

# “We are the ‘Other’”: The Future of Exchanges between Writing and Language Studies

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**Abstract:** What is the relationship, in US writing studies, between scholarship about writing and scholarship about language? What should it be? *Language* and *linguistics* in general have been othered; “internationalization” or “mondialisation” might serve as catalyst for exchange and collaboration and making “the language question” essentially unavoidable for all writing scholars and teachers in ways that can productively lead to new partnerships or at least to mutually respectful growth. Looking back at ourselves via elements of language study—in particular, the way linguists might see “code” and linguistic models of “transfer”—suggests that WAC/WID, writing studies, and other expertises in language as connected to writing have the potential to be highly complementary, in response to internationalization’s pressures and promises. We can begin to see that if writing studies had stayed closer to language questions, we might be more ready to understand some of the new challenges to writing for the 21st century.

## Introduction

Years ago at a biannual Watson Conference at the University of Louisville, in the “wrap-up” final Saturday morning open discussion, luminaries in the field raised the question of language study and teaching in relation to writing study and teaching. In the room were scholars and teachers invested in first-year composition, second-language writing, writing in the disciplines, and other writing domains. “I do not teach ‘language,’ I teach writing,” stated a highly-influential, respected, and thoughtful colleague emphatically, and heads nodded. The lively debate that ensued highlighted a question that we cannot afford to marginalize: what is the relationship, in US writing studies and specifically in writing in the disciplines, between scholarship about writing and scholarship about language? What should it be?<sup>1</sup>

As a way of furthering this complex question in one small part, I will argue that “internationalization,” as a higher education trend and as a phenomenon, has opened up the possibility for new considerations about language and writing scholarship exchanges, and new ways to embrace connections in scholarship and to return, in a way, to connections from decades ago. This is a simple point, really. But it is situated in a very complex network of questions about language and teaching and writing and disciplines, disciplinary boundaries, intrinsic goals, and defining the epistemological edges to our work.

One of the interesting aspects of internationalization and its cousin, globalization, is that by their nature they are everyone’s concern around the world. « *La mondialisation de la communication, la multiplication des échanges professionnels entre des personnes appartenant à des communautés linguistiques et culturelles diverses ainsi que la pluralité des supports de diffusion de ces échanges impliquent de mieux connaître les modes de fonctionnement des discours qui émanent de ces communautés et de mettre en lumière les traits spécifiques qui les caractérisent* » (von Munchow & Rakotonoelina, 2006, p. 9). Both Canagarajah (1996) and Muchiri et al. (1995) have noted that compositionists have long made claims about academic writing,

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knowledge, and language from a particularly US-centric position, something simply no longer tenable in this increasingly interrelated world context.

Horner (2006) notes that this globalization, while increasing what seems to be a monolingual dependence on English, is in fact fragmenting that English in ways that make a focus on single-standard English quite misguided. Kramersch (2014) notes in parallel that foreign language teachers were traditionally prepared to teach a language to students who all shared another language—essentially, a monolingual ideology underpinning foreign language teaching. For Kramersch, it is time to reject the “standard monolingual native speaker as our ideal,” embracing instead the “living multilingual subject” (Kramersch, 2014, p. 251; see also Heidrick, 2006; Cook, 1992). And Kramersch points to L2 users’ impatience with monolithic “standard” language rules as they play with language across modes, media, contexts, and varieties; their goal is communication. These learner expectations do not mesh with traditional teaching.

Kramersch’s point fits into a national trend in which “departments of English and foreign language in particular see the reshaping of their curricula as essential for responding to shifting educational needs and student interests,” and foreign language programs can really be affected—the increase in global studies efforts and programs usually calls out more language training, in speech but also in writing (Schultz, 2011, p. 66). This increased pressure, coupled with new ways of conceptualizing what that teaching does and is, makes the discussions about foreign language writing instruction highly relevant.

### “Others”?

The “other” in my title is meant to suggest that there are disciplinary and epistemological domains that have been pitched as oppositional to the detriment of our collective, collaborative work; “we are the other” suggests that perhaps language and writing studies are closer than we think. There are additional layers to this “other”ness. US writing studies seems to sometimes “other” writing instruction and research in countries outside the US that might have different teaching and research traditions. The field of writing studies has also, at least according to some, seemed for the most part to “other” the fields of second-language writing, foreign language writing, and linguistics within the US, both for their practices and for the disciplines that inform their scholarship. Those same disciplines, interestingly, are often the ones also shaping writing research and teaching around the world—research that has also been depicted as marginalized (Horner, Necamp, & Donahue, 2011). And finally, foreign language writing instruction is perceived as the “other” in L2 writing (Reichelt, 2011).

In thinking about these “others,” I do not want to try to address deeply any of the frequently-posed questions about whether second-language writing and writing studies are distinct fields or disciplines (Matsuda 1999; Silva, Leki, & Carson, 1997; Silva & Leki, 2004); whether second-language writing indeed is “situated at the intersection of second language studies and composition studies” (Silva, Leki, & Carson, 1997, p. 399), whether the two “intellectual formations” (Matsuda, 1999) should or should not merge; or whether the division is rather between applied linguistics and composition studies (Silva & Leki, 2004). I can say with some certainty, however, that there have been communication challenges among these fields, within the US and in global interactions, and, in a related debate, more generally among scholars who feel writing faculty teach language, and those who feel we do not, as I noted above. That question has led to the marginalization that scholars like Matsuda (2006) have described, noting that “second-language issues have remained peripheral to composition studies” (p. 571),<sup>2</sup> or to the warnings about the ways L1 scholarship and teaching might negatively impact L2 writers’ learning and progress (Leki, 2006).

The questioning I offer here goes in two directions related to WAC and WID: the exchanges I will propose are themselves working explicitly across disciplines, and the implications are relevant to writing across the curriculum/writing in the disciplines work in our research and our teaching because of the core issues they raise. I will put my focus on how *language* and *linguistics* in general have been othered, and how “internationalization” or “mondialisation” might offer an opportunity that we must not miss to think

differently—a path, a prompt, and a provocation—serving as catalyst for exchange and collaboration and making “the language question” essentially unavoidable in ways that can productively lead to new disciplinary partnerships or at least to mutually respectful growth.

## International, global, mobile, superdiverse...

The terms “international” and “global” are sometimes used interchangeably, but differentiating them is useful in the context of writing research and writing program administration. Internationalizing is built from the starting point of “nations” and then imagines “inter”-nation interactions. “Internationalizing higher education” tends towards the idea that US colleges might expand their reach, establish campuses overseas, or draw additional students from other countries. Globalization, on the other hand, generally draws on such questions as increasing economic interdependence, the “shrinking” of the world stage (driven in part by social media and the Internet), and the re-hierarchizing of multinational corporations over nation-states. Unlike “internationalization,” with no “nation-” in its root, “globalization” focuses our attention on common experiences driven by something other than nation-state configurations.

Another useful concept, this time from social geography, is “mobility.” This frame, drawn into writing studies in the past decade or so (cf. Blommaert & Horner, 2017; Nordquist, 2017; Lorimer Leonard, 2013), can offer additional insights into the shifting nature of society, a nature that can only influence higher education in multiple interrelated ways, a human geography that serves to make sense of the geographical nature of being-in-the-world today (Verstraete & Cresswell, 2002, p. 12). A mobility perspective considers place as radically open and permeable (p. 12). In this model, the stability of place, and of one’s place, that we seem to have counted on becomes less foundational, replaced by an expectation that people will move, travel, engage, whether virtually or in person, whether in real time or asynchronously, in every lived context.

There are certainly other terms (transnational, for example) that I could use here, but my point isn’t so much to address every term as to note that the phenomena these terms are working to illuminate are making it necessary for us and for our students to engage with language when we engage with writing, whether in terms of writing and English or in terms of writing and any language in the world. Because of their focus on social and economic mixing, inevitability of movement, or heterogeneous communities and communications, the phenomena raise questions about what constitutes “literate competence,” a broad term that can be used in any writing domain, including WAC or WID. Questions can include those about the qualitative difference between people who are (apparently) monolingual vs bi- or multi-lingual: difference in metalinguistic awareness, for example, or in cognitive processes (Cook, 1992).

For years now, scholars have been identifying the changing nature of student writers in those contexts. In the US, Silva and Matsuda (2001), Matsuda, Cox, Jordan, and Ortmeier-Hooper (2006), Tardy (2011), Rose and Weiser (2015), and many others have been pointing to the increasing diversity of US society and higher education landscapes, including of course US writing programs and classrooms. There is no doubt that the population in US higher education is rapidly changing. But this is a change that, it turns out, like so many things, is shared around the globe. European institutions are seeing high rates of international enrollees, from across Europe (encouraged by the Bologna Process) but also from Asia, South America, and Africa; my Korean colleagues report high numbers of students from China seeking to complete their education in Korean universities; and so on. But this change within our classrooms is only part of the picture. The change is also, more universally perhaps, to the world in which graduates will do their work and live their lives.

That diversity has done nothing but increase, to the point where Vertovec (2007, 2009) and Blommaert (2013) among others have suggested we are in an era of “superdiversity.” This evocative term first developed in reference to migration phenomena and their effects on the social, cultural, and linguistic fabric in British metropolitan areas, but it seems clearly adaptable to world-wide trends in movement—

both forced and chosen—of people. It has become a term of force in the 21st century. Blackledge and Creese (2017) recently explored both “diversity” and “superdiversity” to highlight the limitations of concepts such as diversity, multiculturalism, integration, or assimilation in “their power to explain the complexity of contemporary societies” (p. 2) and to sharply remind us that this superdiversity is born of both positive and negative mobilities within and across borders: “migration, invasion, colonization, slavery, religious mission, persecution, trade, conflict, famine, drought, war, urbanization, academic aspiration, family reunion, global commerce, technological advance...” (p. 2).

As I have noted elsewhere, “Such global change cannot not affect language and writing. Global interconnectedness affects flows of language, language ability, texts (print and otherwise) and academic participation in multiple pathways” (Donahue, 2016a). These factors are relevant across students’ college work, whether in the first year, in the disciplines, or across the curriculum. We are necessarily looking at the way communication transforms in the superdiverse contexts that are today’s reality. “Social transformations go hand in hand with sociolinguistic transformations” (Blommaert, 2013, as cited in Blackledge & Creese, 2017). The sociolinguistic transformation includes transformation of dominant languages: English monolingualism may appear to be inevitable, but in fact “our colleagues need *languages* (emphasis mine) to gain a perspective on themselves and to move beyond the comfortable and mobile milieu in which they live” (Tonkin, 2001, as cited in Schultz, 2011, p. 72).

As language questions move us into new milieus, we (re)discover the other we have been thinking was alien to us in our more recent history. As Gentz and Kramer (2006) propose, transcending one’s own horizon for such exchange calls for approaching “‘the other’ in a ‘hermeneutical dialogue’” and understanding that “the experience of the Other always determines the perception of the self; ...at the moment of this experience, the Other has become an inherent component of the self” (p. 4) and not an alien entity. This is at the heart of Bakhtin’s (1986) model as well: “the self comes into existence only by virtue of its relationship to all that is other” (Nystrand et al., 1993, p. 294). This relationship suggests a different way to think about the writing-language dynamic, by looking back at ourselves in writing studies via elements of language study.

## Language...

If we want to use the notion of “other” to explore the way language studies and writing studies relate, we need a sense of when these domains became “othered.” So doing, inevitably questions about the deep field of *second* language study will arise—the one facet of language that is embedded in writing studies discussions today, even if far less than the second language writing community has argued is necessary. Stepping back, it seems nearly impossible to extricate language research from second language research in writing studies, including WAC and WID, and yet they are in fact different even as they overlap at times.

The question of language was certainly not always held at arm’s length or divided from writing studies. Nystrand et al. (1993), in their detailed analysis of where what was at the time understood as composition studies comes from, reference deep interrelated epistemological and research connections involving language and writing. Every phase of their extensive review is based on theories of and research about *language* and *language use*. Indeed, many of the foundational thinkers they cite are linguists, from Searle or Grice or Austin to Bakhtin, van Dijk, or de Beaugrande. They remind us of the essential role played by sociolinguist Labov in turning scholarly understanding away from deficit models to speech community models of language variety, enabling the work of many writing scholars, including Mina Shaughnessy.

“Linguistics” or “linguistic science” is of course not a monolith; Chomskyans are not functionalists or pragmatists, and applied linguists work differently than theoretical linguists. The L2 writing scholarship is grounded, primarily, in applied linguistics, and I would like to explore the relationship to linguistics in other forms. A fair amount of composition research in the 1960s-70s grounded itself in linguistic research

methods and approaches. But until quite recently these were essentially dismissed in the intervening decades.

How did we move from the entrenched trio of literary theory, composition, and linguistics cited by Nystrand et al. (1993, p. 304) to the “I am not a language teacher” and the marginalization of linguistics research in writing studies?<sup>3</sup> From the late 1970s on, certainly conceptualizations of writing changed in ways that de-emphasized direct interest in language. Nystrand et al. noted in 1993 that “Whereas ideas about composition were traditionally limited to analyses of text features, subsequent and more recent models have conceptualized writing in terms of cognitive and social processes,” and that shift burgeoned into new directions less anchored in linguistics.

Another factor was the link between speech, foreign language teaching, and language vs. writing. Hinkel (2010) notes that successful foreign language programs, heavily influenced by structural linguistics, focused on speech. Even though scholars such as Widdowson (1978) pushed against any separation of the four essential skills of reception and production of both speech and writing (as cited in Hinkel, 2010), it is possible that linguistics seemed increasingly distant to writing scholars because of its strong connection to speech. And finally, structuralism itself, a foundation for both linguistics and literary theory (two of the three fields Nystrand et al. take into account), fell out of favor, while composition studies moved towards its own identity, grounded in social construction and critical theory, both antithetical to structuralist accounts of language, writing, and composing.

And why might it be time to come back? Language has always been inextricably at the heart of writing research and teaching, but it is now so starkly clear in its centrality that US writing studies must reimagine its relationships of exchange. Matsuda’s comprehensive review of what he calls the “disciplinary division of labor” (1999, p. 700) provides ample evidence that language questions even in the specific domain of second language writing were rarely present in various signature histories of the discipline to that point, histories that Silva, Leki, and Carson (1997) call ethnocentric.

Matsuda (1999) reports an emphasis, in earlier decades, on linguistic training for writing teachers (especially if they were to teach second-language students) and the roots of disciplinary division coming in part at that point. He suggests that structural linguistics encouraged, in the 1960s, the development of separate ESL classes with specifically-trained faculty, a move that ultimately contributed to waning attention to language issues in writing classrooms, programs, or initiatives. While his emphasis is on the declining interest in language issues, he notes specifically that this decline was about second-language components (p. 713). We might wonder how much the marginalization of second-language issues fostered, or perhaps was influenced by, a marginalization of language issues more broadly in both teaching and research—the degree, that is, to which these two marginalizations influenced each other.

Silva et al. (1997) focused certainly on second language writing, but also and significantly on “other” language writing alongside, making a similar philosophical case for “broadening the perspective” of composition studies’ work. They predicted decades back that the absence of attention to writing in other languages, in our history, could even have the huge effect of leading to “inadequate theories of composition” (p. 400) overall:

A theory of writing based on only one rhetorical tradition and one language can at best be extremely tentative and at worst totally invalid. Such a theory could easily become hegemonic and exclusionary; that is, English/Western writing behaviors could be privileged as being “standard” ... and such a theory could be seen as monolingual, monocultural, and ethnocentric. (p. 402)

Note that this point underscores not only an openness to other languages but also to other traditions and other disciplines.

Just as Silva, Leki, and Carson (1997) have argued for much more interaction between composition and second language studies, to the benefit of both, and Schultz (2011) has suggested that “the potential bi-directional effect of writing instruction in both the L1 and the L2 holds exciting potential for significant linguistic and rhetorical cross-fertilization” (p. 73), I would argue that research exchange with the discipline of linguistics can equally be fruitful.

Such a return to language questions entails, as well, attention to English, specifically, in relation to US composition. A progressive view of English as Englishes, has been amply developed in composition and much more extensively in sociolinguistics (cf. Saxena & Omoniyi, 2010; Nihalani, 2010; Tupas & Rudby, 2015; Ives, 2015), and directly raises a question that both second language writing and writing in any discipline or context must engage head-on: is writing about English, in the US, and if it is, which English? Here as well, linguists support our inquiry. Tupas and Rudby (2015), for example, argue that “There is no one English but many Englishes. No one has exclusive rights to the language; anyone who speaks it has the right to own it” (p. 1). Even as early as 1985, linguist Dell Hymes was already stating unequivocally that “the functional equality of all languages has been a tenet of the faith from the founders of structural linguistics to most practitioners of linguistics today” (p. v). If we accept this view we must engage in questions of class and power and equity; while both writing research and second-language writing research in the US, each in its own way, have done so, neither has ultimately resolved the fraught question of the role of a particular English in college writing, both first-year and, perhaps even more, across the disciplines.

As much as there has been tension in the applied linguistics/second language ⇔ composition/writing studies interactions, heightened by the later-developed translingual scholarship, there is no question that these interactions are also bringing key attention back to language. Silva and Leki’s 2004 treatment of applied linguistics and composition in relation to second language writing underscores essential differences in paradigms, traditions, and scope, and suggests that the separation between at least second-language work and composition was a mutual moving-apart. But they quite powerfully detail the similarities and argue that “it might be preferable for L2 writing to consider reconciling the differences between its parent disciplines” (p. 10), pulling from both applied linguistics and composition studies. Both translingual and translanguaging scholars, as well as the MLA with its 2007 report *Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World*, have pushed new attention on language in writing by attending to a changing understanding of *language*. Horner (2006) asks that compositionists move towards “an explicit policy that embraces multilingual, cross-language writing as the norm for our teaching and research” (p. 570). This kind of call, multiplied across the past decade, cannot leave composition scholars lukewarm and begs us to learn much more about (cross) language—for which we must learn more about language.

## Two examples of language research with benefits to composition

We can begin to see that if work on college writing had stayed closer to language questions, we might be more ready to understand some of the new challenges to writing in any discipline for the 21st century. But we do have different kinds of expertise to draw on today, in order to understand all students’ needs as they engage with a superdiverse world. Precisely because of new international pressures and flows, US writing studies can be opened up to transnational multilingual and foreign language writing, as well as to nation-specific multilingual and foreign-language questions.

In what follows, I will develop, briefly, these facets of language research with reference to how they might inform existing language discussions in writing studies, but I hope it will be clear that they could also inspire new conversations; in a way, they bring us back to a claim made by first language, second language, translingual, and foreign language writing scholars alike: language and writing are inextricably wound together, and the different interests of each research group are more productively seen along a continuum than in discrete oppositions.

The rich field of “contact” linguistics, a subfield of sociolinguistics that surfaced in 1979, treats language mixture as “a creative, rule-governed process that affects all languages in one way or another, though to varying degrees” (Winford, 2003, p. 2). It is, according to Winford, quite normal for speakers and writers in contact situations to bypass communicative barriers and compromise in order to communicate (p. 2). Many different factors govern this activity—from range of typological similarity of the languages to the spread, dominance, or prestige of each language involved (p. 2). The results of language contact appear in a range, from diffusion to structural convergence to the blurring altogether of any boundary between the languages (p. 13).

Another example comes from foreign language writing scholarship. As I’ve noted, “second” language writing is not equivalent to *English* as a second language writing.<sup>4</sup> Research in *foreign language* writing instruction (instruction in languages that are neither a language someone grew up with nor a language that dominates in the context in which a speaker-writer is functioning, per Reichelt, 2011) has blossomed in recent decades after a long stretch of neglect. Reichelt (2011) notes that “a great deal of FL writing occurs around the world in various contexts” (p. 4), and it is the object of a range of studies of its writers’ texts, processes, strategies, and perceptions, the ways it is taught and learned, and contexts of its use and development. One notable domain is the research into the relationship between writing in a foreign language and the learning of that language, including that “writing engages learners in processes that are thought to be conducive to language learning, particularly ‘noticing’ and metalinguistic reflection” (Manchón, 2011, p. 58). There is equally a powerful connection at the intersection with culture. Kramsch (1996), describing the increased political pressure language educators feel, in the face of increasing nationalism (already noticed then), to solve the major social problems of our times, highlights the “mediatory role of language” in culture, culture as “linguistically mediated membership into a discourse community” (p. 3). This is a discourse that scholars and teachers in WAC and WID recognize.

## Two examples of fruitful potential exchange: “transfer” and “code”

I’m going to focus in on two brief examples among many possible ones that suggest unexploited knowledge that could help build fruitful exchange between writing and language research: one is about “transfer” and is grounded in applied linguistics, and the other is about using the term “code” to reference language, and is grounded in French functional linguistics. In the process of considering these examples, we might find that writing-linguistics interactions illuminate some different ways of thinking about language and academic writing across disciplines and curricula. We might also see how the “inadequate theories” predicted by Silva, Leki, and Carson (1997) could be developed and grow to include theories of transfer and of linguistic code.

### Transfer?

In writing studies, attention to this model of knowledge acquisition and reuse has been rapidly developing, but in education and didactics, it has been studied for a century.<sup>5</sup> In exploring this question here I align myself with DePalma and Ringer (2011; 2014), who have thought about “transfer” through the lens of (second) language learning carefully and thoroughly, in particular in reference to WAC teaching and learning. What I suggest here complements and extends that work. They note that (1) the “transfer” discussion was embedded in language-learning before it trended in mainstream composition; (2) this conversation has largely focused on reuse more than adaptation (see also Donahue, 2012; 2016b) and “adaptive transfer” offers a more accurate framing; and (3) L2 transfer research has focused in part on how to help students transfer their rhetorical knowledge from one language context to another (DePalma & Ringer, 2014). They define “adaptive transfer as a writer’s conscious or intuitive process of applying or

reshaping learned writing knowledge in order to negotiate new and potentially unfamiliar writing situations” (DePalma & Ringer, 2011, p. 141). This version is dynamic and transformative.

The meaning of “transfer” in second-language and in foreign language research and teaching (remembering that second-language writing research is richly developed in many languages, not just in English as a Second Language), compared to recent writing studies work, is different—and potentially inter-informing. Linguists and didacticians around the world study the ways a speaker or a writer uses knowledge from one language (usually an “L1”) in another language (usually an “L2”), with positive or negative effect (the negative tellingly considered to be “interference”).

For example, the research suggests that:

- L1 literacy abilities and strategies do not *automatically* lend themselves to successful work in L2 writing but they also do not *automatically* obstruct work in L2 writing.
- The work in first-year writing is, based on what we know from “transfer” research, often simply too dissimilar from what will be required later in various disciplinary and professional contexts for it to help students in later courses (Leki, 2006). For Leki, in the case of L2 students in particular, this is simply not a tenable practice.
- Language transfer is bi-directional; working with two or more languages in fact enriches writers’ competence in both languages, for example in developing their ability to write complex sentences in both languages and their cultural sensitivity towards monolingual writers (Schultz, 2011, p. 73).
- Writers at earlier stages in language acquisition may have more trouble transferring some writing strategies (Wolfersberger, 2003).
- Well-developed L1 abilities can have long-term positive effects on developing those same abilities in an L2 (Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, & Humbach, 2009).
- The practices writing teachers and scholars have seen as multimodal are proposed in foreign language research as multilingual, and thus they are forms of transfer in the domain of foreign language; Kramsch (2014) suggests that they include “translating a poem or a song into a picture, a narrative into a visual, and vice-versa” (p. 253).
- Only when “L2” proficiency is well developed enough will “L1” abilities be positively useful to a speaker or writer (Ito, 2009); competence and writing process are very different for students with different language levels, and different kinds of activity thus support “transfer” differently for different kinds of students (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992).

These transfer effects are also being studied in relation to multilingualism. Cook’s (1992) framing of multilingual and multicompetent phenomena has proven illuminating. Other scholars such as Heidrick (2006) have shown that in speakers and writers learning additional languages, the second language is actually a stronger resource from which the user draws than the first language. As Heidrick notes, “there is no reason why that existing knowledge [to be transferred] should not include previously-learned non-native languages” (p. 1). Indeed, Heidrick seeks to understand what exactly influences the choices multilinguals make in terms of which language(s) they select from for a given utterance (p. 1). In this subfield, “transfer” of lexical and grammatical structures from one language to another is a productive phenomenon, not an interference. Deep, fundamental empirical research about the functioning of these various forms has led to linguistic conclusions that could nourish the composition discussion.

This language knowledge transfer scholarship is a resource by and large untapped to date in discussions about university writing and knowledge transfer more broadly in the US. And yet each of these points above offers insights into “transfer” that illuminate more general questions about how it might work and how we might enable it as our students move across years and disciplines. The very model of “transfer” as a progression from one learning experience to another is in fact something that scholars interested in language use have questioned. Canagarajah (2006) argues for a much messier and more dynamic process in which students “shuttle” back and forth among a variety of linguistic and discursive elements, in the



process transforming the contexts in which they are communicating. We could also imagine that the work in contrastive rhetoric offers us cultural layers to “transfer.” With this lens, variations in writers’ approaches and text features are not failures but alternatives (Silva, Leki, & Carson, 1997); “transfer,” again, is not a linear progression but a layering of useable options.

My question for this first example is, how might this extensive body of work on language and transfer help the current and rapidly-expanding thinking about writing knowledge and transfer? Are there clues about writing knowledge re-use and adaptation that this work can offer? Can it help us re-imagine the very nature of “transfer”? DePalma and Ringer (2014) suggest that “Narrow conceptualizations of transfer... reduce readers to decoders” (p. 46). Can the broader work on language knowledge “transfer” help us to rethink teaching writing across years and disciplines?

## Code?

Another richly productive connection is in terms of language as “code” (and its connection to terms built on “code,” like codeswitching, codemeshing, or codemixing (though see Woodall, 2002, “Language-switching” for an alternative model). These language activities have provoked some strong debate in recent years, taking center stage in discussions of multilinguality, “trans”linguality, second-language writing, and diversity (Guerra, 2012; Young, Barrett, Young-Rivera, & Lovejoy, 2014; Matsuda, 2013; Lu & Horner, 2013; Canagarajah, 2011; Young, 2009; Young & Martinez, 2011).

If, however, language research and writing research partnerships had already been more frequent, the exchanges might have been different, because they would be grounded in different initial understandings of both “code” and code interaction in the dynamic models of language structure and language use available. The fact that “code” is at the root of several dynamic language terms in our current debates is actually quite interesting. “Code” has been critiqued in some branches of linguistics for some time. It is seen in French linguistics, for example, as a very limiting term that focuses on fixed structures rather than dynamic language practices; a concept much more appropriate to structuralist assumptions about language that many linguists had moved beyond by the 1970s or 80s, around the same time literature was moving away from structuralist and modernist frames, and composition from positivism (Nystrand et al., 1997).

While not every scholar takes “code” head-on the way that the French functional linguists do, many scholars depict language function in ways that suggest an understanding of language that is far more fluid than the structuralist version underpinning code-based models that dominated European and US linguistics for many decades (Silva & Leki, 2004; Matsuda, 1999), but as early as the late 1800s, some linguists were arguing that no language comes from a single source (Winford, 2003), a precursor to hybrid or non-code models. Kramersch (2014) asks how language teaching might focus less on language structures and function and more on the social process of enunciation (p. 8). Cook’s multicompetence model (1992) proposes that individuals with multiple languages may be working with a merged language system rather than separate and distinct languages—“codes”—from which speakers or writers pull discrete pieces. Blommaert (2010, as cited in Blackledge & Creese, 2017) talks of “language-in-motion” and sociolinguistic transformation; Garcia and Wei (2014) define “translanguaging” as starting “from the speaker rather than the code or the ‘language’ and focus[ed] on empirically observable practices” in ways similar to French functional linguistics. Translanguaging “refers not simply to a shift or a shuttle between two languages but to the speakers’ construction and use of original and complex interrelated discursive practices that cannot be easily assigned to one or another traditional definition of a language” (p. 14). This kind of “communicative competence” (Hymes, 1971, as cited in Hinkel, 2010) is a way to focus on the communicative value and function of communication in social contexts.

For French linguist François, “code” is restricted to accounting in a limited way for what governs lexicon and syntax. He suggests we might use “language codes” to capture the diverse, pluralized, fluid ways

language actually works and to help us unpack communicative competence, and reserve “linguistic code” for the limited structural questions (personal correspondence, 2017). In a superdiverse context, language as “code” simply doesn’t make sense. I want to note, then, that proponents of both codemeshing and codeswitching—terms used in more than one of the disciplines mentioned earlier—might want to consider the ways in which “code” (and thus presumably the various terms connected to it) might be, linguistically, a term that runs counter to the fluidity, hybridity, and dynamism they support. The distinctions being carefully drawn and argued between codeswitching and codemeshing could be beside the point if the “code” model on which they are built is not the model that works for the kind of language activity in play. If we start the discussion at “code” we might find ourselves in a different debate. Initial analyses of the regularity and creativity of code-switching (as well as language shift and language creation) arise out of contact linguistics research (Winford, 2003, p. 14), as does the establishment of “conventionalized” mixed languages. In other words, I suggest we back up from the various debates about codeswitching, codemeshing, and codemixing—debates that would themselves benefit from more attention to years of research in the field of “contact linguistics” mentioned earlier, and the well-established definitions and models provided there—to the root debate about the very nature of language.

If it is language in use that interests us, language that shapes and organizes our perceptions (as noted by Vygotsky, as cited in Berthoff, 1999), language as symbolic form, with symbols that “derive their meaning from the force of social convention” (Kramsch, 1996, p. 7), then as Blackledge, Creese, and Takhi (2013) have argued, we must move beyond “code” in order to shift away from a focus on “languages as distinct codes to a focus on the agency of individuals engaging in using, creating, and interpreting signs for communication” (p. 193). My question to us all, out of this second body of work, is how might linguistics thought about the nature of language, its resistance (in some branches) to language as “code,” be useful to our explorations of students’ language use—all students’ language use across disciplines and contexts—in writing today? Thinking about the dynamic nature of language seems to me to be our common interest, and one we must take up in preparing our students for the international, global, mobile contexts in which they work and live.

## Conclusion

“Transfer” and “code” are just two examples of the potential for deep exchange. What I draw from these really brief examples (so much more could be said!) is that writing studies and expertises in language as connected to writing have the potential to be highly complementary, in response to internationalization’s pressures and promises. Schultz (2011) suggests that “globalization, the very definition of which suggests intersecting efforts of cooperation among countries, needs to be extended as well to first, second, and foreign language writing research” (p. 80). Now is the time to collaboratively deepen the pool of expertise in order to best prepare all students for a superdiverse world. We are the other—or maybe, we are each other.

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## Notes

1. I use "Writing Studies" as a term meant to encompass all of the many domains of writing work—research and teaching—today: WAC, WID, first-year composition, multimodal composition, technical-professional writing, and so on.
2. Note that a range of complex questions is linked to this central question, but cannot be taken up here: questions about "2<sup>nd</sup>" language writing, the field of applied linguistics, whether L2 writing is field of its own or part of composition or Writing Studies, etc. These questions raise further questions about "the field," who "we/us" are when invoked in scholarly works, discipline(s)—see Horner this issue and Donahue, 2018 for further discussion.
3. This has been the case until quite recently. In perhaps an example of the cyclical nature of trends in research and theory, the effect of "big data" and the availability of very large corpora, alongside technological development in computational linguistics, has ushered in a new period of attention to linguistic methods in composition.
4. I am fully aware of the distinctions some scholars provide among second language and foreign language learning (see Cimasko & Reichelt, 2011; Reichelt, 2011), but here I am trying to clarify a distinction not everyone makes between ESL and "X"SL (say, for example, French as a Second Language, "FLE," literally translated "French as a Foreign Language").
5. For an overview of transfer in US conversations, try *Critical Transitions* (Moore & Anson, 2016).

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