Apples

Special issue on

Translingual and translocal perspectives on writing

Guest editors

Maria Kuteeva, Stockholm University
Taina Saarinen, University of Jyväskylä

Translingual and translocal perspectives on writing: An introduction

Trans- perspectives on writing: Background and motivation

This special issue has been inspired by presentations and discussions which took place during the first workshop of our NOS-HS research network *The Politics and Ideologies of Multilingual Writing* (Stockholm University, 27-28 May 2021). Under the overarching theme of *Translocality, translingualism and multilingual writing*, the invited speakers and research network participants set out to explore questions, such as:

- What does translocality imply for writing that has traditionally been based on localised institutions, such as universities, publishing houses or print media?
- How are our localised writing practices now challenged by translocal and translingual practices?
- What are the implications of translocal and translingual writing for writers and publishers in different individual and institutional settings?

One of the main ideas behind the workshop was to engage in a dialogue with researchers working in disciplines other than applied and sociolinguistics. Two of our invited keynote speakers - Stefan Helgesson and Adnan Mahmutović, both from Stockholm University - introduced new perspectives on multilingualism in creative writing, the former from the perspective of World Literatures and the latter drawing on his own lived experience of a transnational writer working in

English as an additional language. Anna Kristina Hultgren's keynote drew our attention to the importance of socio-economic factors in shaping our language uses, while Suresh Canagarajah's closing address explored how academic writers can negotiate language norms by resorting to different translingual strategies. The discussions following the keynote presentations inevitably turned our gaze towards our own writing practices and, most importantly, to questions concerning the purpose of writing in the academy and beyond, and to how our writing practices are shaped by our linguistic repertoires, disciplinary affiliations, evaluation regimes, and peer review. These discussions prompted us to propose a thematic issue where we could not only explore these questions, but do so in formats that allow us to surpass the conventions and constraints of traditional academic writing. Various contributions to this issue incorporate elements from creative writing, dialogues with reviewers, and poetic interceptions. The issue is organised into four sections, including conceptual articles, discussions of research and pedagogical practices, a conceptual discussion, and experimental articles.

Writing has served different purposes for individuals and institutions throughout history but, over the last few decades, it has gained new dimensions as a result of digitalisation and rapid development of new media. New forms of literacy and writing have emerged (e.g. Tusting et al., 2019), and the established boundaries between written and spoken registers, genres, languages, and various semiotic resources are becoming increasingly blurred. Likewise, we can also observe drastic changes in what counts as publication and in what writing can be considered private or public.

Writing in a certain language or languages has long been intertwined with questions of mobility, audience design and identity (e.g. Pavlenko, 2014 on 'translingual' writers), but in today's digitalised and searchable world, questions pertaining to legitimate language uses can gain new dimensions, for example, in connection to citizenship. The recent "liberalisation" of (forms and outlets of) writing and publishing has not done away with questions of legitimacy in language use (cf. Mahmutović, this issue).

In addition to the established mechanisms of language regulation, such as educational institutions or publishers associated with reinforcing standard language use (e.g. Bourdieu, 1991; Milroy, 2001), questions of legitimacy have gained importance in public debates. For example, the Nordic debate surrounding the protection of local national languages has been dominated by discourses warning against the threat of English, but more recent research on English as a lingua franca views the increasing use of English outside the anglophone world as a natural development which impacts language change (e.g. Mauranen & Vetchinnikova, 2020).

In this special issue, we explore translingual and translocal perspectives, zooming in on various aspects of writing, from its legitimacy to its localities. Our focus is on writing for publication by authors with multilingual repertoires and/or working in multilingual settings. Unlike previous research, which focused on academic, journalistic, and creative writing as separate domains, we aim to bring together researchers working in different subfields of linguistics, literary studies, and education.

Translingual practices, translocal experiences, and writing resistance

The debates unfolding during our workshop discussions pointed towards a need to (re)consider what, why, and how we write about our research. One issue was particularly salient throughout the discussions: Do multilingual researchers working in English as their additional language have the legitimacy to transgress established conventions and writing norms? Would any attempts to challenge such norms through non-conventional writing be seen as manifestations of incompetence, rather than agentive creativity? This is clearly not a minor concern for non-anglophone writers, as Adnan Mahmutović's article in this issue reminds us:

> As writers in our second language – or in my case my third language – we are Jacks of all trades but supposed masters of none. Or we need to be Master-Jacks. We have to be on the very top of our game to even be in the game and even then prejudices and suspicions abound. (Mahmutović, this volume)

Some of our workshop participants voiced similar concerns, as linguistic bias/prejudice against non-standard Englishes is a reality even in our research communities (e.g. Politzer-Ahles et al., 2020). This, in turn, raises the question: What is a language error? Zooming in on the social life of variation in language and its uneasy relationship with our normative ideas, several researchers discuss this seemingly basic but complex question from both cognitive and sociolinguistic perspectives (Khachaturyan et al., this issue). This discussion explores the interplay between language structure, social interaction, and human cognition. While researching language in use can imply going beyond the boundaries of named languages, there is evidence that languages and their varieties are perceived as distinguishable from each other, even by very young children without any formal schooling. What implications does this have for academic writing?

In an article resulting from our workshop presentation, Canagarajah (2022) calls for 'textual' and 'rhetorical' resistance. Using his own example, he shows how it is possible to diversify academic register and rhetoric by embracing a vernacular multilingualism of non-standard English varieties and alternate languages and scripts, and thereby to question established conventions and language hierarchies in academic publishing. Canagarajah challenges the idea that there is no wiggle room within the current publishing structures and argues that "Small small changes make big big differences indeed!" (2022, p. 19).

The rhetorical strategies adopted by Canagarajah include blending standard English with Sri-Lankan English (SLE) variety and rhetoric, code-meshing between standard English and SLE for strategic rhetorical purposes, and using his heritage language Tamil – including its traditional script – in an academic book publication. These strategies are quite different from the earlier kind of elite multilingualism in academic discourse, which assumed shared linguistic repertoires between the author and the audience (e.g. knowledge of Latin or other classical languages) and the same 'regime of comprehensibility' with the target audience (Helgesson, this volume). Canagarajah's (2022) decolonial perspective underscores the importance of the local rhetoric and heritage language in the construction of an individual academic voice. At the same time, he acknowledges the idiosyncratic nature of the proposed strategies and is aware of the status afforded by his current affiliation with a well-resourced US university.

While Canagarajah's (2022) argument underscores the importance of individual agency in the shaping of academic discourse (cf. Kuteeva, 2022), such translingual resistance may not be enough to challenge the status quo, which requires more radical changes in our research and publication practices. Thus, Hultgren and Molinari (this issue) propose three concrete resistance strategies aimed at addressing more structural issues that are difficult to do away with by translingual writing alone. In their article, they advocate other forms of resistance, namely: slow and selective scholarship; rethinking and bypassing research evaluation regimes; and shifting the academic emphasis from writing to reading.

Helgesson (this volume) gives an example of how English can function across various regimes involving languages other than English. He proposes a heuristic notion of 'regimes of comprehensibility' in order to gain insight into the implications of inserting such 'opaque' moments into otherwise English-language texts. Overall, we can see that translingual strategies similar to the ones proposed by Canagarajah (2022) can be detected in World Literatures in English. Helgesson shows how different 'regimes of comprehensibility' involve shifting scales along the local – global continuum and unveiling multiple layers of meaning in different contexts, depending on the reader's background and location.

This brings us to translocality, the second focal concept explored in this special issue. Broadly defined as 'being identified with more than one location' (Oakes & Schein, 2006, p. xiii), translocality concerns non-linear processes which produce interrelations between different places and people, combining both the local and global as meaningful parameters for social and cultural activities (Kytölä, 2016). Many of the authors who have contributed to this special issue are transnational academics with lived experiences of translocality, which inevitably impact the researchers' positionings. These experiences shine through many of the discussions in this special issue or even form a basis for some of the contributions (e.g. Mahmutović; Kaufhold & Dymond; Wójcik-Leese, all in this volume). Thus, we consider what the concepts of translocality as place-making and translanguaging can add to an understanding of current academic and creative writing.

Trans-writing content and form: Contributions to this issue

This special issue responds to the *Apples - Journal of Applied Language Studies* mission of transgressing disciplinary boundaries; of the societal embeddedness of linguistic practices; and of addressing questions of societal in/equity. Questions of epistemic justice and knowledge equity are emerging in academia. As Molinari (2022) points out, the diversity of higher education institutions and their staff and students is rarely manifested as diversity of academic writing practices. Writing from disciplinary perspectives such as applied linguistics, literary studies, higher education studies, translation studies, and sociology, we explore translingual and translocal writing and its societal implications and propose ways towards more equitable practices.

Through different types of submissions, we wish to chart new territories of writing in the academy. On the one hand, we acknowledge that knowing the rules of the academic writing game is important for participating in traditional research communication. However, standardised genres and writing conventions can also restrict our own possibilities to express different dimensions of our research

processes, or limit participation of those who are less familiar with these normative practices. Therefore, we felt it was important to break some of these rules, both in terms of form and content, and to give ways to new ways of understanding translingual and translocal dimensions in our writing (see for instance Mahmutović; Kaufhold & Dymond; Wójcik-Leese this volume).

While academic journals affiliated with major publishers may take a while to open up to less conventional academic discourses, there is scope for innovation on a more local scale with non-profit, open access peer-reviewed journals such as *Apples - Journal of Applied Language Studies*. The contribution by Khachaturyan et al. (this volume) combines a discussion of three original authors with two open reviews and the original authors' responses to reviews in the text, rather than hiding the reviews as invisible edits to the original text and the authors' equally invisible responses to the editors. This, we feel, also makes it possible to invite the reader in a continuous dialogue initiated in the article as a participant and not just as a reader of a "finalised" text.

Our first section, *Conceptual articles*, opens with **Stefan Helgesson**'s essay *Regimes of comprehensibility: A perspectival approach to literary multilingualism*. Helgesson discusses the contradictions between promoting a multilingual approach to reading on one hand and deconstructing linguistic boundaries and identifications on the other, arguing that multilingualism is still very much bounded by the monolingual paradigm. At the same time, the deconstruction of linguistic unity risks the historical continuities of language as textual, conceptual and aesthetic resource. Using a regimes-approach, the author comes to a discussion of multilingualism of "one" language for writers, readers and translators to negotiate multiple regimes.

Adnan Mahmutović continues to discuss languages and locations in his article *To the word-woods and back: Multi/trans/no-lingual movements.* As a transnational writer himself, Mahmutović discusses the roles of locations in his writing that contain historical layers of different languages and literatures. Beyond code-switching and similar obvious features, the historical movements and places shape not only Mahmutović's main language of writing, i.e. English, but also the style, rhythms, character, and structures of his writing. He concludes that creativity lies more in this continuous osmosis than the deliberate hybridising of languages and literatures.

Linus Salö and **Gunnar Norrman** discuss academic writing not just as an activity that precedes publishing, but as an art and a craft. In *Skill, dwelling, and the education of attention: Probing the constraints of second language academic writing*, they discuss academic writing as a practice founded in skill and developed through the dweller's involvement with their daily tasks and constraints. Based on Tom Ingold's perspectives on dwelling, skill, and the education of attention, they argue that "attentive dwelling" is fundamental in the writer's situated education of attention with the environments in which they dwell.

Anna Kristina Hultgren and **Julia Molinari** open the second section on *Discussions of research and pedagogical practices* with their article on the inequities in academic publishing and the possibilities for resistance. In *The limits of translingualism: In search of complementary forms of resistance*, they discuss inequalities between different groups of scholars and the subversive potential of translingual writing, suggesting that it provides an important, but in the end inadequate form of resistance. They conclude by advocating complementary forms of resistance to challenge and disrupt entrenched systemic inequalities:

being more selective about publishing; challenging the academic evaluation regimes that favour some knowledges over others; and valuing reading over the disproportionate value placed on writing to publish.

Johanna Ennser-Kananen, **Adrienn Károly** and **Taina Saarinen** continue discussing the possibilities of multilingualism in academia from the perspective of the complex notion of scientific and societal impact. In *Assemblages of language, impact, and research*, they advocate a multimodal, multidirectional, locally, and globally relevant view of impact. They conclude by suggesting focussing on research that favours direct engagement, participatory approaches, support for promoting community activities, and introducing more epistemologically just understandings of the relationship between the researcher and the community they work with.

Adrienn Károly finishes the second section with her article *Translation and dealing with "the other" in scholarly research and publishing: A call for more reflexivity*. In her contribution, she explores the role of translation in various stages of multilingual researchers' research and writing. Her conclusion is that translation should be based on a critical evaluation of the social, cultural, ethical, and ideological dimensions of scholarly communication and interaction. Thus, a more in-depth understanding of the role of translation in multilingual writing not only contributes to increased diversity and equity in academia, but also enables novice multilingual writers to embrace their agency and make better decisions about their linguistic choices.

The third section, *Conceptual discussion*, consists of one article written in the form of a dialogue between three original authors, comments by two external reviewers and final responses from the original authors. **Maria Khachaturyan, Maria Kuteeva, Svetlana Vetchinnikova, Gunnar Norrman** and **Dmitri Leontjev** discuss the question *What is a language error?* from the perspective of language variation and our normative expectations. The authors show how a simple looking question like "what is a language error" can lead to very fundamental discussions of what language is, how we communicate, and how social and cognitive aspects of language intertwine.

The final section on *Experimental articles* opens with *Translanguaging and place-making in writing for publication: An account in multiple stories* by **Kathrin Kaufhold** and **Rosie Dymond**. They mix theoretical questions of translanguaging and translocality with practices of academic and creative writing. Displaying their own condensed and partly fictionalised creative conversations from different stages of academic cooperation, the authors demonstrate how drawing on a broader range of writers' linguistic repertoires may enrich academic writing. Doing that, Kaufhold and Dymond also show the layered nature of academic writing and ultimately question what counts as a legitimate text.

Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese concludes the issue with *'Nordhavn offings': Writing with/in (three) languages [haibun]*. Her text navigates between prose passages and *haibun*, a combination of haiku and prose forms. This allows her to reflect on her creative practice as an academic author, literary translator, research-based poet and writing tutor. The metaphor of offing, a view of open sea in distance, is similar to ideas of translanguaging, transreading and transwriting: rather than creating a feeling of disorientation, offing offers a view of translocal and translingual writing as a safe possibility for playful experimenting, helping (also) academic writers explore their own writing and thinking.

We conclude our introduction in an old-fashioned way, with a table of contents. Many of the journals published by major commercial publishers, such as Elsevier, have done away with the traditional practice of letting the editors decide on the order of contributions to their collections. While we wanted to propose our perspective on how the different contributions connect and complement each other in meaningful ways, we also recognise that our way of presenting the contents is not the only possible reading. This is certainly a small concern in academic writing. However, it is in these "small small choices that big big changes" may, to paraphrase Canagarajah (2022), start taking place. We encourage our readers to explore their own possibilities for resistance and start pushing against these norms in ways that make academic writing more accessible for all.

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