

Book Review

Translingual Practice: Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations

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This book unveils the vital notion of translingual practice, the premise of which is the dexterity of multilingual speakers and writers to negotiate language differences so as to assert their agency and positionality. It offers a thought-provoking discussion about how the richness of one's language repertoires, cultures, and rhetorical traditions can be a useful resource for meaning-making and negotiation in a global contact zone. Drawing a perspective from critical pedagogy, this book also deconstructs the much extolled current linguistic models such as multilingualism, World Englishes, global Englishes, English as a lingua franca, and English as an international language, showing that they are ideological constructs which ought to be critically interrogated. The book adopts an orientation that language is a dynamic, protean and emergent entity.

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1. Book Review

Scholars in the field of applied linguistics has assiduously invested in researching the role of the English language as a language of education, politics, and economy, often bludgeoning teachers and students with such theoretical models as World Englishes, English as a lingua franca, and global Englishes. While these models have helped generate useful insights for the English language pedagogy, they have been alleged of operating under the monolingualist paradigm (see for example, Pennycook 2014).

This book attempts to redirect our attention to a more egalitarian linguistic practice known as translingual practice –an orientation that acknowledges and respects one's agency and personal knowledge in negotiating language diversity. Under this orientation, the construction of linguistic knowledge from one's positionality and agency is highly encouraged.

Divided into ten chapters, this book adheres to the tenet that diversity is “the norm in the study of English” (p.75). In the first chapter, Canagarajah clarifies the new-fangled notion of translingual orientation by distinguishing it from the dominant monolingual orientation. What is so distinctive between these two orientations, as he further elucidates, lies in the fact that the

former sees communication as both “transcends individual languages...and words and involve diverse semiotic resources and ecological affordances” (p. 6). Some important constructs used throughout the book such as *community*, *native/non-native*, *practices*, *products*, and *shared norms* are also explicated.

Chapter two *Theorizing Translingual Practice* offers an assessment of the limitations of monolingual orientation, and then continues to theorize the emergent perspective –translingual practice. Unlike the monolingual orientation which sees language as a set of predetermined and autonomous entities, translingual practice views language as the by-product of peoples’ engagements in everyday communicative practices. In their engagements, they align themselves with other people, objects, and ecological resources. Thus, translingual orientation is grounded on the practice-based perspective.

Chapter three *Recovering Translingual Practice* provides a historical perspective of the translingual traditions that had long been in existence in precolonial East and premodern West. This chapter provides evidence that translingual practices are not contemporary activities carried out by modern people.

In chapter four *English as Translingual*, the author revisits the current prevalent models such as World Englishes, English as an International Language, and English as a Lingua Franca, and offers a critique of their underlying assumptions. Accusing these models as still clinging to the norms that promote uniformity and sharedness in communicative practices, Canagarajah calls for the redefinition of English as translingual, suggesting that success in communication does not depend on the unified perspective of language norm, but rather on the diversity of the norm.

Chapter five *Translingual Negotiation Strategies* describes several strategies employed by translinguals to co-construct meaning in interactions where there is an absence of shared understanding among the participants. Using a conversation analysis method, the author manages in unraveling different strategies of translingual negotiation. They include *envoicing*, *recontextualization*, *interactional*, and *entextualization*.

Chapter six *Pluralizing Academic Writing* addresses issues related to the possibilities of mixing (or as the author terms it “code-meshing”) diverse linguistic codes in academic writing with the production of hybrid texts as the eventual goal. To convince the readers that meshing the codes is possible in academic writing, the author provides a compelling illustration of a writing penned by a multilingual scholar Geneva Smitherman, who was able to represent her voices and agency in academic writing. Such a code-meshing practice, as the author passionately argues, does not reflect a dysfunctional practice.

In chapter seven *Negotiating Translingual Literacy*, the author begs for difference in conceiving the notion of literacy. Instead of understanding literacy as self-standing and autonomous, we are under the translingual practice orientation compelled to view literacy as always subject to negotiation. Such an orientation “treat the texts as co-constructed in time and space” (p.127). To illustrate the importance of such a shift, the author, drawing from classroom ethnography, shows how a multilingual student negotiated the code-meshed texts in academic writing in their attempt to make meaning.

Chapter eight *Reconfiguring Translocal Spaces* centers on translingual practices from a macro-level context by taking into account the import of such constructs as power, identities, and language ideologies, all of which are always negotiated in translocal spaces. Drawing from the Blommaert’s model of scale, the author analyzes the use of English resources brought by the multilingual migrants in the contact zone, and reveals that these migrants adopt different strategies for voice and intelligibility in their interaction.

In chapter nine, *Developing Performative Competence*, the author redefines the notion of proficiency from the translingual perspective, arguing that what makes translinguals able to achieve communicative success is not their grammatical competence as has been theorized in the Chomskyan model, but their *performative competence*. The latter competence includes the ability of translingual in aligning themselves with diverse semiotic resources surrounding them.

The final chapter *Toward a Dialogical Cosmopolitanism* addresses the implications of translingual practice for cosmopolitan relations. Canagarajah asserts that translingual orientation is in tune with the *dialogical cosmopolitanism* model in that both are not “given, but is achieved in situated interaction, is based on mutual collaboration, with an acceptance of everyone’s difference” (p. 196).

With the dominance and power of the English language ideology seeping into literacy pedagogy and scholarship, this book is a must read. It casts light into how translinguals employ diverse appropriating and resistant communicative strategies to bring their voices and agency. It also reflects an intellectual movement that promotes what Horner, NeCamps, and Donahue (2011) calls “translingual norm”. Evidence drawn from case studies help to strengthen the arguments put forward by the author. More importantly, they can inspire readers to challenge linguistic and cultural determinism.

One reservation about this book is despite the author’s claim that translingual practice is not an esoteric concept, it takes a great feat to fathom it, let alone applying it academic writing classrooms where the English monolingual ideology is still pervasive. Further, without solid background knowledge in studies related to post-modernism and critical pedagogy, the reader has to wrestle with technical terms and metaphors the author employs in illuminating his analysis.

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