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### Title

Whose 'Crisis in Language'? Translating and the Futurity of Foreign Language Learning

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1828r29k>

### Journal

L2 Journal, 8(4)

### Authors

Gramling, David J  
Warner, Chantelle

### Publication Date

2016

### DOI

10.5070/L28430212

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# Whose ‘Crisis in Language’? Translating and the Futurity of Foreign Language Learning

DAVID J. GRAMLING

*University of Arizona*

*E-mail: [djgk@email.arizona.edu](mailto:djgk@email.arizona.edu)*

CHANTELLE WARNER

*University of Arizona*

*E-mail: [warnerc@email.arizona.edu](mailto:warnerc@email.arizona.edu)*

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This contribution questions to whom and to whose learning experience has the idiom of crisis that so pervades the domain of U.S. foreign language teaching been addressed. The authors report on an advanced foreign language classroom-based study from 2013, in which undergraduate German learners translated a 14-page prose poem about translanguing experience—“Das Klangtal” (“The Sound Valley”) by British-Austrian poet and translator Peter Waterhouse (2003). The course—located at a university in the American Southwest—created an opportunity for the students and the instructor to reflect on a constellation of relations—transdisciplinarity, translanguing, and transcontextuality—often perceived under the aegis of a “crisis” of the subject. Through an analysis of the students’ reflections as translators, readers, and languagers, the study considers the different orders of recognition by which the learners in this class positioned themselves as multilingual subjects. Based on this case study, the authors argue that transdisciplinary practices and translanguing pedagogies such as translation can and should be integrated into L2 classrooms in order to create opportunities for collaborative reflective practice between teachers and learners, which would enable educators to step out of their own habitual ways of speaking about foreign language learning.

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Translation becomes interesting when it gets out of control.  
—Interview with Peter Waterhouse  
(Waterhouse & Wittfeld, 2011)

## INTRODUCTION: LANGUAGE LEARNING-IN-CRISIS

Among the many responses to the much-cited 2007 MLA report, “Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World,” few take issue with the stated premise of the report—the state of “crisis” in which foreign language education finds itself (e.g., Ramírez & Hyslop-Margison, 2015). The predominant language of crisis reverberates in a number of publications appearing in the early years after the terrorist attacks on New York City on September 11, 2001 (e.g., Edwards, 2004; Scollon, 2004; Stanton, 2005). In the decade since the MLA task force issued their report—a decade shaped by the 2008 recession, resulting budget cuts, heightened movements to privatize U.S. education from pre-kindergarten to graduate school, and the closing of many language departments—many educators and scholars of foreign languages jest, or honestly believe, that crisis has become the new normal. At institutional and governmental policy levels, this idiom of crisis in

foreign languages persists without signs of abating. In 2012, the Council on Foreign Relations published a report (authored by Joel Klein and Condoleezza Rice) that found: “The lack of language skills and civic and global awareness among American citizens increasingly jeopardizes their ability to interact with local and global peers or participate meaningfully in business, diplomatic, and military situations” (p. 11). In that same year, as part of a panel titled “A National Security Crisis: Foreign Language Capabilities in the Federal Government,” experts testified on the scarcity of federal employees with foreign language abilities (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012). This crisis stance at the federal level, echoed in the mission statements of many state departments of education, universities, and professional organizations for language teachers, is keyed to a perennially unmet need for mastery of certain strategic languages.

But to whom and to whose learning experience has this idiom of crisis been addressed between 2006 and 2016? College-age students of recent years, those who are poised to inherit the legacy of this continuing state of language crisis, are coming of age in a different ecology of languages, allegiances, and language ideologies than did policy-makers like Secretary Condoleezza Rice. Born roughly around 1998, today’s college-age learners do not benefit from the same stock imagery, available to previous generations, of a Cold War bilingualism in which English and the other languages they aspire to speak could stand (at least symbolically) as non-hybridized, monolingual, self-evident categories of language. National trends in university-level foreign language enrollments suggest that this generation of recent and current college students experience and perceive the “crisis” of foreign languages in ways that contrast markedly with discourses that are strategically advanced by institutions. Many have good reason to not behold a crisis at all.

## THE TASK OF THE TRANSLINGUAL?

This article reports on an advanced foreign language classroom-based study from 2013, which reflected on students’ experiences of transdisciplinarity, translanguaging, and transcontextuality—a constellation of relations often perceived under the aegis of a “crisis” of the subject, relations that have come to constitute the normative ecology of an advanced German as a foreign language classroom in the American Southwest. As teachers and curriculum designers, as well as scholars of multilingualism, we have increasingly become concerned that, while questions about hybrid cultures and languages abound in advanced transdisciplinary humanities scholarship, foreign language learning curricula and teaching materials often still struggle to accommodate the disorderly complexity of multilingual lives in more than a topical, gestural way. In our own teaching contexts, we have also become aware that undergraduate students come to our advanced German language classes overwhelmingly as double majors, and accordingly find themselves in a constant state of interdisciplinary translation amid the idioms and affective futurities of their other, often more occupationally oriented, fields of study.

The practical fulcrum of experience we report on here is the task undertaken by 22 undergraduate German learners of translating a 14-page prose poem about translanguaging experience, “The Sound Valley,” composed by the British-Austrian multilingual poet and translator Peter Waterhouse in 2003. Waterhouse’s prose poem, in turn, is an adaptation/transmission of a famous preexisting intertext, Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s 1902 “A Letter,” which is itself a fictional translation of a correspondence between the historical Francis Bacon and a certain Lord Chandos in 1603 (Hofmannsthal, 2012), and which

represents a key text in the Central European debate about “language crisis” (“Sprachkrise”) around 1900. All of the fictional and historical translatedness, multilingualism, and language crisis afoot in this transcontextual intertext—between Bacon’s 1603 and its ostensible reported English language, Hofmannsthal’s 1902 and its manifest published High German language, Waterhouse’s 2003 and its “postmonolingual” poetics, and our students’ 2013 context and its (back-)translations—is often as confusing to track for German language learners as it had apparently been for the five-year-old protagonist of Waterhouse’s prose poem himself, who hears his mother read the Hofmannsthal text aloud to him in their shared post-War exile location of Kuala Lumpur. The students—like the protagonist Heinrich and Hofmannsthal before them—have the option of perceiving messy and intractable translingual lineages and landscapes as indicative of crisis, or instead of countenancing them under a different order of recognition and reflection (see also Warner & Gramling, 2014).

Between January and March of 2013, the 22 learners in this class produced collaborative translations of “The Sound Valley,” one of which has since been published in a peer-reviewed academic journal (Waterhouse, 2014). The current study reports longitudinally from the seven-week process of collaborative translating. Our primary research questions are: How do these learners’ stances about translingual practice and subjectivity change over the course of seven weeks, while they are not only reflecting on their translingual selves, but are also working intensively on a collaborative translingual project? How do these experiences differ, based on their own language backgrounds? We share the self-reported experiences and reflections of three learners, anonymized here as Carol-Anne, Skyler, and Daniel, whose divergent approaches to the proposition of the crisis of language learning (in the broader context of humanistic education) shore up what we see as three corresponding stances in language education discourse at large. At the outset of the 2013 course, Carol-Anne (a language learner of German who speaks no other foreign languages) corresponds most closely in her reflections to prevailing post-9/11 concerns in U.S. federal policy platforms on the crisis in language learning; Skyler (a bilingual German-English speaker raised in German) hewed at the outset rather toward Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s ostensible hypothesis of a “language crisis” in early 20th-century Central European philosophy, while Daniel (a bilingual Spanish-English speaker learning German as a third language) corresponds most with the experiences of Heinrich, “The Sound Valley”’s young translingual protagonist in exile. Despite the initial crisis stances evident in these three learners’ reflections, we see through the longitudinal narrative data how each of them is able to resolve their own discomfiture around translingual positionality and to redesign their own subjective awareness within an unruly multilingual world “always in translation” (Pennycook, 2008)

This article proceeds in four main sections. First, we present the broader ideological, linguistic, and political setting that shapes curriculum design for classroom-based advanced foreign language learning in the setting where the language learning is taking place, the American Southwest. Second, we reflect on the potential role of translingual practice in the classroom, specifically through the task-based lens of sustained collaborative literary/poetic translating. Third, we present the three case studies of learner reflections as sketched above. Fourth, we conclude with some summative implications of the findings.

## RESEARCHING THE TRANSLINGUAL SETTING

On top of the transdisciplinary negotiation-of-self that characterizes the daily course of their (interdisciplinary) education, foreign language learners in our university context no longer fit the imagined community of monolingual English speakers addressed in many of the policy discussions cited at the federal level, or caricatured in withering jokes about “monolingual Americans” (Gramling, 2016, p. 61; Pratt, 2002). Their current home and the locus of their educational imagination is Tucson, Arizona—located just 60 miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border in an overtly bilingual linguistic landscape that was a holding of northern Mexico until 1848.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, Tucson sits on the land of the Tohono O’odham Nation, one of the 22 sovereign Native American nations or tribes dwelling in the state and often transcending national cartographies altogether. Tucson is also the fifth largest refugee resettlement destination in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> This multilingual landscape of Tucson means that translanguaging practice—as a vernacular task, and as a subjective sense of self in the world—is a salient (if often suppressed) feature of the local ecology in which these learners of German are situated.

According to the area-studies fable that still defines many language policies and institutional configurations, stable units of target language correspond with relatively easily identifiable territories on a globe that can be studied and translated in a somewhat orderly fashion. Of course, the situation both for learners and languages has always been more complex than this, but general awareness of what Yildiz (2013) has described as the “postmonolingual condition” (in which the myth of the correspondence of language, place, and person is no longer defensible) has often been slow to manifest in language department curricula, whose stated and funded mission has long revolved around the teaching of one language, like German.

How might we structure our “foreign language” curricula differently, if we viewed ourselves as truly fostering multilingualism, rather than teaching one language and its culture? Within university foreign language departments, the language crisis of the early twentieth century has often been directly connected to or conflated with a crisis in an academic humanities defined historically through Central European languages and cultural traditions (see Berman, 2011; Bernhardt, 1997; Brustein, 2007). In a response to the recent MLA report “Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, fall 2013” (MLA, 2015), Gillian Lord (Chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Studies at the University of Florida) makes exactly this claim and elaborates further:

Our students are under increasing pressure to go to college so that they can get a high-paying job upon graduation, which of course is a worthy goal, but what used to be the underlying assumptions behind that goal -- strength in liberal arts, broad disciplines, critical thinking, etc. -- seems to have fallen by the wayside in recent years. (Farkas, 2015)

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<sup>1</sup> According to 2011 U.S. census data, 27% of Arizonans speak a language other than English at home. In Tucson specifically the percentage is similar at 26.8%. MLA data from 2010 reports that, while Spanish is the second most widely spoken language in Arizona, Navajo is the third with between 1 and 2%. Perhaps more surprisingly, tied for fourth are Mandarin and German.

<sup>2</sup> According to Horizons for Refugee Families, one of the main non-profit, aid organizations for refugees in Arizona, Tucson is currently home to at least 11,500 refugees representing 50 countries and speaking around 45 different languages.

In the 2007 MLA report, the authors note that the crisis is not felt the same ways across language departments and fields. College and university enrollments in Arabic, for example, had nearly doubled between 1998 and 2002. The crisis of languages on university campuses is thus most keenly felt not by less commonly taught languages, but by the Central European languages—German, French, Italian—which have been able to count on students on the basis of cultural traditions and canons that have long been the mainstay of U.S. humanities and comparative literature fields.<sup>3</sup> The crisis of languages is in this context also importantly a crisis in enrollments that, in conjunction with the privatization of American universities and perceived states of economic crisis, is potentially decisive for “disciplinary survival” (see Norris & Watanabe, 2013).

The confluence of conditions shaping the current crisis idiom in languages has created a state among faculty in collegiate departments of foreign languages, literature, and cultures that Lauren Berlant (2011) has described as “crisis ordinary,” a situation of systemic crisis not anchored in a single event, but characterized by one happening piling onto another (e.g., recession, closing of departments, institutional reconfigurations, new budgetary models). Berlant argues that this affective state of perpetual crisis can lead to a particular form of attachment, a *cruel optimism*, “a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility” (p. 21). In a parallel argument, Adams et al. (2009) describe one of the salient characteristics of contemporary times as the proliferation of “modes of prediction” (p. 247). The result, Adams et al. (2009) suggest, is what they call a “regime of anticipation,” an epistemic and ethical valorization of speculative forecast oriented towards a “good working model of an anticipated ‘future’” (p. 247). These authors locate the psychopolitics of anticipation most securely in fields of biotechnology and nanotechnology, but within our context of higher-education foreign language learning, the affect of anticipation saturates discussions and decisions around course and curriculum development, as language departments are pressured to vie for specific tranches of occupationally keyed cross-enrollments. This psychopolitics of anticipation also shapes the broader discourse of higher education, which increasingly frames its purpose as professional training in a hydraulic register at odds with both preservationist and progressive liberal arts values of ambiguity, uncertainty, and dissent. Language departments often try to straddle this tension by offering language courses as a service to the institution and adding more occupationally keyed courses that are targeted at specific fields of study (e.g., German for Business, German for Engineers) to their curricular menu, while maintaining a symbolic core emphasis on more traditional coursework in literary and cultural history in the (smaller) rest of their program (see Warner, 2011). This often also involves a sort of doubling-down on the nationalization of literacy and the monolingual ideology of curricula in language programs (see Plews, 2013; Risager, 2007; Shohamy, 2006; Warner & Gramling, 2014). The debates around the mission of higher education have been well documented in a number of recent publications; rather than taking up this dispute, the foray into affect theory here should serve to point to a crucial epistemic difference between these two positions. The model of higher education as flexibilized advanced job training invests in an epistemic stance in which, returning to Adams et al. (2009), “one’s level of human capital becomes not only a measure of differential worth, but also a data point in a risk calculus of future labor and longevity” (p. 259). The

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<sup>3</sup> Spanish occupies a different position among U.S. languages, especially in a place like Southern Arizona, because of the presence of many first language, second language, and heritage language Spanish speakers.

liberal arts approach affectively orients towards potentials rather than payoffs and lays less claim to an inevitable futurity of job markets and labor capital.

The question of how language programs define themselves becomes even more complicated with a closer look at enrollment trends. While more recent statistics reveal an overall drop in language enrollments at the tertiary level (MLA, 2015), the most notable exception to this trend is Korean, which saw a 44.7% increase since 2002.<sup>4</sup> Within the context of this article, more interesting even than the shift in languages, are the contrasting reasons cited for why enrollments are increasing or decreasing. Nojin Kwak (Director of the Nam Center) cited the influence of Korean popular culture—K-pop, K-drama, and manhwa—as the driving force behind the rising enrollments in Korean language, but also literature and history classes (Flaherty, 2015). The question looms: How can the same generation of language learners who are motivated by pragmatic economic gains, also be driven by such purely affective/aesthetic motivations? How does the same generation who has been sold language as a marketable skill embrace the joy of learning a bit of Korean as part of their participation in global affinity spaces around K-pop and K-drama?

## Student Trends

In our own home department of German Studies, students often cite similarly affective motivations for studying German, although they are less directly tied to particular cultural phenomena. In their responses to a questionnaire administered to students in the first five semesters of study, students regularly select the classroom environment and pleasure of learning German or of learning languages in general as primary motivations for taking and continuing to take German. More instrumental motivations such as opportunities to work and live in Germany and possible career benefits were deemed important, but less important than affective factors (see Ecke & Ganz, 2014, p. 72).

This kind of data is striking not because it provides a clear forecast of learner needs, but rather because it points to an ambivalence among our undergraduate students who have chosen to study German, which is echoed in the statistics on Korean enrollments. The status of German for students in Southern Arizona is often that of a kind of symbolic auxiliary language, what Heinrich, the protagonist of “The Sound Valley,” calls an *Abersprache*, or “super-language.” All of them are enrolled students at a land-locked, land-grant university far from the coastal metropolises most readily associated with transnational cosmopolitan cultures. At this university where approximately 27% of the current enrolled student body self-identifies as Hispanic or Latino, many students have confessed taking German because it isn’t Spanish. This is somewhat at odds both with the future-oriented motivations often stressed at institutional and governmental levels. Indeed, learner motivations seem to align more with those discussions in applied linguistics that emphasize multilingual approaches to language pedagogy (e.g., Creese & Blackledge, 2010a, 2010b; Levine, 2013) and paradigms (often more prevalent in EFL research) that emphasize translationality and the unmooring of language from a particular national or cultural anchor (e.g., Matsuda, 2012; Pennycook, 2008) than the area studies models that often shape the institutional identities of foreign language programs.

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<sup>4</sup> Other increases were seen in ASL, and, to a much lesser extent, Chinese.

## THE STUDY: REFLEXIVE TRANSLINGUAL PRACTICE

Emboldened by these trends in the research, the course design for “The Task of the Translator” wagered that translating as an activity—when approached in a particular social fashion—could augment, if not transform, advanced language learners’ stance vis-à-vis their own translangual and intercultural being (see also Phipps & Gonzalez, 2004). Through classroom-based activities, the resulting learner artifacts and reflections, and our (David and Chantelle’s) own reflections upon these, we sought to understand how learners’ position as individuals who translate across languages and across disciplines’ manifests on various orders of reflexivity: i.e., the teacher reflecting on advanced language learning methods and objectives, the learner reflecting on his/her future as a user of the foreign language and his/her future as a multilingual and translational citizen (potentially in a profession represented by the student’s other major). Further and no less consequential orders of reflexivity for this study include the reflexivity of fictional characters in literary texts—and, most saliently, the protagonist in the poetic prose work “The Sound Valley,” which students translated—who countenance crises of futurity in (multiple) language that run parallel to those of teachers and learners reading these texts. This kaleidoscope of reflexivity and anticipation—of feelings around the questions: What will I become, what will I have done here, what (linguistic) communities will I be at home in, what will have been learned or accomplished?—was designed into the course objectives in the form of homework prompts, discussions, and online forums. In this article, we attempt to put the learners’ experiences as documented through these various sources in dialogue with our own reflections as teachers and curriculum designers in order to question to what extent the sense of crisis that pervades our professional spaces might be importantly at odds with our students’ sense of themselves as translanguagers, and to consider what implications that might have for German and other foreign language pedagogical practice and programming.

### The Learners

The central data in this study emerge from the self-reported experiences of 22 students enrolled in a spring 2013 advanced-level course, taught by David. Those students who consented to participate in the study included: four self-described native or advanced heritage language speakers of German; eight learners of German as a foreign language who spoke no other foreign languages; six learners who spoke Spanish as a native, heritage, or advanced foreign language, for whom German was thus a third language; five learners of German as a third language in addition English and a heritage or native language (in this case Arabic, Portuguese, and Polish) and foreign languages (Korean and Russian). One learner was counted twice, as she was a heritage speaker of both German and Portuguese. Languages of pre-class banter tended to be English, Spanish, and German, in that order. None of the students reported any previous training in translation, though 11 of the 22 students reported having interpreted or translated informally, over the course of their childhood, for parents or other family members.

The individuals in this class, like many of their other classmates in the language program, have come of age amid the U.S.-led War on Terror, amid aggressive political investment in national-security-based approaches to multilingualism, and amid No Child Left Behind discourses of educational crisis. At the time the survey was conducted in 2013, the average age of the learners/participants was 20. This means that these learners were on average 8



years old on 9/11, 13 years old at the time of the publication of the MLA report on “Foreign Languages and Higher Education,” and 15 years old during the onset of the Great Recession in 2008, which has exacerbated the privatization and “malification” of the state university and has led to a continued rise in tuition and fees. Moreover, their lives have coincided with the flourishing of deregulation and economic transnationalism, and the establishment of the European Union, as well as the dismantling of bilingual education more locally in Arizona and neighboring states (see Combs, Evans, Fletcher, Parra, & Jiménez, 2005; Iddings, Combs, & Moll, 2012). Most of the learners surveyed in the class considered themselves to be translingually active in their daily lives; some had grown up in Northern Mexico and were studying in the United States. 16 of the 22 students were seniors and were thus at a natural crossroads between the past and the future of their own use of German among their nonnative languages, in some cases. Four students were double-majoring with other language majors, seven with humanities-oriented social science majors, four with natural and theoretical science majors, and three with arts and music majors. Only one of the 22 students was a single-major in German. One student was a single-major in Chemistry and was taking the class as an overload to her major.

### **Scales of Reflexivity in Teaching Translingual Practice**

In foreign language graduate training in recent years, teacher education has emerged as a focal area and within this growing body of research, reflective inquiry has taken on a central role. The arena of L2 teacher education that emphasizes reflective inquiry is not a particular methodology or approach, but rather professional development opportunities and frameworks that foster critical, introspective practitioners (e.g., Allwright, 2014; Allwright & Hanks, 2009; Byrd Clark & Dervin, 2014; Byrd Clark & Dervin, 2014; Crane, 2015; Johnson, 2009). In an article on exploratory practice in teacher education, Crane (2015, p. 2) recommends involving learners in reflective practice in order to co-construct shared, locally relevant understandings of language and learning.

In the introduction to their recent volume on *Reflexivity in Language and Intercultural Education*, Byrd Clark and Dervin (2014) draw on a long history of work in the social sciences to understand “degrees of reflexivity,” among them critical reflection, awareness, and “hyperreflexivity” (p. 4). We consider this question from the vantage point of ‘orders of reflexivity’—namely the interwoven reflexivities of the teacher, the translator/translingual practitioner, the reader, the text, and the intertext. Reflection as a process, we believe, requires reflective socio-cognitive spaces and surfaces to prompt the activity of reflection. As with the common phrase ‘orders of indexicality,’ we see this scale of orders as constituting a dynamic field of relationships that allow language users to rethink the normative *interdisciplinary* positions presumed of them.

### **Developing the Course: Paradigms and Predicaments**

The process of developing this course (“The Task of the Translator,” or ToT) was a reflective process of its own. Few available course materials and textbooks engage with translation or multilingual subjectivity in more than a thematic way. The imaginative task of developing holistic and sustained curricula around translingual being—and translation as an avocational component of it—falls to the individual teacher, who is often not trained in translation and interpretation pedagogy. Such was, in a nutshell, the experience of one of this

article's authors (David). Not trained formally as a translator over the course of his doctoral work, but aware of the growing eagerness in the humanities to grasp translanguaging practice as a meaningful, consequential aspect of everyday life, he spent hundreds of hours during his literary doctoral training translating from German to English, as part of a research assistantship turned book project (Göktürk, Gramling, & Kaes, 2007). Seven years later, teaching in a department of similar size and curricular structure, David was happy to find he'd been scheduled to teach a fourth-year advanced German course pre-titled "Construction of Identity." While the received course description from previous years highlighted "identity construction," David saw an opportunity to consider specifically how translation practice—when explored socially and avocationally—could, and often would, become a productive avenue for rethinking identity—from a phenomenological, political, ecological, and critical perspective. For reasons no longer defensible in retrospect, he ordered an old-standard "translation exercises" book, but realized in the first two weeks that students found it far too spartan and decontextualized to foster growth. Remembering back to his years of unreflective "translating in the attic," as it was jokingly but accurately referred to during graduate training, he endeavored to seek out a text that was as itself critically, joyfully, and socially *about* translation, transdisciplinarity, and reflexivity.

The course was not intended as an introduction to translation studies or as a course in the basic principles for aspiring professional translators. Rather, students were encouraged to reflect on their own multilingual experiences of translating, experiences that had necessarily accompanied the learners' own socialization into German-speaking communities of practice as well as their appropriation of the German language for the most varying of purposes. The curricular choice to stimulate these reflections through actual translation work, rather than through discussions *about* translating, was meant to access a continuous flow of applied situations in which the broad endeavor of trafficking meaning across language difference presented speakers with ever new affordances, constraints, and opportunities for reflection. Translating was supposed to teach the learners about their own language appropriation strategies, rather than being a mere result of that appropriation.

## Teacher and Learner Practices in the Classroom

In the first and second week of the ToT class, students were asked to establish a "translation agency" with three or four of their classroom colleagues and to collectively develop an agency mission statement. In this mission statement, they would describe what the ideals and goals of their translation practice would be and where they would place their priorities (i.e., on the aesthetic beauty of the translation, its accessibility, its fealty to the original, its precision of expression, or its sensitivity to cultural context).

This exercise was designed to encourage students to air their vernacular assumptions about translation, even prior to encountering a particular text or genre. Of course, proponents of functionalist translating would insist that the ideals and purpose of practice must always follow the particular translation brief, that is, the explicitly articulated purpose of the translation project. As the instructor had chosen the texts to be translated, it was unfeasible and in fact counter-productive to then ask students to fashion a purpose, function, or brief for their work, as the function was, in the end, the successful completion of a course component. The exercise of asking students to develop an agency and their ideals of practice prior to encountering their first text nonetheless served the purpose of highlighting for students how certain desires or virtues that brought forth in the act of

translating may ultimately clash with the very nature of the text they are charged with translating. Potential lessons learned at the outset, then, included: a) one is rarely able to choose the text to be translated, b) language and text do not hew particularly well to the presumptions learners have about how language and text are supposed to behave, c) language and text do not succumb easily to language users' needs and desires regarding what constitutes a "good translation." In this vein, the students in the class were asked to read an interview with Peter Waterhouse (Waterhouse & Wittfeld, 2011), author of the original text during the first half of the semester, in which Waterhouse proposed, "Translation first becomes interesting, when it gets out of control" (our translation; "*Die Übersetzung wird erst interessant, wenn sie ausser Kontrolle gerät.*").

The second purpose of establishing "translation agencies" concerned the double meaning of the word agency. That is, in developing mission statements for their group, learners were able to continuously contrast their mission—and their resultant and corresponding practice—with those of four other groups, who had articulated differing agency missions. Rather than engendering competition or pressure, this parallel gaze from agency to agency allowed students to both view and conceptualize the ever-present differences possible in, and indeed constitutive of, multilingual translation practice.<sup>5</sup> This set-up of mutual monitoring possibilities in the classroom allowed students to take stock of their own "agency" in translating, the pathway and answerability of their choices, and the effects of these on the classroom collaboration.

The goal was to complete a group translation of the 14-page prose poem "The Sound Valley" by mid-semester. Pursuant to this goal, each agency took one chunk of text per night, labeled A, B, C, D, or E. Each student in the agency translated the same chunk of that text and posted it for review in their agency's discussion panel on the online courseware. For each class meeting, a "chief translator" ("*Oberübersetzer*"), charged with reconciling the translations proposed by group members, was nominated from each agency. The result of the chief translator's reconciliation process would then become the working draft section for the cumulative, ongoing translation of the work as a whole. As the translation agencies each strove toward a different set of professional and/or aesthetic ideals, these various sections would necessarily emerge bearing uneven results, yielding a ready-made mid-term exam prompt: Identify examples of differing translation strategies throughout the text and assess the effects of those differences on the overall rendering of the translation.

A final exercise before moving on to the next thematic unit in the course was to imagine writing a translator's introduction to the "Sound Valley" text, in which the process of collaborative production was described. Indeed, this exercise extends the dialogic chain of address into future readerships and intertextual relations. We here provide an introduction written by one of the students:

This translation was not the work of any one individual. Instead, it was a novel form of collaborative translation carried out over six weeks by 24 students in a university course in German translation. Each section of this story was first translated independently by four or five individuals, then the best parts of each translation were combined to a whole greater than any of its parts. Long discussions about the use of one word over another

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<sup>5</sup> By multilingual translation practice, we mean a practice that seeks to maintain the co-presence of multiple meanings in various languages, rather than a serial pursuit of adequate replacements for one language in another.

did not simply occur in one translator's head but were part of a dialog with different perspectives. The story was checked for consistency not once or twice but five times, checked for (unintended) confusion, checked to maintain both the meaning and the feeling of the original (#) times. When a lone translator is rushed to translate a novel, he may only read it once. This translation was reread a hundred times.

What seems extraordinary in this description is the way the student blends a sense of pride in collaboration and dialogic decision-making on the one hand with rigor and precision on the other. Far from experiencing immobility in the face of crisis or invisibility in daily translanguaging subjectivities, this student's outward-facing identity as a translator, language learner, collaborator, quality-control agent, and autonomy exemplifies a "new normal" in the foreign language learning ethos at state universities for which we have yet to see an MLA report, and which may indeed be both a complex consequence and a revision of the insights of 2007.

### **Intratextual and Extratextual Reflexivity**

The protagonist Heinrich is a multilingual subject, a legacy of exile, a translanguager, and an interpreter/translator. It was the wager of this study, and of the curriculum upon which it is based, that 21<sup>st</sup>-century language learners find themselves in a parallel situation of perplexity toward the sometimes beloved, sometimes precarious crisis discourses of their youth and early adulthood. In reading (and translating) Waterhouse's "The Sound Valley," they thus enter a complex *mise-en-abyme* of readerly reception, a call-and-response relationship with texts upon texts that came before them, which—in an urgent and authoritative way—call out to them across time and generations to feel certain ways about language learning, globalization, and affective nationalism (see also Gramling & Warner, 2012; Warner, 2014; Warner & Gramling, 2013, 2014). Furthermore, their own work toward translating and publishing the English translation of a German prose poem that, in turn, is refracting a fictional English letter, itself performs an act of interference in the literary polysystem (Even-Zohar, 1990)

### **LEARNER REFLECTIONS**

We have selected three from among the 22 learners, whose responses to homework assignments throughout the first seven weeks of the ToT class exemplify three distinct modes of "learning-in-crisis" in a multilingual age. Each of these learners, in their own way, discovers and eases a heretofore unidentified anxiety or discomfort about translanguaging practice. We have chosen to highlight these three learners, not because their responses are particularly distinctive among the group, but because each accounts in a particular way for the three main constituencies within the class: foreign-language learners of German who speak no third language, bilingual German-English speakers, and bilingual English-Spanish foreign-language learners of German. (We have chosen not to correct any of their syntax or spelling in any language, nor to indicate where such variance occurs.)

The prompts they were given are as follows:

Week 1	<p><i>Wo sehen Sie Übersetzung als Aktivität in Ihrem eigenen Alltagsleben?</i> Where do you see translation as an activity in your own everyday life?</p> <p><i>Was sind für Sie die häufigsten Schwierigkeiten/Probleme beim Übersetzen?</i> What are, for you, the most common difficulties/problems while translating?</p> <p><i>Was sind für Sie die Emotionen/Gefühle, die Sie beim Übersetzen erleben?</i> What are, for you, the emotions/feelings that you experience while translating?</p>
Week 3	<p><i>Wie versteht/erfährt das Kind die Welt? Ist er verwirrt?</i> How does the child understand/experience the world? Is he confused?</p>
Week 5	<p><i>Trauen Sie sich beim Übersetzen jetzt mehr als zu Beginn dieses Semesters?</i> Do you have more confidence while translating than at the beginning of the semester?</p>
Week 7	<p>Analyze a passage from the “Sound Valley” text. (By the seventh week of the semester, the class had collectively translated, edited, and discussed the entirety of the 14-page prose poem.)</p>

### Carol-Anne: From “Little Things” to “A Totally Extraordinary Feeling”

Carol-Anne was a German major, learning German as a foreign language, who reported speaking no other languages besides English. In her first-week responses, Carol-Anne minimizes and marginalizes the role of translation in her everyday life. Using phrases like “small things” and “on the side,” and inflecting her comments with discourse markers like “ja” to denote the obviousness of her observations, Carol-Anne seems poised to view translation additively, as an option or instrument to turn to for fun or for career purposes:

*Es macht ja Spaß, kleine Dinge zu übersetzen, aber außer das ich würde gern Übersetzungen machen als Karriere, oder vielleicht als etwas kleines ‘on the side.’*

Of course, it’s fun to translate little things, but beyond that I would like to do translation as a career, or perhaps as something little ‘on the side.’

Carol-Anne subsequently reveals that the trouble with translating lies in not knowing what one does not know—that is, being susceptible to mistaking idiomatic language for literal representation. The peril of this predicament is emphasized in her comments through the capitalization of the word “NICHT,” which seems to carry both the force of a caution and admonishment for prior missteps. Recapitulating her reflection, Carol-Anne however uses the last sentence of her comment to issue a general scolding, using the passive “zu” construction germane to government regulations:

*Für mich, ist es dass ich nicht so viele Phrasen oder “sprichwörter” wissen. Also wenn ich eine von diese Phrasen finden, weiß ich manchmal nicht, dass es NICHT direkt übersetzt sein soll. Phrasen wie ‘Im Nacken zu sitzen’ (breathing down (your) neck) sind nicht einfach zu übersetzen!*

For me, it's that I don't know many phrases of idioms. So when I find one of these phrases, I sometimes don't know that it should NOT be directly translated. Phrases like *'Im Nacken zu sitzen'* (breathing down (your) neck) are not to be simply translated/easy to translate!

The question of emotions while translating leads Carol-Anne through a series of thoughts, which she chooses to express in English. Prominent in her comments are the role of meditative time, useful emergence, and a preference for original work:

Hm... that's an interesting question. I had never thought about it like that, but I suppose it could be described as feeling like doing a puzzle, but a really complex puzzle. Or finishing goals in a video game, or something. It's tough, but definitely doable. It takes some time to get right, but when pieces start to fall together it feels really satisfying and like I've gotten something useful and good done, especially if I'm translating something without tons of existing translations to its name!

When asked whether the child Heinrich—the translanguaging protagonist of the story she is translating—is “confused” in his understanding or experience of the world, Carol-Anne lays the responsibility for Heinrich's supposed confusion at the feet of his mother, the German native speaker in exile, who—Carol-Anne seems to claim—misinforms Heinrich about the nature of languages as such. In the course of her comments, Carol-Anne identifies with Heinrich's position as a listener to the Chandos Letter, which is being read aloud to him in the course of the “Sound Valley” story. This alliance that Carol-Anne strikes with Heinrich is based on Carol-Anne's somewhat accusatory innuendo—that “almost every sentence” is at least a bit confusing; while she intends here to be reflecting on Heinrich's intratextual listening activity, her appraisal subtly slides one degree of reflexivity outward to index her own relationship with the “sentences” she is herself attempting to comprehend as a translator.

*Verwirrt- ja, glaube ich. Nur weil das Kind so eine verwirrende Mutter hat. Sie liest auf 'Englisch' aber es ist wirklich Deutsch [...] Diesen Brief, auch, ist total verwirrend! Francis Bacon, ein Kind namens Katharina, und ein Fisch? Ich meine, fast jeder Satz mindestens ein bisschen verwirrend ist.*

Confused—yes, I believe so. Just because the kid has such a confusing mother. She reads in ‘English’ but it is really German [...] This letter, also, is totally confusing! Francis Bacon, a kind named Katharina, and a fish? I mean, almost every sentence at least is a bit confusing.

By the fifth week of the semester, Carol-Anne's diminutive, “no big deal” approach to translating from the beginning of the semester has been replaced with a rather grand sense of achievement, indicated in her comments about the process, which contain the emphatic words “unbelievable,” “faster and faster,” a “totally extraordinary feeling.”

*Ich fühle viel besser beim übersetzen jetzt als zu Beginn des Semesters! Bevor, habe ich nur ein Paar Dinge übersetzt und ich wusste echt nicht, ob meine Übersetzungen gut waren. Aber jetzt kann ich Feedback bekommen und mit meine Klassenkameraden sprechen, wenn ich Hilfe brauche. Es ist unglaublich nützlich zu wissen, dass meine Übersetzungen ok sind, und dass ich nicht etwas furchtbar falsch getan haben, ohne es zu wissen. Als ich mehr übersetze, fühle ich jedes mal besser. Die*

*Übersetzung fließt schneller und schneller und manchmal habe ich dieses... total außergewöhnliches Gefühl, ich kann es nicht gut beschreiben, aber es fühlt wie die zwei Sprachen zusammen in meinen Kopf existieren, gleich in die selbe Zeit. Es ist ganz anders und wunderschön! Es fühlt nicht wie Arbeit, sondern nur Denken. Wunderschön.*

I feel a lot better translating than at the beginning of the semester! Before, I had only translated a few things, and I really didn't know if my translations were good. But now I can get feedback and speak to my classmates, when I need help. It is incredibly useful to know that my translations are ok, and that I haven't done something terribly wrong without knowing. As I translate more, I feel better each time. Translation flows faster and faster and sometimes I have this... Totally extraordinary feeling, I can't describe it well, but it feels like two languages are existing together in my head, together at the same time. It is so different and wonderful! It doesn't feel like work, just thinking. Wonderful.

On an analytical level, Carol-Anne finds in Heinrich's translingual experiences throughout the story a reassuring, underlying "oneness" and "connectedness" to culture and language across adult-constructed borders that allows for a "flowing and fluxing of ideas":

I think this section is one more little piece about unity and oneness. Both the oneness of the numerous languages the child speaks, and the oneness of culture and by extension the world [...] Flowing through the idea of the typewriter, 'number' becomes the next subject. Heinrich thinks about the Malaysian word for number, and how that word, 'nomor,' sounds like the English words 'no more.' This flowing and fluxing of ideas happens throughout the entire piece. Ideas flow into and through one another, and Heinrich expresses his ideas about what the world is. The overarching tone of these ideas are [sic] that the world, in one way or another, is one. This particular selection is another expression of the unity and connectedness of languages and cultures in the world. Heinrich connects words and cultures seamlessly, with no regard for 'conventional' sense.

### **Skyler: From "Probably in the Unconscious" to "Diverging a Bit"**

Carol-Anne's experiences as a foreign-language learner of German and as a translingual practitioner of "oneness" and "connectedness" comes into relief when we consider the parallel experiences of Skyler, who grew up bilingual. Born into an English-speaking American military family, he attended off-base German-language schools until high school. This being the case, Skyler reports noticing translation primarily "in unconsciousness," though she qualifies this with the word "*wohl*/probably," indicating her uncertainty about how the process of translating between the two languages actually transpires for her cognitively.

*In meinem Alltagsleben habe ich Übersetzungserfahrung im Unbewussten, wenn ich mit deutschen Freunden schreibe oder über Skype rede. Es ist für mich so geworden, dass ich nicht mehr aktiv darüber nachdenken muss, was etwas auf Deutsch bedeutet, sondern automatisch weiß was es ist. Also werde ich wohl im Unbewussten die Wörter übersetzen.*

In my everyday life I have translation experience unconsciously, when I write with German friends or speak by Skype. It has become so that I no longer have to think actively, what something means in German, but know automatically. So I probably translate the words in my unconscious.

This act of noticing and naming the unseen probability of actively translingual practices and procedures in her life—rather than imagining that these have somehow truly become “automatic”—helps Skyler then identify a frustration she encounters in her own everyday attempts at translingual representation. The emphatic “*einfach nicht*” (“just can’t”) recalls Carol-Anne’s frustration at not being able to differentiate idiomatic from literal speech.

*ich [verstehe] öfters genau [...] was der Autor oder die Autorin sagen will, und was die Wörter bedeuten, aber ich kann einfach nicht auf der jeweiligen Sprache (Englisch oder Deutsch) korrekt ausdrücken.*

I [understand] often exactly [...] what the author intends to say, and what the words mean, but I simply can’t express them in the respective language (English or German).

Nonetheless, translation is already for Skyler, in the first week of class, an experience that brings joy, pride, and feelings of accomplishment. Interestingly, she glosses “commanding two languages” as the ability to put two parties into communication with one another with no negative consequences.

*Die überwiegenden Gefühle, dass ich beim Übersetzen spüre, ist Stolz und Vollbringung. Es macht mich stolz zu wissen, dass ich so gut zwei Sprachen beherrsche, dass ich zwischen zwei Parteien (fast) problemlos vermitteln könnte.*

The predominating feelings that I sense while translating are pride and accomplishment. It makes me proud to know that I can command two languages so well that I can mediate between two parties (almost) without any problem.

This stance, of commanding two languages (nearly) perfectly, leads Skyler to identify in Heinrich’s disorderly translingual practices “something to be expected of a child.” Indeed, Heinrich is 5 years old in the story, but where Carol-Anne creates a kind of political alliance with Heinrich in solidarity against the untoward linguistic contortions of his mother, Skyler registers Heinrich’s behaviors as the temporary folly of youth:

*Die (Sinnes-)Wahrnehmungen des Kindes sind komplett miteinander verbunden; man könnte sogar sagen, sie sind miteinander verknüpft und fast nicht mehr zu unterscheiden [...] Das sind Vergleiche, die der Durchschnittsmensch meiner Meinung nach nicht so schnell machen würde, aber als Kind sind solche Assoziationen eher zu erwarten.*

The (sensory) perceptions of the child are completely connected to one another. One could even say they are tied up in one another and can no longer be differentiated [...] These are comparisons, that the average person would not make so quickly I think, but such associations are rather to be expected from a child.



Five weeks into the semester, Skyler still notes with regret her occasional inability to recreate in English an expression that she knows intuitively in German. Through a personal-development narrative, Skyler credits our class for helping her become more self-confident in such occasions. It is not that the class exercises are filling gaps in her skill set, but that the “frequency” of them is benefitting her emotionally as she comes to terms with what seems to be a long unidentified experience of untranslatability. She permits herself to entertain the idea that “diverging a bit” from precise transmission is a healthy, fun, and “better strategy” than feeling wholly responsible for “reproducing” one language in another on command.

*Ich habe mich schon immer relativ sicher gefühlt gegenüber meiner Fähigkeit als Übersetzerin. Allerdings gab es hin und wieder Ausdrücke oder Konstruktionen, bei denen es der Fall war, dass ich verstanden habe was sie bedeuten, aber leider nicht in der Lage war, diese auf Englisch, beziehungsweise Deutsch, wiederzugeben. Obwohl das manchmal immer noch der Fall ist, bin ich dank unserer häufigen Übersetzungsübungen viel selbstbewusster dass ich es schaffen kann, das zu vermitteln, was von mir gefragt wird. Ich gebe die Aktivität des Übersetzens viel lässiger an, was meiner Meinung nach eine gute Strategie ist. Es bringt nichts, sich von vorneherein Angst zu machen, dass man vielleicht etwas nicht weiß. So finde ich kann ich eine natürlichere Übersetzung bieten. Ich fühle mich zusätzlich sicherer, wenn ich Dinge interpretativ übersetze, beziehungsweise nicht literal oder zu sehr an den Text gebunden. Jetzt verstehe ich, dass man manchmal eine bessere Übersetzung findet wenn man ein wenig abweicht. Es macht daher viel mehr Spaß als im Gymnasium, weil da sehr auf Genauigkeit geachtet wurde, was der Wortwahl betraf.*

I've always felt relatively secure about my abilities as a translator. But there were expressions or constructions here and there where it was the case that I understood what they meant, but was unfortunately not in a position to recreate them in English or German. Although that is sometimes still the case, I am—thanks to our frequent translation exercises—much more self-confident that I can succeed at communicating what is asked of me. I approach the activity of translating a lot more calmly, which I think is a good strategy. It doesn't make sense to be afraid going in that one may not know something. So I find it can render a more natural translation. I additionally feel more secure, when I translate things interpretatively, that is, not literal or too tied to the text. Now I understand that one can find a better translation when one diverges a bit. It is a lot more fun than it was in high school where so much emphasis was placed on precision of word choice.

Finally, a few weeks later, Skyler develops this notion of “divergence from precise transmission” further; she uses her analysis of the Waterhouse text as an occasion to speculate on the ways that “languages can be useful to one another” and can offer individuals a sense of “cultural unification” with an “open perspective.” Interestingly, Skyler chooses the word “*Vereinigung*”—the political word for the Unification of the two Germanys—in the sense of a healing, or a putting-together-into-a-unity.

*Dass für dem Kind zwei Sprachen zu einer werden drückt aus, wie ambivalent die Sprache allgemein doch ist. Auf dieser Basis des Prinzips der Austauschbarkeit, der Gleichheit, und der Verwandtschaft der Sprachen Deutsch und Englisch beruht ganz 'Klangtal.' Die ganze Kurzgeschichte verkörpert meiner Meinung nach eine Vermischung der zwei: mit langen, komplizierten Sätzen spiegelt es die deutsche Grammatik wieder, und mit dem eher leichten Vokabular reflektiert es der englischen Ausdrucksweise. Im großen und ganzen ist die Philosophie, die hier vorhanden ist, die, dass verschiedene Sprachen sich*

*gegenseitig nützlich sein können, um für ein Individuum, in diesem Fall Heinrich, eine kulturelle Vereinigung und offene Perspektive zu verschaffen.*

That the two languages become one for the child expresses how ambivalent language actually is in general. The whole story of 'The Sound Valley' rests on this basis of exchangeability, of likeness, and relatedness of the German and English languages. The whole short story embodies I think a mix of the two: long, complicated sentences reflect the German grammar, and the easy vocabulary reflects the English means of expression. All in all, the philosophy at hand here is that various languages can be useful to one another, in creating for the individual a cultural unification and an open perspective.

### **Daniel: The Code We Absolutely Must Break**

Whereas the foreign-language learner Carol-Anne experiences a rapid transformation from diffidence to near ecstasy about translating, and Skyler, the English-German bilingual, notices and eases her own frustrations around transmitting precisely from language to language, Daniel's experience as a native bilingual of Spanish and English, growing up on the U.S.-Mexico border, takes us in a third direction vis-à-vis translanguaging practice. When asked at the outset of the semester where he "sees" translation in his everyday life, he responds through a negative self-characterization as someone who has never done any "professional" translating. Note that "professional" was not part of the prompt. Daniel uses this caveat as an opening to describe his extensive intrafamilial experiences translating and interpreting between Spanish and English:

*Etwas Professionelles habe ich noch nie übersetzt. Gerne würde ich aber vieles übersetzen. Vor ungefähr 3 Jahren als ich Mitglieder eines Chores von einer Kirche war, habe ich ein Lied auf Deutsch ins Spanisch gerne übersetzt. Ganz gerne würde ich das nochmal machen. Auch würde ich gerne Filme, die mir sehr gefallen übersetzen für Freunde und Familie von Deutsch ins Spanische und von Spanisch ins Deutsche damit sie die gleiche Freude beim Anschauen wie ich haben.*

I've never translated anything professional. I would however like to translate a lot of things. About three years ago when I was a member of a church choir, I was happy to translate a song in German into Spanish. I would very much like to do that again. I would also like to translate films I like a lot for family and friends from German into Spanish and Spanish into German so that they have the same pleasure when watching as I do.

Daniel reports eagerness to use his competence in German as a third language to provide a kind of aesthetic/affective service for his friends. He wishes for them to have the same "pleasure" in watching German films and listening to German songs as he does. When describing the barriers to this goal, Daniel code-switches from German into Spanish. In the first, German sentence in his comments below, he describes this problem as "finding the exact words." When Daniel switches in his second sentence to Spanish, he repositions, focusing on the task of finding "the most adequate words so that the person receiving the translation might understand in the best way possible." There is of course a world of difference between his gloss in German and his revision in Spanish: the first is technical and

correctness-based, while the latter is dialogical and framed around adequate hospitality and dialogicality:

*Ich glaube, die häufigste Probleme und Schwierigkeiten beim Übersetzen sind die genauen Worte zu finden. Problemas pueden ser también encontrar las palabras más adecuadas para que la persona recibiendo la traducción pueda entender de la mejor manera posible.*

I believe the most frequent problems and difficulties when translating are finding the exact words. Problems can also be finding the most adequate words so that the person receiving the translation can understand in the best way possible.

When responding to the question about “emotions while translating,” Daniel’s response diverges in a similar way. He notes, in the first, Spanish sentence, that emotions and sentiments when “translating for a person” are very important. This is presented as a statement of fact and, presumably, of personal experience. Yet Daniel then undercuts this fact and experience, stating that he believes emotions ought not be involved. Accordingly, he code-switches into German (already established above as the symbolic space for exactness, in contrast to Spanish, which communicates hospitality and dialogicality.) In the second, German sentence, Daniel waxes emphatic with the discourse marker “*gar keine*” (“absolutely no”) in explaining that emotions should not be involved in translating.

*Emociones y sentimientos al traducir para una persona son muy importante aunque yo creo que no deberían de ser. Gefühle sollten gar keine Rolle spielen, da man nur die Bedeutung übermitteln soll und nicht mehr.*

Emotions and feelings while translating for a person are very important although I believe that they shouldn’t be. Feelings shouldn’t play any role whatsoever, because one should transmit the meaning and nothing more.

Three weeks into the semester, Daniel appraises the translingual protagonist Heinrich’s experience not through solidarity (as Carol-Anne does), nor through a narrative of child development (as Skyler does), but through a personal anecdote that shares in the experience of the “beauty of confusion” across languages. For Daniel, confusion is not an analytical or developmental problem to be overcome, but a quotidian social resource to be exploited among friends for the purpose of joy and leisure:

*Ich werde an eine persönliche und witzige Anekdote, die in diesem Fall als gutes Beispiel passt, erinnert, als ich mal mit meinem Bruder Schach gespielt habe. Wir haben mit diesem Wortspiel gespielt, als ich ihm: ‚Was‘ sagte in Sinne von: ‚du bist dran,‘ aber man hört: ‚was?‘ genau so wie die Frage im Deutschen und am Ende würde er fragen: ‚Sagt du mir „was“? Oder „was“?‘ Und obwohl, es kein Deutsch spricht kennt er die Bedeutung von: ‚was?‘ im Spanischen. Das ist das Wortspiel und die Schönheit der Verwirrung, man hat mit zwei oder mehr Sprachen.*

I will recall a funny, personal anecdote that fits here as a good example, from when I once played chess with my brother. We played with wordplay, when I told him ‘*vas*’ (‘you’re going’) in the sense of ‘It’s your turn,’ but one hears ‘*was?*’ (‘what?’) just like the question in German, and ultimately he would ask me ‘Are you saying to me “*was*” or “*vas*”?’ And although he doesn’t speak German he knew the meaning of ‘*was*’ in Spanish.

That is the wordplay and the pleasure of confusion, when one has two or more languages.

By the third week of class, as we can see, Daniel has come to cleave away from the task of dutifully reflecting on the experience of translating (the official focus of attention for the class) and has turned to narrating his own translingual experiences, a parabolic way to fulfill perceived expectations around assigned homework questions. By week five, Daniel appears to have become emboldened in this strategy, as he does not answer the prompt regarding his confidence as a translator now compared to at the beginning of the semester. Instead, Daniel hands in his Spanish-language translation of the story instead, essentially performing the self-confidence that Carol-Anne and Skyler obediently describe in reflective prose. In response to the self-confidence question, Daniel translates a section of the Waterhouse story that speaks of the way objects around Heinrich—fruit stands, houses, smells—seem to “liken” one another:

*En aquel entonces el niño se inventó un título de cuento de hadas y lo repetía en voz alta antes de quedarse dormido una y otra vez: El mismo material de Malasia. Ésas eran palabras para dormir, en la obscuridad. Por las noches el niño le decía a su papá: dímelo otra vez, y así se alejaban de las diferencias hacia los sueños. Pero percibir también era una forma de dormir, las cosas eran iguales, los puestos a lo largo de las calles se parecían, las fruterías olían y brillaban igual, los olores dulces y penetrantes que salían de los puestos eran idénticos.*

In those days the child composed a fairytale title for himself and recited it over and over, again and again before going to sleep. The same material as in Malaysia. They were words for going to sleep by, in the darkness. On many evenings the child said to his father: Tell the words to me, and these words guided him away from differentiations and into sleep. But perceiving was also a form of sleep: the things were alike, the booths along the street resembled one another, the varieties of fruit wafted and shone and resembled one another, the spicy and sweet odors drifted out of the snack stalls resembled one another. (Waterhouse, 2014, p. 3)

By week seven, Daniel has developed a full-throated theory of the purpose of adulthood and higher education: “breaking the code” of the customs one receives in childhood. It is a code that we, in Daniel’s words, “absolutely must break, in order to find out what kind of a person we are.”

*All die Bildung, Schulbildung und Erziehung entwickelt sich und bekommt lebendig und körperlich und verwandelt sich in die Person, die wir als Erwachsene sind. Das ist auf jeden Fall der Code, den wir unbedingt brechen müssen, um herauszufinden, was für eine Person wir sind, und ob all das während unserer Kindheit und Jugendzeit daheim, in der Schule, und mit den Freunden sich gelohnt hat oder nicht.*

All of the education, schooling, and learning develops and comes alive and bodily and transforms into the person that we are as adults. That is definitely the code that we must break in order to find out what kind of person we are, and if all of that during our childhood and youth at home, in school and with friends was worth it or not.

## Discussion

Owing to Carol-Anne, Skyler, and Daniel's divergent prior experiences with German specifically and with multilingualism more broadly, translanguaging awareness means something different to each of them. Carol-Anne initially perceives the challenge of translation as tightly tethered to her identity as a foreign language speaker of German and cites idiomaticity and non-literal meanings as difficulties she expects to encounter. As an L2 learner, Carol-Anne came to the class well-acquainted with the ways in which languages design meanings differently; however, the opportunity to engage in reflective translation enables her to experience the fluidity of translanguaging seemingly for the first time. Skyler provides a contrast to Carol-Anne in that the experience of moving between languages is familiar to her from her own bilingual childhood, and yet, while she criticizes this translanguaging agility/ability in Heinrich as a form of bilingual immaturity, she internalizes it as an obstacle to overcome as a heritage language learner. For Skyler, an acceptance of *incompetence*, of imprecision, awards a newfound sense of potential reconciliation between the multiple languages involved in a moment of translation or other translanguaging practice. This allows her to begin to perceive being a speaker of multiple languages as something other than what Heller (1999) has described as "parallel monolingualism," bilingualism in which "each variety must conform to certain prescriptive norms" (p. 271). Finally, Daniel, who by his own account lives in translation as a bilingual speaker in a bilingual social ecology, discovers a third form of translanguaging through the practice of and reflection on translating within a third language. In his final reflections, Daniel posits an educational objective for foreign language teaching, which departs even more from a strictly competence-oriented model than Skyler's. For Daniel, the promise of translation resides not in the momentary process or the resulting product, but in the perpetual movement between languages that it affords. This echoes in some sense one of Heinrich's final observations in Waterhouse's text, when in answer to his mother's question of when he is happy, Heinrich responds, "*Ich bin glücklich, wenn ich raten muss*" ("I'm happy when I have to guess"; see also Warner & Gramling, 2014), except that Daniel treats this not only as a source of joy, but as an integral objective for higher education.

In spite of the different shapes that translanguaging took in the reflections of these three students, there are also some striking commonalities. When welcomed to cycle through their knee-jerk presumptions about translating and translanguaging practice through reflection and practical application, the three students in this study opted for an ethics of uncertainty rather than an aura of occupational anxiety, a working principle of joy and rediscovery rather than frustration and the urge to minimize losses. In short, they were able to envision a role for themselves as translanguagers, in an institutional context in which the primary position most available to them was that of language learners, with a host of *communicative problems, difficulties* to be overcome (see also Firth & Wagner, 1997). From the purview of their positions as second, third, or heritage language learners, they were experimenting with the interplay between translanguaging competence and moments of translanguaging *incompetence*, and the relative roles available to them in mediating between languages. While translanguaging competence as a concept seems to prioritize the ability to get things done in ways that are self-evident within a discourse of crisis and deficit, translanguaging practice variously involves precarious epistemologies of artful guessing, privileged moments of peripherality, and pleasurable problems with purposes other than being overcome that are all too often sidelined in foreign language curricula (see also Warner & Gramling, 2014).

## IMPLICATIONS: ENVISIONING TRANSLINGUAL FUTURES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CURRICULA

While these experiences were certainly individual in important ways, as we have highlighted through the case study methods, we believe they encourage us to consider foreign language curricula as something more than the victim of or salvation from a language crisis. Positioned in this course as a “language always in translation” (Pennycook, 2008), German languaging became a way of exploring the practical and affective potential of incompetence, as participants also began to define translanguaging in their own terms. While ever fewer students may wish to pursue advanced degrees in the foreign language humanities, the learner reflections analyzed in this study suggest alternatives to the standard service department model, in which language curricula are keyed toward imagined occupational futures of learners. While both of these frameworks anticipate a future for the students as *professional language users*—either in academic trajectories in language-related fields or in careers in which translation and interpretation play a central role—, we might instead envision learners as future *languaging professionals*. “Languagers” as described by Alison Phipps and Mike Gonzalez in an interview from 2005 “are those people...who engage actively with the world, and for whom language learning is a way of embarking on the risky business of stepping out of one’s habitual ways of speaking and acting in order to engage with others whose modes of speech and action are other.” (p. 295). The three case studies here underscore that those “habitual ways of speaking” are not only those ascribed to particular linguistic or cultural backgrounds, but to learners’ previous experiences and beliefs about multilingualism in general and their relationships with the instructed and other languages more specifically.

In more concrete terms, curricula designed to foster languaging professionals might involve the integration of deliberate translation in some moments, as this pilot study did, but would more importantly entail translanguaging activities that depart from the model of the task. Whereas some existing research on translanguaging and pedagogy, in particular that of Creese and Blackledge (2010a, 2010b), assumes a context in which translanguaging is the vernacular norm with which students are already comfortable, in the case of adult foreign language education, the classroom often represents the most accessible site of translanguaging. While communicative and literacy-based tasks are pedagogical useful as a means of practicing and assessing learners’ ability to use a language or languages for specific purposes in imagined future scenarios, this study has shown that less goal-oriented reflective practice can be a means of “engaging actively with a world” that is unpredictable, unanticipatable, and even risky, rather than tidily monolingual and organized by clearly identifiable social tasks. It does not require much interpretive imagination to assume that the experience of reveling in translanguaging competence and incompetence in tandem, translating together and in dialogue the protagonist Heinrich, enabled these three students to rediscover something of the affect—the pleasure, puzzlement, and play—that drew them, like many other students, to study German, this *Abersprache*, in the first place. And yet, these are rarely the principles around which foreign language curricula are designed.

### CODA

Through the act of translating and—perhaps more importantly—through the process of reimagining themselves as not only L2 learners, but as translators, the students in this study

were not merely encountering *prima facie* moments of social or societal crisis, as they may have done fifteen years prior. Rather, they were designing ways to thrive and dismantle fear while surrounded by discourses of crisis and insecurity that have been handed down to them. At the same time as they were translating Waterhouse's text, they were translating themselves into multilingual subjects. While the collective translation of the prose poem "The Sound Valley" was published with Waterhouse's blessing in a peer-reviewed academic journal in 2014—with most of the class opting to be named as co-authors—it is important to note that a second translation was also completed by the translation agency that named itself *Los Thunderbirds*, of which Daniel was a founding member. This agency chose to translate the text into Chicana Spanish—a language for which peer-reviewed journals and editorial support are regrettably less numerous and forthcoming. Knowing this, *Los Thunderbirds* nonetheless collaboratively tasked themselves with producing "El Valle de los sonidos," a Chicana Spanish translation of a multilingual German prose poem, a translanguaging utterance signaling an emergent futurity among young languaging professionals for which we have few available conceptual paradigms at present.

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