

Toward Translingual Realities in Composition: (Re)Working Local Language Representations and Practices, by Nancy Bou Ayash. UP of Colorado, 2019. 254 pp.

Reviewed by Demet Yigitbilek, Illinois State University

A highly addressed topic in the field of composition and applied linguistics (Canagarajah; Horner et al. Motha et al.), translingualism and translingual literacy, Canagarajah states, look at the understanding of production, circulation, and reception of texts that are always mobile, drawing from diverse languages, symbol systems, and modalities of communication that involve inter-community negotiations (“Negotiating Translingual Literacy”). To add to these conversations, Nancy Bou Ayash’s recent book, *Toward Translingual Realities in Composition: (Re)Working Local Language Representations and Practices*, aims “to make visible the dynamic negotiations of language-ideological tensions ... to develop a richly textured and more useful translingual understanding of language and composition ... by advancing the translingual paradigm in superdiverse literate contexts” (xi-xiii). To do so, she approaches the “conflicting yet co-existing language ideologies and their unique and complex negotiations”—both in the U.S. (Seattle) and outside (Beirut)—and the teaching of academic writing in these contexts for the primary audience of writing researchers, teachers, and administrators (6).

Ayash studies young writers from two cities that she defines as superdiverse, linguistically and socio-culturally, and presents both the differences and unexpected similarities through her five-year transnational ethnographic research. In doing so, she acknowledges her multiple positionality and intersecting roles as a writer, researcher, teacher, transnational individual, and activist in taking on the complex task of addressing the diverse manifestations of various language ideologies in sometimes conflicting sociolinguistic realities and their material effects.

In the introduction, Ayash details the terminology she will use in the book, a much-appreciated and needed strategy for such a broad topic. She gives her rationale for terms like superdiverse (“as a cover term more tuned to the complexity, unpredictability, and messiness of the dynamics of language and cultural difference”), monolingualism, multilingualism, translingualism, and postmonolingualism, and pays respect to all the scholars who have coined and expanded their uses (13).

Chapter one, “Language Ideologies in Teaching Writing: A Language Representations and/as Practices Perspective,” details dominant and conflicting language ideologies: monolingualism; multilingualism, an alternative yet “a surrogate to monolingualism” (42); and translingualism, a counterhegemonic

approach to how language(s) are represented to show how ideologies impact our language-related activities. Starting with excerpts from three cases where the instructors show their ideologies in the way they respond to moments of language difference in students' writing, Ayash identifies key features, limitations, and affordances of these three orientations fully; this is a very helpful strategy not just for novices in the field but for experts, as well, to fill the gaps in understanding.

Chapter two, "Working Translingual Language Representations and/as Practices," draws from sociolinguistics, and Ayash highlights the fluid and mobile nature of language. She urges readers to pause and look at the concrete practices in which language users engage and the possibilities translingual approaches can offer. To make the complexities and reality of language use clearer, she presents three metaphors—the rhizomatic banyan tree, moving traffic, and a chaotic arrangement of overhead electricity cables models—to describe transdirectionality and transculturality as well as transversality of networks of sociocultural and historical meanings of interpretive possibilities (50).

Following such grounding theorizations, in chapter three, "Unpacking Local Language Representations and/as Practices: Portraits of Postmonolingual Tensions from Beirut," Ayash gives a detailed description of sociolinguistics in the educational context of current-day Beirut, and in chapter four, of Seattle. She examines how students in such seemingly different contexts negotiate their writings in accordance with the complex and dynamic sociocultural, linguistic, and educational situations. Her analysis of the local contexts in these chapters demonstrates how young writers in her study engage in multiple language representations—which at times conflict with their identities and desires based mostly on the local networks at play—causing them to (re) negotiate their orientations towards language in diverse interactions in daily life and educational settings.

After presenting clear, detailed pictures of the cityscapes of Beirut and Seattle, in chapter five, "Translingual Activism: Turning up the Volume of Critical Translation in Writing Pedagogy," Ayash forges an activist path with translation as an analytical tool for meaning-making. She sheds light on the activism that translingualism affords for writing instruction in deliberate and strategic ways and explores its possibilities and challenges. Detailing her ongoing project on translation as re-writing, Ayash invites writing teacher-researchers to collaborate in creating a bridge by moving away from the traditional and limited ways of defining translation practice toward practices that enable not only multilingual students but also monolinguals to view language as dynamic, fluid, and negotiable—all of which are key points in understanding translingualism. The course design she shares, with her assignment prompts and student responses, gives a detailed picture of how this strategy can benefit many students in first

year writing by extending the practical implications of a translingual approach that so far has been highly insufficient. To this end, her critical and practical approach to translingualism in composition classrooms presents a replicable implementation of a highly valued but underrepresented ideology in practice. The book concludes with observational insights presented as building blocks for expanding a) our understanding of translingualism ideology in language and b) language diversity as embodied literate practices influenced directly by a complex network of contextual features.

Ayash sets a solid ground for her arguments in the entirety of the book through detailed descriptions and expansions of key terminology and ideologies that influence how we view language and diverse language practices. Her research in two local contexts presents how these language ideologies are enacted in so many (super)diverse ways due to various complex networks. Ayash also shows her stance clearly and expands on the work of many scholars: applied linguists, sociolinguists, and compositionists. In doing so, her work highlights how deeply English monolingualism is rooted not only in U.S. composition classrooms but also in different parts of the world where English is used and taught as a foreign or second language. Her research also clearly demonstrates the heterogeneity of language users who can seem so similar yet show a huge degree of variety in the way they view language and language difference in different rhetorical contexts. Through a translingual approach and translation as a writing strategy used in her activism, she also exemplifies how translingual ideology can be taken up and used in predominantly monolingual classrooms. Although the course design she forwards in chapter five may not be so easily implemented in any first year writing classroom in the US—her study took place in two superdiverse cities—it still provides readers with a much-needed practical example and resource to increase student awareness on diverse linguistic practices and empower them to express themselves by focusing on their agency and creativity.

Lastly, her suggested pedagogical practices are invaluable for furthering the scholarship in translingualism in writing studies. This book serves as significant in challenging the long-held Standard Written English monolingualism and therefore can be taught in graduate level courses in English departments and with undergraduate students who are prospective teachers working with a diverse body of students in US contexts.

Normal, Illinois

Works Cited

Canagarajah, Suresh A., editor. *Literacy as Translingual Practice: Between Communities and Classrooms*. Routledge, 2013.

- Canagarajah, Suresh. "Negotiating Translingual Literacy: An Enactment." *Research in the Teaching of English*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2013, pp 40–67.
- Horner, Bruce, et al. "Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach." *College English*, vol. 73, no. 3, 2011, pp. 303–21.
- Motha, Suhanthie, et al. "Translinguistic Identity-as-Pedagogy: Implications for Teacher Education." *International Journal of Innovation in English Language Teaching and Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2012, pp. 13–28.