



Found In Translation

Connecting Translating Experiences to Academic Writing

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Abstract

Writing activities aimed at leveraging the translating/interpreting experiences of bilingual students in a sixth-grade English language arts classroom provide an opportunity for these students to develop meta-linguistic awareness and showcase their ability to shift voices for different audiences.

Found in Translation: Connecting Translating Experiences to Academic Writing

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There's a lot of things at Brigham Middle School that need to change because as students we can't really concentrate on school when our school looks dilapidated and poor. One of the biggest problems we have is we don't have enough supplies for everyone. Most students can't do any work because our textbooks are falling apart, old, and are tagged on. The one thing that bugs me and the students at Brigham is our school police is always watching our every move like we are criminals. The police get us by the neck and pull us around. I'm sure if our school got more money for school supplies, students would concentrate more and get better test scores. Students are hungry all the time and our school doesn't give good food. So if students don't eat lunch or nutrition, when students are in the middle of class, they think about food and zone out. As you could see, there's a lot of things that need to change not only at our school, but in everyone's school. If the district gave students more money and supplies, the students would try to stay in school and pay attention and get better test scores. So we need a lot of money for our school.

In this essay, Christina, a sixth-grade student at Brigham Middle School in East Los Angeles, attempts to persuade local school district officials that certain changes are needed at her school. Christina's writing, like that of students throughout the nation,

represents an approximation of a discourse style that is closely associated with school. Put simply, this is the way that many students think they are supposed to write. This perception is no accident. In schools nationwide, students are often explicitly taught that there is a *right* way to write, and they read many examples of rigid, highly-structured, and dispassionate prose in their textbooks. They are then evaluated on how closely they can reproduce or mimic this particular writing style, which seldom reflects the discursive practices in which they engage outside of school. Rather than learn that there are multiple styles of writing and communicating, each with its own affordances and limitations, students are taught to privilege particular kinds of academic discourse above all others.

Although it is essential to help students develop skills for communicating through dominant styles of discourse, we need to do more than expose students to a single, *correct* way of writing. If we only cultivate a single academic voice, we fail to recognize and build on what students already know and do with language in their everyday lives. What gets lost is the full range of students' linguistic and communicative repertoires. Consider, for example, the essay below, in which Christina asserts to a *classmate* the same core argument that she had presented to school district officials—that changes are needed at their school.

Don't you think our school needs to change because it's ugly and poor? The school needs a lot more money for us. They need to give us more school supplies. The school has some police. They're stupid and they bug. They pull us by the neck and scream at us like we're their kids. I feel like socking them, but we can't 'cause it would go on our record and get suspended, but it's called self-defense. The food here sucks. It's not cooked right and sometimes the chicken patty has blood and it's all nasty. When I don't eat at lunch or nutrition 'cause the food's nasty, I don't do my work and my homework. I can't concentrate when I'm hungry and our school is ugly and wack.

What becomes apparent upon comparing Christina's two essays is her ability to shift her voice for different audiences. As we detail below, Christina's audience awareness is evident in her use of various discursive strategies. However, if we were to look at either of her essays in isolation, we would not see the range of Christina's linguistic repertoire. Ours would be a very limited view of her capabilities and skills. This, we would argue, is precisely what happens to students in schools throughout the country. Their vast repertoires of linguistic skills often go unseen and untapped.

Christina's essays were written as part of an assignment that required her to write a persuasive essay about an important social issue for two different audiences. This assignment was part of a research study that we conducted at Brigham in 2006. Over a period of three months, we worked closely with Ms. García, a first-year teacher at Brigham, to develop a set of curricular activities that would leverage her students' experiences translating between English and Spanish to help them develop conventional academic writing skills. We focused on helping students recognize the extent to which they were already capable of shifting voices for different audiences as translators. Our goal was to help them see how the skills that they were using when they translated between English and Spanish in everyday contexts could also be applied to academic writing assignments. This article describes the process through which we helped Ms. García's students identify the skills they already possessed, recognize such skills as valuable within the context of school, and apply them to a specific academic task.

Context of the Study

We set out to work with the students in Ms. García's classroom and to document that work from beginning to end. Our work started in the fall of 2005, when we began meeting with Ms. García on a bi-weekly basis to discuss her students' language practices, read and discuss research and theory related to translating, and engage in collaborative "work circles," the purpose of which was to begin co-designing a curricular unit. We also worked closely with Ms. García to negotiate our roles as researchers in her classroom.

In the spring of 2006, we began working in Ms. García's classroom. Our research team consisted of one research professor, one post-doctoral fellow, and three graduate students (the authors of this manuscript). The entire team was never in the classroom at the same time, but all members were involved in co-designing and implementing the curricular activities, working with the students, and collecting data. Data collection consisted of video-taping and/or audio-taping all classroom activities, writing fieldnotes, and collecting samples of student work.

The class that we observed was Ms. García's language arts/social studies instructional block. All 30 of Ms. García's students were Latino sixth-graders, and about a third of them had been officially classified as English Learners. This classification oversimplifies the variation that existed among students. While all students spoke English, a wide range of language practices could be observed among them. Some spoke more English than Spanish, others more Spanish than English, and others seemed to speak both with roughly equal proficiency. All of them had some form of experience with translating in English and/or Spanish across formal and/or informal settings.

“Seeing” Translation through Theory

Our work in Ms. García’s classroom was informed by sociocultural perspectives that view everyday language practices as valuable cultural resources—or funds of knowledge (Moll et al, 1992)—that can be built upon in school. Studies of language uses in everyday contexts (Barton and Hamilton, 1998; González, 2001; Guerra, 1998; Heath, 1983; Zentella, 1997) have documented the rich repertoires of oral and literate practices that people engage in their everyday lives, and sociocultural researchers often call upon teachers and schools to recognize, validate, and build upon these practices. Often, however, these researchers offer only minimal specifications for how to do this.

Some research has focused on attempts to make school practices more like home language and literacy practices. Teachers have been called upon to alter the *forms* of school practices: to allow more or less “wait time” in turn-taking conversations in classrooms (Au, 1980; Philips, 1983); to shift patterns of eye gaze; to ask different kinds of questions (Ballenger, 1999); and to be more explicit in making requests of students (Delpit, 1995). But while awareness of cultural variations in ways of talking and doing things can help teachers to be careful in their interpretations of what goes on in classrooms, students are more adaptable than this approach may acknowledge, and their practices are more varied and dynamic. In addition, this approach tends to reinforce static, stereotypical, and essentialized ideas about members of particular social groups. It leads, for example, to statements like “Mexican students do this; Chinese students do that.” Further, we are not convinced that alignment of school and home discourse styles is practically possible, especially when teachers meet up with students from diverse cultural backgrounds — or even with the range of practices that are likely within *any* community.

The “Cultural Modeling” tradition (Lee, 1993; 1995a; 2001; 2007) offers a different way of linking home and school practices. This approach identifies analogues

between everyday cultural and linguistic practices and disciplinary modes of reasoning. This is done first by developing a deep understanding of the practices students engage in outside of school, and then determining the most generative ways of mapping these skills onto academic processes. Carol Lee (Ibid.) established this tradition through close analyses of the rhetorical skill of “signifying” as it is deployed by many African Americans in the United States today; she identified parallels between this practice and the use of metaphors and similes in sophisticated literary texts, and demonstrated, using student-generated examples, that their everyday language practices were a powerful resource for interpreting such texts. Our work builds on this “Cultural Modeling” tradition by identifying parallels between the skills involved in translation and more formal academic literacy skills.

Our work in Ms. García’s classroom was informed by prior ethnographic research in bilingual communities conducted by one of the authors over the last decade. This research documented bilingual youths’ experiences with translation, mapping the wide range of ways that they translate for monolingual speakers, as well as the social, cognitive, and linguistic strategies that they use to do so (Authors, 2001; 2003a; 2003b; 2006). In this project, we built on this ethnographic base by looking at school practices to identify generative ways of connecting these everyday skills to academic language development. We saw many potential points of leverage, but decided to focus first on writing, and, in particular, on audience awareness skills.

Students' Experiences with Translating

We knew from this prior ethnographic research that there are significant variations in youths' translation experiences both within and across communities, and even within and across households. Eldest children are more likely to be active family translators than are the younger ones in a family. Families who have lived in the U.S. for longer periods of time may not rely on youth as much as newer immigrant families, and the distribution of translation work may shift over time as new family members arrive from home countries, and/or as siblings are born or parents learn English. In some communities, there are few bilingual services and, as a result, more everyday demands on youth translators than in other settings. Even in rather "settled" immigrant communities, most bilingual youth do at least *some* everyday sorts of translating, however, and we wanted to take stock of the sets of experiences that *this* group of youth could collectively tap into.

And so we began our curricular work by posing questions about Ms. García's students' translating experiences. We learned that some students translated relatively little, while others translated a great deal. Some students brokered language for a small number of relatives or loved ones, in a limited number of settings; others translated for multiple people, in different contexts, and for multiple purposes on a fairly regular basis. Students described translating at home, church, stores, banks, restaurants, and schools, among other places. They talked about translating letters, bills, television news programs, phone calls, parent-teacher conferences, sales interactions, restaurant orders, and various other in-person conversations. They also shared that they had interpreted for siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, neighbors, teachers, administrators, classmates, new students, and even strangers. Overall, students' translating experiences covered a wide range of audiences, purposes, and contexts. This is important because our

curriculum was designed to tap into their *collective* body of experiences, and to use this as a generative source of inspiration.

The Value of Translating

We also wanted to know what students understood about the value of translating. During a group discussion, we elicited students' understandings by asking them to talk about how they thought translating helped them—or *might* help them—in school. In these discussions, students demonstrated sophisticated understandings of the social and cultural nature of language practices. They recognized how translation practices were embedded in social and cultural practices and used for real purposes in the social world. This contrasts with dominant views of language that separate the range of language codes, registers, genres, and scripts people use from the social-cultural contexts in which we use them.

For the most part, students framed translating as something that *could* be used to help others. Javier, for example, said, “If someone’s from a different state and they don’t speak English, you could probably *help them with what they’re saying*.” Jonas suggested, “If someone comes from a different state and they move to another one and they speak a different language, you could *help them understand better*.” Some students focused on hypothetical or distant situations in the future:

Pablo: You have to know different languages, so like if you want to travel, you could go to *different cities* and you’ll know what they’re saying.

Cesar: Like when you go to *college* and you have a Spanish class, you would want to know how to translate Spanish so you would know what to do on your test or your homework.

Jonas: If you have a pen pal and if they're from a *different country*... like China, you could write them something.

In our effort to expand students' views of translation, and to help them see how it could be useful for *them* and have cognitive or academic utility, we made three separate attempts to reframe the discussion and emphasize how translating could help students personally in school. In spite of these attempts, however, students consistently emphasized out-of-school contexts and activities that involved helping others. They emphasized the *social* utility of translation rather than its cognitive dimensions, and they did not link translating to individual achievement—even after explicit prompting on our part. We point this out because it reveals the strength of students' orientation to the social utility of language. Students seemed to have an awareness of themselves as important social resources as translators for non-English-speakers at home, at school, and in society. We came to see that this is an important orientation to build upon, even as we also wanted to expand students' ideas to see how their knowledge of translation practices could also be useful for them, personally, and for their own schooling in the here-and-now.

That Ms. García's students did not appear to see a connection between this practice, with which they were all familiar and in which most of them engaged, and academic literacy skills (despite their awareness of its social utility in non-school contexts) is not necessarily surprising. Perhaps students do not see translating as useful or valuable in school precisely because it is not valued in school. Perhaps they have learned that schools value only a narrow range of language uses, and not their own larger

linguistic skill sets (e.g., their ability to use two languages and multiple registers in creative ways). After all, even in bilingual education programs, little attention is given to the skills involved in translating, and there has been an emphasis on language *separation* rather than on the movement of words and ideas *across* linguistic borders.

Through these discussions, we came to realize just how invisible and naturalized students' translation skills were to them. It became apparent to us that helping students to apply translating skills to their writing would require that we make visible this naturalized, unseen, and untapped language practice. Also, and perhaps more importantly, we would need to emphasize that it was acceptable—indeed, important—to utilize their full linguistic repertoires for academic tasks. In other words, we would need to give students the explicit “go ahead” to draw on language skills that they had for so long been taught to keep out of school.

Translating Re-enactments

In order to help students develop an awareness of what is involved in translation, we engaged them in a series of re-enactments of translation situations. Our primary goal was to help students grasp the idea that translation involves shifting one's voice in order to appropriately address a specific audience, and that shifts in voice involve not just transitions from one language—or code—to another, but also important changes in grammar, intonation, and vocabulary. We used the re-enactments of actual translating experiences to help students see how they already shifted voice in these everyday language practices, and to analyze what was involved in doing so.

First, we asked students to meet in small groups to talk about times when they had translated or witnessed translation. Each group worked together to plan a dramatized re-

enactment of one translation experience. The students then re-enacted these in front of the entire class. After each re-enactment, we engaged the class in a discussion, asking students to share what they had noticed about what words the translator had chosen, what special demands or challenges had arisen, and how the translator had dealt with these.

To build students' understanding of the notion of voice, we asked them how the translator in each scene had shifted her/his voice in order to communicate with each audience. We tried to get students to look beyond differences in code (i.e., English vs. Spanish) and pay attention, as well, to things like grammar, intonation, and vocabulary. Again, students compared the re-enactments with their own translating experiences, and we discussed the appropriateness of using particular voices in particular situations and for particular audiences. This explicit emphasis on shifting one's voice was an essential part of the analysis process that we mentioned above, as it helped us highlight for students an important component of the translating skills that they already possessed.

Writing: Students “Voice” Their Opinions

The centerpiece of this study was a writing assignment that we hoped would allow students to demonstrate their ability to shift voices for different audiences. We began by asking students to choose a social issue about which they felt strongly. In pairs and small groups, students met to brainstorm ideas and generate lists of possible issues. Next, we met as a whole group to share our ideas and brainstorm a list of people to whom we could present our arguments. We emphasized that these should be *real* audiences—people to whom we could actually send letters or with whom we could actually speak in person. As students generated this list, we wrote these potential audiences down on index cards for subsequent use as part of a game to practice shifting voices when addressing different audiences. After these lists had been generated, we modeled the game by

choosing an issue, selecting an index card, and then presenting an argument to the audience indicated on the card. While modeling, we asked students to help us decide how exactly to use our voice to address that particular audience.

Having modeled the game, we gave students extensive opportunities to play it in pairs. Afterwards, we engaged them in a discussion about how their voices had changed for each audience. We asked them what language(s) they had used, how they had changed their tone, and what words they had chosen for each audience. Did they say “the same thing” for each, or change the content of what they said? Did they use different evidence to convince each audience? Why did they make the choices they made? This discussion enabled us to further analyze and make explicit the skills and strategies involved in addressing different audiences. Although students did not use the same technical linguistic terms that we use here, they did notice that they had changed tones and used different vocabulary for different audiences.

Before beginning the actual writing assignment, we presented students with a graphic to help them organize their thoughts. We then prompted students to choose an issue and select two different audiences, briefly discussing audience selections that would be appropriate for the arguments they were developing. Students’ task was to take a stance on their particular issue and write a persuasive essay for each audience. Although we explicitly instructed students to change their voices as they saw fit in order to persuade/convince each audience, we did not provide any further direction as to how they should do so. We worked with students in small groups to workshop their writing and engage in a peer editing process. We then asked students to pretend that they were the intended audiences and to focus their suggestions for revisions around these questions: How convincing will this argument be to this audience? How can the argument be made stronger? We emphasized that this could involve modifying the *content* of the arguments,

but also their *form*. We continuously referred back to the ways in which they had used their voices in the translation re-enactments, and discussed how “voice” could be conveyed on paper as well. We then typed up their final essays for them, showed them the typed version, guided them in further editing, and let them choose a font style and size.

Writing: Shifting Voices for Different Audiences

A close look at students’ sets of essays reveals that they used various discourse strategies to shift their voices appropriately for each audience. In our discussion, we used Christina’s essays to reveal these strategies, and draw in examples from other students’ writing to elaborate on these points.

Grammar

If we turn again to Christina’s first essay, in which she addresses school district officials, we see that she uses conditional clauses, a late-acquired grammatical structure that invokes a “scientific” notion of causality, which is arguably an effective way of bolstering an argument to an audience such as the school district. She communicates causality by using the *second conditional* in two separate sentences.

*I’m sure if our school got more money for school supplies,
students would concentrate more and get better test scores.*

*If the District gave schools more money and supplies, the
students would try to stay in school and pay attention and
get better test scores.*

She also makes a similar causal argument by using a *general conditional* sentence. General conditionals communicate causality by expressing general patterns, rules, or truths, in which certain results necessarily follow certain conditions (e.g., If she works, she gets paid.).

*So if students don't eat lunch or nutrition, when students are
in the middle of class, they think about food and zone out.*

In addition to serving as an important component of Christina's argument structure, the use of conditional sentences above serves to convey a relatively formal voice, which seems appropriate for this relatively formal, authoritative, and distant audience. If we look at Christina's second essay, in which she addresses her classmate, we see her invoking a different kind of rationale. While she does use a *general conditional* sentence in her second essay (*When I don't eat in lunch or nutrition 'cause the food's nasty, I don't do my work and my homework.*), she is arguing here about a *personal* cause/effect—how *she* is affected when she does not eat lunch. Christina seems to display an implicit understanding of the kinds of arguments that will be more effective for each audience—for the district, an emotionally distanced approach that includes generalized, causal statements about the effects on *many* students of something that matters to this audience (test scores), and for her friend, a personalized, highly affected statement about the effects that the school lunches actually have on *her*.

Several other students also used conditional sentences in their essays directed towards more formal audiences. Although some students made use of *general conditional* sentences in their less formal essays, they tended to reserve the use of the *second conditional*, which communicates hypothetical causality, for their more formal essays. For example, Carlos, a student who chose to write about school uniforms, uses the

following *second conditional* sentence in an attempt to persuade his principal to change the school's uniform policy.

If you had to wear uniforms, you would agree with me about no uniforms.

Interestingly, Carlos makes no use of the second conditional in his less formal essay, in which he addresses his parents. Like Christina, Carlos seems to have an implicit understanding of how to use different grammatical structures to tailor arguments to particular audiences.

Argument Structure

Another difference between Christina's essays lies in the argument structure. In the letter to the district, the argument is clean, neat, and sequentially organized, with little embellishment. Christina states the main problem, lists three related sub-problems, and then provides an example of each. In contrast, in her second essay, she interweaves her set of arguments with personal responses expressed in highly affective language. While she follows the same sequential argument structure, she asserts her feelings and experiences, and uses these *as evidence to bolster her claims*. Notice, for example, the difference between the two assertions below.

Essay #1

The police get us by the neck and pull us around.

Essay #2

They pull us by the neck and scream at us like we're their kids. I feel like socking them...

By referring to her own feelings and experiences, Christina personalizes the second essay, conveying familiarity and informality. This personalization may well make it a more

effective argument for a friend, who is likely to *care* about Christina's feelings, and may likely feel similarly herself. Again, the first essay contains little reference to Christina's personal or individual experiences or feelings. Instead, the focus is on providing evidence in the form of problems that all students at her school face. This difference suggests a keen awareness of the audience that she is addressing in each essay.

Several other students also incorporated their feelings and experiences in order to personalize their less formal essays. In an essay about school uniforms, for example, Elena incorporates her feelings when addressing her classmate Nicola. Notice how she complains about teachers and administrators not having to wear uniforms.

I feel like I am in a prison. I mean come on, it's not fair that they don't have to wear uniforms and we do.

When presenting the same argument to her school's principal, Elena omits any mention of her personal feelings. She simply states, "*It is not fair that we students have to be wearing uniforms and the teachers and you don't have to.*" Again, while both of Elena's essays focus on the issue of fairness, only the less formal one contains any reference to her personal feelings. Much like Christina, Elena seems to craft an effective argument for her classmate by conveying familiarity through personalization.

Establishing Common Ground

Christina further demonstrates audience awareness through an implicit recognition of each audience's values, beliefs, and worldviews, and an attempt to construct common ground with them. In the first essay, for example, she twice emphasizes improved test scores as a potential result of increased investment in schools. She makes no mention of test scores when addressing her classmate in the second essay. By emphasizing test scores, Christina constructs an argument that is appropriate for the

purpose of attempting to persuade district officials, even though she recognizes that this argument will hold little weight for her friend. Christina also attempts to construct common ground by using a somewhat conversational tone (speaking to her audience as “you”) that assumes shared agreement, when she writes: “*As you could see, there’s a lot of things that need to change...*” With this, she reminds her audience that she has provided evidence to support her argument, and suggests that it is only logical that they should agree with her. This contrasts with how she seeks to establish common ground with her classmate in the second essay.

*Don’t you think our school needs to change because it’s ugly
and poor?*

When addressing her classmate, Christina attempts to establish common ground not with an abstract set of arguments, but by invoking shared experiences. She conveys informality by posing a question directly *to* her friend, using the first person familiar (“you”), and presupposing that her friend will agree. She also refers to their shared *ownership* of the school when she refers to the school as “ours.” Again, these shifts in voice indicate that she is keenly aware of each audience’s position and perspective, her positioning relative to each, and their positioning relative to the school.

Once again, we see that Christina is not alone in her ability to demonstrate audience awareness. Several of her classmates also seemed to display recognition of each audience’s values and perspectives. Marisa, for example, chooses to write about students’ right to walk out of school in support of the larger immigrants’ rights marches that were taking place in town. In her first essay, in which she addresses the school principal, she seems to recognize the way in which student walkouts might be perceived by school administrators. Notice how she begins.

Well, as a student, I think we should have our rights. We should have the right to walk out because we are doing it for a reason.

Marisa then goes on to explain what that reason is. The fact that she foregrounds the reason for the walkouts suggests that she recognizes that her principal might view students' actions as disobedient or opportunistic. It seems as if she is attempting to set the record straight, so to speak. She then attempts to establish common ground with the principal by encouraging him to perspective-take.

See, Sir, how would you like it if you were an immigrant and you crossed the border and you had to work in the hot sun picking the fruits and vegetables? See, you wouldn't like that.

Marisa's strategy of inviting the principal to take the perspective of immigrant workers seems to be quite appropriate for this audience. What it suggests is that she recognizes that her principal might not fully understand or support the struggle for immigrants' rights, and that she needs to educate him. This approach seems to be an effective way of persuading him that student walkouts are in support of a worthy cause. In Marisa's second essay, which is addressed to Ms. García, she seeks to establish common ground by beginning and ending with an assumption of agreement.

She begins with:

Hey, Miss, don't you think we deserve our rights?

She ends with:

So, Miss, I know I can count on you.

Because the issue of immigrants' rights was a common topic in Ms. García's classroom, Marisa presumably knew where her teacher stood on this issue. By assuming that she already has her teacher's support, Marisa demonstrates an awareness of a shared set of beliefs and perspectives with respect to immigrants' rights. This is clear when she writes,

“So, Miss, please don’t get mad at us if we walk out, because it’s for a reason.” It is significant that Marisa does not go on to elaborate or explain that reason in her second essay (as she does in her first essay). Again, this suggests that she is aware of her teacher’s understanding of the issue. Like Christina, Marisa demonstrates recognition of each audience’s position and perspective in relation to her own.

Vocabulary

Finally, Christina’s audience awareness is most evident in the key lexical items that differ across her two essays. In the first essay, for example, Christina uses the word “dilapidated” to describe her middle school. This contrasts markedly with her use of the word “ugly” to make the same point when addressing her classmate. Christina also uses a number of colloquialisms in the second essay. Consider, for example, her use of colloquial vocabulary in the following sentences:

*They’re stupid and they **bug**.*

*I feel like **socking** them...*

*The food here **sucks**...*

*...the chicken patty has blood and it’s **all** nasty.*

*The food’s **nasty**.*

*...and our school is ugly and **wack**.*

This colloquial vocabulary constitutes a specialized lexicon that signals familiarity and solidarity with her classmate. Indeed, many school district officials would presumably be unfamiliar with the specialized meanings of these words and/or would consider such vocabulary inappropriate.

This shift in lexicon was the most common strategy employed by students as a way of shifting their voices between the two essays. Almost all of Ms. García's students shifted their vocabulary in some way between the two essays. Although only a few students incorporated what we considered to be more sophisticated or formal vocabulary when addressing their more formal audience, many of them employed rich colloquial vocabulary when addressing their less formal audience. Andrew's essays, which focus on immigrants' rights, provide another illustrative example. He begins his first essay, which is addressed to Congressman Sensenbrenner (the main sponsor of H.R. 4437), by using relatively standard vocabulary.

I believe immigration rights are important.

This contrasts sharply, however, with his use of colloquialisms in the opening of his second essay, which is addressed to his classmate Samuel.

*What up, **dogg!** Don't you think that new immigration law is **messed up?***

Like Christina, Anthony signals familiarity and solidarity with his classmate by using a specialized and highly colloquial lexicon.

As this comparison reveals, Christina and her classmates successfully employ various discourse strategies to shift voices between these two essays. Their ability to do so reflects an awareness of different audiences and an understanding of how to effectively communicate with each one. In shifting her voice to address her classmate, Christina demonstrates a wider range of linguistic skills than she does in the first essay alone. As we mentioned above, her first essay is more characteristic of the type of writing that students are expected to produce in school. It seems safe to assume, therefore, that, if we had not explicitly prompted Christina to shift her voice when addressing her informal audience, we most likely would not have seen her impressive range of linguistic skills.

Engaging Christina and her classmates in these curricular activities enabled us to recognize the richness of their everyday discourse practices.

Conclusion

We have gained many valuable insights from working with the students in Ms. García's class, including a greater appreciation of the challenges of making visible everyday language skills and their connection to school-valued literacy. Many bilingual skills, like those involved in translation, are naturalized, seemingly invisible, and largely unrecognized and unvalued. Thus their tremendous potential as leverage for academic literacy development goes untapped. We have suggested some ways that educators can help students recognize the richness of their everyday language practices and utilize the abilities they cultivate through these practices toward the development of academic skills. The development of meta-linguistic awareness, as we have seen, is an essential component of this work.

Teachers can easily adapt these important concepts to their local classroom contexts. To summarize, the basic steps involve **(1) learning about students' translating experiences; (2) helping students develop awareness of the strategies they use while translating; and (3) helping students see how translating skills and strategies can be applied to school tasks.** As we mentioned, a key step in this process is to clearly and explicitly communicate to students that it is acceptable to draw on their full linguistic repertoires. Once students understand that teachers value the skills they possess, teachers can work with them to leverage and extend those skills. In classrooms where few students have translation experiences, teachers can help students to see other ways in which they shift voice when they speak to different audiences and engage in different activities in their daily lives.

To extend the work that we began with Christina and her classmates, we might use their essays as a starting point for a follow-up unit on voice. We could invite students to carefully examine their essays and note the various discourse strategies they used. After identifying and analyzing these strategies, we could encourage students to employ more of the same strategies to shift their voices even further for each audience, or for a new audience. In pairs, students could assume the identity of their partner's addressees and write responses to each other, further developing the relationship of audience and voice.

Our work in Ms. García's classroom has shown us that it is possible to leverage what students are already doing in their everyday lives to help them develop academic literacy skills. Students might not immediately recognize the richness of their translating practices, but educators can help them develop meta-linguistic awareness, and then draw on these linguistic and communicative resources to develop competence in writing. Our work with Ms. García's students represents one concrete, albeit modest, example of how this can be done. Our hope is that others will continue to draw on bilingual students' vast repertoires of linguistic resources to help them recognize and capitalize on the richness of their everyday language practices.

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