

WAC/WID in the Age of Trans-: Crossing and Re-crossing Borders of Discipline, Language, and Identity

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What kinds of intellectual labor can we begin to perform through the critical deployment of “trans-” operations and movements? Those of us schooled in the humanities and social sciences have become familiar, over the past twenty years or so, with queering things; how might we likewise begin to critically trans- our world?

– Susan Stryker et al., 2008, p. 13

We live in the age of trans-. My focus here will be on transdisciplinary, transnational, and translanguaging challenges for WAC/WID, but let’s take a moment at the outset to see our efforts here as one part—a very small part—of a much broader *trans-* moment. How do these *trans-* phenomena interact with each other and how do they affect WAC/WID pedagogy, administration, and research?

Transing Boundaries

Most prominently, of course, *trans-* in contemporary culture points to *transgender*, *transsexual*, and related terms. For persons who identify as trans, it is both a deeply personal matter, yet also inevitably a socially-constructed one. Transing requires that social categories such as gender be seen as malleable, as arbitrary and imposed, and therefore subject to change, as opposed to natural, biological, and inviolable. Rogers Brubaker (2016), in a discussion of transgender and transracial intersectionality, argues that trans- may be seen as “part of a much broader moment of cultural flux, mixture, and interpenetration, as suggested by the burgeoning discussions of hybridity, syncretism, creolization, and transnationalism in the last quarter century” (p. 11), and issues a call to “think with trans” (p. 4).

Thinking with trans- in the context of WAC/WID is the challenge for us to take up, working with, as Brubaker has suggested, three basic ways of thinking about this categorical malleability:

1. Trans- as the possibility to migrate, to *transition* from one category to another. This version actually leaves the categories themselves mostly intact, just enables a (usually) one-way transportation between them. Here we might

think about the *acrossness* of Writing Across the Curriculum. How would Writing Trans- the Curriculum be different? And what do we mean by “the”? Is “*the curriculum*” a parameter that we must work within, or a contested field that we may negotiate?

2. Trans- as emphasizing the *betweenness* of the journey rather than its end-points. This version suggests that we are never fully *in* a category, but are always *in transit*, perpetual motion, shuttling between, swimming in a middle condition where the categories themselves are fluid and merge into each other. This meaning of trans- is especially important when we are thinking of a translingual approach to language difference, where languages themselves are understood as always emergent, influencing each other, bouncing off each other, interpenetrating, where the borders dissolve. It is also relevant to notions of transnationalism, where national borders are seen not as fully determinative but rather as places that people can move—and live—between.
3. Trans- as moving *beyond* the categories, *transcending* them. This is easier said than done, of course, and it’s not even all that easy to say, because language thrives on oppositions, and much of Western thought is enabled by dichotomies. What if the borders between Writing and Non-Writing were to be eradicated?

As Susan Stryker et al. (2008) have argued, “the time was ripe for bursting ‘transgender’ wide open, and linking the questions of space and movement that that term implies to other critical crossings of categorical territories” (12). That “time” was fully fifteen years ago, and it was in that interim that “translingual” became an important category in writing studies. This is neither to say that translingualism was derived directly from work on transgender issues, nor that it was something brand new—one of the arguments I will take up here is that translingualism must be situated in a historical transdisciplinary context. Rather, I call attention to work in other types of trans- studies in order to point to a broader intersection of tendencies in widely diverse fields of study and practice. Thus the time is even “riper” now for a new examination of trans- theory and practice, to take up the call to “trans- our world.”

Transing WAC/WID: Boundary Work

Robert Frost’s poem “Mending Wall” (1915) famously suspends itself between two repeated and contradictory principles: “Good fences make good neighbors” and “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall.” The speaker’s neighbor believes that “Good fences make good neighbors,” having inherited a traditional ritual of bonding through separation. This position implies that boundaries are a crucial means of creating social identities, of defining relationships, of removing sources of stress

that might stem from ambiguity, and that they are therefore well worth the joint work required to maintain them. The poem's speaker, however, is more skeptical and ironic, musing that "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." From this perspective, boundaries are not natural; in fact, they seem to go against the nature of things; they tend to collapse themselves. The speaker comes to regard them as "Oh, just another kind of out-door game," though also expressing a wish—"If I could put a notion in his head . . ."—to lead the neighbor to a more nuanced understanding of boundaries.

Who is the WAC/WID persona in Frost's "Mending Wall"? Are we the neighbor who believes that "Good fences make good neighbors"? WID traditionally defers to "faculty in the disciplines" and defines the WID role as helping those faculty to articulate their disciplinary values and to develop assignments that implement their disciplinary genres, conventions, and epistemology.

Or is WAC/WID better located closer to the poem's speaker: do we also sense that "Something there is that 'doesn't love a wall'?" WAC has always been tasked with crossing departmental boundaries in search of a unified writing curriculum, and WAC professionals find their work routinely intersecting with faculty and courses in multiple disciplines.

To move from Frost's poetic metaphor to a more academic one, we find a similar ambivalence in the concept of "boundary work," which in science studies originally (Gieryn, 1983) addressed ideological definitions of science vs. non-science, that is, a way that scientists patrol the borders of the scientific domain and exclude what they see as not scientific—e.g. creation science, various types of pseudo-science. Steve Fuller (1991), pertinently for us, expanded the notion of boundary work to include negotiations between adjoining social science disciplines, noting that "disciplinary boundaries provide the structure needed for a variety of functions, ranging from the allocation of cognitive authority and material resources to the establishment of reliable access to some extra-social reality" (p. 302).

Put that way, boundary work for Gieryn and Fuller is an act of group self-assertion, often in response to an underlying anxiety: you don't need to say that something is unscientific unless you're worried that someone will think that it is. This kind of boundary work seems defensive and exclusionary, a power move designed to create an in-group and an out-group. But that's not the whole story. Noting that another strain in the boundary work literature focuses on boundary objects (Star & Griesemer, 1989), boundary organizations (Guston, 1999), boundary concepts (Klein, 1996), and boundary discourses (Shackley & Wynne, 1996), Hauke Riesch (2010) identifies a persistent duality in the idea that echoes Frost's poetic meditations on good fences and bad walls:

A group or a group member can draw a rhetorical boundary that excludes other groups' claims to competence in their area, thus

exerting or trying to exert some sort of control over their epistemic authority. In the other tradition a boundary is seen as a given division between social groups that, while working together, view the world and the object of their collaboration in fundamentally different ways. In this view a boundary is not something created to establish epistemic authority, but rather something to be overcome to create scientific cooperation. (p. 456)

Boundaries, that is, not only exclude but can also connect, and the most fruitful areas for cooperation may lie specifically in the most contested boundary zones. From this perspective, putting up boundaries and taking them down are not opposites but rather simultaneous and interrelated, as mirror twins, aspects of the same action. The apparent act of raising fences can actually be seen as an invitation to collaborate—and perhaps the reverse as well. We may see boundary work of various kinds, complex gestures of rejection and inclusion, ambivalent acceptance and conflicted resistance, often simultaneous, in *trans-* approaches to multiple phenomena: disciplines, languages, nations, identities, and more.

Transing Disciplines

Dividing up a problem so that it can be addressed by different theories doesn't encourage the dialogue we need. Rather we need to move beyond difference towards overlapping and intruding expertise . . . [O]ur efforts thrived in proportion to the amount of linguistics our educators could learn, and the amount of educational theory and practice our linguists could absorb.

– James Martin, 2000, p. 121

Transdisciplinarity as a concept has a contentious 50-year history, which we may (over)simplify for present purposes by dividing the approaches into the “beyond” and the “between” versions of *trans-* discussed above. The most prominent champion of the “beyond” approach is Basarab Nicolescu, whose “Levels of Reality” approach was summarized by Artur Manfred Max-Neef (2005) in terms that echo the famous mathematical incompleteness theorems of Kurt Gödel: “the laws of a given level of reality are not self-sufficient to describe the totality of phenomena occurring at that same level” (p. 13). Nicolescu’s other two axioms are the anti-Aristotelian “logic of the included middle” and an axiom of complexity. Nicolescu (2010) himself cites not only Gödel but also Heisenberg, as well as the phenomenology of Husserl, Heidegger, and Cassirer as reinscribing the Subject as part of the scientific enterprise. Peter Osborne (2015) cites an alternate tradition of transdisciplinary works in the humanities and social sciences, including Horkheimer and Adorno, de Beauvoir, Sartre, Levi-Strauss, Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, Habermas, and Sloterdijk. Most of the names on Osborne’s list are customarily

described as participants in various *post-* movements, especially post-structuralism and post-modernism. To be *post-* is to still be trapped in the horizon of what came before, though one can see its fatal limitations; to re-position these thinkers as *trans-* rather than *post-*, as Osborne does, is to emphasize their potential escape from the *post-* trap, to highlight the continuing movement of these thinkers between and beyond various disciplinary spaces and identities, and to begin to offer a more accurate description of the ways that *theory as transing* has exerted profound influence on multiple disciplines, from literary criticism to philosophy to anthropology to linguistics and beyond, without the theorists themselves being clearly located in a univocal disciplinary identity. This potent intersection of science, philosophy, and theory of various stripes suggests that transdisciplinarity as “beyond discipline” is not some pie-in-the-sky future aspiration but rather an existing force that has already been driving widely diverse intellectual endeavors for several decades, if not longer. From this perspective, the tasks of a transdisciplinary researcher go beyond merely applying one’s own expertise to a new object of study and certainly beyond just importing aspects of another field into one’s own discipline. Rather, the mandate is to seek out areas where similar pressures and influences have already borne relevant fruit in other contexts.

While transdisciplinarity as “beyond,” as “theory,” might even be described as the mainstream in the humanities and some social sciences—though certainly not without controversy or resistance—a more pragmatic “between” approach to transdisciplinarity has prevailed as the principal discourse in STEM fields. Thomas Jahn et al. (2012) offer a consensus definition of what might be dubbed the “social problem approach” in that it concentrates on issues that are too large for any one discipline to tackle alone: climate change, hunger, globalization, etc.:

Transdisciplinarity is a reflexive research approach that addresses societal problems by means of interdisciplinary collaboration as well as the collaboration between researchers and extra-scientific actors; its aim is to enable mutual learning processes between science and society; integration is the main cognitive challenge of the research process. (p. 4)

In this version, transdisciplinarity erodes the borders not only between disciplines but between “science and society” by including “researchers and extra-science actors” in a “mutual learning process.” The goal of “integration” is also the primary “challenge” of this variety of transing: how to remain indefinitely in that “between,” in that mutually created knowledge space without retreating into disciplinary corners.

As Martin (2000) argues, notions of “overlapping” and “intruding” are central to transdisciplinary projects, which otherwise may have hardly anything in common with each other except that they don’t allow the participants to remain

securely ensconced in their disciplinary silos, but instead to experience friction, discomfort, ambiguity of affiliation, weakening or erasure of boundaries, learning and integration of elements from different disciplines, overlapping of intellectual territories, blurring of academic identities.

Transing Languages

WAC/WID has made some tentative approaches to language issues, from calls for transformative collaboration (Wolfe-Quintero & Sagade, 1999; Matsuda & Jablonski, 2000; Johns, 2001; Hall, 2009) to three special issues of *Across the Disciplines* and an associated edited volume (Johns, 2005; Cox & Zawacki, 2011; Zawacki & Cox, 2014; Horner & Hall 2018). Nevertheless, the field has not yet fully engaged with the questions raised by a translingual approach to language difference. Translingualism contests the idea that languages reside in discrete boxes, or separate systems, that do not touch or influence each other. At the macro level, translingualism points toward the idea that the edges of languages are contested territory, contact zones. At the micro level of individual idiolect, the translingual turn insists that all the languages a person knows can be active in the present moment of reading or writing, that all the components of one's complete communicative repertoire are, at least potentially, simultaneously in play in a mutually re-enforcing manner. WAC/WID theory and practice needs to be attentive to both the macro- and micro- levels of language change and interaction.

The translingual approach actually has at least three major components. One is a theory about relations between languages, especially about language difference, about language boundaries. A second component includes an ideological imperative, because of the pervasive yet often-unconscious cultural assumptions of monolingualism that must be countered. This aspect has sometimes been figured as developing translingual or transcultural “dispositions” (Lee & Canagarajah, 2018; Lee & Jenks, 2016), an ethical obligation of openness to variation within and between languages. A third aspect moves beyond writing to research in translinguistics (Dovchin & Lee, 2019) or what I prefer to call “everyday translinguality” (Robinson, Hall, & Navarro, 2020). Here the emphasis is on the ubiquitous, routine nature of translinguality, which only appears to be strange or exotic from the vestiges of a monolingualist perspective.

The original statement of a translingual approach (Horner et. al, 2011) succinctly summarizes the underlying language theory: “A translingual approach takes the variety, fluidity, intermingling, and changeability of languages as statistically demonstrable norms around the globe” (305). Or, rather than a summary, perhaps this is better described as a brief allusion to a complex of existing theories—not original to this translingual approach but rather building on decades of work in

critical applied linguistics and other fields. This formulation points toward the investigation of a state of translanguality, presented as “statistically demonstrable norms”: that is, future studies of translanguality will aspire to produce verifiable research about languages and language difference. Translanguality as a questioning of linguistic boundaries situates comfortably among developments that have influenced a wide range of disciplines ranging from applied linguistics to anthropology to literary theory across the past forty years. One formulation attributes the recent feverish interest in “linguistic multiplicity” to the influence of

postmodern, poststructuralist, and postcolonial thought as seen in such notions as multiplicity, heterogeneity, fluidity, hybridity, and constructedness, which expand and blur the fixed boundaries of the social and linguistic categories that are defined in an essentialist binary logic in the previous modernist paradigm (Kubota, 2014, p. 2).

From *post-* to *trans-*: the “*post*” prefix suggests both an awareness of the limitations of a phenomenon and at the same time the condition of remaining trapped within its horizon. Yasmin Yildiz (2011) suggests the term “postmonolingual” for “a field of tension in which the monolingual paradigm continues to assert itself and multilingual practices persist or reemerge.” (p. 5). The translangual, as an aspiration, would signal that we are ready to go beyond the monolingualist ideology that coincided historically with the simultaneous rise of the nation-state.

The second main component of the Translingual Statement involves a shift to an ideological presentation of translangualism, which

confronts, as well, the practice of invoking standards not to improve communication and assist language learners, but to exclude voices and perspectives at odds with those in power. It treats standardized rules as historical codifications of language that inevitably change through dynamic processes of use. A translangual approach proclaims that writers can, do, and must negotiate standardized rules in light of the contexts of specific instances of writing. (Horner et al., 2011, p. 305)

Here the focus is on a translangual analysis, with strong echoes of Foucault and Bourdieu, of the power relations inherent in a monolingualist paradigm. The key word here is “negotiate,” a term which will recur again and again in discussions of translangual approaches, introducing a fully rhetorical aspect to linguistic change. It is not only that the “rules” of standardized languages shift and change over time, on a macro level, as power relations within and between language communities shift and change—any modern linguistic theory would agree with this much. But translangualism insists on the agency of each individual writer in each rhetorical

situation as participating in that process (Lu & Horner, 2013), if only as one in trillions of such micro-negotiations in every act of language every second of every day all over the world. It's not an either/or matter of choosing whether to follow or to defy the rules of a standardized language, but rather of finding strategies for situating oneself, as a writer, within the already shifting and already malleable repetitions and deviations that constitute the network of differences that form what we call language(s) or dialect(s) or variet(ies)-or subsets such as registers or disciplines.

A third aspect of translanguaging points toward researching the ways in which all language users, whether “native” or not, contribute constantly to the moment-by-moment re-production and re-vision of any language they use. This “everyday translanguaging” (Robinson, Hall, & Navarro, 2020) is both routine and yet potentially transformative, and forms a potent area for future WAC/WID translanguaging research. Two of the co-authors of the statement followed up with a careful delineation of both the roots of translanguaging and its pedagogical application to a student text (Lu & Horner, 2013), focusing most urgently on the issue of agency:

A translanguaging approach thus defines agency operating in terms of the need and ability of individual writers to map and order, remap and reorder conditions and relations surrounding their practices . . . (p. 591)

Min-Zhan Lu and Bruce Horner position writers, including student writers of any linguistic background, as active and purposeful negotiators of meaning.

Translanguaging pedagogy needs to be built on the language theory, the ideological dispositions, and on meeting students where they are in their everyday non-controversial use of multiple language resources, an approach or cluster of classroom approaches that combine linguistic research, instructor raised consciousness, and student agency. One of our jobs as writing professionals is to help both WAC faculty and students reach the consciousness that the particular rhetorical configuration that we call standardized correctness is not written in stone but rather is subject to trillions of micro-negotiations every day, based on the interactions, the rhetorical and linguistic choices, made by speakers and writers all over the world.

Negotiation and Empowerment

It is vital that students understand, both intellectually and viscerally, that they are among those negotiators, those makers of language—that they are co-owners of English, not just renters. Just because they speak English “as a second language,” it does not mean that they are second-class speakers of English. But they enter our classrooms already having absorbed the cultural message that a language is owned by its native speakers, and part of our job, in teaching students to write in a second or for that matter in any language, is helping them to develop a critical

consciousness of what that enterprise really entails. Students, it is true, may express their desire to master Standard English (and only Standard English) because they can perfectly well read the cultural semiotics that associate a particular register of English with prestige and status. But students' attraction to the "Standard" needs to be contextualized, and if the important task of helping students to understand the power relationships inherent in current cultural beliefs about language difference is not addressed in the writing classroom, it probably will never be done at all. The result would be that students regard themselves as passive recipients of a language which will always remain somewhat foreign to them, rather than as one of the billions of active shapers of the language.

One way of thinking of translanguaging is as a rhetoricization of language "correctness," or rather as a recognition that "correctness" is already a rhetorical category, and not a purely linguistic one. A standardized variety of a language describes a particular configuration of writer, audience, and text that has been normalized through social processes, not an inevitable or eternal structure. Suresh Canagarajah (2015) has suggested that "what translanguaging pedagogies favor is deconstructing Standard English to make students aware that it is a social construct" (p. 425).

Negotiations, of course, are seldom between exact equals, and it would be foolish to underestimate the continuing power of monolingualist ideology or to assert that the hegemony of Standard English can be lightly defied with impunity. Even an established scholar like Canagarajah (2006) remains cautious about how he introduces elements of code-meshing and other translanguaging practices into his academic prose. But recognition of a power differential does not mean that no negotiation is possible, nor that it is pointless to raise consciousness even if, in the end, a student declines to challenge existing rhetorical or linguistic norms in a given text or embraces common practices. Understanding the contingent nature of current standards can nevertheless empower students to greater rhetorical assertiveness even as they continue to operate within the established constraints of a particular situation, because they begin to think of themselves as agents making active decisions in real rhetorical situations as they write, rather than simply filling in the blanks of a template or memorizing a book of rules. While prescriptivists look for rules and descriptivists look for patterns, translanguagingists look for choices.

Transdisciplinary Roots and Branches of Translanguaging

Translanguaging, while it may be the new kid on the block in WAC/WID circles, did not arise *ex nihilo*, nor does it exist in isolation in its contemporary circumstances. The original Translanguaging Statement (Horner et al., 2011) included an extensive bibliography, which can stand as a historical representation of what the authors and signatories of that statement saw as their key predecessors, as of

2011, in the fields of second language writing, applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and related disciplines. From a WAC/WID perspective, Terry Myers Zawacki and Michelle Cox (2014) present a narrative of gradual influence from research in all the above fields.

In second language acquisition (SLA), Vivian Cook's conception of "multicompetence," in the 1990s to early 2000s, provides perhaps the most direct precursor to the translanguaging approach—though Cook was mostly not talking about writing, at that time not a front-row priority in SLA. But multicompetence broke down the idea that languages could be kept separate within the individual speaker; rather, they affect each other and do not stay in silos or walled-off systems; a bilingual does not reside in "two solitudes" (Cummins, 2008). Crucially, the influence could move both ways: not only did the L1 affect the L2, but the L2 affected the L1 (Cook, 2003). Cook's concept of multicompetence was later re-formulated by Joan Kelly Hall, An Cheng, and Matthew T. Carlson (2006) as a much more dynamic and usage based view of language, a model with important implications for WAC/WID (Hall & Navarro, 2011).

If translanguaging has multiple roots in the past, it also has multiple fellow travelers in the present, as part of a broader intellectual movement—or perhaps several movements—across all fields involved in language study, and in society at large. From the perspective of applied linguistics, Ryuko Kubota (2014), in describing what she calls "the multi/plural turn," defined as research "which focuses on the plurality, multiplicity, and hybridity of language and language use to challenge a traditional paradigm of understanding linguistic practices in various contexts" (p. 2), captures something of the breadth of these recent developments, even if at times we seem to be drowning in a sea of neologisms: "multilingualism, plurilingualism, world Englishes, English as a lingua franca, codemeshing, metrolingualism, translanguaging approach, translanguaging, multiliteracies and hybridity" (p. 2).¹

Kubota locates the translanguaging approach as one among many examples of "the multi/plural turn," identifying a fundamental rift that cuts across several disciplines related to language research. Canagarajah (2013a) provides a different list of transdisciplinary phenomena that are parallel with or at least bear a strong family resemblance to translanguaging:

In composition: translanguaging writing, codemeshing, and transcultural literacy;

In new literacy studies: multiliteracies, continua of biliteracy, and heterography;

In sociolinguistics: fused lects, ludic Englishes and metrolinguistics, poly-lingual languaging, and fragmented, multilingualism;

1 I've omitted Kubota's citations for all of these; see Kubota (2016) for references.

In applied linguistics: translanguaging, dynamic bilingualism and pluriliteracy, plurilingualism, and third spaces. (p. 9)²

In both of these examples of connective boundary work, translanguaging is positioned neither as a stand-alone revolutionary paradigm, nor as a provincial development within rhetoric and composition, but rather as part of a broader transdisciplinary wave of critical approaches to language difference. The movement of re-contextualization may be seen as an example of boundary work in its more positive, collaborative sense, a move toward articulating a transdisciplinary nexus where multiple perspectives and multiple disciplines are involved in trying to unravel a complex phenomenon. For WAC/WID, it raises the question of how to respond, however belatedly, to the transdisciplinary, transnational, and translanguaging challenge.

Transing National Identities

The notion of standard languages is inextricably tied to the idea of national identities. A supposed common language is frequently adduced as a reason for the creation of a nation-state, even as linguistic uniformity is often imposed on language minorities in the aftermath of a nationalist movement. Insistence on “English Only” in the US, for example, is about anti-transnationalism, i.e., maintaining the prominence of borders, and its concurrent division of “In” and “Out” among people on the various sides.

Alastair Pennycook’s 2008 essay on “Translingual English” adds a sociolinguistic complement to multicompetence theory’s focus on the individual language user. Monolingualism as an ideology has always had both a micro dimension—the expectation that one individual would speak only one language—and a macro dimension, in which a single language is seen as an indispensable unifying factor in a nation-state. Pennycook instead urges a transnational/translingual approach,

[a] move towards an understanding of the relationships among language resources as used by certain communities (the linguistic resources users draw on), local language practices (the use of these language resources in specific contexts), and language users’ relationship to language varieties (the social, economic and cultural positioning of the speakers). This is, consequently, an attempt to move away from nation-based models of English and to take on board current understandings of translanguaging practices across communities other than those defined along national criteria. (p. 304)

2 I’ve omitted Canagarajah’s citations; see Canagarajah (2013a) for references.

For Pennycook, translanguaging arises from transnationalism, or, more specifically, from moving beyond the equation of one nation/one language. Language practices are not limited to one geographic location; across the globe, languages are on the move.

The forces of national identity continue, of course, to make claims of family, culture, and patriotism, and so the transnational challenge—for students, for faculty, and for institutions—raises the stakes of *trans-* phenomena. What does a transnational approach have to offer us as WAC/WID professionals? What do we mean, anyway, by “transnational”? Here’s one definition:

. . . many contemporary migrants and their predecessors maintained a variety of ties to their home countries while they became incorporated into the countries where they settled. Migration has never been a one-way process of assimilation into a melting pot or a multicultural salad bowl but one in which migrants, to varying degrees, are simultaneously embedded in the multiple sites and layers of the transnational social fields in which they live. . . . (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007, p. 130)

Instead of identities defined by national borders, a transnational perspective focuses on the complex relationships that transnational migrants maintain both with the culture of wherever they are physically, and with wherever else they have ties of family, heritage, birth, language, interest, curiosity, or affiliation. It examines the ways that individuals, families, and diasporic communities construct and maintain transnational identities, sometimes through a conscious claim or performance of identity and sometimes through largely unconscious immersion in cultural traces, connections, and memories, often mediated by the ongoing use of a minoritized language in a particular displaced setting. A transnational approach takes multidirectional mobility and the possibility of repeated migration as a given and rejects the notion of an immigrant without a past fully assimilated into a new national identity.

The concept of transnationalism has advanced from early studies in anthropology (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Duany, 2008), sociology (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007), mobility studies (Soong, 2016; Wu, 2017) and ethnic studies (Kivisto, 2001; Portes et al., 1999; Vertovec, 1999) to transdisciplinary approaches such as communication flows (Verdery et al., 2018) and superdiversity (Blommaert & Rampton, 2012; Vertovec, 2007). More recent studies of transnationalism have focused on how it functions in particular domains such as health (Villa Torres, 2017), families (Cho & Allen, 2019), sport (Vertovec, 2009), diplomacy (Kuus, 2017) and history (Macdonald, 2013; Körner, 2017).

In writing studies, transnational approaches continue to illuminate aspects of Writing Program Administration (Martins, 2014); TESOL (Solano-Campos, 2014); composition studies (Donahue, 2009); and mobility studies (e.g.,

Blommaert & Horner, 2017). WAC/WID has made some steps toward engaging with some aspects of this research (e.g., Zenger, Haviland, & Mullin, 2013). Nevertheless, WAC/WID as a field has not yet fully engaged with the questions raised by a transnational approach to writing pedagogy and research. Transnationalism may be contextualized as a subset or example of a broader “turn” away from the idea of the nation-state as the main, or at least the initial, reference-point in a student writer’s identity.

Transnationalism is not merely the interrelation of one static place with another static place. We need to take into account not only the places and cultures changing moment to moment, but also the ceaseless churning movements between and within them. Whether through physical movement via modern transportation or virtual displacement in the vast nowhere/everywhere of cyberspace, people are on the move, and so are their ideas, their stuff, their languages, their loyalties. In the recent pandemic situation, the key aspiration around the world has been to slow movement, with policies necessitating the enforced immobility of persons aimed at arresting both the worldwide and also local mobility of the virus. But this is of course an aberration from what got us in that situation in the first place: the accelerating and—we thought—unstoppable mobility of people, goods, ideas, money, languages—and diseases.

For academic research in multiple fields, especially in the social sciences, the “mobility studies paradigm” (Steller & Urry, 2006) has challenged “sedentary” assumptions that phenomena such as nations, families, businesses, individuals, societies would stay still long enough to be studied. Disciplines, too, are unstable and mobile (Blommaert & Horner, 2017), and scholarly identities require constant modification, project by project and moment by moment within “the same” project. For WAC/WID as an ever-shifting network of persons (students, instructors, administrators, scholars), texts (created daily in multiple virtual locations), and practices (always already adapting on the fly, only now we can see it more clearly), the interruption of mobility in the pandemic environment emphasizes the necessity of interrogating what we mean by academic writing in an environment where instruction is online, where people are on edge, and where the future is on hold. To what degree will this interregnum in mobility force an awareness of all the motion that we were overlooking before, now visible because we miss it?

Transnational Challenges and Opportunities for WAC/WID

In the context of WAC/WID, transnational approaches offer challenges and opportunities for transnational student identities, for universities as transnational institutions, and for faculty as transfronterizo instructors and scholars.

The Transnational Triangle: From Monodirectional Immigration to Transnational Mobility

How are our WAC/WID students affected by a re-thinking of national identity, and especially of immigration, as not a melting pot or a multicultural salad bowl but rather as an ongoing connection to multiple social fields across borders?

The laws of physics say that we cannot be in two places at the same time. The laws of the heart say that often we must be in two places at once. The laws of governments, along with the laws of the marketplace, complicate, mediate, and regulate the operations of the other types of laws. That is to say: transnational identity is composed of the interaction between three points of a triangle: physical location and the events, necessities, and cultural demands of that milieu; continuing ties and activities (legal, economic, familial, linguistic, cultural, symbolic, emotional) to other location(s); and a multitude of external factors which help to determine the specific forms that these connections are allowed to take on.

Steven Vertovec (1999) describes transnationalism as “a social formation spanning borders” in which “the network’s component parts—connected by nodes and hubs—are both autonomous from, and dependent upon, its complex system of relationships” (p. 449). The transnational triangle exists in the physical world, in social or cultural spaces, and in individual subjectivity. It can be influenced by the actions of governments, economic actors, cultural groups, or individuals. It may be seen as both voluntary and deterministic: individuals make choices regarding their loyalties and the connections which they wish to maintain (or not), but those decisions take place in a matrix of influences which is not completely in their control.

In the U.S. context, discussions of immigration tend to put the emphasis on the future, which leads us to conceive of immigration as a one-time and final act, a burning of bridges, a blind and irrevocable leap into the unknown. We still think of immigration the way that the Irish did in the wake of the 19th-century famine, when the custom of an “America wake” arose: whenever a young person was emigrating to America, they would hold a party where the unspoken assumption was that this would be the last time that friends and family would ever see that person (Diner 1998). Yet even in the 19th century, it has been argued that the Irish in America never fully assimilated and always thought of themselves as exiles (Diner, 1998; Miller, 1988). So if even the 19th-century Irish emigrant—lamented in song and mourned as dead, and with return trips limited by existing technology and the cost of a journey—can nevertheless be seen as maintaining some degree of transnational identity, what of today’s global flows of what we still call “immigration,” facilitated by much more advanced transportation and communication technologies?

Still it is not illusory that immigrants of today have a different relationship both to their arrival culture and to their departure culture. A shift from a conception

of irrevocable monodirectional immigrants to transnational continuing mobility can help to restore a sense of a two-way (or more) flow of influence and information and ideas. Today's migrants and children of migrants, including many of our WAC/WID students, function as nodes on multiple intersecting networks of language, culture, and identity.

Transnational Institutional Structures: Beyond "International"

Transnationalism tends to erode borders between nations; the best example might be the European Union. Top-level transnationalism—or anti-transnationalism—most directly affects our WAC/WID students and faculty when it comes to policies regarding transnational students (usually referred to as “international” students—see Hall & Navarro in the present volume). The recent actions of the Trump administration attempting to curtail student visas during the COVID pandemic, for example, have had very direct effects on enrollment, programming, support, and all aspects of international student programs in the United States.

The original context of the term “transnational” was in analyzing the organizational structure of large corporations. Companies with operations beyond a single nation were categorized along axes of Integration and Responsiveness. This model of an I-R framework distinguishes among four types of organizational structure. A transnational corporation was to be distinguished from an international one (just import-export), a multinational one (relatively autonomous subsidiaries with limited working arrangements) and from global corporations (think McDonalds) that attempted to reproduce themselves exactly, often with franchises, with the minimal possible adaptation to local conditions (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1988; Brock & Hydle, 2018; Kordos & Vojtovic, 2016).

This transnational analysis of corporate structure is relevant to the actions of universities as they expand beyond their national borders of origin to position themselves in global, multinational, international, or transnational manners (Chen, 2015). The claims of U.S. universities to be “global” in their reach, or their signing of multinational study-abroad or “sister campuses” agreements with universities elsewhere, or their opening of “branch” campuses in very different national and cultural contexts: all these rhetorical moves need to be evaluated in the context of models of transnational institutional structures.

At the micro-institutional level of “writing programs,” WAC/WID has attempted to move beyond its North American roots to at least acknowledge that the teaching of writing and the doing of academic writing may vary across national and cultural locations. The theme of the 2004 WAC Conference was “WAC from an International Perspective,” and each subsequent conference has been designated as an “International Conference on Writing Across the Curriculum.” In 2012, the

results of an extensive worldwide initiative “mapping” writing programs were published (Thaiss et al., 2012), which shed some light on the diversity of the ways in which “writing” is conceived and taught in multiple locations. Included in the recent formation of the U.S.-based Association for Writing Across the Curriculum (AWAC 2021) is a renewed initiative to interact and to collaborate with similar organizations abroad.

But “international” is not transnational: rather, international envisions everyone remaining in their national silos, signing agreements to cooperate. A truly transnational intersection of programmatic structures would result in de-centered models, involving interdependent parts working together across multiple national and cultural locations.

Crossing and Re-crossing Boundaries: Transfronterizo

If transnationalism explores the slow erosion of national boundaries, there remain many contexts in which borders are not disappearing at all but rather serve as a source of constant tension and potential conflict for those who live in proximity. The term “transfronterizo” has emerged to describe those who cross and re-cross borders repeatedly and often routinely, for whom transnationalism is not a subjective connection across great distances but rather a medium in which daily life is immersed (Fránquiz & Ortiz, 2017; Marshall, 2019; O’Connor, 2019; Zentella, 2009). In this volume, Alyssa Cavazos et al. describe the opportunities and challenges of living in borderlands without either the option of or the desire for an escape route—constantly crossing and re-crossing borders that are physical (their institution is located near the U.S./Mexico border), linguistic (the institution is officially bilingual, and a large majority of both students and instructors make use of both English and Spanish), and disciplinary (the authors are all located in a newly-created Department of Writing and Language Studies). In discussing the sometimes uneasy collaborations between instructors in first-year composition and in Spanish language courses in a translingual and transnational context, the authors describe their condition as that of “transfronterizo collaborators.” Recognizing that most of their students and, in many cases, themselves are simultaneously living *acá y allá*, transfronterizo instructors must intentionally interrogate the “multiple daily transactions” across borders that form the basis of complex language, personal, and intellectual identities.

Transfronterizo may be seen as, in one sense, an inescapable condition emerging from situated dichotomies beyond individual control: the physical border is an artifact of history, the stakes of language difference are rooted in ideology, and disciplinary identities are under pressure from institutional reorganization. In such a situation, to retreat from the borderlands into the supposed safety of a stable disciplinary identity would be to ignore language difference and the liminal existence of a borderland residence.

Conclusion: WAC/WID in the Translingual Transnational University

WAC/WID professionals need always to keep in mind that good fences make good language, national, or disciplinary neighbors only so long as both sides are conscious that boundary work is, as Frost puts it, “Oh, just another kind of out-door game” (1915). Perhaps we should call it boundary play. A translingual approach deconstructs the bright-line separation between languages, and between languages and dialects. Academic disciplines, too, attempt to divide up research territory, but their boundary work collapses, as well, under the centripetal forces of transdisciplinarity. National borders try to define through separation, but a transnational approach regards borders as porous, fluid, as lines which connect more than they divide.

For researchers, instructors, and administrators in a transdisciplinary field like WAC/WID, who are operating in the context of an actual or potential translingual transnational university, all three *trans*-phenomena are inescapable factors in everything that we do. For WAC/WID instructors, many of their students will already be living transnational identities which may not be immediately visible in the classroom, but which potentially offer a rich resource for them to draw upon in their academic writing and research. Administrators of WAC/WID programs may find that their university’s announced “global” identity falls short of true transnationalism. If a university regards its outreach across borders merely as a way of attracting potential students from overseas, it is missing the chance to really engage with what it would mean for a university to be a fully global citizen in a transnational world. WAC/WID researchers should examine the intersection of translingual practices and transnational identities in all of these areas and suggest what it would mean to truly re-invent the contemporary university as a participant in transnational translingual dispositions across boundaries of discipline, language, and nationality.

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