7 Dialogic Openings for Recreating English

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In this chapter, the author argues that the student-teacher conference is crucial for fostering international undergraduates' translingual writing as it facilitates collaborative, inquisitive close readings of drafts, enabling students to exploit fertile grammatical deviations to engender analysis. The author describes two instances of students' specific translingual constructions, (1) "fancy people dignity" and (2) "appreciate" used simultaneously as verb and adjective, and shows that by negotiating language, form and meaning in the conference, students develop the cognitive and creative potential of their linguistic innovations.

Keywords: translingual, linguistic innovation, dialogic, student-teacher conference, composition pedagogy

Translingual and Dialogic Approaches

Contrary to monolingual strategies and assumptions, as this collection theorizes and as established in the work of Bruce Horner, Min-Zhan Lu, Jacqueline Jones Royster, and John Trimbur (2011), the translingual disposition in composition "takes the variety, fluidity, intermingling and changeability of languages" to be the norm and the notion of a universal standard English to be a political myth: "A translingual approach sees difference in language not as a barrier to overcome or as a problem to manage, but as a resource for producing meaning . . . expressively, rhetorically, communicatively" (pp. 305, 303). While "the aim of traditional writing instruction has been to reduce 'interference,'" translingual pedagogues understand that "deviations from dominant expectations need not be errors; that conformity need not be automatically advisable" (Horner et al., 2011, pp. 302, 304). This approach calls for instructors' close readings of students' texts (Trimbur, 2016) to explore deviations as pedagogical opportunities and to support students in meaningfully manipulating and transforming conventions rather than simply pursuing so-called linguistic standardization.

In this chapter, I describe my translingual dispositions, specifically employed during student-teacher conferences, which encourage the translingual composing of two international writing students from Mainland China, one in an ESL composition class that employed a translingual course design and the other in a writing intensive, upper-level, literature course for all undergraduates. The narratives of these conferences are from my field notes, written during and immediately following each conference. Like other teacher-scholars in this collection, I consider forms that translanguaging can take in undergraduate writing and the impacts that it can make on undergraduates' critical thinking about their texts, building on such earlier analyses as Lu's "Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone" (1999) and Suresh Canagarajah's "Negotiating Translingual Literacy" (2013). Canagarajah (2013) has noted the need for more of this work, reflecting that "some scholars have started complaining that advances in theorization of translingual practices have far outstripped pedagogical implementation" and that such pedagogies would, in turn, generate "useful insights into communicative practices" (p. 12). Answering Canagarajah's call, I explain (1) how translingual dispositions in my student-teacher conferences promote the development of my students' linguistic innovations; (2) how translanguaging can signify the mark of a writer's cognitive work and, therefore, is a particularly fertile place for investigating a writer's unelaborated ideation; and (3) how students can use these innovations to articulate and advance thinking in their essays while their diverse English grammar remakes English. When students are guided and encouraged to develop the rich potential of their translingual writing by a facilitator, translanguaging works as a catalyst for their critical thinking in writing about the literature they read, their lived experience, and their linguistic innovation. In contrast, when we dwell primarily on errors as deficits, particularly with students who hail from what Goffman (2005) has termed "face-work" cultures, we risk eroding their sense of dignity as writers and amplifying their feelings of anxiety about composition (Shaughnessy, 1977 as cited in Lu, 1994, p. 448). By encouraging students to explore the creative potential of their fertile deviations during our face-to-face conversations, we give student writers the vital opportunity to develop knowledge of diverse conventions and help them to build a sense of literary dignity, to acquire a text-based-face born of the social interaction between readers and writers as those writers contribute to the evolution of the language that they use.

The impact of my conferences with students on the development of their translingual innovations correlates with scholarship documenting the power of teacher-student face-to-face dialogue (compared to written comments) in catalyzing multilingual students' revision processes (Gitzen, 2002; Goldstein

& Conrad, 1990; Liu, 2009; Young & Miller, 2004). I believe further that direct conversation with students in conferences in which we closely examine their inventive rhetorical, syntactic, and semantic choices in their essays effectively supports their translingual experiments. Through our conference exchanges—my questions and their reflections about their unconventional and intriguing language choices—students endow their translingual forms with efficacy and meaning. Pivotal moments of dialogic exchange during our one-on-one discussions of their drafts launch students' revision processes as they develop a heightened consciousness of their translingual forms as discursive resources for expanding meaning in their essays.

In further support of my student-teacher conferencing choices, I offer here the specifics of Horner, Lu, and Canagarajah's work that speak directly to this dialogic pedagogy. In arguing that all writers, including international students, are refashioning language as they use it, Horner and Lu (2013), raised a profound, inclusive, and germane question: Why is it that deviations in writing by so-called "mainstream" writers "are perceived as creative" innovations, "while deviations in writing by those identified as belonging to subordinate social groups are taken as manifestations of the writers' lack of knowledge or fluency with 'the standard'" (p. 583)? A common (monolingual) response is that the poetics practiced by native users of English deviate meaningfully and intentionally, while the nonnative apprentices who have not mastered the tools of the trade deviate without consciousness. But both of these assumptions are quite often untrue. The poet's creative unconscious is frequently at work, and the apprentice—if one takes the time to ask her—has often applied her tools quite meaningfully even if that meaning is not immediately recognizable or fully articulated in its initial incarnation. Lu's essay, "Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone," (1994) maps one of the earliest translingual pedagogical applications treating grammatical and rhetorical deviations from the perceived standard as stylistic innovation. In an approach to revision that has students explore the various meanings inherent in their grammatical idiosyncrasies, Lu leads class discussions that prompt students' thoughtful negotiation of stylistic choices. The revision of Lu's student's ostensibly erroneous phrase, "can able to," is not corrected according to "one's knowledge of or respect for the authorities of a dictionary English versus colloquial English" (1994, p. 453). Though revisions conforming to currently accepted forms (e.g., "is able to") are discussed, students spend equal time exploring the various meanings of the inventive phrase, "can able to," which is uniquely designed to communicate "conflicting attitudes toward a belief in the transcendental power of the individual" whose agency is potentially curtailed as it depends upon an authority's permission ("can") and not

just upon intrinsic ability ("able to") (Lu, 1994, p. 453). Lu's pedagogies offer support for my decision to treat student writers, as we converse about their drafts, with the same authority and creativity as published authors who do not "passively absorb and automatically reproduce a predetermined form" or deserve to have their idiosyncratic writing regarded as the result of "the not-yet 'perfectly educated' [and] solely in terms of 'error'" (Lu, 1994, pp. 455, 447).

While Lu (1999) describes negotiated literacy occurring among students in classroom discussions of a translingual text, and Canagarajah (2013) emphasizes negotiations among students via their written responses to peers' translingual experiments, I focus on my negotiations in conferences with students that were crucial to their translingual revisions. In dialogic conferences, I promote the creative possibilities inherent in students' unusual syntax, semantics, and rhetorical moves. As my descriptions of our conferences show, from the questions I ask them, students discover the signifying power of their linguistic deviations and become the ultimate decision-makers about strategies for revision. In my experience, focusing our dialogue on the creative potential rather than on the dissonance of students' apparent deviations not only fosters students' engagement and confidence in writing but also promotes their creativity and critical thinking—central to my writing program's goals.

A Translingual Curricular Design

At my home institution, the University of Pittsburgh, the stated goals of our English Department's first-year composition courses—creative, critical inquiry about language, form, and meaning—are inherent to translingual writing. These goals shape our required first-year seminar in composition as well as the precursor composition workshops for native English speakers multilingual English speakers who place into them based upon SAT scores and an on-campus language proficiency test respectively. Articulated more specifically in our statement of "Goals for First-Year Composition" (2016) on the English Department's website, our curriculum engages students in writing as a creative form of critical inquiry; in considering (in writing) problems that emerge from a thoughtful examination of their lived experience, their observations, and their reading of diverse texts; in developing ideas and analysis that reflect close attention to their own and others' specific language choices; and in revising by using strategies that productively challenge conventions and reflect an awareness of the relationship between style and meaning. I carry these goals into the curricular design of my current ESL Workshop in Composition, the course for international first-year and transfer undergraduates, as well as into my responses to student compositions in the writing-in-

tensive literature courses that I teach in our English department. In both types of courses, I ask students to use their languages innovatively in order to critically inquire into the conflicts and complexities within their own experiential narratives and those of published authors.

In what follows, I will discuss two case studies of Chinese students translanguaging—the first, Xiao Ming, in my ESL composition workshop and then Shiwei Li, in my upper-level, writing intensive literature class.[1] Both Xiao and Shiwei hail from mainland China—the predominant international population at the University of Pittsburgh, comprising nearly five percent of our students (University of Pittsburgh, 2018). I describe how Xiao and Shiwei translanguage by transferring into their Englishes Mandarin topic-comment structures and indeterminate parts of speech respectively. Starting with my conference with Xiao and from his revisions, I show how he uses an innovative translingual phrase to develop critical thinking about his narratives. First, however, I briefly outline the curricular design that generated Xiao's work.

My ESL Workshop in Composition takes translanguaging, translation, and transculturation as the central focus of inquiry for the course and the theme of our reading and writing. The class is subtitled "Transporting Home," a metaphor for students' and published authors' experiences of linguistic mobility. While Horner and Lu (2013) caution against assigning discrete languages to geographic spaces such as "nation," "school," or "home," I ask students to consider their first language or languages as *mobile* homes (along the lines of what Blommaert (2010) has called "mobile resources"), which they transport and mesh interactively with other languages in new contexts, thus renovating each time they compose. This theme of mobility presupposes a translingual disposition, for it highlights students' linguistic fluidity, imagining that they and their non-discrete languages are unendingly "en route." The course description of my syllabus suggests that each student embodies and carries within multilingual resources (rather than a fixed code) including language(s) learned from childhood onward and knowledge of a local English. These languages "are now," as Canagarajah (2006) put it, "traveling" and creatively combining with English words, syntax, and rhetorical structures commonly used in our southwestern Pennsylvanian academic locality, and thereby enriching and animating the student's compositions and languages (p. 590).

Students in this ESL Workshop in Composition course analyze the

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1   Both Xiao Ming and Shiwei Li gave written permission for their writing and conversations to be reproduced in this article, which IRB found sufficient given the limited nature of this qualitative study.

evolving roles of their languages in their lives in their first essay, a language autobiography, and then explore the un/translatability of a metaphorical expression from their native tongue into English in the second essay. Finally, the third essay assignment—the one that lead to Xiao Ming's fruitful translanguaging which I discuss in the following section—asks students how interpreting a (self-selected) English language text can lead them to alter their perspective on a difficult experience of leaving home—however they currently define home in their lives. As I will show, probing unconventional passages in Xiao's writing during our conferences made me realize the potential for face-enhancing dialogues for students. My interactions with Xiao illustrate how teachers and students can work together to explore translingual innovations in their drafts.

Text-Based Face in ESL Workshop in Composition

A freshman in my ESL Workshop in Composition class in fall 2014, Xiao Ming struggled to analyze the meanings of his well-crafted narratives and conferenced with me more than once to try to understand what it would entail, as he put it (in his final portfolio reflection on his struggles in the course), "to search and dig out your idea and have more critical thinking." However, embracing Xiao's translingual neologism, "fancy people dignity," which appeared in his very first draft of the essay about a difficult experience of leaving home, ultimately helped him to practice critical thinking in this essay.

When I queried his phrase in our conference, Xiao explained that he had transferred Chinese grammar into the English, "fancy people dignity," because he had conceptualized it in his first language and then translated. Several studies, as noted by Leki (1992) and Whalen and Menard (1995), have documented the constraining effects of linguistic processing on the conceptual production of L2 writers, suggesting their need to revert to L1 or the commingling of L1 and L2 in order to generate concepts. In Yingliang Liu's (2009) interviews of Chinese undergraduate writers studying at a southwestern U.S. university, she found even her most successful student "thinking all in Chinese when she drafted the thesis," another "drafting an outline in Chinese in her mind," and her most challenged student drafting the entire composition in Chinese, which resulted in many Chinglish sentences (pp. 143, 148, 150). As a trace of Xiao's cognitive processing in Chinese emerged in his translingual innovation, "fancy people dignity," this phrase became fertile ground for investigating Xiao's unelaborated ideation; as I show in the following narrative of our conference, this translingual conceptual marker, when probed, enabled Xiao to analyze his narrative.

When we first met in conference to discuss Xiao's first draft, as we took turns rereading it aloud, I asked him how he responded as a reader of his own work, and he said he was unsure how to develop the critical thinking missing in it. (As noted, this had been his struggle throughout the semester.) To that end, I had in mind three critical inquiries for him to consider: (1) What is the significance of the isolation you suffered in your new middle school in Hangzhou (the capital of Zhejiang province, much larger and wealthier than his former hometown of Xiaoshan, where Xiao—as conveyed in his essay—had grown up and enjoyed prestige and popularity)? (2) What does your unconventional phrase, "fancy people dignity," mean? (3) How does O. Henry's story, "The Last Leaf," which you reference, change your perspective on your experience of exclusion in Hangzhou? Because I sensed that the first and third questions were most abstract and difficult, and more importantly because I wanted to ground our conversation in what Xiao *had* accomplished rather than focusing on lacunae, I began with Xiao's own language, his fertile unconventional phrase, "fancy people dignity." Among the other minor deviations, its meaning seemed most provocative to me because the notion of Xiao's dignity, amid what he otherwise lamented in this essay as experiences of humiliation and grief in his new exclusive school, struck me as contradictory and therefore intriguing. As I show in what follows, exploring his invented term led Xiao to compose sentences in his essay that addressed my other two inquiries (about the significance of his isolation in his new school, and the meaning of the O. Henry story he had incorporated in his essay). In our conversation, through unpacking his phrase, he was able to discover how his translingual neologism contained in a compressed and poetic form much of his unstated analysis.

In order to prompt a student to explore the richness of their linguistic deviations, I often have to identify the deviation which they have not noticed or identified as unconventional. Thus, before Xiao unpacked the meaning and significance of "fancy people dignity," I had to draw his attention to the term's unusual formulation. This moment in our conference enabled me to instruct Xiao in conventional English usage, and it enabled Xiao to instruct me in his ways of transporting Chinese grammar into his English. I noted that except in compound nouns (such as homework) and collocations (such as mother tongue), current academic English users more frequently modify nouns with adjectives rather than with other nouns, which are often coordinated with prepositions (Biber et al., 2002). I learned from Xiao that grammatically, "people dignity" transfers into English one type of Mandarin topic-comment (noun-noun) structure (Chen, 2009). Moreover, possessive nouns, Xiao told me, are not always marked grammatically in Mandarin, just as he omitted the

possessive and did not mark the subject distinct from the possessive in fancy people dignity; both parts of speech can be understood implicitly through context cues in Chinese (Ross & Ma, 2006). I believe that Xiao gained authority as he instructed me about Chinese, and I experienced what Lee and Jenks (2016) have referred to as "learning opportunities" for instructors "doing" translingual dispositions (p. 338).

During the course of our conference about his first draft, Xiao created aloud a new meaning for "fancy people dignity" after he learned from me that this phrase, minus the apostrophe, eschews the possessive (people's): he suggested to me that he would like to use that missing apostrophe (missing possessive) "to convey that fancy people don't possess such dignity even though they may hope they do." Xiao said that he "liked hinting through the missing apostrophe [and s] what fancy people were missing since it would allow the reader to discover my meaning." Thinking out loud further, he mused that via this inventive phrase, he would like to imply that "one's so-called dignity exists only in the eyes of others who put that dignity onto you." In turn, others can take it away, as Xiao expressed in his essay when he recounted how his new Hangzhou classmates stripped his dignity: "their arrogant look in the eyes haunted in mind all of the time." During our conversation, when I questioned the unconventional "haunted *in* mind" (rather than haunted my mind), Xiao explained that he meant to insinuate that he had internalized or "took inside their arrogant look;" their judgment had lodged *in*side him; it was a sense of self projected into him by others, yet a judgment owned by them, by "*their* arrogant look." I understood from these explanations that his translingual invention, "fancy people dignity," minus the possessive, implicitly emphasizes that lack of self-possession because the fancy person does not possess and cannot conjure the dignity ascribed or denied by others.

Practicing close reading of students' drafts alongside them is a crucial part of the process of developing their translingual writing. Therefore, regarding Xiao's loss of dignity, at this point in Xiao's conference-revelations, I drew attention to his repeated use of the term "face" in his essay and asked why he had not used the more commonly translated Chinese term "to lose face;" the word "face" appears repeatedly in his first draft, though not explicitly as a psycho-social term, at his moment of greatest humiliation when none of his Hangzhou classmates included him in the working groups they were obliged to form in order to collaborate on the teacher's "social lesson." Remembering his predicament, Xiao had recalled in his essay:

> Sitting there alone, the teacher asked the class: "Is there anyone who's willing to chose Xiao as their desk mate?" Repeat-

ed loudly, no one answered. I lowered my head, covering my *face* with my bare hands. My *face* blushed. I even felt that there was real fire burning on my *face* . . . I felt like tens of thousands of unwilling and mocking eye sights were coming from all these students, taking me as a pathetic loner. (Emphasis added.)

Considering the importance of student autonomy during the conference and in post-conference composing, I want to highlight that in his revised essay, Xiao decided not to refer explicitly to the social implications of the recurrent word "face" in his essay, that is to say, he did not refer to loss of face, which continues to be a commonplace mode of expressing attainment or loss of repute even in twenty-first century post-economic-reform-era China (He, 2012; Mao, 1994; Pan & Kadar, 2011). Instead, Xiao opted to express his loss of social status and humiliation through the unconventional term he had composed before we met, "fancy people dignity," because during our conference, I maintained a translingual disposition, continually encouraging Xiao's innovation and independent choice as a writer. I was not commenting in the margins of his essay draft as an implicit evaluator: "What does fancy dignity mean? It's unclear." Or "why not use the term loss of face since you repeat 'face?'" And he was not a student confronting and considering such comments in solitude, uncertain of what his teacher might value or not value. As he had planned aloud in our conference, Xiao later went on to revise his draft and opt for the phrase "fancy people dignity" rather than the term face precisely because, as he declared to me, "I want to stress that the lost dignity was never my own in the first place;" in other words, by excluding the possessive mark he wanted to stress that fancy people dignity was neither possessed nor earned.

Yet as a reader of Xiao's final draft—revised after the conference yet evidently very much informed by our conversation—it seems to me that Xiao, through his "fancy people dignity" innovation, nonetheless conveys the concept of "face" implicitly. From my reading of Xiao's revision and Chinese notions of face, I would argue that there are two general sources of face indirectly implied, and they are worth defining so as to value Xiao's possible implications. According to the definition by Hsien Chin Hu (1944) reiterated by David Yau-fai Ho (1978) and Jun Liu (2001), face—in Chinese, mìanzi 面子—is social prestige acquired through an authoritative title, a high examination score, or other material public attainment, and face—in Chinese, liǎn 脸—is respect due to reputation for moral deeds (Hu, 1944; Ho, 1976). In both cases—material or moral—face is (like Xiao's definition of "fancy people dignity") granted by others on the basis of one's admirable action; "a sound

míng-yù [reputation] must be *earned*" (Ho, 1976, p. 875, emphasis added). And even if earned, "Chinese face . . . is 'on loan. . . from society' not permanently owned by its bearer" (Goffman, 1967, p. 20 as cited by LuMing Mao, 1994, p. 460).

After the conference, Xiao developed in his revision (quoted below) a definition and narrative elaboration of "fancy people dignity" that places an emphasis on "fancy," that is, on the purely material basis of Xiao's status (or face) in his previous school in Xiaoshan and, moreover, on the fact that the wealth that he displayed he had not "earned." Stressing the importance of his material display (mìanzi) in establishing "fancy people dignity" in the eyes of his Xiaoshan classmates, Xiao recounted in his revision how he had used his family's wealth to acquire friendship and social respect rather than attaining them by means of his own moral agency (liǎn). In the following revised passage, Xiao recalled the outlay of toys that had garnered him approval among his young friends in Xiaoshan, a strategy that failed in his new school in Hangzhou because he could not achieve "fancy people dignity" where more affluent students possessed a larger collection of fancy things. I highlight especially the definition in that passage, which begins to transform his story into critical thinking, an achievement for Xiao in the course enabled by our dwelling in our conference and his dwelling in his essay on his translingual invention:

> In Xiaoshan, they worshipped or adored me for what I had owned. And my mother spoil me a lot: giving me money to buy some toys. Sharing these toys with my friends in town because not everyone has toys as much as I have, I was adored from them. The feeling of being the upper class had already cultivated my vanity and my so-called "fancy people dignity," *a dignity and popularity that resulted from my superior social status.* However, in the new environment (Hangzhou), when I first came to class, they didn't come to say hi to me and ask me to share toys with them. Some of they even have more toys than me. Without confidence, I lost the way to make friends. The feeling that I was isolated and despised by my new classmates depressed me so much that I didn't even do well in my subjects. (Emphasis added.)

Embracing the translingual view that English does not have to have its apostrophe or coordinated nouns in his revision, Xiao defined his neologism, using, in his revision (above) the convention of the appositive clause that I had recently offered to students during a class discussion of various sentence

structures—"a dignity and popularity that resulted from my superior social status." He extended the narrative about the toys that had enabled him to "cultivate" his vanity and seem to possess dignity, showing how socially situated and contingent on others his dignity was, such that later in Hangzhou, the decline in relative value of his toys deprived him of dignity. From Xiao's translingual term, "fancy people dignity," minus that expected possessive, he hoped that a close reader might infer that he *never* possessed such ephemeral and socially contingent dignity and that dignity is not one's own when it is owned only by means of conspicuous consumption. In Xiao's oral elaboration during our conference (prior to revising his essay) he explained "dignity is not earned or possessed by the fancy people; it is given by others who adore you simply because of your display of wealth." Xiao's translingual phrase, identified by me but then endowed with meaning by Xiao, first orally during our conference and then in his revisions, allowed him to intimate his discovery of the hollowness of this way of acquiring admirers.

In order to complete this essay assignment, which (as noted previously) asked students to explain how reading an English-language source altered their perspective on a dislocating experience, Xiao turned at the end of this same essay to O. Henry's story "The Last Leaf." Having heard in our conference Xiao orally develop analytical meanings of his translingual phrase (while he took notes on his draft in English and Chinese on what he said), I finally voiced my third question: How does O. Henry's story, "The Last Leaf," which you reference, change your perspective on your experience of exclusion in Hangzhou? In response, Xiao said he was "proud of his translingual invention, fancy people dignity," and—embracing a translingual disposition—he decided to exploit it further as a resource. Xiao decided in the conference that he could use "fancy people dignity," as he put it, "in contrast to O. Henry's story." In other words, he could use it to introduce O. Henry as a counter-narrative to his own. As revealed in Xiao's revised passage, written after the conference and quoted below, O. Henry had led Xiao to realize that he believes friendship must be built among strangers through one's moral and nonmonetary actions. What follows is a brief synopsis of O. Henry's story and an explanation of how Xiao used it to extend his critical thinking about alternatives to "fancy people dignity."

In O. Henry's "The Last Leaf," prestige is acquired posthumously by a moral and unsolicited act of generosity by the elderly, unsuccessful, painter, Behrman, who dies after suffering a freezing storm throughout the night in order to paint the image of a leaf outside the window of his neighbor Johnsy, an image that keeps the dying Johnsy alive after she has vowed to succumb to pneumonia when the tree in her window loses its final autumn leaf. Through

his sacrifice in creating this "masterpiece," Behrman achieves a dignity through moral rather than monetary or professional accomplishment. In the revision that follows, Xiao imagined O. Henry had helped Xiao to overcome the miserable memory of his social dislocation in middle school by realizing that "fancy people dignity" fails to cultivate genuine human connections, and that we must strive to create interpersonal bonds (*liǎn*) not material display:

> Mr. Behrman could sacrifice his own life only to bring some more hope to help the girl to survive, so *why can't we* do more for our families or friends? When we are complaining about the estrangement between people, *why we couldn't* be the first to break the ice and show our welcome and kindness to them? . . . My embarrassment, estrangement, loneliness, the sense of being isolated and the emptiness was caressed by a warm stream of Mr. Behrman's gift to Johnsy: Love, sacrifice, and strong faith to strive for living on. These complex and mixed elements in the story became an invisible but somehow truly existed man, patting my head, scolding me in a soft yet strict voice . . . Instead of asking for something empty like fancy people dignity from some people, *shouldn't I first* learn how to give? *The reason why* I didn't make new friends was because I didn't show my welcome or friendliness to them. *I was like the dying woman* who gave up hope and stopped trying to find another way to connect. And this story, however, worked for me as the last leaf that the old painter had painted for her. It filled my heart with hope, confidence to make new friends. It was like a shelter and my final peaceful place, revealing the true, the good and beautiful to me. Wealth is an empty test, not everyone judges by it. (Emphasis added.)

In this revised passage, I want to note how Xiao used his revelation about the emptiness of "fancy people dignity" to ponder O. Henry's story and introduce important expository elements: rhetorical questions ("Why can't we . . . ? Why we couldn't . . . ? Shouldn't I first . . . ?"), analogies ("I was like the dying woman"), and explanations ("The reason why . . ."). However, weeks later, in our end-of-semester conference, I questioned Xiao about his uplifting, inspirational concluding sentences: "this story . . . filled my heart with hope, confidence to make new friends . . . revealing the true, the good and beautiful to me. I noted their "positive moral message" about "soundness of character," which I later learned, according to Sullivan et al. (2012), in their multi-voiced article about college writing in China and America, is a common rhetorical

feature and overall aim in much Chinese undergraduate writing. Contributor Fenglan Zheng acknowledges that in China, "it is a writing teacher's responsibility to help cultivate positive . . . emotions among students" (Sullivan et al, 2012, p. 325), emotions such as Xiao's "hope," "friendliness," and "the true, the good, and beautiful" way of "do[ing] more for our . . . friends." Though I suggested that Xiao deepen his analysis of the problem of seeking "fancy people dignity" rather than concluding with an inspirational solution, I ultimately respected Xiao's expressed wish not to change this contrastive rhetoric in his conclusion. For in dialogic negotiations with students, rather than striving for conformity to American academic conventions of critical inquiry, I want to help them recognize options and develop a meta-cognitive awareness of the linguistic and cultural rationales for those that they choose.

Appreciating English in a Writing Intensive Literature Course

What happens to students' translingual approaches after they leave our composition classrooms? What is the potential for translingual learning transfer in other courses that prioritize writing among their requirements? My answer to those as yet unplumbed questions in transfer studies (Leonard & Nowacek, 2016) is provisional since they require data about a range of course settings, and my discovery here pertains to one, my writing intensive, upper-level, "Women and Literature" course, and the writing in that class in spring 2014 composed by Shiwei Li, a senior from mainland China, majoring in Math and Economics, who had taken my ESL Workshop in Composition class in 2011 and was able to continue her linguistic creativity within the "safe house" of my class, where she knew the instructor would welcome translingual experimentation (Canagarajah, 1997; Pratt, 1991). I want to explore Shiwei's writing and the role of our conferences in her revision as an illustration of what the translingual composing process and outcome can look like in a literature class situated outside of the disciplinary boundaries of composition.

In the essay assignment that Shiwei undertook in "Women and Literature," I asked students to compose an argument about their close reading of a metaphor concerning gender in any of the literary texts that we had read, and to imagine the author's purpose in using the metaphor. That Shiwei chose to engage with Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" is not irrelevant, and I stress her choice of text thanks to Jay Jordan's (2015) argument that we must pay attention to "Material Translingual Ecologies," to the material context that enables translingual writing. Though Jordan's ecologies emphasize bodies, sensation, and other ambient factors, I want to highlight the textual

ecology of Woolf's "Room" as an agent in Shiwei's translingual endeavor. For Woolf's is an essay that famously defies conventions in order to open the literary landscape to women just as Shiwei's text admits a trans-rhetorical and translingual disposition of her own once she gains guidance about translanguaging in our conference dialogue.

The first paragraph of Shiwei's essay, "Selfless Angel or Angry Devil?" immediately departs from conventions of Anglo-American literary criticism. Instead of highlighting her thesis, Shiwei has placed us in a scene with Woolf, much as Woolf begins "A Room of One's Own" placing us "by the banks of a river:"

> Walking along the beautiful campus of Oxbridge on a Saturday afternoon, a female student thought about the masters of literature. The birds were singing and the sun was shining. She decided to go to the campus library to follow the footsteps of Lamb, who also studied in this college a hundred years ago. She imagined she could take a look at Thackeray's manuscript and a lot of other masters' works in the library. However, the guard refused her entry into the library, like she had a contagious disease. This unbelievable scene actually happened during the time period Virginia Woolf lived in, as she recorded in her famous book, *A Room of One's Own*.

When I paused in rereading Shiwei's essay aloud with her, at the outset of our conference, to query this unconventional opening, I learned from her and (later from scholars of contrastive rhetoric noted by Sullivan et al., 2012), that what Shiwei did here evokes one traditional form of a Chinese rhetorical opening, in which the writer links emotions and natural scenery. Sullivan et al. (2012) draw on the work of contrastive rhetorician, Xiaoming Li (1996), to explain that in Chinese compositions, human emotion (qing) is traditionally couched in nature (jing): "All descriptions of natural objects or scenery are for the sake of expressing emotions" (Li, 1996, p. 87 as cited in Sullivan et al, 2012, pp. 324-325). Shiwei linked qing and jing through juxtaposition, contrasting the indignant "*unbelievable* scene" where Woolf is refused entry and the cheerful singing birds and shining sun. At the same time, in this intro, Shiwei narrated rather than argued what becomes a key point in her essay—that Woolf tried stylistically and literally to follow in the footsteps of male writers like Lamb and Thackeray. I learned all of this—the student's manipulation of a traditional Chinese introduction and her implied thesis—by asking Shiwei, in person, why she wrote this introduction, why she began by describing Woolf's walk.

What if I had not asked Shiwei about these unconventional rhetorical choices and, instead, had simply required their revision? (What if I hadn't asked Xiao about the meaning of "fancy people dignity," but had simply placed an apostrophe s after people?) Conferencing with our students allows for a genuine dialogue in which we can ask them about the roots and the reasons for their deviations from conventions rather than (via commenting on the paper) editing or simply flagging them, and, in turn, students can teach us about their translingual, trans-rhetorical innovations. Through such dialogue, instructors can discover value in an opening paragraph that invites us into a mood and a scene rather than an explicit argument.

Shiwei's plan in the essay—as she explained it to me further in conference—was to continue to escort her reader on a walk alongside Woolf on her campus tour. Along the way, Shiwei analyzed the gendered metaphors that arise when misogyny obstructs Woolf's steps. The following passage, which contains a fertile translingual deviation, comes from a section of Shiwei's essay about the guardian angel who denies Woolf entry into the Oxbridge library without a patriarchal pass; it marks the place in Shiwei's first draft where I made my main inquiry about Shiwei's translanguaging during our conference, and it led Shiwei to expand her ideas about Woolf's manipulation of language:

> The guardian man were protecting the treasure only belongs to men. All those book, all the fancy foods, all the **appreciate** words were only for men. Woolf used word "kindly" and "regretted" when she talks about the guardian's attitude, but I also noticed the word "deprecating." Is this weird that she used two opposite adjective to describe the guard man? As I think, the kindly and regretted emotion was just the surface of the guardian. The man pretended to be polite, but inside his heart, his attitude was deprecating. He looked down upon Woolf, and as sensitive of Woolf, she could see through this hypocritical immediately. (Emphasis added.)

Though there are several somewhat distracting grammatical deviations in the final lines of this passage, I decided to query just one: Shiwei's intended meaning of "the appreciate words" in "All those book, all the fancy foods, all the appreciate words were only for men." I focused on "the appreciate words" because the phrase seems to have the most elusive and richest potential meaning about language, and language is Shiwei's continual concern in her essay. One could read Shiwei's misplaced verb, "appreciate," monolingually, as an error to be changed to the adjective "appreciative," a deviation arising from Chinese according to Shiwei. Chinese verbs, themselves, do not change

to indicate their adjectival form but are generally accompanied by the generic character—的 de; sometimes the generic de is omitted, and the intended part of speech is simply understood from the context (Ross & Ma, 2006).

But instead of seeking to correct her phrase, "the appreciate words," working translingually in our conference, I asked Shiwei: what do you mean here by "appreciate?" It was a descriptive rather than a corrective question. In response, Shiwei asked me what appreciate could mean. We investigated the meanings and usages of appreciate in the dictionary, and I asked Shiwei which she intended. "I want them all!" was her ambitious response. Shiwei decided to continue her unconventional usage of this word—"appreciate"—and to exploit its dual meanings in order to deepen her ideas about Woolf's figurative language. In her revision, begun orally in conference and completed in writing later on her own, some of the other deviations in Shiwei's passage disappeared as she dwelled on and developed this section of her essay. Shiwei composed these revisions to her second paragraph after we had met and investigated the meanings of "appreciate" and how she could use them to justify her translingual innovation. Shiwei's (italicized) revisions show that encouraging translingual approaches catalyzes language acquisition, analysis and revision.

> The guardian man w*as* protecting the treasure *that* only belonged to men. All those book*s*, all the fancy foods, all the "appreciate" words were only for men. *I mean "appreciate" here as both a verb (appreciating) and an adjective (appreciative). Apparently, only the men are permitted to make their words grow in value so words are appreciating in men's writing. But Woolf is appreciative of words too as she works with them creatively. She used the words "kindly" and "deprecating"* to show the man pretended to be polite, but inside his heart, his attitude was deprecating. He looked down upon Woolf, and she could see through this *hypocrisy and reveal it to us*. (emphasis added)

What I might have read monolingually only as a mistaken usage of "appreciate" became for Shiwei in this translingual approach an opportunity to make meaningful her view of Woolf's appreciation of the creative possibilities for manipulating language. Building upon her translingual innovation, Shiwei went on to argue about Woolf's ability to manipulate language, an appreciation of language that Shiwei contended in her essay Woolf had learned by following in the footsteps of literary men.

By selecting Shiwei's intriguing, unconventional, opaque word as the focus of inquiry for our conference and pursuing a collaborative, close reading and inquiry of it in her first draft, I encouraged her to exploit a fertile

grammatical deviation by thinking critically and creatively about its possible meanings. Such a translingual pedagogy gives writers like Shiwei and Xiao opportunities not only to learn or review conventions but, moreover, to challenge conventions in order to enhance their linguistic creativity and develop their thinking. Students dwell on their sentences and make close reading of their own prose a habit of mind, discovering that as language learners, they have the same ability to revise language (as well as their text) that all language users do (Horner et al., 2011). They exploit their fertile textual deviations, engendering ideas and contributing to the now worldwide enterprise of reinventing English. These translingual processes and innovations confirm Lu's contention that "efforts to acquire—learn and use—standardized U.S. English can be . . . enhanced by critical engagement with it" (Lu, 2004, p. 25).

Conclusion: Dialogic Openings to Translingual Dispositions

Xiao's and Shiwei's revisions illustrate the translingual innovations students perform as a result of dialogue about language and rhetorical meaning in a student-teacher conference. Instructors with translingual dispositions help students to develop analytic purposes for their linguistic innovations. But these achievements require student-teacher face-to-face dialogues, in which instructors ask students their intentions, demonstrate our openness to rhetorical and linguistic fluidity, and then encourage students to make the most meaningful and informed choices.

However, translanguaging raises pressing concerns about reception among readers in composition and the academy. With those concerns in mind, I want to consider, in closing, the implications when writers choose or refuse to include textual cues to make their linguistic innovations readily intelligible by foregrounding their alternative meanings. After I encouraged Shiwei in our conference to make her translingual phrase in this literary analysis as reader-friendly as possible, she chose to signal to her readers by placing scare quotes around her unconjugated form of appreciate and subsequently explaining her dual usages of the verbal and adjectival forms of appreciate. Canagarajah (2006) has spoken of such translations for readers as "a form of compromise" that acknowledges the writer's awareness of "using the structure in a peculiar way for a unique rhetorical purpose" (p. 610). Might creative writers, however, sometimes leave their meaning implicit for the close reader of their essay to infer as Xiao has expected readers to infer, from his eschewal of the possessive punctuation in "fancy people dignity," fancy people's lack of self-possessed dignity? Would another reader have understood Xiao's intention without access to his oral elaborations in our conference? And, if not, if translingual writers choose not to

qualify their meaningful deviations, then what are the institutional risks for teachers who support them and do not edit or downgrade such experimental rhetoric, diction, grammar, and syntax? To what extent should writers "compromise" to accommodate "autonomous literacy ideologies" (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 135) by adding explanatory footnotes or incorporating parenthetical cues about their unconventional language and grammar in order to increase the likelihood that their translingual practices are immediately intelligible to wider audiences, qualified in terms of assessment, and acceptable as writing for the university?

But what should writing be for in the university? Should it protect the ephemeral rule(s) of a mythical monolingual version of English, mythical because we know in the past it was created by the tongues of Germanic and Norman French invaders? And mythical today because we know that the evolution of Englishes continues rapidly as the real and virtual worlds flatten. As Englishes proliferate and attain official status and become commonly used across the globe (Crystal, 2003; Galloway & Rose, 2015), our graduates will increasingly need to be practiced at engaging with emergent linguistic forms, and translanguaging enables both our international and domestic students to develop their competencies in "negotiated literacy," preparing them as writers, readers and speakers for the growing hybrid forms—of Chinglish, Spanglish, Arablish, and others—among billions of people who use indigenous Englishes everyday as linguistic currencies. Might composition's disciplinary parameters be elastic enough to encompass translanguaging that blurs the generic boundaries between essay and poetic prose? Might composition be the "undisciplined" field (Banks, 2015; Horner, 2016) that leads the academy to recognize and engage the realities of global communication flourishing outside its ivory doors? If the university is willing to open itself to translingual dispositions, then face-to-face conferences will be crucial, for extended conversations in conference enable our students to translanguage meaningfully and with confidence, unlike limited margin and end-comments on an essay draft. Face-to-face dialogues allow instructors the chance to question our students' deviations, to learn from our students about the linguistic and cultural roots of these linguistic and rhetorical idiosyncrasies, and to encourage our students to see them as potential innovations, imagining together the meaningful implications of the compressed concepts that translanguaging can convey.

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