

## Chapter 6

# Dynamics of Translanguaging: Analyzing the Literacy Narrative of a “Native Speaker”

**Madhav P. Kafle**  
Rutgers University, USA

### ABSTRACT

*Many pedagogical studies on composition as well as programmatic and curricular structures tend to take for granted the fact that people fall either in the camp of monolingualism or multilingualism. Building on Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur’s translanguaging approach, which calls for a pedagogy that reflects the reality of language use, this chapter highlights how the concept of a linguistic continuum better serves us than that of the two diametrically opposite poles of monolingualism and multilingualism. Often, native English speakers are perceived as monolinguals and non-native English speakers as multilinguals. Reporting on a literacy narrative of a so-called native English speaker, whom the author calls Chrissie, the author seeks to illustrate how such a simple dichotomy is reductive and has negative consequences for acquiring literacies and potentially appreciating linguistic differences. Thus, this chapter has serious implications for the teaching of writing in particular, and pedagogy in general.*

### INTRODUCTION

Studies about how language users mix various codes in their semiotic practices have referred to such practices by various names according to the disciplines in which they are used. For instance, terms such as codemeshing, transcultural literacy, and

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translingual writing have been used in Composition Studies; categories such as translanguaging, multiliteracies, continua of biliteracy, pluriliteracy, poly-lingual languaging, hetero-graphy--to name a few--are used in other disciplines (for more terms, see Canagarajah, 2011b). In this paper, I use the terms *translanguaging* and *translingual* to refer to the act of mixing of codes that transcends the binary of mono-/multi-lingualism. Garcia defines translanguaging as the “act performed by bilinguals of accessing different linguistic features or various modes of what are described as autonomous languages, in order to maximize communicative potential” (2009b, p. 140). Garcia clarifies that the term “bilingual” in her definition of translanguaging also includes multilinguals. Similarly, according to Canagarajah (2011a, p. 401), translanguaging refers to “[T]he ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system.” Some traditional linguists might narrowly call translanguaging code-switching, yet Baker (2006) clarifies that it is not about code-switching, but rather about linguistic practices that validate bilingualism (his word) without a functional separation.

Despite referring to the integratedness between/among languages, all these terms take for granted that people fall either in the camp of monolingualism or multilingualism. In a similar vein, studies on translanguaging (e.g. Canagarajah, 2009, 2011a; Creese & Martin, 2008; Creese & Blackledge, 2010) seem to be simply assuming that the binary of monolingualism and multilingualism. The basic assumption in most of the studies is that we can discretely classify languages based on some perceived stable structure, or system. However, if we observe closely, the common practice of treating languages as discrete, fixed, and separate entities turns out to be problematic (Pennycook, 2007; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). In fact, one can argue that by endorsing the binary of mono-/multi-lingualism, stakeholders have created a false-normativity in such a way that people’s linguistic performances, at least in formal situations, have come to be regulated by the constriction of binary thinking.

Building on Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur’s (2011) translingual approach, which calls for a pedagogy that reflects the reality of language use, this paper highlights how the concept of a linguistic continuum better serves us than that of the two diametrically opposite poles of monolingualism and multilingualism. Often, native English speakers are perceived as monolinguals and non-native English speakers as multilinguals. Reporting on a literacy narrative of a so-called native English speaker, whom I call Chrissie, I seek to illustrate how such a simple dichotomy is reductive and has negative consequences for acquiring literacies and potentially appreciating linguistic differences. Thus, this paper suggests serious implications for the teaching of writing in particular and pedagogy in general. In analyzing Chrissie’s literacy narrative, I first outline the theoretical background to

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