Traversing B/Orders of English in the Academic Writing Classroom

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Abstract: In line with current discussions in the field of critical composition studies urging us to identify pedagogical approaches that engage the multilingual and multidialectal competencies of our students, this paper mines the pedagogical potential of the concept of translation in the composition classroom. Specifically, it presents a pedagogical exercise in intralingual translation that asks students to explicitly and deliberately place Standard English in conversation—and in tension—with varieties of English drawn from their own linguistic repertoires. Through a close reading of the students' translative practices, we showcase their compositional competencies as they engage with and transform the rhetorical, stylistic, and grammatical registers of the source text.

Keywords: pedagogy, academic writing, intralingual translation, Standard English, linguistic difference

Résumé : Cet article, dans l'axe des recherches en cours en rédaction critique qui nous invitent à identifier des approches pédagogiques engageant les compétences multilinguales et multidialectales de nos étudiants, montre le potentiel pédagogique du concept de traduction dans les cours de rédaction. Plus précisément, ce travail présente un exercice pédagogique de traduction intralinguale lors duquel les étudiants doivent utiliser, de façon explicite et délibérée, l'anglais standard dans des conversations (et en tension) avec des variétés d'anglais qui appartiennent à leur propres répertoires linguistiques. Grâce à une lecture attentive des pratiques de traduction des étudiants, nous mettons alors en avant leurs compétences rédactionnelles lorsqu'ils s'intéressent aux registres rhétoriques, stylistiques et grammaticaux du texte source et qu'ils les transforment.

Mots clé : pédagogie, rédaction universitaire, traduction intralinguale, anglais standard, différence linguistique

Resumo: Em consonância com as discussões atuais nos estudos críticos de produção de texto que nos instam a identificar abordadens pedagógicas que envolvam as competências multilíngues e mutidialetais de nossos alunos, este trabalho explora o potencial pedagógico do conceito de tradução na aula de produção de texto. De modo específico, apresenta-se um exercício pedagógico de tradução intralingual em que as estudantes situam a norma culta do inglês em uma conversa, em contraposição às variedades do inglês encontradas em seus próprios repertórios. Através da análise das práticas tradutórias das estudantes, apresentamos suas competências de escrita na medida em que envolvem-se com e transformam os registros retórico, estilístico e grammatical do texto fonte.

Palavras-chave: pedagogia; escrita acadêmica; tradução intralingual; *Standard English*; diferença linguística

Resumen: En el marco de debates actuales en el campo de los estudios críticos de redacción y escritura en torno a la necesidad de identificar métodos pedagógicos que involucren las competencias multilingües y multidialectales de las/los estudiantes, este artículo explora el potencial pedagógico del concepto de traducción y su aplicación al aula de clase. En particular, presenta un ejercicio pedagógico de traducción intralingüística en el que se le pide a las/los estudiantes utilizar explícita y deliberadamente el llamado inglés estándar de manera que entre en conversación—y en tensión—con variedades de esta lengua que emergen de sus propios repertorios lingüísticos. Partiendo de una lectura atenta de las prácticas de traducción de las/los estudiantes, buscamos mostrar sus competencias en escritura y la manera en que abordan y transforman los registros gramaticales, estilísticos y retóricos del texto de partida.

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Palabras clave: pedagogía, redacción académica, traducción intralingüística, inglés estándar, diferencia lingüística

Dilige et quod vis fac.
Augustine

The increasingly visible and audible presence of multilingual students, "emergent bilinguals" (García), and speakers of non-privileged varieties of English in our university classrooms has shifted the terms of the debate regarding the effectiveness of traditional Standard Written English (SWE) pedagogies. Writing curricula across Canadian Universities increasingly incorporate readings and teaching materials which, either in content or form, challenge the standard language ideology, while vernacular and cross-cultural texts have become regular additions to the previously carefully guarded canon of "English Literature". While this diversification of the curriculum has been of critical importance for the inclusion and historical recognition of the place of other englishes and linguistic traditions in the make-up of Canadian society, these problematizations have produced little to no change in current pedagogical strategies in the writing classroom, which continue to be grammar and correctness oriented, and, for the most part, product-focused. We argue that these pedagogical innovations have had a very limited effect on the writing classroom's hidden curriculum, where the myth of the inherently superior nature of the Standard variety, the unquestioned authority of the native English speaker, and the notion that linguistic diversity needs to be contained rather than engaged (Matsuda) remain dominant and unquestioned. It is in this gap between the explicit and the hidden curriculum that deeply entrenched monolingual ideologies and the debilitating sociolinguistic hierarchies they reproduce continue to perpetuate uneven access to symbolic capital for non-native speakers of English.

In line with current discussions in the field of critical composition studies regarding the need to identify "teachable" SWE pedagogic approaches that draw on the students' multilingual and multidialectal competencies (Canagarajah; Creese and Blackledge; Lin and Martin), we have been developing a pedagogical model that aims at *de-positioning Standard Written English* through strategies and tools that challenge the monolingual authority of the Standard in the composition classroom while inciting students to become agents of this code as one-among-many.

With the term "de-positioning" we want to convey a myriad of linguistic decentring effects which, we believe, are necessary to transform students from passive and anxious users of SWE into active agents of the language, capable of appropriating, using, and subverting its rhetorical, grammatical, and lexical constraints. To de-position SWE means, then, to displace it from what has been deemed its proper, appropriate, and familiar place, to upset the linguistic hierarchy that places the Standard as the hegemonic language of power, to open it to the logic of the "more than one/no longer one language" (Derrida, *Specters* xx) and in so doing, to remind the Standard that it is both multiple and incomplete and therefore, susceptible to deformations,

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transformations, and miswritings. But fundamentally, to de-position SWE means to change the ways in which we are placed in language and the manners in which language occupies and haunts us: to loosen the sedimented history of our linguistic attachments in order to unleash the semiotic and expressive potential that lies in between rigid language, dialect, and code demarcations.

Our project on de-positioning SWE arises from a confluence of academic, professional, institutional, and biographical positionings. As composition teachers, our pedagogical practices always and already carry our own lived and sedimented relationships not only to linguistic otherness, but to standard academic English itself in its embeddedness in subjugating pedagogical regimes and practices (Said). Situated as we are in the institutional setting of the university, we teach from assigned positions in a curriculum that only and ever pre-positions us, sometimes above and across, sometimes among or between our students, their englishes, their writing, and their anxieties about their own relationship to the standard. It is no surprise that our intention is always and already in tension with power relations that implicitly and explicitly traverse the curriculum and determine what we have at our disposition and at our disposal: the power to reward, coerce and standardize, but also to model, authorize, and legitimize other knowledges and linguistic trajectories. It is in the crossroads between these various and conflicting positionings that we must remain critically alert to our own *role* call when carrying out our pedagogical endeavours.

Our own relationship to the Standard is as unstable as our temporary (and shifting) institutional assignments. How do our own adjunct—i.e. structurally dispensable—contract assignments affect our pedagogical approaches and the assignments we design and then assign in our classrooms, assignments our students are resigned to undertake? How might we *re-sign* our assignments from within the constraints of adjunct positions? And how do our entangled assignments "translate" to our students? How do they read our expectations as they face the question that confronts them at the outset of every assignment they write: what does the teacher *want*?

What does a teacher *want*? Or more specifically, what does "this" teacher *want*? "This" teacher, these two teachers—both women and immigrants; one brown, the other, white; one accented, the other standardly accented; one more (visibly) queer than the other—what do they want with the standard? The answer is never straightforward. For neither of us can claim this language as a natural dwelling, as "absolute habitat" (Derrida, *Monolingualism* 1) any more than we can ground our legitimacy as writing instructors on a presumed property over the language. Our pedagogical aspirations inevitably recall but also sublate our wants. And so we follow "the method of an immigrant" (Nien-Ming Ch'ien 61), that is, an ongoing repositioning of self in relation to a language we simultaneously love and hate, desire and fear, embrace and suspect. We must therefore ask, how is it that our own conflicted history of English learning, our longing for academic fluency and anxious linguistic hypervigilance get carried across to students —themselves differentially positioned *vis-à-vis* academic English? How are these longings and anxieties performed in the classroom and how do they become re-

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signified in the assignments we design? How do our students respond to and engage with our own implicit curriculum? Our research insists upon these questions.

Our project began with a pilot pedagogical experience carried out at York University in 2013. Throughout the course of a nine-week seminar, thirteen linguistically diverse students from the Professional Writing Program voluntarily participated in a literacy experiment and produced writing pieces across genres and metacommentary essays that engaged explicitly with their multilingual literacy histories and writing competencies. While we are still in the process of documenting and theorizing the literacy effects of this experience conducted only with linguistically diverse students, we have extended our research to our conventional writing courses at the Writing Department at York University, where we have incorporated and adapted some of the teaching strategies and tools to fit these courses' specificities of class composition and learning objectives. As such, this new research phase confronts us with important pedagogical and theoretical questions: How can we cultivate an awareness of language difference and sociolinguistic competence in courses that teach composition in Standard Written English? How can a pedagogy aimed at de-positioning SWE be applied effectively in mixed classrooms composed of monolingual English speakers and linguistically diverse students? And how do we promote even access to the symbolic capital embedded in the Standard for linguistically diverse students?

For a pedagogy oriented toward de-positioning the Standard, we consider it imperative for students to engage in a deliberate and self-reflective practice of linguistic crossings that compels them to shuttle back and forth between languages, dialects, and codes, a practice which, according to Ofelia García and Lai Wei, is habitual for bi/multilingual speakers who treat their multiple languages as a single "linguistic repertoire from which they select features *strategically* to communicate effectively" (22). In working in mixed classrooms composed of monolingual English speakers, emergent bilinguals, multilinguals, and speakers of non-privileged varieties of English, such practice of linguistic crossings, we argue, can be mobilized effectively through practices of intralingual translation.

Jakobson defines intralingual translation as rewording, or "the interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language" (114). While Jakobson explicitly expanded the concept of translation to include forms of semiotic mediation both within a same language (intralingual translation) and between verbal and non-verbal codes (intersemiotic translation), interlingual translation—the transfer of meaning between different languages—is still characterized as translation "proper", which, as Derrida points out, relegates intralingual and intersemiotic translation to the status of mere semblances of "real translation"; i.e. interlingual ("Babel").

The question then of whether intralingual translation should be conferred full translational status is already implicit in Jakobson's taxonomy and continues to be intensely debated. Drawing on disciplinary, institutional, and theoretical arguments, some translation theorists such as Hermans, Newmark, and Toury have claimed that only interlingual translation constitutes actual translation. For the purposes of this paper, the argument that translation only occurs between demarcated linguistic systems, in other words, "that translation is by definition interlingual" (Schubert 126), is particularly

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relevant, in that it suggests that the crossing of barriers between dialects, registers, and genres (i.e. intralingual translation) is a qualitatively different semiotic negotiation from interlingual translation. Yet, as Schmid has indicated, differences between languages are often neither clear nor stable, or they may reflect sociopolitical demarcations rather than linguistic ones, which makes "interlinguality a far from solid basis on which to build a demarcation criterion of translation" (Korning Zethsen and Hill-Madsen, 701). Thinking of language diachronically, Katerina Stergiopoulou also raises the issue of the stability of linguistic demarcations and asks, "[h]ow can we tell where one (stage of a) language ends and where another begins?" (375). Interestingly, Stergiopoulou goes on to consider intralingual translation as a "precursor of the interlingual variety" (375), a view that privileges the affinities and interconnections between intralingual and interlingual practices, and in fact suggests that interlingual translation cannot happen without the intralingual variety. Derrida also questions the assumed demarcation between languages that grounds Jakobson's classification, arguing that it is premised on a monolingual understanding of language as a self-contained, fixed, and closed unit, and posits instead that language "is a system whose unity is always reconstituted […]. It is open to the most radical grafting, open to deformations, transformations, expropriation, to a certain a-nomie and de-regulation" (*Monolingualism* 65). Furthermore, George Steiner's insight that "inside a language synonymy is very rarely complete equivalence" (274) suggests that processes of semiotic mediation in inter- and intralingual translation may be similar in the crucial aspect that both are exercises in evaluative approximation, and therefore, that the challenge of negotiating difference within and between languages may be a matter of degree rather than one of kind.

Building on both Jakobson's and Steiner's theories, Karen Korning Zethsen argues that intralingual translation—currently a marginal subject of study—should be taken seriously by translation scholars given its similarities and continuities with interlingual translation. Korning proposes three criteria for a definition of translation that would not exclude intralingual translation: 1) the existence of a source text; 2) the fact that "a transfer has taken place and [that] the target text has been derived from the source text (resulting in a new product in another language, genre, or medium) i.e. some kind of relevant similarity exists between the source and the target texts" (299) and; 3) the fact that the relationship between source and target text may take many forms and is oriented less by the source text (equivalence) and more by the purpose of the translational action (skopos).

Because Korning is less interested in distinguishing between interlingual and intralingual translation than in formulating criteria that would contain both forms of linguistic transfer, her approach carries various advantages for our purposes. In the context of our pedagogical practice and inquiry, approaching the activity of rewording as an authentic translative practice allows us to harbour the pedagogical potential of the concept of translation in the composition classroom. Indeed, whereas translation presupposes the existence of and engages explicitly with the problem of linguistic difference, traditional approaches to writing pedagogy have been dominated by attempts to enforce linguistic standardization through the systematic invisibilization or devaluation of other languages, or of dialects or registers other than the Standard.

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Approaching transcoding activities that entail "the interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language" (Jakobson 114) as a form of translation allows us to effectively position the Standard as one variety among others and to thwart its claim to "to saturate the totality of the sayable" (Todorov 16) in the composition classroom. As we attempt to show, practices of intralingual translation like the one we discuss below may prompt students to *trans-verse* linguistic varieties, that is, to move from *versus*—the either/or exclusionary logic that sets the Standard as a fixed, stable, monolithic linguistic code and the only legitimate language of academic discourse—into *versing*—to turn, to bend the text's lexical, grammatical, stylistic, and rhetorical conventions in rendering the text in a different code, dialect, or genre. Furthermore, the concept of translation opens the space for students to practice rewording as an active negotiation of meaning across language varieties rather than as mere paraphrases or restatements whose focus rests largely on lexical equivalence. In this sense, Korning's third definitional criteria for translation is particularly relevant, in that our proposed intralingual exercise is oriented less by the value of faithfulness to the source text, that is, by equivalence, and more by the purpose of the assignment itself: to engage linguistic difference by transcoding a Standard text into another variety. In what follows, we present a sample of pedagogical material and discuss three students' responses with attention to the translative effects achieved through changes in the lexical, grammatical, stylistic, and rhetorical conventions in their respective renderings of the same original text.

The Assignment

> …to understand that grammar is an instrument and not a law.
> Fernando Pessoa (*The Book of Disquiet* 81)

> I struggle with grammar; I pleasure through it.
> Roland Barthes (*The Neutral* 52)

This intralingual translation exercise was implemented in two separate courses in the Writing Department during the 2015-2016 academic year: "Academic Writing: Developing Sentence Sense" and "Grammar and Proofreading". The assignment, which asks students to translate an SWE text into a non-standard variety of English, fulfills various pedagogical objectives: it asks students to compose, thoughtfully and carefully, in non-Standard varieties as part of coursework designed to teach Standard grammar and style rules, it expects students to identify key grammatical and stylistic differences between varieties of English and to discuss their rhetorical effects, and it formalizes this composition activity as part of a required and graded assignment. In choosing an excerpt from David Foster Wallace's essay "Authority and American Usage", which challenges the idea that dictionaries represent the ultimate and authoritative compendium over the lexicon that exists in any given language, this assignment also asks students to consider the sociopolitical situatedness of lexicography work as well as the ideological tensions between prescriptive and descriptive usage guidelines.

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Assignment Instructions

As we now know, SWE is one English variety among many, albeit one with a peculiar privilege attached. However, most speakers and/or writers of Standard English – newscasters, journalists, politicians, educators, academics – speak in different registers of the Standard.

The following excerpt by David Foster Wallace from the opening of his essay "Authority and American Usage" is an example of one such register of SWE. Drawing from your own linguistic repertoire, translate the paragraph into the register of English with/in which you are most comfortable (yes, re-writing the passage in the vernacular or slang is one – among many – options). In addition, discuss **ONE** of the following:

- Discuss one or two features of Wallace's essay that indicate it is written in SWE.
- Identify one or two strategies you used to translate this text into a different register of English.
- Wallace's introduction is meant to be humorous. Identify one or two uses of diction and/or syntax to discuss how he conveys humour. Were you successful in conveying humour in your own re-write?

Dilige et quod vis fac.
—Augustine

Did you know that probing the seamy underbelly of US lexicography reveals ideological strife and controversy and intrigue and nastiness and fervor on a near-Lewinskian scale?

For instance, did you know that some modern dictionaries are notoriously liberal and others notoriously conservative, and that certain conservative dictionaries were actually conceived and designed as corrective responses to the "corruption" and "permissiveness" of certain liberal dictionaries? That the oligarchic device of having a special "Distinguished Usage Panel...of outstanding professional speakers and writers" is some dictionaries' attempt at a compromise between the forces of egalitarianism and traditionalism in English, but that most linguistic liberals dismiss the Usage Panel device as mere sham-populism, as in e.g. "Calling upon the opinions of the elite, it claims to be a democratic guide"?

Did you know that US lexicography even *had* a seamy underbelly?

David Foster Wallace, "Authority and American Usage"

But, you may ask, why David Foster Wallace? Why call upon and "deposit" (Freire) yet another straight white guy and his uber-English into students' repository of canonical

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learnings? Why not expose them to the voices we claim are less audible in the classroom, the texts we claim are less visible on curricular syllabi? How is ours a pedagogical act that diversifies composition practices and loosens the mechanisms that keep the hidden curriculum in place? *Hey! Teacher! A little sham-populism of your own? Wha' g'wan?*

Aside from our own transferential engagement with Foster Wallace—an at-homeness in language we simultaneously covet and recognize as a fiction—we want students to respond to the *call*: to inflect the standard with their own discursive tics and tricks and turns of phrase, their own discursive patterns and practices, not to imitate DFW, but to emulate the act of taking possession of one's voice in writing, owning it, claiming it, deliberately crafting it through rhetorical, stylistic, and grammatical choices. We want our students, in other words, to de-position the standard by re-positioning their selves and their own love-hate relationship with the language, by leaning on their love of language itself to do what they *will* with the langue in order to will what they love into voice. The question, in the end, is not can you write like David Foster Wallace; the question is what can you *do* with his paragraph, what can you *make* from an encounter with the given—and giving—material of the English language, and how can you *use* DFW's excerpt to "do voice" in a way that makes the English language *say* you.

The excerpt, which introduces Foster Wallace's "Authority and American Usage," includes an epigraph that frames the whole essay—Augustine's famous injunction "Love, and do what you will", which has been interpreted as grounding moral judgment solely on love, and which rehearses Foster Wallace's larger philosophical perspective on writing as centred on the reader:

> I'm not saying I'm able to work consistently out of the premise, but it seems like the big distinction between good art and so-so art lies somewhere in the art's heart's purpose, the agenda of the consciousness behind the text. It's got something to do with love. With having the discipline to talk out of the part of yourself that can love instead of the part that just wants to be loved. I know this doesn't sound hip at all. I don't know. But it seems like one of the things really great fiction-writers do—from Carver to Chekhov to Flannery O'Connor, or like the Tolstoy of "The Death of Ivan Ilych" or the Pynchon of "Gravity's Rainbow"—is "give" the reader something. The reader walks away from the real art heavier than she came into it. Fuller. All the attention and engagement and work you need to get from the reader can't be for your benefit; it's got to be for hers. (*Conversations* 50)

In using Augustine's precept of love to frame his take on the relation between democracy and authority in "what we as a culture have decided is English" ("Authority" 73), Foster Wallace is, we argue, advancing a rhetorical ethics as a situated arrangement between author and reader where the authority of the text is inextricably linked to the reader's trust. This relational and con-*textual* approach to reading and writing is deeply aligned with our pedagogical orientation in the assumption that all

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grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic choices must be approached in terms of their rhetorical effects rather than in relation to the arbitrary conventions of correctness that are often enforced in grammar and style textbooks.

Stylistically, Foster Wallace's passage rehearses a mode of questioning and a manner of positioning that aspires to this rhetorical ethics.[1] The excerpt begins and ends with a direct address to the reader who is asked, rather playfully, to consider the all-too-human aspects of the apparently dry and tedious process of compiling a dictionary. The accumulation of agonistic nouns suggesting passionate disagreement among lexicographers is humorous, and the polysyndetic use of the conjunction "and" produces a feeling of excess and lack of proportion that contrast with the sober, intellectual, detached moderation that we would associate with lexicographers engaged in the meticulous occupation of compiling a dictionary. The allusion to Monika Lewinsky—for an audience old enough to remember—points to scandal, secrets, political conspiracy, and convenient lexicographical uses (e.g. definitions of "sex") but also to the undeniable jouissance traversing these disputes. Through the use of quotation marks around terms such as corruption, permissiveness, and Distinguished Usage Panel, Foster Wallace distances himself from conservative, prescriptive approaches, a rhetorical distance that becomes even more apparent by the absence of quotations marks around terms such as oligarchic and sham-populism, which hints at the author's political sympathy toward liberal dictionaries. The metaphor "seamy underbelly," used in the opening and closing direct addresses to the reader, characterizes the hidden curriculum of US lexicography as a sordid affair camouflaged behind a rigorous scholarly façade whose aura of authority and expert neutrality becomes dubious through this revelation. Through this unveiling and the "Psst" that exposes lexicography's dirty secret, Foster Wallace insinuates that perhaps language itself also has a seamy underbelly.

Take a look at how our students translated Foster Wallace.

The Scatological Baroque

> *Did you know that taking one good whiff of American lexicography's gutters fills the nostrils with the grungy smell of a conflict of passionate beliefs and shameful scandal and putrid foulness and fiery zeal on a post-apocalyptic scale.*
> *Shockingly enough current dictionaries are infamous for being either too conservative or liberal, and that specific dictionaries are specially forged as a bane for other dictionaries because of their supposed "loose morals" and their "perversion"? That the totalitarian controls of having a special "Distinguished Usage Panel…of fantastic expert speakers and writers" is the dictionaries' attempt to broker a peace between two rogue parties in English, but most "openminded" individuals shoot down the Usage Panel*

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[1] Our interpretation of David Foster Wallace's passage, in particular the author-reader arrangement enacted in his text, changes through our reading of Lorna King's rendition of the text.

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> *like a quail on Sunday, as a pathetic attempt to appeal to people, "Calling out the elite on their views, claiming to provide a democratic guide"? Did you even know that U.S. lexicography had a fecal flinging contest to such a degree and severity?* (Jasman Bhullar, Student, "Academic Writing: Developing Sentence Sense")

Jasman's rendition imitates Foster Wallace's direct address to the reader through the question "did you know," and repeats the polysyndetic coordination achieving a similar cumulative effect, although his replacement of the original text's list of nouns (e.g. "controversy", "intrigue and nastiness") with adjective+noun combinations changes the rhythm of the series. Jasman accurately captures the meaning of the original sentence in his translation—an examination of the hidden life of American lexicography reveals heated ideological antagonism—while taking advantage of the literal definition of "underbelly" as an animal body part to weave a series of embodied, olfactory metaphors: the underbelly becomes the "gutter"—which in urban parlance has sexual connotations, a choice that mirrors back to Foster Wallace's reference to Lewinski—whose "grungy smell" and "putrid foulness" reaches the nostrils. The scatological references return in the closing sentence when Jasman replaces the "seamy underbelly" with "a fecal flinging contest": an intriguing move that shifts the weight from US lexicography to the lexicographers themselves as they engage in what is now the not-so-sublime act of smearing an adversary. In Jasman's rendition, in short, the business of making dictionaries "stinks".

In his metacommentary reflecting on his translation strategies, Jasman explains that he resorted to the dictionary to produce semantic equivalences and adds that he consistently chose "more bombastic and exaggerated synonyms to add comedic value." He replaces "near-Lewinskian" with "post-apocalyptic", "conceived and designed as corrective responses" with "forged as a bane"; "permissiveness" becomes "loose morals", "corruption" becomes "perversion", and "oligarchic" turns into "totalitarian". Importantly, in retaining the quotation marks around "loose morals" and "perversion", Jasman appears to preserve Foster Wallace's authorial positioning—his ideological distance from conservative dictionaries. However, his replacement of the neutral "linguistic liberals" with "openminded" individuals—with added quotations marks—suggests that Jasman considers both conservative and liberal dictionaries equally unprincipled and tendentious. This interpretation is echoed in his rendition of "the attempt at a compromise between the forces of egalitarianism and traditionalism in English" as "dictionaries' attempt to broker a peace between two rogue parties in English".

While the replacement of the neutral "calling upon" with the more agonistic "calling out"—whose vernacular meaning is to issue a challenge, to confront, or even to mock or insult—does not fully work in the context of the sentence—"calling out the elite on their views, claiming to provide a democratic guide"—this idiomatic choice accurately describes the linguistic liberals' gesture of "calling the bluff" of the "Distinguished Usage Panel". Similarly, Jasman's choice of a hunting metaphor in his "shoot down the Usage Panel like a quail on Sunday" renders explicit the power relations between the two sides

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and exuberantly displays, through a vivid and humorous image, the triumph of linguist liberals over the conservatives' "pathetic" attempt to appeal to the people.

"Instead of paraphrasing the paragraph into 'plain English,'" Jasman writes, "I decided to play up the comedic aspects of the paragraph for fun," thus engaging explicitly with the assignment's prompt that invites students to convey humor in their re-writes. We indeed find his deliberate use of extravagant exaggeration and scatological diction funny and feel particularly impressed by Jasman's ability to keep track of the text's topical focus in his explicitly satirical take. Despite the fact that this is a required and graded assignment, it is worth noting that Jasman's piece does not seem to be constrained by the formal expectations typically associated with composition coursework and that he felt free to experiment and "have fun" with the assignment. We are left wondering how Jasman imagined that his piece would be received and evaluated and how his perception of the course instructor shaped his stylistic choices.

The Standard as a Compromise Formation

> *Did you ever realize that if you look closer at the way our dictionaries are written, you would find that each one will differ depending on the author(s) of the dictionary? Like, some dictionaries are written with obvious political agendas that can change the way a word is understood. Most dictionaries are written by a small group of professional writers and linguists who consider themselves to be experts in language. By only allowing input from elite groups of writers, there isn't a fair representation of the way the language is actually used. We speak and write in our language everyday, but did you ever consider that there might be a problem?* (Ben Nason, Student, "Academic Writing: Developing Sentence Sense")

If Jasman's piece appears a fitting example of what we believe our translation exercise should accomplish—an engagement with linguistic difference through derivational strategies (Chesterman) that produce a new text on the basis of a previous one—Ben's text initially appeared to us a flawed translation: one unable to convey Foster Wallace's authorial voice, signaled political preferences, or humor. A more careful and reflexive reading has revealed to us that our initial response to Ben's translation was compromised by our own implicit curriculum: that Ben's deliberate and thought-through choice to offer a formal and standard rendition of Foster Wallace's text seemed to us like a rejection of the spirit of the assignment, a refusal to accept our invitation to bring out his linguistic "other". Still, our initial discomfort reveals something interesting: the ease with which Ben claims an at-homeness in the Standard makes us wonder what exactly is legitimizing his claim. As Ben writes in his metacommentary, "my personal style of conversational speech tends to be a little more on the formal side, even when in casual company such as my close friends. I don't use a lot of slang in my speech and I have always been a bit of a stickler for proper grammar, not just in writing, but in speech as well." Does his ease have to do with the common assumption among monolingual English students that their command of the language is a given? That they are de facto

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fluent and proficient in the Standard? While we don't know the answer to this question, it is important to note that only certain students are unproblematically able to claim the Standard as their own; in other words, it is only for certain subjects that the claim over the *proper* language—in the double sense of "property" and "propriety"—goes unchallenged.

Ben, in the end, not only did what we asked—to translate Foster Wallace's text into the register of English with/in which he is most comfortable—he also deployed a version of the Standard—a formal, sparse, affectively neutral version—that he felt "was representative of the way [he] would speak in everyday conversation." Ben adds, "perhaps the translated version does not give the same sense of urgency as conveyed, but I believe it effectively represents the author's meaning."

We agree with Ben's insight that his piece does not convey the same sense of urgency as the original. Ben eliminates Foster Wallace's first paragraph, and with it, the polysyndetic series of nouns that gives it its affective charge. Apropos of this erasure, Ben writes in his metacommentary: "I attempted to repeat the same essential meaning of the passage, considering each line, and omitting certain irrelevant information. For example, some of the stylistic choices that Wallace made in his passage such as the use of long-listed questions were left out, as I did not consider it to be representative of the way I would speak in everyday conversation." This is consistent with Ben's omission of Wallace's more vigorous and value-laden dictional choices (e.g. "seamy underbelly", "corruption", "permissiveness", "sham-populism"). All in all, Wallace's authorial voice and his signaling of political preferences has been evened out.

Ben's text, however, is a consistent, deliberate, and coherently explained translation, one that responds to his own stylistic preferences—"I am a bit of a stickler for proper grammar"—which seem to align with traditional conventions in formal education and written assignment expectations. With a writing instructor as his audience, and in the context of a university course where assignments are graded, Ben's formal, objective, and affectively neutral rendition is simultaneously safe and authentic, mindful of the power relations that traverse the classroom and faithful to his own positioning as speaker and writer.

Tell de True but tell it *Slant*

> *You know about dem American dictionaries*
> *written by big dignitaries*
> *who slant de written word*
> *to influence de young and de old?*
> *Dem want we think conservatism,*
> *or de opposite -- liberalism.*
> *Panels of scholarly elders*
> *vet dese literary pretenders;*
> *often it's just for show.*
> *So how can we de true words know*
> *if American meanings can't be trusted*

> *cause de system is so corrupted?*
> *I heard dis from Mr. Mutty* -*
> *Him say we was Trumped, and dem treating us like putty.*
> (Lorna King, Student, "Grammar & Proofreading")

Lorna King's poetic rendition interpolates Jamaican patois to shift the author-reader arrangement that DFW enacts in his text. Whereas Foster Wallace uses a rhetorical interrogative to bring the uninformed reader *in on* lexicography's secret, Lorna's form-bending "slant" positions, from the get-go, an audience that is already in the know.

Indeed, Lorna's shift from "did you know" to "you know" in the enjambed opening line (first quatrain) reveals a previously unnoticed power dynamic in DFW's authorial relationship with the audience. It now becomes clear that "did you know" is a rhetorical performative through which the author positions himself as the subject supposed to know, and his audience as not privy to what is now framed, precisely through said rhetorical performative, as privileged knowledge. In contrast, and by implicitly activating the pronominal "we," Lorna positions herself as among and between a community of insiders that are already all too familiar with the technologies of power. Furthermore, Lorna's use of Jamaican patois signals the complexities of racialized language politics, and through her disruption of the author-reader arrangement enacted in the original text, reveals that that which authorizes DFW as an enunciator of "truths" lies beyond his rhetorical dexterity; in other words, that DFW's text both relies on and performs a "stance of whiteness" (Mura 2). What's more, Lorna disrupts this enunciator/enunciated logic by giving a shout out to Mr. Mutty—who she describes in a footnote as an influential radio host in Jamaica who covers national and international news, and frequently uses irony and sarcasm to make his points. Mr. Mutty, who "already knows", trumps DFW's claim to ownership and incumbency, for it is he who Lorna has chosen as the trustworthy critic of systems of power.

Lorna's rendition, then, compels us to "take another look" (hooks) not only at DFW's text but at our own transferential engagement with it. Is it too far-fetched to claim that her translation has returned the text to us anew? While Lorna's larger claim that the game is rigged obscures the particularities of lexicography's seamy underbelly and erases the important differences between "conservatism or de opposite, liberalism", her rendition does reveal to us our own complicity with DFW's authorial stance as privileged enunciator, revealer of truths. We failed to see how the text falls short of DFW's own rhetorical ethics, that is, how the text enacts a power differential while claiming to share knowledge, how it frames the act of disclosure as a gift to presumably unknowing readers, how it may be received as condescending by those who already know, those for whom this knowledge is lived, present, and embodied. Lorna's translation gives us access to the knowledge lodged in our own failure to see.

Bursting (at) the Seams of Language

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> Wha' g'wan? Me got sum reeaaal juicy news. It juicy as Beyonce's "Monica Lewinskied all over my dress" lyrics in her song, "Partition." It all a gaaame! (Liane Maryuen, Student, "Grammar and Proofreading")

As our students take their turn at intralingual translation prompted by DFW's narrative—a narrative they struggle with, are overtaken by—what takes over, or rather, what takes them over as they turn *with* and *in* englishes "simultilingually*"* (Christakos 43) is indeed the pleasure of struggling through writing, the pleasure of *writing through* an encounter with a text's syntactical, stylistic, and rhetorical turns. But this encounter is also a relation, and what happens in this encounter is becoming-event: not only an interrupture of the standard, it is also an interrupture of standard pedagogy. In other words, this is no "restrictive and repressive" repeat-after-monolingual-me old-school prescriptivism. This is not a roll call of passive repetition, but a *role call*, a calling into being that interpellates the student into active agent position, an invitation to de-position their academically conditioned selves and look at the standard—at Standard Written [White] English—as a seeming unity whose materiality is not given but *made* and in the making.

It is a delicious irony that a text revealing the seamy underbelly of lexicography prompts students to reach for the dictionary, and indeed, as many students note in their metacommentaries, their first impulse is to "perform a direct translation, word by word" (Camellia Bryan). Soon, however, they discover that word-by-word translation is insufficient, "awkward" (Camellia). Syntactical structure comes, at this point, to the rescue, as word-by-word translation is disorienting in its pointing to other, seemingly disconnected, unseamed semantic constellations. Imitation arises then as a containment strategy: an echo-logic through which they hold on to the shape of the sentence by mimicking its architextual order. What at first appears to be a word puzzle becomes a riddle as they embed their dictional choices in ever more complex syntactical and stylistic arrangements and begin to re-cognize the text's gestalt structure.

It matters little that the student cannot name rhetorical or stylistic devices like "direct address" or "polysendeton". What matters is that the students notice the repetition of "and", and what is more, the rhetorical effects of the absence of what would have been a more obvious comma choice. Some students, in fact, felt compelled to prescriptively "correct" DFW, under the assumption that he was deliberately violating punctuation rules in going rogue against the dictionary's authority.

Through this exercise in intralingual translation we also invite our students to call upon their linguistic knowledge, their linguistic (dis)orientations, affiliations, loyalties, and multilingual, multi-sonic, multi-rhythmic influences to traverse the given text. This encounter with the text activates a new relation: one in which we call on our students to show us who they are (becoming) by showing us where they are from, where *else* they are from, and where they are "coming from": we know they belong to heterogenous communities and institutions, and are influenced by explicit and hidden curricula, discourse communities, pop cultures, diasporic and migrant histories, all shaping their heteroglossic repertoires. We are also calling on them to claim the role of *author*, and in

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so doing, to perform ownership of their languages while calling into question the *proper*ties of prescriptivism and traditional writing pedagogies. Foster Wallace's text itself engages students "in the ongoing 'battle' of contending language ideologies or, rather, [brings] to consciousness their inevitable engagement in that battle in the choices and responses they make through their reading and writing practices" (Lu and Horner 209).

The process of the student-becoming-author unfolds in the presence of the teacher-as-reader: a teacher who is able to receive the students' phrasings, neologisms, satirical bites, and ironic winks, a teacher that takes seriously their texts as texts, a teacher who reads in their translative search for correspondences an appropriation of compositional *savoir-faire,* and who recognizes in their derivational choices a translative difference. "By observing and retaining, repeating and verifying, by relating what they were trying to know to what they already knew, by doing and reflecting about what they had done" (Ranciere 10), the students seam together old and new knowledges and literacies, pedagogically positioning us to better project them into their future writerly selves.

Our de-positioning pedagogy aims at transforming our students' relation to the language itself, to its textual enactments—in their grammatical, syntactical, stylistic, and rhetorical dimensions—and to the students' own sociolinguistic positioning. Rather than a supplementary or remedial pedagogy that would accommodate the needs of linguistically diverse students, it is conceived as a reframing of the teaching of the Standard that upsets the b/orders of English as defined by the composition classroom's "silent and insidious, insisting and insinuating" (Bourdieu 51) hidden curriculum. It hopes to move students from a decontextualized understanding of prescriptive writing rules into a situated writing practice that reveals the making of language and language in the making, not the standard but the standardizing, not the text in its fixity but in its ongoing composition. In de-positioning the Standard we are also trying to shift the students sociolinguistic position vis-à-vis the language and its symbolic power: to engage with how they suffer, enact, or impose—on themselves and others—entrenched notions of language property and propriety, to recognize how these deeply rooted misconceptions shape the ways they learn and resist learning, what they claim to know, what they feel they can and cannot legitimately claim as knowledge, what they feel they will never learn.

The Sumerian word for translation means "turn" in English; a translator is a "language turner". In the practice of turning language, students return to re-turn, to re-make, and find language anew, strange, foreign; it is a turning that contains within it an entanglement—fluency that evokes separation, echoes that return with difference, rules that let loose expressive potential. In traversing the orders and borders of English, we engage the play of differences within language. We graft one english onto the body of another, an other, maybe even our own.

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