

## ***Translingualism in Action: Rendering the Impossible Possible***

**Setiono Sugiharto**

*Atma Jaya Catholic University, Indonesia*

Despite the relative novelty of the notion of translingualism in literacy pedagogy, this article attempts to provide additional evidence of translingual practices drawn from a specific context (i.e., Indonesia) in order to showcase its vibrancy. It attempts to answer the following research questions: 1) How do Indonesian multilingual writers and an Indonesian artist translanguage different linguistic codes? and 2) How do the textual realizations look as a result of their translanguaging process? Two types of translanguaged texts (academic texts written by two Indonesian scholars and an artistic work) were analyzed and scrutinized. All of these sample texts were coded, interpreted, and reinterpreted in light of the available theories on translingualism. This was done in order to extract instances of translanguaged texts. Results showed that translanguaging, which occurs at both lexical and morpho-syntactical levels, is inextricably connected to the writers' identities, cultures, and rhetorical traditions. The writers' purpose of codemeshing different linguistic codes in this study is deliberate in that they tried to infuse their cultural values and traditions in English texts to produce hybrid texts. As closing remarks, implications for translanguaging in writing pedagogy are offered, and caveats for doing translanguaging are addressed.

**Keywords:** Translingualism, literacy pedagogy, translanguaging, codemeshing, hybrid texts

## Introduction

In his review article *Academic Writing*, Paltridge (2004) points out that writing pedagogy, especially academic writing, has undergone a dramatic shift in viewing the status of disciplinary knowledge and academic values. This, as he goes on to say, is triggered by the postmodern turn occurring in such disciplines as humanities and social sciences. While it is true that postmodern turn has radically shifted our orientation in literacy education, we cannot lose sight of the fact that writing pedagogy is still heavily influenced by the spirit of the Enlightenment or intellectual movement, which sees knowledge as transcendental or universal. It is this knowledge that is supposed to be learned and in the end acquired.

Despite a wealth of publications on literacy pedagogies which provide well-founded justifications for viewing literacy practices from completely new standpoints, hence promoting diversity in thinking (Canagarajah, 2002; Horner, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011; You, 2010), the Enlightenment memory still dominates composition scholarship and is difficult to erase in the late modernity. This is probably because the value this movement has disseminated brings with itself a feeling of “security” in conducting a scholarly activity (Sugiharto, 2011). That is, abiding to prescribed rigid and uniform conventions of academic discourse make scholars feel safe in doing literacy practices. Thus, such notions as rationality, systematicity, detachment, neutrality and objectivity – terms often associated with scientism – are too valuable not to be included in writing pedagogy. The preservation of such notions is further strengthened by what is commonly known as the discourse of globalization especially in literacy education. Canagarajah (*personal communication, May 29, 2009*) expressed apprehension that the continuing legacy of the Enlightenment had the potential to suppress local knowledge traditions (i.e. rhetorical practices) students bring with them in literacy practices and eventually to stigmatize them as inferior, irrational, and irrelevant.

Nevertheless, thanks to the continuous efforts of scholars from the

peripheral countries such as China, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia to mention just a few, scholarship in literacy pedagogy has now been replete with the discussion about issues related to composition teaching and scholarship, which can be said to have heavily drawn insights from the postcolonial theorization. This eventually has prompted the emergence of a new field of scholarship known as multilingual writing, further stimulating “multilingual scholars to bring their voices and values into written texts and pluralize academic writing” (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 109). In fact, the increased interests in researching multilingual writing has led to a movement that challenges and even resists the legitimacy of the putative Standard English, which clings to the English-Only ideology. As a result, multilingualism is deemed more appropriate than monolingualism in liberating or democratizing the process of knowledge construction in a global contact zone in the late modernity. The notion of multilingualism here should not be construed in a traditionally sense as “the familiar laissez-faire accomodationist multilingualism of neoliberalism which effectively leads to a ‘separate but equal’ politics...,’ but to a politic that acknowledges and honors “the legitimacy of the meshing of language” (Horner, 2010, p. 12).

This article begins with the discussion on the potentials of translanguaging as an approach to literacy scholarship, and then continues to review some of the studies regarding it, done in specific sociolinguistic settings. As the notion of translanguaging is still relatively new and without an intellectual status in the field of writing pedagogy, problems associated with it are not clear. Nevertheless, despite the relative novelty of the term, this article attempts to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How do the Indonesian multilingual writers and the Indonesian artist translanguaging different linguistic codes?
- 2) How do the textual realizations look as a result of their translanguaging processes?

Writing samples of these multilingual Indonesian scholars and an artistic work written by an anonymous Indonesian artist were analyzed in order to

show evidence of translingualism at work. Finally, some implications for the teaching of English writing in a foreign language context are offered. The article concludes by addressing some caveats for translanguaging.

### **Translingualism as a Potential Approach to Literacy Scholarship and Pedagogy**

The most influential model in the teaching of academic writing in non-native English speaking countries has been of Standard Written English (SWE) (aka Edited American English). This model assumes that effective and successful writing must use “pure” and “unaccented” English rhetorical conventions. The model tries to minimize cross-language language interference, and, as a consequence, repudiates the idea of linguistic heterogeneity, which may “impede communication and meaning” (Horner et al., 2011, p. 303). Therefore, flouting these agreed on conventions can be considered a serious deviation and can lead to failure. The SWE model then implies that there is only a uniformly universal and ideal norm that one must conform to. Such a notion of universality and uniformity has now been treated as “a language ideology” (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 109).

Nevertheless, as the increasing number of writing scholars have turned to multilingual writing, SWE can no longer be adequate to respond to the changing needs of multilingual writers. It has been challenged on the ground that SWE is insensitive towards other ideologies and too monolithic a model, as it denies the enormity of the emergent varieties of Englishes now on the rise globally. Also because of its alleged alignment with the ideology of monolingualism, teaching writing through the SWE model is susceptible to the perpetuation of hegemonic power of the dominant discourse, which in the end can suppress linguistic pluralism. In fact, the advocacy of a monolingual ideology through written language is feared to “operate as faux-linguistic covers for discrimination...on the basis of race, citizenship status, and ethnicity (Horner et al., 2011, p. 309), posing a threat against the world’s

linguistic diversity.

It is also important to highlight here that resistance against the monolingual model constitutes both a political and conceptual break (Horner, 2010). This type of politics strongly “rejects a model of writing as simply a means of transmitting preexisting meanings, smoothly or not,” and shows respects toward “the necessary labor of writers and readers” when they produce and struggle over meaning with language (Horner, 2010, p. 12). Thus, while SWE as a monolingual model dismisses and subjugates multilingual student writings as illogical, flawed, and absurd, the politics adhered by multilingualism honors these writings and regards them as potential resources to be maintained. As Horner (2010) states:

In pursuing these politics, compositionists can draw and build on composition’s long tradition of learning to recognize and honor the “logic” of seemingly opaque writings of students deemed illiterate by adherents of English-Only standards and of advancing the interests of those students through their teaching and scholarship (p. 13).

While the SME model has been critiqued for its goal to attain sharedness and uniformity of norms (Canagarajah, 2013), an alternative model of literacy pedagogy known as the translingual approach is worth unveiling here. The underlying principle that undergirded this approach is the diversity in practicing language use and the acknowledgment of the evolution of varieties, registers, dialects, and discourses (Canagarajah, 2013). This approach regards forms and functions of language as emergent and socially constructed and reconstructed in line with social mobility, and “defies systematicity or stability all the time” (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 72). Furthermore, it encourages the pursuit of linguistic heterogeneity and language differences, deeming these differences “as resources to be preserved, developed, and utilized” and acknowledges that the most distinctive feature of the translingual approach is that deviations from dominant expectations need not be errors; that conformity need not be automatically advisable; and that writer’s purposes

and readers' conventional expectations are neither fixed nor unified (Horner et al., 2011, p. 304).

To fully capture how translingual approach is applied in the teaching of writing, we can encapsulate the following features derived from the works of Horner et al. (2011) and Canagarajah (2013), which supports the diversity in writing, and then distinguish them from the features which are often imposed on in SWE:

Translingual approach	Standard Written English
1. Respect to Students' Right to their Own Language	1. Respect to the dominant language used in academics
2. Texts as fluid	2. Texts as stative
3. Texts as negotiated	3. Texts as autonomous
4. Rhetorical differences as a resource	4. Rhetorical differences as a problem/deficit
5. Language learners as language creators	5. Language learners as passive recipients.
6. In favor of the English-Plus policy (additive)	6. In favor of the English-Only Policy (subtractive)
7. Writing as an open system	7. Writing as a closed system
8. Writing as a display of complex identities	8. Writing as a strict conformity of identities
9. Writing as a spatial temporal phenomenon	9. Writing as a spatial phenomenon

It should be clear then that the translingual approach to writing democratizes the construction and production of knowledge through writing activities, giving latitude to the writers to exercise their agency and to make use of their rich linguistic repertoires. In fact, this approach has various intellectual alignments with bilingual education, foreign language instruction, multilingual education, and linguistic human rights (Horner et al., 2011).

Despite some scholars' acknowledgments of the importance of promoting the translingual approach to writing pedagogy, the real application of creating

diversified or hybrid texts by defying powerful dominant conventions has been considered perilous, especially in high stakes writing like academic writing, as deviation from the well-established conventions can lead to ostracism and stigmatization (Canagarajah, 2013). It is well-established that academic writing is the most prestigious and most elite genre among scholars and that the conventions from which it is built must not be flouted or deviated. Canagarajah discusses several positions taken by scholars of writing who are against the idea of pluralizing writing. He classifies these positions into five areas: the modality, register, pragmatist, liberal, and temporal schools of arguments. However, given the strong gate-keeping function of academic writing, the most serious critique of applying translingual approach probably deals with the need for a uniform standard in writing. To this, Horner et al. (2011, p. 311) complicates the notion of “standard,” rejecting the reductive view of standard as “a desire for quality writing” and calling for the recognition of “the historicity and variability of standards, which change over time, vary across genres, disciplines, and cultures, and are always subject to negotiations (and hence change).” By consistently clinging to the basic premises of a translingual approach to literacy, Lu and Horner (2013) in their recent publication further elucidate the above point, saying that:

Until we learn to see all language practices as negotiations across asymmetrical relations of power, we cannot do full justice to the extraordinary art and risk involved in the deliberative language work of members of subordinated groups in their efforts to produce meanings and forms that seemingly iterate or deviate from the norm....until we see translinguality as relevant to and operating in the learning and writing of all writers, whether marked by the dominant as mainstream or nonmainstream, the art and struggle of writers from subordinated group will always be dismissed as irrelevant to the work of mainstream learners (p. 586).

The plea here is that writers from subordinated communities need to

continuously exercise their bargaining position (with their rich linguistic repertoires) in the process of textual constructions without worrying about whether or not their textual realization conform to the established standard writing conventions. In order to realize this plea, learners from the subordinated group should recognize that writing from the perspective of their rhetorical traditions provides useful resources, which can be used as a conduit for appropriating the dominant discourse.

### **Previous Studies on Translingualism**

Prior studies on translingualism have investigated expert writer's academic texts, student writer's academic texts, and an artistic work. Canagarajah (2006), for example, analyzed Smitherman's work by focusing on the latter's strategies in meshing the codes between Afro-American Vernacular English (AAVE) with standard written English (SWE). Based on his detailed analysis of this Afro-American-born scholar, Canagarajah found that AAVE occurs not only at the level of grammatical norms, but also at the level of lexicons. The mixing of AAVE with SWE which took place in Smitherman's work was not, according to Canagarajah (2006), motivated by deficiency by the writer's deliberate effort to infuse and index her unique identity as a minority scholar. This is demonstrated by the deliberate use of such non-standard or urban vernacular lexemes such as *dissin* and *doggin*, which as Canagarajah argues, alter the ethos of Smitherman's text.

In another article, Canagarajah (2011) analyzed the construction of academic texts written by a Saudi Arabian undergraduate student, Buthainah. Using a classroom ethnography approach, Canagarajah attempted to explore writing strategies employed by the student in her own texts and negotiated the dominant discourse. From his study, he was able to identify four strategies of codemeshing: 1) recontextualizing strategies (shaping textual ecology for multilingual practices), 2) voice strategies (creating textual space for the inclusion of linguistic resources), 3) interactional strategies

(negotiating meaning to attain equality), and 4) textualization strategies (creating texts for the infusion of multimodal social practice) (p. 404). All of these strategies, as Canagarajah argues, reflect the fact that even the dominant convention of academic writing is open to the possibility of negotiation and appropriation. This argument further implies that academic discourse is not a stable, autonomous and monolithic entity, but is dynamic and continuously undergoes evolution – a position strongly espoused by Elbow (1991) and Zamel (1993).

Other compelling evidence can be read in a recent edited collection *Literacy as Translingual Practice* (Canagarajah, 2013), which buttresses the vibrancy of translingualism taking place in varied contexts. Of relevance to the present article is the work of Milu (2013), who analyzed Kenyan hip-hop to showcase the common translingual practice in Kenyan context, which is called “Sheng.” This practice occurs at two levels: the lexical and morpho-syntactical level. At the lexical level, Milu showed that hip-hop artists creatively meshed two or more languages to form the word *unbwogable* in the hip-hop song *Who can Bwogo Me?* Such a word is formed through the English prefix *un-*, the Luo (one of the indigenous languages spoken in Kenya) word *bwogo* (to scare or defeat), and the English suffix *-able*. Milu calls this phenomenon as Kenyan artists’ “linguistic inventiveness.” At the morpho-syntactical level, Milu found several code-meshed words (Swahili and English morphemes) in the song such as *iki-pump*, *ma-streets*, *tuki-represent*, and *tuko-free*, amongst others. From the Sheng’s translingual practice, Milu concludes that the deliberate code-meshing showcases the Kenyan artists’ freedom and agency in constructing their identity through language use.

The evidence of translingual practices occurring in different contexts shows that the practice has long become part of the rhetorical tradition of multilingual writers or speakers, which in the process of writing forms their “autobiographical self” (Ivanic, 1998), and which they always bring with them in their efforts to construct texts alien to them. Nevertheless, though limited in the number of the texts investigated, the above studies can help shed light on the advocacy of multilingual writing scholarship and can

provide impetus for further inquiries.

In terms of second language acquisition process, translanguaging has been proven to be beneficial in assisting learners to acquire second language and other additional languages. The study by Creese and Blackledge (2010) has shown how translanguaging in classroom facilitates, rather than impedes both Gujarati and Chinese students learning English in the United Kingdom. Employing an ethnographic method in studying translanguaging in classroom, Creese and Blackledge found that repeated translanguaging done by both Gujarati and Chinese students served as a useful and meaningful learning strategy in the process of meaning-making and task-accomplishing while the students were struggling to learn English vocabulary. Furthermore, the meshing of the codes in the students' languages (Chinese and Gujarati) and English showcases their ability to negotiate meaning, to engage with their audience in a strategic fashion, and to perform their identities in a pedagogic context. In fact, as Creese and Blackledge have argued, without the presence of code-meshing in such a pedagogic context, learners' difficulty in understanding tasks their teachers assigned to them cannot be resolved.

Still related to second language acquisition, the use of translanguaging in learning English has been encouraged by scholars in the field, most notably Garcia (2014). From her study of bilingual students learning English in the U.S., she argues that translanguaging encourages "emergent bilinguals," who can make use of their rich linguistic repertoires at their disposal in order to attain academic success. As the appreciation of learners' agency is deemed important in translanguaged classroom, Garcia urges the field of TESOL to keep translanguaging as a common practice in linguistically diverse classroom for the sake of implementing "a social justice agenda" (p. 8).

## **Problems Associated with the Idea of Translingual Writing**

As a relatively new newcomer to the composition scholarship, the idea of translingual writing can be said to have revolutionized the research and teaching of writing to date. Since its introduction in recent literature on writing studies, researchers and writing teachers have embraced the idea of translingualism in their theoretical and pedagogical practices with great enthusiasm (Matsuda, 2014). Yet, while, for the sake of generating new insights and satisfying one's intellectual curiosity, continuous efforts to try out and apply a new theoretical movement needs to be commended, the injudicious attitude toward a novel intellectual by-product could lead to an uncritical acceptance of it. The uncritical acceptance of translingualism, as Matsuda (2014) has recently pointed out, can take the form of the adopting the new movement based on "vigorous and healthy intellectual debate," rather than on "the desire to be on the "right" side – or the fear of being on the wrong side" (p. 80).

However, the danger of uncritical acceptance and injudicious or excessive application of translingualism, or what Matsuda (2014) calls "the rhetorical excess" in pedagogic practices may be the tendency for someone to view his/her own culture as superior or central to other cultures (ethnocentrism), rather than to see cultural realities as relative entities (ethnorelativism). In writing pedagogy and research such a rhetorical excess might discourage teachers and researchers to develop intercultural rhetoric – different versions or patterns of realities in organizing thoughts.

It seems that while studies on intercultural rhetoric in reading recall (Chu, Swaffar, & Charnay, 2002), academic writing (Walker, 2006; Xing, Wang & Spencer, 2008; Yang, 2004), and writing across cultures (Connor, 1996) have revealed the importance of developing student's sensitivity toward intercultural rhetoric, translingualism seems to have been narrowly conceived and greatly valorized as uplifting one's rhetorical writing traditions to contest the dominant writing convention or English monolingualism. What teachers

and scholars often misunderstand (probably due to their insufficient knowledge about translingualism) in doing translanguaging is that practice involves the constant process of negotiating language differences. Clearly, to be able to do this, they certainly ought to be proficient in multiple languages.

In addition, insufficient knowledge of translingual writing can lead teachers and research to reductively view translingual writing as an ends in itself, rather than as a process of struggling for meaning to achieve one's rhetorical purposes. As Matsuda (2014) argues, "Restricting the scope of translingual writing to the end result can obscure more subtle manifestations of the negotiation as well as situations where writers make the rhetorical choice not to deviate from the dominant practices" (p. 481). Nevertheless, whereas inadequate knowledge about translingual writing can result in a reductive view of the practice, judiciously practicing translingual writing with sufficient understanding about it, coupled with one's proficiency in multiple languages and metalinguistic awareness, can effectively help a writer exhibit his agency and write in a rhetorically creative and linguistically distinct way.

In the subsequent section, I will illustrate translingual writing practices at work, which are drawn from the analyses of both scholarly works (academic discourse) written by two Indonesian multilingual writers, and from a creative work by an Indonesian anonymous artist, who tried to satirize the dominant discourse (i.e., English). The purpose of unpacking this practice is not to uncritically valorize translingualism, as Matsuda (2013, 2014) fears, but rather to provide additional evidence to better understand the intellectual value behind translingual writing practices, while showcasing the vibrancy of such practices in a subaltern community like Indonesia.

### **Translingualism in Action: Illustrations from Two Multilingual Writers**

In line with the philosophical outlook undergirding the translingual model of literacy practices, I attempt to provide additional evidence of how

academic texts written (academic discourse) by two renowned Indonesian linguists, exemplify the translingual model. The first (published in *Journal of Southeast Asian Education* in 2001) was written by the late Professor Soenjono Dardjowidjojo, and the second (a book entitled *Islam, Culture, and Education*, 2014) was penned by Professor A. Chaedar Alwasilah. As knowledge construction manifested through textual realization cannot be separated by one's culture or rhetorical tradition, understanding the backgrounds of these two authors is of paramount importance.

### **Dardjowidjojo's Background**

Hailing from a Javanese ethnicity – the most dominant ethnicity in Indonesia – Dardjowidjojo was a multilingual speaker and writers. He spoke and wrote in Javanese (his home language), in Indonesian (his second language) and in English. Born and raised in a small hamlet in Central Java, one of the largest provinces in Indonesia, Dardjowidjojo was educated under the Javanese cultural norms in his childhood. He had a Western educational background and had written and published extensively in top-tiered journals in the field of linguistics such as *Pacific Linguistics* and *Oceanic Linguistics*. With his publications, the U.S. educated Dardjowidjojo enjoyed international recognition. Prior to analyzing his translingual practice, which occur both at the lexical and morpho-syntactical levels, it is important to analyze Dardjowidjojo's identity in writing, as it is closely connected to his agency as a multilingual writer and as a scholar from a post-colonial country.

### **The Construction of Dardjowidjojo's Identity in Writing**

An overall assessment of Dardjowidjojo's writing reveals that while the author at first glance seems to conform to a well-established convention of academic writing (linear, direct and straightforward in presenting ideas), his tone is personal, simple, passionate, informal, non-academic and reader-friendly, giving the impression that the author adopts "I write-like-I-speak" voice (Ivanic & Camps, 2001, p. 28). Most importantly, his texts are

developed through a temporal-spatial frame where linguistic entities are treated as unstable and emergent (Lu & Horner, 2013), making the author seem easily aligns his texts with his own cultural values and literacy traditions and practices. Consider the following extracts:

Despite this “disunity,” however, there is one thing that, I believe, we all agree on... (Dardjowidjojo, 2001, p. 310)

Let’s consider the third alternative. Suppose now that we select the second alternative... (Dardjowidjojo, 2001, p. 319)

Of these three, I personally recommend the adoption of the second and... (Dardjowidjojo, 2001, p. 320)

As an American-educated linguist and a multilingual writer, Dardjowidjojo, who had published widely, was fully cognizant that academic ethos requires a detachment from the personal; yet he seemed to have insisted on personalizing his writing and refraining from using sophisticated disciplinary vocabulary. His writing shows that he is deeply embedded to a Javanese culture, which is characterized by simplicity and humility, and he avoids pomposity in knowledge display. His lack of authoritative voice seems to reduce the rigor of an academic prose which encourages writers to take a stance or position in academic writing (Hyland, 2002; Ivanic, 1998). Dardjowidjojo’s stance on the issue being discussed, however, is covert and not readily apparent from the texts. This is because – in Javanese culture – the act of showing off one’s knowledge and explicitly displaying one’s stances is considered taboo and presumptuous; therefore, it must be mitigated or, if possible, avoided at all costs. Thus, Dardjowidjojo lowers his tone by maintaining a highly personal ethos, as evidenced in the frequent use of the first personal pronoun along with such tentative verbs as *believe*, *consider*, and *recommend*. The use of these verbs is, however, not culturally-vacuum or value-free, because as Ivanic (1998) argues, the lexical aspects of writing construct the writers’ identity. Thus, it can be deduced that these verbs

(contextualized in the texts) show that Dardjowidjojo is exercising prudence so that he (as a senior scholar in Indonesia) would not be labeled as the “elder-know-it-all” or an “all-knowing guru” among his colleagues.

In what follows I analyze the way Dardjowidjojo code-meshed his native language (Javanese) with his second language (Indonesian) and with English at both lexical and morpho-syntactical levels.

### **Translingualism at the Lexical Level**

Dardjowidjojo’s translingual practice evident in his writing occurs at different levels. At the lexical level, he meshes words or phrases that are derived both from the Javanese and Indonesian languages with the English language. The following excerpts illustrate translingualism occurring at the lexical level:

A teacher feels as if he were a *lurah* toward his students, a *camat* toward his *lurah*, a *bupati* toward his *camat* (Dardjowidjojo, 2001, p. 316)

The *ewuh pekewuh* outlook would also bar students... (Dardjowidjojo, 2001, p. 319)

The meshing of the codes in the excerpts above reflects not only Dardjowidjojo’s linguistic awareness of the effectiveness of translanguaging, but also his consciousness of historical, cultural, and socio-political factors in which the texts are shaped, reshaped, and then produced. The word *lurah* “the village head,” *camat* “the district head,” *bupati* “the regional head,” and the phrase *ewuh pekewuh* “feeling uncomfortable and uneasy” are deliberately meshed with the English codes to locate the temporality of the text and to bring the author’s agency as an Indonesian nationality with a Javanese ethnicity. In this respect, Dardjowidjojo grounds his agency “in the mutually constitutive relation of the individual and the social, the official and

the lived or practical” (Lu & Horner, 2013, p. 592). The repeatedly used Indonesian and Javanese words (instead of English equivalents) in the rest of his writing indicates the uniqueness of Dardjowidjojo’s self-representation. With his strong cultural root as a Javanese tribe, he could freely select and choose culturally available voices and easily mesh codes with the purpose of attaining a rhetorical effectiveness of his writing. The insistence on using both Indonesian and indigenous words instead of English equivalents reflects what Wertsch (1991) calls “patterns of privileging,” where the individual writer “can exercise the power to conform to or resist the social forces that are privileging one voice type over another” (Ivanic & Camps, 2001, p. 7). It should be clear here that Dardjowidjojo, while aware of the governing academic conventions or standard written language he ought to conform, chose to resist the social forces that could privilege the dominant language (i.e., English), and opted instead for using codes of his home language(s).

Yet, when one peruses the whole texts, the meshing of the codes here considerably differs from that offered by Canagarajah (2006) in that the former is produced by the writer’s cognizance of recontextualizing his writing by locating his agency both spatially and temporally. The above translingual practice is also distinct from what is generally referred to as code-switching or code mixing where submission to the norms of specific codes occurs (Lu & Horner, 2013; Matsuda, 2013). Matsuda (2013) alerts those who are fond of valorizing the coinage code-meshing, arguing that the the term could potentially spark confusion among scholars and language teachers because such established terms as code-mixing and code-switching may conote the same meanings as code-switching. Yet, as he deems these three terms incongruous, the term code-meshing can also be called “code-switching with attitude,” where the writer mixes the language by exercising his/her agency. Lu and Horner (2013, p. 600) further pursued the term code-switching and code-meshing, pointing out that both of these terms are distinct to each other. While, as they say, the former is understood to represent submission to the norm of specific codes, the latter is seen as deviating from the norms through (unauthorized) mixing or meshing.

It can be inferred that Darjowidjojo's efforts to shuttle between languages by meshing codes result in the heterogeneity of discourse –a typical character of discourse at the postmodern turn – “characterized by diversity, unpredictability, incongruity, and contradiction” (Ivanic & Camps, 2001, p. 30).

### **Translingualism at the Morpho-Syntactical Level**

At the morpho-syntactical level, Darjowidjojo does translanguaging by meshing Javanese words (*gugu* and *tiru*) with the Indonesian prefix *di*, so as to construct passive voice in Indonesian. He then merges the combination with the English copula *be*, with the English passive construction ensuing. Thus, the merging of the codes from the three languages constitutes a double passive construction. Needless to say, in terms of SWE, the following resultant passive construction is rather idiosyncratic, considered unacceptable and a serious deviation from the established norm:

A guru to us is a school-time parent. (S)he must, therefore, be *digugu* (trusted that what (s)he says is right) and *ditiru* (imitated)... (Dardjowidjojo, 2001, p. 315)

The construction of *be digugu* and *ditiru* exemplifies linguistic creativity (not linguistic oddity), which can be termed, to borrow Milu's coinage, linguistic inventiveness. The double translanguaging (from Javanese to Indonesian to English) here may seem to flout the SWE, to which the writer must conform. While being conscious of the “ungrammaticality” of the above construction, Darjowidjojo, nevertheless, seems to adopt what Canagarajah (2011, p. 411) calls a “relaxed attitude” toward writing style and grammatical error, not because he is ignorant of the grammatical rules or does not “care about form,” but because he treats written standards “subservient to *his* rhetorical purposes” [*italics mine*]. Further, the linguistic inventiveness demonstrates greater latitude of the author to exercise his agency and to index his ethnicity (as a Javanese) without necessarily bowing to the standard convention of academic discourse. It apparently shows the emergent nature

of grammatical structures as well as the ideological nature of grammatical construction. Similar to Milu's case (2013), the translanguaging Dardjowidjojo has demonstrated through the linguistic inventiveness can also index his postcolonial identity.

Also, such a linguistic inventiveness coalesces nicely with what Leonard (2014) calls "rhetorical attunement." That is, what is considered as a putative deviation of SWE should be contextualized from "the rhetorical in multilingualism: its instability and contingency, its political weight and contextual embeddedness" (Leonard, 2014, p. 230). As a multilingual speaker and writer born and raised in a postcolonial country, Dardjowidjojo was able to align his life histories (with which he was embedded) and diverse experiences with his writing to resist linguistic imperialism and to promote a more egalitarian way of expressing ideas in a written text. However, to be able to do so, he had developed a heightened awareness that written texts cannot be treated autonomously devoid of one's agency, ideology, and rhetorical traditions which one brings with the process of text construction.

### **Alwasilah's Background**

Different from Dardjowidjojo, Alwasilah is Sundanese in origin – the second largest ethnic in Indonesia; the first being Javanese. He was raised and educated in the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding houses and schools) in West Java, the province of Indonesia. In the *pesantren* literacy skills (reciting the holy Islamic book, the Koran and writing in Arabic) was strongly emphasized during childhood. Yet, like Dardjowidjojo, Alwasilah had the privilege to be educated in a U.S. university, where he obtained his Ph.D. and published extensively in scholarly journals. Just as Dardjowidjojo spoke several languages, Alwasilah speaks and writes in several languages such as Sundanese (his home language), Indonesian (his second language), Arabic, and English.

## The Construction of Alwasilah's Identity in Writing

As Alwasilah is Sundanese and was brought up in *pesantren* where issues on religion (particularly Islam) became the primary subject in school, his writings are often a mixture of both academic and religious discourse. His childhood's literacy skill seems to form an autobiographical self (Ivanic, 1998) – an aspect of identity in writing which depicts a writer's life histories and prior social conditions and which one brings in writing. Consider, for example, the following extracts:

These tenets comprise: *syahadat* (as testimony of belief in Allah and Muhammad as his messenger), *shalat* (the five daily prayers), *shaum* (fasting in Ramadhan), and *zakat* (raising alms for the needy) (Alwasilah, 2014, p. 8).

He himself was proclaimed by Allah Almighty as *rahmatan lil alamin* (mercy for the whole universe) (Alwasilah, 2014, p. 9).

The use of the Arabic words above carries a tone of religious belief (Islam), expressing Alwasilah's faith-based identities as a Muslim. The infusion of such religious identity in his academic texts is one of the strategies Alwasilah uses in achieving his agency in writing. The mixture of one's religious identity in academic discourse (especially Western academic discourse) has long been welcomed, as many U.S.-based composition scholars have argued that the infusion of religious identity is by no means antithetical to academic purposes and that religion is a strategic site of inquiry in composition studies (for example, see Engelson, 2014).

Also as a Sundanese, Alwasilah often infuses the academic discourse with his cultural and ethnic identity via the local wisdom he was brought up with in his Sundanese tradition:

Both Sundanese and Javanese for example share the values of *silih asah* (mutual learning), *silih asuh* (mutual caring), and *silih asih* (mutual

loving) (Alwasilah, 2014, p. 24).

The deliberate mix of Sundanese phrases *silih asah*, *silih asuh*, *silih asih* with English provides so specific nuances that the English equivalents might not have captured their original meanings. Yet, the use of these phrases is not neutral and not exclusive. As Ivanic (1998) points out, the lexical aspect of writing can construct a writer's identity. Thus, through the use of his home language Sundanese, Alwasilah represents himself as a multilingual scholar who can cross languages in order to exercise his agency.

In the next sub-section, I provide an analysis of how Alwasilah codemeshed his home language (Sundanese), his second language (Indonesian), and foreign language (Arabic) with English to form voice. This codemeshing occurs both at the lexical and morpho-syntactic levels.

### **Translingualism at the Lexical Level**

Most of the translanguaging which occurs in Alwasilah's writing lies in his prowess in meshing the code (as a realization of translingualism) between Arabic and English. Being literate in Arabic, Sundanese, Indonesian, and English, Alwasilah can easily shift among languages and cultures to appropriate one language over his own language, achieving his rhetorical purposes and exercising his agency. The following excerpts help illustrate this:

The majority of Muslim *ummah* (community) at the grassroots level are still heavily dependent on their leaders (Alwasilah, 2014, p. 31).

Government offices, social institutions, even small-scale communities regularly hold a *halal bihalal* (social gathering)... (Alwasilah, 2014, p. 46)

To be beneficial for the public, the expertise should be texted observing the criteria of *qaulan baliga* (speak effectively to audience to reach the

inner selves) that is audience-oriented (Alwasilah, 2014, p. 338).

The deliberate employment of Arabic (taken mainly from the Muslim's Holy Koran) in the above sentences is akin to Smitherman's writing – analyzed by Canagarajah in 2013 – where the biblical version (a non-academic text) is infused to a completely new context (an academic text) in order to inject moral values into the latter context. This is, as Canagarajah (2013) argues, an instance of recontextualization strategy. Similarly, this strategy is employed by Alwasilah in that he uses his vernacular culture (i.e., from the pesantren tradition) in *ummah*, *halal bihalal*, and *qaulan baliga* – expressions which evoke religious values familiar to both the Sundanese community in particular and the Indonesian community in general. Such expressions are also typical in an oral tradition in Indonesia (the world's second largest Muslim community), especially in *dakwah* (the preaching of Islam) events where the preachers often quote verses from the Koran. It seems clear here that by elevating his oral-based tradition (through the use of the above expressions) Alwasilah tries to offer alternate ethos and to satirize, if not to oppose, academic discourse. It is through this recontextualization strategy he can index his membership and signal his cultural and as a Sundanese Muslim.

### **Translingualism at the Morpho-Syntactical Level**

The obvious instances of translingualism at the morpho-syntactical level can be seen from Alwasilah's writing where he code-meshed both Arabic word and Indonesian phrases with English:

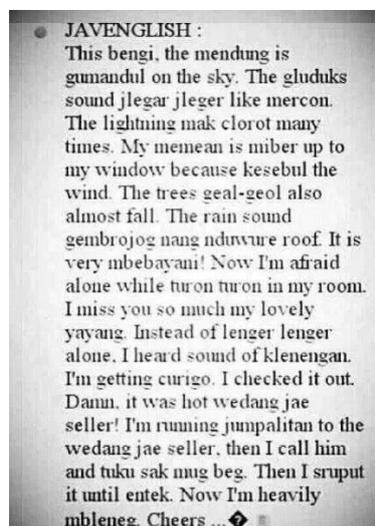
Fasting, like daily prayers, is *ibadah* (worship) to God, namely as evidence of piety and submission (Alwasilah, 2014, p. 34).

The so-called *pers yang bertanggung jawab* (responsible press) itself was a one-sided policy by the government to control the press (Alwasilah, 2014, p. 308).

While, like Dardjowidjojo, Alwasilah framed his texts in accordance with the dominant generic convention of academic discourse, he managed to create spaces in the texts to infuse his identity as both a Sundanese and a Muslim. The use of the Arabic word *ibadah* after the copula *be* and the phrase *pers yang bertanggung jawab* before the reflexive pronoun *itself* might seem idiosyncratic as far as SWE is concerned.

### Translingualism in Action: An Illustration from an Artistic Work

Translingual practices are also common in an artistic work. In this section, I analyze a creative work of an anonymous Indonesian artist who – for the purpose of satirizing or parodying English – deliberately code-meshed Javanese words and expression with English, resulting in what is locally known as *Javenglish*, a short form of Javanese English.



(anonymous)

Figure 1. Code-meshing in an artistic work

This can roughly be translated as follow (by the author) as follows:

This night, the cloud is hanging in the sky. The thunders sound like a big bang like firecrackers. The lightning strikes many times. My clothes hanging on the clothesline are flying to my window because they are blown by the wind. The swinging trees also almost fall. The rain sound like something falling hard on the roof. It is very dangerous! Now I'm afraid alone while lying relaxed in my room. I miss you so much my lovely darling. Instead of sit quietly alone, I hear sound of *gamelan* (Javanese traditional music instrument). I'm getting curious. I checked it out. Damn, it was ginger drink (a Javanese traditional beverage) seller! I'm running in a rush to the ginger drink seller, then I call him and buy a mug of ginger water. Then I sip it until finish. Now I'm heavily full. Cheers...

The creative meshing of many Javanese expressions with English in the above artistic work is actually intended to satirize the English language, so that the writer can index his/her identity as a Javanese. This parody indicates that even such a dominant language can be appropriated through a "lamination" (Bakhtin, 1986) process of meshing English with vernacular language to express the writer's deep feeling of being lonely and scared without losing the essence of the story. Though the story is narrated by patching mostly simple sentences with an oral-like rhythm (e.g., *The gluduks sound jlegar jlegar like mercon, The trees geal-geol also almost fall, Now I'm afraid alone while turon-turon in my room, Instead of lenger-lenger alone*), its grammatical construction is overall well-formed, and more importantly its flow can easily be understood by the Javanese but probably not by the native English speakers. This indicates the writer's high metalinguistic awareness in both languages. Furthermore, almost all of the sentence construction in the narration is dominated by Javanese expressions, giving the impression that the writer wanted to create a nuance that evokes his/her identity more than just a foreign identity. While code-meshing in the narrative occurs mostly at the lexical level, the writer also code-mixed at the morpho-syntactic level by meshing the Indonesian prefix *ke-*

and the Javenese lexeme *sebul* (blow), forming *kesebul* (being blown).

### **Implications for the Teaching of Writing in Foreign Language Contexts**

Although the instance of translingual practice I have presented above is drawn from a specific context (i.e., Indonesia), its implications for the teaching of writing, especially academic writing, is far-reaching. First, writing teachers need to realize that in the context of multilingualism textual forms students produce are by no means value-free. They are instead loaded with the writer's agency, ideological positioning and rhetorical traditions drawn from everyday linguistic practices. They are a representation of a writer's reality, values, and a presentation of self (Canagarajah, 2002). Thus, any grammatical, lexical stylistic and rhetorical idiosyncrasies students exhibit in their writings should not be immediately summarily dismissed as errors or deviations.

Second, teaching writing through the SWE model should not be taken to mean that this model needs to be unilaterally disposed to multilingual students as the static, infallible and absolute norm. Such a model ought to be seen as open to negotiation and resistance by virtue of a student's rhetorical tradition and unique agency. This negotiation involves rewriting, translating, and recontextualizing "language, language practices, user, conventions, and contexts" (Lu & Horner, 2013, p. 586), all of which lead to a code-meshing practice. In fact, rewriting and recontextualizing language practices by virtue of one's home languages not only "provide a critical detachment from dominant discourses" (Canagarajah, 2002, p. 134) but can also help safeguard the survival of endangered minority languages (Cushman, 2013; Lu & Horner, 2013).

Third, the goal of writing instruction requires a paradigm shift from simply exhorting students to acquire a putatively uniform set of dominant academic conventions to assisting students' in unearthing their diverse linguistic repertoires drawn from their everyday language practices and confronting as

well as appropriating the these conventions. Such a shift indeed goes to the very heart of the spirit of translanguaging, which both provides students with latitude in shaping language to suit one's interest and agency and recognizes the plurality of rhetorical constructions (Horner et al., 2011). Furthermore, encouraging multilingual students to use their home language in the process of text construction would benefit students and others (Canagarajah, 2011). In essence, writing pedagogy ought to be geared not to the attainment of the competence in a native English speaker's monolingual model of writing conventions but to the accomplishment of *multi-competence* (Cook, 1992).

Finally, to help students develop a meta-linguistic awareness in doing code-meshing, a model of code-meshed texts written by professional writers can be employed as a pedagogical heuristic. Such a model can make student cognizant that they too have agency in writing, and it is this agency that can complicate the construction of academic texts. The model can also serve as the impetus for students in critically analyzing and examining any written English texts disposed to them, and can eventually aspire them to construct code-meshed texts creatively and purposefully by virtue of their own agency. A final pedagogical benefit of code-meshing is that it can help students "develop their cognitive fluency and increase their engagement with learning" (Milson-Whyte, 2013, p. 118).

### **Some Caveats**

It needs to be admitted that while many scholars in the field of composition scholarship seem upbeat with their theorization of the translanguaging approach to writing, evidence buttressing its radical applications in practice seems rare. The prevailing opinions among both scholars and laymen alike are that writing, especially academic writing proscribes the practice of translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2011), and opts instead for the rigid use of SWE. This "leads to censoring translanguaging, and promoting standardized and discrete codes for literacy" (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 7). This is, however, not surprising, given that writing, compared to speaking, is a

high-stake activity, which is strictly governed by the established conventions.

In addition, the imposition of dominant conventions of writing in classroom teaching instruction requires that students one-sidedly conform to these conventions if they are to produce effective, legitimate, and successful writing. In fact, in the pedagogical context successful writing is often measured by the extent to which a student strictly abides to the standard written conventions. To flout the standards through meshing codes of the students' home language, therefore, may be considered failed writing.

What's more, effective code-meshing requires a high prowess and meta-linguistic knowledge. It is not just simply mixing two languages without clear rhetorical purposes. Yet, it takes years for the beginning student writer to achieve such a specific skill and to eventually code-mesh creatively. This problem, however, is not constricted to beginning writers. Even advanced writers lack sufficient knowledge about how to shuffle between languages to fulfill their communicative intents. This should come as no surprise, however. While it has been pointed out previously that translingualism has been part of a rhetorical tradition practiced for a long time in subaltern communities, the growing interest in its theorization seems to indicate a valorization to the term and to occupy a novel intellectual territory. For this reason, scholars and writers are learning to espouse the arrival of the new movement, although they are not sure what the term really means and although they are not yet well-prepared to apply the term in their pedagogical contexts. Thus, such a situation may create a knowledge-gap and confusion among writing teachers and scholars in the field (Matsuda, 2013).

Another point which is important to highlight when doing translanguaging is that the practice implies efforts to elevate and to valorize one's home language, and to infuse it into the dominant discourse. Nevertheless, the concern here is one's home language is often subjugated and considered disruptive among its native speakers. This is especially true amid the spread of English as the hegemonic language worldwide. As such, endeavors to promote and valorize one's native language through code-meshing are likely to face barriers.

However, these caveats should not be interpreted as the *cul-de-sac*, which can nullify any attempt to code-mesh and shuffle between languages. If the process of knowledge construction through writing is perceived as a site of struggle (with linguistic and cultural fissures seen as normal), there are always opportunities for students and scholars alike to find “favorable ecologies for translanguaging and [to] negotiate competing ideologies to achieve their communicative interests” (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 416).

### **Acknowledgements**

My sincere thanks to the anonymous reviewers of this journal who provided constructive comments on the earlier versions of this article.

### **The Author**

*Setiono Sugiharto* is an associate professor at the Department of English Language Education, Faculty of Education and Language, Atma Jaya Catholic University Jakarta, Indonesia. His writings have been published in *The Journal of ASIA TEFL*, *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *The Routledge Handbook of Educational Linguistics*, and *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*.

English Language Education  
Faculty of Education and Language  
Building G (Van Lith) 2nd Floor  
Atma Jaya Catholic University, Jakarta  
Jl. Jenderal Sudirman No. 51  
Jakarta 12930  
Tel: +62 215708821  
Fax: +62 215708821  
Email: setiono.sugiharto@gmail.com.

## References

- Alwasilah, C. (2014). *Islam, culture, and education: Essays on contemporary Indonesia*. Bandung: Rosda International.
- Bakhtin, M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Canagarajah, S. (2002). *Critical academic writing and multilingual students*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Canagarajah, S. (2006). The place of world Englishes in composition: Pluralization continued. *College Composition and Communication*, 57(4), 586-619.
- Canagarajah, S. (2011). Codemeshing in academic writing: Identifying teachable strategies of translanguaging. *The Modern Language Journal*, 95(3), 401-417.
- Canagarajah, S. (2013). *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. New York: Routledge.
- Chu, H. J., Swaffar, J., & Charnay, D. (2002) Cultural representations of rhetorical conventions: The effects on reading recall. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(4), 511-545.
- Connor, U. (1996). *Contrastive rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second-language writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cook, V. (1992). Evidence for multicompetence. *Language Learning*, 44(4), 557-591.
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching. *The Modern Language Journal*, 84(1), 103-115.
- Cushman, E. (2013). The Cherokee syllabary: The evolution of writing in Sequoyan. In S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Literacy as Translingual practice: Between Communities and Classrooms* (pp. 83-95). New York: Routledge.
- Dardjowidjojo, S. (2001). Cultural constraints in the implementation of learner autonomy: The case in Indonesia. *Journal of Southeast Asian*

- Education*, 2(2), 309-322.
- Elbow, P. (1991). Reflections on academic discourse: How it relates to freshmen and colleagues. *College English*, 53, 135-155.
- Engelson, A. (2014). The “Hands of God” at work: Negotiating between Western and religious sponsorship in Indonesia. *College English*, 76(4), 292-314.
- Garcia, O. (2014). TESOL translanguaged in NYS: Alternative perspectives. *NYS TESOL Journal*, 1(1), 2-10.
- Horner, B. (2010). Introduction: From “English only” to cross-language relations in composition. In B. Horner, M. Z. Lu, & P. K. Matsuda (Eds.), *Cross-language relations in composition* (pp.1-17). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Horner, B., Lu, M. Z., Royster, J. J., & Trimbur, J. (2011). Opinion: Language difference in writing: Toward a translingual approach. *College English*, 73(3), 303-321.
- Hyland, K. (2002). Option of identity in academic writing. *ELT Journal*, 56(4), 351-58.
- Ivanic, R. (1998). *Writing and identity: The discursive construction of identity in academic writing*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Ivanic, R., & Camps, D. (2001). I am how I sound: Voice and self representation in L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 10, 3-33.
- Leonard R. (2014). Multilingual writing as rhetorical attunement. *College English*, 76(3), 227-247.
- Lu, M. Z., & Horner, B. (2013). Translingual literacy, language difference, and matters of agency. *College English*, 75(6), 582-607
- Matsuda, P. K. (2013). It’s the wild west out there: A new linguistic frontier in U.S. college composition. In S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Literacy as translingual practice: Between communities and classrooms* (pp. 128-138). New York: Routledge.
- Matusda, P. K. (2014). The lure of translingual writing. *PMLA*, 129(3), 478-483.

- Milson-Whyte, V. (2013). Pedagogical and sociopolitical implications of code-meshing in classrooms: Some considerations for a translingual orientation to writing. In S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Literacy as translingual practice: Between communities and classrooms* (pp. 115-127). New York: Routledge.
- Milu, E. (2013). Translingual practices in Kenya Hiphop: Pedagogical implications. In S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Literacy as translingual practice: Between communities and classrooms* (pp. 104-112). New York: Routledge.
- Paltridge, B. (2004). Review article: Academic writing. *Language Teaching*, 37(2), 87-105.
- Sugiharto, S. (2011). Deconstructing scientific-empirical traditions. *The Jakarta Post*, April, 2.
- Walker, D. (2006). Improving Korean university student EFL academic writing with contrastive rhetoric: Teacher conferencing and peer response can help. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, 3(4), 71-111.
- Wertsch, J. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Xing, M., Wang J., & Spencer, K. (2008). Raising students' awareness of cross-cultural contrastive rhetoric in English writing via an e-learning course. *Language Learning and Technology*, 12(2), 93-107.
- Yang, E. (2004). The problems of Korean EAP learners' academic writing and the solutions. *Korea TESOL Journal*, 7(1), 93-107.
- You, X. (2010). *Writing in the devil's tongue: A history of English composition in China*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Zamel, V. (1993). Questioning academic discourse. *College ESL*, 3, 28-39.