



# **“Translational Remainders” in Talking and Writing for Non-Disciplinary Audiences**


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# Let's think about disciplinarity by looking at work done for non-disciplinary audiences

- In the work of teaching
- Through the exigencies of inter-disciplinary collaboration
- In the growing need for public presentations, especially in STEM fields



# Writing and speaking for non-specialist audiences releases “translational remainders”

The remainder consists of such variations as regional and social dialects, slogans, and clichés, technical terminologies and slang, archaisms and neologisms, literary figures like metaphors and puns, stylistic innovations, and foreign loan words. (Venuti 2013: 37)



# What can we learn about disciplinarity from STEM academics translating for lay audiences?

- How do they actually think about this process of translating?
- What kinds of remainders can we see?
- So what?





# All participants privileged the idea that conveying their message was a matter of reducing jargon and keeping things simple.

- “Didn’t want to be overly technical”
- “I didn’t want to go too in-depth and lose the audience”
- “Using the specific terms I might use in lab wasn’t necessary to convey point I was trying to make”





# Translational Remainders were accidents, born of habit.

- “That was just my unfortunate . . . I could have said that better.”
- “It’s what I’m used to use so it's really hard in order for me to translate from that word to the more general word whenever I present.”
- “Oh, it's not an everyday word?”





# **Translational Remainders were more likely at moments where threshold concepts were discussed.**

“akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress” (Meyer and Land, 2003).





# “3D is the summation of the 2D planes”

- So basic principle of 3D printing is you divide the 3 dimension into the numerous 2 dimensions and then make the 2 dimensions a summation of that. So I tried to explain the basic concept of the 3D printing or additive manufacturing.
- [Engineering students] know what the zero, one dimension, two dimension, three dimension is but still I have to explain that the basic principle of 3D printing, I have to say ok so 3 dimensional divided into the 2 dimensional. Then they know quickly.







# “So you do make some delta increments”

- Engineering as “standing on the shoulders of a giant”
- “You have to absorb what has been already discovered in the field and then you can make the increment in the field, the knowledge increment by standing on the shoulders.”





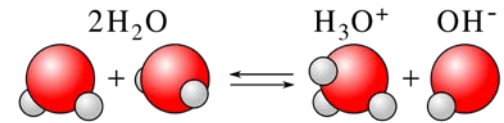
**Translational remainders provide opportunities to explore deep disciplinary knowledge.**

How can these remainders be used as rhetorical devices?



# Translational remainders can remind audiences of complexity *without* depending on specialist knowledge.

“Actually I just wanted to show that there are so many different ions in water and it's important, so there are so many different ions on there. In this slide I need to explain that different ions mean different things in water. That's why you have to analyze so many different ions [. . .] that's totally why I wanted to do that, like if you don't understand it's fine. They are different and that means different things.”



# General Takeaways and Applications

- Highlighting the difficulty of translating threshold concepts is itself a discussion of content.
- Developing awareness of the positive effects of translational remainders helps reduce deficit approaches to lay audiences.
- Like code-meshing approaches in translingualism, highlighting difference in non-specialist writing is a rhetorically-savvy move.

