The Translingual Challenge: Boundary Work in Rhetoric & Composition, Second Language Writing, and WAC/WID

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Abstract: This article applies the perspective of "boundary work," an approach originating in science studies, to relations between the disciplines of Second Language Writing (SLW) and rhetoric and composition (R&C), especially to controversies surrounding the concept of translingualism. Boundaries both separate and connect, a dual potential to exacerbate tensions or to create opportunities for cooperation. Translingualism has sometimes been regarded by R&C as a radical innovation and by SLW as a distracting novelty, but a closer exploration shows both common historical roots and shared contemporaneous parallels in disciplines such as applied linguistics and second language acquisition. For WAC/WID, the translingual challenge may lead to a deconstruction of the L1/L2 binary and to the further rhetorization of correctness, as we find ways to help faculty help students negotiate language choices within a context of acceptance of their full linguistic repertoire and empowerment of their writerly choices.

Robert Frost's (1969) poem "Mending Wall" famously suspends itself between two repeated and contradictory principles: "Good fences make good neighbors" and "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." In my first two sections, I want to talk about how two disciplinary neighbors, rhetoric and composition (R&C) and second language writing (SLW), define their relationship, how they patrol the borders between their territories. Specifically, I'll focus on the question of why R&C, despite its tradition as an English-only monolingualist discipline, has in recent years embraced "the translingual approach" (Horner et al., 2011)—witness the many sessions at recent conferences in the field with variations on "translingual" in the title—while some in SLW have resisted translingualism as irrelevant or even antithetical to its own disciplinary interests—witness the "Open Letter" (Atkinson et al., 2015). This results in the paradoxical situation of a self-described "transdisciplinary field" (Matsuda, 2013) attempting to draw firm institutional, pedagogical, and disciplinary boundaries around itself, while a field that has been accused of being notoriously slow to change appears enthusiastic in accommodating its theories and research, if not yet its pedagogies, to the translingual challenge. Why, that is, does SLW apparently believe that good fences make good disciplinary neighbors, while R&C, if not quite ready to tear down the wall, at least has ceased to love it?

After this initial discussion of disciplinary responses, ranging from informed or uninformed enthusiasm to ambivalent or resistant boundary work, my third section will examine how translingualism can be and has been placed in its historical context and in relation to parallel contemporaneous developments in fields such as critical applied linguistics. My concluding section will turn to the question of how an inherently transdisciplinary field like WAC/WID, in its pedagogy and its professional development and its research, can respond to the translingual challenge.

The Contradictory Impulses of Boundary Work

Who is the WAC/WID persona in Frost's "Mending Wall"? Are we the neighbor who believes that "Good fences make good neighbors," having inherited a traditional ritual of bonding through separation? This position implies that boundaries are a crucial means of creating social identities, of defining relationships, of removing sources of stress that might stem from ambiguity, and that they are therefore well worth the joint work required to maintain them. WID traditionally defers to "faculty in the disciplines" and defines the WID role as helping those faculty to articulate their disciplinary values and to develop assignments that implement their disciplinary genres, conventions, and epistemology.

Or is WAC/WID better located closer to the poem's speaker, who is more skeptical and ironic, musing that "Something there is that doesn't love a wall"? From this perspective, boundaries are not natural; in fact they seem to go against the nature of things; they tend to collapse themselves. The speaker comes to regard them as "Oh, just another outside game," though also expressing a wish—"If I could put a notion in his head..."—to lead the neighbor to a more nuanced understanding of boundaries. WAC has always been tasked with crossing departmental boundaries in search of a unified writing curriculum, and WAC professionals find their work routinely intersecting with faculty and courses in multiple disciplines.

To move from Frost's poetic metaphor to a more academic one, we find a similar ambivalence in the concept of "boundary work," which in science studies originally (Gieryn, 1983) addressed ideological definitions of science vs. non-science, that is, a way that scientists patrol the borders of the scientific domain and exclude what they see as not scientific–e.g., creation science, various types of pseudo-science. Fuller (1991), pertinently for us, expanded the notion of boundary work to include negotiations between adjoining social science disciplines, noting that "disciplinary boundaries provide the structure needed for a variety of functions, ranging from the allocation of cognitive authority and material resources to the establishment of reliable access to some extra-social reality" (p. 302).

Put that way, boundary work for Gieryn and Fuller is an act of group self-assertion, often in response to an underlying anxiety: you don't need to say that something is unscientific unless you're worried that someone will think that it is. This kind of boundary work seems defensive and exclusionary, a power move designed to create an in-group and an out-group. But that's not the whole story. Noting that another strain in the boundary work literature focuses on boundary objects (Star & Griesemer, 1989), boundary organizations (Guston, 1999), boundary concepts (Klein, 1996), and boundary discourses (Shackley & Wynne, 1996), Riesch (2010) identifies a persistent duality in the idea that echoes Frost's poetic meditations on good fences and bad walls:

> A group or a group member can draw a rhetorical boundary that excludes other groups' claims to competence in their area, thus exerting or trying to exert some sort of control over their epistemic authority. In the other tradition a boundary is seen as a given division between social groups that, while working together, view the world and the object of their collaboration in fundamentally different ways. In this view a boundary is not something created to establish epistemic authority, but rather something to be overcome to create scientific cooperation. (p. 456)

Boundaries, that is, not only exclude but can also connect, and the most fruitful areas for cooperation may lie specifically in the most contested boundary zones. From this perspective, putting up boundaries and taking them down are not opposites but rather simultaneous and interrelated, as mirror twins, aspects of the same action. The apparent act of raising fences can actually be seen as an invitation to collaborate–and perhaps the reverse as well. We may see boundary work of various kinds, complex gestures of rejection and inclusion, ambivalent acceptance and conflicted resistance, often simultaneous, in the responses of several disciplines to the translingual challenge.

I. "Something there is that doesn't love a wall": The Translingual Challenge

It's been seven years now since the publication of "Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach," an "opinion" piece in College English that now serves as a *locus classicus* of a term that has become common–if sometimes misunderstood–usage in fields ranging from rhetoric and composition (R&C) to second language writing (SLW) to applied linguistics and beyond. My intention here is to briefly trace the sources and development of this term within R&C contexts before considering it in relation to SLW and other disciplines.

The Translingual Statement: Linguistics and Ideology

The translingual approach actually has at least two major components. One is a theory about relations between languages, especially about language difference, about language boundaries. The other component includes an ideological imperative, because of the pervasive yet often-unconscious cultural assumption of monolingualism that must be countered. Translingual pedagogy needs to be built on both the language theory and the ideology, a combination of increased knowledge and raised consciousness.

The original statement of a translingual approach (Horner et. al., 2011) succinctly summarizes the underlying language theory: "A translingual approach takes the variety, fluidity, intermingling, and changeability of languages as statistically demonstrable norms around the globe" (305). Or, rather than a summary, perhaps this is better described as a brief allusion to a complex of existing theories–not original to this translingual approach but rather building on decades of work in critical applied linguistics and other fields. This formulation points toward the investigation of a state of translinguality, presented as "statistically demonstrable norms": that is, future studies of translinguality will aspire to produce verifiable research about languages and language difference. Translinguality as a questioning of linguistic boundaries situates comfortably among developments that have influenced a wide range of disciplines ranging from applied linguistics to anthropology to literary theory across the past forty years. One formulation attributes the recent feverish interest in "linguistic multiplicity" to the influence of

> postmodern, poststructuralist, and postcolonial thought as seen in such notions as multiplicity, heterogeneity, fluidity, hybridity, and constructedness, which expand and blur the fixed boundaries of the social and linguistic categories that are defined in an essentialist binary logic in the previous modernist paradigm (Kubota, 2016, p. 2).

From "post-" to "trans-": the "post" prefix suggests both an awareness of the limitations of a phenomenon and at the same time the condition of remaining trapped within its horizon. Yildiz (2012) suggests the term "postmonolingual" for "a field of tension in which the monolingual paradigm continues to assert itself and multilingual practices persist or reemerge." The translingual, as an aspiration, would signal that we are ready to go beyond the monolinguist ideology that coincided historically with the simultaneous rise of the nation-state.

The second main component of the Translingual Statement involves a shift to an ideological presentation of translingualism, which

> confronts, as well, the practice of invoking standards not to improve communication and assist language learners, but to exclude voices and perspectives at odds with those in power. It treats standardized rules as historical codifications of language that inevitably change through dynamic processes of use. A translingual approach proclaims that writers can, do, and must negotiate standardized rules in light of the contexts of specific instances of writing. (305)

Here the focus is on a translingual analysis, with strong echoes of Foucault and Bourdieu, of the power relations inherent in a monolingualist paradigm. The key word here is "negotiate," a term which will recur again and again in discussions of translingual approaches, introducing a fully rhetorical aspect to linguistic change. It is not only that the "rules" of standardized languages shift and change over time, on a macro level, as power relations within and between language communities shift and change–any modern linguistic theory would agree with this much. But translingualism insists on the agency of each individual writer in each rhetorical situation as participating in that process (Lu & Horner, 2013), if only as one in trillions of such micro-negotiations in every act of language every second of every day all over the world. It's not an either/or matter of choosing whether to follow or to defy the rules of a standardized language, but rather of finding strategies for situating oneself, as a writer, within the already shifting and already malleable repetitions and deviations that constitute the network of differences that form what we call language(s) or dialect(s) or variet(ies) —or subsets such as registers or disciplines.

Beyond the Translingual Statement: Developments in Rhetoric and Composition

It needs to be acknowledged that until relatively recently, the R&C/SLW boundary work was largely carried on from only one side, as though Frost's speaker headed out on a cold day to mend the wall, only to find that his neighbor never showed up. One might even argue that the development of SLW as a distinct discipline was necessitated by the historical inattention on the part of "mainstream" composition researchers and instructors to the needs of non-monolingual students and the persistent concerns raised by researchers in fields related to SLW. Alarms were persistently raised from the SLW side of the fence, but R&C practitioners preferred to sleep in.

Until translingualism woke them up. The translingual moment has been fueled not only by its intrinsic usefulness as a language theory and an anti-monolingualist ideology, but has benefitted as well from a slow accretion of previous work. The cries in the wilderness, on both sides of the fence, reached a critical mass so that they could finally be more widely heard—and suddenly energetic compositionists rushed to the disciplinary barricades, and in fact ran right through them, skipping the part about good fences making good neighbors.

The original translingual statement has proved very popular, especially in R&C circles, as is quite natural as it was signed by some 50 prominent scholars, including two of the future authors of the Open Letter. One criticism from the Open Letter that strikes me as justified is the idea that some of the recent conference presentations with "translingual" in the title are grabbing on to a popular buzzword, rather than engaging with the underlying ideas about language, or wrestling with the complex pedagogical and theoretical issues raised by its ideological perspective. Sometimes it seems that a single citation of (Horner et al., 2011) is seen as a sufficient flashing of translingual credentials. This is not the fault of the statement itself, which in its extensive bibliography is careful to provide a trail of breadcrumbs into its transdisciplinary sources, and which is clearly labeled as an "opinion" piece (as is the Open Letter). The translingual statement, that is, was meant to be a beginning of a conversation, not the last word.

But it's not as though there has not been extensive further development. Two of the co-authors of the statement followed up with a careful delineation of both the roots of translingualism, and its pedagogical application to a student text (Lu & Horner, 2013), focusing most urgently on the issue of agency:

> 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…, [and] marks reading and writing and their teaching as what Pennycook terms mesopolitical action: action that mediates the "micro" and the "macro" in light of the

specificity of relations, concerns, motives, and purposes demanding meaningful response in individual writers' past, present, and future lives (p. 591)

Lu and Horner position writers, including student writers of any linguistic background, as active and purposeful negotiators of meaning. The same authors (and their co-editors Juan Guerra and Anis Bawarshi) also edited a 2016 special issue of the same journal that had earlier published both the Translingual Statement and the Open Letter, providing a forum for exploration of the various ways that explorations of translingualism can be "put to work" in various specific contexts (Lu & Horner, 2016).

Perhaps most importantly, Suresh Canagarajah has both developed, under the rubric of "translingual practices," a highly nuanced definition of translingualism in his own work (2013a) and also offered a forum for researching its applications in an edited volume (Canagarajah, 2013b). The most relevant aspect of the former for the present discussion may be his case for the necessity of the new term, an implicit answer to the suspicion that translingualism is an unnecessary neologism for concepts that could just as easily have been expressed using existing disciplinary language. Translingualism, he argues, must be distinguished not only from monolingualism but from multilingualism as customarily conceived:

> The term multilingual typically conceives of the relationship between languages in an additive manner. This gives the picture of whole languages added one on top of the other to form multilingual competence. This orientation may lead to the misleading notion that we have separate cognitive compartments for separate languages with different types of competence for each...Similarly, in society, multilingual often connotes different language groups occupying their own niches in separation from others. What should be clear is that the term multilingual doesn't accommodate the dynamic interactions between languages and communities envisioned by translingual. (2013a, p. 7)

In the context of Canagarajah's enhanced definition, the scholars in his edited volume (Canagarajah, 2013b) fan out across the globe, and back in history, to find examples of translingual practice. Translingualism is not positioned as a new phenomenon, but rather as an unavoidable characteristic of language practice of any kind, connecting past and present languaging, the transnational linguistic negotiations of immigrants, as well as multimodal networks of technologies in all centuries, in a single web of language mixture and communicative interaction.

Language Background in Student Populations

So why has translingualism proved so popular in R&C? I think that there are both practical and theoretical answers to that question. The practical attractiveness of translingualism stems from its promises to address the linguistic diversity of today's student bodies on U.S. campuses. As one article puts it: "distinctions between L1 and L2 writing students and classrooms in the U.S. have blurred" (Costino & Hyon, 2011, p. 24). Just how blurry have these distinctions gotten? Table 1 shows a question from "The Linguistic Diversity Project," a study which I conducted at a public urban university—which is, perhaps, an extreme example currently, but, I would argue, a sign of the future everywhere. One of the components was an Education and Language Background Survey, which asked students a variety of questions about what languages they spoke, when and where they learned them, and where and how often they use them now.

Table 1. Linguistic Diversity in Composition at a Public Urban University

Which statement best describes your background?	%
English is the first and only language I have learned.	25.9
I began speaking English as a child and have only a very limited proficiency to speak or to understand in another language or languages.	20.5
I learned English and another language simultaneously as a child.	28.2
I grew up speaking another language but have now been speaking primarily English for more than seven years.	15
I grew up speaking another language and have been speaking primarily English for seven years or less.	10.5
Total	100

Here we see that about 46% of the students are either monolingual English speakers or have only limited proficiency in another language. At the upper end, we see that 26% grew up speaking another language. In the middle are 28% who say that they learned English and another language simultaneously (Hall, 2014a; Hall, 2014b).

All of these students, I want to emphasize, are in the same composition classroom. So when I as instructor stand in front of that room, I really cannot think of myself as an "L1 composition instructor"–I'm excluding at least a third of the class and probably more. Nor can I teach the section as an "L2 compositionist," since that will exclude the roughly one third of the students who are monolingual English speakers. And neither of these labels, or even the two of them put together, constitute an adequate response to the potential challenge of that third in the middle, those students who make significant use of a non-English language in their everyday life, even though they were born in the U.S. In a situation like this, any curricular proposal or placement plan that begins with "put the multilinguals over there and the monolinguals over here" is doomed from the start.

Advocates both within R&C and in disciplines such as SLW had long complained that the field of R&C was founded on and continued to embody principles of monolingualism, and practitioners, unable to deny the accusation and yet not knowing what to do about it, increasingly faced the daily pressure of overwhelming language background diversity in every section of every writing course. Techniques that had been developed in SLW for a pre-sorted population with relatively homogeneous proficiency levels seemed inadequate to the mixed bag of student languages that R&C instructors faced every day. Translingualism promised a new, more inclusive approach to language difference: by raising student consciousness of their language resources and affirming the value of those resources in academic as well as non-academic contexts, instructors could invite students to write with their whole minds and capabilities, not only in a narrow sliver of their communicative repertoires.

Besides placing all students, whether traditionally designated as "L1" or "L2," on a continuum of language identities, possessing various linguistic resources, translingualism is also attractive to R&C pedagogical theories because it envisions students as active rhetorical agents, positioning themselves in relation not only to genres and rhetorical situations, standard issues in R&C pedagogy, but now also in relation to their individual repertoire of language resources which can be brought to bear in their writing, either visibly (as in code meshing, for example) or invisibly (as a text whose final product is apparently "in Standard English" emerges from a hidden translingual process during composition), depending on the assignment and the student's own purpose and identity.

II. "Good Fences Make Good Neighbors": The Ambivalent/Resistant Response of Second Language Writing

Outside of R&C, the discipline that has felt the impact of translingualism most acutely is SLW–and not always in a positive way. Translingualism came along at a time when SLW was undergoing its own internal dialogue about its disciplinary identity, which unavoidably affected, to some degree, its response to the translingual challenge.

Boundary Work in SLW

As a relatively new discipline, SLW needed a tradition of self-conscious examination of its disciplinarity— or its multidisciplinarity or its transdisciplinarity. The scrutiny has been both vertical–tracing "mother disciplines" such as applied linguistics and rhetoric–and horizontal–exploring the relationships with adjacent disciplines such as rhetoric and composition. Back in 2004, an article by Silva and Leki argued that the root difference is that SLW derives a good portion of its parentage from applied linguistics, and thus begins from an empirical base. It values quantitative explanation of linguistic phenomena, advocates an experimental approach, tends to focus on observable linguistic processes, and therefore has the instinct to operate on the microscopic scale. R&C, on the other hand, has its roots in rhetoric and other humanities-based disciplines, and its instinct is to regard writing as an aspect of larger processes such as critical thinking and especially reading. With this more macroscopic focus, it's not surprising that it regards quantification in general, and empirical, microscopic quantification in particular, with suspicion.

For Silva and Leki (2004), persistent disciplinary differences limited the degree to which "L1" and "L2" definitions of writing could ever be reconciled. One disciplinary instinct in SLW is to try to isolate variables in writing, and thus to simplify writing processes in order to make them more observable. The underlying assumption here is that writing is a separable skill that can be studied on its own. Here is a fundamental difference with R&C, where the prevailing approach is that "writing" is not just the production of text per se, but rather just a metonym for a larger complex of literacy skills. From this viewpoint, it would be just as accurate to describe first-year composition as a reading course which uses writing to help students think critically about texts, or as a critical thinking course which uses writing and reading to illuminate thought.

One cannot talk about the discipline of SLW, or its relation to R&C or WAC/WID without considering the work of Paul Kei Matsuda, the most consistent of the SLW voices in the wilderness–and more recently one of the authors of the Open Letter. The Disciplinary Division of Labor model is what some in both disciplines might prefer: each takes a particular slice of the student body, and leaves the other alone. But as Matsuda has frequently pointed out, this arrangement, however superficially convenient, ends up concealing the complexity of our student populations and their relation to college writing (Matsuda, 1998). Matsuda (1999) also discussed a Disciplinary Intersection model, which suggests that there are some overlaps, but ultimately all practitioners may remain securely researching in their own disciplinary niches, contrasting this with a more interdependent "symbiotic" model. But in addressing boundary work between WAC and ESL, Matsuda offers an even more complex Mutually Transformative model (Matsuda & Jablonski, 2000), in which disciplinary boundaries are continually modified and re-negotiated by ongoing interaction.

Matsuda's transdisciplinary vision is stirring but difficult to implement on the ground in actual classrooms. Costino and Hyon (2011) gave it a try, exploring the use of "genre" as a "disciplinary bridge" that would avoid "scare words" in promoting collaborations between "L1 compositionists" and "L2 compositionists" or between "L1 writing specialists" and "L2 writing specialists." On the one hand, this bifurcation in disciplinary descriptions, especially the "L2 compositionist" label, represents what had already been several dynamic decades of research, disciplinary self-definition and self-assertion, and

practical pedagogical application within the field which by then possessed not only its own flagship journal, but its own well-respected international conference. But, on the other hand, do we really want to accept the professional identities of "L1 compositionist," and "L2 compositionist"? In the context of Costino and Hyon's laudable collaboration, perhaps it makes sense because the courses they teach are designed around students who have already been separated according to those labels, and the outcome of their collaboration resulted in the "L1 compositionist" incorporating an L2-style focus on "moves" in the composition of a book review, while the "L2 compositionist" added a more L1-focus on the rhetorical situation in which students were writing, with more attention to their own purposes. So far so good, but does this really provide a model for more large-scale cooperation and collaboration across disciplinary boundaries?

Disciplinary Dialogues and Translingualism

In the same year (2004) in which Silva and Leki published their article describing SLW's inheritance from applied linguistics as empirical and objectivist, Canagarajah (2004) simultaneously came to very different conclusions about influences on applied linguistics, identifying concepts from "poststructuralism, postcolonialism, social constructionism, and feminism [as] now widely shared in the field of applied linguistics" (p. 267). So applied linguistics already had, even then, its own internal boundary work to settle—an empirical approach vs. a "critical" turn in the discipline—and had already begun to pave the road that would lead not only to translingualism, but to a variety of similarly disruptive concepts.

SLW was very much aware of these somewhat contradictory developments and their possible effects on the discipline. As early as 2003, Paul Kei Matsuda described the current state of SLW as a complex stew: "Yet, even as the field matures, its dynamics do not seem to be stabilizing; the intellectual currents seem to be fluctuating more than ever before, and disagreements abound on some of the most fundamental issues" (p. 152). In the same symposium, Canagarajah anticipated some translingual themes by focusing on "multiliteracies" (p. 156), while Harklau pointed to the increasing complexity in the linguistic backgrounds of students on U.S. campuses. Over the next decade, debates about "replication"–a call for SLW to become more like a traditional science–were received skeptically by leaders of the field. Noting that Silva, despite his attraction to an empirical approach, also had noted that "a strong positivistic orientation" was not possible in SLW because of its "inductive basis," Matsuda (2012) characterized SLW as "an issue-oriented interdisciplinary field, not a modernist discipline that sees the world as a neat and orderly place that can be observed without any biases (which is one of the key assumptions behind replication)" (p. 300). SLW leaders had fought hard to establish the discipline as a professional destination for graduate students and new faculty, and as a maturing research field with its own area of study, at the same time that they were cognizant of the limits of (modernist) disciplinarity in a postmodern world.

A 2013 "disciplinary discourse" in *Journal of Second Language Writing* revealed that none of the contributors–key figures in the field–were completely satisfied with the formulation in the title of the journal. Kobayashi and Rinnert (2013), without using the word *translingual*, conclude very much in its spirit "that L2 writing is closely interrelated with writing in other languages, and as such is not a separate entity but part of comprehensive multilingual writing competence." Two contributors, Kubota (2013) and Canagarajah (2013c), structured their contributions by objecting to the field's conception of "language," its structuring of "writing," and the teleological assumption inherent in the "second"-ness of SLW. While Kubota (2013), calling for the "dislimiting" rather than delimiting of SLW, cautiously suggests that a re-naming of the field may be in order after discussion (p. 430), Canagarajah (2013c), in a piece provocatively titled "The End of Second Language Writing?," is the only contributor who mentions translingualism directly, suggesting that along with other recent developments, translingualism will transform "L1 composition" to the point of non-existence, and relegate SLW to the sidelines:

> If the activity of writing is now being understood differently, and new concepts define this activity beyond separate languages, we have to ask if there is any benefit in keeping alive the discipline "second language writing." Soon, our Other— "first language writing"—won't be around, and we'll be left with the ghostly presence of a ''second language writing'' that may not have much practical value. More importantly, when ''second language'' instructors have an opportunity to move to the center of writing studies and contribute to a richer understanding of writing for all students, responding to the move by "first language" teachers and researchers, they might instead ghettoize themselves. (p. 441)

Matsuda (2013), in his response to all this uneasiness, concedes that even the basic definition of SLW as "the study of writing performed by non-native speakers" (Hyland, 2013, p. 426) is "problematic" but concludes that

> Despite its shortcomings, the term second language writing still seems to have much to contribute, especially in institutional and national contexts where second language writers and their allies have not gained adequate institutional recognition. (p. 450)

Matsuda thus concedes that SLW as a conceptual research focus is flawed, while insisting that his defense of it is "not the kind of passive resistance against change that Canagarajah seems to anticipate" (p. 450). Instead he argues that the SLW formulation should be maintained as a means to "institutional recognition" and because of the need for "a proactive call for continued advocacy and activism on behalf of students whom we may broadly refer to as second language writers."

The 2013 disciplinary symposium in JSLW thus ends on an ambivalent note, precariously balanced between arguments for greater engagement with translingualism and other developments in writing pedagogy and critical linguistics, and a perceived need to maintain the material structures of SLW as a means of social advocacy for the language rights of students as well as the resources necessary to address their needs in the classroom. The field thus faced a dilemma: by circling the disciplinary wagons, they risked, as Canagarajah suggested, self-ghettoization and conceding the lead in the investigation of students' language capabilities to R&C, which, partly under the influence of translingualism, was increasingly declining the identity of "L1 composition." But the alternative–to engage with translingualism and other new developments and perhaps even give up the existing name of the field–meant that, in the zero-sum game of academic resource allocation, they risked not only their own institutional perquisites, but more basically would be offering institutions yet another excuse to neglect L2 students, as articulated in the symposium by Ferris (2013), who expressed her frustration with the material conditions under which SLW instructors must operate, in the shadow of reckless admissions policies, inappropriate placement instruments, unproductive curricular structures, and insufficient support services that are out of their control.

Critiques and the Open Letter

SLW thus was poised in a tension between the two competing functions of boundary work: boundaries as delimitation, boundaries as connection. The choice ultimately made by the field is perhaps best embodied in "Clarifying the Relationship between L2 Writing and Translingual Writing: An Open Letter to Writing Studies Editors and Organization Leaders" (Atkinson et al., 2015). This "Open Letter" is a classic example of "good fences make good neighbors" boundary work: it is trying to stake out the fences between SLW and translingualism, and the dispute is largely over professional resources. The Open Letter complains that researchers of SLW topics are being asked by reviewers and editors of journals to incorporate aspects of translingualism in their discussions and their methodologies. They also say that job interviews increasingly include questions about translingualism. But the basic contention of the open letter is that

translingualism is threatening to absorb the territory that SLW has meticulously and with great effort claimed for itself over the past couple of decades. The open letter worries that "translingual writing has not widely taken up the task of helping L2 writers increase their proficiency in what might still be emerging L2s" (p. 384). But not everyone found very much "clarifying" being accomplished in this statement. In the most detailed response to date, Canagarajah (2015), in noting the defensive "territoriality" in the Open Letter, goes on to lament its "isolationist and protectionist" tone.

Matsuda's dreams of uniting SLW and R&C in a mutually transformative manner did not come true as he envisioned them originally. Initially, of course, it was principally R&C that resisted the transformation, still stuck in its monolingualist rut. Throughout the first decade of the new century, SLW appeared to be the more nimble and innovative discipline, perhaps because it was both smaller, in terms of the numbers of its practitioners, and also younger as a discipline, and so more flexible. R&C, with its representatives on every campus and its semi-conscripted navy of adjunct labor, is a much larger ship, slower to turn. But once it finally began to come around–and the prevalence of translingualism in conference panels suggests the degree to which what were once foreign ideas have now become mainstream in R&C–that big ship threatens to swamp all smaller boats.

Now, as the Open Letter testifies, it is SLW that is more openly anxious about shifting disciplinary boundaries. The Open Letter notes that "some L2 scholars have left or are considering leaving CCCC" (p. 385), and informal discussions suggest that others continue to attend but eschew anything with "translingual" in the title. The Open Letter complains that administrators in their hiring decisions, conference organizers in their programming, and journal editors in their assignment of reviews, have been acting as though that long-wished-for merger with R&C might actually have already taken place, with translingualism emerging as an umbrella term for SLW and other approaches to teaching writing in a context of linguistic difference.

If long-time R&C advocates of a more serious approach to language differences in "regular" composition classrooms now are cheered at the prospect of seeing, in the popularity of the translingual approach, tentative signs that these ideas have actually started to take hold in a broader, "mainstream" way, SLW seems to experience this movement toward breaking down barriers between "L1" and "L2" composition less as a mutually beneficial merger and more as a hostile takeover. It is now SLW that does not want to be "mutually transformed," and one can certainly understand that: its leaders and practitioners have worked very hard to establish SLW as a separate discipline, and have made enormous strides in that direction. But the irony is that this disciplinary status has been achieved at the precise moment when the traditional notions of separate disciplines, as of separate languages, are under attack in a movement toward transdisciplinary investigations, and the boundaries seem to be dissolving before our eyes.

Even in the Open Letter, SLW continues to define itself as a "transdisciplinary field" (p. 384), but perhaps the most unfortunate aspect of that statement is that its defensive tone and boundary work rhetoric might lead new researchers and instructors to think of SLW as a walled city, where those inside don't need to connect to the outside, and those on the outside, including those working with translingual approaches, feel excluded. Yet this is not to say that SLW's approach does not make some valid points, though I find these less in the Open Letter itself than, for example, in Matsuda's 2014 article, "The Lure of Translingual Writing," which makes two points that I think are not only correct but crucial. The first is a response to the focus on explicitly transgressive or mixed-language textual practices, as in the Canagarajah anthology. By valorizing texts that code-mesh, for example, advocates of translingualism assume, Matsuda argues,

> that translingual writing is visible—that negotiation is only acknowledged when it results in mixed language use, leaving out the possibility that negotiation may have led the writer to adopt the apparently dominant choice. But in translingual writing the process of negotiating assumptions about language is more important than the product. (pp. 480-481)

The dichotomy of product and process is, of course, a foundational tenet of composition pedagogy, deployed here to show an inconsistency. But Matsuda also points to a crucial direction for future research either within or outside of the translingual paradigm: that much translingual activity is invisible, but that doesn't make it any less real. Any time a person with multiple languages or dialects in their communicative repertoire—i.e. anybody at all—sits down to write, or for that matter stands up to speak, all of their resources are at least potentially active and implicated in the result. This is also, and perhaps even more crucially, true with regard to reading and listening, falsely described as "passive" activities, but important future areas for translingual research.

There's plenty of room within the existing disciplinary discourses of SLW to affirm a more connective version of boundary work that sees translingualism not as a threat to disciplinary identity but as part of a broader transdisciplinary field. Belcher (2013) had called for "a wider lens" for SLW, moving away from an over-emphasis on college writers, and turning toward K-12, adult writers, and EFL contexts. And Matsuda concludes his 2014 article with an appeal to transdisciplinary dialogue, in a continuation of his earlier models:

> In writing studies, the knowledge of existing research from other fields seems to come indirectly through translingual writing scholarship, a problematic trend because other fields tend to be partially and sometimes inaccurately represented. To develop a full appreciation for insights related to language differences and to incorporate these insights into scholarship and pedagogy, all writing scholars and teachers must develop a broader understanding of various conversations that are taking place—inside and outside the field. (p. 483)

Certainly in a field like composition, with its huge part-time labor force, much of the dissemination of research is going to be filtered through developments within rhetoric and composition, as presented in the (often scarce) professional development opportunities, and this seems unavoidable. But it's also inarguable that the "understanding of various conversations that are taking place" is crucial for R&C, for SLW and for WAC/WID. To quote Robert Frost again:

> "Men work together," I told him from the heart,
> "Whether they work together or apart."
> — "The Tuft of Flowers"

III. "If I Could Put a Notion in His Head": Contextualizing Translingualism

Every boundary has two sides, at least, and while I have thus far focused on boundary work carried on from the SLW side of the fence, Christine M. Tardy (2017) —both a signatory to the translingual statement and a co-author of the Open Letter—in responding to a new collection of articles on translingual pedagogy, suggests that R&C practitioners, under the umbrella of translingualism, have been engaging in some boundary work of their own:

> Somewhat surprisingly, the recent interest in translingualism among compositionists has not brought on serous engagement with related work in applied linguistics (including the fields of second language writing, World Englishes, and second language acquisition), but instead decades of relevant research, theory, and practice are routinely ignored or dismissed as traditional or monolingualist. (p. 182)

Tardy titles her response "a plea for transdisciplinary scholarship," and her call for situating translingualism within multiple scholarly traditions of language study strikes me as both a perfectly

reasonable request and a nearly impossible one, given not only the sheer volume of available research and approaches but also the difficulty of escaping from the epistemological assumptions of one's own discipline. Yet we must find ways of jump-starting that conversation, in order to prevent discipline-based misunderstandings, to facilitate collaborative projects across disciplinary lines, and to foster future transdisciplinary syntheses. In this space I can only indicate a few possible directions for facilitating that conversation, especially for those who are, like me, coming at these issues from a WAC/WID orientation.

Historical Roots of Translingualism

Translingualism, while it may be the new kid on the block in WAC/WID circles, did not arise ex nihilo, nor does it exist in isolation in its contemporary circumstances. If, within the R&C context and beyond, translingualism has already demonstrated more staying power than an intellectual flavor of the month, that is because of its deep historical roots in SLW, applied linguistics, SLA, and related fields.

The original Translingual Statement (Horner et al., 2011) included an extensive bibliography, which can stand as a historical representation of what the authors and signatories of that statement saw as their key predecessors, as of 2011, in the fields of SLW, applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and related disciplines. From a WAC/WID perspective, Zawacki and Cox (2014) present a narrative of gradual influence from research in all the above fields to WAC/WID.

The term "translingual" has been profitably employed in the context of literary study. Studies of literary translingualism in China (Liu, 1995), in Africa and the West (Kellman, 2000) intersect with the research impetus of Canagarajah's edited collection (2013b) to situate translingualism not only as a postmodern phenomenon or a product of 21st-century mobility and technology, but rather as a ubiquitous historical phenomenon connected to the origins of language and literature.[1]

In second language acquisition (SLA), Vivian Cook's (1992, 2003) conception of "multicompetence" in the 1990s to early 2000s provides perhaps the most direct precursor to the translingual approach–though Cook was mostly not talking about writing, at that time not a front-row priority in SLA. But multicompetence broke down the idea that languages could be kept separate within the individual speaker; rather, they affect each other, and, do not stay in silos or walled-off systems; a bilingual does not reside in "two solitudes" (Cummins, 2008). Crucially, the influence could move both ways: not only did the L1 affect the L2, but the L2 affected the L1 (Cook, 2003). Cook's concept of multicompetence was later re-formulated by Joan Kelly Hall, An Cheng, and Matthew T. Carlson (2006) as a much more dynamic and usage based view of language, a model with important implications for WAC/WID (Hall & Navarro, 2011).

Pennycook's 2008 essay on "Translingual English" adds a sociolinguistic complement to multicompetence theory's focus on the individual language user. Monolingualism as an ideology has always had both a micro dimension—the expectation that one individual would speak only one language—and a macro dimension, in which a single language is seen as an indispensable unifying factor in a nation-state. Pennycook instead urges a transnational/translingual approach, a

> move towards an understanding of the relationships among language resources as used by certain communities (the linguistic resources users draw on), local language practices (the use of these language resources in specific contexts), and language users' relationship to language varieties (the social, economic and cultural positioning of the speakers). This is, consequently, an attempt to move away from nation-based models of English and to take on board current understandings of translingual practices across communities other than those defined along national criteria. (p. 304)

For Pennycook, translingualism arises from transnationalism, or, more specifically, from moving beyond the equation of one nation / one language. Language practices are not limited to one geographic location; across the globe, languages are on the move.

The Multi/Plural/Trans Turn: Parallel Contemporaneous Developments

If translingualism has multiple roots in the past, it also has multiple fellow travelers in the present, as part of a broader intellectual movement–or perhaps several movements–across all fields involved in language study, and in society at large. From the perspective of applied linguistics, Kubota (2016), in describing what she calls "the multi/plural turn," defined as research "which focuses on the plurality, multiplicity, and hybridity of language and language use to challenge a traditional paradigm of understanding linguistic practices in various contexts" (p. 2), captures something of the breadth of these recent developments, even if at times we seem to be drowning in a sea of neologisms: "multilingualism, plurilingualism, world Englishes, English as a lingua franca, codemeshing, metrolingualism translingual approach, translanguaging, multiliteracies and hybridity" (p. 2).[2]

Kubota (2016) locates the translingual approach as one among many examples of "the multi/pluri turn." If R&C–and, for that matter, SLW–sees this change more provincially as the "translingual turn," it is still useful to see that it does not stand isolated as a deviation from current developments in language study more generally, but rather that it is another manifestation–perhaps the local manifestation in college writing pedagogy—of a much wider and pervasive transformation in the way that languages are conceptualized and studied.

Thus what is at stake in the R&C/SLW disagreements over definitions of writing and writing pedagogy is less a quarrel between neighbors and more indicative of a fundamental rift that cuts across several disciplines related to language research. Canagarajah (2013a) provides a different list of transdisciplinary phenomena that are parallel with or at least bear a strong family resemblance to translingualism:

> In composition: translingual writing, codemeshing, and transcultural literacy;
> In new literacy studies: multiliteracies, continua of biliteracy, and hetero-graphy;
> In sociolinguistics: fused lects, ludic Englishes and metrolinguistics ,poly-lingual languaging,
> and fragmented, multilingualism;
> In applied linguistics: translanguaging, dynamic bilingualism and pluriliteracy, plurilingualism,
> and third spaces. (p. 9)[3]

In both of these examples of connective boundary work, translingualism is positioned neither as a stand-alone revolutionary paradigm, nor as a provincial development within R&C, but rather as part of a broader transdisciplinary wave of critical approaches to language difference. If some R&C conference goers have responded to translingualism as a shiny new toy, and some SLW stalwarts have seen it as a threatening interloper from outside, Kubota and Canagarajah recontextualize translinguality as neither of these. It didn't come out of nowhere, but rather is connected to what is going on in multiple disciplines, and requires application to those disciplines to fully understand it.

The movement of re-contextualization may be seen as an example of boundary work in its more positive, collaborative sense, a move toward articulating a transdisciplinary nexus where multiple perspectives and multiple disciplines are involved in trying to unravel a complex phenomenon. For R&C, this contextualization of translingualism entails the burden and the opportunity of immersion in related research in other fields, answering Tardy's call for a transdisciplinary approach. For SLW, it makes translingualism harder to ignore, once it is conceived not as an invasive species hatched in R&C, but rather as a phenomenon that fits rather comfortably into the ongoing development of disciplines from

which SLW has long claimed descent and continuing relation. For WAC/WID, it raises the question of how to respond, however belatedly, to the translingual challenge.

IV. "Oh, Just Another Outside Game": Translingual WAC/WID Pedagogy and Research

WAC/WID has recently made some serious approaches to the scholarship in second language writing, from calls for transformative collaboration (Wolfe-Quintero & Sagade, 1999; Matsuda & Jablonski, 2000; Johns, 2001; Hall, 2009) to two previous special issues of *Across the Disciplines* and an associated edited volume (Johns, 2005; Cox & Zawacki, 2011; Zawacki & Cox, 2014). Nevertheless, the field has not yet fully engaged with the questions raised by a translingual approach to language difference. Translingualism, as we've seen, may be contextualized as a subset or example of a broader "turn" away from the idea of languages as discrete boxes, or separate systems, that do not touch or influence each other. At the macro level, translingualism points toward the idea that the edges of languages are contested territory, contact zones. At the micro level of individual idiolect, the translingual turn insists that all the languages a person knows can be active in the present moment of reading or writing, that all the components of one's complete communicative repertoire are, at least potentially, simultaneously in play in a mutually re-enforcing manner. WAC/WID theory and practice needs to be attentive to both the macro- and micro-levels of language change and interaction.

Translingual WAC/WID Pedagogy and Research

For WAC/WID in its professional development capacity for classroom faculty, the most obvious pedagogical application of a translingual approach is in responding to student writing. At one level, translingualism simply tells us not to obsess about "errors" in grammar or usage. If this were all, that would be very old news, both in WAC and in the R&C community, where it has long been standard practice, or at least standard policy, to focus first on higher order concerns and a student's own purpose in writing. This approach to feedback and assessment has not always been evenly applied when it came to "second language" writers, however, and so WAC/WID professionals may still need to sing the praises of "minimal marking" to sometimes-skeptical instructors in disciplinary courses.

A revised WAC/WID pedagogy incorporating response and revision principles needs to go beyond a reactive translingualism. An instructor's open-minded approach, in terms of feedback and evaluation, to whatever language variations students spontaneously inject into their writing, is not enough. Of course many of these spontaneous variations will be unintentional–they were trying for "Standard English" and missing the target. Of course students don't see themselves as having power to negotiate rhetorically in writing, and of course they don't see their dialectal variations or their non-English languages as resources of strength that they can draw upon. Of course they are not chomping at the bit to code mesh, or to experiment in other ways with bringing their full communicative repertoire to bear on their academic written work. They have spent their whole lives within a culture, including but not limited to a school culture, based on pervasive yet unexamined assumptions of monolingualism. It is our responsibility as instructors to make sure that, at the very least, students come to see those assumptions *as* assumptions, and not as immutable facts. They need to be aware, at minimum, that on a global and historical basis monolingualism is the exception rather than the rule, that numerically "native" English speakers are a minority. And if English—or any other language—is not owned by its native speakers, then all our students, including "L2" students, are potential agents of change in its structure and its usage, sentence by sentence, word by word, every time they write or speak.

What students need from WAC/WID instructors is permission to see their multiple languages as a possible resource, and encouragement to explore that resource. This certainly doesn't mean that our

assignments should mandate code meshing, or that the subject matter of every course becomes a seminar on sociolinguistics, which would be a negation of WAC/WID principles. But writing to learn includes learning that takes place with any language, and instructors must understand that all student writing emerges from a complex behind-the-scenes interaction of diverse language resources. Proactive translingual pedagogy will need to ask students to think about their complete communicative repertoire, and how it relates, or how they want it to relate, to their writing, including but not limited to their academic writing. The key term here is "think about" their language goals, because if we just ask them once, they're likely to recite their indoctrination, that they want to speak and write in "Standard English," because that's what they've repeatedly been told to want.

Deconstructing the L1/L2 Binary and the Rhetorization of Correctness

WAC/WID needs to question descriptions of how a "first language" (L1) is said to relate to a "second language" (L2), or for that matter, a third. For in what does this "1-ness" of "L1" consist, and the "2-ness" of "L2"? Is it as simple as 1 to 2? The basic distinction between L1 and L2 is described as chronological, as in the common survey question, "what is the first language you learned?" But it seldom remains that simple. We are permanently impressed, the assumption is, by the childhood experience of the L1, which becomes central to a narrative of origin and of essence.

Translingualism questions the separation of languages. Therefore, it calls into question the role of the first language as origin. It deconstructs, as well, the teleological role of the L2 as 'target" or destination. But most of all, it questions the road between L1 and L2, it takes up residence in the ambiguous space of continuous journey, and it insists that this in-betweenness is not a temporary condition while learning, but rather reflects an essential ambiguity in our concepts of language in general, and therefore of "second language," and therefore of writing in all one's languages. The "target language," that is, becomes a moving target, a negotiable target, a rhetoricized target.

One way of thinking of translingualism is as a rhetorization of language "correctness," or rather as a recognition that "correctness" is already a rhetorical category, and not a purely linguistic one. A standardized variety of a language describes a particular configuration of writer, audience, and text that has been normalized through social processes, not an inevitable or eternal structure. Canagarajah (2015) has suggested that "what translingual pedagogies favor is deconstructing Standard English to make students aware that it is a social construct" (p. 425). Linguists of all kinds, including those in SLW, have long recognized that Standard English has been constructed over time, by groups of people; it has not been discovered as a law, or as a pre-existing structure, and therefore it can be un-made, changed, by groups of people operating over time–and that in fact, it inevitably will be re-made, is being re-made from moment to moment even as I write this sentence. A translingual approach to writing pedagogy, and to instructor professional development, needs to emphasize this contingent quality of Standard English, because this conception of dynamic standardization, while uncontroversial in almost all areas of language study, is not widely shared in other disciplines, where instructors may still seek to send students who are writing with an accent elsewhere–to the Writing Center, to the ESL program, anywhere except the WAC/WID classroom itself. One of our jobs as writing professionals is to help both WAC faculty and students reach the consciousness that the particular rhetorical configuration that we call standardized correctness is not written in stone but rather is subject to trillions of micro-negotiations every day, based on the interactions, the rhetorical and linguistic choices, made by speakers and writers all over the world.

Negotiation and Empowerment

It is vital that students understand, both intellectually and viscerally, that they are among those negotiators, those makers of language, that they are co-owners of English, not just renters. Just because they speak English as a second language, it does not mean that they are second-class speakers of English.

But they enter our classrooms already having absorbed the cultural message that a language is owned by its native speakers, and part of our job, in teaching students to write in a second or for that matter in any language, is helping them to develop a critical consciousness of what that enterprise really entails. Students, it is true, may express their desire to master Standard English (and only Standard English) because they can perfectly well read the cultural semiotics that associate a particular register of English with prestige and status. But students' attraction to the "Standard" needs to be contextualized, and if the important task of helping students to understand the power relationships inherent in current cultural beliefs about language difference is not addressed in the writing classroom, it probably will never be done at all. The result would be that students regard themselves as passive recipients of a language which will always remain somewhat foreign to them, rather than as one of the billions of active shapers of the language.

Negotiations, of course, are seldom between exact equals, and it would be foolish to underestimate the continuing power of monolingualist ideology or to assert that the hegemony of Standard English can be lightly defied with impunity. Even an established scholar like Canagarajah (2006) remains cautious about how he introduces elements of code-meshing and other translingual practices into his academic prose. But recognition of a power differential does not mean that no negotiation is possible, nor that it is pointless to raise consciousness even if, in the end, a student declines to challenge existing rhetorical or linguistic norms in a given text, or embraces these norms as practices, for whatever purposes. Understanding the contingent nature of current standards can nevertheless empower students to greater rhetorical assertiveness even as they continue to operate within the established constraints of a particular situation, because they begin to think of themselves as agents making active choices in real rhetorical situations as they write, rather than simply filling in the blanks of a template or memorizing a book of rules.

Beyond Pedagogy: Translingual Research

The next step is for translingualism in WAC/WID to evolve from an insurgent pedagogical movement, and toward a research agenda located at the intersection of languages, and crossing the boundaries of disciplines. It's not only that instructors should respond to student writing differently, or re-think course learning objectives, or construct syllabi and assignments differently, or even to use translingualism to help ourselves and our students reach a "rhetorical sensibility" (Guerra 2016), crucial and laudable as these all are. Yes, we need to change ourselves and our classroom procedures and our institutional assumptions– but it's not all about us.

Because translinguality is not just an attitude or an approach to be adopted. For many of our students, it is a reality that they have already been living. Translinguality transcends our conceptions, it exists far beyond our classrooms, and it shows itself in all language use, not just in writing.

To move beyond the writing classroom is also to move beyond a fixation on writing to take in students' entire spectrum of language use. Here there is a broad and fascinating tradition of second language reading to study, in which it is now well established that all of a student's languages are inevitably involved in the act of reading (Hornberger, 1989; Wurr, 2003; Walter, 2007; Bernhardt, 2010; Grabe, 2010; Guo & Roehrig 2011; Brevik et al., 2016). Reading is a neglected aspect of study in WAC/WID, as well as in both SLW and R&C, despite the continuing insistence on having students almost always write in relation to assigned or chosen texts. If we are serious that by "writing" we really mean WRT—Writing, Reading, Thinking—then we need to look at how students, of whatever language background, read, how they struggle with reading, how to deepen their close readings and their overall interpretations.

Every student's language use is as individual as their linguistic and cultural background, their experiences, and their aspirations, and in the end each student will have to find a mixture of competencies that works for them. But this opens up a field of study for translingual researchers: how do students deploy their

multiple languages, dialects, competencies, and registers across not only academic but nonacademic situations? How do they deal with the lingering cultural idea that one person/one nation should only have one language? As research into translingualism moves not only beyond writing but beyond reading, we will be able to connect studies of literacy with ongoing research focused on translingual aspects of the speaking/listening spectrum, which nevertheless may have important implications for the study of writing.

Conclusion

We used to think that we knew what "a language" was, and where the borders were between different languages. The translingual critique, building on decades of research in applied linguistics, second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and related disciplines, suggests that those boundaries are not so clear anymore—and that changes everything in all disciplines having to do with language study. It doesn't mean that research based in previous conceptions of language is invalidated, or that there aren't important new insights to be found within the horizon of, for example, SLW. But it does mean that a fundamental shift in one's conception of language will necessitate changes—sometimes profound ones—in one's writing pedagogy. WID professionals need always to keep in mind that good fences make good disciplinary neighbors only so long as both sides are conscious that boundary work is, as Frost puts it, "Oh, just another kind of outside game." Perhaps we should call it boundary play. We need to remind ourselves that disciplinary boundary walls are only scaffolding put up for a particular purpose, to illuminate some aspect of reality that might remain hidden if we couldn't observe from that angle. We need to remember that these disciplinary walls are artificial, temporary, metaphorical, contingent, situated, and ultimately symbolic. We get in trouble when we forget all that and start pretending that they are real.

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Notes

1. For recent developments in the study of literary translingualism, see the recent special issue of *L2 Journal* (Lvovich & Kellman, 2015).

2. I've omitted Kubota's citations for all of these; see Kubota (2016) for references.

3. I've omitted Canagarajah's citations; see Canagarajah (2015) for references.

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