

# MIXED FORMS OF ACADEMIC DISCOURSE: A CONTINUUM OF LANGUAGE POSSIBILITY

*ABSTRACT: "Academic Discourse," "Hybrid Discourse" – these are contested terms. Recently, scholars in composition studies have begun to question and problematize the issues of writing in academic discourse communities. While scholars are now publishing in alternative discourses, including "mixed" or "hybrid" forms, college students are only beginning to find acceptable spaces for their alternative writing styles in academia. This is especially true for inexperienced writers and those for whom English is a second language. If hybrid discourse were viewed along a continuum of linguistic and cultural possibility instead of according to its proximity to the dichotomies of academic/norm and nonacademic/"other," the term "hybrid discourse" and the writing it describes could become both useful and valued in the academy.*

Broadly defined, a "hybrid discourse" is a mix of home and school languages. A term as slippery as "academic discourse," hybrid discourse was loosely defined in a 1999 article by Patricia Bizzell as non-academic discourses blending with traditional academic discourses ("Hybrid" 11). In a later article, Bizzell asserted that

to prepare students now for success in school, it may no longer be necessary to inculcate traditional academic discourse. Rather, what is needed is more help for students in experimenting with discourse forms that mix the academic and non-academic, or what I have called "hybrid" forms of academic discourse. ("Basic Writing" 5-6)

Bizzell refined this position by questioning the term "hybrid" because it is "at once too essentializing and too suggestive of independent "'parent' strands" ("Basic Writing" 4). She also advocated a stronger classroom pedagogy – that writing instructors should find ways to encourage "mixed" forms in their teaching ("Basic Writing" 4). While I agree with Bizzell's pedagogical admonition, I would like to propose that the term "hybrid discourse" need not be as negative as Bizzell claims. If we were able to change our perspective and think of hybrids as dis-

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course forms along a continuum rather than as mixed forms between a dichotomy of academic and nonacademic discourses, perhaps neither the term “hybrid discourse” nor the acceptance of alternative discourse use in college classrooms would be as problematic. This notion is of primary importance to college students in the margins for whom English is a second language and for under-prepared basic writers, whose discourse is measured for correctness against “traditional” academic discourse, whatever that may be. When viewed on a continuum that extends from the completely traditional mainstream to the entirely idiosyncratic and unintelligible, the discourses of under-prepared writers could be viewed as attempts at meaningful discourse rather than as failures, and their true value would emerge.

Besides Bizzell, scholars such as Mina Shaughnessy, Peter Elbow, David Bartholomae, Joseph Harris, Min-Zhan Lu, bell hooks, Mike Rose, and Elspeth J. Stuckey have problematized the term “academic discourse.” In fact, I would argue that no such entity exists; the term defies definition. Bizzell’s list of the characteristics of traditional academic discourse, an extension of the work of Helen Fox, although perhaps the most comprehensive compilation, is not exhaustive (“Hybrid” 10-11). To rehearse a taxonomy of traditional academic characteristics would seem to imply a fixed unchanging entity, which is a myth (Bizzell, “Basic Writing” 6). Furthermore, since discourses are inherently “ideological,” composing a list of traditional academic discourse traits would serve to reinforce its privileged sociopolitical position within the academy. Therefore, I choose not to produce such a list. The heteroglossic nature and shifting characteristics of academic discourse, whether in the scholarship produced within composition studies or in the writing of first-year college students, render the term nearly useless. When alternative discourse forms are juxtaposed against traditional notions of academic discourse, they are viewed as unacceptable violations representative of the marginal voice of the “other.” The traditional reaction of college instructors has been to force students to transform writer-centered discourse into reader-centered discourse. However, mixed or hybrid forms of discourse might be deemed acceptable for doing intellectual work in institutions of higher learning when viewed along a continuum of language use. I propose to advance this argument by showcasing the acceptable use of and value of “hybrid” discourses by scholars in various disciplines—composition/rhetoric, discourse theory, linguistics, and cultural and postcolonial studies—and by illustrating the possibility of acceptable student writing in college. The ideology represented by such a stance would serve to resist the notions of privilege and power assumed by traditional academic discourses.

This showcase of hybrid discourse scholars is not intended to be comprehensive; rather, I have selected representative examples from

various disciplines and included writers and scholars fore-grounded by Bizzell in her ongoing alternative discourse work in academia. Bakhtin is perhaps the first scholar, in discourse theory, to have used the word "hybrid." He locates discourse on a continuum of language use that highlights the value of a variety of complex, purposeful utterances. Bakhtin posits the term "hybrid construction" to describe a double-accented, double-styled structure that has "enormous significance in novel style" (not poetic style) (Bakhtin 304-05). This utterance belongs to a single speaker but "actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two 'languages,' two semantic and axiological belief systems" (Bakhtin 304). According to Bakhtin, who denies the existence of individual voice, an utterance is multivocal, a polyphony socially constructed from many voices, which are in an internal dialogic (Halasek 30-31). Furthermore, there are no "formal" boundaries between these voices and languages (Bakhtin 305). "Hybridization" is, therefore, the mixing of two or more different linguistic consciousnesses — an encounter — within a single concrete utterance, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor (Bakhtin 358, 429). It is precisely "between 'languages,'" "on the borderline between oneself and the other," that the individual consciousness lies (Bakhtin 293).

It is my contention that the inseparable mixing of oneself and the other(s) operates hazily along a continuum of consciousness and empowerment, the positioning of the subject ever moving back and forth as one reveals and takes control over more and less of the true self. This "ideological becoming" — a continuum — is a "process of selectively assimilating the words of others," a "struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions, and values" (Bakhtin 341, 346). While these discourses continue to "interact or inform one another," the subject is liberated by the ability to freely choose the discourse(s) employed rather than be unconditionally bound to another discourse (Halasek 109). Under-prepared writers, whose discourse may be viewed as idiosyncratic and unintelligible, could then be valued as writers not only learning to write but as human beings writing to learn, consciously making choices and mixing discourse forms.

According to Bartholomae, a developmental writer lacks choices, options, and control ("The Study of Error" 255). How will a basic writer learn to make choices if never presented with any? As a first-year writing teacher, one of my goals is to help students be critical thinkers, i.e., make choices and ask the right questions (Maimon 116-17). At my institution, where under-prepared writers are mainstreamed with prepared writers, every student and his/her discourse is valued, although some need more guidance in making critical "writerly" choices. We

require a one-credit writing workshop to supplement English 101 for inexperienced writers. In any case, the ability to make effective choices simultaneously empowers beginning writers, resists the political and linguistic hegemony of academia, and encourages the emergent self of the writer. To prepare my students to succeed in other disciplines rather than do them a disservice, I further stress the importance of asking the right questions in each discipline, where they are likely to find that all things are not valued equally and they must make appropriate choices.

Throughout his seminal essay "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin characterizes discourses as public and private, external and internal, centripetal and centrifugal (heteroglossia), direct and indirect, literary and everyday, personal and impersonal, authorial and "other," and authoritative and persuasive. The interaction (interanimation) between these diametrically opposed systems creates a dialogic tension—a resistant "internally persuasive" language—that results in multi-layered creative relationships with new contexts and new perspectives ("newer ways to mean") (Bakhtin 314, 345-47). The resulting "languages of heteroglossia," "a unique artistic system of languages," or "*images* of languages," become mirrors that reflect aspects which are "broader, more multi-leveled, containing more and varied horizons than would be available to a single language or a single mirror" (Bakhtin 414-16). Intentional hybrid styles have as their goal "the illumination of one language by means of another, the carving-out of a living image of another language" (Bakhtin 361). This purposeful mixing of languages results in an enriched language with the potential to produce meaningful discourse both creative and intellectual that would otherwise not be possible in the expression of only one language.

Frequently, meaning springs from tension, both in life and in reading and writing. The apprehension basic writers feel because of their failure to meet the expectations of any, much less all, of their various academic discourse communities should be viewed as an opportunity for discovery. Carol Severino compares the clash between basic writers and academia to "hybrid snack 'nachos' [...] tortilla chips coated with melted, processed American cheese" (5). The chips and the cheese (artificial and not particularly nutritional, like academic discourse) may not seem compatible at first glance, but in fact, when mixed together, their individual flavors are enhanced. I contend that the intentional mixing of discourse forms is similarly unconventional yet appetizing. Severino's notion of commonality and intersection lends itself to the idea of a discourse continuum rather than to a relationship of discourses in opposition. Furthermore, inexperienced writers would not be evaluated by their proximity to and approximation of a particular discourse. Taking on a new dialect, such as SAE, is likely to result in more production errors, especially in early drafts, than texts written in home vernacular. For basic writers, particularly, the initial "freedom from

failure" may be the catalyst for achieving confidence and control over subsequent texts, with both the writer and the writing being transformed in various ways in the process.

The acceptance of hybrid discourses for accomplishing serious academic work will revolutionize the academy and create new and interesting intellectual possibilities. However, in order to decrease tension and facilitate the negotiation of students across distinct academic discourse communities, all college teachers should clearly voice their expectations and model the writing conventions valued in their particular disciplines. Since writing teachers are usually the first to meet beginning college students, they need to purposely communicate that reading and writing allow writers to learn more about themselves, their feelings, their ideas, their language use, and their writing process, things they might never discover any other way except through the cognitive and metacognitive reflections of the inner mirror of language use. As they are confronted with (and helped to make) writerly choices and gain control over texts, developmental writers, especially, will achieve confidence and experience success in the college classroom. They will see that they are able to accomplish intellectual work that is valued.

My first-year writing classroom includes speakers of SAE, English as a second language, AAVE, regional Georgia dialects, and bilingual speakers. I try to communicate to my students that all of these languages, dialects, and varieties are valued and that we as a writing community are enriched by the linguistic and cultural mixture. One way I do this is to have individual students share their writing within our local discourse community and in published collections on our college website. We also read multi-cultural texts written in multiple discourse styles and genres, including film, some in home vernacular (from *Making Literature Matter*, edited by John Schilb and John Clifford, and supplemental texts). If such hybrid texts are acceptable as models, why must student drafts be transformed? As Bizzell has pointed out, no one speaks SAE ("The Future").

In my writing classroom, we continually point out language differences, we explore the possibilities of language use, and we talk about the importance of language choices. Furthermore, clashes of culture and language are foregrounded as students read texts against each other and against their own experiences. Assigning mixed discourse forms a place on a discourse continuum rather than a value derived from their distance to/from acceptable/unacceptable positions frees teachers from having to valorize discourses and allows us to appreciate the uniqueness of each as they illuminate our multilingual classroom conversations. I also stress to my beginning writers that the individuals who belong to each particular discourse community and the languages they use make it unique, not only without but also within the discipline of English, including my own different sections of English 101

and English 102. To succeed in college and at work, students must learn to identify the characteristics and expectations of each discourse community they wish to (or are forced to) join. One of my goals in first-year writing is to have my students "try on" various reading and writing strategies in order to fill their reading and writing toolboxes with tools that might be helpful to them in the many, sometimes contradictory, discourse communities they will be asked to negotiate both at school and in the workplace.

It might be helpful to revisit Volosinov's bridge metaphor for the utterance as a two-sided act "thrown between myself and another" (qtd. in Halasek 44). Hybrid discourse is best imagined as a bridge (a connection, a continuum) between travelers (conversants) free to travel unrestricted and unlimited in either direction. Both prepared and under-prepared college writers should have the freedom to travel this bridge of discourse in either direction. Further, the value of travel in both the literal and metaphorical senses should not be underestimated, as wide experiences broaden not only our cultural but our linguistic horizons as well. From the complex interaction and mixing of discourses, possibilities arise for new ways of thinking, new ways of doing ("creativity"), and enrichment not otherwise possible in a mythical monolithic language. Certainly, experimenting with various mixtures of styles and dialects will better prepare our students to make effective choices in the multiple rhetorical situations in the overlapping discourse communities they will encounter in academia and on the job.

Many scholars have argued for broadening the concept of acceptable academic discourse(s), investigating new forms, and accepting alternatives discourses within the academy (Bizzell, Chase, Bridwell-Bowles, Sledd, Pixton, Eskey, Delpit, Bishop, Helen Fox, Tom Fox, Schroeder). Bizzell has demonstrated how in recent years academic scholars (Rose, Helen Fox, Gilyard, and Villanueva) have revolutionized their "successful, published academic" discourses by employing many or all of the traits she has identified as characteristics of "hybrid discourse," such as writing in variant forms of English and using non-traditional shared cultural references and assumptions, personal experience, "offhand refutation," "appropriative history," humor, and indirection ("Hybrid" 16-17). These hybrid discourse forms are mixtures of personal narratives, poetry, prose, and commentary, as well as languages and dialects. The acceptance of alternative discourses and mixed forms has changed the way the academy views and writes "academic discourse." Bizzell considers well-done, deliberate hybrid discourse to be an enriched discourse that has the capacity for accomplishing reflective, dense, rigorous, serious intellectual work that could not be done in traditional discourse ("Hybrid" 11, 13). As Bartholomae has pointed out, university students must "invent" themselves by ap-

propriating the language of academic discourse communities to earn the right to speak and enter the conversation ("Inventing the University"). As college "outsiders" try on their Bakhtinian masks (identities and languages), they are tested against the changing discourse of academic "insiders." Since these shifting discourses mix along a continuum of academic discourse, both experts and novices should have the freedom to move simultaneously along the academic discourse continuum instead of being separated as they adapt and mix home and school languages to the intellectual work of the academy.

Of course, just because I say so doesn't make it so. Folks in disciplines outside of English (and some inside of English) do not and will not value mixed discourse forms for intellectual work. We can propose to analyze published texts in other disciplines and make other scholars and teachers aware of their own use of hybrid discourses in their published scholarship (as, for example, at CCCC 2001 convention in Denver, Bizzell, in an address entitled "The Future of College Composition," analyzed an article written in hybrid discourse by Joel Williamson in the *Journal of American History*). We can share how our students are using mixed discourse forms to do intellectual work (and we are accepting them) in our classes. Perhaps this can develop from a formal discussion or from a casual conversation with a colleague commenting on the grammar, spelling, and punctuation inadequacies of their students and our responsibility as English teachers to "fix" them. We can provide models of teacher response based on the pleasure of responding to the content of student writing for colleagues who choose to value form over content. We can talk about our students as individuals and as interesting people who, through hybrid discourses, allow us glimpses into their true selves. We need to start and/or continue meaningful dialogues among our colleagues.

Discourse theorists and linguists hold similar theories about the goals of discourse and speaker/writer roles and oral versus written language (Summerfield, Britton, Horowitz and Samuels, Tannen, Lakoff); however, Brandt, Horowitz and Samuels, Tannen, and Lakoff have worked to dispel the dichotomy between oral and written ("literate") languages. Tannen, for example, refers to the "oral-literate continuum." From a linguistic perspective, an "interlanguage" resembles a hybrid discourse. Whether the "middle ground" between students' language and academic discourse is viewed as transitional or not (Kutz 393), this dynamic, overlapping, and ever-shifting interlanguage lies along a continuum between home and school languages. Harris describes how teachers might build on the "'overlap' ['polyglot'] between the students' 'common' discourses and the 'academic' ones of their teachers" to encourage a "polyphony" ("an awareness of and pleasure in the various competing discourses that make up their own") (17, 20). When viewed along a continuum in which characteristics of



oral and written — home and school — languages are mixed, a place will be opened up for hybrid discourses that serve both writer and reader. Judging hybrid discourse by the dual measuring sticks of “traditional” and “nontraditional” academic discourse — theoretically, culturally, or linguistically — will always render it “other” — “substandard,” “abnormal,” “deviant,” “a violation,” or “unacceptable.” Hybrid discourse will forever be devalued as impoverished (Kells uses the term “linguistic shame” due to “dialect misconceptions”), even as academic discourse has and will continue to change (Kells 137).

On the contrary, the rich, varied, and unique textures of discourse are to be found somewhere in-between, in the mixing of the traditional and the innovative, the personal and the impersonal; discourses that fall at both ends of the discourse continuum then become impoverished, for they reflect neither the complexity and multivocality of group nor the individual voice(s) of self. When assessed from a continuum perspective, alternative discourses are valued and not dismissed as aberrations. Hybrid discourse is the language of possibility not restriction. This is good news for basic writers, who bring valuable linguistic resources and personal experiences with them to college, which must be acknowledged rather than discounted. Inviting under-prepared writers to cross the bridge of hybrid discourse, thereby entering the conversation of the university, will serve to empower them; the alternative is to silence them by continuing to measure their discourse by its distance from a pre-determined (yet undefined and unstable) point (academic discourse).

Bizzell coined the term “hybrid discourse” by borrowing the word “hybrid” from postcolonial theory because it upsets the dichotomy between academic discourse and students’ home discourses and implies that discursive and cultural boundaries are blurred (“Basic Writing” 7). However, cultural and postcolonial scholars have negative associations with “hybridity,” a term linked for them to the context of colonial subject. For example, Deepika Bahri and Mary Vasudeva call the hybrid “the exiled, the dislocated, the multi-located” in a “condition of betweenness” sliding between identities (9, 13). Bahri and Vasudeva assert that postcolonial theorists rely on the “inadequately nuanced binary colonizer/colonized” despite their efforts to resist dichotomous constructions that force postcolonialists to write back to Eurocentrism (138-39, 152). They challenge postcolonialists to produce “a discourse free from colonial reminiscing,” as the colonizer/colonized (us and them) dichotomy because “it casts the ‘postcolonial’ as passive victim and encourages a culture of blame and self-pity” (Bahri and Vasudeva 145). Furthermore, since postcolonial terms such as “hybridity” tend to refer to metropolitan locations, thereby obscuring those in the Third World, the term becomes essentialist, homogenizing whole groups and reinforcing stereotypical attitudes and failure to



genuinely investigate other cultures and voices (Bahri and Vasudeva 142, 154). But Bahri and Vasudeva do not suggest that these terms be abandoned; rather, they admonish us to confront their inherent contradictions and open them up to new readings (152). They charge that "the persistent reading of culturally 'Other' texts for their 'difference' and distance from the dominant culture could foster rather than erase divisions," and they challenge us to "activate the continuum rather than the polarities between binaries" (Bahri and Vasudeva 154, 158). This call is parallel to my continuum argument for hybrid discourse, which seeks to abandon the oppositional binaries of academic and nonacademic discourses. Rather than reject the term "hybrid discourse," we ought to problematize then embrace it as the discourse of possibility not limitation.

When Homi Bhabha refers to the growing number of cultural hybrid communities, he speaks of oppression, assimilation, and resistance, the "defined" and the "not defined." Hybridity is an in-between reality, a halfway point of non-definition (neither one or other) (Bhabha 6-14). In this "hybrid gap," where the colonial subject takes place and its subaltern position is ascribed, there is no relief, only anxiety and anguish associated with "vacillating boundaries" drawn with "subversive political lines" (Bhabha 58-59). This discriminatory "ambivalent space," signifying the displacement of value, is inhabited by "other," the hybrid split of the self (Bhabha 112-14). Bhabha contends that the bearers of a hybrid identity are caught in discontinuous time; however, he challenges us to explore the "Third Space," the in-between space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture, a space of translation free from "the politics of polarity" where the others of our selves may emerge (38-39). Bhabha thinks of this space as a passage, borrowing from Benjamin's idea that "the important thing about translation is to focus on the continuum of transformation" (Olson 14-15). This passage implies movement on three levels: spatially, as in opening up a space; as in a rite of passage (transition); and as an inscription (holding the moment of transition) (Olson 14). For Bhabha, hybridization is "the process of negotiation," a "move away from the notion of the subject of recognition toward the subject of enunciation" in which one is both subject and object at once (living in "double-time") (Olson 18-19, 23, 31). By opening up a physical space for hybrid discourse in college classrooms, beginning writers, especially, will be helped to negotiate through their passages from outsider to insider and make their unique marks on the ensuing conversations along the journey.

However, this "cross-boundary process" is fraught with tension (Olson 20, 25). Although Bhabha labels hybridity as a "zone of nowhere-ness," as Bizzell has pointed out, this zone is a very real place, a "contact zone" defined by Mary Louise Pratt as a "social space where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery,

or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt qtd in Bizzell, "Basic Writing" 10). This space is not free of conflict, as "border-crossing can be dangerous and potentially fatal" (Bahri 39). As a discourse with the potential to discover, negotiate, and revise hybrid identity, I believe the language of the hybrid Third Space — a shifting continuum of cultural and linguistic (and ethnic) mixing, meaning, value, and possibility — is hybrid discourse.

Scholars in cultural and postcolonial studies (Anzaldúa, Spivak, Mohanty, Bhabha) have called "hybrid" people — people (in the words of Jacqueline Jones Royster)

who either have the capacity by right of history and development, or who might have created the capacity by right of history and development, to move with dexterity across cultural boundaries, to make themselves comfortable, and to make sense amid the chaos of difference. (37)

While this hybridization process allows for survival, Royster contends that it also breeds the emergence of genius. The fusion of cultural and linguistic (and ethnic) boundaries, like hybrid discourse, "allows for the development of a peculiar expertise that extends one's range of abilities well beyond ordinary limits, and it supports the opportunity for the development of new and remarkable creative expression" (Royster 37). Just as the agronomist chooses the best traits to yield a unique and better breed, hybrid discourse mixes the best of academic and nonacademic characteristics. Further, if our interpersonal and cross-cultural goals are to exchange perspectives, negotiate meaning, and create understanding, hybrid discourse is the perfect language for our conversation of cooperation and collaboration. Hybrid discourse may be the vehicle to achieve these same goals in college classrooms.

Gloria Anzaldúa creates an evocative hybrid voice in her writing. In *Borderlands/La Frontera*, she refers to herself as a "hybrid progeny," a mixture of races. However, "rather than resulting in an inferior being, [...] [this racial mixture] provides a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool" (Anzaldúa 77). Although there may be a "*choque* (cultural collision) between cultures, the new *mestiza* can emerge with *la conciencia* (a new consciousness) [Freire's conscientização?], a breaking down of the "subject-object duality" that keeps her a prisoner (Anzaldúa 80). Anzaldúa illustrates how by true faces we will be known:

I am visible — see this Indian face — yet I am invisible. I both blind them with my beak nose and am their blind spot. But I exist, we exist. They'd like to think I have melted in the pot. But I haven't, we haven't. (Anzaldúa 108)

Anzaldúa views her self, her culture, and her language along a continuum of mixed changing images ("hybridized metaphors") rather than as fixed points of heritage. From the resulting tension created by this rich, continual mixing and ambiguity of the private and the public, new but true identities are released.

In the Preface to *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa explains how the codeswitching between Spanish and English languages (and dialects) she writes in results in the cross-pollination and revitalization of the languages. This new way of speaking illuminates her feelings and ideas in a way not possible in only one language. A reflection of her hybrid self, she describes her writing ("a creative act") as a "mosaic," "montage," "weaving," "hybridization," "beaded work," "assemblage," "crazy dance" (Anzaldúa 66, 73). Clearly, Anzaldúa's distinctive fusion of language, self, and meaning could only have been achieved through her unique hybrid discourse. In fact, she claims that living in a Borderland state "is what makes poets write and artists create" (Anzaldúa 95). Anzaldúa is the "new Mestiza," a successful inhabitant of the Third Space, "the borderland space that is home to her multiple identities and voices" (Lunsford 44).

Anzaldúa explains how, through the cracks between two worlds, borderland residents have access to other worlds" (Anzaldúa 237). It is in this space that she finds her "non-binary identity," an identity always in process (Bakhtin's "ideological becoming"), a fusion of self and other (the peripheral 'I's within a person, the personal 'I's, and the collective 'we' of her ethnic community) (Lunsford 44, 47). Anzaldúa feels the ambivalence, perplexity, strife, insecurity, indecisiveness, and restlessness of the border struggle:

Because I, a *mestiza*,  
continually walk out of one culture  
and into another,  
because I am in all cultures at the same time,  
alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,  
me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.  
*Estoy norteadada por todas las voces que me hablan simultáneamente.*  
(Anzaldúa 99-100)

(A soul between two worlds, three, four, my head is buzzing with the contradictions. I am steered to the north by all the voices that talk to me simultaneously) [my translation]

In a continuation of *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa refers to the "Nepantla," a "Nahuatl word for the space between two bodies of water, the space between two worlds" (Anzaldúa 237). She describes this limited space as "a space where you are not this or that but where

you are changing. You haven't got into the new identity yet and haven't left the old identity behind either—you are in a kind of transition," which is "very awkward, uncomfortable and frustrating ... because you are in the midst of transformation" (Anzaldúa 237). Anzaldúa uses the Spanish pronoun for "we" (women), "*nosotras*," to disrupt binary oppositions and to illustrate that for her, there is no such thing as "other." "Us" ("*nos*") and "them" ("*otras*") are interchangeable, for "[t]he other is in you, the other is in me" (Lunsford 52). From within this Third Space, Anzaldúa's language—a reflection of her blurred identities—has emerged. For her, language and identity are inseparable; she says, "I am my language" (Lunsford 45). Nepantla is not only a place where identities get created but where "reality gets constructed" and "knowledge gets produced," a concept that is "articulated as a process of writing" (Anzaldúa 237). This hybrid language of possibility results in "new and remarkable creative expression," to use Royster's words, a rich mixture of genres—a "Mestiza Rhetoric" (Lunsford 45). Should we deny our students the same remarkable possibilities of being, creating, and doing through their writing?

In my earlier work, I have demonstrated how a beginning college student successfully used hybrid discourse (as defined by Bizzell) to negotiate various academic discourse communities English, Speech, Broadcasting, Radio-TV across the curriculum and how he was unsuccessful in those communities that did not accept his unique, creative discourse, such as History (Hebb). I analyzed the writing of Jeremy, a student of mine in English 101 at Texas A&M University-Commerce, across several disciplines over a period of two years (and have his permission to cite his work).

Jeremy's Essay #6 for English 101, "Voice—The Ambrosia of Language," is a response to the question "How is language a form of resistance and/or power? The writing assignment required at least five total citations from the essays "From Outside, In" by Barbara Mellix and "From Silence to Words: Writing as Struggle" by Min-Zhan Lu and the film *Oleanna*. Excerpts from the beginning and end of this essay, written in hybrid discourse, effectively illustrate the importance of language for empowering (or silencing) personal voice (and the identity of the writer):

Everyone must have their say in this and that these days. Got to argue the belief of oneself...right. So how can someone get the attention of another to be heard?

**Beep...**What is a voice Alex? That is correct. a voice is power and can be used in the speaking or the writing sense. It's the key to take an opponent and rip out their beating heart and shove it in their face verbally.

The battle of the voices is an ugly one. I had an experience in one of these with a high school junior English teacher who we will name "Mrs. I only like a select few." [...]

[...]

So now I leave you with this fact that the voice is very powerful, creative, and can be silenced by the outside foes. So be on your toes wizards and warriors. Keep fighting for the forces of good and protect your vocal cords and scrolls for the War of Language is never over... (Drake Essay #6; bracketed ellipses indicate omissions, while others occurred in the student's original)

In this essay, Jeremy clearly demonstrates how his hybrid mix of home and school languages enriches his discourse and advances his argument. His nontraditional cultural references, comparing language use to an intellectual contest (like the game show "Jeopardy") and to physical combat and a joust (offhand refutation), as well as his colloquial language and humor, add new, insightful, colorful perspectives on the hegemony of academia. Furthermore, reading his personal experience against the experiences of Mellick, Lu, and Carol in *Oleanna* illuminates his forceful, resistant voice and reinforces his argument for the power of language in a way that would not have been possible in entirely traditional academic discourse. We ought to validate the sometimes marginal spaces inhabited by hybrid discourse writers such as Jeremy and invite them to enter into and illuminate the intellectual conversations in institutions of higher learning rather than dismiss them as irrelevant. Along the continuum, there are spaces for experts and novices alike to mutually enrich one another's discourse.

The term "hybrid discourse" has a rich, complex, and multi-layered history and context. Whether viewed through the lenses of compositionists, rhetoricians, discourse theorists, linguists, or postcolonialists, hybrid discourse is the discourse of possibility not limitation. Language and identity are inseparable. In some sense, we are all linguistic and cultural hybrids, continually revised and constructed by many voices, both collective and individual. We should acknowledge and revel in the polyphony that shapes us. As long as we are careful to equate all discourses along the discourse continuum with heteroglossia, the term "hybrid discourse" will be valid. By abandoning a dualist perspective and perceiving mixed discourse(s) along a continuum of conversation, we could value hybrid languages and the people who speak them. These are goals shared by those who study and teach both language and culture. This theoretical and pedagogical

cal move would help to bridge gaps between languages, people, ideologies, and experiences both within and without the academy. Think of the possibilities!

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