10 Arabic, as a Home Language, Acts as a Resource in an English Writing Class: Borrowing Translation Strategies in a First Year Writing Course

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This chapter describes how home languages work as a resource for students in an English foundation writing course at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. We describe writing tasks that require analysis of syntax, register, idiomatic, and cultural expressions as they are manifested in the specificities of usage in both Arabic and English texts. Our analysis of students' writing indicates that these writers became more consciously aware of using strategies; were better able to negotiate meanings; gained understanding of knowledge construction; and were more capable of producing meaning across language and cultural differences in their writing.

Keywords: translingual pedagogy, Arabic as a home language, writing practices

Our observation of an introductory translation course that primarily dealt with the rendering of Arabic literary texts into English initiated the idea of using home language texts, in lieu of English language readers, as the starting place for first-year writing (FYW). The translation activities we observed showed that students gained an ability to select, comprehend, and hone the syntactical and lexical elements of their translations. Inspired by the ground rules of this translation course, and supported by the literature on translingual

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and translocal theories and applications (Canagarajah, 2002, 2011, 2013; Creese & Blackledge, 2013; Grossman, 2010; Horner & Lu, 2007; Leonard, 2014; Ray, 2013), we repeatedly asked students to engage in translingual writing tasks where Arabic was L1 and English L2 (or even L3). Specific assignments called for analysis of syntax, register, idiomatic, and cultural expressions, as well as the specificities of usage in each language. The students worked on assignments involving close reading of texts in both L1 and L2/3, after which they produced thoughtful writing analyses, reflections, and responses in English.

By having students read texts in Arabic and employ them in developing their writing in English, we aimed to explore the benefits of using a translingual approach in our own context at AUB. Working with students who have complex language backgrounds, we implemented a pedagogical approach connected to translanguaging theories other scholars have developed but adapted for our own teaching and learning context. Examples from the students' writing demonstrate a translation-based translingual process and show that students were able to: analyze, negotiate meaning, and value their bilingual competency (Ferris, 2014); develop their language repertoires; reflect on their process while consciously using creative writing strategies to achieve their communicative objective across cultural differences (Canagarajah, 2006; Horner et al., 2011); discover the sensitivity to and awareness of sentence-level issues they possess (Ray, 2013); and appreciate the linguistic and cultural specificities that differentiate Arabic (L1) from English (L2) (Said, 2002).

This chapter includes a discussion of the pedagogical context and theoretical frame of the assignments, a discussion of pedagogy linking the current studies on translingualism to analysis of the students' writing, and a discussion of the place of the translation assignment in the current approaches to translingual studies and the suitability of its results for more thoughtful and engaged college writing practices.

Background

English is the language of instruction and the medium for communication across the context within which we work at AUB, "which bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education . . . and where [t]he language of instruction is English (except for courses in the Arabic Department and other language courses)."[2] Students take FYW courses (a sequence of English writing courses known

2 See https://www.aub.edu.lb/Registrar/Documents/catalogue/undergraduate09-10/university.pdf

as the Communication Skills Program) including English 102. In these classes, students are asked to meet the expectations of the course instructors in writing texts that adhere to grammatical accuracy, striving to "think in" English and use it exclusively. In other words, English is the only resource. Yet, most students and instructors may be using other languages such as Arabic, their home language, or French, which they have learnt at school, outside the writing class. In our case "translanguaging [becomes] a naturally occurring phenomenon" (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 402). Though our students are mostly Lebanese, there is a good number who come from other Arab countries and whose home languages are varieties of vernacular Arabic, which are different than the Modern Standard Arabic learned at schools in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region. Our students are mostly speakers and writers of English and Arabic, with some Armenian students, whose home language is Armenian, comprising a small percentage in our classes.

The Communication Skills Program at AUB is a service program through which all students have to pass in order "to satisfy university requirements and to meet the diverse literacy needs of AUB students. The program aims to educate students to use writing and reading for learning, critical thinking, and communication in academic and other social contexts."[3] Based on a certain scale and using the score a student obtains in a required English proficiency test, any student admitted to AUB is placed in one of the four courses that constitute the core of this program, one of which is English 102. English 102 "is designed to upgrade students' overall proficiency level in English and enrich their exposure to a range of discourse that develops fluency and accuracy in communication through reading and writing for critical thinking" (see Appendix A English 102 syllabus). It is the base course that caters to students with the lowest proficiency in English found acceptable for a student to function at AUB.

Given the university requirements and culture as well as instructors' expectations mentioned above, courses in the Communication Skills Program, including English 102, have always used monolingual English texts. The use of an Arabic text in English 102 and other courses in the program has historically been unthinkable, which renders the utilization of Arabic texts in an English course, the technique employed in our study, a major break away from conventions.

Theoretical Framework for Translation Assignments

Applied linguists and rhetoric and composition scholars value more than the

3 See https://www.aub.edu.lb/FAS/ENGLISH/COMMSKILLS

product of students' writing believing that practitioners need to investigate what resources students bring to the writing classroom, including their experiences with and knowledge of languages. Canagarajah, among others, finds that these language resources interact dynamically with a new context they are brought into, changing it and undergoing change themselves (Canagarajah, 2013; Guerra, 2008).

Considering language difference as a resource, a translingual pedagogy attempts to train students to tune in to this difference and learn to navigate across language borders. Leonard (2014) advises writing and rhetoric teachers to remember that mono- and multilinguals actually differ "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" (Hall et al., 2006, p. 229). We suggest that a translingual approach, a communicative strategy which allows for broad "linguistic diversity" in different social practices, operates within this framework. Even when dealing with one language, students need, what Leonard (2014) calls, rhetorical attunement, "an ear for, or a tuning towards, difference or multiplicity" (p. 228).

FYW students often produce errors in written discourse, especially when they, understandably, think in Arabic and translate their ideas into English. In our study, the process of analyzing, responding, and reflecting in both languages was meant to have student writers examine their own writing rather than imitate model texts to discover how and why they could be reworking with a text "in response to specific contingencies" or "social circumstances" (Horner & Lu, 2007, pp. 154-155). By asking students to engage with their own texts at the sentence level, we hoped to raise their awareness of the "codes [the students] use" (Ray, 2013, p. 192) in a number of ways. First, we wanted them to "develop critical awareness of the choices that were more rhetorically effective" (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 402). Second, we encouraged students to treat their work "more consciously as active participants in the creation and re-creation of language" (Horner & Lu, 2007, p. 157) that was meaningful to them. Finally, we hoped that sensitivity to sentence-level language issues would become clearer to them, and they would be aware of how to better employ language and rhetoric to express their ideas effectively.

In addition, in our translation assignment we adopted one specific suggestion by Horner et al. (2011) by encouraging "renewed focus by students of writing on the problematics of translation to better understand and participate in negotiations of difference in and through language" (p. 308). Grossman (2010) believes that translation intensifies and expands a writer's discernment of style, technique, and structure by giving translators access to more than one national or linguistic tradition. The activities we worked on in

our FYW classes were an attempt to deal with language difference in writing, to build on language variation and student resources (knowledge of Arabic in this case); to focus on the problematics of translation in teaching writing rather than eradicating those realities of difference as is the tendency in a monolingual approach.

The description of translation assignments and our initial analysis of students work follows. We present this analysis as case studies drawn from a larger study of 300 students' texts. We began with two research questions:

1. To what extent does a translation-related translingual activity develop students' critical awareness of rhetorically effective writing in English as they translate from Arabic?
2. To what extent does a translation-related translingual activity add to students' awareness of sentence-level choices?

For this chapter, we are most interested in a focus on the problematics of translation.

Translation Assignments

We first introduced translation assignments in the fall 2012 semester. This was the very first time Arabic texts had ever been assigned in a FYW classroom. Our purpose was to test whether integrating a translation component proves applicable in a FYW class. The excerpts assigned were from an Arabic detective story for young adults. Students read these excerpts and analyzed the diction, sentence structure, and idiomatic expressions used by the author, after which they translated words, expressions, and sentences into L2, reflecting on their choices to achieve a meaningful and faithful translation.

Following the 2012 pilot project, four instructors assigned translation projects in their English 102 classes, with a total student population of around four hundred, over two fall semesters, 2013 and 2014. Similar to the pilot, students were engaged in close reading of texts. They discussed and analyzed the cultural, lexical, and syntactic implications of these texts, before they set about translating selected short excerpts of these texts into English. In each of the semesters, a different text was selected. Fall 2013 semester students were first asked to analyze an Arabic selection from Wadad Cortas' memoir *Dunia Ahbabtoha* (*A World I Loved*) written in the early 1960s. Cortas rewrote her text in English before her death in 1979. The book was completely revised and edited for a western audience in 2009. The 2009 English version of *A World I Loved* was introduced and students analyzed the thematic and rhetorical choices made by the editors. The writing assignment for this activity was

a compare-and-contrast essay that showed the similarities and differences between the writer's and editors' choices as well as a reflection that would reveal whether or not the Arabic reading helped students in comprehending the English text (see Appendix B for detailed instructions). In fall 2014, after analyzing an Arabic excerpt from Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's autobiography *Albi'r Al'ula* (*The First Well*), students worked on translating a short selection from the text and then compared their work to a published English translation. They wrote an essay to discuss whether this activity was helpful for them and reflected on their rhetorical choices during translation (see Appendix C for detailed instructions).

During the process of completing the translation assignment, the students worked collaboratively to construct meaning. In class, they worked in small groups to discuss the texts, translate excerpts, validate their choices, and revise their translations. The essays and reflections were written individually. Samples of their writings from the second and third phases were collected for data analysis since the assigned tasks were similar.

It is important to note that the cultural and emotional themes of Cortas' and Jabra's texts helped in introducing these translingual activities and invited students to connect to the authors' experiences as the excerpts would show later in the chapter. In *A World I Loved*, Wadad Cortas, the principal of an all-girls school, Ahliyya National School in Beirut, discussed her struggle to protect the Arab cultural and national identity through preserving students' use of Arabic. Cortas (2009) who fought against "French [language] gaining ground and putting Arabic in eclipse" (p. 80) believes that the use of Arabic is a sign of patriotism and a means of liberation from western colonialism. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, a Palestinian writer, evokes in his autobiography, *The First Well*, nostalgia for the Arabic language and culture as the author vividly recalls his childhood and school memories during the 1920s in Bethlehem and Jerusalem. He expresses his fascination with Arabic language and its literature when he wrote "words glowed in my mind; they glittered like gold and sparkled like jewels. I imagined myself walking on colored silk carpets spread over the waves of a wondrous sea of dreams" (Jabra, 2012).

Analysis of Student Translation Work

Our discussion covers two fall semesters, 2013 and 2014, worth of students' written responses to the activities. Here we offer the examples of students' translation work that we feel best illustrates a translingual pedagogical potential. We have divided these student-examples into four main categories

supported by rhetoric-composition theories related to translingual writing classes. The first category is writers' conscious use of strategies (Canagarajah, 2006), in which student writers bring the strategies that all writers use into the conscious, as opposed to the mechanical or unconscious, level. The second category is negotiation of meaning (Horner et al., 2011) and rhetorical attunement (Leonard, 2014), which student writers negotiate the differences between the linguistic specificities of their native Arabic, and those of English, thereby tuning in to these differences and coming to a decision about what to use and/or how to evaluate syntactical and lexical choices. The third category is construction of knowledge (Guerra, 2008; Horner et al., 2011) in which student writers make use of going through the stages of the activities to understand what they know and construct new ideas about what they write. The fourth category, making connections/improvising ways and producing meaning across language (and cultural) differences (Horner et al., 2011), takes the student writers to broader levels of attunement with the cultural, temporal, spatial, and linguistic aspects that two texts written in L1 and L2 may offer, thus bringing into their writing course a more well-rounded comprehension of academic and non-academic experiences. In short, the resistance and trepidation that might characterize any individual's first encounter with the very idea of using two languages in a writing classroom vanished as has been revealed in the student writers' responses.

Conscious Use of Strategies

The process of this translingual classroom activity started with introducing Arabic texts into English 102 classes. Students developed the ability and advantage of working together collaboratively on their "possible different textual realizations" (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 601) of the same Arabic text into English. Groups of students negotiated, contested, and (eventually) decided upon their texts together, selecting what they found most suited for the audience and rhetorical context. This exercise, in addition to the analysis of the original and translated texts, invites students to explore how their translation decisions are driven by a rhetorical context, enabling them to bring the strategies writers use, not excluding themselves as student writers, to the level of consciousness.

For example, after students translated an excerpt of the text into English, one of them wrote:

> As I translated the Arabic text into English, I discovered that my translation is different than the original. For

> example: كان يا مكان في قديم الزمان could be translated in many ways. I translated it to "Once upon a time" while in the original version it is translated as "One afternoon". These simple dissimilarities have the ability to affect the whole meaning of the text. Additionally, the Arabic word ساحة could be translated into "square," "field" or "yard". Furthermore, ايس مال is an informal tactic that is used in Arabic [and] does not exist in English. So how would we translate it? What is the closest word we can write? These are the few questions we could ask ourselves while translating.

When student writers use one language to express their ideas, they might not be as readily aware of the strategies and processes that they are actually using to create the exact meaning. However, this student showcases that she is consciously aware of the strategies she employs to select her intended meaning.

When students in class had the chance to discuss and compare the different possibilities of translating a text and discussing how each textual representation is more suited for a certain audience and context, they were able to experience how "[t]he same language may be used to construct different texts if the language is used for different contexts and communities" (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 601), and they came to realize that "[e]quating one language with one discourse is terribly limited" (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 601).

Another student explained the choice of the text which he found most appropriate out of a number of possible other texts in the same language. He justified appropriateness by what the reader needs, or the context calls for:

> First, the names were kept in their original pronunciation: "Yusuf," "Abdu," "Antar and Abla, etc." were not translated, as it sometimes happen[s] with some names. This gives the reader of the English translation a sense of what the people were called in their language. Also, some other names such as "the Box of the World" or "the Square of the Church of Nativity" were literally translated to keep an original touch to it. Adding to this, more technical words such as "magnifying lens," "spindle" or "paper tape" were also translated effectively in order to explain the box's mechanism as it was intended to be in the original text.
>
> However, other words like "Yalla" and "Kaake" . . . were translated to "Ok" and "Cake" . . . Sentence structures were not always respected. They were sometimes slightly modified to

> be understood by someone who reads English and does not know Arabic. For example, the listing of adjectives "large, blue, wooden box" was in the original Arabic "a box in wood large painted-blue". The order was changed in the English text to suit the linguistic needs of English speakers.

The examples above shows how student agency can consciously and knowingly departing from conventions. Here is another example that shows how students were able to question, and maybe demystify, certain conventions through a comparative analysis of an Arabic text and its translation.

> In the Arabic version, it is understandable that the writer mentioned names of certain important characters in the Arab world. But including these names in the translation is of no use to the audience reading the translation as this audience is unlikely to be aware of the significance of these characters or even who they are. Thus, the English text translated from Arabic should not blindly copy everything the Arabic text has. It should omit what is confusing to its English audience.

The linguistic decisions students made and the decisions of other writers they reflected on (and sometimes challenged), as demonstrated in the excerpts, show the agency of the students, who were working with more than one language. The task gave them the opportunity to learn how to make decisions and to be "rhetorically creative"; for example, they strategically chose what needed to be transliterated from the original Arabic text and what needed to be idiomatic English. They considered, reflected, and defended their choices, which they based on what is needed for a certain audience, community, or context. As a result, they made choices consciously "from a range of different options to achieve their communicative purposes" (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 602). Thus, our study demonstrates how students' learning and language acquisition is achieved through a process of working with the language rather than simply applying strategies or techniques that are imposed on them. They experienced and consequently learned how "rules and conventions can be negotiated for one's purposes with suitable strategies" (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 602).

Finally, by digging for words and expressions, thinking of their different meanings and cultural implications, and consciously making linguistic choices driven by communities and contexts, students were able to "demystify certain conventions" and to "relate their writing to the social context," thus taking steps towards becoming "critical writers," who, we hope, with such

praxis, would be well on their way "to shap[ing] their writing to achieve a favorable voice and representation for themselves" (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 603).

Negotiation of Meaning

One main feature common to writers (and translators) is that they both negotiate meaning in L1 and/or L2 (Horner et al., 2011) which we suggest provides them with the ability to attune their rhetorical choices (Leonard, 2014) according to the meaning of the idea at hand. Given the linguistic specificities of Arabic, a Semitic language that differs from English, not just in syntax and lexical origins, but also in the focus it places on syntax, lexis, eloquence, figurative language, and creativity, reading and translating, or analyzing the translation of Arabic/English texts necessitates that student writers engage in extensive negotiation and rhetorical attunement. The student writers in our project dealt with some of these specificities without necessarily referring to the finer lexical and syntactical terms or explanations. Most of the students in question had to deal with this kind of literacy in their Arabic classes, and it became a "latent" or "indirect" factor in their linguistic repertoire. For example, one student referred to "ya salam," an expression related to wonderment and enticement as ". . . an informal tactic that is used in Arabic that does not exist in English. So how should we translate it? What is the closest word we could write?" This question stems from the linguistic and folkloric existence of "al-Munada" rule in Arabic (similar to "Oh + proper noun" in English, a style that is no longer in up-to-date use). Awareness of the nonexistence of this form in English is the first step towards negotiating the equivalence, and tuning in to the linguistic differences.

Another student criticized the English translation of Jabra's text because it "lacks figurative expression compared to the Arabic text. The alliteration in Arabic gives the text special effects but the alliteration is absent in the English version." Awareness of this figurative feature and expecting to "enjoy" it in the English translation is an example of how the student writers, while criticizing the lack of the abundance in eloquent and figurative usage in L2, attune themselves to this rhetorical feature of English writing, at least as it occurs in the selected texts. One student went so far as to wonder whether the translation has "destroyed the magic of an original text."

Another student commented that this task provided them a chance to discover that "the English language is rich of words that are synonyms but can have different meanings . . . which helped me think more and search for the right and accurate words that could satisfy the meaning of the sentence." This element of "register," common to both Arabic and English writing, is a

writing teacher's nightmare. In this exercise, many register-related negotiations were taken care of, since the tackling and juxtaposing of two languages elucidated the shades and levels of meaning in question. As a student wrote:

> It was helpful to read a text and its translation because the original text will make us understand the real aim that the writer wanted to reach; it comes as a support for the English text. And the English text helped to enlighten the abstract and conceptual ideas present in the Arabic text.

Many student writers commented on the Arabic original of Cortas containing "sophisticated words [which] helped in strengthening her main topic which is patriotism and staying attached to our Arabic culture." A student wrote:

> [T]he Arabic and English texts were similar and different at the same time. They were similar somehow in content and message . . . while they were different in word choices and audience . . . The message was clarified in the English text whereas in the Arabic text it was more detailed and complicated."

Another student wrote that in Cortas' text, "the choice of words was of a low level," and "the translator used diluted vocabulary." This is a clear reference to the lexical and syntactical differences between Arabic and English. The student writers embraced those differences at different levels of knowledge or awareness, yet their criticism or approval of one or the other worked towards their negotiating meaning and getting attuned to rhetorical modes.

Construction of Knowledge

When it comes to "constructing knowledge" (Guerra, 2008; Horner et al., 2011) of the specificities of usage in each language, students considered working with a text written in two languages as a source of enrichment. They viewed their L1 and L2/3 language(s) as valuable resources, as one of the students stated, "When we are working with several languages we are capable of saying and expressing ourselves in a more enriched and elegant way because each language can have characteristics that another one doesn't have." Another student wrote, "Both versions of the text present the reader with the same theme and ideas but each had different techniques in sending the message." A third student mentioned in the reflective essay, "using Arabic text in English course is helpful, students will understand the meaning of the text and the

message that the writer wants to send. Then when they read the translation, they will have the opportunity to learn ways of writing in English." A fourth student wrote:

> The aim of this course is to enrich students with English, set them on the correct path towards academic English courses, and enhance their writing for their future benefit. For me the activity which was most successful in achieving that was the translation activity. It helped clarify how to write what we thought in our mind, which is mostly in Arabic, in English. It clarified the vast differences in sentence structure; word choices; style; theme; idiomatic expressions and many more.

Students were negotiating meanings to translate effectively some Arabic excerpts into English, which expanded their communicative competence and created a space for them to express themselves more eloquently in English. They were reworking a text "in response to specific contingencies" or "social circumstances" (Horner & Lu, 2007, pp. 154-155), and were learning "language conventions with full awareness of how they are created and legitimated by use and cultural practices" (Hesford et al., 2009, p. 117). As students were comparing and contrasting L1 and L2 texts, they were constructing knowledge of how writers/translators modify their strategies to achieve rhetorical effectiveness and meet the needs of an audience from a different culture. One student pointed out in her reflection that Cortas' Arabic text uses charged and emotional words to empower her Arab audience. Another student observed that these charged expressions were lost in translation, and "made the Arabic text more like political oration, while the English text is more narrative and subjective."

Meaning Making across Language and Cultural Differences

From the examples that have been analyzed, we noticed that as our students were working in groups to decide on the best translation they could figure out for the excerpts they selected from the Arabic version of the texts. Throughout their discussions, they negotiated lexis and syntax and the cultural context within and across the different texts and audiences. We sought to adopt a pedagogical strategy that would enable them to adjust to the culture of the texts they dealt with while also considering the emotional factors that reflect the specificities of syntactical and lexical factors of L1 and L2. In this way, the classroom would be a space "to expand [students'] cultural views" (Hesford et al., 2009, p. 121) as they developed their language competence in English.

In the case of Cortas' *A World I Loved*, for example, students saw that the Arabic version contained more charged words and idiomatic expressions, which they could not easily find equivalents for to convey exactly the same emotional impact in English. One student wrote in her reflection: "Those feelings were totally shown and best described in the Arabic text '(ايند اهتببحأ, يسدقم ساطرق, 1960)' where the sentences were richer and more emotional. The use of charged words in [the] Arabic version clearly shows the emphasis of Cortas' purpose." This reflection shows the student's awareness of the purpose and audience in writing. It is clear that working on the Arabic text demonstrated to the student the bombastic use of Arabic diction and special expressions, as opposed to the simpler and more direct English counterparts.

In Jabra's *The First Well*, students also thought the word رابكلا, which literally means "adults" in English, had more cultural connotations in Arabic. They were negotiating possible meanings like "wise," "people who were older," "those who had more wisdom," or "those who were more rational and they could learn or benefit from." They thought "adults" does not carry the cultural register as one student wrote: "the way the word [was used] in the Arabic version has its own style that was ruined in the English version." Similarly, a student wrote "I kept the word 'ya salam' an expression that means [in Arabic] that something is fascinating and amusing" since he could not find its equivalent in English. Another student wrote,

> This process was not easy; we found difficulty in translating some local linguistics . . . since the translation of such words will not reflect the exact meaning. [For example] ةفيرعتلا that is similar to pennies . . . does not reflect the true culture reflected by the original word.

Students were concerned with maintaining the cultural implications of the words and expressions, so they were consciously using strategies (Canagarajah, 2006; Grossman, 2010) while translating the Arabic text into English.

The above examples seem to resonate with the multilingual approach and are applicable in what students worked on to deal with differences among languages as "strategic and creative choices" that authors make in order to achieve "rhetorical objectives" (, 2006, as quoted in Horner & Lu, 2007, p. 149). We could see students constructing knowledge (Guerra, 2008; Horner et al., 2011) as they were responding to texts in a translingual context.

Students were also making connections and improvising ways to produce meaning across language and cultural differences (Horner et al., 2011). One Algerian student wrote in response to Cortas' text, "I recognized in those ex-

cerpts the atrocities from which, Algeria, my country suffered for more than a century under the destructive power of the same French colonizer."

Similarly, other students felt the nostalgia to the Arab culture and feared that they might be losing their cultural identity as they embrace the English Only approach. One student wrote:

> We are gradually disconnecting from our Arab roots and this does not forebode a prosperous future for our Arab identities. We should be proud of our nation and embrace our cultures by using our language as a tool to prove to other countries that their languages are not more valuable than ours.

An Armenian student wrote:

> Language was a mean[s] of protection for many nations in history [;] some nations are still in existence because of their commitment to their language [.] [A] very famous example [is] the Armenians that are a minority in this world but have used their language as a weapon.

These excerpts from students' writings reflect their emotional attachment to their identities and cultures, an aspect that we normally do not recognize when working with pure English texts. They reinforce the idea that as students "shuttle" between languages (Canagarajah, 2006) they notice the power of language and recognize that meaning is not fixed, making room for alternate translations.

Application, Implications, Limitations

This assignment responds to researchers' invitation to "take up language differences in composition" (Bawarshi, 2006; Horner et al., 2011). We suggest it is one example of how translingual praxis can attempt to address language difference in writing based on students' thoughtful appreciation of these variances. It provides a "favorable ecology" for students to develop their translanguaging skills (Canagarajah, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2010), and a safe space cultivated through the use of students' home language, to which they are often emotionally and culturally attached. Students, as such, could feel comfortable with their knowledge of their home language and could focus on constructing meaning, rather than feel anxious about producing "correct" and "standard" linguistic forms.

Such activities help students value what they already know and perceive this knowledge as an asset. It is based on the assumption that diverse linguis-

tic backgrounds are a plus, departing from the previous view that speakers of English gain legitimacy only if they are monolingual "native" (or "native-like") speakers. Hence, learners of English who are speakers of other languages have to try, from their "inferior" and disadvantaged position, to approximate the status of a native speaker, as a result, stifling their true identity. The translingual activity, however, values the resources students have, primary among which is their multilingualism and the socio-cultural knowledge that comes with it, and allows students to embrace their identity and take pride in what they already know: their home language. It gives students a voice to share something considered valuable.

Moreover, this translingual activity helps students overcome their apprehension of writing in a second language, whose rules they have difficulty mastering, not only because it is foreign to them, but also because these rules keep shifting and oftentimes they are in the making as they are put into use. Students engage more in analyzing the lexis, the structures, and the cultural values in each idea they produce without focusing on the language errors as is often done in second language classes (Horner & Lu, 2007). They acquire the knowledge of "multiple conventions" rather than the "standard conventions" of the language. It is about acquiring the knowledge of how these conventions gain legitimacy in different historical periods, geographic locations and socio-cultural communities. It is discovering first hand that learning the conventions of one language is in many ways similar to learning the conventions of two or more different languages. More importantly, it is learning how to shift capably between different codes (be they varieties of the same or two different languages) as required by the rhetorical situation. This ability is invaluable in an increasingly globalized world, characterized by a perpetual pull between the local and global, where code-shifting, code-switching, and code-meshing have become survival skills.

This engagement of multiple languages ultimately responds to the call to pay greater attention to the problematics of translation in teaching writing (Horner et al., 2011). Thus, this assignment serves as a model of how translators, who are multilingual writers, can critically and creatively negotiate their rhetorical choices for effectiveness and communicative proficiency (Grossman, 2010). The processes that translators adopt and the strategies they employ work very well for student writers, who could borrow such processes and strategies to become more sensitive to context (cultural, academic, geographical, or historical), audience, and purpose requirements.

According to Edward Said (2002), "rhetoric and eloquence in the Arab literary tradition" (p. 222) are revered. He argues that this attitude of favoring eloquence in writing by the Arab-speaking population is, however, not fa-

vored in English speaking contexts. Whether this opinion is true or not, the practice our students received helped them deal successfully with this difference and they were able to navigate between the language varieties.

Knowing that a wealth of knowledge is filtered when languages interact, it is significant to "envision and incorporate" non-native students' "multilingual and literacy repertoires as resources for learning" (Hornberger & Link, 2012, p. 274), and give them an opportunity to work with languages through a variety of means before they can acquire the proficiency in English which enables them to adapt to university courses and later on to the global workplace (Shohamy, 2007). All excerpts from students' writing show the students' ability to express themselves using the appropriate lexis and syntax. The ability to compare and analyze texts and value the cultures they live or get exposed to is also revealed. In addition, the implications of the study on practitioners, curriculum designers, and the field of teaching writing and composition studies are worth mentioning.

At the macro-level, our analysis of student response to this assignment highlights the need to train students to work on more thorough and profound analysis of texts (be they monolingual or otherwise) to enable them to develop a more critical and conscious writing process, a subtler rhetorical sensitivity and a more astute ability to deal with different code shifts. It also helps students in maintaining a richer and more meaningfully learned and developed language repertoire. At the micro-level, most students showed enthusiasm and motivation to read and write about the texts they worked with. Students became aware that using the conventions of a certain language helps them reach new audiences of a different culture. As such, the activity helps in building cultural bridges. Besides, most students felt at ease in the class, reading or writing about issues and themes that matter to them (problems encountered in their everyday life or nostalgic feelings); they seemed to develop a more positive self-perception, which could translate into a positive attitude towards language learning and writing.

Implications for Practitioners

It is necessary that teachers accommodate their teaching to meet students' diverse needs. Using the basic strategies of translation in a writing program would shift the focus from the "emphasis on the power of standardized languages to an emphasis on the agency of language users" (Horner & Lu, 2007, p. 149) who would be able to make meaning of the language they employ. The outcomes promise benefits for writing teachers who choose to incorporate such translingual activities in their syllabi. Therefore, we encourage teachers

who see the benefits of this approach to pay greater attention to the problematics of translation in teaching writing and figure out how to effectively approach language teaching in light of local conditions (Ferris, 2014). Creating the suitable environment that offers students multiple opportunities to help them "develop new habits of the mind" (Guerra, 2008, p. 301) throughout the writing process is thus recommended.

Implications for Writing Programs

The results we obtained, though in need of further verification, seem to indicate that collaboration with language departments would benefit a college writing program, thus calling for more inter- and cross-disciplinary writing programs, which incorporate more multi- and cross-language work. The aspect of writing where students draw on one another's resources and exercise positive interdependence is worth looking into. Thus, researching whether this kind of translingual activity facilitates collaborative writing processes and whether it enriches a written product is useful.

Implications for Researchers

The promising findings we obtained from our study open the door for more experimentation and research. Classroom studies need to be done that focus on the impact of using a home language and translation in a composition class, specifically in relation to meaning making, complexity of ideas, critical thinking, and linguistic forms in terms of competence and production. Though the reflections of most students in our study perceive such translingual activities positively, more focused and detailed studies are needed to find how such activities affect the actual quality of student writing.

Limitations

Yet this type of engagement presupposes a few limits to translation pedagogies. Minimally, the instructor needs to possess a knowledge of and appreciation for a plethora of suitable L1 texts that bolster the students' intellectual and emotive faculties in indulging in this kind of translingual writing, be that at the sentence-level or longer writings. Most importantly, at the programmatic level, and as many instructors prescribe to time-honored "English-only" class activities, skeptical teachers, who might view this added dimension as a "heretical" practice, would require specific encouragement and support to introduce non-English reading materials.

In programs where classes comprise very few speakers of Arabic (or other home languages), using this type of assignment might culminate in understandable resistance. True, the translingual activity employed here gave students the chance to learn the tools and strategies of translators in one small unit of the course; however, in order to check the impact, more than one activity should be experimented with over a given semester. Finally, due to our focus on merely exploring the effects translingual activities might have on students writing skills in an enrichment course, we have not carried out a systematic assessment. It might be helpful in future studies to measure, for example, via control versus experimental research methods, more accurately how this activity would impact the students' writing. The success or lack thereof of the experiment would be informed by repeating the experiment and tracing the students' performance in subsequent writing courses.

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Appendix A: English 102 Course Syllabus

American University of Beirut
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Department of English

English 102: Enrichment Course in English
3 credit hours
Pre-requisite: English 100 or exemption

Course Description

English 102 is designed to upgrade students' overall proficiency level in English and enrich their exposure to a range of discourse. It develops fluency and accuracy of communication through reading and writing for critical thinking. Freshmen students should expect their final grade in the course to count toward their GPA. Sophomore students' final grade will only be counted toward their GPA in the semester they take the course and will later be dropped from their record.

Course Instructional Objectives and their respective Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, English 102 students will be able to:

- Communicate in a variety of settings and situations.

- Participate in group discussions and debates.
- Respond formally and informally to specific prompts on texts.
- Deliver presentations based on research and collaborative work.
- Read different genres critically.
- Identify writers' rhetorical techniques.
- Annotate, outline, summarize and paraphrase a variety of texts.
- Research self-selected and assigned topics using library and other resources.
- Compose unified, coherent and well-developed texts.
- Apply appropriate conventions of grammar and usage to develop accuracy and fluency.
- Incorporate learned information into the composition of texts.
- Draft, revise, edit and proofread written assignments.
- Reflect on own and others' writing, both for structure and content.

Appendix B: English 102 Activity, Fall 2013

Purpose:

- Compose unified, coherent and well-developed texts.
- Summarize and paraphrase a variety of texts.
- Respond formally and informally to specific prompts on texts.
- Apply appropriate conventions of grammar and usage to develop accuracy and fluency.

Task:

Read the Arabic version (pages 28-29) of "A World I Loved" by Wadad Makdisi Kortas, then work on the activities that follow: (1-1½ class sessions)

- Discuss the theme(s) raised in the text.
- Work in pairs or groups of three to discuss the following:
- Content and context
- Audience
- Sentence structure
- Word choice
- Idiomatic expressions
- Share your answers with the whole class.

Prepare an informal response to tell how the sentence structure, idiomatic expressions, and/or word choice help you come to terms with the text. Refer to evidence in the text to support your answers.

Read the English version of the same text by Wadad Makdisi Kortas,

(pages 78-80), then work on the activities that follow: (1- ½ class sessions)

- Work in pairs or groups of three to discuss the following in comparison/contrast with the Arabic version: (make sure you paraphrase the ideas as you discuss them)
- Content and context
- Audience
- Sentence structure
- Word choice
- Idiomatic expressions
- Share your answers with the whole class and provide evidence from the two versions to support your answers.

From pages **79 OR 80** in the English version, choose one **paragraph** you think that it develops an important idea that appeals to you. **(Homework Assignment)**

- Circle the key words in that paragraph that enable you to form a comprehensive summary.
- Write the summary of that paragraph. (Attribute the ideas to the author)
- Revise the summary to make sure it:
- Presents a clear idea of the paragraph you have selected to summarize;
- Key words are used appropriately;
- Sentences are connected so as to create a flow between the ideas;
- Errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation are minimal.

Develop a **250-word response** to the idea presented in the paragraph you have summarized. Choose **ONE** of the following to include in your response:

- State why you think the idea is important/significant in our days; or why you think it is irrelevant now. Support your point of view by giving real life example(s) and by referring to the text itself for evidence.
- State how the comparison/contrast between the two versions of the text helped you (OR NOT) in understanding the text better. Justify your ideas by referring to specific evidence in the two versions.

Revise your response based on **the following checklist** to make sure you have minimal problems in content, organization and grammar.

Checklist to revise your response:

- My response relates directly to the paragraph I have summarized.
- I have stated a clear thesis statement to guide me as I develop my response.

- I have presented more than one piece of evidence to justify my ideas.
- Each sentence clearly states one idea/example.
- The sentences are logically linked to each other.
- The idea is clearly developed.
- A concluding sentence brings the response to a meaningful ending.
- Each sentence is capitalized and punctuated correctly.
- There are no run-on sentences, non-parallel structures, or fragments in the response.
- There is a correct sequence of tenses among the verbs in the response.
- There is no problem in subject-verb agreement.
- There is no problem with spelling

Note: Make sure you upload the summary and the response to Moodle by December . . . , 2013, and save a copy of your work on your USB for future use.

Write a reflective journal where you describe the process you worked on throughout the activity, analyze whether the activity has helped you achieve the learning outcomes and how, and whether you can make use of the skills and strategies you have practiced in other activities/courses.

Appendix C: English 102 Translingual Activity, Fall 2014

Purpose:

- Compose unified, coherent and well-developed texts.
- Summarize and paraphrase a variety of texts.
- Respond formally and informally to specific prompts on texts.
- Apply appropriate conventions of grammar and usage to develop accuracy and fluency.

Tasks:

- Read the Arabic version (pages 38-39) of *THE FIRST WELL by Jabra IbrahimJabra.*
- Discuss the theme(s) in the text (such as background, traditions, lifestyle, characters, etc.)
- Work in teams to discuss: sentence structures, word choices, idiomatic expressions, figurative expressions, etc., used in the text
- Share your answers with the class, providing specific examples from the text to support your answers.

Translate into English the second paragraph of p. 39 from the Arabic text. In teams, discuss individual translations, focusing on how you negotiated your sentence structures, word-choices, idiomatic, figurative and cultural

choices, and any other feature the team deems interesting. Be sure to discuss challenges and benefits that you may have experienced.

(Individual translations prepared prior to team discussions).

Continued Activity (on translated text into English)

Read the English translation of the same text by Jabra (translated by Mohammad Shaheen, pages 26-27).

Tasks:

- Work in teams to discuss the same text features that you applied on the Arabic version (sentence structures, word choices, idiomatic/figurative expressions, etc.)
- Delineate items that constitute SIMILARITIES and/or DIFFERENCES for each category
- Discuss the extent to which those SIMILARITIES/DIFFERENCES constitute a change in meaning from the original Arabic text. Give examples on items that change the meaning, and other examples on items that do not change the original meaning.

Homework Assignment:

- Write an analysis paper of approximately 500 words on how the activity (in all its stages) was useful to you. You may reflect on linguistic, stylistic and/or thematic aspects. Refer to your team notes on negotiating choices to provide supportive examples.