-Language*).

However, these attempts to incorporate linguistic variety into composition, which have largely been part of the pluralist approach, have had mixed results, at best. As practiced, composition instruction has been largely assimilationist. I describe both the assimilationist and pluralist approaches in more detail in Chapter Two, but briefly, here, both approaches are influenced by what I identified above as the linguist’s view and informed by sociolinguistic research. The assimilation approach attempts to use knowledge of nonstandard varieties to help students transition to SE and traditional academic discourse in school settings, while pluralism argues that SE and dominant academic discourse should *not* be required in school, instead advocating more acceptance of nonmainstream discourses.

In recent years, a new approach has gained traction: *translingualism*. It was first articulated by Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur in an article for *College English* in 2011 (“Language Difference”), and shortly thereafter by Horner, NeCamp, and Donahue in a 2011 *College Composition and Communication* article (“Toward”). The translingual

approach is still evolving and has been the subject of much internal debate among scholars who identify with it (see *College English's* special issue on translingualism in January 2016). However, I consider it the most promising approach for developing linguistic equity in college writing. While scholars disagree somewhat on what translingualism is and does, and on its scope, there appear to be some areas of general consensus:

First, translingualism, like pluralism, advocates for the recognition of nonstandard varieties and rejects the idea that there is one appropriate, standardized way of writing for the university. I focus mostly on translingualism's written applications, but the approach is also applicable to spoken contexts, multimodal composition, etc. It also, crucially, asks us to bring to light the underlying (often racist, classist, or xenophobic) reasons hegemonic discourses dominate, and challenge them directly instead of accepting them as unchangeable rule: "Though dominant ideology is always indifferent to the invalidity of its claims, we need not and should not accept its sway" Horner et al. argue ("Language Difference" 305); and Lu and Horner charge that "we need to contest, rather than work within, the assumptions underlying the ideological frameworks of the arguments to which we are responding" ("Translingual Literacy" 583).

In the translingual view, language difference is not "a barrier to overcome or...a problem to manage"; instead, it is "a resource for producing meaning in writing, speaking, reading, and listening" (Horner et al., "Language Difference" 303). Translingualism values writer agency, and emphasizes that while individual writers are informed by many discourse communities, they are not bound by their cultural backgrounds and may take up new discourses, including the standard if they wish. It

encourages experimentation, including by combining codes, even codes the writer has not yet “mastered” (Canagarajah, *Translingual Practice*; Horner et al., “Language Difference”; Horner et al., “Toward”; “Lu and Horner, “Translingual Literacy”).

A translingual approach disrupts homogenous paradigms by challenging us to see language and communication events as emergent, focusing more on meaning than form, practice than product (Canagarajah, *Translingual Practice*, 57, 69). It also emphasizes that no language is entirely discrete and self-contained, instead acknowledging interconnections among seemingly disparate codes. It asks readers to take up more of the communicative burden when they encounter unfamiliar varieties, using these as opportunities to engage with a new discourse and add to their own linguistic repertoire instead of demanding adherence to a traditional norm. The term *translingual* is applicable in both so-called multilingual and monolingual contexts; that is, it asserts all language users have translingual competence, because even people who speak only one “language,” such as English, are versed in different varieties and registers of English. Moreover, translingual competence can be developed and improved through practice (Canagarajah, *Translingual Practice*; Horner et al., “Language Difference”; Horner et al., “Toward”; Lu and Horner, “Translingual Literacy”).

In a translingual approach to teaching, we don’t start by thinking of students as monolingual or bilingual, as language-learners or nonstandard users, or defined by any other familiar labels. Instead, we think of them as translingual. What does it mean to think of a student as translingual? It means to realize that they already have at least about two decades’ worth of experience juggling, combining, and negotiating numerous discourses. Skill in these and new discourses that they are introduced to, in college and in

life outside of college, can be constantly and carefully honed, as students learn to compose effectively in multiple contexts and increase their linguistic repertoires.

To acknowledge that one is translingual is to engage in a lifelong apprenticeship with language. Though it is to discard the notion of a single correct linguistic path, it is to embrace the notion that each translingual person crafts their own complex identity from a cacophony of competing discourses.

### **Code-Meshing as (One) Performance of Translingualism**

Connected to translingualism is the practice of *code-meshing*. Broadly speaking, code-meshing is the blending of different varieties of language, or even different languages. We might think of translingualism as a kind of competence and code-meshing as a kind of performance of that competence, keeping in mind that code-meshing is not the only possible form of performance under translingualism. Vershawn Ashanti Young, who first introduced the term *code-meshing* to composition studies, defines it thus:

[T]he strategic, self-conscious and un-self-conscious blending of one's own accent, dialect, and linguistic patterns as they are influenced by a host of folks, environments, and media, including momma, family, school, community, peer groups, reading material, academic study, whatever. ("Keep" 139-140)

Young argues that the practice "allows minoritized people to become more effective communicators by doing what we all do best, what comes naturally: blending, merging, meshing dialects" ("Nah" 72). Similarly, Michael-Luna and Canagarajah define code-meshing as "a communicative device used for specific rhetorical and ideological purposes in which a multilingual speaker intentionally integrates local and academic discourse as a form of resistance, reappropriation and/or transformation of the academic



discourse” (56). Each of these scholars’ first works on code-meshing were published several years before the term “translingual” was proposed by Horner et al., but Young’s emphasis on the use of multiple available linguistic resources, and Michael-Luna and Canagarajah’s discussion of appropriation and integration of different linguistic resources, are in line with the translingual approach. Code-meshing proponents often recommend this writing strategy as a better alternative to the assimilationist practice of *code-switching*. I describe both practices in more detail in Chapters Two and Three;<sup>15</sup> briefly, *code-switching* in composition studies asks writers to take up a perceived-discrete variety that is considered appropriate for a certain context, and exclude qualities of varieties that are considered inappropriate. For example, strict code-switching would not allow Young to use the terms and phrases “host of folks,” “momma,” and “whatever” in the academic publication cited above. Code-meshing proponents argue that not allowing students to code-mesh unfairly demands that they unproductively adopt wholesale the discourses of the academy (Michael-Luna and Canagarajah; Young, ““Nah,”” “Your Average”).

### **The Persistence of Assimilationist Pedagogies**

Despite pluralist and translingual efforts, composition, in practice, is still largely dominated by assimilationism (Ball and Lardner, *African* xv; Lu and Horner, “Introduction” 207). By this I mean that composition pedagogy and assessment favor writing that on the micro-level uses SE grammar and syntax, and on the macro-level

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<sup>15</sup> Matsuda raises thought-provoking concerns about composition’s use of the term *code-switching*, which has a different meaning in applied linguistics and includes what I’ve described here as *code-meshing* (“It’s the Wild West”; “Lure”). With respect, I use the definition set forth by Young and adopted by Michael-Luna and Canagarajah, and several other composition scholars. I address Matsuda’s critique in Chapter Three.

prefers a paradigm of “academic discourse” based in a standardized conception of acceptable organizational and discursive patterns. In Chapter Two, I describe the problem of the prevalent assimilationist approach, which is particularly influenced by Appropriacy Reasoning (Lippi-Green). Appropriacy arguments acknowledge that nonstandard varieties are legitimate, but claim they are only “appropriate” in certain situations, usually outside of college writing. Critiquing appropriacy, Flores and Rosa argue that “discourses of appropriateness...involve the conceptualization of standardized linguistic practices as objective sets of linguistic forms that are understood to be appropriate for academic settings” (150). However, no set of linguistic forms can truly be “objective” or neutral, and appropriateness-based pedagogy reinscribes the preeminence of white, middle-class-based discourse practices. “[A]ppropriateness-based approaches to language education,” Flores and Rosa argue, “are implicated in the reproduction of racial normativity by expecting language-minoritized students to model their linguistic practices after the white speaking subject” (151). Moreover, it is the “white listening subject” who has final say in what is “appropriate,” and this subject often perceives of minoritized peoples’ language use as inappropriate even if they use SE (151-2, 162-4).

### **Default Whiteness and Colorblindness**

In order to interrogate the problem of appropriacy reasoning in the U.S., it is helpful to draw on research about whiteness, because the prominence of white-based discourse practices in academia is tacitly accepted by faculty and students. For instance, “[s]tudents, both White and Black, have learned throughout their education that whiteness is ‘normal,’ and that the study of African American language, culture, and history is not the norm” (Smith “Introduction” 9). Interrogating whiteness is therefore a

necessary part of anti-racism. I draw here on Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's conception of the "white habitus," Marilyn Frye's related concept of "whiteness," and Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa's "white listening subject" to interrogate the structural racism underlying much of college writing. Both the white habitus and whiteness also make possible color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva), while the white listening subjects helps us understand the role of implicit bias in color-blind racism.

Bonilla-Silva's concept of the "white habitus" is an extension of Bourdieu's "habitus." According to Bonilla-Silva, the white habitus results from whites' alienation and self-segregation from non-whites; it is "a racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that *conditions* and *creates* whites' racial taste, perceptions, feelings and emotions and their views on racial matters" (152, original emphasis). Moreover, "the white habitus...promotes a sense of group belonging (a white culture of solidarity) and negative views about non-whites" (152). Through the development of a habitus, people internalize certain ways of seeing, responding to, and engaging in the world, to such an extent that these ways come to seem natural (173). The white habitus is so powerful largely because it is invisible, at least to whites; to most whites, it is a "normal" way of being, and non-white-habitus seem abnormal. Thus the white habitus helps determine the ways of being, thinking, performing, and communicating considered most acceptable in mainstream American society. When comedians make jokes along the lines of "Black people do X, and white people do Y," they are talking about habitus. But white comics who make jokes about white behavior are probably more explicitly engaged with notions of habitus than the average white person is.

Similarly, Marilyn Frye describes the color-blind disposition of “whiteness,” which is mostly performed by people racially positioned as white, but can be performed by non-whites (87). The whitely person is not necessarily intentionally discriminatory; “[o]ne can be whitely even if one’s beliefs and feelings are relatively well-informed, humane, and good-willed” (88). In fact, whiteness includes a belief in the goodness of whiteness, a sense that it is a widely acceptable and appropriate identity, and that teaching others to be whitely is a moral good (Kim and Olson). The whitely person “believes with perfect confidence that s/he is not prejudiced, not a bigot, not spiteful, jealous or rude, does not engage in favoritism or discrimination” (89). Taken to this extreme, faith in whiteness limits the capacity to learn new things, as “[t]he dogmatic belief in whitely authority and rightness is also at odds with any commitment to truth” (91); an authentic commitment to truth requires the ability to loosen total faith in one’s rightness and engage with competing discourses, narratives, and ideas; or to “stand under” another’s discourse (Ratcliffe 28-29). Unlearning whiteness is a necessary step in challenging racism and practicing anti-racism (Frye 97).

Flores and Rosa describe the white listening subject as “a listening subject who hears and interprets the linguistic practices of language-minoritized populations as deviant based on their racial positioning in society as opposed to any characteristics of their language use” (151); that is, they hear non-whites as deficient, even if they perform a white habitus. Flores and Rosa present the white listening subject as primarily a collective, cultural identity, “an ideological position and mode of perception that shapes our racialized society” (151). Flores and Rosa use the concept of the white listening subject to critique appropriacy-based pedagogies, arguing that these pedagogies seek to

train language-minoritized students to write in a way the white listening subject, with its “hegemonic positions of reception” (162) will find acceptable, instead of challenging the white listening subject’s racism (155). In academic writing, we are usually expected to write for the white listening subject.

The white habitus, whiteness, and the white listening subject all help us understand colorblindness, the mostly tacit theory many white people use to understand the world. People who subscribe to colorblindness often claim that they are blind to racial difference and treat all people equally. However, given the prevalence of systemic inequality and the impossibility of actually ignoring such a powerful social construct as race, what those who claim to be color-blind are really doing is imagining the erasure of racially-linked differences in access, education, treatment by authority figures, etc. Drawing on interview and demographic data, Bonilla-Silva identifies several aspects of colorblindness. An important aspect of white color-blindness is that whites often don’t perceive white as a race; for example, one of Bonilla-Silva’s white interview participants said, “I don’t think there was *any* racial children in my, you know, public schools” (qtd. in Bonilla-Silva 163-164, original emphasis). Race is something that belongs to *others*. Whites tend to socialize primarily with other whites, a choice that is accepted without question; growing up in an all-white community or attending a school with few or no non-white students is considered normal, even ideal (159-160). Yet whites often perceive of non-whites as “self-segregating,” and insist that whites do not self-segregate (162-163). Color-blind whites are generally wary of being overtly racist, however, and use color-blind frames to position themselves as non-racist.<sup>16</sup> Colorblindness is a tacit theory

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<sup>16</sup> One of the most infamous examples is the “I have a [minority] friend” claim. Though when a white person claims to have a non-white friend, it is not necessarily a *lie*, Bonilla-Silva found that whites often

that whites like me need to interrogate. If white teachers want to promote and perform anti-racism, we need to acknowledge when we have incorrectly perceived something as normal which is not normal. We must learn to challenge our privilege, and extend our challenging of that privilege to linguistic matters.

My grandfather is a geography professor, and one of his pet peeves is when people refer to North as “up” and South as “down.” There is nothing inherently “up” about the cardinal direction north, and no number of maps with the Northern Hemisphere on top can change that. Subscribing to whiteness or the white habitus is the racial equivalent of using only such traditional maps. What translingualism asks us to do is explicate our tacit theories about language, which involves explicating and troubling the white habitus. What we need to do is the discursive equivalent of maps that turn the world “upside down.”

The persistence of default whiteness and colorblindness contribute to a status quo that favors SE not only in the popular imagination (Nelson and Flores; Lippi-Green) but in educational contexts (Nelson and Flores; Lippi-Green; Bizzell, “Preface”). Moreover, it is not only grammatical and syntactic SE that are presumed as the default, but academic writing that follows a so-called linear model. Mountford points to a university and disciplinarily-held “strong belief that writing that is linearly arranged and focused around a point constitutes successful college writing” (367), and points out that “[l]eading textbooks in the field and major first-year college writing programs operate on this tacit

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promote minorities who are friendly acquaintances to the level of friend or close friend in order to position themselves in a favorable, non-racist light (156-159). When the definition of “friend” is limited to people we spend significant amounts of free time with, fewer than ten percent of whites actually have black friends (156). Claiming that we have minority friends is one way that we tell ourselves and others that we make friends in a color-blind way, and that race does not influence our decisions about who to socialize with (159).

belief” (367). However, “[w]hat we think of as the traditional academic essay reflects a particular set of cultural values not shared by all cultures” (370), because “composition courses are founded upon the speaking and writing habits of educated Northern European immigrants and their descendants” (368-9). Basically, the traditional conception of academic writing is based in the socialization practices that white middle-class (Gee; Inoue) and some Asian-American (Mountford 381) students experience outside of school, giving them a notable advantage in educational contexts.

So our first challenge is to interrogate privilege and its role in how we teach and assess, how we think about writing. But we also have to acknowledge that most people who teach college writing are not, often through no fault of their own, part of the scholarly conversation I draw from here. It is a well-established trend that most composition courses are not taught by composition scholars in full-time positions, but by graduate teaching assistants and contingent faculty members<sup>17</sup> (Ritter 388), who sometimes come from composition and rhetoric, but are more likely to be specialists in literature, creative writing, or another related field. As Ball and Lardner point out, in discussion of the adjuncts who teach “almost all sections” of composition at a typical mid-sized university, “Little incentive is afforded them by their institution to pursue professional development opportunities” (Ball and Lardner, *African* xix). So any discussion of professionalization needs to address and attempt to remedy this problem, which I do in Chapter Six.

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<sup>17</sup> According to a survey conducted by the Associated Departments of English in 2007, “80.8% of all first-year writing courses offered in public institutions were taught by teachings assistants (29.5%), part-time (33.3%), or full-time, non-tenure-track faculty (28%)” (Ritter 388).

## Focus on AAE

I focus mainly on instructors' receptivity to student work including or influenced by AAE, at both the micro and macro levels. The U.S. is host to numerous varieties of English, such as Hawaiian Creole, Latino/a Englishes, Appalachian English, Native American Englishes, and so on, and they certainly bear acknowledgment in any discussion of linguistic variety. They have also been the subject of valuable scholarship in composition (e.g., Cai; Lyons; Mangelsdorf; Reyhner; Valdes and Sanders; Welford). However, AAE is the cornerstone of my project for several reasons. AAE is a significant variety of English spoken in some form by a large majority of African-Americans, as many as "80 to 90 percent" according to Smitherman (*Talkin* 2), as well as some non-African-American Americans (Bucholtz; Paris). There have also been numerous recorded instances of cross-overs of AAE vocabulary, in particular, to mainstream SE (Richardson, "English-Only"). And AAE appears in numerous scholarly, literary, musical, and cinematic works, including *Moonlight*, which won the 2016 Academy Award for Best Picture. Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison uses AAE in her writing, and former President Barack Obama's use of AAE is the subject of scholarship (Alim and Smitherman) and an integral part of his highly regarded oratorical skill. Because AAE is so widely used and influential, it seems as logical for an American teacher of English to study AAE, at least enough to acquire basic familiarity, as for U.S. history teachers to study African-American history.

Yet despite AAE's significant place in the American linguistic landscape, it is widely stigmatized and misunderstood, often perceived as deficient: "The majority of English speakers think that AAVE is just English with two added factors: some special



slang terms and a lot of grammatical mistakes” (Pullum qtd. in Green 221). Deprecation occurs both in the public imagination (Milroy and Milroy 153) and in education, with teachers’ negative attitudes about AAE negatively impacting AAE-using students’ performance (Green 231, Redd 502). AAE is so widely stigmatized that AAE speakers often internalize the belief that it is an inferior variety, and “may...reject any view that AAE has internal structure and regularity” (Britt and Weldon 809), or experience “reference to AAE as a legitimate variety [as] a source of embarrassment” (Green 221).<sup>18</sup>

These negative attitudes against AAE in education mean that millions of African-American students in U.S. primary, secondary, and higher education attend schools where their native variety of English is undervalued. According to Ball and Lardner, around 75% of African-American students attend college at predominantly white institutions (*African* 28), and historically-black institutions have also been known to embrace an assimilationist mission, seeing SE skill as an enfranchisement tool (Fowler and Ochsner 123). The majority of teachers, who are generally white, are not familiar enough with AAE, or the African-American experience, to provide linguistically-aware and racially conscious pedagogy for AAE-strong<sup>19</sup> student writers (Ball and Lardner, *African* 26-27). Assessment and grading literature provide valuable insight into how AAE writing is often perceived. Matarese and Anson examined composition instructors’ comments on AAE writers’ texts and found a trend of misinformed, unhelpful, and inconsistent commenting. Christopher DiOrio’s 2011 master’s thesis similarly found that

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<sup>18</sup> Of course, not all AAE users believe AAE is inferior or inappropriate. For example, Britt and Weldon cite several research studies which found correlations between a strong sense of African-American identity and positive attitudes towards AAE, including a belief in the variety’s appropriateness in educational settings (809-810).

<sup>19</sup> I use the term “AAE-strong,” inspired by Coleman’s term “Ebonics-strong,” as a label for writing that shows characteristics of AAE.

“[t]eacher response to AAVE features reveals a pattern...that seeks to discredit AAVE as ‘bad’ language” (3).

In a 1997 case study, Arnetha Ball found a pronounced gap between white teachers’ assessments of white and African-American students’ texts, a gap that was significantly larger than that between African-American teachers’ assessments of the same texts (“Expanding” 362-366); a similar disconnect was found in a study at Harvard, where white graduate students responded negatively and black graduate students positively to AAE macro-level rhetorical features in undergraduate essays (Taylor and Matsuda, cited in Mountford 382). As Arnetha Ball, who has conducted multiple scholarly inquiries into assessment of AAE, has found:

Generally, those who have not been socialized with AAE styles of rhetoric, traditions of linguistic creativity, uses of African and English words and grammatical constructions in intimate communications, or traditions of African American preaching fail to fully understand that those experiences influence the linguistic practices of AAVE speaking students. (“Evaluating the Writing” 226)

Lack of understanding of AAE is a major obstacle to good teaching of AAE-strong writers. No wonder these students often lack confidence or dislike writing. In surveys of AAE-strong writing students cited by Ball and Lardner, the students were more likely than not to describe themselves as poor writers, as lacking in confidence, or as not enjoying writing (*African* 14-15). Negative assessments of AAE correlate with low grades (Ball, “Expanding” 360), academic failure (P. Powell 674) and attrition (McLaughlin and Agnew).

This continued trend of negative responses to AAE provides, I believe, plenty of exigence for further interrogating composition instructors' beliefs about AAE, how they develop those beliefs, and what solutions for professionalization might help us remedy this problem. Moreover, as AAE is probably the most stigmatized variety of natively-spoken American English, it is a particularly useful entry point for advocacy of linguistic diversity. In a survey that included questions about teacher's language experiences, educations, and attitudes about language, the CCCC Language Policy committee found that the study of AAE correlated more strongly with pluralist attitudes towards language, extending to other nonstandard varieties and L2 writing, than any other kind of linguistic study (Richardson, "Race, Class(es)" 55-56). Perhaps the realization that the most stigmatized variety of English is both legitimate and rhetorically powerful encourages transfer to acceptance of other varieties. Finally, AAE/SE code-meshing has been identified as an entry point for AAE users who are working to master academic discourse, providing opportunities for AAE users' success in college (Young, "Your Average"; Perryman-Clark, "African American Language," "Africanized"). Such code-meshing pedagogies have promising potential for the education of minority language users.

## **Chapter Previews**

With each chapter of this dissertation, I attempt to further explore ways to address the problems I have identified, by explicating the often-tacit theories behind approaches to language variety in our profession, exploring how ideology influences composition instructors' beliefs about language, and seeing what happens when instructors are asked to explicate their language beliefs by exploring discourses of linguistic diversity and

translingualism. Finally, I provide explicit recommendations for professionalization in the hopes of better preparing teachers to work ethically and effectively with students from nonprestige language backgrounds.

In Chapter Two, “Four Approaches to Language Variety in Composition,” I distinguish four approaches to language difference throughout composition’s history: *eradicationism*, *assimilationism*, *pluralism*, and *translingualism*. I take a translingual approach to language in this dissertation, but argue that we cannot fully appreciate the benefits of translingualism without acknowledging the approaches that have come before. Eradicationism, the dominant approach from composition’s origins through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, perceived language use that differed from the standard, prestige variety as deficient, and it sought to remove varieties perceived as inferior from language users’ repertoire and replace them with the prestige. The assimilationist approach, sometimes called the Bidialectal approach, acknowledges the validity of nonprestige varieties, but encourages minoritized language users to save nonprestige varieties for low-stakes and informal contexts and use only the prestige variety in academic writing. Pluralism argues for full linguistic equality and insists that nonprestige varieties are appropriate in all contexts. Pluralism is influenced by race-conscious theories and resists color-blindness; however, it has been criticized for being difficult to implement because of continued popular stigmatization against nonstandard varieties. Finally, translingualism, I argue, does a better job than pluralism of critiquing linguistic inequality, and also allows for more blending of languages and varieties. Though translingualism is still evolving, and several scholars have critiqued aspects of it and made suggestions for future theorization and practice, it is the best-suited approach for 21<sup>st</sup> century composition.

Chapter Three, “Code-Meshing over Code-Switching,” addresses several areas in which translingual scholars have noteworthy disagreements. Some of these issues have been debated at conferences and in journals, while others have been previously unexamined—thus, I offer a unique contribution by explicating the theories where they are tacit. First, I discuss the debate over the use of the term *code-switching* in composition. The term has proven somewhat contentious, with Matsuda arguing that the appropriation of this term from applied linguistics invites confusion; I argue that potential misunderstanding can be offset and is outweighed by the conversation it allows compositionists to have about the imposition of double-consciousness on minority writers. I then trace the origin and evolution of the term *code-meshing*, which has often been misattributed, further articulating the concept, and argue that some of the misunderstanding over *code-switching* vs. *code-meshing* comes from misreading of Young’s notable essay “‘Nah, We Straight.’” Second, I explore the complexity of code-meshing by identifying four warrants, previously unexamined tacit theories, that ground arguments for code-meshing. These warrants help us understand competing motives for and conceptions of code-meshing. Finally, I identify two different competing conceptions of writerly identity behind advocacy for code-meshing, each rooted in the age-old debate about whether linguistic skill is “natural” or “learned.”

Chapter Four, “Ideology, Expectation, and Evaluation,” explores how college writing instructors develop our language ideologies, and how these ideologies contribute to our readings of student work. Using Bakhtin’s theory of “ideological becoming” as a framework, along with the concepts of authoritative and internally persuasive discourse (AD and IPD, respectively), I first discuss how those concepts contribute to prevailing

trends in composition. I then share an AAE-strong essay by Maya, a first-year student who blends AAE rhetorical strategies with SE grammar and academic discourse conventions in a rhetorical analysis of a Beyoncé song. While I found the essay to be quite effective and compelling, the instructors I shared it with in a later pilot study<sup>20</sup> (yielding the Spring 2013 dataset) did not read it as positively. I draw on my own experiences, and interview data with my participants, to identify the aspects of Maya's essay they found most problematic and explore why I think our responses differed so widely. I suggest our ideological becomings, including familiarity (or lack thereof) with AAE rhetorical conventions, were instrumental in our different responses.

Chapter Five, "The Use of Narrative to Reconcile Competing Discourses," describes the results of a study that I was inspired to design by questions lingering after the study I conducted for Chapter Four. Conducted two years after the first study, this study recruited six participants for a five-part semi-structured interview project (yielding the Fall 2015 dataset). Each participant read several academic and student texts to introduce them to linguistic diversity, translingualism, and AAE, and our discussions of these texts, and the participants' professional experiences, shaped our conversations. There were two main findings: first, most instructors began from an assimilationist position, but shifted to more pluralist or translingual positions over time; and second, they used spoken narratives in conversation to reconcile the new ideas they encountered with their previous beliefs and experiences. The narratives took many forms, including rejection, ambivalence, and appropriation of new discourses. I conclude that successful

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<sup>20</sup> Both the Spring 2013 and Fall 2015 studies were approved by the University of South Carolina's Institutional Review Board.

translingual professionalization should include time, space, and opportunities for instructors to create such narratives, which promote critical reflection and interrogation.

Finally, in Chapter Six, “Beyond Drive-By Translingual Professionalization,” I draw on the conversations from the Fall 2015 dataset,<sup>21</sup> used for Chapter Five, as well as professionalization literature, to make specific recommendations for effective translingual professionalization. I argue that for translingualism to become more than just a niche area of inquiry in composition scholarship, but an influential paradigm in composition pedagogy, we must devote more time, space, and resources to professionalization in linguistic diversity issues. Recommendations include providing incentives for instructors to learn more about translingualism, acknowledging their previous professional experiences and expertise, creating flexible opportunities for them to pursue professionalization, facilitating discussion with peers and mentors, and promoting reflective writing.

I carefully selected the methods I used to conduct the primary research that informed Chapters Four, Five, and Six. For reasons further explicated in those chapters below, I found those methods to be the most appropriate for helping me answer my research questions. However, the methods do carry some limitations. Though I do believe my findings are suggestive, because of the small sample size and because participants are all members of the same racial identity, work at the same institution, and mostly come from the same class background, the findings are not generalizable. (The reason I believe they are suggestive is that they reflect the majority class background and race in

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<sup>21</sup> I specifically discussed professionalization with the Fall 2015 participants, so my interviews with them yielded much useful data to inform Chapter Six. However, I did not discuss professionalization with my Spring 2013 participants, so with the exception of one brief reference to a Spring 2013 participant who discussed how conversation with a peer informed his professional growth, those interviews did not inform my professionalization recommendations in Chapter Six.

composition instruction.) The Spring 2013 data were collected in single interviews with each participant, so they do not reflect changes in instructors' stated beliefs or positioning over time (except as described in individual recounting). The Fall 2015 data took place over a longer period of time, but were still of a somewhat limited duration, covering only a semester. Because of constraints on time for the participants, they were not given explicit instruction in sociolinguistic principles of language variation, so the study cannot comment on how that factor would influence instructors, which would be a promising area of inquiry for future study. The analysis in both cases relies on instructors' answers in an interview setting, so they do come from only a single type of primary research and do not have the benefit of triangulation among numerous types of data.

Scholars interested in linguistic diversity often point to statistics about the increasing ethnic diversity and multilingualism of both the United States in general and the population of higher education students in general. This is not an illogical move. However, as other composition scholars have pointed out, the U.S. has never really been a monoglot, monodialectal place, despite the efforts of gatekeepers to suppress linguistic variety (Pavlenko; Trimbur "Linguistic Memory"; Horner and Trimbur). The real change has been in our growing awareness of the legitimacy and value of nonstandard varieties and "alternatives discourses," increasing appreciation for linguistic diversity, and emerging embrace of translingual communication practice. Though we do still need to improve, composition scholars and writing teachers have played a worthy role in resisting linguistic suppression, and moving towards a future that embraces diversity in language use. My hope with this dissertation is to contribute to the scholarly and professional conversation in a way that enables writing teachers to better develop "the experiences and



training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language” (*Students* ’ 19). And perhaps we may even learn something about *our* own relationships with language in the process.

## CHAPTER 2: FOUR APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE DIFFERENCE IN COMPOSITION HISTORY

“Anything is possible if you sound Caucasian on the phone”  
—Yearbook quote chosen by Savanna Tomlinson,  
Treasure Coast High School Class of 2017, Port S. Lucie, Florida (qtd. in Harriot)

### Introduction

There’s an old joke; stop me if you’ve heard it before:

“What do you call someone who speaks two languages?”

“Bilingual”

“What do you call someone who speaks three languages?”

“Trilingual”

“What do you call someone who speaks only one language?”

“American!”

I’ve never liked this joke, and the more I learn about language in the United States, the less funny I find it. Yes, many Americans are what is popularly considered monolingual,<sup>22</sup> and as I’ll attempt to address in these pages, a nagging strain of monolingual ideology (Horner et al., “Language Difference”; Lu and Horner, “Translingual Literacy”; Matsuda, “Myth”; Trimbur, “Linguistic Memory”) persists to the detriment of college writing. But the above joke has several issues.

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<sup>22</sup> Despite its imperfections, I use the term “monolingual” here in the most widely used definition, to describe a person who knows only one “language” (i.e. English, French, Spanish, Korean, etc.).

First, it is inaccurate. According to the *American Community Survey Reports* on “Language Use in the United States” in 2007, about 20% of Americans “spoke a language other than English at home” (Shin and Komsinki 3), and of that number, over half reported speaking English ‘very well’ (3). So by the most conservative estimate,<sup>23</sup> at least 10% of Americans are functionally bilingual in English and another language. The joke ignores these Americans, relying on a default image of an American as a person who speaks only English; this image erases a significant part of the population. Second, the joke implies these Americans have no interest in language-learning, ignoring “monolinguals” who have worked to develop some facility in a second language. The market for language-learning software and apps such as Rosetta Stone, DuoLingo, and Mango, indicates that plenty of English-speaking Americans want to communicate in additional languages. Third, the joke ignores the multiplicities *within* language. Monolinguals are typically skilled in switching between and among varieties of their native tongue (Leonard; Lippi-Green; Canagarajah, *Translingual Practice*).

We often say of a good joke, “It’s funny because it’s true.” In this case, the corollary holds: the joke is *not* funny because it is *not* true. It represents a flawed view of language, that there are discrete “languages” that one either speaks well or not at all. Perhaps I find this joke so unfunny because for the past few years, I have regarded language through a *translingual* lens. In this chapter, I argue that *translingualism*, and thinking of ourselves and our students as having translingual capabilities, can help us escape the limited set of assumptions described above.

Briefly, *translingualism*, an approach that has emerged in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century in composition scholarship, emphasizes that languages and varieties are not only inherently

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<sup>23</sup> The survey did not ask about the second-language abilities of people who speak English at home.

variable and equal, but in constant interaction—thus the prefix *trans*. Translingualism also asks us to think about how we engage with language issues: “a translingual approach is best understood as a disposition of openness and inquiry toward language and language varieties” (Lu and Horner, “Translingual Literacy” 585). The translingual approach asks stakeholders in writing—scholars, students, instructors—to practice a critical orientation towards language: taking up a translingual approach involves “changing the kind of attention we pay to our language practices, questioning the assumptions underlying our learned dispositions toward difference in language, and engaging in critical inquiry on alternative dispositions to take toward such differences in our writing and reading” (Horner et al., “Language Difference,” 313). Translingualism asks us to interrogate the linguistic status quo, even when doing so may be unpleasant for those who find that the status quo is working for them. It asks us to check our privilege; no one, including white monolingual users of prestige varieties of English, is off the hook, permitted to dismiss language variety as “other people’s issue” (Haddix 256).

As we will see, “[t]aking a translingual approach goes against the grain of so many assumptions of our field” (Horner et al., “Language Difference” 313). Composition practice still too often defaults to prescriptivist approaches that stigmatize minoritized languages, contributing to lack of access, problems with retention, and a continued racial achievement gap. The ultimate goal of translingualism is language education that is more self-aware, communicative, equitable, and ethical than has previously been the case while monolingualist, homogenous assumptions about what constitutes good language use have dominated policy and pedagogy. However, keep in mind that translingualism is still evolving, and by design is not something that can be pinned down or easily defined. As

Lu and Horner write in their introduction to the 2016 special issue of *College English* devoted to a symposium on the approach, “translinguality [is] always... in need of being ‘reworked’” (“Introduction” 216).

In order to fully appreciate translingualism, we must delineate the approaches that have come before, because translingualism both challenges and, in some cases, draws some of its principles from them. So before delving into further discussion of translingualism, I review other approaches to language in our field. These approaches have been identified by different terms and heuristics, which often overlap but are rarely direct synonyms. I have attempted to group these terms and heuristics with their closest cousins in order to identify four main approaches to language variety in composition studies: *eradicationism*, *assimilationism*, *pluralism*, and *translingualism*. Each of the first three approaches—particularly assimilationism—still influences composition instructors’, and therefore the discipline’s, ideologies and pedagogies. Exploring these positions helps situate translingualism within a historical and theoretical context; and by showing how eradicationism, assimilationism, and at times pluralism fail students, this overview further highlights the aspects of translingualism that make it the preferred approach for 21<sup>st</sup>-century composition.

### **Approach 1: Eradicationism**

Eradicationism is the most common term assigned to the type of approaches described here (Gilyard, *Voices*; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes). Under eradicationist approaches, codes that differ from the socially prestigious language of power are perceived as deficient compared to that language of power, which is assumed to be more logical, more systematic, better at communicating complex thoughts—in short, the *only*

suitable code. In schools, multi-dialectal and multilingual students are expected to suppress their non-prestige varieties, often the varieties with which they most strongly identify.

Eradicationism argues that in English-language contexts, SE should replace nonmainstream varieties in and out of the classroom (Gilyard, *Voices* 70-72; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 316-317). Though *eradicationism* has been the dominant term, scholars have also used other helpful phrases to describe different and sometimes more specific iterations of the paradigm. One example comes from Canagarajah, who in an article focused on L2 writers uses the term *conversion* as follows: “The *conversion* approach [is] informed by the deficit attitude, which posits that multilingual students have to permanently move away from their indigenous discourses to superior English-based discourses” (“Understanding” 225, original italics). Though he focuses on non-English language users in the article, the term could also be applied to certain pedagogies for native speakers of non-standard English varieties. For simplicity’s sake, I classify it here under the label *eradicationism*.

Horner et al. argue that eradicationist response “has sought to eradicate difference in the name of achieving correctness” (“Language Difference” 306). Though many sources, such as Horner et al., point to continued eradicationism in practice (306), eradicationism is no longer supported by composition *theory* (Bizzell vii). However, it was accepted by the field until the *SRTOL* era of the late 1960s and 70s. Even as compositionists began recognizing the validity of nonmainstream varieties of English in the 1950s and early 1960s, most advocated that instructors teach students to replace these varieties with SE and “toe the line in terms of teaching the social inadequacy of

nonstandard forms” (Smitherman, “CCCC’s Role” 353). According to Smitherman, at the 1968 CCCC conference, days after Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination, Ernece B. Kelly “took [the organization] to task” (355), using verbal irony in sharply criticizing the common eradicationist approach: “Here we meet to discuss the dialects of Black students and how we can upgrade or, if we’re really successful, just plain *replace* them,” she said (qtd. in Smitherman 355; original emphasis). Kelly’s speech catalyzed a movement within the organization that eventually resulted in the 1974 *SRTOL* statement.

I am primarily concerned with attempts to eradicate nonstandard English varieties, especially AAE, but it is important to note that our national and disciplinary history also includes successful efforts to suppress non-English languages. Such practices reinforced unidirectional monolingual ideology and monodialectism, and laid the groundwork for continued suppression of non-standard varieties. Historically, in the U.S., eradicationism has also occurred in forced English-immersion schools, where native languages such as German, Spanish, and Indigenous Languages were either marginalized or forbidden altogether (Guerra, “From Code-Segregation”; Lippi-Green; Pavlenko; Trimbur, “Linguistic Memory”).

### **Theories Underlying Eradicationism**

Several intersecting beliefs about language, which are mostly what Gee calls *tacit* theories, support eradicationism: the deficit perspective (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes; Lippi-Green); the white habitus (Bonilla-Silva; Inoue); “the myth of linguistic homogeneity” (Matsuda, “Myth”); monodialectism (Trimbur, “Linguistic Memory”); unidirectional monolingualism (Horner and Trimbur); monolingual ideology (Horner et al, “Language Difference”; Horner et al., “Toward”; Lu and Horner, “Translingual

Literacy”); and Standard Language Ideology (SLI) (Lippi-Green). Such theories are common in the U.S., where there is a strong “standard language culture” (Milroy and Milroy 167). With such a large number of overlapping commonsense beliefs supporting eradicationism in the popular imagination, no wonder we still struggle to promote acceptance of nonstandard Englishes and translingual practices.

Under eradicationism, difference is usually equated with deficit in the sense that the less prestigious variety is read as deficient. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes describe how:

[D]uring the late 1960s and 1970s, there were many debates in educational circles over the so-called ‘deficit-difference controversy,’ with language scholars arguing passionately that dialect variation was simply a matter of *difference*, not *deficit*, and some educators arguing that variation from the socially accepted standard constituted a fundamental deficiency. (6, original emphasis)

An example of the latter is Basil Bernstein’s 1966 “verbal deficit theory”: “In Bernstein’s view, children who do not speak \*SAE<sup>24</sup> do not possess sufficient human language to think or reason, and must be helped to overcome these language and cultural handicaps” (Lippi-Green 84). Fortunately, Bernstein’s view has been discredited by many scholars; unfortunately it still persists in many popular expressions of language belief (Lippi-Green 83-84). One example is a teacher in the 1990s describing Puerto Rican students’ language:

These poor kids come to school speaking a hodge podge....As a result, they can’t even think clearly....It’s our job to teach them language—to make up for their

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<sup>24</sup> Lippi-Green uses the asterisk to indicate that Standard American English (SAE) does not actually exist, except as an abstraction (55-65).



deficiency. And since their parents don't really know any language either, why should we waste time on Spanish? It is 'good' English which has to be the focus. (qtd. in Lippi-Green 83).

The teacher's delegitimization of the students' language use extends even to denying they have any language at all, and to denying that their parents are fully competent adult language users.

Matsuda defines "the myth of linguistic homogeneity" as "the tacit and widespread acceptance of the dominant image of composition students as native speakers of a privileged variety of English" ("Myth" 638). Because U.S. college culture values visible ethnic and racial diversity, but *not* linguistic diversity, it is considered acceptable to exclude or otherwise marginalize students who don't fit the linguistic ideal ("Myth"). The current practice Matsuda identifies has historical precedent—beginning with the post-revolutionary-era conflation of American English with national identity (Trimbur). As part of an effort to further promote independence from and establish linguistic superiority to the British, Daniel Webster argued that there were biblical roots to American English and that the U.S. could and should move towards monodialectism ("Linguistic Memory"). Further, Horner and Trimbur argue that U.S. composition has been shaped by a tacit policy of "unidirectional monolingualism," which arose partially in reaction to the prestige placed on Greek and Latin in colonial-era U.S. higher education. The variety of American English spoken by a small group of elites, such as Webster, became the language of prestige, and the communicative aspects of foreign languages were undermined so that they became objects, not subjects, of study.

This history matters, because approaches supporting a uniform ideal language suppress the part of language study that prepares us to communicate with people who use different codes, along with our ability to communicate across and challenge linguistic boundaries. Such accounts help explain why *monolingual ideology* is still prominent. In “Language Difference,” Horner et al. argue that the current predisposition in composition is one of monolingualism (312), and that “Monolingualism teaches language users to assume and demand that others accept as correct and conform to a single set of practices with language” (312); i.e., there is one way to use English.

Finally, there is Standard Language Ideology (SLI), which Lippi-Green identifies as “a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogenous spoken language which is imposed by dominant bloc institutions and which names as its model the written language, but which is drawn primarily from the spoken language of the upper middle class” (67). SLI is an authoritative discourse (in the Bakhtinian sense; see Ch. 4 for further discussion) backed by the powerful: “Dominant institutions promote the notion of an overarching, homogenous standard language which is primarily Anglo, upper middle-class, and ethnically middle-American” (Lippi-Green 68). Like Trimbur, Horner, and Matsuda, Lippi-Green relates common beliefs about correctness to issues of national identity: “SLI proposes that an idealized national-state has one perfect, homogenous language” (68). Importantly, this language uses its position of power to maintain its dominance: “This hypothetical, idealized language is the means by which (1) discourse is seized, and (2) rationalizations for that seizure are constructed” (68). Such seizures, acts performed to reinscribe power, are necessary because the idealized language “is also a fragile construct and one that needs to be protected” (68).

Further, SLI is tied up with popular tacit theories about language, which have a significant impact on language users: “A standard language ideology provides a web of (supposedly) common-sense arguments in which the vernacular speaker can get tangled at every turn: at school, in radio news, at the movies, while reading novels, at work, she hears that the language which marks her as Chilean, Muslim, or a native of Mississippi is ugly, unacceptable, incoherent, illogical” (Lippi-Green 68-69). SLI sends messages reinforcing the eradicationist idea that one idealized variety should replace inferior varieties.

Eradicationism assumes that there are inherently superior ways to use language, and that they have achieved their status *because* of this superiority, not because of their use by people in power. This is particularly true with nonprestige varieties<sup>25</sup> in a context where a prestige variety is dominant (e.g., AAE in an SE-dominant setting.) As Gilyard writes, “Eradicationists believe that Standard English is the only language variety that has a legitimate function within the school. In their judgment Black English is not only inappropriate, but is indicative of minimal intelligence or cognitive deficiency” (70).

Eradicationism has been largely taboo in composition *theory* since the 1960s and 1970s, but that doesn’t make it extinct. Kamusikiri’s 1996 research showed that composition instructors who initially set out to use process pedagogies may, as a reaction

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<sup>25</sup> In contrast to the deficit view taken towards non-prestige dialects, eradicationism—in the U.S. context—does not always perceive non-English languages as inherently deficient, but promotes English in the U.S. largely because of popular associations of English as essential to American identity and patriotism (Lippi-Green; Trimbur, “Linguistic Memory”; Pavlenko). Of course, throughout the world, eradicationism is also applied in other contexts: e.g., Parisian French favored over regional varieties of French. Eradication approaches are harmful to bilinguals because they either explicitly argue that the speaker should suppress or forget their native language, or enable educational policies that result in a loss of language. The non-English language may be perceived as a valid language, but so inappropriate to the speaker’s geographic location that it should be eradicated from that location: the history of language use in a location may even be disregarded, as in the case of Native American boarding schools established to force indigenous children to forget the languages historically spoken in the region.

to encountering non-standard varieties, abandon process in favor of “outmoded, de-contextualized grammar and usage exercises” (Kamusikiri qtd. in Behm and Miller 137), thereby focusing on the “eradication of deviant language patterns” (Kamusikiri qtd. in Behm and Miller 137). I witnessed another example first hand when I was working at an HBCU in the early 2010s; a white instructor interrupted one of her AAE-using students in the writing lab to “correct” her use, in spoken conversation, of the first-person singular possessive *mines*—embarrassing and alienating the student in an environment that was supposed to be a low-stakes, welcoming place for students to work on their writing.

### **Critiques of Eradicationism**

Horner et al. argue that eradicationism “is problematic in at least four ways” (“Language Difference” 306): first, it does not acknowledge differences in writing based on genre or situation, nor does it acknowledge World Englishes; second, it does not acknowledge the reality of language change over time; third, it doesn’t acknowledge the role of ideology in readers’ perceptions of correctness and acceptability and writing (306); and finally, “it ignores the value for ordinary language users and learners of challenging and transforming language conventions to revise knowledge, ways of knowing, and social relations between specific writers and readers” (306)—that is, it doesn’t acknowledge the benefits of challenging established norms, benefits that include new developments in thought, knowledge and social interaction (306). Simply put, eradication does not allow for critical inquiry of language.

Horner et al. also debunk the notion, common to eradicationist philosophy, that students need to master the so-called basics before moving onto more advanced aspects of writing: “Scholars of basic writing,” they point out, “have long since exploded the

notion that adult writing students improve their writing by first attempting to master the so-called mechanics of writing before working on what are deemed to be higher-order features of writing” (“Language Difference” 312). The connection between “high” and “low” order aspects of writing is not fixed. Rather, “like all writers, student writers’ command of various features of writing fluctuates: they may have more difficulty with issues addressed through copyediting as they attempt to write in different genres or about new topics or to unfamiliar audiences” (312).

The eradicationist approach frequently takes the form of “drill-and-skill” instruction, emphasizing “low-order” concerns, and such instruction tends to be overused in classrooms with minority language students (Ball and Ellis 507). In a review of research on writing pedagogies, Ball and Ellis write, “researchers concluded that drill exercises, which often predominate in the instruction in classrooms that serve poor and culturally diverse students...are not the best approach for improving the writing of students of color” (507). Instead, students performed better in settings that drew on their backgrounds and emphasized fluency over accuracy (507).

Ball and Ellis also report that when teachers are influenced by a deficit view, their students may even face psychological harm. Researchers “found that assessments are a key tool that can affect students’ view of themselves as writers” (508). Such a finding is not necessarily surprising, but it is important to remember, especially since “teachers’ negative assessments of students’ writing can negatively impact the development of students’ identities as writers” (508).

Perhaps Keith Gilyard describes the impact of Eradicationism best in *Voices of the Self* where he argues that Eradicationism is not only psychologically harmful and

socially unfair, but relatively impossible, as speakers tend to resist efforts to force them to sacrifice their home varieties (71-72). “The best thing I can say about Eradicationism,” he concludes, “is that it is definitely wrong and has never actually worked” (72).

### **Approach 2: Assimilationism**

Under the assimilationist approach, students’ home varieties and home languages that differ from SE are nominally honored, but students are expected to adopt SE for school and other “formal” contexts—they are expected to “assimilate.” Horner et al. argue that this approach “appears tolerant” of difference and “has sought to distance itself from the eradicationist approach by acknowledging differences in language use; codifying these; and granting individuals a right to them” (“Language Difference” 306). But despite the *appearance* of tolerance, this approach still “assumes that each codified set of language practices is appropriate only to a specific, discrete, assigned social sphere” (306).

Terms and heuristics falling under the assimilation approach include: *bidialectism* (Gilyard, *Voices*; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes), *crossing* (Canagarajah, “Understanding”), and *code-switching* (Young, “‘Nah,’” “Your Average”; Michael-Luna and Canagarajah). The most common, and oldest relevant term, is *bidialectism* (Gilyard, *Voices* 70-72; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 316-317). It is usually applied to, and recommended as a strategy for, speakers of multiple dialects of the same language. Canagarajah uses the term *crossing* to describe approaches recommended for multilingual students. In the crossing approach, “teachers attempt to build bridges to help multilingual students move from their local literacy practices and cultural frames toward

academic/English discourses (and vice versa)....there is a clear-cut difference between the academic and vernacular literacies” (“Understanding” 225).

Another common term is *code-switching*. As I will discuss further in the next chapter, the debate over the meaning of “code-switching” has been contentious, with some scholars (Guerra, “From Code-Segregation”; Matsuda “It’s the Wild West”) finding fault with the definition advanced by other scholars, primarily Vershawn Young and Suresh Canagarajah. I prefer the definition used by Young and Canagarajah, which has gained purchase in composition studies. In this dissertation, *code-switching* means the practice of shifting between perceived-discrete codes based on the situation (e.g., if I use Appalachian English in talking to my grandmother but SE when speaking at an academic conference). Code-switching pedagogies usually ask students to reserve non-standard varieties for less-prestigious, lower-stakes, or more informal situations (e.g., text-messaging, conversation with peers, and talk with family), and adopt the prestige variety for formal written contexts.

Many education scholars over the past several decades have promoted assimilationist pedagogies. One of the most prominent is Lisa Delpit, who argues that assimilation is essential for minoritized language users to achieve mainstream success. She says, “Despite the difficulty entailed in the process, almost any African-American or other disenfranchised individual who has become ‘successful’ has done so by acquiring a discourse other than the one into which he or she was born” (1316). Delpit acknowledges the validity of nonstandard varieties and the social inequity leading to social stratification, but relies on examples of successful African-Americans to argue that

African-Americans can, and *should* adopt the dominant discourse in order to be able to challenge racism (presumably in its non-linguistic iterations):

Only after acknowledging the inequity of the system can the teacher's stance then be 'Let me show you how to cheat!' And of course, to cheat is to learn the discourse which would otherwise be used to exclude [the students] from participating in and transforming the mainstream. (1319-20)

Delpit doesn't ignore the way racism shapes attitudes about language in the first place, but she does seem to forgive it.<sup>26</sup>

While assimilationism technically views all codes as inherently valid and systematic, it presumes that minority language users need to learn how to use the "language of power" in contexts such as education and the white-collar workforce because mainstream approaches hold more overt value. Canagarajah explains, "teachers fear that deviating from SWE [Standard Written English] is costly for multilingual<sup>27</sup> scholars and students. Bringing one's own values and voices into high-stakes writing will lead to failure" (*Translingual Practice* 109).

Patricia Bizzell describes the general consensus in composition from the mid-1970s to early 2000s as follows: "so-called nonstandard dialects should not be stigmatized in teacher commentary...and should even be welcomed in the classroom for use in discussion and in informal writing assignments" (vii); yet use of nonstandard Englishes here was seen as a step in learning SE on both a grammatical and rhetorical

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<sup>26</sup> Delpit also implicitly endorses a corrective assimilation that relies on white, middle-class notions of appropriateness, when in one of her examples of successful assimilators she praises "teachers [who] insisted that students be able to speak and write eloquently, maintain neatness, think carefully, exude character, and conduct themselves with decorum. They even found ways to mediate class differences by attending to the hygiene of students who needed such attention—washing faces, cutting fingernails, and handing out deodorant" (1315).

<sup>27</sup> The use of "multilingual" here is also applicable to multi-dialectal students.



level, as “academic discourse.” Bizzell explains, “Acceptance of so-called nonstandard dialects in these ways would facilitate achievement of the goal to which most writing teachers—including myself—remained committed in those days, namely, mastery of traditional academic discourse by all students” (vii). Bizzell eventually realized that it was impossible to teach all students to master SE and traditional academic discourse, and modified her strictly bidialectal position.

### **Theories Underlying and Promoting Assimilationism**

Assimilation acknowledges the importance of both “overt prestige”—the prestige that accompanies SE in places like school and the white-collar business world—as well as “covert prestige,” which speakers and writers attain by using the variety of a specific discourse community (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 184). For instance, text-message-speak brings covert prestige among friends using their cell phones to communicate; moreover, in a nonstandard language context, SE may even be taken as a sign that the speaker or writer is trying to make themselves look superior. Covert prestige helps explain why students may not want to adopt SE if it is noticeably different from their home variety: “A young person who adopts vernacular forms in order to maintain solidarity with a group of friends clearly indicates the covert prestige of these features on a local level even if the same features stigmatize the speaker in a wider, mainstream context such as school” (184). Assimilationism privileges the overt context and diminishes the acknowledgment of covert prestige.

Some of the ideologies that support eradicationism also support assimilationism, particularly SLI. Meanwhile, other ideologies are also at play here, including the white habitus, color-blindness, and Appropriacy Reasoning.

First, Lippi-Green's work on SLI is relevant to assimilationism as well as eradicationism, because the acquisition of an idealized standard is implicitly linked to social value: "the process of linguistic assimilation to an abstracted standard is cast as a natural one, and necessary and positive for the greater social good" (68). So in SLI, even where non-standard English varieties are acknowledged, speakers have a perceived moral duty to take up the standard.

Assimilation in the U.S. is particularly influenced by the white habitus. In *Racism without Racists*, Bonilla-Silva first identified the *white habitus*: a set of habits, dispositions, and tastes based largely in white middle-class practices, and so ingrained in many whites as to seem natural and even ideal, which shapes commonsense notions of acceptability in the U.S. (see Chapter One); Inoue takes up the term and describes it as ideologically authoritative in composition. Despite the profession's attempts to assess all students equitably, the lingering power of white, middle-class norms means that students from outside that group are disproportionately perceived as weaker writers, because "[w]e define 'good' writing in standard ways that have historically been informed by a white discourse, even though we are working from a premise that attempts fairness" (Inoue 18). The dominance of the white habitus contributes to institutionalized racism; Inoue argues, "Racism in schools and college writing courses is still pervasive because most if not all writing courses...promote or value first a local SEAE [Standard Edited American English] and a dominant white discourse" (14).

Another tacit belief system underlying assimilation is *colorblindness*<sup>28</sup> (see also Chapter One). Steve Lamos identifies two prominent schools of thought on language variation in 1960s and 70s composition: the "color-blind" school and the "race-

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<sup>28</sup> See Bonilla-Silva's *Racism without Racists* for further discussion of colorblindness.

conscious” school. Both are still applicable today, and race-consciousness, which informs pluralism and translanguaging, is discussed below. For now, I focus on the “color-blind” school of thought, which manifests in assimilationism. Broadly speaking, the “color-blind” school, most notably through Mina Shaughnessy’s work, challenged the deficit perspective embodied by eradicationism (Lamos). According to Tracy Santa, “Shaughnessy punctured the dominant perceptions of error, perceptions linking error with sloth, character deficit, or the hopelessness of teaching the unteachable” (46-47). Shaughnessy has widely been, and not without merit, praised for her contribution to the decline of eradicationism. However, color-blind advocates like Shaughnessy did not consider race or culture to be particularly important (Lamos 130; Santa 49-50). Colorblindness “posit[ed] that race is irrelevant to effective literacy instruction” (Lamos 130). Though Shaughnessy’s influence in undermining the difference-as-deficit view was undeniable, she was ultimately an advocate for better teaching of SE (Wible, “Pedagogies” 372; Lu, “Redefining” 772), and for assimilationism.

Finally, *Appropriacy Reasoning* is perhaps the characteristic tacit theory underlying assimilationism. In a nutshell, it says, “X variety is okay, but it’s not okay here in [insert formal situation].” Lippi-Green argues that “[a]ppropriacy judgments... cloak subjective, culturally bound judgments of ‘correctness’” (81), and that appropriacy logic enables a “faux egalitarianism” (82) under which “[t]eachers are directed to appreciate and respect the otherwise stigmatized languages of peripheral communities, but at the same time, reminded that those languages must be *kept separate*” (82, my emphasis). Flores and Rosa argue that “discourses of appropriateness... involve the conceptualization of standardized linguistic practices as objective sets of linguistic

forms” (150); but far from being objective, these standardized practices are part of “a perspective that privileges dominant white perspectives” (150). Appropriacy Reasoning has informed notable pro-language-rights decisions and policies rooted in Assimilation. For instance, both the 1979 *Ann Arbor* decision requiring teachers to consider students’ home dialects, and the Oakland School Board’s 1997 program to train teachers in awareness of Ebonics, presumed that AAE was not appropriate for educational and white-collar environments. In each case, the goal was to use linguistic knowledge of AAE to teach mainstream SE.

In the Ann Arbor case, federal judge Charles Joiner ruled that teachers’ negative attitudes towards the AAE spoken by African-American elementary school children “constituted a language barrier that impeded the students’ educational progress” (Ball and Lardner, “Dispositions” 471). Though the court mandated training to help teachers better understand AAE and work more effectively with AAE-using students (473), the ruling also reinforced the stigma against AAE. Ball and Lardner argue that “the Court’s final memorandum opinion and order explicitly and unequivocally positions African American English in a subordinate position to the mainstream” (472). In the order, Joiner wrote:

Black English is not a language used by the mainstream of society—black or white. It is not an acceptable method of communication in the educational world, in the commercial community, in the community of the arts and science, or among professionals. (qtd. in Ball and Lardner, *Dispositions* 472)

Even this seemingly progressive ruling maintained that the home variety of the plaintiff speakers needed to be acknowledged only because it was an obstacle to be overcome.

Similarly, in 1997, the Oakland School Board passed a resolution recognizing AAE (or in the terminology they used, “Ebonics”) as a separate language from English. They identified Ebonics and English as distinct languages, instead of acknowledging Ebonics as a variety of English, for practical reasons: extra funding that was available for bilingual education programs did not exist for bidialectal programs. About 30% of Oakland students were native AAE speakers (Lippi-Green 308), and educators had found that the students’ “failure to thrive was due at least in part to the fact that African American children came to school speaking a variety of English that (1) differ[ed] significantly from the academic/school English they were expected to use; and (2) was highly stigmatized” (308). Drawing on research that “the best way to introduce children to the idea of \*SAE is to use the home language as a conduit” (308), the school board published the resolution and sought funds for a program to train teachers in using knowledge of AAE to help students learn SE. The project was overtly assimilationist: “All parties agree[d] that schoolchildren must learn \*SAE because the command of that language is crucial to success. No one raise[d] the issue of racism inherent to this linguistic separate-but-equal approach” (309). However, the resolution was misinterpreted and misconstrued by the media and the public, soon devolving into a “moral panic” (306). Inaccurate narratives emerged, such as that the Oakland School board wanted to explicitly teach AAE to all its students (309, 311-12) or give up on teaching SE to African-American students (312-313). African-Americans across the country were among those enraged by the resolution, which they interpreted as an attempt to segregate African-American children by not allowing them the opportunity to learn SE (314, 316)—in fact, the opposite of the school board’s intentions.

## Critiques of Assimilationism

Critics of assimilationism point out several problems: it can limit student creativity by preventing students from using the code that comes most naturally to them when they compose, making it difficult for them to get words on the page, and it can harm students' sense of identity by maintaining that a code with which students identify is not appropriate. Because of harm to creativity and identity, assimilationist pedagogies can lead students to dislike writing and consider themselves poor writers (Ball and Lardner, *African* 15-16, 27). The approach can also restrict students' willingness and ability to engage with new tasks: students who demonstrate fluency in their extra-curricular writing, where they have more freedom to use home varieties while engaging with new codes, become "tongue-tied" (591) in school when forced to code-switch (Canagarajah, "The Place" 591). It is also in many ways a separate-but-equal approach: Gilyard criticizes how "[b]idialecticists postulate that Black English is equal to SE but not quite equal enough" (*Voices* 74). And Flores and Rosa argue that "the appropriateness-based models place the onus on language-minoritized students to mimic the white speaking subject while ignoring the raciolinguistic ideologies that the white listening subject uses to position them as racial Others" (155).

Finally, critics point out that the assimilationist practice of code-switching does not, in and of itself, overpower discrimination. Greenfield is one of many scholars to draw on empirical research to argue that AAE is not the only reason African-Americans face discrimination. She writes, "Black people are not discriminated against because some speak a variety of Ebonics—rather...Ebonics is stigmatized because it is spoken primarily by Black people" (qtd. in Inoue 32). In other words, when someone makes a

racist judgment about an AAE speaker, it's not because of AAE. It's because of racism. Several cases have demonstrated that African-Americans who use SE are either not given credit for doing so, or not even given an opportunity to take a job where they might use SE.

Alison Shaskan describes her work teaching students in a culinary school to code-switch in both their writing and speech, and while doing so, she realized that AAE users often learned to code-switch without any material benefit. While arranging job internship placements, Shaskan found that white and Latino/a students were regularly given preference over African-American students (88-89) by employers, and in one case, a manager specifically asked for “no African Americans” (Shaskan 88) because he believed “Blacks never show up for work” (qtd. in Shaskan 88). To help her black students secure employment, Shaskan regularly had to “vouch” for them and assure employers they were reliable, unlike with her white and Latino/a students, who were more likely to be given the benefit of the doubt (88-89). She was especially troubled by the case of one particularly qualified African-American student “with Anglo-American speech patterns, and dress [who] could not find work on his own” (89). The student eventually got a placement at a restaurant, where he soon rose to become a sous chef, but only after the white student who had initially been hired over him—despite having less work experience—was let go for poor job performance (88). These incidents made Shaskan realize that a student’s ability to use a white SE was no help in the face of overt racism. Shaskan titled her essay, fittingly, “How I Changed My Mind—Or, A Bidialecticist Rethinks Her Position.” Similarly, Behm and Miller found that “Even if students of color successfully replicate standard English, they may never be truly heard”

(134). Such students may be conceived of as pretenders, and “may be branded as ‘troublesome, not worth listening to, and lacking in potential for success’” (Behm and Miller 134, quoting Feagin, Vera, and Imani).

And because of what Flores and Rosa call the “white listening subject,” minoritized people who use SE may be mis-heard. Flores and Rosa cite an example from H. Samy Alim, who was conducting research in a high school with a predominantly African American student population and spoke with a teacher who repeatedly insisted that African-American students were always using AAE grammar in their speech: to exemplify, the teacher said, “one of the few goals I had this year was to get kids to stop saying, um, he was, she was” (qtd. in Flores and Rosa 165). Both those are examples of grammatical conjugations in AAE *and* SE; when Alim pointed out that the teacher might have meant “they was,” which *is* “a specific African American English syntactic construction (e.g., they was talking)” (Flores and Rosa 165), “the teacher agree[d], but she then [went] on to state that the problem [was] that students think phrases such as ‘she was’ are correct” (Flores and Rosa 165). The students in this case were using what the teacher should have considered “correct” English, but she didn’t *hear* them.<sup>29</sup>

As the young woman in the epigraph to this chapter used her yearbook quote to point out, using a white SE in a telephone communication may open doors for an

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<sup>29</sup> A painfully humorous example of the white listening subject can be found in the *Bachelorette* spoof *Burning Love*; the bachelorette in question, Julie (June Diane Raphael), is presented with several suitors. Most are white, but one contestant is an American of Middle-Eastern origins, Zakir, played by Pakistani-American actor Kumail Nanjiani. Zakir’s attempts to woo Julie are stymied by the fact that whenever he speaks to her, she insists she cannot understand a word he says. Though the actor and character both speak with a Pakistani “accent,” Zakir/Nanjiani has native-like competence in English and is intelligible to the audience and every other character on the show. In real life, in Rubin’s infamous 1992 study, college undergraduates listening to a lecture recorded by a female native speaker of mainstream American English perceived her as having an “Asian accent” when they were shown a picture of an Asian woman while they listened to the recording (Lippi-Green 92-95)



African-American, but if an in-person encounter is required, those doors may once again be shut.

### **Interlude: Strategies and Tactics**

In “Listening to Ghosts,” Malea Powell cites Michel de Certeau’s concept of the difference between *strategies* and *tactics*. I don’t deal at length with this issue or adopt de Certeau’s terminological distinction, but I consider it worth noting here when we consider the difference between our first two approaches, eradicationism and assimilationism, and our next two, pluralism and translingualism. Eradicationism and assimilationism both expect minority language users to take up more than their fair share of the communicative burden, while pluralism and translingualism reject that practice. According to de Certeau, “[s]trategies are ‘circumscribed as *proper*’” (M. Powell, quoting de Certeau, 19, emphasis in original), and are therefore “actions that are delimited by the propriety of the system. They are connected to the power of the dominant order, sustained by it” (M. Powell 20). We can think of eradicationist and Assimilationist-based writing practices, and pedagogies, as “strategies” in de Certeau’s sense—the writer plays by the rules of the system in place, whether or not those rules are fair. In contrast, “[t]actics...are not proper” and “don’t recognize the propriety of the system as binding” (M. Powell 20). Instead, a writer using de Certeau’s *tactics* will find a way to circumvent unfair rules, while also staying in the game. They are also likely to demand more of an unfamiliar audience by going beyond their (the writer’s) pre-determined sphere: “The place of the tactic, then, is ‘the space of the other,’ able to insinuate itself into systems of dominance” (M. Powell, quoting de Certeau, 20). Powell argues that much writing by Native American authors is tactical in this regard,

incorporating Native American rhetorical traditions into English-based contexts, including academic writing. Both pluralism and, in particular, translingualism, as we will see, are supportive of such practices, in contrast to eradicationist and assimilationist approaches.

### **Approach 3: Pluralism**

Traditionally, three-tiered progression systems have been used to differentiate among approaches to language variety (e.g. Eradication, Bi-dialectism, and Dialect Rights in Wolfram and Schilling-Estes' *American English*, and Eradicationism, Bidialectism, and Pluralism in Gilyard's *Voices of the Self*). *Pluralism* has been the most common term for approaches attempting to distinguish themselves from assimilationist methods as the next, most advanced, more progressive step. Usually, *pluralism* is the term favored in composition; in sociolinguistics, the position may be called "*Dialect Rights*." The terms appear to be mostly synonymous, although pluralism seems more of an overarching idea that includes Dialect Rights and academic movements to study "Alternative Discourses," as well as the "English Plus" movement in composition. I'll use *pluralism*, except when quoting scholars who use the term *Dialect Rights*.

Regarding varieties of English, pluralism argues that students should not be required to learn or use SE (Gilyard, *Voices* 70-72; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 316-317). In the case of AAE, for example, "Pluralists insist that the language of Blacks be left alone since it is as good as any other" (Gilyard, *Voices* 72). This position arose in response to inequities like that experienced by Gilyard, an AAE user who argued that learning to assimilate as a child "was a tremendous strain," one for which he "had to foot [a] psychic bill" (*Voices* 70). Pluralism "rejects the obligation to learn spoken standard

English at all, maintaining that both the eradicationist and bidialectalist positions stand too ready to accommodate the dialect prejudices of American society” (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 317). In its most radical form, pluralism also considers it unfair to expect students to learn written SE. However, most pluralists usually acknowledge the value of SE as a resource—what separates them from assimilationists is a desire to challenge the primacy of SE; they prefer to highlight the systematic inequalities that lead to linguistic discrimination in the first place, and to resist oppressive policies and pedagogies (including code-switching). Gilyard explains, “To the pluralist the crucial work involving language education is to develop a school system (and of course a society) in which language differences fail to have deleterious consequences for those whose language has been traditionally frowned upon. The proposal is not to ignore Standard English” (73).

Unfortunately, pluralism has been historically difficult to implement because of institutional and social pressures to adopt assimilationist practices. The pluralist *SRTOL* has even been interpreted as an assimilationist document (Bizzell vii). However, despite the difficulty of practicing pluralism, the theoretical and practical concerns with assimilationism cited above have influenced several scholars to grapple with issues of language variety, anyway, not only as it relates to micro-level but also macro-level writing conventions.

Some pluralist gestures can be found in research on “Alternative Discourses,” (Bizzell; “Intellectual”; Schroeder et al.) which explores not only nonstandard grammars but diverse discourse varieties such as the African American Rhetorical Tradition (Ball and Lardner, *African*; Jackson and Richardson; Richardson and Jackson;), African (continental) Rhetorics (Karenga; Schoen) Asian Rhetorics (Canagarajah, “Toward”;

Lan; Mao), Latino/a Rhetorics (Lunsford and Anzaldúa; Baca; Baca and Villanueva ) and Native American Rhetorics (Baca and Villanueva; Cushman; Lyons; M. Powell).

Similarly, scholars have called for more acceptance of these discourses in assessment (Mountford).

World English may also fall under the pluralist umbrella. World English writers are those who learned English as a lingua franca outside of a predominantly English-speaking country, for example, Nigerian, Sri Lankan, or Indian Englishes. Many residents of these countries speak one or more heritage languages, but have learned English since early childhood. Their varieties of English differ in prestige from “Inner Circle” native varieties spoken in countries such as the U.S., Canada, the UK, and Australia, where English is the heritage or only language of most speakers. World English varieties are rarely accorded the status of inner circle varieties, though both types are natively spoken (Canagarajah, *Translingual Literacy* 58-61).

The “English Plus” movement is also related to pluralism. Trimbur proposes a multilingual composition that promotes multilingual literacy. He writes, “I want to imagine a new configuration of languages in the U.S. university and in U.S. college composition that realigns the old Anglo-American linguistic dyad, making English not the center but the linking language in multilingual programs....To do this would require a shift from...unidirectional and subtractive monolingualism...to an active and additive multilingualism” (“Linguistic Memory” 586). Essentially, he calls for a system in which compositionists no longer limit their expertise to English. Composition students, in such a paradigm, could also compose in non-English language languages. The idea is not Trimbur’s alone, however—he is reaffirming Smitherman’s 1987 “[call] for a national

public policy on language that,” in addition to both the teaching of SE as the “language of wider communication” and the affirmation of nonmainstream Englishes as appropriate for the classroom, would also “promote the learning of one or more additional languages” (Trimbur 586).

### **Theories Underlying Pluralism**

Unlike assimilationism, which sees the prestige variety as a paradoxical first among equals, pluralists emphasize the value of each variety without endorsing a hierarchy based on power. They are often informed and influenced by sociolinguistic research, and may even emphasize the ethical necessity of their cause. Gee argues:

[J]udgments [about language] are ultimately ethical or moral decisions.... I personally believe that, exposed to the linguists’ theory and the everyday cultural model, the only ethical choice is to use ‘correct English’ the way linguists use it. This is so because the linguist’s theory, I believe, will lead to a more just, humane, and happier world. (19)

If we are able to reject commonsense-based assertions about the inferiority of marginalized language varieties, Gee argues, the results should be positive. Though he doesn’t elaborate on how, specifically, the world will be “more just, humane, and happier” in such a case, I can imagine how composition might be positively impacted: freed of the negative judgments about students’ intelligence based on their use of what we once thought of as incorrect English, for example, we may not only enjoy our teaching more, but find that we set higher expectations for our students and spend more time focusing on skills such as critical interrogation of texts.

Unlike colorblind assimilationism, pluralism is race-conscious. As Lamos has described, in the context of pluralism during the open-admissions era, race-consciousness is “a clear insistence that issues of race and racism need to be addressed directly when attempting to theorize high-risk language and literacy instruction” (Lamos 129-130). As noted previously, Kelly’s 1968 race-conscious CCCC speech called on composition to recognize that race and culture were connected to language diversity, and to recognize that the most marginalized students were unfairly expected to make the most significant changes to their language use. Though it ultimately lost out to the color-blind school (Lamos 127), race-consciousness informed much pedagogy in the 1960s and 1970s. It also informed *SRTOL*, authored and endorsed by the CCCC. In 1974, *SRTOL* proposed that students had the right to their own varieties of English and that educators needed to be both more receptive to, and familiar with, the complexities of nonstandard Englishes. The statement made no mention of the prestige value of SE<sup>30</sup>. Lamos argues that *SRTOL*’s authors and supporters promoted an “ideology of language and literacy...fundamentally concerned both with cultivating the extant language and literacy skills *of* students and with cultivating non-racist institutional environments *for* students” (128, original emphasis).

*SRTOL*’s accompanying materials also acknowledged the risks of giving in to literacy-crisis demands, arguing “English teachers who feel they are bound to accommodate the linguistic prejudices of current employers perpetuate a system that is unfair to both students who have job skills and to the employers who need them” (qtd. in Lamos 129). It warned of the negative repercussions of preserving an unfair status quo.

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<sup>30</sup> However, some critics would argue that the supporting materials accompanying the statement gave SE too much prominence (Smitherman “CCCC’s Role” 364).

Lamos points out the race-conscious nature of the document, writing, “[W]e can see the SRTOL arguing that language and literacy instruction must be geared toward recognizing and cultivating nonwhite and nonmainstream students’ existing strengths, not simply forcing students to utilize typical white mainstream standards in writing and speech” (129). Race-consciousness pervaded 1960s and 70s pluralism, and was viewed as integral to student achievement: “SRTOL itself insists that race-conscious thinking about student literacy needs and the institutional contexts in which these needs are addressed must occur if students are going to be successfully educated for the future” (129).

### **Critiques of Pluralism**

Critics of pluralism often say that it is a nice ideal, but is too utopian, ignoring the reality of a discriminatory world: the potential benefits of nonmainstream language users mastering the mainstream variety, and the possibility of nonmainstream users being discriminated against for their language practices. Another criticism is that it takes agency away from students—that instructors promoting a pluralist agenda may ignore students’ wishes to study what is popularly perceived to be correct writing (Delpit 1317). Delpit expresses concern that teachers, misconstruing pluralist scholarship, will believe they cannot or should not attempt to teach minority language users the dominant discourse, out of misguided understanding that minority students are incapable of fully mastering academic discourse, or that it is oppressive to students’ cultures and identities to teach it (“Politics”).

Criticisms of pluralism also come from translingual scholars. One such critique is found in Canagarajah’s identification of “difference-as-estrangement” (“Understanding” 224). In this view, difference isn’t quite deficiency in the eradicationist sense, but

multilingual writers'<sup>31</sup> native tongues and cultures are presumed to act as barriers that make it impossible for the writer to truly acquire the new, prestige language: the students' "perspectives are seen as being shaped by their respective cultures and languages, requiring inordinate effort to reorientate to other discourses" (224). Thus, "such an attitude is to orientate toward difference as a problem all over again. Sometimes this can take a deterministic bent. The cultural uniqueness of students is treated as *preventing* them from becoming successful writers in English" (224). Anger at the misperception that the Oakland School Board was doing this in the late 1990s, giving up on teaching SE to AAE users out of a belief they couldn't handle it, contributed to the Ebonics controversy.

Many translingual scholars have also charged pluralism with perpetuating the presumption of discrete codes. Canagarajah argues that "dominant models of global Englishes" aren't sufficient for fully understanding the complexity of plural English. As he sees it, current thinking places too much emphasis on identifying or studying discrete varieties; for example, "Though it pluralizes English, WE still anchors the emergent varieties and their functions in terms of one set of norms or another" (*Translingual Practice* 59).

Scholars have also revisited *SRTOL*, which following Bizzell and Lamos, and based on my reading of the text, I interpret as a pluralist document. These scholars don't disqualify the pluralist *intention* of *SRTOL*, but argue that by "solidif[ying] a clear distinction between 'home' and 'school' or 'public' language varieties," *SRTOL* "underwrote at least some pedagogies designed to encourage students to learn privileged

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<sup>31</sup> Canagarajah focuses on L2 writers here, but I suggest his writing in this case can also be extended to users of marked native varieties of American English.



codes via contrastive analysis” (Jordan summarizing Wible 369). This critique fits in with charges that pluralism enshrines the notion of “separate” codes in ways that can be unproductive and unhelpful. Jordan identifies this break from the enumerative aspect of *SRTOL* and pluralism as a way that “the translingual approach takes a full step toward realizing pluralism” (369), by “replacing assumptions about language stability and immediate evaluations of language appropriateness with an orientation to ways in which all language users are capable of purposeful deliberation across codes” (369).

#### **Approach 4: Translingualism**

As Lu and Horner acknowledge, “*translingual* as a point of entry with no predefined, predetermined outcome is subject to competing inflections” (“Introduction” 207). So I don’t pretend what I present here is the definitive explanation of translingualism; instead, I offer my understanding of how the approach best helps me address my research questions about language attitudes and their influence on the profession.

Translingualism builds upon pluralism in numerous ways. It emphasizes benefits for self-identified monolingual users of a mainstream standard. It also calls for instructors to adopt a “disposition of openness and inquiry toward language and language differences” (Lu and Horner, “Translingual Literacy” 585) which involves interrogating our own language identities and ways of reading unfamiliar discourses. This critical interrogation helps us better challenge the common, flawed, beliefs about correctness often cited as reason to resist pluralism. This disposition is one of many ways I find a translingual approach to be particularly valuable for questions of response to nonstandard varieties of English.

In “Language Difference,” Horner et al. align translingualism with the “English Plus” movement, which I have previously identified as part of the pluralist movement, writing that “in line with the English Plus policy, a translingual approach supports efforts to increase the number of languages and language varieties that students know, and to deepen their knowledge of these” (308). But the authors then present translingualism as a *new* kind of pluralism, when they write, “we seek to move beyond an additive notion of multilingualism. We call for working to achieve fluency *across* differences in our reading and writing, speaking and listening” (307, my emphasis). Additionally, Horner et al. argue, “mastery must be redefined to include the ability of users to revise the language that they must also continuously be learning—to *work with and on, not just within*, what seem its conventions and confines” (307, my emphasis).

Drawing on Horner et al., I argue that translingualism improves on pluralism because, while the two approaches share an underlying belief in linguistic equality, translingualism challenges the status quo more effectively by articulating new ways of reading and changes to professionalization:

In short, a translingual approach argues for (1) honoring the power of all language users to shape language to specific ends; (2) recognizing the linguistic heterogeneity of all users of language both within the United States and globally; and (3) directly confronting English monolingualist expectations by researching and teaching how writers can work with and against, not simply within, those expectations. Viewing differences not as a problem but as a resource, the translingual approach promises to revitalize the teaching of writing and language. (Horner et al., “Language Difference” 305)

In previous writing, I have included translingualism under the umbrella of pluralism, as have scholars much more established than myself. It does make sense, in some regard, to perceive translingualism as an extension of pluralism (the newer approach certainly owes much to the older one). However, I suggest that we now differentiate between them. One particularly important distinction is that the *trans* in translingualism emphasizes the interconnection between languages and varieties, whereas pluralism emphasized their multiplicity but allowed for an assumption of separateness. Translingualism views language and dialect not as discrete, self-contained entities, but interconnected codes.

In translingual pedagogy, difference is used as a resource and opportunity for critical inquiry:

[S]tudents can investigate, in order to make more conscious use of, differences in all features of written language, including syntax, punctuation, formatting, media, organization, and genre, addressing these in terms of their interrelations. They will gain fluency in working across language differences in all these areas, instead of attempting to achieve a chimerical fluency in one language alone. (Horner et al., “Language Difference” 312)

This vision of translingual pedagogy provides numerous opportunities for entry, based on student and/or teacher interests in grammar, multi-modal composition, or other areas of focus. And regardless of the point of entry, it promotes metalinguistic awareness, with students exploring difference and building on existing, intersecting skill sets.

I also believe translingual theory has recently taken an important step in combating critiques against it, by bringing to light and challenging underlying assumptions. A common reactive critique against pluralism and translingualism is that

while celebrating linguistic difference is a nice ideal, in reality, many people—including faculty throughout the university, prospective employers, and other gatekeepers—still subscribe to viewpoints like SLI and Appropriacy Reasoning. So even if we personally find such theories flawed, we (English teachers) must still prepare our students to operate within the system’s rules. However, Lu and Horner argue against this idea; they propose that “when responding to attacks on specific language practices, we need to contest, rather than work within, the assumptions underlying the ideological frameworks of the arguments to which we are responding” (“Translingual Literacy” 583). That is, if we engage assimilationist arguments on their terms, we are implicitly accepting the underlying warrants of those arguments.

Translingualism asks us to change how we approach encounters with unfamiliar discourses. Unlike monolingualism, “translingualism teaches language users to assume and expect that each new instance of language use brings the need and opportunity to develop new ways of using language, and to draw on a range of language resources” (Horner et al., “Language Difference” 312). Such a disposition stands to benefit any language user by helping them build on rhetorical flexibility and think critically about language. Such skills are not only valuable in the study of the humanities but also necessary in a multicultural world: “[t]he ability to negotiate differences and to improvise ways to produce meaning across language differences with whatever language resources are available is becoming increasingly necessary, not only to careers and commerce, but to the chances for peace and justice” (312-313).

Another benefit of the translingual approach is that it complicates the dichotomy between “multilinguals” and “monolinguals.” In translingualism, language difference is

assumed to exist on a spectrum, as is heteroglossia; for example, on one end, you may have a person who is “monolingual” but uses several varieties of that one language, and at the other end of the spectrum you may have a person who speaks multiple languages and uses multiple varieties of those languages. Taking this perspective requires challenging the World English model, which enables the assumption that natively spoken Inner Circle varieties of language—those spoken in countries like the US, UK, Canada, and Australia, where monolingualism or primacy in English describe most speakers—are homogenous (Canagarajah, *Translingual Practice* 57). So, for example, the Inner Circle variety of American English presumably represents one norm. Such a view enables the marginalization of minority native speakers of a language—such as southern white varieties, Boston English, AAEs, etc.—as not full members of the “Inner Circle.” In a sense, they aren’t accorded native speaker status by “the dominant models of global Englishes” (57). Breaking from the WE view in this regard, the translingual approach argues that “translingual practice [is] the process whereby native speaker varieties have also been developing” (57).

Canagarajah argues that “Those who are considered monolingual are typically proficient in multiple registers, dialects, and discourses of a given language....all of us have translingual competence, with differences in degree and not in kind” (*Translingual Practice* 8). So another advantage of translingualism is that it more accurately describes language users. And as translingual competence is a term that can apply to any user of language, translingual pedagogy is appropriate for any student of language. We can best describe translingual competence as existing on a spectrum. A Spanish-English bilingual will make shifts when they alternate between those two languages that are more salient,

in a primarily English context, than the shifts a monolingual makes between registers or varieties. Yet, when I instinctively adjust my phonology, word choice, and grammar in conversation with my southern (white) English-using grandmother, I perform much the same fundamental move as a Spanish-English bilingual who shifts into Spanish in conversation with her Spanish-speaking grandmother. If I converse with my grandmother entirely in a southern English variety, and the Spanish-English bilingual uses only Spanish with her own grandmother, those are examples of what composition calls *code-switching*, which will be further discussed in Chapter Three. The same rhetorical abilities apply to code-meshing contexts. In conversing with her parents, my friend Benu, a first-generation Indian-American, shifts seamlessly back and forth between English and Bengali.<sup>32</sup> This is an example of *code-meshing*, also further discussed in Chapter Three. However, Benu also speaks multiple types of English, including the discourse of her profession in the mental health field, so she may also code-mesh with her adolescent clients. Though I am not fully conversant in any language but English, I do speak multiple Englishes and may shift between them in conversations: when speaking with my mother, I may use double modals like *might could* (a common feature in our shared Appalachian variety) along with some jargon of my profession that she, also an educator, will understand.

Rebecca Lorimer Leonard points out the different material conditions facing, respectively, monolinguals' and multilinguals' experiences; as a result of these different experiences, Leonard argues, multilinguals cultivate rhetorical flexibility more easily than monolinguals do. However, monolinguals still have rhetorical flexibility, though it

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<sup>32</sup> Much linguistic scholarship has explored such blending by multilinguals—a fascinating area of inquiry that is well beyond the scope of this dissertation.

may be less salient. Like Canagarajah, Leonard, conceives of the range of variation available to individual speakers as existing on a spectrum<sup>33</sup>, instead of being strictly divided between monolinguals on the one hand and multilinguals on the other:

[M]ono- and multilinguals differ ‘not on number of languages, but on amount and diversity of experience and use’ because ‘all language knowledge is socially contingent and dynamic no matter how many language codes one has access to’ .... Monolinguals may simply have communicated under different lived conditions than multilingual individuals, and thus have fewer opportunities to consciously tune themselves toward language dynamism. (243, quoting Hall, Cheng, and Carlson)

But “[t]his is not to say that multilingual writers are smarter or more linguistically advanced than monolingual writers” (Leonard 243). Leonard quotes Rita Franceschini’s suggestion that “a monolingual can be as dynamic and variable in his or her use of language” (Franceschini qtd. in Leonard 243) as a multilingual, since members of both groups are “just exploiting the inherent characteristics of language variability on the wider or smaller scale of languages they can use” (Franceschini qtd. In Leonard 243).<sup>34</sup> Yes, multilinguals may have more seemingly distinct resources at their disposal and be more prepared to shuttle, switch, or mesh in more circumstances. But “rhetorical attunement” is arguably as inherent a human ability as the capacity to learn language itself, and part of being a language user in the world.

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<sup>33</sup> Leonard, Canagarajah, and other translingual scholars’ conceptions of the spectrum of translingual competence is not identical, and may bear further analysis in other projects. Here, I treat them as analogous.

<sup>34</sup> I appreciate how Leonard “flips the script” here, or at least the monolingualist script. Monolinguals, not multilinguals, need defending in this construction.

This “difference of degree and not kind” conception is another way in which translingualism is relevant for all language users, not only language minorities.<sup>35</sup> There is often hesitation about translingualism not being applicable, or even useful, for all students, especially native speakers of mainstream varieties—who are usually white and middle-class. This is something I’ve encountered in discussing my research with colleagues, who often see language variety as a topic that should only be addressed in classes with significant proportions of minoritized language users. Instructors with majority-white/mainstream students may balk<sup>36</sup> at the translingual approach if they see translingual pedagogy as only appropriate in association with “those deemed linguistically ‘other’” (Lu and Horner, “Translingual Literacy” 585); they may presume that mainstream users are already negotiating academic discourse, or assume such students’ transition to college poses less of a risk to their identity than it would if they were non-mainstream users. Lu and Horner comment on this phenomenon, pointing out that when “arguments for a translingual approach” are interpreted primarily “as addressing the language practices and needs of only those writers defined and recognized by dominant culture as different from the sociolinguistic norm,” then “those identified as English monolinguals are seen as beyond the purview or concern of teachers and scholars taking a translingual approach” (“Translingual Literacy” 585). But such students are not beyond the purview of translingualism.

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<sup>35</sup> Though it does seem problematic that one feels it necessary to emphasize the benefits for mainstream users.

<sup>36</sup> Instructors may also be mindful of not making minority students uncomfortable by singling them out in class, or implying they speak a variety the other students might recognize as stigmatized. Such hesitation is understandable, and needs to be addressed; it would certainly be a promising topic for discussion in translingual professionalization.



The problem with such hesitancy is two-fold: first, it suggests that racially and socially conscious discussions of language are marginal, even remedial, concerns. Second, it prevents mainstream language users from developing the degree of socially and racially conscious rhetorical flexibility that is deemed a necessary writing goal for minority language users. Are we just promoting “rhetorical flexibility” for minority language users as a euphemism for remediation, a promotion of appropriacy logic? If not—and I hope we are not doing that—if rhetorical flexibility is a high-level learning outcome, then we should seek to help all students realize it. Otherwise, we’re saying you only need to be able to assess a situation, draw on multiple traditions, and make strategic decisions about which code or codes to use if your home variety isn’t good enough—if you need to be assimilated. We are unethically placing a larger share of the communicative burden on minority language users than mainstream users, instead of asking the latter group to check their privilege.

So translingual proponents need to be as clear as possible about what we are advocating. Yes, translingualism has grown out of concerns about marginalization of linguistic minorities, who in the U.S. are often people of color. However, the translingual approach is not only applicable for students of color, or white students, from nonmainstream backgrounds. It is a useful and necessary way to influence pedagogy for all students.

### **Theoretical Underpinning of Translingualism**

In the assimilation approach, the situation usually determines what code is “appropriate”; in such a case, the definition of “appropriate” is (pre-)determined by powerful forces outside the speaker’s control. However, I read translingual approaches as

providing more agency for writers, even enabling the writer to challenge their audience by introducing them to unexpected variety and instability.

Placing more emphasis on speaker agency helps counter an argument often lobbed at pluralism, that it ignores language users' desires. Lu and Horner's definition of translingual agency in "Translingual Literacy" bears considering:

A translingual approach thus defines agency operating in terms of the need and ability of individual writers to map and order, remap and reorder conditions and relations surrounding their practices, as they address the potential discrepancies between the official and practical, rather than focusing merely on what the dominant has defined as the exigent, feasible, appropriate and stable 'context.' ("Translingual Literacy" 591)

Similarly, Canagarajah writes that "translingual practice...might find representation in a text that approximates and reconfigures 'standard English'" (*Translingual Practice* 8).

Translingualism does not ignore the prevalence of belief systems incompatible with translingualism, such as SLI and Appropriacy Reasoning. It is aware of these belief systems and seeks to help writers become more informed about those systems, as well as the different rhetorical situations writers may face, and the different possible codes, registers, languages, and so forth at a writer's disposal. A translingual user, no matter their language background, may choose to write in SE. But translingualism, like pluralism, differs from eradicationism and assimilationism in that it does not *privilege* SE. And unlike assimilationist approaches—and perhaps pluralism—translingualism

prioritizes writer agency in a significant way. Indeed, writer agency<sup>37</sup> may be at the heart of the translingual approach.

Importantly, and related to this emphasis on agency, translingualism is influenced by a principle of anti-racism. Inoue identifies translingualism as an aspect of the anti-racist project (59). Like many scholars, Inoue distinguishes between “racism as a term that references personal prejudice or bigotry” (4) and structural racism. The latter form of racism is what he is concerned with combatting in composition (4)<sup>38</sup>. He specifically calls on educators to resist colorblindness, writing, “Don’t tell me I shouldn’t see race and that’s the answer to racism....Waiting is complicity in disguise” (24). He points out the importance of studying structural racism in composition:

Racism is a product of racialized structures that themselves tend to produce unequal, unfair, or uneven social distributions, be they grades, or access to education, or the expectations for judging writing. Conversely, antiracist projects must be consciously engaged in producing structures that themselves produce fair results for all racial formations involved. (53)

Translingual pedagogy, by allowing students to draw on and work within a variety of codes, by refusing to privilege SE, and by explicitly interrogating power structures, can be such an anti-racist project.

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<sup>37</sup> In this way, it is in line with what Eckert identifies as the third wave of variation research, which emphasizes speaker agency. As Eckert writes, “The emphasis on stylistic practice in the third wave places speakers not as passive and stable carriers of dialect, but as stylistic agents, tailoring linguistic styles in ongoing and lifelong projects of self-construction and differentiation” (97-98).

<sup>38</sup> Of course overt racism should be combatted, but it seems that should go without saying in the university. Structural racism, because it is often invisible, requires a more explicit call to action.

## Critiques of, and Future Directions for, Translingualism

Critiques of translingualism help us to be conscientious about this promising, but potentially unwieldy, approach. Matsuda warns scholars not to get ahead of ourselves, embracing a theory or set of theories we don't fully understand ("Lure")—essentially reminding us of the benefit of making theories overt instead of letting them remain tacit and unexamined.

In an article for *College English's* recent forum on translingualism, Keith Gilyard remarks, somewhat tongue-in-cheek: "The arc of moral composition studies is long, King might say, but it bends towards translingualism" ("The Rhetoric" 284). While generally supportive, Gilyard is one of several scholars who raises questions and concerns about future directions of the still-evolving approach. In particular, he warns that translingual scholars should avoid "flatten[ing] language differences" (286). Though I've cited translingualism's applicability to every language user as a benefit of the approach, Gilyard warns that in portraying "the translanguaging subject...as a sort of linguistic everyperson" (285) we run the risk of eliding the fact that linguistic discrimination causes more harm to some language users than others (285-6). Invoking anti-racism, he writes:

[T]o be attractive to the widest range of folks invested in combatting pernicious language instruction—in some cases the linguistics of white supremacy, to make it plain—translingualism has to be sure to promote analyses of language, diversity, and power that steer clear of any formulation that might be interpreted as a sameness-of-difference model. (286)

That is, to continue to be relevant, translingualism can't ignore the role that power imbalances play in causing some nonstandard ways of using language to face harsher stigma than others.

Similarly, Vivette Milson-Whyte argues that translingual arguments need to be careful not to forget to “first establish the legitimacy” of stigmatized nonstandard varieties before inviting students to work across or combine codes (119). She also warns that translingualism shouldn't function as an excuse for appropriation. “[S]tandard languages can seem to gobble up others,” she points out (123); and “[m]ainstream students, invited to engage in blending styles and codes, may not value the difference in minoritized varieties: once blended into the dominant code, minoritized varieties—previously considered as different, albeit subordinate—can be virtually forgotten” (123).

Jay Jordan points out that most scholarship on translingualism to date has taken a human-centric bent, and argues that the approach could benefit from more conversation with material rhetorics and object-oriented ontologies. “A vital step beyond recognizing cultural and linguistic diversity already in classrooms,” he proposes, “is recognizing the ontological diversity there as well” (379). Material approaches to translingualism could consider how geographical environments, sensory experiences, germs, weather, and other non-human-centric factors contribute to translingual communication (378-380). Such an approach could help us use translingualism to interrogate inequality in the U.S. (e.g., by looking how language difference intersects with access to technology, writing environments, etc.). Other scholarship has focused on translingualism's implications for transfer (Leonard and Nowacek), multi-modal composition (Shipka) and genre (Bawarshi).

## Conclusion

In “Audience Addressed, Audience Invoked,” Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford discuss debates over the nature of “audience” in rhetoric and composition. In one view, which they term “audience addressed,” the needs of the audience are primary; writers tailor their work to specific readers. In some forms of audience addressed, “the audience has the sole power of evaluating writing....the writer has less control than the audience over both evaluation and motivation” (158). I suggest that such an approach informs Appropriacy Reasoning, described above. When writers are expected to cater to an audience, and that audience expects SE, then under these logics, the writer should give the audience what they expect.

In another approach, which Ede and Lunsford call “audience invoked,” the writer creates their desired audience, assigns them roles: “the writer uses the semantic and syntactic resources of language to provide cues for the reader—cues which help to define the role or roles the writer wishes the reader to adopt in responding to the text” (160). In that paradigm, the writer’s desires take priority, and it is the audience’s responsibility to adapt (160-161). We might think of this audience invoked approach as underlying much of pluralism.

Ede and Lunsford propose a synthesis—an approach that both invokes and addresses audience. “A fully elaborated view of audience,” they write, “must balance the creativity of the writer with the different, but equally important, creativity of the reader” (169). Additionally, their approach emphasizes the importance of considering other aspects of the rhetorical situation and context, and the multiple perspectives of audience and author: “It must account for a wide and shifting range of roles for both addressed and

invoked audiences. And, finally, it must relate the matrix created by the intricate relationship of writer and audience to all elements in the rhetorical situation. Such an enriched conception of audience can help us better understand the complex act we call composing” (169-170).

This nuanced approach to audience is relevant to the translingual approach. The translingual approach does not ask writers to be subservient to the whims of their audience. It expects readers to be willing to engage with conventions and techniques that may be unfamiliar to them, to take up a share of the communicative burden. And it also maintains awareness that writer and reader both exist in a complex ecology where languages and ideas are always shifting and evolving, constantly working within and across difference to understand and convey new ideas, new meanings, new ways of meaning.

I think we as composition teachers have always—or at least, for the most part—had the best interests of our students in mind when we formulate our approaches to teaching writing and addressing language difference, even if we don’t always agree on how best to realize those interests. But I believe a translingual approach helps us engage with language difference in more informed, ethical, and efficacious ways than we previously have in our field. It allows us to practice and promote anti-racism, teach critical thinking and rhetorical flexibility, and prepare our students to be effective and ethical communicators in local, national, and global contexts. Translingual pedagogy, used well, can help us dispel the notions of the tired old joke I cited at the beginning of the chapter—to our students, our fellow Americans, and the world.

## CHAPTER 3: CODE-MESHING OVER CODE-SWITCHING

“You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”

—Inigo Montoya to Vizzini, *The Princess Bride*

“One thing I think we all have to keep in mind when we engage in debates about the terminology we use to represent our ideas is that the terms we use to discuss issues like language difference—code-segregation, code-switching, and code-meshing—are metaphors rather than transparent descriptors of reality.”—Juan C. Guerra, “From Code-Segregation to Code-Switching to Code-Meshing”

### Introduction

It is a truth universally acknowledged that scholars who share many of the same core values, goals, and ideas will still find something to disagree about. Sometimes, the disagreements are overt, voiced in conferences and in the pages of academic journals; that is the case among certain translingual scholars for the terms *code-switching* and *code-meshing*,<sup>39</sup> and I attempt to make sense out of that debate here. In other cases, the

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<sup>39</sup> In linguistic scholarship, the term *code-switching* signifies a wider range of linguistic practices than it does in composition scholarship and education research (see for example Eckert and Rickford’s edited collection *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation*). I do not use linguistic practices of identifying instances of intraspeaker variation, because I am primarily concerned with how educators use and understand the terms. However, the linguistic distinctions are still worth mentioning, as they alert us to the different ways speakers use multiple codes. In linguistics, types of code-switching can be subdivided into the following categories: *Intrasentential code-switching*, which is “[a]n alternation within a single sentence/utterance. For example, *I’m not going to school porque no me siento bien*” (Barrett 31, original italics); *Intersentential code-switching*, “An alternation that occurs between two sentences/utterances. For example, *I’m not going to school today. No me siento bien*” (31, original italics); *situational code-switching*, or “A pattern of alternation where one language is used in one context and another language is used in another context. An example would be using one language at home and another language at school” (31); *metaphorical code-switching*, which is “[u]sing two language in the same context, such as alternating between languages in a single conversation or using more than one language in a single piece of writing” (31), and *code-shifting*, which is “[m]oving from language to another over the course of one’s life span” (31). Rusty Barrett explains that linguists think of all five practices as *code-switching*, whereas educators are more likely to limit their definition of *code-switching* to the situation-based or lifespan-based (31); that is, unless they are linguistic scholars, when a primary, secondary, or post-secondary writing instructor uses the term *code-switching*, they are probably describing (and/or advocating) one or both of the following practices:



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choosing one variety over another, such as SE over Appalachian English, because of the setting, *or* giving up one variety altogether and taking up a new one (i.e., if I stop using Appalachian English and only use SE in all contexts). There is certainly an argument to be made for improving teacher education on the terminology of linguistics, but such an argument is beyond the scope of this project. Moreover, though I believe it would have many benefits, the task of educating a critical mass of teachers on linguistic terminology is a daunting one. For the time being, because I cannot presume most teachers have access to the linguistic vocabulary, I suggest that it makes more sense to limit my discussion to the dyad of terms I explore in this chapter.

disagreements are more tacit, unexamined; I argue that this is the case for underlying warrants and theories behind advocacy for *code-meshing*, and attempt to elucidate and delineate them.

This chapter has three sections. In the first section, I explore the impact of Vershawn Young's introduction of two terms, *code-switching*<sup>40</sup> and *code-meshing*, to the field of composition; each term has been taken up by numerous other scholars who adopt his definitions, such as Suresh Canagarajah, Frankie Condon, Melissa Lee, Sara Michael-Luna, Vivette Milson-Whyte, Nicole Stanford, Victor Villanueva, and Theresa Welford; in many cases, these scholars have expanded on or sought to further elucidate Young's initial definitions, but they accept his use of these terms and the basic definitions he begins with. However, not everyone has been enthusiastic about Young's newly introduced vocabulary, particularly Paul Kei Matsuda, who rejects Young's definition of *code-switching* as a synonym for bidialectism, arguing that the correct definition of *code-switching* encompasses what Young calls *code-meshing*; Juan C. Guerra has also resisted adopting Young's definitions, instead providing his own definitions for each term. In the first section of this chapter, I provide an overview of this debate; I ultimately argue in favor of the definitions of both *code-switching* and *code-meshing* found in the scholarship of Young and those who take up his definitions, but acknowledge the benefits of Guerra and Matsuda's critiques. I also discuss Young's essay, "'Nah, We Straight'" and describe why I believe it has been misread, contributing to some confusion over terminology.

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<sup>40</sup> Though the term *code-switching* itself long predates Young's work, he introduced it to composition with a new meaning and in combination with *code-meshing*, a term that was not part of composition jargon before he began writing about it.

In the second section of the chapter, I identify four underlying warrants, typically more tacit than overt, behind advocacy for code-meshing<sup>41</sup> pedagogies. As we will see, many scholars have argued in favor of code-meshing, though not always under that name. These scholars advocate writing practices that encourage writers to combine codes and/or draw on multiple linguistic resources in a single context. However, their reasons are rarely identical. Some base their proposals on pragmatism; some on the assumption that writers already code-mesh; some on a belief that code-meshing is an effective method for learning new codes; and finally, some advocate code-meshing on anti-racist grounds. Of course, more than one of these warrants can be, and often is, found in the work of the same scholar.

Finally, in the third section, I identify two competing theories of writer identity as it relates to code-meshing. Some proponents view code-meshing as a form that allows writers to be their authentic selves, while others promote code-meshing from a rhetorical attunement approach—they see code-meshing as a way writers can be more rhetorically savvy, and are less concerned about authenticity. This distinction is also connected to a debate over whether code-meshing is natural or learned, with “authentic voice” proponents being more likely to see code-meshing as intuitive, and rhetorical awareness proponents favoring the belief that effective code-meshing must usually be taught. However, these beliefs can and do exist in the same scholarship. I take the position that code-meshing can be both a representation of a writer’s identity and a demonstration of rhetorical savvy, and that it can also be both natural and learned, with “natural” code-meshing usually operating differently from “learned” code-meshing.

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<sup>41</sup> Each warrant can also function in a similar role for translingualism, but I do not mean to directly conflate translingualism and code-meshing; translingualism is an overarching approach and evolving paradigm, while code-meshing is one writing strategy favored by many translingual theorists and educators.

This authenticity/rhetorical awareness distinction is related to the four underlying warrants described above. However, the warrants are more interested in the act of writing, its sociopolitical repercussions and possibilities; the competing theories of writerly identity are more connected to the writer. Additionally, while the four underlying warrants in pro-code-meshing arguments often overlap and intersect, the different views of the writer are in direct competition. This dichotomy also shows how code-meshing is related to age-old questions about whether good writing itself is more learned or instinctive.

An in-depth exploration of these differences is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but they are worth noting here because they help us to further understand the intersecting belief systems that shape translingual scholarship and code-meshing pedagogies. They can also help us better understand how, as a discipline and as individual instructors, we theorize student writing.

### **I: Code-Switching “vs.” Code-Meshing**

This is a story about an argument over word choice. As a young scholar, Vershawn Young begins using a dyad of terms—*code-switching* and *code-meshing*—that many of his colleagues find useful and begin to take up. However, he works in a field where people care quite a lot about the relationship between the symbol and the symbolized; so conflict, controversy, and confusion ensue. In the end, no one is 100% satisfied, but the parties in question have contributed to a fascinating, if at times maddening, conversation.

As I struggled to write this chapter, I’ve gone back many times to the same thought—why can’t these scholars agree on what code-switching and code-meshing

mean? Why can't we find definitions that will make everyone happy, so we can stop squabbling over terminology and go back to focusing on our real work—figuring out how to make writing education more equitable, more worthwhile, for our students? I mean, I doubt any of us are in this for the money.

I take comfort in the belief that each of us who squabbles over terminology does so because we want to find the best words to explain the practices we promote, to describe our proposed teaching strategies, our beliefs about writing, in the clearest terms possible. Guerra reminds us that “the terms we use to discuss issues like language difference.... are actually *figurations*...politically informed accounts of alternative subjectivities designed to help us ‘learn to think differently about the subject, invent new frameworks, new images, new modes of thought’” (Guerra 38, quoting Braidotti, my emphasis). That is basically what we are doing—we're thinking about language differently these days, and that requires a struggle to choose new figurations.

Young published the article “Your Average Nigga” in *College Composition and Communication* in 2004; in that essay, he discussed the crises faced by many black male college students, who he argues often struggle to perform “white” habits well enough to survive in higher education while also maintaining a black masculine identity. As part of this argument, he criticizes the practice of *code-switching*, which he presents as a synonym for bi-dialectism by associating it with assimilationist pedagogies, including Lisa Delpit's (Young, “Your” 705); he equates code-switching with “telling [black students] to imitate a white newscaster” (705). He also cites Gilyard's *Voices of the Self* and implies that Gilyard uses *code-switching* in the same way he (Young) does. Young writes that in *Voices*:

Gilyard calls approaches like the one Delpit...encourage[s] ‘enforced educational schizophrenia’—because black students are forced to see themselves as embodying two different racial, linguistic, and cultural identities. Gilyard rightly recognizes the problem that code-switching presents and supports the notion of pluralism. Pluralism is a more democratic sociolinguistic theory than code-switching. (“Your” 705)

Young, then, would probably not say he originated the term *code-switching* as a synonym for bi-dialectism, but might say that Gilyard did. This is one of many places where it gets tricky. Allow me to briefly go back to Gilyard’s *Voices*, as it should provide some helpful context.

A close reading of Gilyard’s *Voices* does not reveal quite as clear an association of assimilationist bi-dialectism with the term *code-switching* as Young provides in “Your Average” and later works. But such a reading is certainly possible. Gilyard only uses the term *code-switching* a few times, in a three-page span, in *Voices*. Describing how he learned to be bidialectal, Gilyard briefly discusses code-switching; he includes Elgin’s definition of the term, the “ability to move back and forth among languages, dialects and registers with ease, as demanded by the social situation” (Elgin qtd. in *Voices* 31), as well as Penalosa’s, “a strategy by which the skillful speaker uses his knowledge of how language choices are interpreted in his community to structure the interaction so as to maximize outcomes favorable to himself” (Penalosa qtd. in Gilyard 31).

On one hand, these definitions allow for a more flexible reading of the possible manifestations of code-switching than what I, following Young, have been using. On the other hand, the real-life examples and the context situate Gilyard’s “code-switching”

within bidialectism. He provides an example of his mother, “the chief agent helping me learn to code-switch” (31); explaining that she “is a bidialectal speaker, capable of producing Black English and Standard English as well” (30). Gilyard explains that his mother would use SE with “a grocer, a salesman, a doctor, or a stranger...and then turn around, watch me carelessly knock a bowl of cereal on the floor, and exclaim, ‘Now look what you done did!’” (30-31). This, to Gilyard, is code-switching. Elsewhere in this section of *Voices*, Gilyard writes, “each case of *shifting or mixing* happens as the child is experiencing conflicting social demands” (32, my italics)—it’s not clear if *or* functions as a contrast word or as a stylistic substitution for *and*. Both readings make sense within the context, but reading *or* tells us that shifting is *different from mixing*. Finally, one of Gilyard’s examples of code-switching is of a young girl who, in telling a story, “launched into a very formal narrative which was notable for containing no contractions. At the end of the story she visibly relaxed, and from there on freely used contractions” (Troike qtd. in Gilyard 32-33). All of this is to say that if Young took his definition of *code-switching* from Gilyard, I don’t see a problem with his logic.

Now, back to Young: in the 2004 article “Your Average Nigga,” and then in the 2007 book of the same name, he clearly uses *code-switching* to represent style-shifting from one situation to another—and he is sharply critical of this practice. In *Your Average Nigga*, he writes, “Code switching is racially biased, requiring blacks to separate the codes that bespeak their identities from those they use at school” (7). As in the 2004 article, he criticizes Delpit for “propos[ing] a pedagogy of ‘linguistic performance’ where teachers are supposed to teach students to be bidialectal or to code switch or, in other words, to use BEV [Black English Vernacular] at home and in black communities and

WEV [White English Vernacular] in school” (*Your* 95). Keep in mind that in the work Young cites, the 1995 book *Other People’s Children*, Delpit herself *does not* use the term code-switching.<sup>42</sup> It is Young’s word, borrowed either from Gilyard or from another source, and adapted to suit Young’s purposes—to provide a foil with which to contrast the writing solution he proposes, *code-meshing*.

Young introduces *code-meshing*<sup>43</sup> first in the 2004 article “Your Average Nigga,” but in an endnote:

As an alternative to code switching, I argue in my doctoral dissertation...that true linguistic and identity integration would mean allowing students to do what some linguists have called *code mixing*, to combine dialects, styles, and registers. Code mixing, or what I call *code meshing*, means allowing black students to mix a black English style with an academic register (much as I do in this essay). (713)

The doctoral dissertation he mentions became the book *Your Average Nigga*, where Young argued even more strongly for code-meshing throughout the main text. However, perhaps because Young was not well-known at the time and because the original use of *code-meshing* appeared in an endnote, Suresh Canagarajah is often mistakenly credited with originating the concept. For his part, Young does not seem bothered by this. He credits Canagarajah with popularizing the term, writing in a later article, “it’s [Canagarajah’s] theoretical and practical scholarship on the concept that has propelled it from an explanation I put in a footnote to a subject of primary focus in journal articles, edited volumes, dissertations, and published monographs” (“Keep” 139). Though “the

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<sup>42</sup> At least it does not appear in the index or upon a keyword skim.

<sup>43</sup> Though Young did introduce the term *code-meshing*, he didn’t coin it; he credits Gerald Graff for coining the term during a conversation in Graff’s office, as Young, then a graduate student, discussed possible dissertation topics with the senior scholar (Young et al., *Other People’s English*, xiii).



term and its applications have been just as astutely enlarged by others as it has been ardently debated” (139), Young and Canagarajah’s work currently makes up the backbone of code-meshing scholarship.

As mentioned above, numerous scholars have since taken up Young’s definitions of code-meshing and code-switching (e.g. Condon, Milson-Whyte, Stanford, Villanueva), and expanded on his work in some way. However, I focus here on the work of Canagarajah, in a noteworthy solo publication and a co-authored piece with Sara Michael-Luna. In the 2006 *College Composition and Communication* article “The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued,” Canagarajah uses the term “code-meshing” in the same way Young does. He promotes it on the grounds that code-meshing can help students master the dominant discourse. He then presents Geneva Smitherman’s article “CCCC’s Role in the Struggle for Language Rights” as an example of how code-meshing is already present in academic writing and argues that her strategic deployment of AAE increases the effectiveness of her argument.

In a 2007 article for the *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, Sara Michael-Luna and Canagarajah further explicate code-switching and code-meshing, and extend code-meshing to multilingual contexts. However, adding to the confusion for readers interested in meshing/switching distinction, they A: identify code-meshing as a *form* of code-switching (57), but B: use code-switching as a *foil* for code-meshing. They explain *code-switching* as “involve[ing] items at the lexical or syntactic level and has focused on balanced bilingual language use” (58). In their view, code-switching sees the multiple codes as separate from each other, and maintains the norms of each language. Resistance of existing norms is not a concern. Use of multiple codes means “switch[ing] or

shuttl[ing] between them” (58), so that “[t]he discourses (e.g. academic discourse, vernacular discourse) are kept distinct even when they are integrated” (58). This is essentially the definition I have been using.

In contrast to *code-switching*, they “present *code meshing* as an ideologically informed consideration of a specific form of code-switching behavior in writing” (Michael-Luna and Canagarajah 57, original italics). They clearly establish code-meshing as a *type* of code-switching, seemingly drawing on the common use of the latter term in applied linguistics. And yet, the essay teases out how code-meshing contains qualities *not* found in code-switching. So whether it is their intention or not, Michael-Luna and Canagarajah implicitly identify two types of code-switching—one that is expansive enough to include code-meshing, and another that is so limited it renders code-meshing necessary as a second option. The limited form involves those qualities outlined in the paragraph above, keeping varieties discrete. In contrast to the ambiguous articulation of code-switching, the definition of code-meshing they present is much clearer: “Code meshing is a communicative device used for specific rhetorical and ideological purposes in which a multilingual speaker intentionally integrates local and academic discourse as a form of resistance, reappropriation, and/or transformation of the academic discourse” (56). They then further delineate specific qualities of code-meshing and how those properties differ from code-switching (58).

For instance, according to Michael-Luna and Canagarajah, while in code-switching the languages used have “[p]rimarily, separate morphosyntactic systems” (Michael-Luna and Canagarajah 58), in code-meshing there is one “*integrated* morphosyntactic system” (58, my emphasis); code-switching deals with “[l]exical, phrasal,

or syntactic level switches only” (58), but in code-meshing, “[r]hetorical and discursal mixing [is] also under consideration” (58). Finally, unlike code-switching, which is content to maintain individual language norms and not upset the apple cart, code-meshing is “[u]sed as a strategy to resist identities and redefine discourses” (58) and a writing form where the “[n]orms of both languages [are] resisted and reconstructed into new wholes” (58). So code-switching, according to these scholars, is a way that language users combine codes while fundamentally maintaining those codes’ separateness. Words and phrases might be mixed, but the status quo is preserved; in code-meshing, on the other hand, the codes blend at the morphosyntactic level, rhetorical and discursive features are available for blending, and the status quo is challenged.

Unfortunately, Michael-Luna and Canagarajah do not provide an example of code-switching, but based on their description, it seems likely that they would include under the heading of “code-switching” the example given by Gilyard, of his mother using SE with businesspersons and then shifting suddenly to AAE to admonish her child (Gilyard, *Voices* 30-31); however, they do provide examples of code-meshing, in children’s books used in a bilingual Spanish/English first-grade class. The teacher in Michael-Luna and Canagarajah’s classroom study selected the book *My Family/En Mi Familia* because it combines languages in ways that help children who are native Spanish speakers learn English: though it is accompanied by a Spanish translation for novice English readers, the main text is primarily in English—but code-meshed to include Spanish vocabulary, as in the sentence “The *curandera* came every day for about two weeks. She would burn copal incense, read a prayer and brush my sister with the branches from a *ruda* plant” (Lomas Garza qtd. in Michael-Luna and Canagarajah 61,

original italics). Additionally, the book, like many others chosen by the teacher, has “content knowledge and narrative structures common in Spanish language books” (61). The blend of Spanish-language storytelling traditions and English vocabulary is presented as rhetorical code-meshing. The teacher often also chooses books that use Spanish sentence structure and primarily Spanish vocabulary, but include English vocabulary throughout, such as “El parquet es lindo –dice mi abuela. Yo sé por qué lo dice. Yo también creo que el parquet es hermoso, beautiful”<sup>44</sup> (Dorros qtd. in Michael-Luna and Canagarajah 61). In this case, no English translation was provided; the text was selected to help students learn the English word *beautiful*.

In composition studies, however, much scholarship on code-meshing focuses not on multilingual students but so-called monolinguals who speak stigmatized English varieties. After first introducing the code-meshing/switching distinction in 2004 and 2007, Young takes on the dyad more aggressively in the oft-cited 2009 *JAC* article “‘Nah, We Straight’: The Case Against Code-Switching.” He writes, “The prevailing definition [of code-switching], the one most educators accept, and the one I’m against, advocates language substitution, the linguistic translation of Spanglish<sup>45</sup> or AAE into standard English” (50). In “‘Nah,’” Young criticizes the expectation that minority language speakers who wish to enter “higher” circles—the middle-class; university education; etc.—participate in the practice previously identified as “bi-dialectism.” He connects code-switching to institutional racism by arguing that it reifies a separate-but-

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<sup>44</sup> The English translation of this sentence is: “‘The park is beautiful,’ says Grandma. I know what she means. I think the park is beautiful, too, *beautiful*” (Michael-Luna and Canagarajah 62).

<sup>45</sup> For Young, Spanglish is not an example of code-switching, though it would be to many linguists. In later works, Young provides more clarification of such terminology, as in 2014’s co-authored *Other People’s English*.

equal mentality and requires AAE users to develop a double consciousness, writing “to teach students that two language varieties cannot mix and must remain apart belies the claim of linguistic equality and replicates the same phony logic behind Jim Crow legislation” (53).

### **Critiques of *Code-Switching* as Synonym for Bidialectism**

In what seems to have been a coincidence, Young was not the only scholar to begin using *code-switching* as a synonym for bidialectism in the early 2000s. Secondary-education scholars Rebecca Wheeler and Rachel Swords used the term in a 2004 article, “Codeswitching: Tools of Language and Culture Transform the Dialectically Diverse Classroom,” and a 2006 book, *Code Switching: Teaching Standard English in Urban Classrooms*. Like Young, they defined *code-switching* as a form of situational shifting, where nonprestige varieties of language were considered technically valid, but reserved for informal and non-school contexts, while SE was required for most formal and academic assignments.<sup>46</sup> Unlike Young, however, Wheeler and Swords advocated code-switching.

This is where Paul Matsuda comes in. Matsuda, who believes *code-switching* should not be used in the way Young, Wheeler, and Swords do, has been critical of each of those scholars for their use of the term. His critique of Young can’t be fully separated from his critique of Wheeler and Swords, whose 2006 book aims to assist language

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<sup>46</sup> As Matsuda has correctly pointed out, this definition of code-switching describes *diglossia* (Matsuda, “It’s the Wild West” 133), a form of bilingualism or bidialectism in which one code is reserved for “high” situations and another reserved for “low” situations (Van Herk and Miller 517). Neither Wheeler and Swords, nor Young, appear to have used the term *diglossia*, however, and only Young explicitly identified this form of code-switching as socially imbalanced.

educators in “help[ing] our students transition from home grammar to school grammar in the classroom” (qtd. in Young, “Nah” 50).<sup>47</sup> Though Wheeler and Swords strive to help educators recognize the legitimacy of AAE, and use it as a resource, their ultimate goal is to promote assimilation to SE. Matsuda credits, or rather, blames, Wheeler and Swords for coining *code-switching* as a synonym for bidialectism (“It’s the Wild West” 133), and laments the resulting negative connotation of the term; he says, “[t]his incongruous definition became quite popular, also gaining currency among U.S. college composition specialists. Yet, Wheeler [and Swords]’s idea quickly became a target of criticism, bringing down the term ‘code-switching’ along with it” (133). One can see why Matsuda would be bothered by the seemingly sudden development of a negative connotation for a term which, in his experience, does not deserve it.

Matsuda argues that in applied linguistics, *code-switching* has a more expansive meaning than as a synonym for bi-dialectism, because *code-switching* can operate the same way as the proposed *code-meshing*. He argues, “A prime example of lawlessness in the linguistic frontier of U.S. college composition...is the debate surrounding the terms *code-switching* and *code-meshing*” (“It’s the Wild West” 133, italics in original). Based on the claim that “most applied linguists would not use the term [code-switching]” as a synonym for bidialectism (133), he proposes that “the incongruous use of the term ‘code-switching’ ought to be stopped” (134). Matsuda’s concerns are that if compositionists uncritically adopt the term *code-switching*, they will risk confusing readers from applied linguistics, and embarrassing themselves in international settings where, to non-

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<sup>47</sup> Notably, Wheeler and Swords explicitly take up the color-blind approach described in Chapter two, writing, “We suggest that you refrain from referring to race when describing code-switching. It’s not about race” (qtd. in Young, “Nah” 50).

Americans, code-meshing is not a novel concept (135-6). However, Matsuda does not propose an alternative term,<sup>48</sup> so the reader is left unsure as to what she is to do if she not allowed to use the term *code-switching* in what Matsuda considers an “incongruous” way.

Problematically, Matsuda incorrectly attributes the coining of *code-switching* as synonym for bidialectism *solely* to Wheeler and Swords, and indirectly accuses Young of plagiarizing their definition. Though it is not the crux of his critique, this claim weakens Matsuda’s argument because it suggests he has not given Young a fair reading or sufficiently explored the background of the term under debate. Matsuda suggests that Young uncritically adopted the term from Wheeler and Swords and used it in *Your Average Nigga* (Matsuda, “It’s the Wild West” 133), but says that “[r]ather than citing Wheeler and Swords” (133), Young “characterized the term as ‘a popular concept and approach to language instruction’” (Matsuda, quoting Young, 133). However, Matsuda is wrong. As I demonstrated above, Young first wrote about *code-switching* in the 2004 article he published the same year as Wheeler and Swords’ “Codeswitching” article; it seems unlikely that he cribbed directly from them, given the pace of academic

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<sup>48</sup> Nicole Stanford’s “code-censoring” appears at first glance to be a possible alternative term for *code-switching*, but on closer examination, does not work as a direct synonym. However, it bears mentioning as a reminder that linguistically suppressive practices exist on a wide spectrum. Stanford describes *code-censoring* as a process by which “minority speakers have internalized dominant attitudes toward their verbal expression and are keeping quiet—that is, code-censoring—in the conversation of mankind” (122). She draws on her experience as a Cajun Vernacular English (CVE) user and explains that people for whom CVE is a heritage tongue often adopt the dominant perception of CVE as inferior, and reject it: many “upwardly mobile Cajuns who code-censor to speak ‘unmarked’ English disparage CVE as a dirty mixture of French and English” (127). So code-censoring is “a strategy to hide nonprivileged cultural markers from the audience” (127), assuming that “the burden of good communication rests on the shoulders of the speaker or writer” (127). Someone who code-censors willingly avoids understandable, but stigmatized, features: “If...I am filtering out cultural markers that do not actually impede the message but simply may offend my audience because of their prejudices... I am code-censoring” (127). Code-switching is imposed from the outside, but code-censoring is internalized; and while code-switching keeps up the pretense that all codes are equally valid, and encourages users to maintain use of both, code-censoring says that they are *not* equal, and encourages language loss.

publishing. In both “Your Average Nigga” the article and the book of the same name, Young uses the word *code-switching* multiple times, and does not cite Wheeler and Swords’ works at all—but that does not mean he got the term from them and just did not bother to cite them. Moreover, once he became aware of Wheeler and Swords’ work, he used it in his writing, criticizing them in his 2009 essay “‘Nah.’” So Matsuda does not seem to consider that Young may *not* have taken this term from Wheeler and Swords, but perhaps another source, such as Gilyard, who Young *does* cite in both the article “Your Average Nigga” and the book *Your Average Nigga*.

I also respectfully disagree with Matsuda’s argument that, as some readers may misunderstand the term *code-switching* when it is used as a synonym for bidialectism, it shouldn’t be used as such. Words take on new meanings over time. As Gee points out, “Meaning is not something locked away in heads. Meaning is something we negotiate and contest socially” (27). Compositionists taking up a new meaning of *code-switching* is part of that social negotiation. Additionally, “in actual contexts of use we must assign nuanced meanings that fit with or even help shape the context” (Gee 28). Compositionists who use the term *code-switching* in the way Matsuda disapproves of do so because it provides us with an easy-to-understand contrast to code-meshing, thereby helping to make our arguments about writing practices involving language variation more clear. It also helps us understand the “separate-but-equal” mentality that occurs when a nonprestige language user is asked to *switch* from a stigmatized to an un-stigmatized variety.

Second, there is always a possibility that your audience will not immediately understand every word or concept that you use, or they may have a slightly different



association with a term than you give it. But one reason that we read is to engage with new ideas, which sometimes involves negotiating polyvalence. Writers who code-mesh may place some of the communicative burden back on their audience; if they have made things understandable to an audience, and the audience is willing to work to understand a new term or concept, a word used in an unfamiliar way, or a slightly different kind of discourse, that seems fair. And as discussed in the previous chapter, in relation to Ede and Lunsford's "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked," translingual writing does not require writers to cater entirely to an audience, to take all of the communicative burden onto themselves. As Nichole Stanford, a Cajun Vernacular English (CVE) speaker who advocates that more scholars take up code-meshing in their own work, writes:

While I am responsible for being 'accurate, fair, interesting, and clear' in my delivery, as the *LB Brief: The Little, Brown Handbook* advises... I am not responsible for removing the fingers or prejudices with which my audiences chooses to plug its ears. That is no longer a failure to communicate on my part; *that is a failure to listen on the part of my audience.* (Stanford 128, my emphasis)

Just as I think people should unplug their ears of linguistic prejudices, I think scholars can understand when a writer is using a term in a new and useful way.

However, Matsuda makes a valid point when he writes, "at the end of the 2009 Watson conference, many participants seemed eager to embrace the term code-meshing and apply it to their teaching. Yet, few of the participants were able to define the term....The only sentiment that many seemed to share was this: Code-meshing, good; code-switching, bad" ("It's the Wild West" 134).<sup>49</sup> We do, I agree, need to be careful

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<sup>49</sup> A colleague who also participated in this discussion argues that Matsuda oversimplified the discussion, and that many participants took a more nuanced approach than Matsuda suggests.

about setting up such strict dichotomies, and further overt interrogation of code-meshing can help us better understand it and, if we so choose, incorporate it into our teaching.

In a 2012 talk, Juan C. Guerra takes a different tack from Matsuda's in critiquing Young's work. He doesn't dispute the use by compositionists of code-switching as a synonym for bidialectism. However, he delineates between two different kinds of code-switching: "progressive" and "conservative" ("From Code-Segregation" 33). I find Guerra's distinction to be thought-provoking, but ultimately unhelpful, only muddling the issue further. Guerra acknowledges that "code-switching has manifested itself in more conservative terms in first-year writing programs and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) settings" (33); one aspect of this conservative code-switching is "WAC's almost exclusive devotion to academic discourse at the expense of the linguistic and cultural repertoires students bring with them to the classroom" (33-34). In fact, he suggests this type of code-switching more closely resembles "code-segregation," his term for a type of eradication, than it does progressive code-switching (34), though for him *code-segregation*, *conservative code-switching*, *progressive code-switching*, and *code-meshing* are four distinct practices.

In contrast to the harmful conservative code-switching, Guerra identifies progressive code-switching as a feature of much K-12 pedagogy and research, writing, "In K-12 settings, an authentic commitment to a form of code-switching that advances the cause of social justice has manifested itself in the development of an array of carefully researched pedagogical approaches that value and use the languages and dialects students bring with them to the classroom" (33). He also says, "progressive proponents of code-switching...freely encourage disenfranchised students to engage in

practices that involve the meshing of codes” (34-35). I must admit that I did not find this distinction terribly helpful; Guerra does not provide examples, but implies that the difference between conservative and progressive code-switching is that the latter allows for code-meshing. In which case, progressive code-switching is almost another name for code-meshing.

Guerra argues that the translingual approach aligns with the goals of progressive code-switching proponents (“From Code-Segregation” 36), not just those of code-meshing<sup>50</sup> proponents, and criticizes Horner et al., authors of “Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach,” and Young and Aja Y. Martinez, editors of *Code-Meshing as World English*, for “defin[ing] code-switching in rigid and problematic terms” (36). Ultimately, Guerra takes the stance that both “[progressive] code-switching *and* code-meshing, rather than code-meshing alone, provide the best response at our disposal to make a difference in the lives of disenfranchised students” (37). Guerra’s talk reminds us that it is not easy to draw a neat line between *code-switching* and *code-meshing*, but it’s not clear what benefit we stand to gain by ascribing aspects of code-meshing to so-called “progressive” code-switching.

Guerra’s critique does remind us to distinguish between, on one hand, practices that treat non-prestige varieties as inferior to prestige varieties, and on the other hand, practices that treat all varieties as inherently equal *but* ask us to consider the rhetorical situation in which they are used. However, Guerra does not address the possibility that code-switching pedagogies will reinscribe existing inequities by advancing Appropriacy Reasoning, and he does not acknowledge Young’s important “separate-but-equal”

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<sup>50</sup> Guerra mistakenly credits Canagarajah for coining the term “code-meshing” (“From Code-Segregation” 35); I mention this not to be picky, but to comment on the confusion among scholars over the origination of these terms.

critique of code-switching. Thus, while perhaps not meaning to, he implicitly condones a status quo by which context—usually determined by prestige language users—decides appropriateness.

Moreover, part of Guerra's reason for supporting progressive code-switching comes from what I consider a too-restrictive definition of code-meshing. Guerra explains that he chose to code-switch, not code-mesh (by his definitions), for most of the talk because he wanted his non-Spanish-speaking audience members to be able to understand him; he says, "If I had kept code-meshing throughout my talk the way I did in the two middle paragraphs of my opening narrative" ("From Code-Segregation" 37)—which contained sentences with roughly half Spanish, half English vocabulary (29)—then audience members "with limited proficiency in Spanish would have had difficulty following the logic of my inquiry" (37). That explanation presumes that code-meshing necessarily involves making parts of a text incomprehensible to some audience members.

While we could certainly consider half-Spanish/half-English text to be code-meshed, it is but one type of code-meshing. Code-meshing that includes fewer Spanish terms would much more likely be comprehensible to a wider audience. As we saw in the children's book example cited by Michael-Luna and Canagarajah, Guerra could have used Spanish terminology familiar to most English speakers, or used Spanish words or phrases within textual locations where the audience could easily infer the meaning. For example, Victor Villanueva argues that his (Villanueva's) use of *tia* Margarita instead of Aunt Margarita is an example of code-meshing ("Forward" ix); *tia* is a word many non-Spanish-speakers know, or can easily infer from context. And code-meshing can also draw on multiple varieties of a single language, such as English, instead of from two or

more languages. As one example, take Smitherman's description of her failed effort to flirt with a good-looking basketball player: "this fine baller ignored my lil attempt at mackin" (*Word* 1). Few American readers would have trouble understanding Smitherman's meaning.

In recent years, several works have further elaborated on code-meshing, including Young et al.'s *Other People's English*, Young and Martinez's edited collection *Code-Meshing as World English*, and scholarship by Melissa Lee and Vivette Milson-Whyte. In the forward to *Other People's English*, Villanueva writes that he was initially skeptical of code-meshing, but eventually began to conceive of his existing writing practices as code-meshing:

I never did not mesh codes, languages, dialects in both English and in Spanish, registers of formality and informality. In my publications, I would write of *tia* Margarita, not Aunt Margarita....Or I could write this in an essay: 'Exile.

Alienation. What does one do when one becomes fully conscious of the alignment that arises from the exile of being racialized, of knowing something ain't right and there ain't no puttin' it right but can't be no ignoring the wrong?' ....I was

meshing more than switching. There is a difference, and it's an important one. (ix)

These works demonstrate the growing interest in code-meshing, and the endorsement of a renowned scholar like Villanueva adds legitimacy both to the term *code-meshing* and to its distinction from a *code-switching* defined as synonym for bidialectism. The growing interest in code-meshing also, of course, means that it is more important than ever to continue interrogating what code-meshing is and what it can do.

## **Interlude: In Defense of “‘Nah, We Straight’: An Argument Against Code-Switching”**

Misreading of some of Young’s arguments in “‘Nah’”—itself an excellent example of meshing AAE rhetoric and traditional academic discourse—may be partly responsible for the backlash here, and misunderstanding of the meshing/switching distinction. However, if we are willing to take up our share of the communicative burden when reading “‘Nah,’” treating it as AAE-informed scholarship using strategies such as circumlocution and implication, his definition becomes clear.

White readers with whom I share “‘Nah’” are sometimes initially confused about the distinction Young draws between code-meshing and code-switching. I’ve found that this is usually because it is a pro-code-meshing essay that begins with a story about code-switching, using an anecdote about Barack Obama, who is not the actual code-mesher in the piece.<sup>51</sup> Young begins the essay by describing a viral video of Obama’s visit to Ben’s Chili Bowl, a well-known African-American-run establishment in Washington, D.C., shortly before the 2009 inauguration. Obama said, “Nah, we straight” to let his server know that she should keep the change from the cash he had handed her for his order. Beginning with that anecdote, an eye (or rather, ear) catching-hook, was a clever move on Young’s part; what rhetorician skimming through *JAC* in 2009 wouldn’t be drawn to a story about Obama? However, the Ben’s Chili Bowl utterance was not actually an example of code-meshing, but switching. “Nah, we straight” is a distinctly AAE oral utterance, expressed in a friendly AAE-rich setting where such an utterance is not

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<sup>51</sup> See Alim and Smitherman’s *Articulate While Black* for more on Obama’s rhetorical practices, including his fusion of AEE with SE at multiple linguistic levels, and Young’s “Straight Black Queer” for discussion of gendered and homophobic critiques of Obama’s code-meshing and code-switching.

uncommon. His brief sentence includes both AAE grammar, with zero copula, and AAE lexis, with “Nah” and “straight.”

Young implies that Obama’s “Nah, we straight” is switching, not meshing, and I concur. We can reasonably assume that with a non-AAE-using interlocutor in a different restaurant, Obama would have said, “Keep the change” or “We’re good.” However, let us imagine that if after speaking to the server, saying “Nah, we straight,” Obama had turned to a non-AAE-using interlocutor and said, “You have to try this chili. It’s amazing.” In this hypothetical scenario, Obama has entered a new speaking situation. So he is still code-switching, not meshing.

If we compare the use of “Nah, we straight” in an AAE-rich context to the former president’s use of standard varieties in writing or speeches to mostly white audiences, then we actually have an example of *code-switching*, the variety Young criticizes.<sup>52</sup> Instead, Young’s examples of code-meshing come from sources such as Rickford and Rickford’s *Spoken Soul*, which according to Young, claims to promote code-switching while actually performing code-meshing, as in this example:

Don’t ever shun or jeer a brother or sister because of the way he or she speaks. It is only when we have claimed both Spoken Soul and Standard English as our own...that we will have mastered the art of merging our double selves into a better and truer self. Remember: to become an accomplished pianist, you’ve got to be able to work both the ebonies and the ivories. (Rickford and Rickford qtd. in Young 56-57)

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<sup>52</sup> Though this is not to suggest that Obama has not also performed code-meshing (see Alim and Smitherman; Young, “Straight”).

By using Obama's code-switching as the hook, Young makes it *possible* for readers to misunderstand his argument. However, I argue this is not Young's responsibility, but the responsibility of readers to read beyond the hook and consider the argument as it unfolds—"Nah, We Straight" is a powerful example of AAE/SE discursive meshing, using strategies such as circumlocution, narrative interspersion (Ball and Lardner, *African*), and signifying (Smitherman, *Talkin*), all strategies that will be further explored in my analysis, in Chapter Four, of student writer Maya's work. Young also uses many more conventional academic discourse moves, such as the "meta-text" in which you tell the reader what you are, or are not, focusing on (Graff 125): "I do not intend this opening example [Ben's Chili Bowl] to suggest that I will conduct a sociolinguistic analysis of Obama's speech habits," Young writes ("Nah" 49) in the second paragraph of the essay. Young also uses the traditional move of explicitly stating his purpose within the first paragraphs of an academic essay, writing, "I forefront Obama's undeniable use of AAE in the mainstream public to exemplify my primary argument—an argument against code switching" (49).

Young's ultimate argument about Obama's language use, in "Nah," is that Obama's success with code-switching can hopefully be part of a process that leads us to a time when African-Americans aren't required to rely heavily on the white-dominant prestige variety in order to achieve and keep success. Young ends the essay by writing:

As we think about Obama's language practice during his campaign and accept for the sake of argument that he played the code switching game...then what if, just what if, he played the game to end the game?....Not only so he could have the



luxury to use AAE more freely after the election, but so no other AAE speakers would have to put up a show just to prove their worth? (72)

Young's work in “‘Nah’” is complex, both drawing a clear distinction between code-switching and code-meshing, and reminding us that many successful speakers have learned to perform both. But by the sub-title of his essay—“The Case Against Code-Switching”—and his recurring, repeated assertion that code-switching enforces double-consciousness for African-Americans, Young makes it clear where his preference lies, and why.

### **Two Imperfect Metaphors**

Ultimately, to paraphrase Guerra, we can only appoint terms to act as imperfect metaphors for the complicated concepts we want to articulate. This task is even more difficult when we are trying on new ways of thinking, new—hopefully better—ways of approaching the world. I just hope we can be generous with our readings of each other's work as we remember that we share a common, student-oriented mission. Our competing definitions of terms like code-switching and code-meshing reflect our shared concern with equity in teaching and assessment.

If the distinction between code-meshing and code-switching still seems a bit muddled at times, however, that speaks to the essential relationship between the two practices. They may fundamentally operate on a spectrum of inter-speaker language variation, instead of being an either/or option. If it is so difficult to distinguish between them, then, why have I tried to do so? Because, as mentioned above, I believe the distinction provides a valuable heuristic for educators. It lets us differentiate between, on one hand, a practice that limits students to a single code with which they may not yet be

fully comfortable, thus potentially stymying their writing; and on the other hand, a practice that encourages students to draw on multiple resources, including codes they are still learning, thus encouraging experimentation and growth in writing.

So, when I talk about code-switching, unless otherwise noted, I mean what many linguists would refer to it as “situational code-switching: A pattern of alternation where one language is used in one context and another language is used in another context. An example would be using one language at home and another language at school” (Barrett 31). I, like Young, simply call it *code-switching*. And when I talk about *code-meshing*, I am referring to what many linguists would call “metaphorical code-switching,” which is “[u]sing two languages in the same context, such as alternating between languages in a single conversation or using more than one language in a piece of writing” (Barrett 31). Moreover, my definition of code-meshing includes further criteria: after Michael Lina and Canagarajah, I argue that code-meshing can incorporate sentence-level and rhetorical meshing; after Milson-Whyte, I argue that code-meshing operates on a spectrum from mutually intelligible only to insiders to mutually intelligible to outsiders. In using these definitions of code-switching and code-meshing as a productive dichotomy, I critically follow Young, Canagarajah, Michael-Luna and Canagarajah, Lu, Horner, Stanford, and other scholars who have found this distinction useful.

## **II: Four Underlying Warrants behind Support for Code-meshing**

Proponents of code-meshing don’t all base their support on the same underlying rationales; nor do they all have the same goals for code-meshing. To help us understand some of the ways scholars may differ in their views on code-meshing, I identify four

different underlying warrants for advocacy of it:<sup>53</sup> 1. The *pragmatic* warrant; 2. The *learning-process* warrant; 3. The *we're already doing it* warrant; and 4. The *anti-racist* warrant. These warrants often overlap, and a scholar may use more than one at a time.

**The *pragmatic* warrant:** the pragmatic view<sup>54</sup> presents code-meshing as a workable middle ground between the extreme options of either code-switching or outright rejection of the prestige variety for use of the home language. The pragmatic warrant is politically savvy in this regard. It also relies on the belief that subtle change is possible from within a system.

Much of Canagarajah's work exemplifies pragmatism; in *Translingual Practice*, he suggests that codemeshing enables writers to get the proverbial best of both worlds, to work within the dominant discourse but without having to resort to code-switching:

[C]odemeshing enables us to address the process of pluralizing written discourse with sensitivity to the dual claims of voice and norms. Codemeshing offers a middle position between the extremes of disregard for dominant norms and the suppression of the authorial voice. (109, original italics)

Canagarajah's practicality also comes through in his earlier essay "The Place of World English" where he makes a valuable critique of the realization of *SRTOL*: for many instructors, *SRTOL* is satisfied if students are allowed to use their home varieties of English in low-stakes assignments and drafts. However, he asks, shouldn't *SRTOL*, taken

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<sup>53</sup> Some of these warrants can also be applied to the translingual approach, but I would not say this occurs in a one-to-one correspondence.

<sup>54</sup> A significant benefit of the pragmatic argument is that it is more instinctively palatable to those who might be otherwise reluctant to allow any linguistic variation in academic writing. Drawbacks include the possibility that the pragmatic argument can be (rightly) subjected to one of the same critiques often leveled at code-switching: that it privileges written SE and marginalizes nonstandard varieties. Canagarajah acknowledges this in "Place" (599).

at face value, enable students to use their home dialects *everywhere* (596)? While he would prefer this, Canagarajah ultimately decides that it is not a practical goal. Instead, he sees code-meshing as a way to change the game from within, writing, “[i]f all speech events are language games, the rules of the game that all players currently share need to be acknowledged. This is important even if the current rules favor one group more than the other” (“Place” 599). He continues by pointing out how code-meshing can help writers play the game their way: “If we suddenly bring in new rules, we could be disqualified from that game” (599), but “[b]y inserting the oppositional codes gradually into the existing conventions, I deal with the same audience and genre of communication but in my own terms” (599). Cajun Vernacular English (CVE) user Stanford makes a similar argument in relating code-meshing to the CVE rhetorical technique of *canaillerie*, “a strategic, classist, and questionable movement that originates among the dominated as a means of dealing with unmanageable pressures and inequalities” (131). While there is no equivalent for *canaillerie* in English, “the connotation is almost always a playfulness or well-intentioned (though not always) deviousness....Canaillerie is bending the rules but in a way that will not get you kicked out. Which is really important if you want to be able to stay in the game” (131). Canagarajah’s and Stanford’s work on code-meshing here call to mind de Certeau’s tactics; one is able to subvert the rules, but in a practical way.

**The *learning-process* warrant:** The learning-process warrant says that code-meshing is a way for students to learn a new code, usually academic discourse—i.e., blending familiar and unfamiliar codes, appropriating the new into the old, will better enable

students to learn new codes than starting from scratch with a new code and working only in that code.<sup>55</sup>

Michael-Luna and Canagarajah's work relies on this warrant in advocating code-meshing by describing a case study of a bilingual elementary classroom in which the teacher blended Spanish and English to help his students, native Spanish speakers, develop their English vocabularies and improve their English reading and writing skills ("Multilingual"). Canagarajah also cites prior research arguing that "appropriating English according to the preferred interests and identities of the speaker is both a condition for gaining voice and also the most effective way for developing proficiency in that language" ("Place" 588). He cites the case of "Almon," a Chinese-American student whose English did not improve in school, where English is "based on 'native' norms" (59), and his (Almon's) English was perceived as "broken" (591), leaving him "tongue-tied" (591). However, researcher Eva Lam found that Almon's English did improve thanks to his extracurricular writing online, where he "uses his own English with multilingual speakers of that language... a language that he owns collectively" (Canagarajah 591, summarizing Lam). Canagarajah also provides a valuable review of literature and summarizes that "Ethnographies in contexts as diverse as Hong Kong, Kenya, Tanzaniya (sic), Malta, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Sri Lanka, and even England and North America point to the strategic role of [code meshing] in language learning" (601). Indeed, "Much of this research literature demonstrates that rather than hampering the acquisition of English, the negotiation of codes can indeed facilitate it" (601).

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<sup>55</sup> The same logic is at work here as in code-switching pedagogies that rely on contrastive analysis to teach SE, or allow students to write drafts in their home varieties before switching to SE/academic language for final drafts.

Geneva Smitherman, Keith Gilyard, and Elaine Richardson have all done work showing the success of code-meshing, in blending SE with AAE discourse features, that helped students succeed in academic contexts where their work was assessed by blind raters. Though the students in such cases did not necessarily take classes where they were explicitly taught to use AAE to help them learn SE, it seems likely that they intuitively relied on existing AAE skills to write papers that blind raters, expecting SE, found acceptable. In “The Blacker the Berry,” Smitherman found that when African-American students used AAE features in their essays on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), they earned higher scores than black students who suppressed or didn’t use AAE. Gilyard and Richardson found similar results in a separate study, implying that use of AAE helped the students demonstrate expected levels of academic discourse, and arguing that “Black discursive style, rather than a quality to be merely appreciated, is essential to the development of a Black, formal public voice” (227). Richardson (cited in Perryman-Clark, “African American Language” 472-3) and Perryman-Clark (“African American Language”; “Writing”) have reported on success in using Afrocentric or linguistically conscious curricula that helped AAE-using students improve in their academic discourse. And in L2 writing, Lu’s essay “Professing Multiculturalism” describes how a native Chinese speaker from Malaysia used blending and her own innovative construction, *can able to*, to convey her meaning in an essay, and develop better understanding of available English modals. Lu was then able to use that same construction to introduce language-learning and language variation issues to the rest of the class. Each of these writers emphasizes how code-meshing helps students acculturate to traditions of academic writing in college.

**The *we're-already-doing-it* warrant:** This warrant posits that code-meshing is not a new concept, just a new term for something that has already been theorized about before under other names, and that many writers worldwide—including college students, scholars, shopkeepers, creative writers, and so on, already do to varying degrees. Such a belief is based in theories like Bakhtin's heteroglossia and many-voicedness, in which "at any given moment of historical existence language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past...between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles, and so forth" (291).

This warrant is related to scholarship about hybridity in contact zones and bilingual communities, and proponents of this viewpoint will point to the fact that members of linguistically marginalized and border communities have for a long time combined codes in strategic ways, as in the combination of Latin and English in medieval Britain (Kirtley); modern English/Tamil meshing in Sri Lanka, historical Tamil/Sanskrit meshing in Sri Lanka (Canagarajah "Place" 600), or use by indigenous writers facing colonization (Pratt cited in Canagarajah, "Place" 601; Anzaldúa cited in Canagarajah, "Place" 601). Proponents using this warrant may point out that code-meshing is not a novel idea to non-Western audiences (Canagarajah, "Place"; Matsuda, "It's the Wild West"), so code-meshing is presented as a way for Anglo/western communities to become more linguistically cosmopolitan.

Support for the *we're already doing it* warrant comes from: examples of code-meshing in many everyday conversational interactions, in which participants subtly align to each other's styles; scholars' work, such as the writing of Geneva Smitherman and K.

Sivatimby (cited by Canagarajah), Rickford and Rickford (cited by Young); and students' work, such as the successful test-takers in Smitherman, and Gilyard and Richardson's, research, cited above.

**The *anti-racist* warrant.** This warrant sees code-meshing as a way for instructors to practice anti-racism by directly challenging, instead of favoring, the prominence of the white habitus and white-normed writing standards. It shares many similarities with the race-consciousness articulated by Lamos and discussed in Chapter Two.

As explicated in “Your Average Nigga,” *Your Average Nigga* and ““Nah,”” anti-racism is a major part of Young’s case for code-meshing. For example, Young describes code-meshing as an opportunity for AAE-using students to avoid the “double-consciousness” trap of code-switching. Code-switching pedagogy, he argues, is both unsound and grounded in inequality; as previously mentioned, in ““Nah,”” Young equates code-switching pedagogies with the separate-but-equal fallacy (53). Code-switching pedagogy, he argues, is also dangerous because it reinforces the notion that there are “acceptable” limits and prejudices in our society (64). For the many Americans who come from language backgrounds beyond SE, code-meshing is not only a more practical pedagogy, but a more ethical one: “Code meshing is so very important to our work with minoritized peoples, to those who can not or will not extract their dialects from use of standard English” (72).

Kermit Campbell’s work in the 1990s, which is often cited by Young, predates the *term* code-meshing, but in writing about African-American male students incorporating AAE terms, syntax, and rhetorical strategies into their academic writing, he



describes the practice. One clear underlying rationale for Campbell's argument is that code-meshing provides African American students an opportunity for "affirmation in blackness"<sup>56</sup> (68) in a "society [that] has defined or constructed a black male identity largely through negative images and exclusion" (71). He cites Henry Louis Gates, Jr., describing how AAE-infused autobiographical literature protests racism: "Through autobiography [black] writers could, at once, shape a public 'self' in language, and protest the degradation of their ethnic group by the multiple forms of American racism" (Gates qtd. in Campbell 77).

In *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies*, Asao Inoue cites code-meshing and translanguaging as ways to help disrupt the "two-track system of privilege that rewards a white *habitus* exclusively" (59) in classroom composition writing assessment (58-59). He also describes how his own hybridized writing style is a way for him to practice anti-racism, explaining, "my discourse is an indicator of my subversive success at making a local SEAE [Standard Edited American English] my own, making that discourse less white and more universal by diversifying it" (23).

As with the pragmatic warrant, de Certeau's subversive tactics are visible in these arguments. Code-meshing performs the valuable task of challenging racism by making a space for non-white writing styles in traditionally-white environments.

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<sup>56</sup> Campbell also implicitly connects the value of code-meshing to, simultaneously, literacy acquisition and anti-racism. He argues that acceptance of African American codes will help students to achieve academic literacy, writing, "Nonmainstream students need this legitimation and affirmation if they are to acquire and use academic literacy" (69). He also pointed out how AAE strategies could be capitalized on to teach writing in the classroom, explaining that one student's paper's "metaphoric and improvisational qualities would doubtless make useful resources for writing instruction" (72).

### III: Code-Meshing, Authenticity, and Rhetorical Attunement

As in many other sub-fields of composition and rhetoric, code-meshing proponents do not necessarily agree on the relationship between writing and identity. This is perfectly understandable, given that these are contentious philosophical issues that can never be truly solved, only continuously interrogated. However, I think it helps us to understand debates about code-meshing and translingualism if we make ourselves aware of the simultaneously competing and overlapping perspectives on code-meshing pedagogies. The conception of the writer intersects with conceptions of code-meshing in two notable ways: *code-meshing as authentic voice* and *code-meshing as rhetorical attunement*. These two concepts are related to another dyad—code-meshing as natural, and code-meshing as learned. Though I suggest the two respective pairings do correspond somewhat, I do not mean to imply that they have a direct one-to-one connection; nor do I suggest either pairing is mutually exclusive.

The *code-meshing as authentic voice* perspective is grounded in the belief that language and identity can never be truly separated. Teaching code-meshing, or authorizing existing code-meshing practices for more language contexts, allows writers to be authentic to the selves and communities with which they identify. This is in contrast to code-switching, which requires that users choose one discrete code, potentially at the expense of identity.

Educational research also supports the belief that code-switching pedagogies interfere with student writers' sense of identity. Ball and Ellis argues that in modern K-12 classrooms, "there is an increased possibility that cross-cultural conflicts can occur that negatively influence a student's identity development as a writer" (504). The implication

is that student writers' identity formations can be harmed, "particularly when [these] students' expressions of individuality and cultural ways of communicating are suppressed" (504). Additionally, several researchers have found that classroom culture typically requires minority students to choose between two seemingly incongruous options: the home or school discourse (504). Stanford describes how code-censoring, her term for self-imposed code-switching or eradication, in academic writing requires her to hide her Cajun identity: "I am filtering out cultural markers that do not actually impede the message but may offend my audience because of their prejudice against my class or ethnicity" (127). The unfortunate result of continued code-censoring is language loss; Stanford says, "I have spoken with numerous scholars who claim they simply cannot remember their home accents anymore" (127).

Students whose home language is close to, or the same as, the prestige variety don't have to make such a choice, or risk the kind of language loss Stanford describes. Code-meshing pedagogies have the potential, then, to allow student writers from non-prestige language backgrounds the same opportunity as language majority students, to develop their academic writing skills without sacrificing an important part of their identity.

*SRTOL* was authored several decades before the term "code-meshing," but code-meshing proponents often refer to the statement for support. In fact, *SRTOL* claims that identity and language use are connected. The first sentence reads, "We affirm the students' right to their own patterns and varieties—the dialects of their nurture or whatever dialects in which they find their own identity and style" (19).

The *code-meshing as authentic voice* perspective presumes that language users' upbringings, their social and cultural experiences, will influence their language identities. But the perspective isn't limited to an essentialized view of the relationship between language and social identity, where language determines identity and vice versa. For instance, wording from *SRTOL* verifies the validity of "the dialects of [students'] nurture," but is followed immediately by a second affirmation, of "whatever dialects in which [students] find their own identity and style" (*Students'* 19). *SRTOL* acknowledges the role of what we commonly think of as home discourses, but allows for writers' agency to take up new linguistic identities. Such an approach is in line with the views of writer agency described above as associated with translingualism.

However, it is risky to *only* see code-meshing as tied to identity, as Guerra seems to do in "From Code-Segregation." His description of Spanish/English blending as "code-meshing at its best" (37) suggests that he sees code-meshing as *not* a rhetorically savvy approach, because he explains that he opts not to code-mesh in his speech to a mostly English-speaking audience because they would not understand him. As explained above, however, I think this is a limited view of code-meshing.

Arguments about code-meshing affirming a writer's identity may point to the notion that it is a "natural" way to use language—e.g., Young's claim in "'Nah'" that "code meshing...allows minoritized people to become more effective by doing what we all do best, *what comes naturally*: blending, merging, meshing dialects" (72, my emphasis).

In contrast to the view of code-meshing as affirming identity, the *code-meshing as rhetorical attunement* perspective is not particularly interested in the relationship

between writers' identities and their language practices. The rhetorical attunement<sup>57</sup> view's emphasis is on the rhetorical situation outside of the writer. In this view, code-meshing is a way for writers to strategically blend codes in order to achieve a specific rhetorical purpose. For instance, Canagarajah interprets Geneva Smitherman's limited code-meshing in "CCCC's Role," where she reserves AAE for low-stakes sections, as a way for Smitherman to subtly reinforce the validity of AAE while writing for an audience that is largely unfamiliar with the variety (Canagarajah, "Place" 603). Someone looking at code-meshing as more rhetorically savvy than tied to authentic identity might interpret Smitherman's AAE use as an artistic choice she makes to entertain her audience or provide a brief window into the world of a woman who navigates codes on a daily basis. However, her book *Talkin and Testifyin* and early articles like "English Teacher, Why You Be Doin' the Thangs You Don't Do?" and "Black Idiom," written with much more consistent AAE syntax, grammar, spelling, and diction, provide provocative, stylistic challenges to the status quo, a way to shake up the establishment (Carey). In Tamika Carey's analysis, Smitherman's hybrid AAE/academic performance was a way to demonstrate that AAE could be used to make sophisticated academic arguments; Smitherman waged "a strategic rhetorical campaign" that "show[ed] her innovation in creating and catering arguments to specific audiences" (Carey 132). In both Carey and Canagarajah's analyses of Smitherman's work, the possibility that AAE use may be an integral part of Smitherman's identity is left largely unexamined.

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<sup>57</sup> Notably, while rhetorical attunement is often used as a rationale for promoting code-meshing, it can also be used as a rationale for code-switching or eradication because of a belief that local/marginal varieties are inappropriate for certain contexts. For instance, Stanford explains that "Many academics practice code-censoring in the name of kairos, or rhetorical dexterity. We learned to hide our home discourses in order to be accepted within the academy...to be heard at all" (127).

This perspective sometimes deliberately places limits on the extent to which code-meshing is acceptable. Canagarajah states: “This doesn’t mean that students are free to use the vernacular for all contexts of communication. Negotiating grammars means being sensitive to the relativity of style and usage in different communicative situations” (“Place” 611). Unfortunately this perspective runs the risk of reinforcing appropriacy reasoning.

Arguments relying on/incorporating this perspective may incorporate a related perspective, that good code-meshing is difficult (Stanford 129); to do it well, it must be learned. Stanford, who does write about code-meshing as a way to avoid suppressing identity, also describes it as no easy task. She cites Canagarajah’s “Place” for support, writing, “code-meshing is a difficult strategy to master, ‘a complex discursive act for our students’” (Stanford 129, citing Canagarajah). In fact, it is “one that is so challenging that most academics do not know how to do it, far less how to teach it” (129).

Though they compete, the *code-meshing as authentic* and *code-meshing as rhetorical attunement* views are not mutually exclusive; Rebecca Lorimer Leonard’s work is particularly useful here. She includes translingualism with a list of perspectives that are related to rhetorical attunement, including “sensibilities described...as mestizo...critical...or translingual” (231). Though she doesn’t use the term code-meshing, her discussion of multilingual writing as blending codes fits into the definition of code-meshing I use here. She explains, “Rhetorical attunement highlights the rhetorical in multilingualism: its instability and contingency, its political weight and contextual embeddedness” (230). To be rhetorically attuned is to engage with numerous forces outside of the self. But in Leonard’s view, rhetorical attunement is not necessarily

antithetical to the self or to one's linguistic identity: "In fact, calling attunement rhetorical serves to underline these elements—materiality, contingency, emergence, resistance" (230). Yes, there are outside forces to consider. But Leonard's inclusion of "resistance" in the list above signals that rhetorical attunement does not automatically mean that a speaker has to be subservient to the situation.

Canagarajah also acknowledges that there is always some conflict or tension between rhetorical awareness and expression of identity, reminding us that "It is important to engage with the linguistic system, with the understanding that there is always the tension between...[the] sociolect and idiolect in any language" (Canagarajah, "Place" 611). This makes sense: language is socially constructed, but it is socially constructed by individuals.

My opinion is that both perspectives are, in their own ways, indispensable. The tension between the two perspectives calls to mind the age-old debate between the belief that good art comes from the self, or innate genius, and the belief that it comes from practice and careful study. The important thing is to consider the influence of each perspective as it concerns our definitions of code-meshing, particularly the definitions we convey to our students. Milson-Whyte astutely points out the importance of examining how we want to conceive of code-meshing. Her work suggests that there are two types of code-meshing: the unstudied/natural type is probably more reflective of the lived reality among language peers—in Milson-Whyte's example, Jamaican Creole/English unbalanced bilinguals who mesh their codes in ways intelligible to each other but not outsiders. Such meshing may be "natural," and relatively easy, but lacks metacognitive awareness. The other type of code-meshing, however, must be taught. This studied code-

meshing is more consciously strategic and requires metalinguistic awareness and rhetorical attunement for the language user to effectively communicate with interlocutors who don't share their full repertoire—for example, a Jamaican Creole/English user writing for a reader who knows little or no Jamaican Creole. Code-meshing is still possible here, as the writer can use Jamaican Creole features and isn't limited to only SE. But this type of code-meshing is more difficult, and requires more work, than code-meshing with a fellow Jamaican Creole/English bilingual (120-121).

### **Code-Meshing over Code-Switching**

What is code-meshing? Depending on who you ask, it is one, some, or all of the following: intuitive, learned, strategic, a method of resistance, a way to practice anti-racism, a way to learn, something only some do, something many already do, tied to identity, a way to demonstrate learned mastery, the opposite of code-switching, the same thing as code-switching, something that is more intuitive to multilinguals than monolinguals, and finally, something that only an American would find novel.

We do not need to outlaw code-switching; as a practice, some writers may prefer what we think of as discrete “code-switching,” and the translingual approach certainly allows for that. *But* I don't think we should place it on an equal footing with code-meshing in our scholarship, because code-switching is already quite valued and does not need to be argued for—it is such a common practice in existing pedagogy that it needs to be problematized, instead.

In his talk, Guerra says, “for me, the key difference between code-switching and code-meshing is reflected in the vivid patterns one hears echoed in George Bernard Shaw's (1957) famous observation: ‘The reasonable man adapts to the world; the



unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself” (38). He then uses that quote to make this analogy: “We either accept the world as it is and do our best to self-consciously adapt to it by code-switching...or we challenge it by embracing code-meshing and demanding that the world adapt to us” (38). However, I think this is a false dichotomy. You could code-switch and still resist the status quo, and vice versa. And I’m reminded of another quote, one I saw on many t-shirts and signs in the wake of the 2016 presidential election in the U.S. It’s an old quote from Angela Davis: “I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept.”

Sometimes the world needs to be challenged. In college writing, monolingual, standard language ideology is something that needs challenging. I believe code-meshing can help us do that.

#### CHAPTER 4: IDEOLOGY, EXPECTATION, AND EVALUATION: HOW LINGUISTIC EXPERIENCES AND ATTITUDES INFORM RESPONSE TO AAE-STRONG STUDENT WRITING

“I don’t know how anyone could have gotten away with not ever wanting that feeling of making a difference in the world.... Being successful has gone from a goal in life to a need for me. If that doesn’t tell you how strong of emotion I feel for this song. I’ll have to sing it to you.”  
—student writer, “Maya,” in a rhetorical analysis of Beyoncé’s “I Was Here”

Several years ago, a student’s essay prompted me to re-evaluate my understanding of academic writing. As a result of my engagement with this particular text, I began exploring how we, as writing teachers, determine situational and generic appropriateness. I also began considering the implications of the way paradigms of student writing conflict among individual instructors as well as between instructors and students. That is, I began asking: how do language ideologies shape our expectations for student writing? And when and how might these ideologies and expectations—which both overlap and vary among instructors—lead to communicative impasses with student writers, especially those from non-standard English backgrounds?

The essay, by a student writer I call Maya, was a rhetorical analysis of the 2011 Beyoncé song “I Was Here.” Maya, a young African-American woman, employed several noteworthy features of AAE rhetoric. Her essay took the form of a narrative about her gradual appreciation of the song, weaving in implicit and explicit discussions of ethos, pathos, and logos. Maya called the essay simply, “I Was Here,” after the object of analysis, but the title also encapsulates the essay’s major theme: how Beyoncé’s striving

to be remembered inspired Maya to excel in her own life. I don't claim "I Was Here" is the perfect student essay, if such a thing even exists. But it moved me on both an intellectual and emotional level. I enjoyed reading it, and rated it relatively highly.

I am a middle-class white woman. When, as part of an interview-based qualitative study, I shared Maya's essay with several colleagues, all also white and predominantly middle-class, they were rather less impressed than I had been. They generally demonstrated either full resistance or ambivalence to Maya's AAE-strong work. Several variables may have influenced the difference in our readings; for instance, I knew Maya as the kind of student who sits in the front row, and had watched her writing develop over a semester; meanwhile, my colleagues read the essay blindly and had no relationship with her. However, I believe language ideology, influenced by tacit theories of language, was also a significant variable, and it is my focus here. As outlined below, Mikhail Bakhtin describes the ongoing development of language ideology as "ideological becoming." I, my fellow instructors, and Maya are all ideological beings whose writing practices and beliefs about language have been shaped by different linguistic traditions, formative experiences, and encounters with new discourses.

During the semester when Maya was my student, I was taking a graduate seminar on AAE; when I designed the study, a year later, I was in a sociolinguistics course on varieties of American English. I also have a background in creative writing and am an Appalachian English user, two factors that predispose me to appreciate narrative-based academic work. Language variety in composition has become my primary academic interest. In contrast, my colleagues generally had little to no familiarity with pluralist or translingual discourses; they described experiences and practices aligning them with, and

indicated preferences for, standardized micro- and macro-level writing conventions typically favored by the academy. Maya's essay had not been what I was expecting from an academic text, but met my personal expectations for good writing. For my colleagues, it seems, Maya's essay either failed to meet their general expectations for good writing, or they set aside those expectations in order to respond based on what they considered appropriate. When I realized how sharply my reading differed from my colleagues', I knew I would need to do more than argue for the validity of Maya's work. I would need to figure out how we got to such different interpretations of the same text in the first place.

So, in this chapter, my primary goal is to explore how college writing instructors develop language ideologies, and how these ideologies contribute to our readings of student work. I begin with a review of Bakhtin's concepts of "ideological becoming," and authoritative and internally persuasive discourse, followed by a discussion of how those concepts apply to current theorization of language ideology important to composition. Next, I share Maya's essay, and the instructors' responses<sup>58</sup> to it. Drawing on AAE scholarship to articulate the rhetorical strategies Maya uses, I argue that her essay succeeds through *code-meshing*. The instructors, by contrast, largely used "appropriacy reasoning" (see Chapter 2) when responding to the piece—reasoning I suggest is shaped at least in part by the formative individual experiences that they describe. Finally, I argue that further study of instructors' development of language ideologies can help us develop more pluralist and translingual professionalization, contributing to the goal of promoting these approaches in our discipline.

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<sup>58</sup> I use "response" here as an umbrella term encompassing summative assessment, written response, and the verbal assessments and affective reactions we share with students and colleagues.

## **Ideological Becoming and the Academy**

Bakhtin delineates two kinds of discourses: “authoritative discourse” (AD) and “internally persuasive discourse” (IPD). Our struggle to reconcile these competing discourses shapes our ideological becoming (IB), an ever-evolving process. Both types of discourse begin as “alien”: they come from outside the self. ADs carry more of what linguists call overt prestige; they are “religious, political, moral...[embodying] the word of the father, of adults and teachers” (342). In the United States—and notably, in US college composition (Inoue 14)—SE and traditional, linear western academic discourse are ADs. An IPD, by contrast, does not carry overt prestige or official sanction. IPDs are “denied all privilege, backed up by no authority at all, and are frequently not even acknowledged in society” (Bakhtin 342). I depart from Bakhtin’s description in one respect, to say that IPDs are often *acknowledged* in society, but dismissed or devalued. IPDs in contemporary American English include varieties such as AAE, an important part of Maya’s linguistic identity. IPDs survive in large part because they are “internally persuasive” to the people who use them, and pass them on to others. They are vital to their users’ identities—“[an] internally persuasive discourse...is...tightly interwoven with one’s own word” (Bakhtin 345).

However, the line between ADs and IPDs is not strict. They inform each other, and can overlap. In Bakhtin’s view of ideological becoming, “[a]nother’s discourse performs...as [an] *authoritative discourse* and an *internally persuasive discourse*” (342). So importantly, when we are developing our ideologies about languages, the alien discourses that we assimilate function with both external authority and internal persuasiveness. For instance, though AAE is generally an IPD, it has functioned also as

an AD for Maya. “I’m probably very influenced by African American English as a writer,” Maya told me in a recent e-mail correspondence. “I’m an African American. I was taught to speak by other African Americans, African Americans that grew up in the deep south.” This does not mean that at all times ADs and IPDs are perfectly aligned. Yes, “the authority of discourse and its internal persuasiveness may be united in a single word—one that is *simultaneously* authoritative and internally persuasive—despite the profound differences between these categories of alien discourse” (Bakhtin 342). However, harmony is the exception to the rule: “such a unity is rarely given” (342). It is the disharmony between ADs and IPDs that drives ideological becoming: “it happens more frequently that an individual’s becoming, an ideological process, is characterized precisely by a sharp gap between these two categories....the struggle and dialogic interrelationship of these categories of ideological discourse are what usually determines the history of an individual ideological consciousness” (342).

Ultimately, IPDs—which *may* also be ADs—are the crux of our development of *individual* language practices and beliefs: “Internally persuasive discourse...is, as it is affirmed through assimilation, tightly interwoven with ‘one’s own word.’ ....Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words...and does not remain in an isolated and static condition” (Bakhtin 345). IPDs allow for creativity and individuality. Moreover, we continuously place these more flexible discourses into tension with others; an IPD “enters into an intense interaction, a *struggle* with other internally persuasive discourses” (346).

Without losing sight of the dyad’s yin-yang connection, we cannot forget their yin-yang distinctions. Generally, it is useful to think of ADs as more formal, IPDs as

informal or vernacular; ADs as more strictly regulated, and IPDs as more variable. The AD/IPD relationship aligns with another Bakhtinian distinction, that between centripetal and centrifugal forces. While centripetal forces attempt to maintain order and establish norms, centrifugal forces inject chaos into the system, producing variety and novelty (Bakhtin 270-274). Both forces are essential: “Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear” (271). Over-privileging of centripetal forces, like over-privileging of ADs, leads to unnatural stagnation and limits the possibilities of language. This is because “[the authoritative word’s] semantic structure is static and dead... [it] permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions, no spontaneously creative stylizing variants on it” (343). In contrast, “the semantic structure of internally persuasive discourse is *not finite*; it is *open*; in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal newer *ways to mean*” (346, emphasis in original).

These discourses interact on a linguistic level—“linguistic” here encompassing everything from diction to rhetoric—and on a meta-linguistic, ideological level. In ideological becoming, “another’s discourse...strives...to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior” (Bakhtin 342). Bakhtin describes “language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even a concrete opinion” (271). Our ideological becoming not only includes how we use language ourselves, but how we think about it: “our ideological development is...an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available ideological points of view, approaches, directions, and values” (346). Our values and ideas about

language, our beliefs about how it can and should work, are as important to acknowledge as our individual uses of language; while the latter describes how we speak and write, the former manifests in how we read and respond to others.

Bakhtin's work helps us understand modern manifestations of language ideology in approaches to language variety in composition; I focus here on Assimilationism and Translingualism, previously discussed in Chapter 2. Assimilationism is strongly informed by Appropriacy Reasoning, which favors the AD over the IPD in contexts carrying overt prestige. It establishes and voices the dichotomy by which "formal" situations require ADs such as SE, while IPDs without external authority, such as AAE, are relegated to "informal" or casual contexts (Lippi-Green 81-85). In contrast, the translingual approach is more supportive of IPDs. Translingualism acknowledges the linguistic validity of non-standard varieties of English and challenges the traditionally powerful appropriateness hierarchy (Lu and Horner, "Translingual Literacy"; Horner et al., "Language Difference"; Canagarajah "The Place" and "Toward"). Though a relatively new term, *translingualism* seeks to articulate an existing reality—that we already often value and engage in variety. In a sense, translingualism recasts Bakhtin's *heteroglossia*, or many-voicedness.

While Assimilationism favors code-switching, Translingualism allows for (though it does not require) code-meshing. Recall Young's argument that code-meshing enables AAE-strong writers like Maya to escape the double-consciousness trap of code-switching:

[C]ode meshing does not require students to 'hold back their Englishes' but permits them to bring them more forcefully and strategically forward. The ideology behind code meshing holds that peoples' so-called 'nonstandard'



dialects are already fully compatible with standard English. Code meshing secures their right to represent that meshing in all forms and venues where they communicate. (“Nah” 62)

Code-meshing, then, reconciles authoritative and internally persuasive discourses, creating a writerly voice that grows from the writer's linguistic ideological becoming.

As teachers, readers, and writers, we have probably all experienced moments when our appropriateness and translingual instincts came into conflict, when our allegiance to an AD conflicts with our appreciation for an IPD. If this weren't so, I doubt we'd be so fond of phrases like, “The rules were made to be broken.” However, we often defer to certain rules because they have historically been established as a standard, neutral, unifying force: “the victory of one reigning language (dialect) over the others...the canonization of ideological systems...all this determine[s] the content and power of the category of ‘unitary language’” (Bakhtin 271).

Though in theory we may value heteroglossia, student writers from nonmainstream language traditions are often many-voiced in ways that instructors find confusing or unfamiliar, influenced as we often are by white-dominant ADs. When a student essay defies the white habitus, it challenges our default response practice.

### **“I Was Here”**

Early drafts of this chapter featured only excerpts from Maya's essay. However, I have realized that abridging shortchanges the work. To give the best understanding of the text, I include it here in full. The version printed below is the one Maya submitted as a final draft, after revising based on my comments to her rough draft:

*I Was Here*  
*By Maya Hendricks*

*When thinking about something to write about that could connect to my research paper; I automatically searched my brain to think of something that actually meant something to me. There are a lot of things that I take seriously and also a lot of things that make me wonder about the certain possibilities that could occur in life. Even with the numerous facts of the universe at my fingertips, nothing seems to engage my mind more than the mysterious world of music.*

*Music is something I could literally write about all day and have a good time doing so. I can't even try and tell you what my favorite kind of music is. Every time I thought that I had completely fallen in love with one genre, I hear of glimpse of another one and feel the exact same way. Just a funky beat gives me that joyous feeling. If I can say that I love anything, music would be that thing. The numerous thoughts that cross my mind when I connect with the sound or lyric, means more to me then someone just saying that they have felt the same way. There is something about a song that touches you, it's like you are the one singing, it's like you can feel the emotions the artist has, like you have been there, you know? It's a craving I want more of every day. It's a feeling that comforts and soothes me in a unique way. I'd like to write explanatory essay on a song, "I Was Here," by Beyoncé Knowles.*

*"I wanna leave my footprints on the sands of time." This sentence in itself has meant so much to me. I remember this summer when the album came out with the song featured on it, how my best friend told me she refused to listen to this song anymore because when she first heard it, it made her cry. I thought she was silly and exaggerating of course, Beyoncé isn't really famous for sad ballads and she made it sound depressing. I went and got the album of course and kind of listened to it over and over, like any person would a Beyoncé CD. I didn't really pay much attention to the song. The dancing numbers were the ones that got my attention at first and the ballads were heard but not really listened to. Then one day after learning the words to all the other pop songs and kind of learning the beats to the ballads, I actually listened. I cried. Not because it was a sad song but because it was inspiring. The songwriter, Diane Warren, to have snatched every little thought I had as a kid, up until now and made it into a song, a song I could sing. The emotions that I feel when singing that song are something, that I have never, ever felt. Writing this essay even makes me tear up a little.*

*Enough about the emotional toll this song had on my life though, there is some logos and ethos too. The ethos approach I believe has a lot to do with the fact that the artist is Beyoncé. "When I leave this world, I'll leave no regrets, leave something to remember so they won't forget....I was here" As a child I wanted people to know my name, people to know who I am and that I am more than just the average person. Beyoncé did this, she set herself apart from the rest, she is Beyoncé and everyone knows who Beyoncé is. Her image is that of near perfection, so when she utter these words in her song I believed her, I felt it, I knew it. There is nothing like the power of a voice behind a certain lyric. Ian Walker of the band AbsolutePunk said:*

*"'I Was Here' is Knowles' monument to the ages. The song climbs higher and higher, chorus by chorus, until Knowles reaches her apex, delivering some of her best vocals on the album. The lyrics are a bit uninspired, overly triumphant but somewhat humble as the singer contemplates her mark on history. Although*

*she has garnered massive amounts of acclaim through her storied career, Knowles is far from satisfied."*

*The logos approach was harder for me to find because the song is so emotionally driven, but I knew it was there. I think the logos in this song is that she did indeed make a difference "The hearts I have touched will be the proof that I leave, that I made a difference and this world will see...I was here." Some would argue this as an opinion, but I believe it is a fact, there is no way possible that Beyoncé Knowles will not go down in history, in fact she already has. She is one of the most powerful women in the world. Everyone does know this, everyone will know this. If my opinion isn't you know fact enough though, there are lists from magazines like Forbes, that list her as one of the most powerful women. The argument the song is making is more of cause and effect argument in literary terms. Because she did that with her life, this resulted. She also seems to be drawing the conclusion that when she is gone, people will know that she was here.*

*If I hadn't said enough in the pathos department, I thought I would touch on it again, because the emotion behind this song seems so strong. "I just want them to know, that I gave my all did my best, brought someone some happiness, and made this world a little better just because... I was here." I don't know how anyone could have gotten away with not ever wanting that feeling of making a difference in the world, but those lyrics are something magical. Being successful has gone from a goal in life to a need for me. If that doesn't tell you how strong of emotion I feel for this song. I'll have to sing it to you. The way Beyoncé sings the song has a gradual effect as well; she starts the song softly yet boldly holding back, but giving power to the lyrics to the song. You can hear the dynamics of the song in her voice as they coincide with the lyrics. In an interview with Billboard, Beyoncé said:*

*"I knew ['I Was Here'] was going to be a very special song. It just fit[s] where I was in my life and expressed something I believed and wanted to share. As an artist, you want your music to mean something or to help someone get through something, and when a song has a great message and meaning, it is what you strive for.*

*Pathos, ethos and logos are very creatively integrated together to for the argument that the author or in this case artist is trying to portray. I greatly understood what they were trying to tell me and I felt the meaning behind it all. I believe the weakness in this the logos point of view, because there are many ways you can prove that people will know about you in the future, there isn't technically a way to back up the argument with facts and you of course rely on the pathos and ethos arguments to make the logos work. This then goes back to the power of the three working together. So I think of it more of a weakness within the strength of the argument.*

*In conclusion, the song "I Was Here" is about more than wanting to be known and famous or even making a difference. It's about telling your audience how you feel, having them believe you and thinking that it is possible. Which is all explained through the different elements that I have learned about this semester.*

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I gave the paper a B+. My reasoning, as best I can recall, was: I had encouraged the students to focus more on discussing how the appeals interacted, which I thought Maya successfully did, than unpacking them individually. I found a clear progression and an engaging writerly persona. I also sensed that one of Maya's goals was to convince me "I Was Here" was a valuable piece of music, and she achieved that goal. I left the essay with a newfound respect for Beyoncé, an artist I hadn't paid much attention to before.<sup>59</sup>

The following year, in an IRB-approved, semi-structured interview project, I asked a few fellow composition instructors to read and assess Maya's essay. Though I did not exclude any potential participants based on their race, everyone who volunteered to participate in my study was white. I did not inform them that Maya was African-American, and deliberately chose a somewhat race-neutral pseudonym, because I didn't want self-consciousness about engaging with race to influence their responses, as research has shown that white instructors tend to feel awkward discussing race (Kim and Olson). Thus, despite the prevalence of color-blindness in composition—in which writing is taught and assessed with little or no attention to a student's race or ethnicity (Lamos)—it is possible that they would have responded differently if they had known Maya was African-American.<sup>60</sup>

### **Instructors' Responses**

Six instructors volunteered for my pilot study: Two men, Maxwell and Stephen, who were graduate students in composition and rhetoric; and four women, LeAnn, Cara,

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<sup>59</sup> Maya's essay was written in 2012, before 2016's *Lemonade*.

<sup>60</sup> In the study discussed in Chapter Five, I did inform participants up front that Maya was an African-American writer. Those results differed, but a number of variables make it unwise to directly compare the two groups of responders.

and Nora, who were graduate students in literature, and Alison, a graduate student in creative writing. As a group, they had between one and seven years of experience as the instructor of record in a composition course. All participants were white, native speakers of American English who had completed, or would soon complete, a two-semester teaching practicum. A required major assignment in the second-semester composition course at their institution is a rhetorical analysis, so each instructor had experience assigning and commenting on that genre.

The instructors were asked to read “I Was Here,”<sup>61</sup> comment as they would on one of their own students’ essays, and rate it using an accompanying rubric.<sup>62</sup> Immediately afterward, we did a short interview discussing the essay, their assessment of it, their teaching practices, and their prior educational and linguistic experiences. I provide the list of questions in Appendix I. In this chapter I focus on what the instructors said in our interviews, the textual materials serving as prompts.

Collectively, the instructors had three main criticisms for the essay: they saw no explicit thesis at the beginning; first- and second-person pronouns made the sentence style too personal; and, relatedly, the essay reflected a worldview that was not objective or distant enough for academic writing—the overall approach was too conversational and openly enthusiastic about the topic; the author was too close to the story.

Five instructors (Maxwell, LeAnn, Stephen, Alison, and Nora) criticized Maya’s choice not to include an explicit thesis early in the essay. For example:

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<sup>61</sup> They also read, rated, commented on, and discussed another student essay, a speech by “Shawn,” an HBCU student. However, because my focus here is on the instructors’ assessment of traditional written texts, I focus only on their responses to Maya’s essay.

<sup>62</sup> The rhetorical analysis rubric was taken from their university’s first-year English instructor resource intranet site, where it serves as the standard available (though not required) rubric for that assignment.

**Speaker Utterance<sup>63</sup>**

LeAnn the student didn't really have a clear thesis that told me what she was going to be talking about throughout the rest of the essay....it wasn't until I got to almost the end of page two that I figured [the point] out.

Alison The first paragraph doesn't even mention pathos at all. And so... I mean I can't surmise that that's what they were talking about.

Their comments reflect a tacit theory that the student author is responsible for explicitly introducing their argument early in the essay; by extension, the reader is not responsible for inferring the argument.

Five instructors (Maxwell, LeAnn, Cara, Alison, and Nora) called the style too personal. For example:

Maxwell It became a lot of I feel this, I feel that, this song makes me cry. And it was bad.

Cara I refuse to accept 'you' in an academic essay."

Alison Her speech is too colloquial, and she needs to get out of the conversational way in which we speak.... we need to move out of that and try to be more formal when we're writing papers

Finally, four instructors (Maxwell, Stephen, LeAnn, and Nora) stated that the essay did not demonstrate enough critical distance from the object of analysis. For example:

Maxwell the introduction...was not critical or distant or some type of third party objective academic tone...I was looking for that and I didn't see that.

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<sup>63</sup> Transcription conventions for these interviews, aka the Spring 2013, are not the same as for Chapters One, Five, and Six. When transcribing these interviews, I inserted punctuation based on typical conventions of written punctuation. I also omitted conversational "filler" words such as "um" and "like." I did transcribe expressions such as "I mean," "you know," or "I guess" in most cases, as they were often used for emphasis or hedging. I otherwise lightly edited the transcriptions for clarity. This is because I was more interested in the content of the instructors' responses than in how they conveyed that content. As with the Fall 2015 data, Ellipses (...) indicate the removal of part of a single utterance or (...) of removal of text includes part(s) of more than one utterance. Brackets [ ] indicate substitution of synonymous wording needed to make the meaning clear, e.g. if the speaker uses a pronoun but the noun is required for reader understanding; bracket. Shorter transcripts are presented within the regular text, as with shorter quotes in MLA.

Nora        I thought she kind of tried to talk about ethos, pathos, logos but ...  
                 that was obscured by her enthusiasm for the song.

None of these comments are about the *content* of Maya's essay, but the *form*. Though most instructors made some written suggestions about how Maya could strengthen her analysis, the collective critiques they emphasized in the interviews were not about the analysis itself, but about tonal and organizational moves they saw as inconsistent with scholarly analysis—enthusiasm; conversational tone; direct address to the reader; a narrative structure that rendered the thesis more implicit than explicit.

Their collective critiques reflect the ADs of and about academic writing. The end-of-the-first-paragraph thesis statement is a hallmark of school writing in the U.S. And we often expect that school-based writing should be the opposite of personal and enthusiastic. In *Alt Dis*, Patricia Bizzell describes the “typical worldview” of academic writing (“Intellectual” 2), which strives for objectivity and impersonality:

[T]he ones in power in the traditional academic community create discourses that embody *a typical worldview*. This worldview speaks through an academic persona who is objective, trying to prevent any emotions or prejudices from influencing the ideas in the writing. (Bizzell 2, my emphasis)

Maya's essay simply does not adopt the “typical worldview” Bizzell describes.

Unfortunately for Maya, that discourse is a perfect example of a discourse backed by power and authority, an authoritative discourse, which in this case prefers an objective, impartial, skeptical authorial persona. Unsurprisingly, my participants described looking for these qualities in Maya's paper and not finding them, thus reading her work as deficient in that regard.

## Re-reading “I Was Here” as Grounded in AAE Rhetoric

My colleagues’ reactions differed from mine enough that I decided to take another look at the essay. I did not agree with their assessments, but realized I was more overtly familiar with the theories informing their readings than with those informing my own. Indeed, their comments are probably similar to ones I would have made before I began pursuing language variety as an area of study. So, in an attempt to see if I could justify, or at least better understand, my positive reading, I began further researching AAE rhetoric. My research helped me better articulate my appreciation for Maya’s essay.<sup>64</sup> Re-reading it as a scholar of linguistic variation and student writing, not only as a teacher who inherently enjoys variety, I found that Maya’s approach showed many characteristics of rhetorical-level AAE. Specifically, she employed circumlocution, narrative interspersion, and testifying.

Maya’s essay is an excellent example of circumlocution, which Ball and Lardner define as “implicit linking of topics in the discourse, shifts in focus, and topic relations that must be inferred by the message receiver” (*African* 42), so her thesis is not, as the readers noted, obvious. But re-reading with an understanding of circumlocution, we see that she works her way to an easily inferred argument. Throughout the essay, Maya describes her changing experience with the song “I Was Here” and links its emotional power to the listener’s familiarity with Beyoncé’s situated ethos. The connection with logos is less explicit, but Maya briefly establishes a cause-effect relationship between Beyoncé’s life choices and success. This relationship is tied back to Beyoncé’s ethos, and

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<sup>64</sup> I found validation in being able to apply established labels to Maya’s strategies. However, this raises questions for me about our requirements for validating a student’s writing. Do a student’s patterns really need to be backed up by scholarly research in order to be effective? I’m still intrigued by this question, but will have to address it in a future project.



contributes to the overall pathetic impact of the song. Maya implicitly connects each paragraph to a central focus on the song's effective use of pathos.

Maya also uses narrative interspersion, “the insertion of narratives within the context of the expository text...in order to achieve particular effects or purposes” (Ball and Lardner, *African* 47). In the African American rhetorical tradition, “[a]n ordinary inquiry is likely to elicit an extended narrative where the abstract point or general message will be couched in concrete story form” (Smitherman, *Talkin* 161). Maya's use of first-person narrative to describe her topic selection process, her general admiration of music, and her changing experience with the song—from skeptical listener to enthusiastic fan to rhetorically-savvy critic—provides a classic example of narrative interspersion.<sup>65</sup>

Finally, in a related practice, the essay also exhibits “Testifying,” which Smitherman describes as “tell[ing] the truth through ‘story’” (*Talkin* 150). “[T]estifying,” she explains, “is not plain and simple commentary but a dramatic narration and a communal reenactment of one's feelings and experiences” (150). To this reader, Maya's use of “dramatic narration” made the essay more urgent, more compelling, than if she had chosen the “plain and simple commentary” route.

Several years after she wrote “I Was Here”—in fact, after she had graduated—I contacted Maya via e-mail to share a summary of my work and ask for her perspective. Notably, one of the first things she wrote was, “I've always tried to write as if I was

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<sup>65</sup> Narrative interspersion is not unique to AAE; you may have noticed that I use it here, and many academic writers, of diverse language backgrounds, do so as well. However, the technique has been identified most prominently in AAE, suggesting that while it is not a “group-exclusive” feature (used only by members of one group), it is “group-preferential” (used more often by members one of one group than other groups) for AAE (see Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, 172-173, for further discussion of group-exclusive and group preferential features). Based on my intuitions and experiences as an Appalachian English user, I suggest that my linguistic background predisposes me to this strategy. It may be one reason that I am instinctively more receptive than many of my colleagues to narrative-based academic texts. However, further exploration of narrative interspersion among white Appalachian English users is beyond the scope of this project.

telling a story to someone.” She explained that she originally intended to pursue a career in broadcast journalism, but “I didn’t like the rules that came with journalism...it took out all of the fun, the creativity, the ability to be myself...it felt like I was trying to fit my creativity into a box that was way too small.” Note the echo of Bakhtin, who wrote, “[the authoritative word’s] semantic structure is static and dead... [it] permits no play with the context framing it, no play with its borders, no gradual and flexible transitions, no spontaneously creative stylizing variants on it” (343). So Maya switched to a career in advertising, which she considers a better fit: “Advertising gave me the ability to speak to other people like me and to the people who wanted to speak like me,” she wrote. In her job, “writing with a personality is so important. If I bore my audience, they’ll never buy anything from us.” Maya is a conscientious writer, well aware that different contexts favor different styles. She actively chose a profession where her preference to write in a way that feels more authentic to her is welcome. In this case, it seems, I favor the *codemeshing as authentic voice* viewpoint that I identified in Chapter Three.

Of course, Maya is certainly capable of using formal academic conventions. In the essay, for instance, she uses SE grammar and syntax. She also includes quotes from print texts and the song itself, exhibiting explicit intertextuality. Aside from a few formatting errors, she successfully uses MLA citation. She also references rhetorical principles that are common knowledge in rhetoric and composition, demonstrating her entry into the new discourse community. By blending SE- and AAE-favored registers and styles, Maya is *code-meshing*. Code-meshing proponents influenced by the *we’re already doing it* warrant identified in Chapter Two might guess, correctly, that Maya code-meshed without being explicitly taught to do so in her college writing course. And proponents of

code-meshing who favor the *learning-process* warrant might point out that Maya's code-meshing allowed her to practice new academic writing strategies.

Maya's code-meshing shows her ideological becoming, and her heteroglossia, as a writer. Code-meshing is rarely explicitly taught, but student writers—especially those from minority language backgrounds—often intuitively learn it, and deploy it successfully. As discussed in Chapter Two, several scholars have found that African-American students who incorporate AAE rhetoric into their writing perform relatively well on blind assessments (Smitherman, ““Blacker””; Gilyard and Richardson) and in race-conscious college writing courses (Perryman-Clark “African-American,” “Africanized”; Young, “Your Average”). Her approach may not have won over my study participants, but Maya said that many of her past teachers had praised her AAE-strong style. “In college,” she wrote, “most professors loved my writing, but I had one or two who just didn't get it.” Although I can only speculate, it is at least possible that if I *had* informed my participants that Maya was African-American, the increased contextual information may have helped some of them better appreciate her rhetorical choices.

### **Individual Experience, Appropriacy, and Ambivalence**

My colleagues may not have “gotten” Maya's essay, but that doesn't mean their readings were faulty; indeed, they are logical given the expectations the instructors have developed for student writing through their training and professionalization. As mentioned above, appropriacy reasoning is prevalent in composition (Inoue 14), and most white instructors are unfamiliar with AAE discourse patterns (Ball and Lardner, *African* 30; Smitherman, *Talkin* 161). Such trends were indicated for all my participants.

Additionally, they told several stories that suggest specific roots to their language ideologies and assessment practices.

Cara described how a childhood experience of being mocked for speaking with a Southern accent contributed to her developing prescriptive beliefs about language:

Cara     I come from a redneck, Deep South home where my first exposure to external speakers was people...who laughed every time I opened my mouth....And I was traumatized. So I...started teaching myself how to *not* sound southern at the age of eleven. And I happened to be at the age where grammar was not taken out of schools yet ... most of my understanding of language comes from...the classroom.

Influenced by Standard Language Ideology, Cara actively worked to change her speech style to resemble a prescriptive writing style, in an effort to gain overt prestige:

Cara     I was always taught...that our natural inclination is to write how we speak, and so I took that to heart and started speaking how I wrote....I want to be respected, and the way I can be respected is if I speak the way acceptable writing is produced.

Given her stated beliefs, it should not be surprising that Cara's comments about Maya's essay included a blanket rejection of the conversational second-person. Discussing the essay, she said, "I feel like, things like, 'like you've been there, you know?' It's way beyond informal for an essay that's trying to prove it's worthy of analysis." Cara sees good writing as distinct from speech. She is sensitive to the potential ridicule of nonprestige discourse practices.

Professionalization experiences were also influential. Nora explained that she had taken a pedagogy class that introduced the validity of non-standard dialects, but emphasized appropriacy:

Nora     [The class] was about teaching English to native and ESL speakers, so we talked about how some people ...don't even realize they're using regional variations and dialects—so we talked about the

appropriate way to tell them that that's great, and they can do whatever they want, but people might be expecting something a little different in an academic assignment.

In the class she took, Nora learned the assimilationist approach to teaching writing: “regional variations and dialects” are “great,” but since the audience is “expecting a something a little different” the writer can’t, actually, “do whatever they want.” So in her assessment of “I Was Here,” Nora takes a position that though Maya’s essay is not inherently flawed, it is not appropriate for the context:

Nora        I kind of liked the casual tone [but] I wasn’t sure whether it was appropriate. If I had received this as a smaller exercise, I would have thought it was fine. I kind of liked how it was casual. It’s about a pop song; I thought that was appropriate for the subject matter. If it were like a paper-paper and I told them to use an academic tone...then I would’ve marked off for that. But...if it were just like a casual assignment, like a mid-semester assignment, I probably would’ve thought the style conventions were fine.

Maxwell, like Nora, was ambivalent about the appropriateness of Maya’s conversational tone given the subject matter, and faced a conflict between the expected tone of an academic essay and the logic of writing about one’s feelings in a piece of music criticism.

Maxwell    I was looking for an academic tone...but I expected in a rhetorical analysis of a song...and music in general to be personal and non-academic because music...also is about the way it makes you feel, so that should be included in there.

He described his position that academic writing is not monolithic:

Maxwell    I am interested in students developing their own voice, not necessarily matching an academic voice. That is, academic voice is many different things, or at least it can be....I am interested in [students] learning how to sound academic I guess, using sources, evaluating sources, thinking critically. If that’s academic...I’m interested in that. But I’m not interested in everyone sounding the same.

For Maxwell, academic writing does not necessarily need to meet certain style parameters as long as writers are working critically with sources, which Maya does. He implies that he values variety in student writing. However, his assessment in this context was influenced by the rubric—he said, “The rubric for the rhetorical analysis wanted an academic tone, and this essay did not have anywhere near that.”

Maxwell discusses his grading in terms of *what the rubric wanted*. He assigns agency to the rubric, which is an authoritative text, and lets that authority override his own criteria, which he has developed over several years of teaching. He defers to the AD, not the IPD. This is a sensible thing to do, from a professional standpoint. And I doubt Maxwell is the only instructor who has experienced such a disconnect. Even instructors as experienced as Maxwell may often set aside our own individual, often translingual, beliefs about good writing in order to follow the rules set by an institution. And these institutional rubrics too often promote a white, authoritative discourse: describing the scoring guide for a statewide writing assessment in California (Inoue 34), Inoue writes, “the guide...promote[s]... a particular ideal text, one that values only abstract ideas, with no sensitivity to the way particular racial formations might respond differently, respond from their own social conditions. This ideal text, I argue, is informed by a dominant white discourse, seen in the rubric and the way it asks readers to judge from it” (42). This is but one example of a rubric shaped by whiteness. And such experiences with rubrics, in turn, shape our assessment practice—because that is what they are designed to do.

An instructor’s own experience as a writing student may also influence how they assess. In one case, Stephen expressed a lack of confidence in his writing and implied

that he was forced by his graduate program to write in a way unnatural to him. Asked to describe his writing style, he said:

Stephen     Total garbage .... I dunno, ‘getting there’ comes to mind. It depends on what I’m writing...what’s appropriate to one genre isn’t always appropriate to the other. I mean, what I’m *made* to do, academically, is really cut-and-dry.

Stephen has learned to code-switch in his work, and limit creativity in his academic writing. Not coincidentally, he was one of the instructors to criticize Maya’s implicit thesis, saying “[Maya’s] argument, if there is one...the argument should be clearly spelled out.” He also suggested she leave her personal voice out of her essay: “For rhetorical analysis it should be, it should be just analysis....objective tone, close reading, critical reading, that kind of thing.” In other words, he suggests Maya write in a more “cut-and-dry” style.

Finally, Stephen’s description of his influences suggests the role conversations with others, such as colleagues and family members, about language correctness can have on one’s beliefs. Stephen described how he has debated with his wife, who teaches writing to non-native speakers of English, about the purpose of composition:

Stephen     We’ve had sort of arguments about if [first-year English] should be these sort of gateway classes for standardized academic writing....I kind of come from the position that [first-year English] should be a sort of gateway class into standardized academic writing.

Despite his initial, prescriptive stance, partially as a result of their debates, Stephen said he had become more flexible in the writing he assigns his composition students:

Stephen     Five years ago I never assigned a personal narrative, I’ve been assigning personal narratives in the last years, so I guess that’s changing... I think it does something when they can tell their own story. Like it gives them back...a certain comfort level with their language use that makes for more powerful writing.

He described the personal narrative as a low-stakes assignment, separate from formal assignments such as rhetorical analyses. Though such a separation of assignments does reinforce code-switching, and assimilationism, the way Stephen came to the decision to allow narrative at all is noteworthy. His is an example of how conversations with peers contribute to changes in our language attitudes, something I discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

### **Further Research**

My participants were influenced by a range of experiences throughout their lives: childhood traumas; education; professionalization; rubrics; debates with peers. These promising sources of ideological becoming warrant further exploration in future studies. Overall, these instructors' ideological becomings appear to have been heavily influenced by appropriacy reasoning and white habitus, which are authoritative discourses. However, my study also gives me reason to be optimistic about the possibility for a more translingual future in composition. These instructors were not hard-and-fast prescriptive ideologues: they expressed belief in the value of narrative, saw the potential merits in using emotion to write about music, and argued for the multiplicity of academic discourse. The difficulty of promoting translingual composition does not necessarily lie with individual instructors so much as with the authoritative discourses that surround us. Of course, it is a problem only individual actors can solve.

Inoue argues that in college composition, "there is something wrong with the academic discourse itself, something wrong with judging everyone against an academic discourse that clearly privileges middle-class white students" (8). We *should* expand our definition of academic writing to better appreciate work like Maya's. Unfortunately,



composition has not yet realized the lofty goal of appreciating diverse styles. For that to happen, several pieces must fall into place: changes to large-scale assessment; changes to institutional syllabi; pluralism and translingualism promoted in composition practicum; and so on. Such changes must be implemented by WPAs and composition instructors. Each person who writes a syllabus, helps establish course objectives, makes comments on student drafts, and does any of the other work of teaching writing—each of these is an individual with a linguistic ideology that has been shaped by a lifetime of personal, educational, and professional experiences. These ideologies are still in flux, because ideological becoming is a neverending process. And these becomings influence how writing gets taught. Close study of such ideological becomings can help us understand the professionalization needed to promote translingualism. We need to know more about the forces that have shaped current attitudes about language, expectations for student writing, and goals for the classroom. We also need to listen to each other, and actively let one another's discourses influence our thinking—whether that means taking up colleagues' practices and ideas, or recognizing when we need to better trouble our own perspectives.

I also suggest that Maya's essay is an example of how student texts can and should influence our paradigms of student writing. When a student does something unexpected, and it works, it should give us pause. This does not mean we have to just let students write anything they want at any time. But we should be receptive to the possibility that a student essay, like Maya's, could make us re-think our expectations. Allowing good, unorthodox student writing to influence us in this way can help shape our ideological becoming in productive, positive ways. And it demonstrates the "disposition

of openness and inquiry toward language and language differences” that Lu and Horner describe as a hallmark of translingualism (“Translingual Literacy” 585).

In this chapter, I have discussed how several ideological beings intersected: Maya, the AAE-strong, code-meshing student writer; my fellow instructors; and myself. In a way, this is an essay about my ideological becoming, as an instructor and scholar. Maya’s IPD-strong essay became authoritative for me as it grew into a centerpiece of my research, and led me to put a number of discourses and meta-discourses into productive tension: Maya’s writing style; my colleagues’ articulations of their expectations for student writing; scholarship on AAE, appropriacy reasoning, code-meshing, and translingualism; and my understandings of AAE, SE, and the Appalachian storytelling tradition that informs my own experience. At some point along the way, I realized Maya’s writing was influencing my own—I felt freer to adopt narrative in my work, and hope I have used it effectively.

So perhaps it is fitting to end on a brief story: as I prepared my initial study, I chose Maya’s essay not only because she is an AAE writer, but because I remembered how, when I was grading papers in a prior semester, this one stood out. Most of Maya’s classmates chose to write about academic sources or articles from our course anthology—a more familiar task, as we had practiced analyzing similar texts. Maya risked applying rhetorical analysis to a new genre. Her passion for her topic caught my attention from the beginning, and by alternating analysis with the story of how she came to be emotionally affected by the song, she carried my interest to the end. Other students may have been more successful at adopting the format and tone of a traditional rhetorical analysis, but Maya’s essay was the only one I remembered a year later—though I couldn’t fully

articulate why, at the time, I thought it was *good*. I think I can explain it now, and I consider myself quite lucky to have encountered a student text that set me on an eye-opening scholarly journey. Like the artist she so admired, Maya left her mark.

## CHAPTER 5: THE USE OF NARRATIVE TO RECONCILE COMPETING DISCOURSES

“Each of us is a narrative. A good part of the time we can live comfortably adjacent to or across the way from other narratives. Our narratives can be congruent with other narratives, or untouched by other narratives. But sometimes another narrative impinges upon ours, or thunders around and down into our narratives. We can’t build this other into our narratives without harm to the tales we have been telling.”—James Corder, “Argument as Emergence, Rhetoric as Love,” p.18

### Introduction

While analyzing the interview data (aka, the Spring 2013 dataset) for the project detailed in Chapter Four, I was reminded that there is much more to a teacher’s linguistic ideological development than can be uncovered in a single half-hour interview. That project enabled me to get a sense of my colleagues’ beliefs about language on the day I interviewed them, and some sense of the reasons behind their linguistic ideologies, but it could *not* tell me what would happen if they had the opportunity to reflect on the matter over time, or to engage with discourses that might explicitly trouble their pre-existing beliefs. So I wanted to see what would happen if I did a second study, one in which I talked with teachers at more length, gave them more time to reflect on the questions at hand, and gave them a chance to engage with scholarship on translingualism and language variety. This chapter reports on that second study, using data collected in Fall 2015. As with the Spring 2013 data, I recruited participants from a mid-sized, research-focused, flagship university in the southeastern U.S. Six instructors (all different from the instructors in the Spring 2013 data) volunteered for the project, which involved meeting with me five different times throughout the Fall 2015 semester in order to discuss their

linguistic experiences and beliefs, several scholarly texts on issues related to linguistic variety, and three student texts by nonmainstream writers. In this chapter, I describe how this group of instructors told stories as a way to make sense of new information and ideas that conflicted with their existing linguistic experiences, theories, and ideologies.

We use narratives to make sense of our world, to create our identities and convey them to others. The narratives and discourses with which we interact contribute to our “positioning,” the way we present ourselves and respond to new conversations (Davies and Harré 42-46). Our narratives and positions are informed by our ideologies and theories, both tacit and overt (Gee 16-19). Though the positions we take up guide our interactions with the world, they are not fixed, but fluid (Davies and Harré 46). In Chapter 4, I discussed Bakhtin’s concept of “ideological becoming” as an ongoing process shaped by the tension between internally persuasive and authoritative discourses. Similarly, Davies and Harré argue that “[a]n individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate” (46). That is, by engaging in discourse, by telling and hearing stories, we develop and re-build the self in a continuous act of becoming.

When introduced to narratives and discourses that challenge those we have been using to position ourselves and others in the world, and to make decisions, we have several options: to engage with the new stories and attempt to learn from them; to ignore and pretend not to hear them; to become unmoored and lose our sense of self; to become angry and aggressively defend our position (Condon 1-2; Corder 16-19). The telling of

stories within conversation is one way to enact each of the above options, which narrators may do separately or in combination.

My participants in this chapter are all white, middle-class, college writing instructors who are Ph.D. students focusing in American Literature.<sup>66</sup> The narratives these instructors create show that they are typically influenced by the “white habitus” (Bonilla-Silva) or “whiteness” (Frye); “color-blindness” (Bonilla-Silva; Lamos); and “Appropriacy Reasoning” (Lippi-Green; Flores and Rosa). Each of those ways of thinking is prominent within the university, but antithetical to translingualism. However, promisingly, many instructors’ narratives also demonstrate a willingness to interrogate their worldviews. That is, they use stories to help make sense of new stories, to decide if and how much to let those stories inform their beliefs and practices. These include narratives based in past or recent personal and professional experiences, as well as hypothetical narratives of imagined futures. Each type of narrative helps the speakers grapple with the conflicts between old and new discourses. Though the participants’ narratives do, at times, indicate rejection of, and attempts to ignore, translingual discourse, they more commonly demonstrate that speakers are “choosing to lean in and learn from” the new viewpoints (Condon 2). This “lean[ing] in” includes openly embracing translingual ideas, but also grappling with them through narratives expressing confusion, uncertainty, and anger. The instructors are willing to let translingualism trouble them, an essential move as “to be troubled is a necessary condition for learning

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<sup>66</sup> I did not intentionally limit my sample by race or class background, but only white, middle-class instructors volunteered to participate. I did intentionally limit my participant group to graduate students of American Literature for several reasons: first, working with participants from the same discipline reduces potential confounding variables; second, American literature is one of the most popular areas of inquiry (though of course there are specializations within this field) in English graduate programs, and many American literature specialists go on to teach composition after earning their degrees.

and for change” (Condon 7). Ultimately, I draw on my interview data to suggest that college writing teachers may be willing and able to incorporate translingualism into their professional thinking, if they are given the time, space, and opportunity to do so in a low-stakes, dialogic environment that values their existing professional knowledge and experiences. Such an environment invites instructors to answer translingualism’s call for “readers—teachers and students alike—to come to terms with their responses to language differences” (Trimbur, “Translingualism” 226). A crucial early step in adopting translingualism is confronting the ways we read quality into different varieties of linguistic expression. The dialogic professionalization components I propose are unlikely to convert every writing teacher into a translingual zealot, but they *do* have the potential to help instructors engage responsively with translingual discourse, make room for this new paradigm in their professional understanding, and even incorporate aspects of translingualism into their pedagogies.

### **Language Professionalization Trends**

James Corder writes that we use narrative to shape a coherent identity and understanding of the self, a self we can be happy with. However, this identity narrative will face challenges, giving us two choices:

We... make a narrative of ourselves that we can enjoy, tolerate, or at least not have to think about too much. Every so often, we will see something we have not seen before, and then we have to nudge, poke, and re-make our narrative, or we can decide we can either ignore the thing seen or whittle it to shape the narrative we already have. (16-17)

Moreover, a new narrative may be particularly troubling if it challenges our belief in ourselves. “What happens,” Corder asks, “if a narrative not our own reveals to us that our own narrative was wanting all along, though it is the only evidence of our identity?” (19)

As previously noted, the abundance of research affirming language variety and the benefits of pedagogies that promote translingual awareness, reading, and writing rarely seems to influence practice. Geneva Smitherman takes a particularly pessimistic view and argues that:

People listen to the information about the competence of language, they take it in and then—like cognitive dissonance—they exhibit language behaviors that are totally contrary to the information....People have been given the information—the facts—but they still behave in the same old ways. (qtd. in Lovejoy et al. 383)

One might think teachers would be quick to take advantage of a learning opportunity. Then again, humans often resist knowledge that clashes with our existing worldviews. We rely on our initial impressions of a subject, and are unlikely to change our minds even when presented with evidence that these impressions were based on faulty or deceptive information (Kolbert).

Jane Bowman Smith describes one possible reason teachers may resist incorporating language variety knowledge into their pedagogies and worldviews:

[A] problem for those of us in academe is our own ‘egocentrism,’ for want of a better word; after years of work to intuit the demands of our fields, the ego urges us to know that the discourse we have painstakingly mastered over our years of study is of course correct. (“Negotiating” 19)



When a set of beliefs about correctness in language has long been part of our teaching practice, and when that set of beliefs also validates our sense of professional efficacy, it may certainly become wrapped up in our identities. When identity is on the line, it is impossible to find a resolution “that injures neither party” in a debate (Hairston qtd. in Corder 22), and the clash of competing narratives gets messier the more “steadfast” (23) parties are. It is hard to get someone to think about changing their mind if they sense a threat to their very self. No matter how logical an argument, it “may be totally ineffectual when employed in a rhetorical situation where the audience feels its beliefs or values are being threatened” (Bator qtd. in Corder 23-24). By the time instructors have gained experience and a sense of efficacy (Ball and Lardner, *African*), narratives and discourses such as appropriacy reasoning may be a part of their identity—in which case, narratives challenging that identity are likely to be unwelcome.

Hypothetically, initial teacher training is ideal for introducing principles of language diversity. But current teacher training, for both college and primary/secondary educators, rarely includes such professionalization. Lovejoy et al. find that composition programs usually ignore language diversity or fail to provide necessary resources on the subject, pointing out that “most composition programs do not have explicit language policies or program initiatives that address linguistic diversity in the classroom” (“From Language Experience” 382). And in a survey of primary and secondary teacher education programs, Ball and Muhammed found that there are few opportunities for pre-service teachers to study language variety or train to incorporate it into their pedagogy; moreover, such courses are usually electives, not requirements (79-81).

When pre-service teachers and new composition instructors have the chance to study language variety, results tend to be mixed. Though some research has reported the effectiveness of courses and training in promoting pluralist and translingual<sup>67</sup> attitudes (Ball and Freedman; Canagarajah, “Translingual Writing”; Okawa; Richardson, “Race, Class(es)”), research—sometimes the same research that reports on ways pluralist attitudes are successfully fostered—also notes teachers’ resistance to incorporating language variation scholarship into pedagogy (Ball and Lardner, “Dispositions”; Behm and Miller; Canagarajah, “Translingual Writing”). Classes focused on American dialects or AAE have proven to be more effective at fostering receptivity to linguistic diversity than general courses on linguistics or the history of American English (Ball and Muhammed 81; CCCC Language Policy Committee; Richardson, “Race, Class(es)”), and voluntary semester-long learning opportunities (Ball and Freedman; Canagarajah, “Translingual Writing”; and Okawa) are usually more effective at promoting pluralist attitudes than shorter, mandatory professionalization (Ball and Lardner, “Dispositions”; Perryman-Clark, “Racial Profiling” ); however, it is possible for a required, semester-long course that includes activities such as reflective writing and tutoring with linguistically diverse students to be effective at fostering acceptance of linguistic diversity (Ball and Muhammed 82-88).

Canagarajah argues that college writing practicums typically take a teacher-centered approach, and don’t allow enough room for instructors-in-training to productively put their prior knowledge in dialogue with the materials introduced in the practicum. Recognizing the value of resources new instructors bring to the classroom

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<sup>67</sup> Because of overlap between pluralist and translingual discourses, I use both terms together where both are applicable.

(268), and providing a space for the instructors to place their existing beliefs and experiences into conversation with new material, is essential, because dismissing such prior knowledge is detrimental to long-term professionalization. Canagarajah draws on new research in professionalization to point out that “if the pedagogical content and professional knowledge” (266) introduced in a practicum “are not negotiated in relation to instructors’ current beliefs and past experiences or appropriated in relation to the professional identities they are developing, their professionalization won’t be effective” (266). If TAs receive new information banking-concept style (Freire), it is less likely to make an impact than if it is introduced in a more dialogic, critical way.

Ball and Muhammed found that, where courses on language variety issues are available, class membership is more likely to consist of experienced teachers, including secondary educators or composition instructors, than pre-service teachers (80-81). This suggests that many experienced teachers realize the importance of linguistic diversity and wish to pursue continuing education on it. The researchers also suggest that pre-service educators may avoid the subject mainly because of packed pre-graduation schedules (81). And based on her reading of the results of the CCCC’s Language Policy Committee’s 1999 *Language Knowledge and Awareness* survey, Richardson argues, “most of the profession realizes that training in linguistic diversity is an important requirement and may enhance their teaching” (“Race, Class(es)” 55). In short, there appears to be sufficient interest among educators on topics of language variation to warrant more courses and professionalization opportunities.

Most of the available research, however, tells us about pre-service K-12 educators’, experienced K-12 educators’, and novice composition instructors’ study of

language variety. It does not tell us much about how experienced college writing instructors engage with language variety, nor if they are willing to do so. Therefore, one contribution my work offers to the field is by focusing specifically on experienced composition instructors, a group that has previously been under-represented in the research. A project focused on this group is not only interesting for demographic reasons, either: experienced composition instructors do not work within the same constraints as secondary educators, and therefore have had more time than novice college writing instructors to independently ask more questions about language variety, and/or, to solidify their existing beliefs on how language variety should be addressed in pedagogy; to recognize it is an issue worth further professionalization, or to develop pedagogical strategies they find satisfactory and are unlikely to change on their own. So we can only extrapolate so much about their language attitudes based on research that focuses on other groups. Knowing more about this group's dispositions toward, and interactions with, language variety can better prepare us to create meaningful professionalization opportunities for them.

### **Study Design and Methodology**

The present study features six participants, all Ph.D. students studying American Literature, who are current or recent composition instructors at a mid-sized research university in the southeastern U.S.<sup>68</sup> I conducted five interviews with each participant. The first interview was used to determine demographic information and discuss the participants' experiences with and beliefs about language. The second centered on

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<sup>68</sup> I recruited participants by sending a brief e-mail accompanied by a formal invitation letter over the graduate English listserv, and explained my research goals generally in the introductory paragraph by writing "I am conducting a study on how composition instructors' professional, personal, and educational experiences contribute to their professional opinions regarding language variety in student writing." I also outlined the format for the study protocol and noted the financial incentive.

discussion of Anson's "Reflective Reading," which includes an essay by an ESOL writer, "Leang"; and an excerpt from Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur's "Language Difference in Writing."<sup>69</sup> For the third interview, we discussed an excerpt from Ball and Lardner's *African American Literacies Unleashed*, which includes a sample AAE-strong essay by "Lisa"; for the fourth, we talked about Young's "'Nah, We Straight'" and another AAE-strong student text—Maya's essay, from Chapter Four. The fifth interview was an opportunity to discuss the impact, if any, of participating in my project, and a chance for my colleagues to raise lingering questions. I also used it as an opportunity to gauge their interest in participating in translingual professionalization in the future. Because of the time commitment, they earned a fifty dollar stipend.

The participants were in their mid-twenties to mid-thirties, with between two and eight years' experience as instructor of record in college writing courses. There were four men and two women, all white (non-Hispanic), native speakers of American English. I did not exclude racial minorities, but for demographic reasons an all-white field was practically inevitable.

My approach to interviewing, in this study, is influenced by Participatory Design, a methodology in which researcher and participants work together "to examine the tacit, invisible aspects of human activity" (Spinuzzi 164). I made my participants aware of my research questions both for the sake of professional courtesy, and in the spirit of dialogue, influenced by the belief that "participants' tacit knowledge and researchers' more

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<sup>69</sup> I only asked them to read the first three pages of this document, which provide a basic introduction to translingualism, instead of the whole document, because I was conscientious of time commitment. For recruitment purposes and to make it easier for participants to fit the reading into their schedule, I wanted to limit the reading to a manageable amount.

abstract, analytical knowledge...must be bridged, with each being valued by all involved” (164).

I wanted my methodology to allow my participants room to reflect on the questions I asked, by developing a good rapport and creating as comfortable and nonthreatening an environment as possible. Okawa argues that “[i]n a relatively nonthreatening learning environment based on descriptive deconstructions of language behavior, students can often confront threatening and uncomfortable issues...these reflections can become a profound beginning of revised attitudes about language, identity, and culture” (335). Additionally, “a sense of threat usually blocks successful communication” (Corder 20).

In this project, interviews took the form more of conversations than formal interviews. I wrote a basic script with a list of questions for each interview, and have provided it in the appendix. However, because of the conversational nature of the project, we sometimes went on tangents or discussed questions out of order (e.g., if a participant’s answer to Question 3 made it more organic to follow up by asking Question 8 before circling back to Question 4). Flexibility is an aspect of participatory design; the “partnership must be conducted iteratively so that researcher-designers and participants can develop and refine their understanding of the activity” (164), which in this case is language diversity in teaching. So at times, we had to make adjustments to our conversation in order to achieve greater understanding of our activity.

I also sometimes asked different follow-up questions depending on participant’s answers. After asking my questions, I yielded the floor as much as possible, while also

providing backchanneling cues<sup>70</sup> (e.g., expressions such as “mmhmm” and “yeah”).

Though I sometimes allowed the conversation to veer onto tangential topics that helped establish rapport, such as discussion of shared experiences with professors, politicians we disliked, and even on occasion, pets, I always made sure we covered all the main areas of discussion on the agenda for the meeting.<sup>71</sup> I also sometimes offered my own interpretation of a text or provided supplemental information on an issue when directly asked by a participant to do so, or when the situation invited it (e.g., I provided additional information about the authors of our scholarly texts, and I attempted to provide a counter-narrative to Thea’s misunderstanding of the Oakland School Board controversy).

However, I held my own views and stories back until after we had discussed a participant’s initial responses to a text. Even though my position as a researcher introduces some imbalance to the relationship, I tried to create a more equal conversational footing by using strategies of politeness (Johnstone, *Discourse* 144-147), including hedging (159) and the aforementioned backchanneling (173).

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<sup>70</sup> As Johnstone explains, “‘backchannelling’ in conversation...indicat[es] that interlocutors are listening, understanding, or agreeing” (*Discourse* 173). Similarly, according to Wolfram and Schilling-Estes, “Backchanneling involves interjecting small utterances such as *Mmmhmm*, *Uh-huh*, *Yeah*, and *Right*—or even just nodding the head—into conversation in order to let the current speaker know that he or she may continue speaking” (99, original italics). Though I usually attempted to keep my backchanneling (I use Wolfram and Schilling-Estes’ spelling) utterances as neutral as possible, neither affirming nor disagreeing with participants’ statements, it is certainly possible, even likely, that I sometimes conveyed a tone suggestive of agreement or disagreement, and/or that participants interpreted many of my utterances as either positive or negative.

<sup>71</sup> Another way the methodology influenced the data was that some interviews were much longer than others—though I was always conscientious to make sure that I did not impose on participants’ time and assured them we could stop at the allotted time even if we had not already finished answering all the questions. Participants usually expressed interest in continued discussion and were not rushed to leave, which bolsters my informal hypothesis that instructors find language issues worth discussion and inquiry. Finally, interviews were almost always conducted in the same two office spaces (I did not have my own office space during the semester I collected data, but two senior colleagues granted me use of their offices), but they were not conducted at consistent intervals. This was because I had to accommodate my participants’ schedules. So, for example, Wally and I started and finished our interviews within a span of about 6 weeks, while Barry and I took 10 weeks to complete all our meetings.

I wanted to establish a good rapport, as “Establishing rapport with informants is of paramount importance in the conduct of qualitative inquiry” (Williams qtd. in Webb-Sunderhaus 14). I hoped to create a climate in which my participants felt comfortable expressing disagreement with me; in such a climate, I hoped they could share their unfiltered impressions of the texts and the issues those texts raised, and we could engage in a productive dialogue and challenge each other’s ideas. Though I was not an impartial, objective observer, I did not climb onto my soapbox and try to convert them to my particular brand of chaos-loving linguistic descriptivism. My hope is that we established enough of a rapport that my interpretation did not unduly influence their answers; however, as there is always some give-and-take when colleagues exchange ideas and discuss concepts, it is likely that my discernible interpretations, and my discussion of new terms and concepts, also acted as a new discourse that participants incorporated into their thinking on the matter, or rejected. Ultimately, my goal was to see how my participants respond to challenging discourse and ideas, of which I am also a source. I also wanted the project to be as beneficial for my participants as possible. Participatory Design is also rooted in “*action research*, in which ethnographic methods are linked to positive change for the research participants” (Spinuzzi 164, original italics). A goal of my project was not only to collect data, but to provide positive change by giving participants a chance to learn more about a significant theoretical movement in composition studies, providing increased professionalization as well as information that could provide additional resources for teaching.

For analysis, I transcribed each interview and then re-read each participant’s series of transcripts, and wrote an initial overall summary of each participant’s



engagement with the material. I recognize that there is a potential for bias here in my interpretation, but I attempted quality checks by revisiting transcripts at a later date to confirm whether or not the participants' utterances supported my paraphrases. I then looked for similarities and differences across participants—for example, I noted answers to the questions that I asked each person; and, if a trend occurred that was not based directly on one of my questions, I checked to see how widely it applied. I also noted moments when participants expressed doubt or, in contrast, confidence about a position. I used these measures to make adjustments, as needed, to my summaries. I then compared them with existing literature to select the most salient possible findings to explore, and selected the focus for this chapter. I had established broad initial research questions, but used data analysis to hone in on the best possible focus, which here was to examine instructors' use of narratives. Hammersley and Atkinson argue that “research design should be a reflexive process operating through every stage of a project” in qualitative studies (qtd. in Maxwell 214), and Maxwell points out that paying attention to trends that emerge during the study can help researchers best achieve their research goals (220-221). While reviewing the data I found myself “[i]dentifying unanticipated phenomena and influences” (221)—in this case, participants' habit of using narratives to reconcile competing discourses—and thus “generat[ed] new, ‘grounded’ theories” about what was happening” (221).

It was during this stage that I decided to focus on five of the six participants, as one participant, Josephine, was a notable outlier. Josephine positioned herself from the beginning as a firm proponent of linguistically diverse pedagogies, having received explicit, extended enculturation into pluralist and translingual scholarship at a prior

institution. I left Josephine out because I was interested in exploring the narratives created by teachers who are encountering translingual scholarship paired with discourses of linguistic diversity in composition for the first time. The five other participants had either no previous experience with these discourses, or their exposure had been limited. Josephine's interview data is a rich resource for exploring how teachers with previous exposure to such discourses respond when they return to them. Her interview answers were insightful and helpful, and provide some positive evidence for the impact of translingual training. Though they are beyond the scope of this chapter, the data from my interviews with Josephine inform Chapter Six, and will be discussed further in future works.<sup>72</sup> For this chapter, I focus on how those instructors who begin from eradicationism or assimilationism engage with language variety discourses.

## Findings

Five participants initially described themselves as holding either eradicationist (Thea) or assimilationist (Oliver, Martin, Wally, Barry) views, and expressed a belief in the prestige of SE. All four male participants initially described some degree of ambivalence<sup>73</sup> about SE's prestige, but Thea<sup>74</sup> was firm in her belief in SE's value and

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<sup>72</sup> Josephine used our interviews as an opportunity to further explore translingualism, and also began considering how translingual teaching could be applied to students with learning disabilities.

<sup>73</sup> In *African American Literacies Unleashed*, Ted Lardner describes how he developed a great deal of ambivalence about academic discourse relatively early in his career, writing "I was and still am disposed to regard the formal registers of academic discourse as pretentious language not worth aspiring to master" (Ball and Lardner 131), and describing how that ambivalence interfered with his development of an effective sense of teacher efficacy, acknowledging that he "did not know how to teach from this mixed-up position" (131). This is one example of how Ball and Lardner's work argues that a moment of recognition of one's ambivalence is a crucial part of reflective practice. (Lardner and Arnetta Ball co-authored by the book, and co-wrote most chapters and sections; in some chapters, however, the two authors alternate turns writing their own narratives of linguistic experience and professional development. The section cited here is solo-authored by Lardner.)

<sup>74</sup> The CCCC Language Policy Committee has found that men are more accepting of nonstandard English usage than women, to a statistically significant degree (cited in Richardson, "Race, Class(es), Gender, and

believed that correctness in writing was tied to cognitive ability. Promisingly, by the end of the interviews, all five indicated some way that their perception of language variety had become more pluralist or translingual.

For example, Wally said that he had noticed a change to his response practices, re-thinking the reason he might be confused about a portion of a student writer's text. Instead of presuming the student was making errors based in sloppy thinking, he raised the possibility that the student had a deliberate meaning that Wally misunderstood. He said he was encouraging more conversation with students, to help clear up such communicative confusion, instead of direct corrective written feedback: "maybe a phrase that I think that they used that was inappropriate was used for a completely different goal and they had a real motive behind it and I missed it."<sup>75</sup> Martin said, "I think I would just maybe be more open to the students who (were) {long pause} sincerely trying to be productive and different with their language." Oliver, who already had many translingual instincts at the start of the project, said his participation in my study had made him more prepared to adopt those instincts in his practice; he said, "it's just giving me like<sup>76</sup> one

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Age" 47-48, 50). Richardson points out that "It has long been thought that females use more standardized forms than males" (50), and sociolinguistic research backs this up, at least in formal contexts (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 234). However, though gender may be a promising area for future exploration of teacher attitudes about language difference, it seems unlikely that it is the reason for the divide between Thea and the men. All four men recounted meaningful experiences working with AAE writers, but Thea did not. Her teaching experience was limited to a predominantly white university with a relatively small population of African-American students, the latter of whom, for reasons related to admissions, are unlikely to write in a distinctly AAE-rich style. Additionally, her area of specialization was literature by upper middle-class white American prose authors known for favoring SE.

<sup>75</sup> Transcription conventions are the same as for Chapters One and Six, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>76</sup> Unlike with the Spring 2013 data, with this Fall 2015 data, I included every word spoken by the participants in my transcriptions, including "filler" words such as "um," "uh," and "like." This is because participants often used their turns-at-talk during interviews to think out loud or work through an idea, and expressed varying degrees of certainty at different times. The inclusion of these "filler words" helps reflect that thinking-out-loud process for the reader.

more sort of dimension on how to talk about how to negotiate these kinds of things, or how writing is connected to our identity...some of the materials just sort of reinforced my instinct to try and like teach them to create and destroy at the same time.” Barry noted, “I would probably say that my conception [of Standard English] is a little more capacious maybe now” and referred to “widening the confines of standardized English.” Even Thea, who re-asserted her believe in the value of teaching and assessing for SE at the end of the final interview, acknowledged an increased awareness of the power relations connected to language issues, saying, “I guess in the way that it might influence me might be just to, just more awareness, like of language and what kind of {short pause} what kind of power I guess, kind of goes along with that or can be exercised by not recognizing differences.”

Each participant also expressed concerns about the practicalities of translingual pedagogy. These include fairness in assessment, institutional expectations, a white SE-using instructor’s ability to effectively and ethically teach and assess works incorporating AAE, and training. Wally said, “I’m still just sort of bothered by how to strike a balance...obviously you do wanna be inclusive, but it’s pretty hard to, it seems like you’ve got to set some sort of objective bar, as far as grading is concerned.” He also pointed out that the required course textbook he was using explicitly instructed students to strive for SE: ‘I kind of accept a lot of the key tenets of [the translingual approach], but at the same time, my textbook is telling me that I have to encourage my students to whitewash their prose.’ Both Martin and Oliver acknowledged that their whiteness made them unsure about their ability to effectively and ethically teach translingually. Martin asked, “Do I, as a middle-class white male, get to say what is or what is not African-American English? And how do I assess whether or not this is a successful employment

of that vernacular...in an academic paper?” Oliver noted, “I don’t even know if I’d be comfortable saying like, ‘I code mesh, too.’” And Barry said he felt like he hadn’t had the training necessary to teach translingually. He said, “I felt like [Horner et. al] had sort of a harsh judgment of people who might not be incorporating a translingual approach, or, as I think my point was, don’t have the necessary knowledge, really...don’t have the background, and the training, or the knowledge to be able to do it the way they’re laying it out.” Each of these is a valid concern that needs to be addressed in some way in professionalization. What the raising of concerns here suggests, though, is that instructors are generally accepting of many tenets of translingual discourse, and have incorporated it into their worldview. They are now working on how to apply in practice something that is more or less acceptable to them in theory.

Throughout the interviews, participants frequently used narratives of personal experience to engage with translingual discourse. Such action is in line with one of the purposes of narrative in shaping an individual’s identity. Ochs and Capps write:

[T]he telling of past events is intricately linked to tellers’ and listeners’ concerns about their present and their future lives....Interlocutors tell personal narratives about the past primarily to understand and cope with their current concerns. Thus, narratives are often launched in response to current worries, complaints, and conflicts. (25)

That is the case here, though as mentioned previously, the narratives often include stories about the very recent past, mainly encounters with texts, and imagined futures. Corder writes, “Each of us is an argument, evidenced by our narrative” (18), and asks, “What happens, then, if the narrative of another crushes up against our own—disruptive,

shocking, incomprehensible, threatening, suddenly showing us into a narrative not our own?” (18-19). This often happens to us as communicators and actors in the world: we think we know how something works, and then we are confronted with a storyline that calls our knowledge into question. This doesn’t mean we are obligated to adopt the new discourse and abandon our old ways of being, but the rhetorically responsible thing to do is learn from the new narrative, even if we ultimately reject it. I’d argue that it is particularly necessary to engage with new narratives when they represent overt theorization and deal with issues of social responsibility. Like Gee, I believe that if “we are all, all the time, theoreticians” (23), then “we ought to be good ones when things matter” (23).

Corder presents a number of possibilities for responding to new narratives: “Sometimes we turn away from other narratives. Sometimes we teach ourselves *not to know that there are other narratives*” (19, my emphasis). That is, we can willfully ignore new narratives. Or, we can engage with a new narrative, allow it to become part of our discourse, influence our positioning: “Sometimes—probably all too seldom—we encounter another narrative and learn to change our own” (19). Similarly, Ochs and Capps write that:

[N]arrative activity challenges participants to make sense of enigmatic and frustrating situations. Faced with such a challenge, narrators alternate between two fundamental tendencies: either to cultivate a dialogue between diverse understandings or lay down one coherent, correct solution to the problem. (32)

The option to engage is more rhetorically responsible, but much more difficult than simply ignoring alternative ideas and sticking to a single narrative. That's probably why willful ignorance is so tempting. When grappling with a new narrative:

Sometimes we lose our plot, and our convictions as well; since our convictions belong to our narratives, any strong interference with our narrative or sapping of its way of being will also interrupt or sap our convictions. Sometimes we go to war. Sometimes we sink into madness, totally unable to manage what our wit or judgment has shown us—a contenting narrative that has force to it and charm and appeal and perhaps justice and beauty as well...a contending narrative that shakes and cracks all foundations and promises to alter our identity, a narrative that would educate us to be wholly other than what we are. (Corder 19)

I read Corder's presentation of these different types of response as distinct from each other: on the one hand, the poor options of willful ignorance, confusion, anger, or existential crisis, and on the other hand, the better option of learning from a new narrative and perhaps appropriating<sup>77</sup> it into our own narrative. However, I argue that the different reactions are in fact interconnected and essential to each other. To borrow from popular psychology, they remind me of Kubler-Ross's five stages of grief: denial, bargaining, anger, depression, and acceptance. Psychologists argue that this streamlined model of the grieving process, which can be applied not only to grief over a loved one's death but other negative blows, is helpful for understanding how people cope with trauma. People don't necessarily cycle through each stage in the order commonly listed, but do experience most or all of them at some point. Based on the narratives my participants

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<sup>77</sup> Assuming, that is, it is not a morally reprehensible narrative, such as one promoting racism, xenophobia, or sexism.

used to grapple with translingual discourses, I argue that something similar happens when we encounter challenging new narratives: we may for a time willfully ignore the new narratives, or choose to do so in order to help resolve an existential crisis. We may at first get angry and aggressively defend our previous positions, but upon further introspection, come to see value in an idea that initially offended us. We may become mired in self-doubt, but eventually figure out how to resolve a conflict that once seemed insurmountable.

Each of my participants demonstrated several of Corder's listed reactions to new discourses during our discussions. Happily, each instructor ultimately showed through narrative that they were willing to "lean in and learn from" (Condon 2) the new narratives and incorporate them into their discourses. But before they could do that, each instructor also at some point had to respond in one of the ways Corder sets up as less than ideal. A negative reaction does not necessarily represent, once and for all, an instructor's position on a matter, but is instead part of their continuous construction of the self. In the following, I first share a select sample of narratives demonstrating anger, confusion, or willful ignorance/rejection of new narratives. I then share a select sample of narratives that demonstrate the speaker's commitment to learning from the new discourses. The selected narratives are meant to represent the types of response that occurred, not stand in for or make judgments of individual instructors' reactions.

### **Using Narrative to Fit a New Story into Prior Understanding**

William Labov identifies a six-part structure common to all "fully-formed" (363) narratives in the Western tradition: an *abstract*, which introduces and previews the story; an *orientation*, which sets the scene; a *complicating action*, the conflict or unexpected



event; *evaluation*, which indicates why the story is worth telling; a *result or resolution*, telling how the complicating action was resolved; and a *coda*, indicating that the story, and the speaker's turn, is over (Labov, "Transformation" 363; Johnstone, "Discourse" 636-638). Johnstone points out that not all narratives contain every element listed, the abstract and coda being most often missing ("Discourse" 639); that in the years since Labov<sup>78</sup> published his original work on narrative, exceptions and variations have been found (639); and that his narrative paradigm is based on storytelling traditions in the western world (642); however, the overall proposed structure holds up among researchers "at least in the English-speaking world" (639). It is stories following this narrative syntax in some way that I focus on in this chapter, with particular interest on how the narrators use complicating action, resolution, and evaluation.

To exemplify how Labov's paradigm works in conversation, I begin with this example of a story told by Thea, an especially skilled narrator. During the third interview, we discussed the excerpt from Ball and Lardner's *African American Literacies Unleashed*, which includes the full text of an AAE-strong essay by "Lisa" and Ball and Lardner's discussion of many features of AAE. I asked Thea if, before reading the essay, she had ever heard of AAE. She responded with a story about discussing the Oakland Ebonics controversy in an introductory linguistics class, and getting into an argument with a classmate:<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> In some publications, along with collaborator Waletzky.

<sup>79</sup> For the transcripts of longer narratives in chapter, I break them up and number the lines for ease of reading and analysis. Whenever the speaker pauses for breath, self-interruption, the end of an utterance, or cross-talk with the interlocutor, I start a new line.

Line	Speaker	Utterance
1	Thea	Well,
2		sort of a funny story about this debate that I got into with this
		girl,
3		who was white....
4		We [referring to the class] were talking about Ebonics,
5		and about how teachers should talk in Ebonics...
6		and I don't know I found that silly and said I thought that was
		actually,
7		a really racist,
8		that's how I felt about some things in here {indicates Ball and
		Lardner text},
9		and that it's saying that if you are a black student,
10		let's say,
11		that you are incapable of learning Standard English...
12	Stephanie	mmhmm
13	Thea	So this girl, [referring to the same white girl from lines 2-3]
14		(I think) she was from like [northeastern city]...
15		and she goes well-
16		cause I was sitting in the back,
17		and actually the black kids were sitting with me,
18		(because we were all friends),
19		and she goes well they just can't help it,
20		they can't learn it,
21		it's not their fault...
22		And we start yelling and getting (mad)
23	Stephanie	yeah
24	Thea	and then she's talking about special standards,
25		and then for once in my life I actually thought up a good
		zinger...
26	Stephanie	{laughter}
27	Thea	...I just looked at her and I said,
28		well I guess I need to go to a special [southeastern US state]
		school,
29		because I could never understand such a smart person from
		[northeastern city].
30		And an African-American student next to me started laughing
		so hard he cried.
31		So I won,
32		I'd say!

According to Labov's paradigm, the *abstract* occurs in lines 2-3, where Thea gives an overview of the event. The *orientation* occurs in 4-5 and 13-17, where she sets the scene

and names the main characters. We can find the *complicating action* in 6-7, 19-22, and 24 where Thea describes the conflict and the antagonist's racist comments. Resolution occurs in 25 and 27-30, where Thea triumphs with a zinger and earns approval from African-American students who laugh. The coda is in the last two lines 31-32, where Thea proclaims herself the winner and ends her turn at talk. As is often the case in such narratives, evaluation occurs throughout the story (Labov 269; Johnstone, "Discourse" 638). For instance, Thea lets us know the story is worth telling by calling it a "funny story" in line 2, describing how she had encountered "a really racist" idea, in line 7, preparing us for a "really good zinger" in line 25, and letting us know that the narrative earned outside approval, laughter in the moment, in line 30. Citing another character who provides evaluation is one way that skilled storytellers perform this aspect of narrative (Labov 373).

With this narrative, Thea positioned herself in several ways—some probably more deliberate than others. By describing herself as a verbal opponent of a classmate who said something overtly racist, and telling us that she sat with African-American students with whom she was friends, and who endorsed her takedown of the northeastern interloper, Thea positions herself as non-racist and a white ally. She "belongs in one category and not in the other" (Davies and Harré 47)—in this case, non-racist instead of racist. However, probably not as deliberately, Thea makes it clear through this narrative that color-blind discourse influences her positioning. Bonilla-Silva describes whites' claims of friendship with blacks as a way of enacting colorblindness, pointing out whites' tendency to "promote" black acquaintances to friends in conversation for non-racist credibility (156). In telling this particular narrative, Thea also ignores the points Ball and

Lardner raise about AAE writing, instead returning to a familiar, factually incorrect narrative that the Oakland School Board resolution gave up on teaching African-American children SE and instead required teachers to speak AAE in class. So she ignores the new discourse; in Corder's terms, she "turn[s] away from other narratives" (19). We also see an example of how, both with her classmate and to an extent, with me, Thea "go[es] to war" (Corder 19) to defend her prior position.

When we discussed another reading, Young's "'Nah,'" Thea used another brief narrative in an effort to fit Young's work into her previous understanding of language variety, one in which whites—such as herself, a Southern White English user—are also the targets of linguistic discrimination. Though she was the most vocal participant on this matter, she was not the only participant to bring up white stigmatized varieties to help her grapple with narratives focusing solely on linguistic discrimination against blacks. As discussed in Chapter Three, Young's essay uses Barack Obama's viral, pre-2009 Inauguration Day exchange with a server at Ben's Chili Bowl in Washington, D.C., as an opening hook, but his argument is not about Obama but the linguistic double-consciousness burden imposed on African-Americans.

- |    |           |   |
|----|-----------|---|
| 1  | Thea      | I don't know I felt like there was more stuff to look at with the |
|    |           | 2008 election and he left out something,                          |
| 2  |           | (which) I can't stand her,  |
| 3  |           | but Sarah Palin   |
| 4  | Stephanie | mmhmm   |
| 5  | Thea      | um,   |
| 6  |           | was mocked endlessly for her Midwestern accent,                   |
| 7  |           | and the 'you betcha'  |
| 8  | Stephanie | mmhmm   |
| 9  | Thea      | and the 'gotcha question' and Joe six-pack and stuff              |
| 10 | Stephanie | yeah that's a good point  |
| 11 | Thea      | and they lost the election! {laughter}                            |
| 12 | Stephanie | yeah  |
| 13 | Thea      | hello   |

14 Stephanie well I hope that's not the only reason  
 15 Thea well I would pray not.  
 16 But I think that ties into it,  
 17 though.  
 18 And I do think the reason McCain lost is cause he had her as  
     his running mate.  
 19 I think she's a bimbo,  
 20 but her speech patterns definitely,  
 21 you could argue had some impact on that.  
 22 and I think that would have been interesting to look at,  
 23 to have a more complicated look at language coding,  
 24 if you will.

It is perhaps promising that Thea uses Young's article as a jumping-off point to consider linguistic discrimination against other groups. Ultimately, though, I suggest this narrative demonstrates her attempt to fit the Young essay into a white-dominant worldview, a discourse where the needs of whites cannot be ignored. As Krista Ratcliffe points out in *Rhetorical Listening*: "whiteness socialization gives white readers certain expectations: They expect to be included in a text 'in a direct way, if not as subjects then emotionally. Otherwise they are disinterested and even feel threatened when excluded' (Ratcliffe, citing & quoting Castillo, 126).

Young's essay presents Thea with a conflict. Her previous teaching experiences have not included classes with predominantly African-American students; instead, she has spent her teaching career at a historically and predominantly white institution. Her own scholarly work focuses on white American authors not known for incorporating nonmainstream speech into their works. Suddenly, she is being asked to consider a very unfamiliar discourse—an essay about the needs of African-American students, written by an African-American man who writes from a rhetorical tradition<sup>80</sup> with which Thea is not

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<sup>80</sup> Thea also repeatedly criticized Young's organization strategies—which owe much to the AAE rhetoric—and the overall quality of his work. She said "I think, he was, the author was kind of making that point, at

familiar. To make sense of this text, she relies on the linguistic discrimination experiences with which she is familiar—those facing southern whites like Thea, and other whites who speak stigmatized regional varieties, like Palin. No wonder Thea once again “go[es] to war” (Corder 19), ignoring Young’s argument about the particular double-consciousness facing AAE-strong writers in the academy.

In a similar case, Barry responded to the reading from Horner et al.’s “Language Difference” essay with anger. In this case I would suggest that while, like Thea, Barry “go[es] to war” (Corder 19), this narrative also demonstrates that he is letting Horner et al.’s work trouble him. Though he may not yet be ready to adopt translingualism, it seems here to make him angry because it challenges his prior beliefs; and not only does it challenge his belief in the importance of SE, but it also challenges his belief in himself as an informed, conscientious teacher. It challenges his sense of teacher efficacy, his belief that he can work effectively with all his students (Ball and Lardner, *African* 17). As Corder writes, “any strong interference with our narrative or sapping of its way of being will also interrupt or sap our convictions” (19). I present the exchange in full, including “filler words” and repetition, because it shows Barry’s construction of a narrative within conversation to think through new ideas:

- |   |           |  |
|---|-----------|--|
| 1 | Barry     | But you know I found this one to be {long pause}       |
| 2 |           | {sigh},  |
| 3 |           | I found it to be sort of offensive {laughs}            |
| 4 | Stephanie | Okay.  |
| 5 |           | Why did you find it offensive?                         |
| 6 | Barry     | Maybe I’m just taking it too personally.               |
| 7 |           | But,   |
| 8 |           | I mean obviously I don’t subscribe to the translingual |

---

the bitter end, which as a writing teacher drove me nuts, it’s like ‘big idea up front dude!’”; and then, later asked, “Did he write this when he was a graduate student? Cause it has that feel.” So perhaps another benefit of introducing graduate students to alternative discourse traditions is to help prepare them to appreciate scholarship that does not follow the traditional, white-based “linear” format.

9 Stephanie mmhmm  
 10 Barry approach um,  
 11 you know we talked about this last time,  
 12 about how I do sort of push for these ideas of correctness  
 and polish you know in my class so obviously I felt like  
 they were kind of attacking me.  
 13 A little bit. {laughter}  
 14 Stephanie {laughter}  
 15 Barry Or people like me.  
 16 Um,  
 17 but what I,  
 18 okay,  
 19 so you know I understood you know their basic points,  
 20 that um,  
 21 you know,  
 22 there is no one version of English,  
 23 and if we try to teach it that way we're really teaching a  
 fiction.  
 24 Stephanie mmhmm  
 25 Barry Uh,  
 26 there's no uniform standard.  
 27 But,  
 28 you know,  
 29 I mean I'll kind of agree with those ideas in the abstract,  
 30 Stephanie mmhmm  
 31 Barry but then over like on page three oh four, {sound of turning  
 pages}  
 32 when,  
 33 again this is just probably my own ignorance of,  
 34 of trends in composition,  
 35 because when they talk about the 'Students' Right to Their  
 Own Language,'  
 36 Stephanie mmhmm  
 37 Barry this big sort of landmark {laughter} declaration in 1974,  
 38 um,  
 39 I've never heard of it.  
 40 Stephanie yeah  
 41 Barry You know until,  
 42 until today I'd never heard of that,  
 43 Stephanie yeah  
 44 Barry Never been told about that.  
 45 Never read about that.  
 46 Um,  
 47 so they,  
 48 they treat it as if,  
 49 um,

50 Barry Standard English is gone.  
 51 We've done away with it.  
 52 We've all come together,  
 53 we've all decided that teaching Standard English is just,  
 54 it doesn't work,  
 55 Stephanie mmhmm  
 56 Barry and it's a fiction and it's counterproductive.  
 57 So now we're gonna accept all different kinds of English,  
 58 all different kinds of languages,  
 59 And that's just not true...  
 60 And again I'm not sure what year this was written,  
 61 um  
 62 Stephanie I think it was two thousand eleven,  
 62 yeah two thousand eleven.  
 63 Barry Yeah  
 64 I mean I know it varies widely from institution to institution  
 65 Stephanie mmhmm  
 66 Barry but  
 67 at all the institutions I've ever {pause}  
 68 been at,  
 69 not once have I ever heard this idea circulated or advocated  
 for.  
 70 Stephanie mmhmm  
 71 Barry you know I've never heard-  
 72 it's never been pushed on me,  
 73 or even,  
 74 I've never even been uh,  
 75 exposed to it.  
 76 You know I've never even had anybody hand me an article  
 and say 'you should really check this out'-  
 77 And again maybe that's my own failing for not,  
 78 for not you know reading more in the field,  
 79 but,  
 80 Barry the way they characterize it,  
 81 to me it's just,  
 82 I even (wrote) to say I think you failed {laughter}  
 83 Stephanie {laughter}  
 84 Barry I mean if your goal was to make this sort of a universal,  
 85 universally accepted new paradigm  
 86 Stephanie mmhmm  
 87 Barry It's not.  
 88 I mean it hasn't worked.  
 89 I mean I'm sure composition people are aware of it,  
 90 I'm sure it's talked about at-  
 91 at composition conferences  
 92 Stephanie mmhmm



93	Barry	and um,
94		and that's great,
95		and I'm sure it has value.
96		But to treat it as if it's,
97		it's this-
98		it's the new paradigm that we've all accepted,
99		that struck me as inaccurate,
100	Stephanie	mmhmm
101	Barry	and that struck me as idealistic,
102		and it struck me as just as monolithic and um {long pause}
103		sorta totalitarian as
104	Stephanie	mmhmm
105	Barry	what they were actually fighting against.

The narrative here is much less straightforward and paradigmatic than Thea's, but it still contains each major element: for instance, we have complicating action, where Barry recaps Horner et al.'s claims (lines 22-26, 47-58) and where he describes how he has never been exposed to translingualism before (lines 35-45, 66-76); and evaluation, where he describes the reading as "offensive" (line 3), repeatedly uses the word "never" to emphasize that their ideas have not been shared widely (lines 72-76), and uses words like "totalitarian" to criticize Horner et al.'s thesis (line 103). However, he struggles to reach a standalone resolution, instead mostly combining them with evaluation, as when he argues that translingualism has failed (80-88, 96-99), and in suggesting that his having not read about translingualism before is his own shortcoming (77-78). The resolution that works best for this narrative is that composition scholars have tried and failed to advance translingualism, but hidden inside it is a small story about Barry's frustration with not having been exposed before to a concept important to his profession.

The recursive aspect of this particular narrative helps demonstrate Barry's emotion and use of narrative to think out loud, to engage with new ideas. He does not have a prepared narrative, a story he has already told before, because he is still building

his narrative of engagement with the text. He is trying to reject translanguaging, but not quite succeeding.

Barry's positioning through narrative is also complicated here, ambivalent; in lines where he evaluates *himself*, he describes himself as an experienced educator by pointing out that he has worked at multiple institutions (line 67), but then shifts gears to position himself as a novice, of having insufficient knowledge of language movements in composition (lines 77-78). Through narrative moves like these, Barry and other participants allowed themselves to express confusion, uncertainty, and a willingness to learn.

Finally, another of Barry's narratives exemplifies how a contending narrative may cause us to "sink into madness, totally unable to manage what our wit or judgment has shown us" (Corder 19). Not that Barry loses his marbles, but his narrative of engaging with Ball and Lardner's text shows how the introduction of "a contending narrative that shakes and cracks all foundations" (Corder 19) can lead to confusion and indecision:

- |   |           |  |
|---|-----------|--|
| 1 | Barry     | I feel like the assumption was,                                  |
| 2 |           | you the instructor who don't know much about African-            |
|   |           | American vernacular,   |
| 3 |           | so far you have been holding everybody to (this) same            |
|   |           | Standard English standard  |
| 4 | Stephanie | yeah,  |
| 5 |           | I get what you're saying   |
| 6 | Barry     | and,   |
| 7 |           | and what we want you to adjust...                                |
| 8 |           | is this mindset that everything that fails to conform to certain |
|   |           | Standard English conventions is automatically and                |
|   |           | necessarily wrong.   |

Barry then said, “I accept all that as probably being, you know, as valid. But I just think that opens up a whole lot of other questions.” He raised the issue of other racially-connected language varieties, and said: “so you want me to be familiar with African-American vernacular, okay fair enough, I can probably do that” but asked, “How many other vernaculars do we need to be familiar with?” He explained his hesitation by saying, “I’m not necessarily opposed to it, I’m just a little bit unsure of how to proceed.” The questions Barry raises here function as the complicating action of this particular narrative; they also recall Ochs and Capps’ distinction between relativistic and fundamentalistic responses to new narratives, a dyad similar to Bakhtin’s distinction between centrifugal and centripetal forces. Relativistic responses can open up an infinite number of possibilities, while fundamentalistic responses limit us to one story (Ochs and Capps 32). “The relativistic tendency,” Ochs and Capps write, may “lead to a paralyzing sense of indeterminacy” (32). That seems to be the case here, as Barry explains that he doesn’t know what to do—how many dialects must he learn to be a good teacher? So, presumably attracted by the possibility of “lay[ing] down one coherent, correct solution to the problem” (Ochs and Capps 32), Barry uses the resolution section of the narrative to move back to acknowledge his prior, hesitant support of SE—resulting in the following exchange:

38 <sup>81</sup>	Barry	I do think there’s some merit even though it kinda squashes individuality to some extent,
39		I think there is some merit to having a standard,
40	Stephanie	mmhmm
41	Barry	Right?
42		You have a standard that applies to everybody,
43		and yeah I get that the standard’s a white man’s standard.
44		We’re obviously,
45		are asking them to conform to

---

<sup>81</sup> I start this line with 38 because it is the 38<sup>th</sup> line of the narrative started on the previous page.

46	Stephanie	and somewhat class-based
47	Barry	sure,
48		sure.
49		And uh,
50	Barry	yeah that is troubling {laughter}.
51		I guess.
52		I guess I just don't see any easy way around it,
53		because,
54		uh,
55		the alternative is sort of an endless multiplicity,
56		it seems
57	Stephanie	{laughter} that's like my dream
58	Barry	{laughter} and that seems great,
59		but it seems hard to evaluate.

So, while theoretically favoring language variety, Barry returns to an appropriacy reasoning view at the end of the narrative, because it provides stability.

### Using Narratives to Learn and Explore

Each instructor also used narrative to align themselves with translingualism explicitly, or to show they were “lean[ing] in and...learn[ing] from” the new discourse (Condon 2). For example, in this brief exchange, Martin described his experience of reading and being convinced by Young’s argument in “‘Nah’”:

1	Martin	The purpose of the piece is to make a very sort of stark well-reasoned even legalistically based and ideologically based argument against code-switching.
2		And,
3		I find it more persuasive than I was expecting.
4	Stephanie	why,
5		um,
6		can you point to any parts
7	Martin	yeah
8	Stephanie	that you may have just found particularly persuasive?
9	Martin	I thought the comparison to integration and segregation was really helpful.
10		Um,
11		more so than I expected.
12		Um I'm not entirely certain that I'm sold or persuaded or fully understand what code- <i>meshing</i> is
13	Stephanie	mmhmm

14     Martin     But that's,  
 15                again I'm not,  
 16                I don't wanna split hairs about that.  
 17                The,  
 18                just like really,  
 19                just in some senses it was very repetitive,  
 20                but again he was trying to produce a lot of evidence to  
                      prove that look this is a racist logic  
 21     Stephanie    yeah  
 22     Martin        and by the end of it,  
 23                by the end of part one I was like yup,  
 24                it is a racist logic.  
 25                He is correct {laughter}  
 26     Stephanie    {laughter}  
 27     Martin        I am one hundred percent persuaded by this.

Martin “encounter[s] narrative<sup>82</sup> and learns to change [his] own” (Corder 19)—to incorporate the narrative that code-switching is based on “a racist logic.” In this brief narrative the complicating action (lines 3 and 11) and resolution are succinctly presented (lines 23-27)—Martin did not expect to be convinced, but then he was.

On other occasions, participants used narratives to show how principles of linguistic diversity aligned with a stance they already held. For example, Thea connected standard language ideology to the prominence of STEM and a utilitarian, right/wrong way of thinking:

1     Thea     It makes me so mad when I listen to these politicians and they're  
                      talking about how we need to have more STEM education so  
                      [students] can get jobs,  
 2                and they need to learn X and Y so they will get jobs...  
 3                and I'm like,  
 4                well yeah,  
 5                you need a job,  
 6                but at the same time,  
 7                don't you wanna know why the sky is blue?...

---

<sup>82</sup> This story also provides an example of one of the forms contenting narratives can take—sometimes they may take the form of socially-constructed theories or archetypal stories, but in other cases, as with Young's essay, they may take the form of a scholarly argument.

8      Thea    Don't you have questions about the world around you?...  
 9                And I think that we abandoned that,  
 10               and in some way I guess you could say language is tied to that,  
 11               in that it's about having this utilitarian lifeless bloodless {laughter} 'this is your standard perfect English and this is the only way' kind of mentality.

This narrative allows Thea to maintain her position as an expert in her field, aligning linguistic diversity with the goals of the humanities.

Another way instructors use narratives to show they are appropriating new discourses is to bring up examples of past experiences in which they had allowed a similar new discourse to influence them. By drawing on such narratives, they show they are not ignoring the discourse in question, and that they are reflective teachers willing to make changes. When we were discussing Ball and Lardner's work, Barry asked about my reading of the text and how I thought students who code-mesh using non-standard varieties should be evaluated. The following exchange ensued:

1      Stephanie    I mean it would be just like...  
 2                it's probably gonna depend on the teacher,  
 3                and it's probably gonna depend on the context,  
 4                and it's probably gonna depend on the student,  
 5                and so like,  
 6                and so I kinda feel like maybe what they're doing here is,  
 7                you know,  
 8                is just deliberately troubling.  
 9                They're being like,  
 10                hey,  
 11                sorry to upset the apple cart,  
 12                but we have to introduce some evidence  
 13      Barry        mmhmm  
 14      Stephanie    some stuff that is gonna confuse you and give you some  
                              hard questions  
 15      Barry        yeah  
 16      Stephanie    and then you just have to deal with it.  
 17                Yeah {sighs}

In response to my vague answer, Barry referred back to a prior experience he had described before as being formative for him, and which I cited in Chapter One: his first teaching experience, as an adjunct instructor at a technical college with a large population of returning adult students whose writing was influenced by Gullah. They resisted his attempts to teach SE grammar or assess based on adherence to SE grammar. For a number of reasons, not least of which was that as a twenty-something he did not feel comfortable challenging middle-aged people on their ability to use their native language, he deferred to their preference and focused on discussing texts and critical thinking. He also contrasted his students favorably with the predominantly white students he taught at a traditional four-year college, students who made few errors of SE but were not very interested in the higher-order goals of the course. Of the technical college students, he said:

1	Barry	They were super engaged.
2		They all did the reading...
3		And I was really surprised,
4		and it was my own probably,
5		my own prejudice....
6		at first I was like,
7		these people aren't gonna read,
8		man.
9		They're not gonna want to read and they're not gonna want to
		talk about it,
10		but I was wrong.
11		On both points....
12		So I just kinda changed my expectations...
13		you know they are critically thinking...
14		and if that's our goal is to increase their critical thinking ability
		and to make them formulate arguments,
15		they're doing it.

I gave a pseudo-answer about troubling one's assumptions, and the importance of context; Barry responded by sharing a story about a time when he had been forced to

trouble his prior assumptions about a group of students, and changed his teaching to better suit that particular context.

As mentioned above, instructors often constructed hypothetical future narratives. In the narrative below, Wally demonstrates how his growing appreciation for language variation principles clashes with his desire to avoid conflict with students, especially if that conflict involves a discussion of race. He imagines a hypothetical scenario in which a student informed by an appropriacy-reasoning or SLI-based understanding of correctness challenges his grading:

- |    |           |  |
|----|-----------|--|
| 1  | Wally     | I kinda do like the idea here,                                 |
| 2  |           | it just seems like it'd be extremely hard to justify,          |
| 3  |           | you know if two students are peer reviewing each other's       |
|    |           | essays,  |
| 4  |           | and you had one student who had just reviewed somebody's       |
|    |           | paper written in,  |
| 5  |           | I don't know like a code-switched dialect,                     |
| 6  |           | and that got turned in,  |
| 7  |           | and that grade got potentially higher than somebody who        |
|    |           | wrote in standard written English...                           |
| 8  |           | it would be very hard to defend that point,                    |
| 9  |           | I think,   |
| 10 |           | if (they) came to me like I peer-reviewed so-and-so's paper... |
| 11 |           | and he got so-and-so grade,                                    |
| 12 |           | and I got so-and-so grade,                                     |
| 13 |           | how did that happen?   |
| 14 |           | There were these misspellings,                                 |
| 15 |           | there were these sort of strange idiomatic phrases in there.   |
| 16 | Stephanie | yeah   |
| 17 | Wally     | How do you justify that?                                       |
| 18 |           | Like,  |
| 19 |           | I'd feel really uncomfortable looking that student in the eye  |
|    |           | and being like,  |
| 20 |           | well,  |
| 21 |           | it's a dialect.  |
| 22 |           | And just expecting that student to understand it.              |
| 23 |           | Which I guess is why it needs to do be discussed in class...   |
| 24 | Stephanie | mmhmm.   |
| 25 |           | Well so in this hypothetical scenario,                         |
| 26 |           | cause I can see that being a problem....                       |



27 Stephanie would it have been a matter of,  
 28 the,  
 29 let's say if there's an African-American student AAE speaker  
 who gets a higher grade,  
 30 is the reason they got the higher grade because their ideas  
 were better,  
 31 or  
 32 Wally yeah it's likely gonna be content,  
 33 it's gonna be argument.  
 34 Um whereas the other student might have a lesser argument,  
 35 but they just convey the conventions more properly.  
 36 Stephanie Then couldn't you just say that?  
 37 Like you know  
 38 Wally You could,  
 39 but I'd still feel pretty uncomfortable...  
 40 Stephanie mmhmm  
 41 Wally I'd feel okay giving that grade...  
 42 but it would still be very uncomfortable to tell that student,  
 43 to try to confront (him) one-on-one and just be like no no no,  
 44 this is acceptable,  
 45 this is okay.  
 46 Your ideas just need to improve.  
 47 Um.  
 48 I don't know if that's properly justifiable on my part,  
 49 but at least that's my own apprehension towards it.

It is not the practice of taking linguistic diversity into consideration while assessing student work that bothers Wally; instead, it is the awkwardness faced by a white teacher having to explain to a white student SE user why they had received a lower grade than an AAE user. Wally's discomfort is not uncommon. Kim and Olson explain that "many [teachers] are afraid to discuss race and racism even when they do acknowledge its...prevalence" (12). Kim, in a solo-authored section of the essay, explains, "most of my colleagues in a class I took for first-year composition teachers said that they were avoiding racial issues in their classes because they did not know how to initiate or continue these conversations...it was awkward for them, as mostly white teachers" (12). Importantly, in an evaluative portion of the narrative, Wally acknowledged that his

hesitation was not, in and of itself, a good reason to avoid practicing race-conscious assessment. He also acknowledged that having addressed the issue of linguistic diversity in class could help offset some of the difficulty. He uses the resolution section of his narrative to propose a possible solution to the complicating action, the awkward situation.

Finally, another example of a hypothetical future narrative comes from Oliver. When Oliver and I discussed the possibility of teaching code-meshing by introducing it as something any writer can do, he said, “I don’t even know if I’d be comfortable saying, like, ‘I code-mesh, too,’ cause it sort of implies that I have this double-consciousness or whatever.” Note that he appropriates Young’s use of the term “double-consciousness” to position himself as well aware of his privilege, as someone who does not experience double-consciousness. In another portion of the same interview, Oliver discusses how he anticipates his straight, white male privilege could create an obstacle when he teaches code-meshing as an explicit practice to minority language users who may already be code-meshing:

- |   |        |  |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Oliver | Demographically I’m like the world’s worst thing,        |
| 2 |        | white heterosexual male....                              |
| 3 |        | so I mean that’s always a strange kind of situation,     |
| 4 |        | where it’s like,   |
| 5 |        | I know about code-meshing,                               |
| 6 |        | and I’m introducing you to code-meshing,                 |
| 7 |        | even though you’re the one who’s doing it,               |
| 8 |        | and I really don’t know how to practice it....           |
| 9 |        | but I mean that’s my problem as a teacher to figure out. |

Like Wally, Oliver uses the complicating action section of a narrative to raise his concern, and the resolution section to propose a solution—in this case, that he as a teacher take on the responsibility to overcome his hesitation and solve the problem.

It seems possible that the logic of the narrative structure itself helps Wally and Oliver reach these resolutions; the instinct to include some kind of resolution in narratives, to solve the complicating actions we've introduced, is deeply ingrained. Sometimes, as in Thea's story about her argument with her classmates, or Martin's story of being persuaded by an academic essay, we have a resolution ready when we start talking. Other times, especially with narratives of conflicts we are still processing, we get to the part of the story where we intuitively sense that we need to provide the listener with a resolution, and we struggle to find one—so we reach back to what is comfortable and familiar, as Barry did in concluding that perhaps an unfair, but easy to grade, standard is better than the chaos of “endless multiplicity.” Or we may, like Oliver and Wally, use the resolution to test out how our future selves might solve a hypothetical problem, or at least acknowledge the need to continue interrogating the problem.

## **Conclusion**

During the final round of interviews, I asked my participants why they had agreed to volunteer for my project. After all, they had put a lot of time and energy into reading new texts and discussing them with me, in exchange for a pretty small stipend. Most cited the desire to help a colleague, or interest in becoming more involved in the department. Only two participants, Barry and Wally, said they had been motivated at least partly by their interest in the subject matter. I found my colleagues' answers to this particular question heartening. In theory, I would like it if everyone were as fascinated by linguistic diversity as I am. But I know that's not the case. So I consider it reason for optimism when college writing instructors who have not previously thought much about these issues are willing to read new materials and engage in lively discussions with me over a period of several weeks. I initially allotted about fifteen to thirty minutes for each

interview, but it was quite rare for us to finish within this time frame because we were so caught up in conversation; I did of course keep track of time, but whenever I offered to end an interview at the thirty-minute mark, even if we still had a few questions to cover, participants almost always declined—they wanted to make sure they had more time to share their perspective on a reading, ask questions, or tell another story.

What this suggests to me is that the prospect of translingual professionalization in composition studies is not so bleak as Geneva Smitherman suggested when she wrote, “People have been given the information—the facts—but they still behave in the same old ways” (qtd. in Lovejoy et al. 383). The problem may not be that English teachers are particularly stubborn in their views about language. We translingual proselytizers may, however, have to recognize that we can’t just get up on our soapboxes, give out facts, and expect anything to change. Instead, we need to give our eradicationist- or assimilationist-oriented colleagues the opportunity to engage in conversations about principles of linguistic diversity and translingualism with scholarly texts, student texts, and human interlocutors. We need to give them time and space to grapple with discourses that are new to them. Some of this grappling might involve a bit of anger, hesitation, or rejection, and it is unlikely that everyone will immediately ask to be put on the CCCC Translingual listserv. But as suggested by my participants’ comments and narratives, composition instructors who begin as fans of eradicationism or assimilationism can, and do, learn to find something to like about translingualism—an expanded definition of “correctness,” increased awareness of the relationship between power and language difference, a new appreciation for marginalized discourses. In my conversations with my participants, I learned that they generally like and respect their students, are conscientious about their

work, and want to learn more ways to be effective teachers. Professionalization that keeps these factors in mind will be one step closer to sustainably promoting appreciation for linguistic diversity.

## CHAPTER 6: BEYOND DRIVE-BY TRANSLINGUAL PROFESSIONALIZATION

“Advancing a translingual approach requires changes to writing programs in the design of writing curricula and in the hiring, training, and professional development of writing teachers. At the very least, it requires making good on long-standing calls for giving all teachers of writing professional development in better understanding and addressing issues of language difference in their teaching”—Horner et al, “Language Difference” p. 309

My mother is a public school teacher and has spent most of her career teaching high school math and computer science. Professional development (PD) has always been a significant part of her job, helping her stay up to date on the latest available technologies, changes to curricula, and recommended modifications to pedagogy. Her school district regularly pays for her to attend conferences and workshops throughout the state, in addition to the frequent in-house training she attends at her school.

My experience, having worked almost exclusively in higher education, has been, to say the least, different. When I first began teaching composition as an adjunct instructor at a private Catholic university, I was hired based on my MFA in nonfiction. I didn’t work as a TA during my MFA, so I had never had any PD in writing pedagogy. Over the next few years, I took advantage of the few PD opportunities that were available, but I got nowhere near the level of institutional support and encouragement that my mother does. I don’t think my experience was unique. As the Association of College and University Educators pointed out in a recent white paper on the need for more investment in PD in higher education: “It is a struggle to think of any other profession

where employees receive so little support in work that is central to the profession's mission" (Gyurko et al. 12).

I don't think composition professionals get enough PD, but I do suspect our discipline provides more training than most. TAs at master's- and doctoral-degree-granting institutions are typically required to attend orientation sessions, and/or a one- or two-semester practicum during their first year of teaching. Over the past few years, as I've been researching and writing this dissertation, I've become known as the language issues girl in my department. So I've been asked to speak about language variety, *SRTOL*, and working with L2 writers, both during beginning-of-term orientations and the practicum itself.

Unfortunately, none of my talks has been a rousing success. I led one-hour sessions on addressing linguistic diversity and working with L2 writers during two consecutive fall FYE orientations. Attendance at a session was mandatory, but my session competed with several others offered concurrently. Each year, I prepared about a dozen handouts, but only had two people attend. Yes: that's two people a year in a program that regularly employs 100 or more instructors. On another occasion, I was invited to address the required practicum class all new TAs take—but I was allotted only five minutes to cover *SRTOL*, diversity within American English, and working with writers who are non-native English speakers. I distributed a handout, went through a few PowerPoint slides, and concluded by saying, "In a nutshell, don't be a Grammar Nazi." There was no time for the type of discussion that I have come to realize is integral to good PD on linguistic diversity issues.

I think the dearth of time I've been allotted for translingual PD probably reflects the degree of influence that translingualism and linguistic diversity hold, or rather *don't* hold, in most composition practice. For translingualism to be more than just a niche paradigm in composition studies, we must make sure it plays a much larger role in professionalization. That means dedicating more time and space to discussion of translingualism and linguistic diversity. It also means using that time and space more effectively. In this chapter, I provide a series of recommendations for how translingualism and issues of linguistic diversity can better be introduced to college writing instructors, both in practicums for new instructors and professionalization opportunities for experienced teachers. Such professionalization is needed if composition is to finally realize the goal set out four decades ago by *SRTOL*.<sup>83</sup>

### **Specific Recommendations for Professionalization**

While I focus here on what I call translingual PD, I want to re-iterate the need for more PD, in general, in the university and in composition. Professionalization has been linked with better student performance and higher retention for college students (Gyurko et al. 5); but despite these and other benefits, PD is not, as a rule, given high priority in college teaching. As Gyurko et al. explain, "Faculty professional development has long been understood as central to improving teacher satisfaction, classroom instruction, and student achievement. Yet it has historically been a low priority at many higher education institutions" (7). The low priority of PD occurs in part because scholarly research within

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<sup>83</sup> I don't focus here specifically on assessment, classroom pedagogy, or policy, but these issues are important and are certainly connected to PD; they have already been written about, and covered well, by numerous scholars. See, for instance, Dryer; Inoue; Zuidema; Lovejoy; Lovejoy, Fox, and Wills; Kinloch; Young, Barrett, Young-Rivera, and Lovejoy; Young and Martinez; Kynard; Barbier; and Wible (*Shaping*).



faculty members' disciplines is more often incentivized than PD (12). So faculty members at colleges and universities in the US are under-professionalized for teaching, in contrast to the world of primary and secondary education: "Higher education faculties are in fact the only faculty in education that, as a matter of practice, are not trained to teach their own students" (Tinto qtd. in Gyurko et al. 8).

Research shows that instructors throughout the university<sup>84</sup> consider PD important, but have limited access to institutional support and PD resources (Gyurko et al. 12). Adjuncts have especially limited access to professional development (11). Gyurko et al.'s report did not focus on any one discipline, but in college writing, first-year sections are usually staffed by adjuncts or graduate students (Ritter 388), and in non-profit institutions throughout the US, in all disciplines, "graduate students, along with 1 million adjunct professors, teach most of the classes in higher education today. In total, adjunct or contingent faculty account for almost three quarters of the instructional faculty" (Gyurko et al. 11).

So the contingent faculty and graduate students who teach most composition courses receive little professionalization. Yet PD for teachers of college writing may be especially beneficial for student success because, as PD research has shown, "the key factor for ensuring students' successful transition from secondary to higher education is the university instructor" (Gyurko et al. 9). Because of the FYE requirement at almost all institutions, and because FYE classes may be the only first-year classes small enough for instructors of record to work directly with students, FYE instructors play a unique role in

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<sup>84</sup>The report briefly mentions graduate students and does not seem to discount them, but does not emphasize grad students' interest in professionalization. It seems to include graduate students in the non-tenure-track group/adjunct faculty group.

students' transition to college. We are uniquely positioned to help or hinder students' ability to successfully acculturate to college.

For these reasons, my recommendations in this section are grounded in the premise that PD in general, and PD in linguistic diversity in particular, needs more institutional and departmental support—both financially and in terms of resources such as space, time, visibility of priority, and prestige.

***Recommendation #1: Introduce TAs and instructors to scholarship both on response in general, and in translingualism and linguistic diversity issues in particular.***

The Collaboration for the Advancement of College Teaching and Learning (CACTL) has published a list of “Characteristics of Effective Faculty Development Programs.” One such characteristic, according to the organization, is that these programs “[c]hallenge and broaden local perspectives through exposure to a wider scholarly dialogue on teaching, learning, and faculty development” (Cafarelli). Introducing teachers-in-training and experienced teachers to scholarship about response and linguistic diversity should certainly help achieve that objective. Inoue identifies “[e]cological parts” (125) as one of the key elements of what he calls an antiracist writing assessment ecology, a classroom and institutional climate that makes a priority of challenging linguistic inequity. “Parts refer to the artifacts, documents, and codes that regulate and embody writing” he writes (125). Anti-racist ecologies need more than traditional, whiteness-favoring parts: “[W]hat I’m arguing for in antiracist writing assessment ecologies are parts that are counter-hegemonic” (132). Texts such as theoretical and

scholarly work on translingualism and linguistic variety can serve as such counter-hegemonic ecological parts.<sup>85</sup>

Several participants from the Fall 2015 project found such texts useful when asked to read them as part of the study described in Chapter Five, or mentioned having found them influential in previous circumstances. Barry said that Hull and Rose's "This Wooden Shack Place" helped him remember the importance of trying not to impose his own interpretation of a piece when assessing student textual analysis. Josephine said she found Gee's work informative in her training at a prior institution, citing him as a scholar who was part of a professionalization curriculum that included an emphasis on appreciating linguistic variety. As mentioned in Chapter Five, Young's "Nah" convinced Martin that code-switching was "a racist logic." Josephine also said she had read the *SRTOL* statement at her prior institution, and when she encountered it as a novice instructor she assumed it was the accepted wisdom in the field.

*SRTOL* is such a short and easy document to read, along with being a cornerstone text, that it should be required in all linguistic diversity PD. In a survey I conducted at a mid-sized flagship institution<sup>86</sup> in Spring 2012, I found that instructors (88% of whom were TAs) who were familiar with *SRTOL* showed more receptivity to sentences using AAE grammar, rating them as acceptable in multiple contexts, and were more likely to

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<sup>85</sup> Possible texts could include, but are not limited to, sources on response such as Anson's "Reflective Reading"; Hull and Rose's "This Wooden Shack Place"; Joseph Williams' "The Phenomenology of Error"; Batt's "The Rhetoric of the End Comment"; and Sommers' "Responding to Student Writing." Sources on translingualism and linguistic diversity include, among others, Gee's *Social Linguistics and Literacies*; Lu's "Professing Multiculturalism"; Horner et al.'s "Language Difference"; Young's work, such as "Nah, We Straight" and "Your Average Nigga"; Lippi-Green's *English with an Accent*; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes' *American English*; and, of course, the *SRTOL* statement.

<sup>86</sup> I tried to recruit faculty from other institutions, but due to the limited responses from those institutions I focused on results from the mid-sized flagship university, which were more numerous (Boone 19). As with the Spring 2013 and Fall 2015 studies, this study was approved by my university's Institutional Review Board.

discuss language variation in their courses, than instructors who were not familiar with *SRTOL*; this was true regardless of whether or not they actually *supported* the statement. Familiarity with *SRTOL* was also correlated with higher expectations for student writing, more positive attitudes towards student work, and more likeliness to assign students to read texts written in nonmainstream varieties (Boone 21).

Ball and Freedman, Okawa, and Haddix have each found positive results in teachers' evolving pluralist/translingual attitudes, and development of critical linguistic awareness, when they read and discuss the work of scholars and literary writers such as Keith Gilyard (Okawa 330; Haddix 260), Shirley Brice Heath, William Labov, Geneva Smitherman (Okawa 329-330), Amy Tan, Richard Rodriguez, Simon Ortiz (Haddix 260), Henry Giroux, Kathryn Au, Paulo Freire, Lisa Delpit, and James Paul Gee (Ball and Freedman 14) in teacher-education courses. Drawing on Gee, I argue that engaging with scholarly texts and narratives of linguistic experience enables teachers to develop their own *overt* theories on linguistic diversity issues, instead of relying on *tacit* theories (16-23)(see Chapter One). Along those lines, engaging new theoretical material has been identified as an important source of teacher efficacy (Bandura cited in Ball and Lardner, *African* 59-60), and can provide opportunities for teachers to appropriate those theories and develop ways to apply them in their pedagogy. For example, based on his engagement with translingual scholarship, Martin theorizes ways to discuss linguistic diversity issues in class by introducing the concept of "parsing," when he says:

Martin I don't know (if) [Young] was making the connection between parsing and grammar at the end [of "'Nah'"], but I think parsing would be a really interesting way of getting students to pay attention to their language. And to codes and code-switching and code-meshing. ... obviously it's not grammar for the sake of correctness,



Josephine    like,  
                  right because it's this idea of,  
                  um,  
                  recognizing where power lies,  
                  and the idea of marginalized voices,  
                  (that) with the translingual approach,  
                  part of it is not passing a judgment.  
                  On where the student is coming from as far as like their social  
                  position and like lived experience.

Josephine draws connections here between translingualism and Anson's piece, which predated the translingual movement but is relevant to translingual goals. Josephine conceives of translingualism as asking teachers to resist making assumptions about students' lived experiences and motives. In this case, a reader cited by Anson said that the student writer manipulated his refugee experience for sympathy, but Josephine says that a translingual perspective would resist such an assumption. She also finds in Horner et al. an emphasis on not looking for errors, for reasons to say "this is wrong," but on trying to figure out the students' purpose and start from there to provide feedback.

***Recommendation #2: Expose TAs and teachers to research on the logic, and micro-and macro-level conventions, of nonmainstream varieties of English, particularly AAE.***

It is important to include some specific training on the logic and grammars of nonprestige American dialects, especially AAE. Study of specific dialects can contribute to more positive attitudes about nonmainstream varieties, better preparedness to work with language minority students, and better understanding of language minority writers' work. Many researchers have already argued effectively for the importance of teachers' learning more about nonmainstream varieties and alternative discourses (Ball and Lardner, *African* and "Dispositions"; Smitherman; Schroeder et al.; Coleman; etc.); in fact, this idea was the conclusion of the original *SRTOL* statement: "We affirm strongly

that teachers must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language” (19).

As mentioned previously, the CCCC Language Policy Committee’s *Language Knowledge and Awareness Survey* found that study of AAE and American Dialects was *much*—to a statistically significant<sup>87</sup> degree—more positively correlated with pluralist attitudes than were courses in introduction to linguistics, or history of the English language. Study of AAE was the most highly correlated of all with pluralist attitudes (18-20)—perhaps teachers’ recognition of the legitimacy of the most stigmatized American variety acts as the proverbial rising tide that lifts all boats. In fact, survey courses that only briefly cover linguistic diversity might in themselves have little impact, or even sometimes contribute to misinformation: for instance, both Barry and Thea said they had taken an introductory linguistics course as undergraduates, but Barry said he couldn’t remember it; and for Thea, as we saw in Chapter Five, her experience resulted in her developing a misconception about the Oakland School Board controversy.

Moreover, study of specific varieties<sup>88</sup> can help teachers be more prepared to recognize what “errors” in student writing are based in dialect difference, and what errors

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<sup>87</sup> For example, 49.2% of people who had taken a course in AAE strongly disagreed with the statement “In the home, students should be exposed to standard English only” (19), compared to 32.1% strong disagreement among people who had not taken such a course (19); 7.6% of those who taken a course in AAE strongly disagreed with the statement “Students who use nonstandard dialects should be taught in standard English” compared to 1.8% of those who hadn’t studied AAE; for the same question, the difference in strong disagreement between people who had taken a course in American Dialects and those who hadn’t was 5.1% to 1.6%, respectively (19). The differences were all found to be statistically significant after analysis (19).

<sup>88</sup> Jane Bowman Smith’s *The Elephant in the Classroom* includes several pieces with recommendations for better understanding AAE strategies, including Palacas’s “African American Voice and Standard English,” Jones’ “Room for the Unfamiliar,” and Matarese and Anson’s “Teacher Response.” Other useful pieces include Coleman’s “Our Students Write with Accents”; Pullum’s “African American Vernacular English is Not Standard English with Mistakes”; Ball and Lardner’s *African American Literacies Unleashed*; and Ball’s research on the macro-level organizational writing patterns favored by African-American

are not; it can also help teachers avoid reading errors where they do not occur; Matarese and Anson reported on a study of teacher response to student writing in which teachers' limited knowledge of AAE resulted in misunderstanding student writers' intended meaning and, in their comments, misdirecting students' revisions. In one case, a teacher misread the sentence "I'm not trying to say nothing has improved since the last century because things have improved" ("Daunte" qtd. in Matarese and Anson 124) as AAE, and changed it to, "I'm not trying to say anything has improved since the last century because things have improved," (cited in Matarese and Anson 124) thus changing the student's intended meaning and rendering the sentence illogical.

***Recommendation #3: Expose instructors to student work that is strong in AAE or other nonmainstream discourses***

New TAs may assume that an ideal, single paradigm of student writing is expected in composition courses (Farris 99-101), which makes sense given common perceptions of academic writing. According to Jacqueline Jones Royster, conversations about academic writing in the academy have led to a dominant idea that "[t]here is *the* language, *the* discourse of academe and there are *other* languages and discourses that are not academic" (24, emphasis in original). This belief has contributed to a limited paradigm of acceptable student work: "Whether by intent or default," Royster argues, "we have centralized in our conversations a default of what can be sanctioned as good writing (as enacted often through a traditional view of the freshman essay)" (24).

Introducing strong student writing that draws on nonmainstream rhetorical traditions will give teachers the opportunity to recognize the value of such work, instead of

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adolescents, reported in "Cultural Preferences." Like other scholarship on language variety, such texts could serve as counter-hegemonic parts of an anti-racist ecology (Inoue 125-132).



automatically reading it as deficient; again, such texts are further possibilities for counter-hegemonic ecological parts (Inoue 125-132).

Frye argues that part of challenging “whiteness” (see Chapter 1), is to create environments where non-whiteness is welcome (100). “[W]e will have to make these environments for ourselves, since the world will not offer them to us” (Frye 100). Creating a professional environment that values AAE and other non-whitely paradigm student texts can help us undermine the pervasiveness of default whiteness in the academy. Familiarity, or a lack thereof, with non-mainstream varieties matters. In their research, Fowler and Ochsner have found that raters’ level of familiarity with nonmainstream linguistic patterns can influence assessment. Raters are sometimes more charitable with patterns they know well, but less receptive to unfamiliar patterns. In studying sample papers written by students at FSU, they found that when “raters evaluated texts exhibiting an unfamiliar dialect, they evidently penalized the writers even though the quality of writing was relatively high” (121).<sup>89</sup> That is, they gave lower grades based on language differences they perceived as errors, having little familiarity with the linguistic traditions from which the students came.<sup>90</sup> Learning more about non-dominant discourse traditions would help us better understand where our students are coming from, and we should be able to give better feedback when we aren’t bogged down by a pre-occupation with what we perceive as error.

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<sup>89</sup> Fowler and Ochsner also found that raters at a different school, UCM, ignored sentence-level variations that many readers would consider errors, focusing on big-picture areas of concern in their rating; this was true for both AAE-strong papers, an unfamiliar dialect for these readers, and Hispanic-influenced papers, a familiar dialect for them. Fowler and Ochsner suggest this is due to the institutional climate at UCM (124).

<sup>90</sup> Non-dominant-paradigm texts shared with teachers in professionalization could include work such as Maya’s Beyoncé essay (see Chapter Four); Lisa’s essay, reprinted by Ball and Lardner (*African*); Cam’s writing in Young’s “Your Average Nigga”; and excerpts of Latino/a student work from Kells’ “Leveling the Linguistic Playing Field,” among others.

***Recommendation #4: Expose instructors to scholarship that uses AAE and other alternative discourses***

Among the new scholarship we ask practicum students, or experienced teachers in professionalization workshops, to read, we should include work that draws on non-white-based and other non-dominant discourse traditions, what Bizzell calls “alternative discourses” (“Intellectual”). Study of such texts can help teachers recognize these traditions’ potential for academic writing, and legitimize the traditions in new scholars’ eyes. We can even discuss how the presence of linguistically diverse academic sources represents an evolution in academic discourse itself (Bizzell 2-3). As Inoue argues in his thoroughly code-meshed *Antiracist Writing Assessment*, while scholarship usually requires writers to make some changes, these scholars can also effect change in the discourse community: “I’ve worked hard to have the voice I have in the academy,” he writes, “made some linguistic sacrifices, changed my ways with words and my dispositions about texts, but I’d argue my voice and what it says changes the academy too, just as others’ voices have” (23). Inoue isn’t the only one who sees successful use of nonmainstream varieties as influential in our understanding of academic discourse; in a 2002 publication, Bizzell commented on the ubiquity of alternative discourses in academia:

[S]lowly but surely, previously nonacademic discourses are blending with traditional academic discourses to form the new ‘mixed’ forms. These new discourses are still academic, in that they are doing the intellectual work of the academy—rigorous, reflective scholarship. We find these discourses appearing in

articles in top-rank academic journals and in books from prestigious academic presses. (2)

The rich body of available scholarship includes, but is certainly not limited to, the work of Geneva Smitherman, Vershawn Young, Keith Gilyard, Elaine Richardson, Carmen Kynard, Victor Villanueva, and Gloria Anzaldúa.

Having teachers engage with such texts can help undermine the norm of white-based rhetorical conventions. And many of these texts can also serve as readings for composition students. Of Smitherman's "CCCC's Role," an essay in which she code-meshes AAE and traditional academic discourse, Canagarajah writes:

Examples such as Smitherman's and other experimental pieces by experienced scholars can be treated as useful models to encourage students and novice scholars to code-mesh in their academic articles. It is important for students to know that there are successful multilingual scholars who are representing their voices and norms in academic writing. (*Translingual Practice* 125)

Canagarajah also emphasizes that using alternative discourses in academic writing is not the same as taking the path of least resistance: "Note that my proposal demands more, not less, from minority students.... [T]his strategy requires not only awareness of the established and local norms, but the competence to bring them together strategically for one's voice and for one's objectives" (*Translingual Practice* 125).

While Canagarajah argues that alternative discourses *require* additional rigor on the part of the writer, Bizzell says that they *enable* more possibilities for inquiry: "I think these new, alternative or mixed discourse forms are gaining ground because they allow their practitioners to do intellectual work in ways they could not if confined to traditional

academic discourse” (“Intellectual” 3). In both cases, the authors challenge the idea that allowing students to use alternative discourses lowers the proverbial bar. Analysis of professional examples of code-meshing and other alternative discourse forms could include discussion of the possibilities that those forms create, and/or the extra rigor required to be successful. Teachers could use such writing as models for themselves and their students to imitate—keeping in mind Milson-Whyte’s warning about the risks of appropriation—or to spark discussions about the possibilities of language. However, while reading these texts, we need to resist the maxim that only so-called “advanced” writers are allowed to “break the rules.” Such texts should be models of what students can do *now*, not on the mythical “someday” when they have reached an arbitrarily determined, exalted position where variation is suddenly allowed.

***Recommendation #5: Frame translingualism as anti-racist***

Not only is racial hostility still an issue in the U.S. (Young and Condon), but there has also been a recent spike in hate-crimes, including race and ethnicity-based hate-crimes (Alim, “Introducing” 26). I think it’s safe to say at this point that white backlash to the two-term presidency of the nation’s first black president played a substantial role in the 2016 election of a race-baiting demagogue. In the U.S., African-Americans, Latino/a people, people of Middle-Eastern descent, Asian-Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans have all faced an uptick in hate speech, violence, and other forms of discrimination.<sup>91</sup> Research finds that “[o]ver the last two decades, American society has become more and more segregated...and all of America’s major institutions (e.g.,

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<sup>91</sup> As have women, members of the LGBTQ community, and members of religious minority groups in the U.S., of course; however, my focus here is on anti-racism.

educational, religious, and political institutions) remain highly segregated” (Alim 3). Moreover, “discriminatory discourses about the languages of ethnoracially minoritized groups are still commonplace and acceptable (as opposed to overt remarks about race or phenotype” (18). However, despite this increasingly hostile environment, many students and teachers are still hesitant to confront how race influences education (Young and Condon, “Why Anti-Racist”). So taking an active antiracist stance is important for educators. Young and Condon argue: “we, i.e., those interested in a just and egalitarian society, need to renew our commitment to intelligently and publicly deliberate race and to counteract the effects of racism” (“Why”). For most college writing instructors, framing linguistic discrimination in the right way—as a form of racism—will help make the issue more exigent. The concept of interrogating privilege, particularly white privilege, has gained increasing traction in higher education in recent years (Kolowich), and it seems natural to extend this concept to its linguistic domain. We can use the work of scholars like Asao Inoue, author of *Antiracist Writing Assessment*; Vershawn Young, who Martin found so convincing; and Keith Gilyard, whose work continues to challenge racism in education, to help us explore the antiracist possibilities of translingual pedagogy. Inoue even frames the anti-racist mission in composition as a “revolutionary” project on the same level as, and in the spirit of, Freire’s critical pedagogy (82).

***Recommendation #6: Incorporate reflective writing on language diversity issues into professionalization***

Reflective practice came into use in TA training as early the 1950s at the University of Kansas (Pytlik 12), and critical reflection has been recognized as an

important part of TA training since the late 1980s and early 1990s (Wilhoit 21). So it seems natural to extend the practice to engaging with translingualism.

Okawa, Ball and Freedman, Ball and Muhammed, and Haddix have all described courses where success was achieved in fostering pluralist attitudes, and at times critical metalinguistic inquiry, by incorporating reflective writing in courses for teachers-in-training, both pre-service and experienced teachers. Such writing projects include reflections on readings (Ball and Freedman 13-17; Ball and Muhammed 83), free-writing (Ball and Muhammed 83) and most notably, literacy autobiographies (Okawa 330-2; Ball and Freedman 13-17; Haddix 260). In Ball and Freedman's work, reflective writing was part of a strategy, along with class discussion and teaching experience, to help teachers develop increased metalinguistic awareness (13): "As the teachers' metacognitive levels increased concerning their own literacy experiences, many began to look outward and to question and challenge some of their long-held perspectives that they may not have been consciously aware of earlier" (Ball and Freedman 14). Haddix also connects reflective writing specifically to the challenging of white privilege, writing, "In order to unravel dominant ideologies about multiculturalism and multilingualism and interrogate Whiteness and White privilege, preservice teachers must first reflect on their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds" (258).

In a multi-authored piece, Lovejoy, Fox, and Wills reflect on their own linguistic experiences and describe how they used these reflections as a foundation for pedagogies appreciative of linguistic diversity (383), arguing, "language experiences and reflection can create paths that lead to renewed pedagogy and classroom practices that embrace linguistic diversity" (381). And of course, as saw in Chapter Five, reflection in

conversation helped my participants engage with translingual questions and connect them to their own teaching and learning experiences. I do not mean to suggest, however, that reflection on linguistic experience and scholarly materials is necessary or valuable only for white, middle-class teachers from mainstream language backgrounds. The linguistic autobiographies in the works of minority-language scholars such as Gilyard, Inoue, Villanueva, Stanford, and Young have shown how the authors' reflections on their own ideological growth helped shape their linguistic ideologies and teaching practices.

***Recommendation #7: Make interrogating privilege, especially white privilege, a priority of professionalization***

Along with reflection on scholarship and samples of student writing, interrogation of privilege should play more of a role in professionalization. This recommendation overlaps with #6, because for many instructors, interrogating privilege is an essential part of linguistic autobiography. Frye argues that “We have to avoid, or be extremely alert in, environments in which whiteness is particularly required or rewarded (e.g. academia)” (100). To perform anti-racism and move towards anti-racist and linguistically diverse pedagogy requires the troubling of whiteness-based environments, and vigilance in white-dominant environments.

While not all composition teachers come from places of privilege (and unfortunately, the harsh realities of academic employment often put many of us into economically unprivileged positions), enough of us do, and privilege is so essential in shaping our conceptions of correctness, that reflection on how that privilege influences our perceptions of correctness is essential. Interrogation of privilege can help us to be

more accepting of linguistic diversity and better understand students who come from less privileged backgrounds.

Interrogating not just privilege in general, but the specific privilege that allows for the assumption of default whiteness, helps white preservice teachers move beyond seeing language, power, and difference as “other people’s issues” (Haddix 256). A white teacher needs to become more than just a “cultural tourist” (Lewis qtd. in Haddix 260); the goal is instead to develop “a critical awareness of themselves as cultural [and] linguistic beings” (Haddix 260). This is because “[w]ithout seeing, hearing, and experiencing their own cultural and linguistic heritage, White preservice teachers remain in danger of not understanding their own positions of White privilege, reinforcing boundaries that keep their ‘marked’ and ‘non-native speaking’ students from full participation in society” (262).

Discussions with peers and readings of scholarly and student texts could be sources for such interrogation; the linguistic autobiography would also be one option for a reflective writing task that promotes such interrogation. In her essay “How I Changed My Mind,” Alison Shaskan describes how her experience negotiating the environment at a social worker’s office, in a successful effort to procure food stamps, helped her to recognize the privilege she gained from her whiteness and middle-class upbringing. This increased awareness made her more attuned to how lack of such privilege harms many of her students, and how the persistence of covert and overt racism impacts her African-American students to such a degree that their assimilation to white norms is not enough to grant them the same professional opportunities as their white peers.



The teachers in my Chapter Five study who expressed most conscious awareness of the problem of white privilege were among the most receptive to translingualism. For instance, early in our first interviews, Martin, Oliver, and Josephine all described Standard English as being defined by a privileged position tied to whiteness. Martin said, “I think [SE is] tied to race and class. So, what do white, middle-class Midwesterners sound like?....I really do think there’s this really sort of, insidious, um bias towards that, and it becomes called Standard English.” When I initially asked Oliver to define SE, he said, “I’m mainly just tempted to say old white-guy English.” Martin and Oliver, though initially un- or little-familiar with translingual discourses, were ultimately quite receptive to those discourses and to concerns about linguistic diversity. Given that they already accepted that white privilege influenced notions of correctness and appropriateness, their receptivity to translingual discourses was not particularly surprising. And Josephine had previously been enculturated into translingualism and linguistic diversity issues before our study, and remained committed to those concerns at the end of our project. When I first asked her to define SE, she said, “It’s been described as this quote-unquote language of the academy, but it’s also like one that’s always associated with privilege, it’s associated with like people who are of a higher socioeconomic status, and um, people who are in the majority ethnic groups.”

***Recommendation #8: Model how to teach translingually***

Teachers often find it helpful to be given a concrete way to practice a new pedagogical approach. Professionalization could include modeling of assignments, perhaps based on some of those described in *Other People’s English* (Young et al.),

*Code-Meshing as World English* (Young and Rivera), or *Antiracist Writing Assessment* (Inoue). During the wrap-up interviews with my Fall 2015 participants, Barry had specifically mentioned modeling as something he would hope to see in a translingualism workshop:

Barry      I would sort of like for somebody to model like how to sort of do  
                 code-meshing in the classroom...  
                 like,  
                 is there a way to teach it?  
                 Is there a way to discuss it?  
                 Cause I've never talked about it with any of my students before  
                 so...  
                 I mean I would just like a little show and tell,  
                 kinda like somebody to get up there and model a lesson or  
                 something for us.

Witnessing the modeling of new skills is one form of “vicarious experience,” an important source of teacher efficacy (Ball and Lardner, *African* 59). Modeling is also supported in professionalization research; according to the CACTL, one aspect of “[e]ffective faculty development programs” is that they “[e]mphasize interaction and collaboration among faculty” (Cafarelli). Modeling could be a form of interaction and collaboration. Taylor and McQuiggan also found that in professional development, faculty want, and find it beneficial, “to access specific examples and strategies” (34) and to be able to learn from experienced colleagues (33).

***Recommendation #9: Acknowledge instructors’ prior expertise and ability to contribute***

We should ask teachers to use their prior experiences, whether in teaching, tutoring, studying, or in their personal lives, as resources for engaging with new ideas about translingualism. Doing so would allow teachers to maintain and build on their positioning as experts. Bandura identifies prior teaching experiences, and how the

teachers conceive of them upon reflection as successes or failures, as the most important source of the teacher's sense of efficacy (cited in Ball and Lardner, *African* 59). So encouraging them to reflect on past experiences with linguistically diverse students, or on dealing with issues of linguistic diversity in general, can help them recognize moments where translingualism might be useful in future contexts. For example, in this passage, Wally described his experience tutoring at a previous institution; he explained how he worked with student athletes who were required to make frequent visits to the writing center, and who often wrote using AAE syntax and grammar. Following the standard practice at the writing center, he had taken a corrective approach, but found that left little time to help students focus on ideas. He puts that experience into context based on our discussion of AAE and code-meshing:

- Wally        Student athletes could certainly benefit to be told that [code-meshing] is  
                  an appropriate way to write.  
                  That certain signifiers in their dialect or voice do matter.  
                  Um I noticed a lot,  
                  working at the writing center,  
                  (I) did.  
                  Very often the goal is not to focus on ideas but to translate their  
                  thoughts into standard written English
- Stephanie   mmhmm
- Wally        and you don't really worry about the ideas or the argument you just try  
                  to make it acceptable.  
                  You try to make it at least a C....  
                  You're looking for just like significant damage control....
- Stephanie   yeah
- Wally        yeah
- Stephanie   so that would just be a way-  
                  it sounds like you're talking about using it as a way of letting them  
                  focus more on their ideas  
                  yeah yeah,  
                  so many times I mean,  
                  the first...  
                  like 3 or 4 times you'd meet with a student it would really just be about  
                  formatting.

Wally        So you'd really (only) get two to three meetings with them that you  
                  could brainstorm or work on concepts.  
                  And the rest of it was just like,  
                  walking them slowly through,  
                  okay maybe we should alter this phrase.  
                  How can we alter this phrase.  
                  You'd take so much time on just small sentence-level corrections like  
                  that,  
                  you can't really get a lot done.

Acknowledging teachers' expertise can also help remove some of the sense of threat that both Okawa and Corder describe as detrimental to productive dialogue. Additionally, allowing teachers to position themselves as experts helps promote the possibility that they will see problems arising from translingual teaching as problems they can take on and solve. For example, Martin saw his whiteness as a potential obstacle to fairly assess and teach AAE-strong writers, but expressed confidence that he could find a way. In our fourth interview, Martin and I had this exchange:

Martin	Do I, as a middle-class white male, get to say what is or what is not African-American English? {laughter} right?
Stephanie	{laughter}
Martin	And how do I assess whether or not this is a successful employment of vernacular or idiomatic English, in an academic paper, and what is not? And this is why I brought up the clarity and effectiveness versus correctness
Stephanie	yeah
Martin	earlier, so like I think that I can probably, it's one of those things...Um, what was it that Louie Armstrong used to say about jazz, if you have to ask, you'll never know, right?
Stephanie	{laughter}
Martin	So... I think I'm erudite and sensitive enough that I can understand the difference between a successful employment of that idiom and an unsuccessful employment of that idiom.

Martin does not consider himself an expert on AAE; however, instead of using that as a reason to ban the use of AAE in student papers, in this hypothetical scenario, he envisions that he can apply an existing skill set he does have—the ability to identify clear and effective writing, or the successful employment of idioms—to assess writing including AAE as fairly as possible.

Teachers also often appreciate having the opportunity to discuss new ideas with their colleagues, as peers. They appreciate having their perspectives and experiences valued in the professionalization setting, and learning from each other. For example, Barry described his ideal workshop as including an opportunity for him and fellow attendees to reflect on and discuss the new ideas and discourses. He said:

Barry     One thing I would like to get out of something like that...  
I would just sort of want somebody to show me examples of  
             different kinds of English....  
to hand me a paper and say yeah,  
read that and tell me what you think about it,  
you know,  
and tell if it,  
if it would fly in your classroom...  
would this meet your criteria for an essay assignment.  
Um,  
like ...  
[the facilitator should] give me a description of the assignment and  
             give me a sample paper...  
and let me sort of chew on that a little bit,  
and then just maybe add some kind just kind of open discussion with  
             everybody in the room,  
and just kinda say,  
what do we think,  
is it accept-  
what makes it acceptable,  
what makes it unacceptable...  
like if this is our student,  
what would we tell him or her,  
you know.

Josephine also listed the possibility of discussing the issue with colleagues as an incentive to attend professionalism on translingualism, saying:

Josephine Well,  
I mean incentives would be to like have the opportunity to discuss  
with other instructors,  
after you give us the information,  
what their opinion is on it.  
Or to learn about how they would evaluate an essay after having  
received that information.  
That would be an incentive.

These participants' comments are in line with findings in professionalization research. In a faculty survey, Taylor and McQuiggan found that "faculty indicated that the most helpful aspects of professional development events...included opportunities to share real-life experiences with their colleagues" (34); they also point out possibilities for transfer of adult education principles, such as respecting adult students and capitalizing on their experience, to PD (36). Adult-friendly "learning opportunities...offer a climate of respect, encourage active participation, take advantage of prior experiences and build on them, employ collaborative inquiry, and empower participants to reflect and take action on their learning" (36). And Gyurko et al. draw on prior professionalization research to argue that one reason online professionalization is often successful is that it "allow[s] participants to 'exchange ideas and resources with their colleagues [and] engage in collaborative work'" (Gyurko et al., 13-14, quoting. Killon). Finally, a benefit of well-designed PD is that it is "shown to foster community" (Gyurko et al. 13).

In my review of the literature on linguistic-diversity-related PD in composition, professionalization opportunities that didn't emphasize teachers' prior experiences or position them as experts-in-progress have not been very successful. Such was the case with programs like those described by Ball and Lardner ("Dispositions") and Perryman-

Clark (“Racial Profiling”). I should add here that full details of these programs were not available, and I cannot say with certainty that there was *no* acknowledgment of teachers’ prior expertise. However, in both cases, principles of linguistic diversity seem to have been presented in a relatively top-down manner by one or more authority figures, to teachers with little to no prior training in linguistic diversity issues, but who *did* have teaching experience; either coincidentally or not, the teachers were resistant to change.

***Recommendation #10: Anticipate objections to translingualism and linguistic diversity, and be ready to engage in conversations to help respond to these concerns***

The CACTL lists “knowledgeable, professional, and effective faculty development leadership and management” as an important characteristic of effective PD (Cafarelli). Because of the skepticism often facing pluralist and translingual movements, those of us who hope to facilitate translingual professionalization will need to be prepared to address the most common concerns, questions, and objections raised by teachers. My Chapter Five participants’ responses suggest that some of these will include questions about fairness in assessment; the applicability of translingualism to language majority students; the difficulty for white instructors of teaching race-consciously; and a repetition of the myth that mastery of standard white English will help minorities to “succeed.”

To address these concerns, we can draw on sources such as Inoue, who lays out a vision of effort-based assessment (*Antiracist*), and Dryer, who suggests re-conceiving assessment practices to be more translingual; we can also use sources who point out the importance and value for mainstream students to learn about linguistic variety and expand their linguistic repertoires (Zuidema 342-3; Canagarajah, “Place” 591), as well as

those who argue it is teachers' responsibility to address linguistic discrimination head-on (Zuidema). We can trouble the whiteness-based assumption that whites must "be included in a text 'in a direct way, if not as subjects, then emotionally'" (Ratcliffe 126, quoting Castillo) and thus that pedagogy should target the needs of mainstream students. We can also discuss the importance of finding productive ways to discuss race as it relates to education (Young and Condon), and bring up the material reality of institutionalized racism, which means that African-Americans and other minorities are still discriminated against in numerous contexts, such as housing, education, and careers (Bonilla-Silva 25-62), for reasons that have little or nothing to do with language use.

If a translingual facilitator ends up having to debate the merits of translingualism with PD attendees, this isn't necessarily a bad thing. Verbal and social persuasion have been cited as additional important sources of teacher efficacy (Ball and Lardner, *African* 60); what this means is that critical conversations with others can influence how teachers conceive of their ability to work well with their students, and what resources and knowledge they find necessary in order to do so. The type of relationship a teacher has with colleagues and mentors is certainly a factor, and is influenced by how much the teacher trusts their interlocutor, and how knowledgeable they see that person as. Recall that in Chapter Four, Stephen described the influence his wife, who was also a colleague, had on his decision to introduce more narrative-based assignments in his composition classes. Basically, instructors are more likely to accept encouragement and feedback from people they trust (Bandura cited in Ball and Lardner, *African* 60). Thus, if translingual PD facilitators convey a knowledgeable and trustworthy ethos, by being prepared to



discuss such issues raised, teachers may be more likely to be persuaded of translingualism's value.

Each translingual PD facilitator will need to be aware of possible objections and decide for themselves how to respond. There will not always be a “right” answer, but the continued dialogue can help us continue troubling the status quo where it reproduces inequity. And of course, translingual professionalization can include encouraging teachers to come up with their own strategies for addressing the issues we raise.

***Recommendation #11: Provide incentives, financial and otherwise, for teachers to pursue translingual professionalization***

Composition teachers rarely complain about having too much time on their hands. So making professionalization opportunities more attractive and accessible will be necessary in order to get more than a few people involved. Some incentives cited by my Chapter Five participants were food, money, something they could include on a CV, a list of clear objectives about how the instructor would benefit and what they could take back to their classrooms, and the opportunity to discuss new concepts with peers (addressed above). Most of these incentives align with what PD research has found. For example, Taylor and McQuiggan found that preferred incentives included “a financial incentive” (35) and “a university-sponsored certificate of achievement” (35). Their literature review reports that other popular incentives that could be relevant to translingual professionalization include “an adjusted workload or release time...mentoring and grant opportunities, public recognition, notes of appreciation, special parking privileges...travel funds...and recognition counting toward promotion and tenure” (32).

Barry said that his first choice for an incentive would be money, explaining that particular incentive had been successful at an institution he had taught at previously:

Barry        I don't know if you could really pay people {laughter}  
                 but I know if you  
Stephanie   it'd be nice  
Barry        if you paid them for the day,  
                 I remember when I was adjuncting at [college],  
                 we had something,  
                 it wasn't specific to translingualism but they called it a composition  
                 workshop before the semester started,  
                 every year...  
                 and uh,  
                 they catered lunch ....  
                 they paid us for the day.  
                 It was like this is a work day so,  
                 we'll pay you you know for the six,  
                 seven hours that you spend here.  
                 And it was a free lunch,  
                 and everybody came {laughter}

Though he didn't bring the prospect of a CV line or certification up himself, he said that he is interested in professionalization opportunities because "as a grad student I would come just because I'm trying to learn things and make myself into a good candidate for jobs." When I mentioned the possibility of being able to include attendance on a CV, however, he agreed it would be a perk:

Barry        I wouldn't expect anything,  
                 I wouldn't expect any kind of reward,  
                 I would just come to try to get something out of it  
Stephanie   yeah  
Barry        um  
Stephanie   yeah,  
                 what about,  
                 sometimes too like I know they've done things,  
                 where you get a nice little CV line.  
                 It's like "participated in such and such thing"  
Barry        oh yeah that would be good,  
                 too.  
                 That would be good.  
                 Kinda make it sound official so we could like put that on our CVs.

Universities often develop teaching-fellowship programs or professional networks/institutes based around digital humanities, social justice issues, and other themes. Translingualism could be the basis for something similar. The prospect of being part of an exclusive cohort and gaining a professional credit could certainly attract busy instructors.

In its “Characteristics of Effective Faculty Development Programs,” the CACTL states that one characteristic of such programs is that they “[a]ddress clearly defined priorities through a limited range of activities” (Cafarelli). Because instructors have to be conscientious about how they allot their time, knowing what skills and knowledge they stand to acquire from a potential workshop can encourage attendance. Both Thea and Martin spoke to this point; Thea asked, “What are you gonna know how to do better? What are you going to have a better understanding of when you leave that workshop? Um, what kind of challenges are you gonna know how to tackle?” Martin echoed Thea’s comment about clear objectives, suggesting that he would like the facilitator to make it clear ahead of time that “the basic premise is X, and then Y and Z are gonna be the takeaway points.”

Another incentive is to make funding available so that instructors can take relevant courses, either at their current schools or neighbor institutions, or to attend professional development institutes or pre-conference workshops. As mentioned before, Ball and Muhammed found that experienced teachers often took courses on linguistic diversity when they had the opportunity (80-81). Spending money is never an attractive

option from an administrative standpoint, but when applied to PD it is usually a worthwhile financial investment. Gyurko et al. point out that:

[I]n a study of spending patterns at higher education institutions, universities and colleges that were identified as highly effective ... spent more money per student on instruction and academic support, a category under which most institutions report resources dedicated to faculty development, teaching and learning centers, and other academic support staff. (Gyurko et al. 13)

There is a link between money spent on PD and graduation: “instructional and academic support expenditures are significant predictors of graduation rates” (13). Investing money to help college writing instructors learn more about translanguaging and linguistic diversity—significant issues and areas of inquiry in the field in which they teach—could pay off with higher graduation rates for their students, preventing the college or university from losing the money they would receive from those students’ tuition, fees, and other campus expenses. Attrition is expensive: in a 2013 study, Raisman found that attrition and delayed graduation cost U.S. colleges and universities a collective 16.5 *billion* dollars annually (cited in Gyurko et al. 14).

Finally, instructors will be more interested in PD that they are able to fit into their busy schedules. According to the CACTL, effective PD “[e]mphasize[s] sustained programs rather than one-shot workshops” (Cafarelli). However, constraints on time are frequently listed as major obstacle to PD attendance (Taylor and McQuiggan 35). One potential solution is to make multiple opportunities for professionalization available, including “informal learning opportunities, flexible scheduling, short sessions, and one-

on-one support for anytime, anywhere professional development” (35). Another option is flexible web-mediated PD (Gyurko et al. 14).

In my informal survey of instructors, and in the surveyed professional developmental literature, no single incentive was dominant. But it seems that there are a range of possibilities for incentives, including ease of access, prestige, credit, clearly articulated goals, and financial or material incentives; it also appears that special attention needs to be paid to the issue of time constraints. Though it is beyond the scope of this project, further research on the effectiveness of translingual PD on learning outcomes and could be fascinating.

### **Implications and Conclusions**

At the risk of sounding overly optimistic about human nature, most writing instructors that I’ve met seem to care about their students and want them to succeed, and therefore tend to be willing to engage with new ideas that might improve their teaching. The instructors I worked with while collecting my Fall 2015 data were all, as I have previously mentioned, willing to engage with issues of linguistic diversity through readings and conversation, and willing to let those readings and conversations trouble their pre-existing beliefs. Similarly, though I spent less time with the Spring 2013 participants, during our brief conversations I realized that they were generally reflective, thoughtful teachers, who had done their best to incorporate their previous professional and educational experiences into good pedagogy, and weren’t necessarily unwilling to engage with new ideas about teaching. Granted, twelve volunteers do not make a representative sample or conclusive findings. But I do think they give us reason to be a bit optimistic about what the possibilities for translingual professionalization in college writing—if we are willing to actually make such professionalization happen. We first

need to face the fact that the people who actually teach most composition courses, TAs and part-time or full-time contingent faculty, are not getting enough exposure to the scholarly conversation about linguistic diversity; when they do get such exposure, it is often too limited or hierarchically-imposed to make much of a difference. As Horner et al. argue in the epigraph to this chapter:

Advancing a translingual approach requires changes ...in the hiring, training, and professional development of writing teachers. At the very least, it requires making good on long-standing calls for giving all teachers of writing professional development in better understanding and addressing issues of language difference in their teaching. (“Language Difference” 309)

That is, we can’t keep doing professionalization in the same old way, and expect anything but the same old results. Admittedly, the list of recommendations I provided in this chapter is a bit of a wish list. Budgets are tight. Instructors are often overworked and overscheduled. But these are concrete obstacles that can be worked around, and must be, because the English classroom is uniquely situated to promote principles of linguistic diversity that have reverberations beyond the university.

We as English instructors need to acknowledge the importance of our classrooms as policy spaces where we have the choice to either challenge or reify the status quo. Canagarajah points out that “the classroom is already a policy site; every time teachers insist on a uniform variety of language or discourse, we are helping reproduce monolingualist ideologies and linguistic hierarchies” (“Place” 587). So English teachers are uniquely situated to help shape perception of linguistic diversity. Baron points out teachers’ roles in shaping current ideologies: “We must own up to the fact that the

teaching of English to speakers of English has promoted much of the linguistic insecurity and fear of grammar that we observe today” (Baron qtd. in Zuidema 347). Because of this history, Zuidema notes, people are often unnecessarily self-conscious of their language use around English teachers. “Consider how often teens and even adults use perfectly appropriate conventions of casual conversations and then, remembering they are speaking with English teachers, apologize in embarrassment for their ‘bad grammar’” (347). The flip side of this is that English teachers have the ability to help challenge myths: “It is important for students to hear English teachers acknowledging that a nonstandard register or even another dialect or language is sometimes the most appropriate and effective choice”<sup>92</sup> (347). We can, and should, use our power for good—to help destroy tired, and harmful, myths about language, with pedagogies that include critical, translingual interrogation of linguistic privilege. Key to such pedagogy, of course, is effective PD. Translingual professional development needs to be respectful of instructors’ prior experiences; it needs to welcome reflection, and dialogue between peers and mentors; it needs to be incentivized, whether through money, prestige, or obvious value for the instructors’ career prospects. And most of all, it needs to be available.

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<sup>92</sup> However, Zuidema follows this up by pointing out that banking-concept introduction of the idea isn’t sufficient: “hearing the message isn’t enough; students also need opportunities to consciously explore and reflect with their teachers about effective uses of systems other than formal standard English” (347). For students, like teachers in professionalization, active reflection on and engagement with linguistic diversity issues is important.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SPRING 2013 DATA COLLECTION

1. How did the rhetorical analysis align with your expectations?
2. How did the speech align with your expectations?
3. What was your most important criteria in assessing these essays?
4. What did you think of the rubric you were asked to use?
5. What is your sense of the style conventions that are most appropriate for these texts?
6. Did these essays differ from the kinds of essays you normally encounter in your teaching?
7. Are you familiar with the CCCC position statement *Students' Right to Their Own Language*?
8. [If yes: Can you talk a bit about how it influences your teaching?]
9. Has your pedagogical training included any discussion of nonstandard language varieties, or alternative discourses?
10. [If yes: Can you talk a bit about that?]
11. Do you have any experience studying alternative discourses in your own research?
12. [If yes: in what contexts?]
13. How would you describe your own language background?
14. Do you think your language background has any effect on your teaching?
15. [If yes: how so. If no: why not?]
16. How would you describe your writing style?
17. Do you think your writing style has any effect on your teaching?
18. [If yes: how so. If no: why not?]
19. Is there anything you'd like to say that you haven't yet had a chance to talk about?

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FALL 2015 DATA COLLECTION

### Interview 1:

1. How long have you been teaching composition? Does that include classes at other colleges, or secondary school teaching? [If so, how do your experiences at the different schools compare?]
2. When you first started teaching, did you feel prepared? Why/why not?
3. How would you define “Standard English”? Can you provide some examples of Standard English?
4. How would you define Nonstandard English? Can you provide some examples?
5. Do you believe that Standard English is the only variety that is appropriate for academic writing? [If so, why? If not, why not?]
6. Do you believe there is a correct variety of American English? [If so, how would you describe it?]
7. How would you define traditional academic discourse conventions? Can you provide an example?
8. How much does students’ use of Standard English conventions influence your grading?
9. How much does students’ use of traditional academic discourse conventions influence your grading?
10. Can you think of a time when you changed your mind about something in your teaching practice? [If prompt needed: such as assignments, ways of grading, classroom management] [If so, please explain.]
11. Have you ever taken any courses in linguistics? [If yes: what course/courses?]
12. What variety or varieties of American English do you think you use?  
When/where?
13. Who are some of the authors you focus on in your own literary scholarship? Why did you choose these authors?
14. Do you the writers you study have any impact on the way you teach writing? [If so, how?]
15. Do you think it is ever acceptable for professional writers to “break the rules” of writing? [If so, when?]
16. Do you think it is ever acceptable for student writers to “break the rules” of writing? [If so, when?]

17. Do you ever “break the rules” in your own writing? [If yes: can you give an example?]
18. Have you had any teaching experiences that you think are relevant to our discussion? [If yes: can you tell me a little about it?]
19. Is there anything you would like to ask about, or bring up, that you haven’t had a chance to say yet?



## Interview 2:

1. Before I begin asking questions, do you have comments or questions about the texts you read that you would like to start off with?

*First, I would like us to discuss Anson's essay, "Responsive Reading":*

2. Have you ever encountered essays or ideas like Anson's before? [If so: in what context? Do you think they affected the way you respond to student work?]
3. Have you encountered L2 work like Leang's before, in your teaching? [If so: how did you respond to it? Why? Do you think you would do the same thing now?]
4. What kinds of assignments do you think Leang's essay would be an appropriate response to? How do you think you might respond to this essay, if he wrote it as a draft for your class?
5. If Leang turned this in as the final draft of a personal essay—having already made some revisions based on your feedback—what letter grade do you think you would assign? Why?

*Next, I would like to discuss the excerpt from Horner et al.'s article:*

6. In general, what do you think of the authors' proposal? Does it seem like something you would support?
7. [If yes to above]: How do you think you would enact a translingual approach in your teaching practices?
8. [If no to above]: What reservations do you have?

*Finally, I just have some wrap-up questions:*

9. Have you had any teaching experiences that you think are relevant to our discussion? [If yes: can you tell me a little about it/them?]
10. Is there anything you would like to ask about, or bring up, that you haven't had a chance to say yet?

### Interview 3:

1. Before I begin asking questions, do you have comments or questions about the texts you read that you would like to start off with?
2. Have you encountered work like Lisa's before, in your teaching? [If so: how did you respond to it? Why? Do you think you would do the same thing now?]
3. How do you think you might respond to this essay, if Lisa wrote it as a *draft* for your class (assuming that it responds appropriately to the prompt)?
4. If Lisa turned this in as a *final* draft—having already revised based on your comments—what letter grade do you think you would assign? Why?
5. In general, do you agree with Ball and Lardner's assessment of Lisa's essay? Disagree? Or partly agree? Why?
6. Thinking back to the excerpt from Horner et al. we discussed previously, about the "Translingual Approach," do you think that approach is relevant in considering Lisa's essay? [If yes: how? If no: why not?]
7. Before reading this essay, had you ever heard of African-American English? [If yes: in what context(s)? Can you give an example?]
8. Did you learn anything from Ball and Lardner's essay that you found particularly interesting? [If yes: what was it?]
9. Have you had any teaching experiences that you think are relevant to our discussion? [If yes: can you tell me a little about it/them?]
10. Is there anything you'd like to add, or any questions you would like to ask?

#### Interview 4:

1. Before I begin asking questions, do you have comments or questions about the texts you read that you would like to start off with?

*First, I'd like to ask about Young's essay, "Nah, We Straight."*

2. Do you think that "code-meshing" is an effective method for incorporating the vernacular into academic writing? [If yes: how? If no: why not?]
3. Would you advocate for such a method in the English composition classroom? [If so, why? If not, why not?]
4. Do you think that "code-meshing" could be used by writers other than those who speak AAE? [If yes: Who else might benefit from this method?]
5. From reading the essay, do you think that code-meshing is something students need to be explicitly taught or something some writers already do naturally? [Please explain].
6. Do you think Young did any code-meshing in his essay? [If yes: can you give an example?]
7. Have you ever used code-meshing yourself? [If yes: can you give an example?]
8. Have you ever seen code-meshing used in a student essay? [If yes: can you give an example?]

*Next, I'd like to discuss the student essay:*

9. Do you think that Maya uses any code-meshing strategies? [If yes: can you give an example?]
10. If you received this essay as a rough draft, what kinds of feedback do you think you would give Maya?
11. If Maya turned this in as a final draft, after making revisions, what letter grade do you think you would assign? Why?
12. Thinking back to the excerpt from Horner et al. we discussed previously, about the "Translingual Approach," do you think that approach is relevant to Young's article, or Maya's essay? [If yes: how? If no: why not?]
13. Did you learn anything new from the texts that you found particularly interesting?

## Interview 5<sup>93</sup>

1. Why did you agree to participate in this project?
2. We talked in our first interview about how you would define Standard English, and I was wondering if you would mind defining it again.
3. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about how you think about correctness, and the notion of correctness in teaching writing.
4. What about the notion of appropriateness? Is that something that you teach, or talk about?

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<sup>93</sup> This last set of questions was revised slightly from what was originally proposed. The revision came because, following the semi-structured interview method, I discovered that some questions could be eliminated during the final interview to avoid redundancy and interview fatigue; and based on participants' comments on professionalization, I theorized that it would be beneficial to ask briefly about participants' interest in potential future professionalization experiences. The original interview script was: *First, I'd like to ask you some repeats of questions that I asked in earlier interviews. This gives us a chance to discuss if and how your opinions may have changed:*

1. How would you define "Standard English"? Can you provide some examples of Standard English?
2. How would you define Nonstandard English? Can you provide some examples?
3. Do you believe that Standard English is the only variety that is appropriate for academic writing? [If so, why? If not, why not?]
4. Do you believe there is a correct variety of American English? [If so, how would you describe it?]
5. How would you define traditional academic discourse conventions? Can you provide an example?
6. How much does students' use of Standard English conventions influence your grading?
7. How much does students' use of traditional academic discourse conventions influence your grading?
8. Can you think of a time when you changed your mind about something in your teaching practice? [If prompt needed: such as assignments, ways of grading, classroom management] [If so, please explain.]
9. What variety or varieties of American English do you think you use? When/where?
10. Who are some of the authors you focus on in your own literary scholarship? Why did you choose these authors?
11. Do you the writers you study have any impact on the way you teach writing? [If so, how?]
12. Do you think it is ever acceptable for professional writers to "break the rules" of writing? [If so, when?]
13. Do you think it is ever acceptable for student writers to "break the rules" of writing? [If so, when?]
14. Do you ever "break the rules" in your own writing? [If yes: can you give an example?]

*Finally, just a couple wrap-up questions:*

15. Have you had any teaching experiences that you think are relevant to our discussion? [If yes: can you tell me a little about it?]
16. Is there anything you would like to ask about, or bring up, that you haven't had a chance to say yet?

5. Could you talk a little bit about how you think that discourse conventions on the structural level, and the organizational and rhetorical level, should influence grading?
6. Since we've been doing our interviews, have you noticed any changes in the way you grade or comment on papers, or think about student writing?
7. Could you talk a little bit about your responses to the readings. Things that you agreed with, things that you didn't agree with, or that bothered you?
8. If there were like a continuing education opportunity, or sort of professionalization workshop about these issues we've been discussing, is that something that you think you would be interested in participating in?
9. What would be some incentives for you to participate in it, and what would be some roadblocks?
10. Is there anything you'd like to add that you haven't had a chance to say yet?