



# Translingual Practice: Weaving Native Cultures to a Writing Classroom

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# ABSTRACT

The growth of extensive discussions of translingualism has emerged in the area of writing and composition in recent years in response to view writing as a negotiation of cross -language form in the multilingual contact zone. Translingual approach problematizes the propagation of monolingual orientations: standardized native-speaker norms and the stigma of printed written language, and overlooks the diverse cultural and linguistic potentials brought by the students in the English writing classroom. Translingualism does not offer the generic model to bridge the linguistic gaps perpetuated between academic setting and students' backgrounds. However, it endorses transformative perspectives of language teachers to embrace students' differences in first language and second language meaning-making production and the creative use of semiotic resources in the classroom. With a clear understanding and knowledge of students' cultures, Canagarajah (2015) argues that writing teachers can better apply translingual practice in the classroom due to their well-experience as multilingual writers and speakers. This paper aims to situate the concepts of translingualism concerning students' native cultures and classroom settings in Indonesia, in particular in Moluccas (known as Maluku) context. The pedagogical practice of translingual practice is addressed based on the context- and cultural-specific manner and draws upon Canagarajah's (2013) four macro-level strategies of Translingualism. As such, this paper can broaden the horizon of language teachers and scholars about the possible chance to adopt and adapt translingual practice in a local setting with the available knowledge and understanding.

Keywords: translingualism, translingual practice, Indonesia

#### 1. Introduction

English has been growing as a world English (es) with the celebration of a diversity of linguistic and cultural repositories, and it breeds into many varieties of English. Kirckpatrick (2010) argued that some 'non-standard Englishes' in Asian countries be influenced by multicultural norms of the speakers and constituted as the result of English as a lingua franca. The Malay, for example, was substituted by English as a lingua franca in the Southeast Asia because the Malay users become fewer compared to the increasing numbers of English speakers (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Inevitably, there is interference by several major ethnic languages such as Mandarin, Tamil, and Malay in the use of English for the contact purposes. I experienced the complexity of language use in a different context when I traveled to Malaysia for the conference, and I interacted with some local people there. I did code-switching between Malay and English when I communicated with taxi-drivers and hoteliers who could not speak English well but Hindi and Malay.

Trudgill (2000) stated that the language speakers could operate two languages or more based on the situation and their intention to cue the meaning. In particular, the multilingual speakers are capable of employing codeswitching as they shuttle from place to place to maintain their interaction with their interlocutors. The fact that code switching is globally used through English and other languages are contradictory with the situation in the L2 classroom. Cook (1999) argued that most English classrooms in many expanding circle countries be centralized by the delusion of native speaker as the standpoint of standard English. The standard English and native speaker myth are challenged because English has been embraced as an international language for everyone as the owner of English. Later in his newest article, Cook (2016) contended that there is no much change with the preservation of monolingual ideology of native speaker which is inextricably intertwined with the English speaking curriculum and materials. Canagarajah (2013b) reminded that students' language travels and make contact with another cultural and linguistic repertoire of different students in the classroom which always disrupt the monolingual pedagogy. To enhance mutual intelligibility and to empower students' position as the L2 speakers and writers, translingualism becomes the seed of internalization and localization of English in negotiating with the diversity of local resources and language norms in the classroom. My relevant experiences as an English teacher and a multilingual speaker become the assets for me to encapsulate the translingual practice in L2 writing. This paper begins by posing problems identification in the social context and classroom setting. I then present the theoretical framework of translingualism and provide a pedagogical practice in my L2 writing classroom.

#### 2. Problem identification

## 2.1. Social Context

Indonesia is the archipelago country with more than 200 ethnics groups. These groups have a wealth local cultures and language resources. Each individual is raised with at least with one local dialect. Besides the local linguistic codes, in the past, Malay-Polynesian (Austronesian) was used as a trading language which shared the same root with Malay. Bertrand (2003) professed that although Dutch colonized Indonesia for more than thirty-five decades and spread the use of Dutch language it was limited to the governmental apparatus and academics. Dutch colonials allowed the use of Malay-Polynesian for daily communication among natives in Indonesia. The Malay-Polynesian was chosen as the lingua franca in Indonesia because it was easy compared to another local language such as the Javanese language with its hierarchy linguistic system (Bertrand, 2003). In November, 28th 1928, Indonesians had youth pledge and replaced the Malay-Polynesian with Bahasa Indonesia. After the independence in 1945, the establishment of Bahasa Indonesia began. The Malay and some other minor languages like Arabic, Sanskrit, Dutch, English, Spanish, and Portuguese have influenced the codification process due to the past contact in trade and colonization. The varieties of languages influences enrich the phonemic system of Bahasa Indonesia. Bahasa Indonesia becomes the national language which is used widely in administration, commerce, and schools. The establishment has two sides of the coin. On the one hand, Bahasa Indonesia becomes the official language to unite people with diverse backgrounds. On the other hand, the language practice appeals to the idea of one language, one nation, and one identity. The enforcement of Bahasa Indonesia policy can suppress the use of local languages. Keyes argues that the national languages, especially in Asia, are "the products of political processes that privilege on language among the many spoken and read by those who have been subsumed as citizens within the boundaries of state" (2003, p.177). This policy of national language as the privileged language shares similar influence with the agenda of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the classroom by the perpetuation of English only by following the native speaker norm.

I am aware the fact that I can speak many languages because my languages are used in different settings and purposes. I use Bahasa Indonesia fluently because of my

formal education and interaction with multiethnic people in Indonesia. I also speak my dialect, Ambon Malay-the creole of Malay and Dutch languages- as my language of infancy in my home discourse. I have also experienced learning English for more than 15 years in formal education. I prefer to see myself neither a native speaker nor a non-native speaker of a certain language, but I view my identity as a multilingual speaker. This perspective is aligned with Cook's (2012) argument that non-native speakers should not be seen as incompetent users but the ones who have multicompetent with two or more languages. Canagarajah (2015) is also the multilingual speaker, but he opts not to choose certain language among four languages he could speak. He realized that the assumption of native language adheres to the ideology of native speakers. Holliday (2005) disputes the notion of Native Speaker who claims the significant use of the language of Self (authoritative language) that overshadows diversity of language of Other (minor languages). Canagarajah and Matsumoto suggested that the speakers need to attribute his multilingual competence by integrating English into his or her linguistic resources and appropriate it for developing his or her own voice (2016).

# 2.2. Second Language (L2) writing Classroom Setting

The dilemma occurred when my ascribed identity as the multilingual speaker with many linguistic competences opposed with the romanticism of monolingual English classroom. I acknowledged that I was drowning by the myth of linguistic homogeneity (Matsuda, 2006) by assuming the same degree of L2 students' cognitive ability. I objectified my class by framing English norms for my L2 students to follow. I struggled to teach a basic writing class for my L2 students and ended up using a red ink for all grammatical mistakes that they made in their assignments. I would only write, "You have problems with the Subject-Verb Agreement" or "You need to have transition signals in your papers". I realized that it was unfair for the L2 students because their works were mainly assessed based on the norms rather than their other rhetoric and genre skills. This learning situation becomes not neutral since the power of monolingualism affects how I as a teacher performed in EFL classroom. I overlooked my own reflection of having multilingual competence by neglecting of what the students have and contemplating students' other linguistic capabilities can obstruct their process of L2 learning. Canagarajah (2015) argued that L2 students are struggling when their local dialects are not acknowledged which made them remain silent. For instance, the L2 students who carry their cultural accents in English are identified as deficient speaker because of the interference of other linguistic proficiency in the target language (Canagarajah, 2015). This linguistic feature, accent, sometimes becomes a point of ridicule among students' peers when the students could not show the 'correct' accent.

Another problem is a lack of acceptance when L2 students in my context perform a code switching between Bahasa Indonesia and Malay Ambon as the way to clarify

the meaning in the classroom. Cook defined the codeswitching skill is not in favor of the standard of monolingual English (2001). L2 students feel they need to keep their local resources back at home instead of bringing to the school (Gee, 2006). Students eventually develop their inferiority to use their own voice in the classroom. It is unfair to assess L2 students from the voice of native speakers that emphasizes on individuality and originality. The teachers need to corroborate students' voice which is communal and cultural traditions-oriented (Canagarajah & Matsumoto, 2016). Finally, the interlocutors and readers need to be actual for the L2 students. The teachers sometimes fail to notice the current classroom context and L2 students' identity by creating the fictional interaction between non-native English writer with a reader who is a native speaker. L2 students are not accustomed to identifying the genre and social convention and practicing performative competences in real communication because they focus on impressing the teachers.

### 3. The Frameworks of Translingualism

The classroom is considered as a contact zone, where multilingual and multicultural people meet and interact. According to Pratt, homogenous linguistic context only creates linguistic utopia about the sameness of norms and identities (Canagarajah, 2013b). Writing cannot be seen as the product of Standard English with students as a nonnative English speaker. Writing should be a negotiation of cross language-relation among different students across regional, cultural, and transnational backgrounds. Translingual orientation shifts from the product-based of monolingual orientation into the process and practices of language relations (Canagarajah, 2013b).

Canagarajah asserted that L2 classroom should be the place to embrace and appreciate the diverse repertoire of English speakers (2013a). Gee (2006) pointed out that academic discourse needs to accommodate students home discourse such as distinct dialects and cultures. Their local languages and English cannot be seen as the source of conflict toward the cultural resources because they are different. Pennycook (2010) claimed that language is always a part of local practice. Craig and Porter (2014) contended that locality is the unique element which blends in pedagogy and becomes the core of the classroom. Translingualism perceives the locality as a difference within and across various languages and cultures, and it works as a resource to generate the meaning (Horner, Lu, Royster & Trimbun, 2011). However, Craig and Porter (2014) gave caveat not to narrow local practices to micro pedagogy without affirming possible global encounter. Donahue (2016) further argued that academic situations need to train the students with rhetorical flexibility as the way to 'trans' understand language, rhetoric, teaching and learning for any future encounter from local to global contexts. The context of communication is historically and socially changed based on the time. Language practice such as writing activity needs to meet the demands of communication skills to cope with genres, academic disciplines, workforces and society without neglecting local cultures embedded in language users.

The translingual approach provides the process of meaning making and negotiating students' identities in L2 writing through two stages of the interactional process: 1) Students with the dominant norms of a native speaker, and 2) Students with their real readers. Students experience linguistic negotiation with the academic norms, which in turn creates their own unique hybrid discourse. Translingual approach challenges the conventional norms or standards in the classroom because L2 students have a legitimate voice to negotiate meaning with their readers. The practice to invoke norms in the classroom does not enhance the communication and help them to understand the rhetorical move since their voice are hindered by the power (Horner et. al, 2011). Trimbur (2016) echoed that errors of norms could be the effect of the deviation to reach the agreement in the form of rejection of the social transaction by the asymmetrical power of language community. Horner et.al (2011) inferred that translingual approach treats dominant norms or linguistic codification to be necessarily evolved as they dynamic process of language use. In another word, the standard convention of native speakers cannot always become the key to measuring L2 students' ability, but the norm is negotiable for interlingua communication. Students can negotiate the rules because they are struggling to position their discourse which can influence the use of standard, style and writing convention (Trimbur, 2016). In the second stage, students have a negotiation with their readers for meaning-making and co-constructing to get a mutual understanding. Writing becomes a two-dimensional activity where the writer and the readers have the same responsibilities, and they are legitimate in The L2 students can present the communication. information differently which cannot always become errors for the readers since there is the intention or purpose behind the difference in the norms. There is a possibility that students become resistant to follow the ideologies but try to create their mixed genre to strategically and contextually negotiate their meaning and their interest (Canagarajah, 2015). As such, reader engages with text not to find errors but to understand the ways language is used to convey meaning. Canagarajah and Matsumoto (2016) suggested for students' collaboration in co-constructing meanings in writing. The collaboration can be done between the peers and instructor in the classroom which becomes a writing community of practices for its participants.

To form the results of students' interaction within translingualism, students take into account their material contexts that might be different from time to time while negotiating their agency and asymmetrical power in interaction (Jordan, 2015) which includes the way students reconsider the use of conventional print literacy. Donahue (2016) said that the socio-cultural communicative practice within the text, materials, and practices transcending time and space, will uptake multimodalities to facilitate and clarify the meanings. Language in the classroom then shifts from linguistic to semiotics. Kress (2011) argued that students take the agency as the meaning maker to be

'making' and 'design' with a text-various semiotic entity which has a social sense since the different text in the form of semiotics has different affordance for different meaningmaking. Hafner (2015) referred semiotic resources as multimodal when the students compose their text with multiple semiotic modes like writing, signs, image and sound digital. Through multimodality, students involved with the process of engagement, transformations and sign making in particular context. Translingualism gives a chance for the students to blend different elements of their communicative repertoires and not only relying on the conventional print letter by remixing letters and images altogether to create meaning as well as to develop a unique voice. Code-meshing is the practical form of translingual. The code-meshing mix the various language repertoires and semiotic resources with dominant genre conventions to create hybridity in the text (Canagarajah, 2013a). I eventually envision translingualism as a promising pedagogy to contest dominant norms and to bridge the gap of academic context with students' local linguistic competences.

## 4. Pedagogical Practice of Translingualism

Translingual practice creates the safe space for a negotiation by students as legitimate speaker or writer with different cultural backgrounds. Writing in EFL context need to be defined in "more ecological, situated and multimodal ways" (Canagarajah, 2015, p.418). The teachers who are proficient as the multilingual speakers and knowledgeable about cultural resources can help the students to shuttle their languages based on the rhetorical needs and utilize the ecological context and semiotic resources involved. There is an urgent call for action by L2 teachers to use their own understanding and experience to facilitate students' local repertoire. Canagarajah (2016) pointed out the ecological orientations of translingualism in L2 writing classroom by underscoring participants, process, artifacts, and structures. In this case, my participants are the students from various regencies in the Moluccas in their basic writing course. The process consists of several translingual activities including the negotiation of students' discourse and native speaker norms as well as the dynamic interaction between students, their peers, and the teacher. Artifacts are the products of what students have in their translingual practices. I will use the four macro-level strategies framework by Canagarajah (2013a) to accommodate the implementation of translingual practice in my teaching context. I will modify these strategies and contextualize them in my teaching practice. I acknowledge that there is a thin line between those strategies, so there is overlapping process in my pedagogy.

## 4.1. Invoicing/Identity (Personal)

Canagarajah (2013a) argued that the students can use several strategies to represent their voices in their writing. One of the ways is by using semiotic resources to explore students' identities and interests that hint for different voices to serve rhetorical purposes. They can remix signs and texts

to reveal the meaning for engaging with the interaction. The Moluccas are well-known as the province of music and arts; thus, I group the students based on their similar cultures and interest, and ask them to reflect their cultures and local dialects that they might share. Since this is writing class, not all the students have proficient writing skill. I will make a group work so the students can learn from and with their peers collaboratively and effectively. Also, the students who have similar cultural backgrounds share the common social sense of a semiotic entity which is useful to address their meaning. Teachers can ask the students to do research about their languages and cultures, and how the language characterizes their cultural identity. The students need to collect data from an interview with people and do cultural discovery which can include but not limited to their folktales, local tradition and customs, and local stories. I will divide the students into groups; I will set up a Facebook page for us to have a discussion in regards to the difficulty and issues during the data collection. I suggest the students go to the local museum to collect more data if it is necessary. During the process of data collection, the students are required to have a weekly journal to track their works with the pictures to document their journey of discovering their cultures. Students then compose an artwork representing a negotiation of their cultures and genre (e.g. Students can find many kinds of cultural forms connects with their identity as the Moluccans). In this phase, the students will use English combined with other types of semiotic resources to present their discussion. They learn who they are and legitimate their cultural identity from information that they will later present in their artworks and reflective writing. The song below is the sample of cultural song in Moluccas.

Gandong La Mai Gandong
Mai Lo'oi Gandong nge....
Lo'oi yau atahia
ite lua esai gandong
Hidup ku walia'a tolo moso-moso... E
Ale rasa yau rasa
ite lua esai gandong
Chorus:
Gandong sio Gandong nge
Mai yau hahiti, yau hahiti Ale Uma
Ite lua cuma walia,a e.....
Lahat Esai, Esai Jantonge

The song from local dialect represents the bond of the brotherhood between Muslim and Christian religions sang in the ceremony. As a teacher, I have some information about the ceremony of Panas Gandong (Heating Brother Bond). However, this brotherhood ceremony from each region of Moluccas is various based on cultural perspectives and bonds e.g. Gandong between religions or Gandong because of Blood Bonds. Students can do cultural research about it. This prompt only the sample for the local teachers.

### 4.2. Recontextualization (Contextual)

According to Fairclough (2006), recontextualization is the process of ideas to be put into the text. Bloomaert (2005) further explains that this is the process to extract or loosen the text, signs, and meanings from its original context and relocate it into another new context. As such, students will negotiate their discourse and local dialects with dominant academic norms by doing a text transfer from original local context to the new context which is a classroom. According to Horner and Tetreault (2016) the process of translation as the meaning transfer illustrates a site of struggle where the students engaged in the process of negotiation and rework with language practices. The students will frame the text according to the mixture between local discourse and academic genre, and conventions. According to Hyland (2007), Genre refers to "abstract, socially recognized ways of using language" (p.149). Hyland further explained that the writers are like dancers; they can do some creative and unexpected movements based on their cultures to pull language and fits with the desired context to construct the meanings. The result of the movements is the agency for genre performance that takes into account "new interplay of possible meanings and linguistic relations" (Bawarsih, 2016, p.245). It is fair for the students to know the academic conventions of the writing and to know how far the convention will not constrain their creativity to code-mesh their languages and academic ones. The students can create their artworks different from the prevalent academic genre based on the negotiation of context and genre that they experience in their daily interaction such as in social media. Their artworks represent hybrid texts of code-meshing from different semiotic resources. Those hybrid texts can be in the form of songs, poems and others whom the students will perform. Their original texts are code -meshed between English and their cultural repertoires. This process, from the design of artworks to the performance of their works, is documented in students' journal, to track their process. The journals will be useful later for the students to compose their reflective essay about their process of meaning-making in translingual practice. The sample of the song below is the translated version of the song Gandong but with translingual practice: native language and English are mixed.

Gandong, come here my gandong
I'd really like to say to you
I, I just want to tell you
That we both are really gandong
Sharing, caring each other
It's so very very sweet
Let's together share our feelings
That we both are really gandong
Chorus:
Gandong e, oh my gandong
Let's us share our feelings,
share our feelings oh my gandong
We are brothers, you and I are one gandong
One origin and one family
(Translated by Leonora Tamaela)

\**Gandong*= *brother* 

## 4.3. Interactional (Social)

In translingual practice, writing becomes a social act between the participants in the classroom. Students work collaboratively with other peers and teachers to facilitate the co-construction of meaning (Canagarajah, 2013a). The code-meshing project that the students already made will be negotiated regarding interaction with teacher and student's peers as readers. There will be some negotiation for equal vocabularies or phrases to share the same meaning. Canagarajah (2016) pointed out a dialogicality which refers to the interaction between the peers and the instructors. The process will be dynamic and interactive because the students use the semiotic resources as the affordance to cue the meaning while the readers try to construct the understanding based on their interpretation. However, the teacher will ask the students not only have their peer feedback from their friends, but they can discuss with other people to crosscheck the understanding of the meaning. In this way, the teacher will ask the students to post their project on youtube or social media and expect the response from online viewers. Students appropriate their creative works by using social media to engage with the broader audience. They introduce their project by posting an opening text about their project. Their project illuminates the students' effort to transform their cultures and dominant norms. Hafner (2015) sees this process as the process of remixing cultures when the students blend and manipulate the cultural artifacts to widen dialogical space to perform their voice. The readers or audience will give the feedback based on what they think about the meaning interpretation and also clarify it by asking some questions.

# 4.4. Entextualization (Textual)

Entextualization is how the writers manage text construction to advance their voice and meaning (Canagarajah, 2013a) in this part, the students use all the information from their journal and the feedbacks of their video project to compose their reflective essay. Their essay will be the process of their project trajectory and what they have learned from artworks production and how they have negotiated their language repertoire and native-speaker norms. The teachers will guide the students to take into account the ecological environment including participants, context, genre convention and purpose as the part of essay construction. The L2 classroom is writing community; the students will take a consensus about the form of the essay. Through the process of consensus, Won Lee (2016) echoed the idea that students are invited to decide how specific and creative their writing can conform with cultures and norms. Their draft will be peer-reviewed among their peers.

As the example from previous stages, the students can write a reflective essay about cultural diversity in the Moluccas which is tied-up with the culture of Brotherhood. After the students submit their reflective essay, I would

assess students' artworks and reflective essay based on the approach of translanguaging assessment by Won Lee (2016). Won Lee suggested that teachers cannot depend on certain evaluative criteria that are in adherence to privileging particular norms. Teachers need to give more attention on the documentation of students work in approaching writing goal rather than the demonstration of their writing products. The grammar convention becomes negotiable, but it depends on to what extent the code-meshed writing is encouraged in the classroom based on students' needs and level. By experiencing translingual approach, students learn various textual manifestation and be confident with their complex identities as L2 writers. They will then develop their meta-awareness of rhetorical skills based on the type of texts, genre, and their audience through translingual practice as a medium of their L2 learning.

#### 5. Conclusion

This design of activities by using translingual framework is one of my attempts as the English teacher to cherish the locality of my students and promote sensitivity about their diversity and dominant norms in the L2 classroom. The L2 teachers need to understand the complexity students' background, classroom environment, cultures and social contexts, and the policy of curriculum. Also, they need to acknowledge their personal and professional experiences as multilingual speakers and teachers. With better understanding, the teachers can be the facilitators to synergize students' negotiation on norms, cultures, and knowledge. When the teachers can make attempts to stretch the capacity of their students, the students come to realize that they do not longer become subordinate under the norms and myth of native speakers. The teachers can enhance individual creativity and writing skill to meet the purpose of various contexts and genres beyond the classroom. To sum, translingual does not always give the generic solution for the teachers to solve because teachers and the students "are constantly negotiated multiple languages, conventions of writing and linguistic loyalties" in the classroom to participate in the global community and situation (Trimbur, 2016, p.22).

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