The Translingual Classroom: Strategies for Navigating Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

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Warm-up Exercise

- Take a moment to think about the following:
  - What is a key controversial issue in your field right now?
  - How would you summarize it briefly for a non-expert?
    - Conflicting viewpoints and who holds them
    - Where you fall in the debate and why

- Now: Take 5 minutes to write a one paragraph summary of the above (like a mini lit review)
  
  ….in a language you have learned but don’t consider your first or most comfortable language.
Debrief

What was your experience like of writing about this issue in additional language?

What resources could you draw on for this communicative task?
- Subject knowledge and comfort with the issue you were presenting?
- Awareness of your audience and what would need to be made clear?
- Experience writing this type of thing in the past? (Both in your dominant language and this foreign language?)
- Language courses: explicit knowledge of grammar, vocabulary?
- Ability to ‘write around’ words or concepts you didn’t have language for? (circumlocution skills?)
- Dictionaries or other tools?
In Students’ Own Words...

In America, when I write totally different style of paper, the professor say, “Where are you from? How did you get into this college? Your writing is behind the line, so you can’t really catch up to the class.” So, I don’t know how to figure that out. —Yoon, student from S. Korea

I would really love to learn nice words, because I do have ideas, and I do want to put something down, but I am short of words. —Ayesha, student from Pakistan

When you ultimately succeed in writing is when you have your own accent. When I speak, my accent reflects who I am and where I come from. Well, I want my writing to reflect me in that way. —Tonka, student from Bulgaria
A translingual orientation emphasizes that what we treat as ‘standard English’ or ‘monolingual’ texts are themselves hybrid. These labels are ideological constructs that mask the diversity inherent in all acts of writing and communication. Consider that in each act of communication the semiotic resources we use are recontextualized for the purposes and participants in that activity, with their own resonance. Translingual orientation...makes us sensitive to the creativity and situatedness of every act of communication, even in seemingly normative textual products. In this sense, ‘translingual practice’ is emerging as a term that accommodates hybrid practices without ignoring the inherent hybridity in products that appear on the surface to approximate dominant conventions. The orientation thus enables us to discern agency and voice of both multilingual and monolingual writers in textual products that have varying relationships to the norm.” (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 3-4)
We are all constantly making choices about how to use the language resources available to us to meet the needs of communicative contexts. Consider ways we switch between language resources available to us:

- Different levels of formality
- Jargon for different fields we work in or are interested in (hobbies, social groups...)
- Foreign languages we’ve studied or use professionally
- Language we use to build and maintain relationships with loved ones, colleagues, neighbors, students
- Our command over tone in both spoken and written communication
- Other examples?
Developing awareness and translingual skills:

- How did you learn when to use these different resources (and when not to)?
- What functions of language do students in your class need to navigate well?
  - How might your classes, your assignment prompts, your feedback, conversations in your office hours, etc. help students develop and reflect upon those language tools?
  - What resources are available (or could we make available at the institutional level) for students to further develop their communicative skills?
“Accent in writing”

- Samples available in packet (pgs. 4-5, student feelings about their writing, pgs. 6-7)
- Why is it there? (Why do errors or non-standard usage persist, even at high levels of L2 proficiency?)

- To what extent can we become more comfortable with “accented” student writing?