Brian Ray

Review Essay

“It’s Beautiful”: Language Difference as a New Norm in College Writing Instruction

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

Translingual Practice: Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations
A. Suresh Canagarajah

Shaping Language Policy in the U.S.: The Role of Composition Studies
Scott Wible

Other People’s English: Code-Meshing, Code-Switching, and African American Literacy
Vershawn Ashanti Young, Rusty Barrett, Y’Shanda Young-Rivera, and Kim Brian Lovejoy
During the 2014 Super Bowl, Coca-Cola aired a multilingual commercial titled “It’s Beautiful,” featuring a version of “America the Beautiful” sung in four different languages. The commercial may not have seemed controversial until social media lit up with racist and monolingualist assertions of “English Only,” criticizing Coca-Cola as unpatriotic. Some Twitter users went so far as to declare, “I will never drink another Coke product as long as I live,” or “We speak English in the USA. Get over it.” Talking heads such as Rush Limbaugh and Glen Beck accused the company of dividing Americans by confronting them with the reality of a linguistically diverse nation. Meanwhile, supporters emerged on social as well as mainstream media, including MSNBC and The Colbert Report. Coca-Cola responded to the uproar by airing an extended version of “It’s Beautiful” during the Winter Olympics opening ceremony. Talk about guts.

Controversy over the “It’s Beautiful” commercial illustrates a paradox in U.S. culture, one reflected across educational institutions domestically and perhaps even globally. On the one hand, multilingualism is gaining acceptance as commonplace in public discourse, and researchers in our discipline are acknowledging language difference as no longer marginal but mainstream within and beyond institutional contexts (Horner, NcCamp, and Donahue). Moreover, researchers have offered new terms such as code-meshing (Young; Canagarajah, “Place,” “Toward”) and translingualism (Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur; Canagarajah, “Multilingual”) to account for the mixing of dialects and languages that occurs in language users’ everyday interactions. Even more recently, Jay Jordan’s Redesigning Composition for Multilingual Realities has highlighted the creativity and innovation of multilingual writers that native speakers often misjudge as evidence of incomplete mastery. According to Jordan, deviation from standard usage “may even lead to more elegant and locally appropriate language” (68).

Despite these advances, resistance still emanates from a vocal minority who insist on maintaining a myth of linguistic homogeneity (Matsuda). Of course, those who contest the norming of language difference are not merely angry tweeters—they include educators and policy makers whose decisions have material consequences for students. Researchers have articulated the importance of countering such public and institutional misconceptions about language through our work in classrooms, professional journals, conferences, meetings, blogs, listservs, websites, and newspapers. Doing so has been part of composition’s mission since the 1974 CCCC position statement on Students’ Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL).
The norming of language difference is an issue shared across the four titles under review in this essay. Each book provides a perspective on linguistic diversity’s inevitable yet tumultuous move to the center of our teaching and research. A. Suresh Canagarajah’s monograph *Translingual Practice* focuses on the language practices of multilingual writers, with equal consideration of historical and theoretical positions in favor of a pluralistic norm. Canagarajah is interested in defining exactly what makes translingualism different from other conceptions of language, giving a persuasive argument for why composition needs this term. Scott Wible’s historical work on language policies and position statements in *Shaping Language Policy in the U.S.* questions the tendency of scholars in our discipline to criticize statements such as SRTOL for not having “done enough” to alter material conditions for linguistically diverse student populations. As Wible argues, position statements perform a valuable discursive function, nurturing rather than stifling pedagogies.

Two recent essay collections also signal the movement of language difference to the center of our discipline. Edited by Canagarajah, *Literacy as Translingual Practice* brings together notable scholars who take the ideas established in Canagarajah’s monograph *Translingual Practice* in different directions, including indigenous rhetorics, ethnography, history, postcolonialism, and pedagogy. Vershawn A. Young et al.’s coauthored book *Other People’s English* focuses largely on the value of African American English, although it joins the other titles in asserting linguistic diversity as no longer a matter of tolerating other Englishes, but of embracing them. Moreover, this book makes some important distinctions between types of code-switching and code-meshing that, like the other titles, establishes the importance of a translingual understanding of language.

**Translingualism in Theory, in Action**

A. Suresh Canagarajah’s *Translingual Practice* delivers a comprehensive theory and pedagogy of translingualism, explaining its key differences compared to sociolinguistic concepts such as multilingualism, language variation, code-switching, and code-mixing—which often treat languages and dialects as largely separate systems. Over the course of nine chapters, Canagarajah explains that translingualism may seem like an “outlandish and unnecessary” idea (19), but it enables a fresh perspective on language practices that are timeless and ubiquitous. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce and define translingualism, explaining the exigency for such a new term. In contrast to bilingual or multilingual models of language, translingualism holds that language users “[are] always in contact
with and mutually influence each other, “treat all available codes as a repertoire in their everyday communication,” and “don’t have separate competencies” (6). As Canagarajah explains, a problem with current frameworks is that they often see the use of multiple languages in the same context as interference or evidence of incomplete mastery. They do not recognize or value the creativity and ingenuity of language users who blend multiple languages and varieties.

Translingualism, however, describes language as always open and flexible—not codified into stable systems. Norms have merely “evolve[d] from local language practices sedimented over time” and so are “always open to renegotiation and reconstruction as users engage with new communicative contexts” (7). Here Canagarajah draws on research by Alastair Pennycook, in particular the idea of sedimentation, to argue for a bottom-up view of conventions. Echoing Bakhtin’s notion of dialogized heteroglossia, Canagarajah also regards monolingualism as a mere “ideological construct,” since “those who are considered monolingual,” or identify themselves as such, “are typically proficient in multiple registers, dialects, and discourses of a given language” (8). Chapter 2 expounds on the historical forces that shaped this “monolingual orientation” to language, followed by an examination of the overlaps and departures between translingualism and similar projects such as integrationist linguistics, language ideology, indexicality, performative theories of language, contact zones, communities of practice, and dynamic systems theory. Coverage of so many areas may leave readers’ heads swimming, but it explains why a new term is needed to account for how language users negotiate local and ideological aspects of language, aligning and adapting their semiotic resources across communities.

Chapters 3 and 4 of Translingual Practice situate ethnographic and historical observations about language acquisition against other research models such as World Englishes, International English, and English as a Lingua Franca. Canagarajah treats these models as different from translingualism because, while they do recognize English as inherently diverse, they still tend to treat global varieties of English (e.g., Singlish, Konglish, Indian English) as discrete systems. By contrast, Canagarajah describes language use in South Asia as “repertoire-building rather than ‘total’ competence … in individual languages” (42). Language users there “prefer to develop a range of codes for a range of purposes” (42) and habitually co-construct norms for emerging situations, producing meaning successfully even when their language choices violate preestablished rules. Chapter 3 recovers precolonial instances of translingual practices in Asia, Europe, and North America before the emergence of the “monolingual orientation” in the eighteenth century.
Readers may be most interested in the book’s second half, which takes up pedagogical issues—somewhat lacking across scholarship on language difference. Chapter 5 analyzes discourse strategies used by five international students at the University of Hertfordshire in Britain, each of whom “[doesn’t] bring uniform resources in form” but all of whom deviate from native English speaker (NES) norms in different ways. Despite their lexical and semantic deviations, the students employ various moves such as the “let it pass principle” (Firth and Wagner) in order to accomplish the task of planning a campus visit from an international diplomat. Chapter 6 turns specifically to written discourse, noting how multilingual writers have started to question the dominance of Standard Written English (SWE) in academic discourse, as well as how researchers have begun to challenge the traditionally “hands-off policy on writing” adopted by researchers in sociolinguistics. In short, sociolinguists have begun to find evidence of multidialecticism and translanguaging in written discourse as well as oral.

Those eager to see how Canagarajah’s theory building pays off may be most interested in chapter 7, which situates translingualism within recent research on literacy in composition, aligning with scholarship that defines meaning as co-constructed and therefore a matter of negotiation between writers and readers. Chapter 7 contains a most vivid account of translingualism inside a writing classroom, as Canagarajah recounts interactions between his own students in a graduate-level course on second-language writing. Over the course of several peer review workshops and discussions of a literacy autobiography, students in the class negotiate the nonstandard language choices of one Saudi Arabian student. What Canagarajah describes could serve as a loose model for teachers, the main lesson being that native English-speaking students can learn to negotiate their own expectations and understandings of translingual prose with the writer’s own rhetorical desires to perform a translingual identity—which often call for deliberate turns away from SWE norms and the intentional obscuring or delaying of meaning for effect.

As Canagarajah made clear in 2006 CCC and CE articles, he takes issue with composition scholars such as Peter Elbow, who has argued for a “two-pronged approach” allowing nonstandard varieties of language in early drafts of papers but not final ones. For Canagarajah, anything less than a fully translingual approach enacts “a model of diglossia” in which “[h]ome languages are treated as a lower form and SWE is treated as a higher variety” (112). Here Canagarajah allies with Vershawn Young in promoting the textual strategy of code-meshing, defined broadly as “bringing the different codes within the same text rather
than keeping them apart” in order to “merge diverse codes for voice, as a realization of translingual practice” (112). Canagarajah is aware that change is a slow process, but it starts with teachers encouraging students to negotiate rather than simply submit to the norms of academic writing. Readers of Canagarajah’s earlier essays in this journal, College English, and JAC will be familiar with his close-reading of Geneva Smitherman’s code-meshing of SWE and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in her 1999 article “CCCC’s Role in the Struggle for Language Rights.” But the reading has been adapted and situated within this fuller theory of translingualism and therefore is worth reading again. Interestingly, based on personal correspondence with Smitherman, Canagarajah notes that her composing process is to write in SWE first and then code-mesh during editing stages, indicating that “code-meshing is a conscious strategy” for many writers, “nothing spontaneous or unplanned” (126).

Translingual Practice contributes a unified theory of translingualism with some much-needed discussion of teaching strategies. Canagarajah’s work synthesizes research in composition and sociolinguistics in ways the discipline has not seen since the 1960s and 1970s—the period that originally produced such important documents as the SRTOL position statement. This title serves as a reminder that translingual discourse has occurred routinely throughout the history of language, and that the idea of standardizing languages into discrete varieties, contained within arbitrary geographic boundaries such as nation states, is a relatively recent and unusual development.

The Role of Language Policies in Composition
Whereas Canagarajah seeks to articulate a vibrant new theory of language difference, Scott Wible examines composition’s past in order to answer a recurring question regarding why our discipline seems to have made little headway in the struggle for students' language rights over the past forty years. In doing so, Wible finds reason to reassess our discipline’s position statements in Shaping Language Policy in the U.S.: The Role of Composition Studies. As Wible acknowledges in his introduction, the 1974 STROL position statement and subsequent 1988 National Language Policy have undergone criticism for being “long on theory but short on practice” (4). In three chapters, he offers an alternative understanding of these position statements: While they may not describe explicit pedagogical practices, they do valuable work in framing the discourse on language difference both within and beyond institutional contexts. They
serve as a call to action and proclaim the importance of attending to language issues, rather than perpetuating inaccurate conceptions of language that lead to monolingualist attitudes.

The first chapter addresses the long-held view that SRTOL has seemed to “spin in . . . circles” without answering the question, “what should we be teaching and for what purpose?” (Smith 155–56). This chapter examines archival documents regarding the Language Curriculum Research Group (LCRG), which Wible describes as “a scholarly collective that in the late 1960s and early 1970s was building on the same sociolinguistic and cultural rhetorical theories that would eventually give shape to the Students’ Right policy” (31). Operating out of New York and funded by the Ford Foundation for more than $250,000, the LCRG began auspiciously, and contrary to perceptions about SRTOL, the organization’s activities indicate that it “did in fact inspire teachers to invent pedagogies enabling students to leverage their linguistic diversity” (32). One of the LCRG’s primary aims during the early 1970s was the production of a textbook to support linguistically diverse writing instruction, as well as a teacher’s manual, weekly tutorials, and workshops for CUNY teachers. Unfortunately, the emergence of a literacy crisis during the mid-1970s, sparked by the 1975 Newsweek article “Why Johnny Can’t Write,” thwarted the group’s effort to gain traction nationally. The textbook failed to convince any publishers about the merits of linguistically diverse writing instruction.

The LCRG’s struggle to find a publisher for its textbook is a somber answer to the criticism leveled at SRTOL. Although it may be true that language difference has yet to produce a stock of replicable assignments comparable to those of process pedagogies or classical rhetoric, this absence is not solely responsible for the continued struggle to recognize students’ language rights. Wible makes a compelling point that cultural attitudes have a bearing on the activities of teachers and researchers, and that promoting language difference calls for efforts on many fronts. As such, language policies and position statements are not empty rhetoric, but vital in creating a discursive space in which pedagogy can thrive. Wible’s reading of debates during the 1960s and 1970s situates SRTOL as “craft[ing] a new identity for college composition in relation both to other disciplines and to American society” (43), and indicates that its goal was not to supply lesson plans but to push teachers “to adopt new goals for writing courses” (42) and to see that a teacher was, as Adrienne Rich once wrote, more than “a grading machine out to get [students] for mistakes in spelling and grammar” (qtd. in Wible 42).
Wible’s third and concluding chapter drives home the importance of drafting and debating language policies as part of composition’s work. If composition teachers are not active in this arena, they risk ceding valuable discursive territory to other organizations and their agendas. His reading of the 2006 National Security Language Policy illustrates this risk, revealing the hypocrisy of the Bush administration’s emphasis on the need to “develop multilingualism in more U.S. citizens,” which is nonetheless “based on troubling notions about language, identity, and the pedagogical aims of language arts teaching” (118). Despite its apparent similarities to CCCC position statements, the Bush policy would have universities deliver foreign language instruction not as an end of itself, but for strategic intelligence purposes that assume an antagonist relationship between the United States and the rest of the world. Its goals may conflict with those of English Only movements in the United States, but ultimately such a policy only “reinforces a belief that English is the language for public use in American civic life while non-English languages are ‘foreign’ and only needed for reading and speaking ‘overseas’” (135).

Wible’s concluding arguments reminds teachers that why multilingualism is introduced to students is as important as how. Theory and ideology are the foundations to pedagogy, and they play a formative role in its development. Our discipline’s position statements are more than blueprints for pedagogy, and so they must be studied as also attuning teachers to broader student needs, institutional reforms, and the sociopolitical climate in which their work occurs. This book encourages teachers and scholars to view these policies not so much as doing something about language difference but as articulating the importance of letting language difference happen. As the controversy surrounding Coca-Cola’s “It’s Beautiful” commercial shows, linguistic diversity happens on its own, as it has historically—which is an important tenet of the emerging theory of translingualism. Often, teachers don’t need to “teach” language difference per se, but simply need to nurture it and refrain from imposing conventions and perpetuating English Only attitudes. Other times, it is important for teachers to introduce all of their students to the ubiquity of linguistic diversity and to make efforts to dispel inaccurate views of language that contribute to discrimination and suppress students’ written voices.

**The Rising Tide of Research in Translingualism**

The breadth of contributions to Canagarajah’s edited collection *Literacy as Translingual Practice* underscores Wible’s assessment of CCCC’s position
95

statements as valuable to the field’s identity, and indeed it shows that interest in translingualism as a new frontier for language difference is reaching a critical mass. This collection unites scholars from a range of traditions including second-language writing, sociolinguistics, and intercultural rhetoric who all subscribe to the tenets of SRTOL and are interested in realizing those tenets in their research and teaching. Together, these essays project the full potential of translingualism for research and pedagogy. One common feature among these essays lies in their extension of writing and rhetoric beyond Standard English and an appreciation of different sign systems on their own terms. As Canagarajah describes these efforts in his introduction, “The urgency for scholars to address translingual practices in literacy derives from the fact that they are widely practiced in communities and everyday communicative contexts, though ignored or suppressed in classrooms” (2). The contributions here effectively tap those contexts and communities.

Many of the essays chart new areas of research outside current paradigms of language study. And yet their subjects and topics hail from a range of time periods and locations where translingual practices took shape long before the term translingual did. Ellen Cushman’s historical and linguistic consideration of Sequoyah’s Cherokee syllabary enacts the goals of translingualism as “directly confronting English monolingualist expectations by research and teaching how writers can work with and against, not simply within, those expectations” (Horner et al. 305). Confronting a prevalent “alphabetic bias” in rhetoric and composition research, Cushman uses Sequoyan to illustrate the efficiency of a non-English “polysynthetic language,” in which “one multisyllabic word . . . can be an entire sentence” in which “each syllable uttered carries with it meaning” (89). Such research extends the bounds of rhetoric and composition, expanding our notion of what it means to produce meaning.

Many of the essays apply the idea of translingualism in surprising ways that offer new paths in various areas in our discipline. LuMing Mao complicates contemporary work on indigenous rhetoric by examining a resurgence in Chinese nationalist songs, showing how “what makes these revolutionary songs indigenous is not about a revolutionary past marked by borders and chronological timelines,” but instead “the borderless space these songs have entered where they claim their unique links” (51). Mao’s argument gestures toward a new global conception of indigenous rhetorics recognizing how they “mingle, negotiate, and further contend with other discourses,” leading to a paradigm of “interdependence-in-difference” (53). Rebecca Lorimer’s ethnographic study
of twenty-six multilingual writers—three of whom are recounted in her essay—reveals literacy practices as a kind of attunement to and negotiation of multiple languages and conventions simultaneously—rather than mastering one set of conventions and then another. Christiane Donahue’s contribution narrates her shift during a study of US and French students’ essays from a simple comparative method to one that highlights “fluidity, hybridity, particular kinds of agency, and a disposition toward negation of meanings and frames” (157) in both sets of essays.

Not all of the contributors express equal excitement about the possibilities of translingualism. Paul Kei Matsuda’s essay “It’s the Wild West Out There” issues a series of cautions regarding the popularity of translingualism as well as new terms such as code-meshing. Although Matsuda initially describes the emergence of translingualism as a positive and “proactive” movement in which “the issue of language difference is no longer seen as mundane drudgery that took time away from other useful pedagogical concerns” (131), he expresses some skepticism about the “terminological mishmash” (133) characterized by the misappropriation of terms from sociolinguistics such as code-switching and code-mixing—roughly equivalent to the term code-meshing inaugurated by Young and Canagarajah. Matsuda relents that code-meshing might be understood as highlighting “the active and agentive use of language mixing,” in short “code-switching with attitude” (134–35). But the subtext and tenor of the essay seem to aim at a sobering reminder that what may strike us as new and exciting has certainly been addressed in our affiliate disciplines.

The collection contains a number of essays taking an explicitly pedagogical approach, many of them contained in a separate section titled “Pedagogical Applications.” Although I applaud the contributors’ efforts to model translingual pedagogies, the section falls short of expectations in some ways. Anita Pandey’s essay “When ‘Second’ Comes First” offers a promising tool for analyzing texts in different varieties of English, dubbed STEPS (structure, theme[s], etiquette, purpose, and style). Pandey’s STEPS method seeks to remedy an “absence of globally applicable and multidimensional framework[s] of analysis that provides a comprehensive understanding of translingual discourse across linguistic levels” (219). However, the essay offers little discussion of how or even whether Pandey has used STEPS in a classroom, how students responded to the framework, and how it might be incorporated into a college writing course. Pandey uses the method to analyze lexical and semantic features of emails written in Indian English and then concludes that “students might be interested
in knowing that meetings are sometimes ‘preponed’” in India (moved up), and that “[i]t helps to know that many words are decoded differently” in Indian English (224). Although the method seems promising, I kept waiting for a fuller narrative of how Pandey had successfully deployed STEPS in a classroom. Joleen Hanson’s “Moving Out of the Monolingual Comfort Zone” provides the kind of narrative missing from Pandey’s piece, though it is difficult to quell reservations about the idea of having students use Google’s translate feature to explore non-English websites. Hanson’s piece describes an exercise used in two sections of first-year composition that “intended to challenge the expectation that all relevant, useful information would always be available in English” (209). The forty students in the study, all enrolled at the same upper midwestern state university, explored websites in various languages, making educated guesses about content before plugging words into Google Translate to confirm their initial hunches. A survey showed that a majority of the students (twenty-four) said they were more likely to try to incorporate non-English websites into their academic research in the future (212). I admire Hanson’s motivation to “help all students, but particularly those who function only in English, to gain fluency in working across language differences in all features of written language” (207), which is a sentiment shared by many of the authors reviewed here. On the one hand, the exercise does encourage students to act as linguistic *bricoleurs*, in line with translingualism’s de-emphasis of mastery and fluency in languages. On the other hand, relying so heavily on a translator may reinforce a somewhat superficial appreciation of other languages. I would stress to anyone adapting Hanson’s exercise to use it as a gateway into other activities, such as having students research and write about different varieties of English and other languages.

Aimee Krall-Lanoue’s essay “And Yea I’m Venting” illustrates the kind of charitable readings of students’ texts long advocated by Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner (Horner and Lu, *Representing*: Lu and Horner, “Logic”). The method bears so much similarity to Lu and Horner’s that I wondered what this essay contributes that the discipline has not already seen in at least three or four different manifestations, including “Conflict and Struggle” and “Professing Multiculturalism” (from Horner and Lu, *Representing*) and Lu’s “Living-English Work,” not to mention Lu and Horner’s contribution to Young and Martinez’s collection *Code-Meshing as World English*, in which the authors negotiate the use of the word *rape* in a Chinese takeout menu. Krall-Lanoue states that “[i]t is our learned inclinations as teachers to cross out, rewrite, edit, even flinch
when we see ‘errors’ in student writing,” but “a way of interrogating those inclinations is to redefine error and negotiate with students about the meaning they are making in the writing” (233). Several times, she states that “a conversation with Josh about this sentence opens up a space for negotiating meaning,” or “discussing [a sentence] with Connie creates a space to talk about reading expectations” (232). Yet these conversations are never described, and one phrase even states that a “discussion would most likely lead both of us to see” alternative possibilities for revision, indicating that the entire article is composed of hypothetical negotiations. It would have been more satisfying to read actual negotiations with students.

Despite some of these shortcomings, the co-authored book makes a clear statement about the importance of language difference and its role in the production of knowledge in composition. To echo Matsuda, language issues now seem to occupy a central role in discussions about college writing and rhetoric. Perhaps the most recent and striking feature in these titles lies in their promotion of translingualism as intrinsic to all writing and writers, including those labeled or self-identifying as monolingual. On a more immediate note, the collection is a vital extension of the theory and pedagogy laid out in Canagarajah’s monograph. Thinking in Wible’s terms, Translingual Practice serves a role similar to that of a position statement, creating a theoretical and pedagogical foundation upon which the contributors to Literacy as Translingual Practice can carry out their own projects. The diversity of these projects further shows the potential of serious thought about language difference to transform the research and teaching of writing and rhetoric.

The Beauty of American Tongues

The edited collection Other People’s English offers the most direct confrontation of monolingualist assumptions among these four titles. Divided into four parts, the book advocates literacy education practices that recognize the value of multiple Englishes, rather than privileging one variety over another. The first section by Rusty Barrett draws on research in linguistics and sociolinguistics to highlight fundamental misconceptions about language across primary, secondary, and higher education. One especially prevalent assumption among Americans (including educators) is that multilingual speakers who switch between languages and varieties of English “can’t speak either language fluently and [are] using one language to fill gaps of knowledge from the other” (28).
Another common assumption is the idea that Standard English is required for socioeconomic success, although Barrett cites linguistic research in which listeners “‘hear’ undervalued English” (50) when listening to Standard English, simply by being told the race of the speaker. From such findings, Barrett infers that “[a]cquisition of Standard English cannot eradicate prejudiced views of an individual’s speech or writing because negative evaluations of the language of African Americans are not based on the actual form of their speech” (50). In short, there is simply no logical reason to insist on learning Standard English, because it does not assure mobility and in fact is not easily distinguishable from other varieties to begin with. Students perform best when taught many varieties of English in conjunction, rather than learning to see one as inherently better than another—a view that the authors of these books clearly describe as a form of discrimination.

Linguistic equality calls for a pedagogy of code-meshing, understood as the simultaneous use of different languages and their varieties, in contrast to code-switching, understood as the use of one language or variety in a particular time or place. Barrett’s discussion of these two terms clears up some confusion about the term code-switching in particular. Part of Matsuda’s critique of translingualism in Literacy as Translingual Practice addresses the slippage that occurs when appropriating terminology from linguistics, and Barrett explains key differences between a linguistic and educational understanding of the term. What many educators understand as code-switching is a specific type of situational code-switching, such as “using one language in church and another language at home” (29). What linguists such as Matsuda understand as code-switching is, in fact, metaphorical code-switching, which “refers to using two languages in the same context to exploit the context-meaning associated with each language” (29). Metaphorical code-switching and code-meshing refer to essentially the same practice. With this understanding in mind, Barrett forwards code-meshing as a literacy education approach that “allow[s] students to write in their native language variety,” “extend[s] the range of grammatical forms that students may use to express themselves,” and “recognizes the importance of both standard and undervalued varieties” (43). Resistance to code-meshing is rooted in misinformation about language that Barrett dispels, indicating that grammatical rules extend across many varieties of English but manifest in different ways (46).

Vershawn Ashanti Young describes three costs to students who are taught under the paradigm of situational code-switching. First, it “inherently breeds racial animosity” and promotes “racial mimicry,” in a way that “produce[s] not
only the burden of acting White but also the epithet and animosity used to call it out” (69). Second, a pedagogy of situational code-switching reinforces a “hierarchical positioning of dialects . . . where Standard English is presented as the formal dialect and African American English as informal” (70). Third, it creates a sense of linguistic confusion in which students cannot “see what [is] African American English and what [is] not Standard English” (73). This confusion results from a dualistic notion of dialects that neglects how they often manifest in the same speech acts. Code-meshing, or metaphorical code-switching, acknowledges that speakers often incorporate multiple dialects in the same conversation or piece of writing regardless of their race. Therefore, a pedagogy of code-meshing avoids these three costs and leads to a more accurate and productive awareness of language choices.

The final two sections of Other People's English map out pedagogical applications of code-meshing. Y’Shanda Young-Rivera, Young’s sister, details a five-day unit delivered to elementary and middle school children in two different classrooms in Chicago public schools. Lesson plans introduced the idea of code-meshing as an alternative to dialect separation, encouraging students to use all of their linguistic resources. Students completed a variety of activities identifying meshed English in their everyday lives and finally engaged in class debates about the merits of code-meshing. The only possible reservation regarding the debates is that “the con side prevailed”; meanwhile students who were assigned to argue in favor of code-meshing “didn’t appear to be as confident in voicing the arguments” (109). Young-Rivera foregoes an explanation of what their arguments lacked, which would have strengthened this discussion. Moreover, it seems counterproductive to have students debate code-meshing as a yes or no issue, especially given the book’s overall stance in equating situational code-switching with racism and discrimination. Perhaps a more productive question would have asked students to reflect and argue for the most effective methods of making code-meshing a reality, rather than perpetuating an either/or mindset.

Kim Brian Lovejoy’s contribution reworks expressive writing, as conceived by James Britton, turning attention to how it “denotes the personal language of the writer” (131) as much as the subject matter. Developing student voices in Lovejoy’s view means learning “to draw on the resources of their own dialects and languages as they write about the ideas that matter to them” (132). Within this framework, he describes lesson plans and workshops that expose students to “different genres and styles—samples for analysis and discussion,” including
blogs, cartoons, letters, and advertisements (134). This approach moves away from the stigmatization of nonstandard language choices and “invites teachers to converse with writers about their choices, in the context of multiple grammars” (143), with an emphasis on rhetorical meaning rather than correctness. The pedagogy outlined here reflects what Canagarajah proposes—not a radical restructuring of college writing courses, but reframing attitudes so that instructor feedback and peer workshops, for once, become places where languages are seen in cooperation rather than competition for dominance. Drawing on different Englishes and languages becomes much less a matter of right/wrong, more so a discussion of when/how.

These authors are anything but blind to the work that lies ahead for advocates of translilingual practices like code-meshing. Resistance can come from unexpected places, as Lovejoy points out when describing his experiences teaching a composition course as part of a themed learning community titled “African American Perspectives: Pathways to Success.” Lovejoy recounts how the course itself was a success, resulting in quality portfolios and high student evaluations. Despite the positive outcomes, other professors objected to the promotion of code-meshing at the expense of Standard English, and Lovejoy found himself having to justify his teaching practices only minutes into a planning meeting for the upcoming semester. And yet Lovejoy’s conclusion leaves room for hope, given that after a contentious discussion about the value of dialect and difference in student writing, the teachers became more receptive. Likewise, Young-Rivera admits that it took her brother “Ver” several years to finally convince her of the merits of code-meshing, but that she finally saw its value when reflecting on achievement gaps in secondary and higher education.

Not all minds and attitudes change, but many do over time. And so do cultural landscapes. What began forty years ago with SRTOL has become a major topic of discussion among college writing teachers. These four books signal a new phase in the struggle to value and promote linguistic diversity, with a new wave of research building on foundational work of the 1960s and 1970s. Although it may take another forty years for monolingualist assumptions to completely dissipate, they seem already on their way to the margins and relegated increasingly to reactionary stances—tweeting angrily about progressive commercials and proposing increasingly irrational English Only laws. It will remain important for teachers and researchers already invested in language difference to use all of the resources and outlets at their disposal to continue contesting outdated and inaccurate notions of language when they arise.
Works Cited


Brian Ray
Brian Ray is an assistant professor of Rhetoric and Writing and Director of Composition at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He has published in *Rhetoric Review, Composition Studies, Computers and Composition*, and the *Journal of Basic Writing*. His book *Style: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Teaching* was published by Parlor Press in 2014.