

Traveling Literacies: Writing Among Languages and Locations

By

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Abstract

This dissertation uses an empirical, qualitative approach to multilingual writing to capture the lived experience of writing across more than one language and location in the world. The study uses grounded theory methodology, drawing on in-depth interviews to analyze the experiences of 25 multilingual immigrant women who have moved across geographic locations, but also move across multiple languages and literacies as a matter of everyday practice. The complex diversity of this group of writers—students, nurses, teachers, stay-at-home moms, from 17 countries, collectively speaking 22 languages—guides a qualitative analysis not of a specific cultural community or individual language, but of the phenomenon of multilingual writing itself. Tracing the movement of immigrants and their writing practices shows how literate movement—multilingualism—interacts with social and physical movement—migration and its social effects. This explicit mobile analysis reveals 1) literate practices moving against social structures, 2) globalizing social structures moving in on practices, and 3) destabilized literate resources and repertoires. As the accounts that fill these chapters show, literacy practices are indeed traveling with writers, and multilingual immigrants are propelled forward or held back by their writing practices in deeply complex ways.

The dissertation's chapters foreground different elements of traveling literacies, including social conditions, literacy practices, and resources and repertoires. Analysis focuses on the interrelation of social and literate mobility and the instability of traveling literacies, showing how the value and effects of writers' literate practices shift as they travel, becoming redefined by the social, political, educational, and institutional contexts they meet along the way. Particular attention is paid to the movement of one literacy practice, letter writing, which by definition

produces mobile text. Letter writing illuminates how powerful transnational institutional forces push writing around and away from individuals, compelling them to send their writing to and from in order to satisfy the push and pull of international interests. Further analysis focuses on mobile resources and repertoires, showing what these resources look like as literacy practices and how writers create, adapt, and act with these resources as they travel. This analysis demonstrates that literacy practices on the move create rhetorical attunement—an ear for, or a tuning toward, difference and multiplicity. Multilingual writers aren't aware of this quality *a priori*, but come to know—become rhetorically attuned—across a lifetime of communicating across difference.

Throughout the dissertation, multilingual writers' literacy and language experiences—journaling, texting, dictionary-reading, speech-making, essay-writing, online chatting, note-taking and making—all prove to be uneven activities, the social and political value of which is not secure or guaranteed, but is highly dependent on time, place, and condition. Writers in this study do not write from a static repertoire of skills, but instead create and adapt literate resources in motion, traveling with highly charged experiences, values, and beliefs that influence the ways in which they are or are not able to call on their literate resources as they travel across languages and locations. Specifically, the dissertation brings into sharp relief the social conditions and constraints under globalization; the vast, specific, contradictory, and fragile components of a literate repertoire; the production of literate resources from practice; the spectrum of intentionality of resource use, from accidental to purposeful; and the perceptions gained by practicing literate multiplicity as a lived, taken-for-granted norm.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: How Mobility Loosens and Loses Language

In the late 1990s, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai said, “It is now widely conceded that human motion is definitive of social life more often than it is exceptional in our contemporary world” (191). He and scholars from various disciplines say changes in work, national policies, “mobile capital, mobile production and distribution, mobile populations, and mobile cultures” have created, in contemporary times, “a perpetual motion machine” (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, and Qin-Hilliard 3; Appadurai 191). Suarez-Orozco and others claim that globalization itself is a phenomenon that is “first and foremost...about movement,” creating the appearance in global and local contexts that “all the world is on the move” (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, and Qin-Hilliard 3; Sheller and Urry; Ohnmacht, Maksim, and Bergman; Bauman). These claims are presented by their authors as paradigm-shifting, characterizing the last three decades as a full-scale release into constant and ongoing movement.

Meanwhile, in writing and rhetoric studies, linguistic and rhetorical multiplicity recently has been depicted as a matter of movement: Suresh Canagarajah suggests we think of multilingual writers as “shuttling” between their discursive and rhetorical resources as they write (“Toward”); Ilene Crawford has begun “theorizing rhetoric as the study and practice of movement, rather than the study and practice of how language achieves its effects” in order to treat “both roots and routes as complex compositions of physical, emotional, and intellectual movement” (76); Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur propose a “translingual” approach to writing, that “takes the variety, fluidity, intermingling, and changeability of languages” as an assumed norm (301); Wendy Hesford proposes a “transnational feminist rhetorical analytic [that]

highlights the discourses of mobility in unique ways” enabling us ask “who/what moves or travels across borders and who/what doesn’t and why” (70). Applied linguistics, and especially second language writing, have long been defined by their concern for communicative movement between languages, particularly in studies of transfer, acquisition, and code-switching (Auer; Cenoz and Gorter; Cummins; Heller *Codeswitching*; Jarvis and Pavlenko), while sociolinguist Jan Blommaert has recently called for a “sociolinguistics of mobility” that attempts to understand “not language-in-place but language-in-motion” (5).

This dissertation starts with the idea that these echoes of movement are not coincidental, but that social experiences of movement are related to literate ones.¹ As movement has quietly appeared at the fore of studies of multiplicity and difference, this study looks for the interrelation of social and literate mobilities, asking what the consequences are for analyzing language as a mobile phenomenon. I use mobility to frame an analysis that specifically traces the movement of immigrants and their writing practices, treating literate mobility as a phenomenon itself to be studied. As migration studies scholar Paul Carter proposes, movement can be understood “not as an awkward interval between fixed points of departure and arrival, but as a mode of being in the world” (qtd. in Chambers 42). Centering movement in this way, making it the locus of analysis rather than a space excised in pursuit of this/that comparison, opens up to analysis the activity that happens in the middles—in-between countries, in-between rhetorical traditions—and disturbs fixed constructs for comparison, such as one language to another. In the context of this study, a mobile analysis especially complicates how literate movement—multilingualism — interacts with social and physical movement—migration and its social effects. To this end, this study adopts an explicit mobile analytic in order to 1) analyze literate practices moving against

¹ By “literate,” I don’t mean the opposite of “illiterate” or simply the ability to read and write. I use “literate” throughout this study as an umbrella term to mean the written communicative activities that involve language: literacy practices, writing practices, and activities rhetorical, discursive, and linguistic.

social structures, 2) analyze globalizing social structures moving in on practices, and 3) unsettle fixed depictions of language and literate resources and repertoires.

This mobile framework was honed through 25 qualitative life history interviews I conducted with multilingual immigrant women over the course of a year.² These are individuals who have moved across geographic locations, but who also move across multiple languages and literacies as a matter of everyday practice. In other words, their everyday literate movements are interrelated with their experience of life-altering geographic mobility. They have much at stake when it comes to the relationship between literate and social mobility. In interviews, these writers described their lived experience writing their way across languages and geographical locations, recalling literacy memories, describing current literacy practices, and giving opinions about communicating as a multilingual individual. As the rich accounts that fill these chapters show, literacy practices are indeed traveling, and multilingual immigrants are propelled forward or held back by their writing practices in deeply complex ways.

To engage a mobile analysis in this way means relying on mobility, as a construct, to do some analytic work. In order to use this concept with care, this introduction critically examines ideas of mobility in migration studies, sociology, anthropology, rhetoric, linguistics, and literacy studies. Looking at mobility across these fields shows similarly evoked mobile metaphors and concepts, as well as competing claims for the potential of mobility to produce rhetorical, linguistic, or social change. Throughout this review I weigh the relative merits of using a mobile analysis, and the relative usefulness of the terms that tend to govern talk of mobility—multilingualism, transnationalism, globalization. Ultimately, this chapter shows that while an adoption of *trans* prefixes and metaphors in writing and rhetoric studies mirrors the impulse for trans-like elements in other fields—fluidity, agency, boundary-crossing—much writing research

² See chapter 2 for a full description of this design.

has adopted these mobile characteristics without attending to the fixity that has been recognized elsewhere. With some exceptions, language, literacy, writing, and rhetoric have not fully accounted for the immobility that mobility brings along. This dissertation sets out to do both—to show how multilingual immigrants do, indeed, travel with their language and literacy practices, calling on their literate repertoires to loosen the boundaries of language, but also to show how global and social forces that have a fixing effect, often times keeping immigrants and their multilingual repertoires in place.

Mobility, Migration, and “Globaloney”

If “all the world is on the move,” and “a perpetual motion machine” governs the production and distribution of capital and ideas under globalization, it might also be assumed that literacy and language practices are circulating of their own volition. Such mobile characterizations of our current moment seem to depict an atmosphere of people, ideas, and “happy hybridities” traveling freely as a natural outcome of the breakdown of boundaries (Lavie and Swedenburg 15). But as we might suspect, mobile writers and their literate practices are very much subject to the same powerful social forces that have brought about conditions of mobility. Many of these forces are results of transnationalism and globalization—two phenomena with their own burgeoning literatures, neither of which has produced fully agreed upon definitions, but both of which show how each phenomenon plays a role in mediating literate activity on the move.

Globalization generally accounts for the worldwide interconnection of the global and the local, wherein phenomena from the other side of the world have consequences in local contexts (Held et al.; Kearney; Levitt). Under conditions of globalization, economic and technological forces have created a “widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness,” shaping a world which, itself, has become “a shared social space” (Held et al. 2).

Transnationalism is understood as a set of processes “by which immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlements” —a complex of migrant activities that cross national borders, combine national identities, or acknowledge a “diminished significance of national boundaries” (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc; Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 49). Transnational actors are characterized as moving “freely back and forth across international borders and between different cultures and social systems,” a lens often adopted in opposition to the “macroapproach” of globalization which can portray migrants “not as active agents but as passive reactors manipulated by the world capitalist system” (Brettell and Hollifield 104). In this way, these terms are often set in opposition to one another. For many, globalization is a phenomenon of global interconnectivity while transnationalism characterizes activities carried out across contexts and borders, whether “from below” with individuals or “from above” with political, military, and economic organizations (Smith and Guarnizo). Some scholars would like even further distinctions between the two so that each concept does not become “a muddle” (Portes 876).³ But no matter their terminological nuance, the crossborder practices and activities of migrants and immigrants are always mediated by a global system of affordances and constraints.

Indeed, this dissertation understands globalization and transnationalism to be unavoidably connected. The analysis of everyday immigrant activities throughout the study show that crossborder practices and global interconnectedness are naturally intertwined and mutually constitutive. Some scholars understand transnational processes to be one aspect of the phenomenon of globalization or an active manifestation of it—a set of practices to be understood

³ For example, sociologist Alejandro Portes has detailed transnational activity as carried out by “international” actors as embassies and diplomats carrying out activities such as diplomatic missions and export drives, “multinational” actors as the UN and missionary organizations that monitor global life or global corporations, and “transnational” actors as human rights NGOs, grassroots charities, and immigrants who carry out export/import enterprises, hometown civic associations, and charity work (877).

as always set in a context *of* globalization (Schiller, Basch, and Blanc; Heisler; Levitt). Thus, transnationalism and globalization are not terms in opposition or terms describing wholly separate processes, since one system is bound up in the other. If we might make any distinction it could be that transnationalism indicates concrete activity while globalization indicates a fuzzier force. But this dissertation follows an analytic line of interrelation, avoiding a neat bifurcation of micro-level transnationalism and macro-level globalization, since both terms are salient on micro and macro levels. Instead, the dissertation traces the mobility of immigrants' practices *across* linguistic and geographic borders and *against* transnational and global forces. In other words, this study is grounded in the tension of mobility: each chapter analyzes micro-level mobile practice enabled by both transnationalism and globalization all the while attending to the macro-tendencies of both phenomena to disable individual practice.

It is important to note that both terms, as well as resultant proclamations about mobility, have received the ire of many scholars, particularly historians. Critics of what sociologist Michael Mann calls "globaloney" say such characterizations of the fluid freedom of new and increasing human movement are exaggerated and historically naïve, the worst kind of "theory for theory's sake" (Favell 393; Manderscheid). Particularly suspect are claims that globalized mobility creates new kinds of "unrestrained" freedoms and revolutions: that technologies of globalization "hold the promise of freeing people from the tyranny of space and time," that "there is nothing before movement...no stasis, only processes of creation and transformation," or that a "revolution in the foundations of nationalism" is "carried in the repertoires of increasingly mobile populations" and is "increasingly unrestrained by ideas of spatial boundary and territorial sovereignty" (Suarez-Orozco 7; Urry 33; Appadurai 161).

Sociologist Adrian Favell responds to such hyperbole by noting that the historical long view shows how migration and mobility, “as a form of human experience,” are both not new and “still the exception in the modern world” (392). He points to claims that late nineteenth century global migration was more extensive than late twentieth, and to John Torpey’s conclusions that “the true epoch defining event” is not twentieth century globalization, but rather the invention of the passport and the resultant national regulation of the formerly “extraordinarily free-moving world” (390, 394). Other scholars note that diasporic networks have been mobile around the world for quite some time, maintaining connection through mobile communication like letters and mobile economies like remittances (Clifford; Portes and Rumbaut; Schiller, Basch, and Blanc). Thus, a widened historical context reveals “the nomadism and the non-national identities of people in our ‘global’ age” to be perhaps “less novel, albeit qualitatively different,” as has been claimed in some of the literature (Favell 394). Some scholars even argue a historical context importantly illuminates the long-occurring activity of transnational communication from behind the national narratives that obscured them in service of assimilation (Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 51).

However, scholars admit that even given the historical precedent of migration and mobility, a qualitative shift in global movement is taking place in which the circulation of people and products are “of a different order”: restructured global capital and technological change have made transnational linkages more dense, multi-stranded, bureaucratized, and of a higher frequency and velocity (Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 52; Brettell; Heisler; Held et al.). Held et al. list a number of “unprecedented phenomena” brought about by globalization, including the institutionalization of worldwide organizational infrastructures and the reflexivity that comes with globalization being named: a worldwide “consciousness of global interconnectedness” and

“self-conscious...visions of world order” (430). Papastergiadis uses a Marxist model to narrate global shifts in mobility, explaining that nineteenth-century colonial and trade circuits connected dispersed localities; twentieth-century capitalism organized markets “within the boundaries of a national economy” and twentieth-century capital circulated “with greater velocity and with less commitment to any given national economy” (43). Importantly, he likens contemporary “turbulent” migration patterns to what he characterizes as equally disorganized, fragmented, flexible, and deregulated contemporary flows of production and consumption. In other words, though mobility, as understood in contemporary models of globalization and transnationalism, is not entirely new, its form and quality are different.

Recent census data and reports on global migration place these shifts in an important context, both confirming that current patterns of migration are qualitatively different and that the bureaucratic/organizational quality of contemporary mobility is reflected in the backgrounds of newer immigrants to the U.S. While the recession at the end of the last decade “slowed migration worldwide and abruptly curtailed foreign arrivals to the United States,” the country is paradoxically experiencing “historically high levels” of immigration, with 38.5 million immigrants in the U.S. in 2009, and “extraordinary growth” in its foreign-born population (Hall 2, 17). The percentage of the U.S. population that is foreign-born, 12.5%, is nearing percentages that occurred during the industrial era (Hall 2). In other words, while immigration, by percentage of the total U.S. population, was higher in the late nineteenth century, the total number of immigrants is rising to unprecedented levels. Further, the background of the immigrant population in the U.S. is changing. It seems the “Great Recession” of 2008 was not indiscriminate: demand for middle and low-skilled employment fell away, while high-skilled

“preferences” remained steady.⁴ This shift appears to be historically distinct in that immigrants in the U.S. who have a bachelor’s degree now outnumber those without a high school diploma, and almost half of those with BAs are over-qualified for their jobs (Hall 1-2). This is not to say that the U.S. is experiencing a wholesale shift away from low-skilled immigration, but that the high-skilled population is becoming more predominant, (contradicting the public discourse and media focus around low-skilled, undocumented, primarily Latin American immigrants), just as an economic squeeze is making low-skilled immigration more transient and temporary (Hall 22). It is important to consider this shift toward higher skills in the context of globalization’s penchant for increasingly dense and quick organizational and bureaucratic infrastructure, and it certainly begs the question of which migrants are equipped to navigate these skill-intensive bureaucracies and with what literate practices they do so.

So perhaps without hyperbole, we can admit that both globalization and transnationalism and resulting depictions of mobility are attending to a “qualitative” change in global movement. This is a change to be taken seriously in this dissertation since its participants all immigrated to the U.S. within the last decade. But is, indeed, all the world on the move? Are the immigrants counted in the census above arriving in the U.S. with fully mobile literate repertoires? The next section proposes that while contemporary mobility certainly enables the breaking down of boundaries and the opening up of fluidities, mobility also includes elements of blockage that have yet to be fully explored.

⁴ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) gives the following overall picture of the U.S.: from 2007-2009, estimates of undocumented immigrants fell from 11.8 million to 10.8 million, numbers of refugees admitted grew but were below quota level, employment-based permanent and temporary visa certifications fell, and non-agriculture temporary workers fell short of the quota cap. Meanwhile, visas granted for employment-based preferences (high-skilled workers) stayed steady and foreign students and exchange visitor visas increased, exceeding the quota cap, with a 64% increase in Chinese nationals.

The Complexity of Mobility

Contemporary mobility is marked by paradox. As global activities and practices become more fluid, national boundaries tighten. The transnational flow of people and practices results in “more and more barriers [being] constructed to screen movement...regulated by an ever-tightening matrix of economic, political, sexual, and cultural factors” (Papastergiadis 52). As capital circulates more freely, laborers experience more restrictions. Thus an ever-more-mobile world paradoxically causes an “ideological hardening of social boundaries” (Jacquemet 263) and a “heightening [of the] nation-state building processes” (Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 59). Territories and nation-states have not “dissolved into universal borderlessness” because “states are in the business of regulating the movement of people, internally and internationally,” and that business remains lucrative (Manderscheid 29, Suarez-Orozco 11). This global “schizophrenia” (Beck)—the simultaneous fluidity and fixity of global movement—is partly due to the complexity of mobility itself.⁵

Contemporary understandings of migration have been depicted as fluid, on-going, and ever-loosening, often described in terms preceded by “trans” to indicate movement “across” borders and boundaries. Newer forms of migration are said to be less regulated by borders and more subject to the active re-making of migrants themselves. The “new immigration” (Suarez-Orozco), “new migration studies” (Friedman), and “new transnationalism” (Brettell) are all characterized by fluid “on-goingness” or continued simultaneity “in more than one society” (Schiller, Basch, Blanc 48). This focus on fluidity and mobility is informed by Arjun

⁵ Scholars in critical theory and cultural studies have examined how space and territory shapes subjectivities and identities, variously deeming them nomads (Cronin, Deleuze and Guattari), travelers (Cronin, Clifford), tourists (Bauman), flaneurs (Baudelaire, Benjamin), wanderers, vagabonds, migrants, gypsies. Each of these subjects has come to represent “a generalized poetics of displacement,” dislocation, or dispersion, (Jacquemet following Deleuze and Guattari). While many of these concepts have become “emblematic of postmodernity” in that they disperse a unified subject as they dislocate the national (Cronin), they remain theoretical or discursive concepts, few of which fully connect the material physicality of movement with mobile language practices.

Appadurai's earlier theories of "scapes"—ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes, which afford an analysis of "the fluid, irregular shapes" of the global cultural landscape (33).⁶ For example, Suarez-Orozco calls the new immigration "an uninterrupted 'flow' rather than neatly delineated 'waves' typical of the earlier European transatlantic immigration" (73). He says this "ongoing, uninterrupted migratory" movement replenishes social and cultural practices previously "lost to assimilation" (73). Similarly, Papastergiadis claims that "contemporary migration has no single origin and no simple end," but rather is "an ongoing process" with "departures and returns [that] are rarely, if ever, final" (4). Papastergiadis and others reject a focus on origins and ends found in push/pull models of migration—the pull of the economic opportunity elsewhere and the push of unsustainable economic realities—as unable to "capture the dynamic on-goingness of mobile identities in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century" (Friedman 9). Thus, the geographic mobility of people has come to be understood not as not uni-directional or linear, as was previously the dominant model of assimilation, but as turbulent, fluid, and circulating with multi-polar, multidirectional, and reversible trajectories (Held et al.; Papastergiadis; Stroud and Mpendukana; Warriner).

However, scholars in sociology and cultural studies also argue that mobility, specifically geographic, social, and economic mobility, contains intrinsic elements of immobility as well—fixity within fluid movements, boundaries always blocking the movement of some. This critical analysis of movement creates variable degrees of mobility (Massey; Uitermark; Bauman), showing that, for example, the mobility of people is not the same as the mobility of capital

⁶ Anthropologists also have argued that communities themselves, not researchers, have come to "imagine" themselves into a unified whole through their literate practices: "large numbers of people, no longer rooted in a single place, go to great lengths to revitalize, reconstruct, or reinvent" their traditions across national borders (Schiller, Basch, and Blanc 52, also Anderson, Appadurai).

(Beck) and that chosen movement is vastly different than forced movement (Bauman). Both distinctions are instructive in hedging romantic visions of movement. As is supported by the accounts of multilingual immigrant writers throughout this dissertation, forces of mobility and immobility are inextricable, defining and creating each other, and often producing inequality among the people, products, ideas, and capital attempting to circulate.

For example, sociologist Ulrich Beck displays these degrees of mobility by designating differentiated markets for movement. He points out that while borders are “wide open to [financial] capital, . . . workers who wish to utilize their labour and educational capital in other countries” are labeled or “criminalized” as migrants, immigrants, or refugees (188). In fact, Beck calls the difference between migration—the movement of workers—and mobility—the movement of capital—racist, and claims that this is a carefully maintained “asymmetry between the mobility of capital and the immobility of labour” by powerful global forces and market economies that open up the free flow of financial capital while shutting down territorial movement (189). Slovakian English users in Prendergast’s ethnography describe living the experience of these shifting markets: the English language, “supposedly the gold of the information economy,” did not grant them the social mobility they expected because the market for English changed as the EU changed (131). Slovakian English was not marketable outside of Slovakia, and thus was not a form of mobile capital, rendering these English users as simply Slovakian workers outside of Slovakia, “stuck” as they attempted to move (131).

These degrees of mobility, as designated by *who* is allowed to move with *which* skills *where* in the world, are complicated by the notion of choice—who is choosing to move and who is not. According to many of these scholars, having the choice to move or stay put is, itself, a form of power, an unforced movement that is economically and culturally advantageous (Urry;

Manderscheid; Bauman). This “freedom to choose where to be” is experienced, according to sociologist Bauman, pleurably by “tourists” who experience mobility from “high up,” traveling as they please to a destination of their choosing, and less pleurably by “vagabonds” have no such choice, experiencing forced movement from “low down” to destinations not always of their choosing (86-87). Put bluntly: “tourists move because they find the world within their (global) reach irresistibly *attractive*—the vagabonds move because they find the world within their (local) reach unbearably *inhospitable*” (Bauman 92-93, original emphasis). Bauman and others are mapping the divergence, stratification, and polarization described by the globalization scholars above onto the notion of mobility, finding that the term indicates simultaneous fluidity and fixity.

The Complexity of Mobility in Language

Just as the “new” forms of migration above have been characterized as ongoing and freely mobile, so has literate multiplicity been characterized recently in literacy, linguistics, writing and rhetoric as fluid and boundary crossing. Some scholars in these fields have adopted trans-like understandings of language, using the prefix *trans* rather than *multi* and describing multilingual writing practices as mixed, meshed, and transgressing the borders of language. Some of this research accounts for the complexity of mobility as it is detailed above, but little research has fully explored the consequences of this mobility or the literate history that allows writers to move. For this reason, much of this early *trans* theorizing has not fully uncovered the complexity of mobility or accounted for how literate resources and repertoires can also get lost in the process of travel among languages and locations.

Literate diversity has for quite some time been characterized by the multiplicity that the prefix *multi* allows. Previous uses of this prefix were a well-intentioned attempt to move away

from deficit models of linguistic difference and toward additive or strengths-based understandings of linguistic variety. In writing and rhetoric studies, “multilingual writer” and “multi-literacies” was taken up as a more accurate term than “second language” or “bilingual” writer since English can be one of many native languages for writers. In this work, *multi* means “many”—many languages, literacies, cultures, and modes. For example, linguists Diane Belcher and Ulla Connor describe the writers in their collection *Reflections on Multiliterate Lives* as “multicompetent languages users” who have “achieved what relatively few monoliterates accomplish in their entire lifetimes” (5). They suggest “not just that these particular multiliterate individuals are unusually high achievers but also argue...for the inherent values of multiliteracy” (5). In comparative rhetoric studies LuMing Mao applauds Xing Lu’s “multicultural rhetoric” saying, “this rhetoric ‘recognizes and celebrates a diversity of rhetorical styles and persuasive discourse,’ [because] it is ‘capable of honoring both universal values and cultural insights in the practice and formulation of rhetorical perspectives’” (Lu 308-9 quoted in Mao 53).

But these uses of *multi* have been critiqued across fields for celebrating a “multicolored, free-floating mosaic” of multiculturalism without contextual grounding (Lavie and Swedenburg 3). Such “notions of ‘multiplicity’” problematically suggest a “neorelativism” that argues “that ‘we’ are all decentered, multiple, ‘minor,’ ‘mestiza’ in exactly comparable ways” (Frankenberg and Mani 289). Scholars say such lenses enable, for example, a “unidirectional comparativism—West to East, North to South” and an “enumerative strategy of counting languages and romanticizing a plurality” (Hesford and Schell 2008; Hesford “Cosmopolitanism” 60; Pennycook *Practice* 82). Pennycook, for example, critiques terms that label literate variety as “multi” or “poly,” saying “polylingualism...like plurilingualism and multilingualism” still “tends towards a pluralization of singular entities (languages)” rather than a dissolution of separate linguistically

bound entities (*Practice* 84). In other words, this kind of *multi*-washing can mask power in its tendency to equate all languages and cultures as many equal entities. For this reason and others, scholars have been moving away from a celebration of many codes as equally valuable—what Canagarajah calls a “rights discourse”—toward practice-based understandings of how writers use their multiple codes to move among languages or use parts of languages for certain rhetorical ends—what might be better understood, says Canagarajah, as a “resource discourse.” For these reasons, “re-thinking the multi” has allowed many in language studies to critique “how differences, multiplicities and commonalities are played out; how these are constituted, contested, reproduced or re-signified in many and varied discourses, institutions, and practices” (Brah 246).

In pursuit of understanding how these differences and multiplicities are “played out” specifically in multilingual practices, scholars have researched how individuals mix, mesh, and move with their literate varieties. Scholars have used for quite some time the constructs of code-switching and code-meshing to trace the movement between languages. First theorized in sociolinguistics (Heller *Codeswitching*; Myers-Scotton; Auer) and later taken up in composition and rhetoric (Smitherman; Gilyard; Villanueva) code-switching attempts to understand how multilingual students’ use their multiplicity of languages, dialects, or “codes.” In reaction to the placing of writers’ codes in distinct domains—informal/formal genres, home/school contexts, early/final drafts—writing scholars also have adopted “code-shuttling” (Canagarajah “Toward”) and “code-meshing” (Canagarajah “World Englishes;” Young) to describe how multilingual and multi-dialectal writers communicate among their various codes in every domain. In particular, Suresh Canagarajah and Vershawn Ashanti Young have adopted “code-shuttling” (Canagarajah “Toward”) and “code-meshing” (Canagarajah “World Englishes;” Young). Both scholars use

“meshing” to mean the mixing of dialects, styles, and registers, and deem it superior to “switching” (Canagarajah, “World Englishes” 594-5; Young 153-154n9). Both meshing and switching seek to revive a communicative agency in multilingual individuals who are described to be actively choosing among their literate resources to maintain their identities and create certain rhetorical effects. However, both terms have been critiqued for relying on constructs of languages and dialects as whole, complete, and separate entities that writers pick and choose among or “mesh” together as they strive to communicate (Heller *Codswitching*; Gardner-Chloros). As linguist Gardner-Chloros explains, in studies of code-switching, “‘languages’ are often treated as...discrete, identifiable and internally consistent wholes, and we forget how historically recent and culturally selective such a view is” (9).

Thus, to move even farther into movement, scholars in writing, rhetoric, and language studies scholars have adopted *trans* notions of language, looking for the constant and often unconscious movement between multiple codes and a more fluid understanding of language—how language comes loose from its moorings, leaks across the political borders set up to contain it, and moves across social, historical, linguistic, and geographic boundaries. In writing and rhetoric in particular, *trans* has been used in the following ways: a “translingual notion [shifts] our focus away from the confines of national borders toward transnational connectivities;” transcultural repositioning” describes the literate navigation of bilingual Latinos; “transidiomatic practice” describes “the communicative practices of transnational groups that interact using different languages and communicative codes simultaneously;” and “transcultural literacy” is understood as “the only viable metaphor for inculcating the kind of disposition towards cultural-linguistic differences necessary for building a better world for all” (Horner, NeCamp, and Donahue 287; Guerra “Putting Literacy;” Jacquemet 265; Lu “Metaphors” 292-293). This

repetition of *trans* reveals an impulse in writing and rhetoric studies to account for the mobility of language, particularly in contrast to previous uses of *multi* which have been said to maintain language boundaries. Terms such as transcultural literacy, translingual writing, and translanguaging, all gaining in currency in literacy studies, writing and rhetoric, and applied linguistics, each attempt to capture the fluidity and variability that moves away from bounded understandings of language.

In empirical research and theoretical descriptions, these terms are used to characterize language as fluid, ongoing, and happening across codes simultaneously. For example, Canagarajah says that translanguaging “is a social accomplishment,” in which “languages are not discrete and separated, but form an integrated system” (“Translanguaging” 4). Garcia explains that languages “are not fixed codes by themselves; they are fluid codes framed within social practices” (32). Pennycook claims that English cannot be understood to be “held in place by a core structure with variation on the edges” but is instead a language, like all languages, “that cannot hold together” at all (*Practice* 77). Linguists Cenoz and Gorter suggest that “multilinguals establish ‘soft boundaries’ between their languages—that is, boundaries that are permeable and allow for interaction between the languages” (357). They say treating language as bounded by “hard boundaries” cannot fully account for multilinguals’ integrated and permeable language practices. Scholars say these hard boundaries have colonialist and nationalist roots.

Ulla Connor’s intercultural rhetoric is similarly attempting to move beyond comparative and contrastive rhetoric’s analytic habit of comparing across what is understood to be whole and separate languages and rhetorical traditions (304). She and others claim that “everything”—rhetorical tradition, language practices—“exists between cultures” and “in an in-between space” (Connor, Nagelhout, and Rozycki 312). Looking for perhaps the most “transgressive”

understanding of these boundary-blurring practices, Pennycook sets “multilingualism and multimodality...which focus on languages and modes as pluralized entities” in opposition to “translingualism and transmodality...which question the very separability of languages and modes in the first place” (49). Thus “to think and be trans,” says Pennycook, is to “cross over” in terms of “a fluidity of relations across global contexts” (*Global Englishes* 36, 44). This is an attempt, he says “to move away from nation-based models of English and to take on board current understandings of translingual practices across communities other than those defined along national criteria” (*Practice* 84).

Why Mobility Matters

These depictions of mobile phenomena should look familiar by now, with those describing language closely paralleling those describing social and geographic migration. However, these claims about language do not necessarily include the full complexity of mobility. Canagarajah has recently cautioned against romanticizing the potential of fluidity and freedom in language, saying that “scholarship on translanguaging [can make] multilingual communication appear more diverse, dynamic, and democratic” than it actually is (“Translanguaging” 3). He urges scholars to remain critical toward the “resources/limitations” as well as the “prospects/challenges” of translanguaging (“Translanguaging” 3). Some scholars in literacy and language studies have noted instances of immobility in their empirical studies (Cuban “Downward Mobility;” Hernandez-Zamora; Norton; Prendergast; Warriner), but the desire to see fluidity remains strong in most scholarly work. For example, linguist Monica Heller says once “we start looking closely at real people in real places, we see movement...languages turning up in unexpected places and not fitting in any fixed frames” (Heller *Bilingualism* 343). This is certainly true, and the literature above shows how language can travel in this way—looking

closely at “real people’s” everyday practices does reveal unexpected language movement and the loosening of language boundaries. But while languages themselves might be only social constructs, bounded by borders created through colonial or nationalist histories, writers, themselves, still encounter these language borders every day. They experience the “fixed frames” of language when these frames are imposed on them by external conditions—by powerful social conditions acting on individual language practice. So whether or not languages themselves have actual boundaries, the *construct* of a singular language continues to be used by many to create and regulate social contexts. These highly powerful and highly rhetorical constructs are just one type of force that immobilizes language.

Therefore this dissertation uses a mobile analytic that takes into account the full complexity of mobility, tracing language as it loosens but also accounting for the moments when it gets lost. This is analysis that seeks nuance by foregrounding the paradoxical dynamics of mobility—movement within and against fixed structure, stable yet elusive literate resources, networks becoming simultaneously dense and loose. The chapters below show that multilingual immigrant writers do carry their literacy practices with them as they move among their languages and the locations in the world in which they have lived. They do experience the social mobility they hope for by calling on their deep and complex literate repertoires. However, as especially Chapter Three shows, at various turns these writers also find themselves de-skilled, under-employed, stuck or lost, traveling as a vagabond with undervalued literate capital.

This is the interrelation of social and literate mobilities that frames the analysis that follows. When framed as activities on-the-move, rather than as happening-in-place, literacies become meaning-making activities that occur as writers move through different social contexts and against various social forces. The next chapter details how the research was designed to seek

this more complex understanding of literate mobility. The chapter describes the data collection and analysis process and culminates in a distillation of theoretical principles that foreground the variability, instability, and fluidity of multilingual literate practices.

Chapter 2

Research Design: Tracing Traveling Literacies

This dissertation was designed to understand the lived experiences of multilingual immigrant women writing their way across locations and languages. Over the course of a year, I interviewed 25 women living in a mid-sized, midwestern university town and asked them to describe their literacy and language memories, their current literacy and language practices, and their opinions about communicating as a multilingual individual. The goal of the research was to understand how literacy travels—how it moves with writers who themselves move around the world and among languages as a matter of their everyday life experience.

This focus on travel, movement, and mobility, as detailed in the previous chapter, stems from this project's origins in a community writing center in which I worked primarily with immigrant women on their writing. As I worked side-by-side with these writers, I was often taken off guard by their language and literacy repertoires—reading strategies based in three or four languages; writing habits informed by previous teaching, nursing, communications positions—and I was compelled to ask how these repertoires moved with these immigrants from their previous countries of residence to our community writing center table. Across which languages and communicative situations had these literacy practices traveled before ending up here? How were these writers propelled into migration by their existing literate practices? This curiosity led me to ask similar questions of one Azerbaijani woman with whom I worked at the center, and that small pilot study led to this dissertation.

Along the way, my curiosity was refined into specific research questions that asked how writing is practiced by multilingual women immigrants in the U.S. and in their home countries,

and how the movement between those sites, the very act of migration, alters, affects, or erases these women’s literacy practices:

1. How do immigrant women use literacy practices learned in one geographical location to write in another?
2. How do immigrant women use literacy practices learned in one language to write in another or in many?
3. How does movement itself—here defined as migration and immigration—affect, change, or produce certain literacy practices?

I believed at the beginning of this project, and still believe, that the stakes of these questions are quite high, not only as university populations diversify, but also as the discourse around globalization continues to make promises about social, economic, and physical mobility. This chapter describes in detail how this dissertation research was designed in pursuit of these questions and in pursuit of better understanding these stakes.

Multilingual Immigrant Women in a Midwestern Metro

Mirroring claims about migration and mobility with which the previous chapter began, a recent report on “The Geography of Immigrant Skills” by the Brookings Institution also identifies a shift in the trajectory of global mobility. The report’s co-authors claim that the U.S. is experiencing a historic demographic transformation, which is occurring and being felt most noticeably in the metro and urban areas of the country (Hall). The reports’ authors show the immigrant population in the contemporary U.S. to be changing in a manner that is historic and also geographically specific. Because this study’s participants are recent immigrants⁷ to a midwestern metro—one the report points to specifically as an example of this historic shift, this

⁷ “Immigrant” is a category complicated by its scope and variability: refugees and asylees, migrant workers, Generation 1.5 students, temporary professionals, international college students, highly-skilled entrepreneurs are lumped together or conflated as identity categories. In this essay, I use “immigrant” to mean individuals of varying legal status and personal capital who have come to the U.S. in the last ten years with the intention of staying. By “multilingual” I mean the ability to communicate proficiently in more than one language, though 19 of the 25 participants in this study proficiently communicate in three to five languages.

study happens to have captured the language and literacy practices of an immigrant population on the verge of change.

The metro area in which this study took place is designated a low-immigration metro, with modest inflows of immigrants and a small “foreign-born” population. Importantly, this population is also highly professionally and educationally skilled, and thus the report has given the metro area a “high-skill level ratio,” meaning it has double the high-skilled immigrant population for every 100 low-skilled immigrants, a ratio the report attributes to the metro’s large research university. In other words, while the immigrant population in this mid-sized metro area is small, it is highly-skilled. Recent census data from the area also shows this to be true:⁸ This area is 6.3% foreign-born, with a newer immigrant population (63.7% without citizenship and 42.9% having entered after 2000) predominantly from Asia (43.2%) and Latin America (34.4%).

The Brookings report supports arguments made by literacy and immigration scholars during the last decade that the U.S. immigrant population’s skill levels are diverging and stratifying, with the growing population of highly-skilled immigrants working in the U.S. in jobs for which they are overqualified. Sociologists and sociolinguists have been showing this in their research for quite some time: the women subjects in Bonny Norton’s study of immigrant literacy were college-educated professionals in their home countries but hadn’t found jobs in their professions years after immigrating; the women in Sondra Cuban’s research had “educational qualifications, academic resources, and sophisticated language and literacy practices (educational capital) [that were] missed or viewed deficiently” (“Home/work” 83); and the “new immigrants” in Suarez-Orozco’s work include “highly educated, highly skilled individuals...more likely to

⁸ Here I am using 2009 census data in order to make a comparison with the 2009 data the Brookings Report used. The most recent census data for this metro area is from 2010. The 2010 data shows a growing foreign born population (7.2% from 6.3%), growing immigrant population without citizenship (67.8% from 63.7%), and growing population of newly arrived, post-2000 immigrants (55.1% from 42.9%).

have advanced degrees than the native-born population...[and] are among the best educated and most skilled folk in the United States” (14).

The participants in this study generally correspond to the patterns set out in the research and reports above. They immigrated to the U.S. from 17 different countries, speaking 22 different languages among them—44% from Asia, 24% from Latin America, 16% from the Middle East, 8% from Eastern Europe, with singular individuals from Asia Minor and Africa. Of the 25 participants, 16 immigrated to the U.S. with existing tertiary education—12 with undergraduate degrees, and four with graduate degrees. Four participants immigrated at a young age and were in college programs and two immigrated specifically to attend university in the U.S. and stayed. Of the 25 participants, 14 held professional positions previous to immigration—five were teachers, three worked in communications, and the rest spanned professions like architecture, law, environmental planning, and medicine. The majority of the immigrants in this study are indeed educated, professional, underemployed, and importantly, multilingual prior to immigration. But while the Brookings report attributes immigrant underemployment partially to “lack of English language proficiency,” 23 of the 25 participants in this study spoke English proficiently, if not fluently. Ten were bilingual, 11 were proficient in three languages, and four were proficient in four or more languages. And yet, many of them experienced the de-skilling reported in research and policy reports. They often found themselves overqualified for their jobs or returning to school to start entirely new careers. This challenge to the Brookings claim indicates that these highly-skilled immigrants are not experiencing de-skilling in the U.S. simply because they lack English—clearly something more complicated is occurring as immigrants enter the U.S. with professional and educational experience *and* deeply developed literate repertoires.

This study's participants' shared professional background, is, of course, not only due to the location of the study in a university town and to shifts toward high-skilled immigration in this metro area. My method of recruiting participants also had much to do with the common characteristics of this group of immigrants. Immigrants in this study were purposefully selected for interviews using a snowball or chain sampling method that originated with one pilot participant and with teacher colleagues who teach ESL and writing at local community colleges and universities (Patton; Miles and Huberman). After meeting briefly with these points of contact, they referred me to potential study participants, and these participants, in turn, referred me to many more. This method creates a participant pool with shared characteristics, though the shared characteristics of this particular group were primarily professional. They varied widely in class, educational, national, and linguistic background. For example, the nurses referred me to other nurses, but this group of seven nurses represented lower to middle class family backgrounds, high school to graduate degrees, six different countries of origin, and ten different languages. So while the highly-skilled status was shared across nearly all participants, other characteristics were highly diverse.

Feminist Design

This group of participants share another characteristic—they are all women. Because of the study's origins in a community writing center with almost all immigrant women writers, and in response to a dominant narrative of downward mobility in research on immigrant women, I made the intentional methodological choice to build a research design based on feminist concerns. The literature on feminist methodologies does not uniformly agree about what those concerns are and how they manifest themselves in methodological choices, but in general they share the following epistemological features: treating women's lived experiences as a legitimate source of

knowledge, including researcher reflexivity on the researcher/participant role in the research process, and analyzing the workings of power in all forms of inequality while aiming for social action (Campbell and Wasco; Conti and O’Neil; Crotty; Harding; Mohanty; Naples; Plummer and Young; Spivak).

Just as there is no single form of feminism—Rosemarie Tong offers seven (liberal, Marxist, radical, psychoanalytic, socialist, existentialist, postmodern) and there are certainly others—there is also no single form of women’s writing or women’s multilingual practices. Diane Davis says there is no “category of women with which feminists identify and for which they seek liberation” calling this an “assumption...built on another one: that a feminist (or anyone else) can *know the truth* about ‘women’ and then re-present that truth adequately and honestly” (143, original emphasis). Therefore, this dissertation was not designed to discover “the truth” about immigrant women multilingual writers, since these categories are unstable and socially generated, nor do its conclusions aim to represent a true or correct characterization of women’s multilingual writing experiences. Instead, this dissertation’s research design itself is feminist: Interviews foreground women’s lived experiences as a source of knowledge, grounded theory allows for researcher reflexivity and participant interpretation, and social, material, and transnational analyses highlight the power relations that mediate and regulate immigrant women’s writing experiences.

Women’s Lived Experiences

In choosing participants for the study, I recruited only women immigrants in order to center their lived experiences as a source of knowledge that could help ground theoretical musings about multilingual practice and, to a lesser extent, about women’s immigration experiences. According to scholars in migration studies, literacy studies, and sociology, women’s immigration

experiences have been sidelined to analyses of men's migration experiences, though women may face an intense set of responsibilities and barriers after immigration: pulled between work and home, often facing patriarchal limits to education, and expected to transmit cultural knowledge through home education (Appadurai; Cuban "Home/work;" Lee and Pratt; Mojab, Phillion; Ramdas; Robinson-Pant; Sadeghi; Sarroub; Street *Literacy*; Warriner). Brettell says these barriers create a "'triple invisibility' for migrant women based on factors of class, ethnicity, and gender" (111).

Further, centering women's experiences was meant to complicate the dominant narrative in the literature on immigrant women becoming always downwardly mobile—socially and economically—after immigration. Researchers describe women who hold a variety of professional positions in their home countries and are subsequently unable to maintain that professional status after migrating, experiencing downward mobility especially when government, employment, and educational institutions in their new countries do not recognize their existing professional and education credentials (Hall; Clayton and Euscher; Cuban "Home/work;" Warriner). Interestingly, this narrative was simultaneously reinforced and complicated by the study's focus on women, as is clear in Chapter Three. Many participants in this study followed their husbands to the U.S., adhering to research that finds that "many more women immigrate through family sponsorship than as employment-based immigrants," both because of the kinds of employment specialties the visa system is set up to favor and because of cultural expectations in many countries of origin (Sreeharsha 4; Brettell; Hall). As Shiva Sadeghi points out, many immigrant women experience "existing tensions and struggles between the pursuit of their educational and vocational aspirations and culturally scripted roles and obligations" (218).

But some participants were happy to return to school, switch careers, or re-route their existing skills and leverage some new ones—newfound bilingual status, translation experiences—into new social and professional positions. In this way, centering women’s experiences in this study has allowed the study to intervene in the tale of inevitable downward mobility, but also resist celebrating immigration as the moment of complete educational and cultural freedom. The intentional focus on women highlights the give and take of agency during migration, as women choose to immigrate not only because of economic inevitability but also due to family maintenance, personal betterment, and, sometimes, as in the case of the “lottery visa” held by one participant, complete chance.

Grounded Theory as Feminist Methodology

Feminist researcher Nancy Naples explains that methods and methodologies are not epistemologically neutral, but indicate assumptions about what counts as data, how research should relate to subjects, and what the outcomes or products of research should ultimately be (5). In this way, “feminist methodology is a theory of research rather than a specific method or technique for gathering information” (Harding 65). Therefore the use of interview methods and a grounded theory methodology reveals my own assumptions and feminist concerns as detailed above—that methods should allow for participant analysis and build researcher reflexivity into the methodological process. In fact, grounded theory has been described to have “epistemological affinity” with feminist methodologies, particularly because its analytic process systematically allows for both researcher reflexivity and participant interpretation (Plummer and Young; Keddy, Sims, and Noerager; Stern; Wuest).

As will be detailed in sections below, grounded theory maintains heuristic strategies of theory building that also allows for participants to interpret their own experience. For example,

recent versions of grounded theory suggest using “in vivo” codes in the axial coding process, in which participants’ own words are used as the codes themselves (Strauss and Corbin; Charmaz *Constructing*). Rather than the researcher creating an analytic term and then applying it to a set of data, a term of a participant’s own making is used as an analytic code and applied across the data. As Charmaz explains, participants’ “specialized terms provide a useful analytic point of departure” and help researchers “preserve participants’ meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself” (*Constructing* 55). For example, I used the in vivo code “mess” from participant Sofia’s interview to code every instance of language “mess,” “messy,” and “messiness” described by participants. Because I had to return to all the data to look for every instance of mess rather than just the ones I had originally chosen, this in vivo code helped me analyze the common articulation of “mess,” not from my original understanding of chaos or confusion, but from the participants’ understanding of the word as creative productivity. Another in vivo code—“speaking in the mind of another language”—originated in Ishtar’s interview when she used it to describe her experience of cross-cultural understanding. I applied her phrase to other participants’ similar articulations and the resulting comparative analysis formed the basis of Chapter Five’s argument. Grounded theory coding strategies like these foreground participants’ own understandings of their experience, cohering with feminist concerns that research subjects speak from their own lived experience and play a role in shaping the research process.

Further, the memo-writing practice of grounded theory, explained in detail in sections below, guides researchers through a writing-intensive practice of reflection. For example, I wrote a memo when a particular interview question was eliciting only confusion from participants, causing me to reflect on the way I was asking it and how a participant might have felt hearing a

certain question from a white, middle-class researcher. While some participants self-identified as ethnically white, others commented on feeling no longer white in the U.S. because of reactions to their *hijab* or their accents. I wrote an entire memo on the word “Caucasian” after one participant explained that she stopped identifying as Caucasian, even though she came from the Caucasus (Azerbaijan), when told by a fellow university student that she was clearly not white. Other memos led me to reflect on why participants would often follow-up their responses by asking if that was a “right” or “useful” answer or apologize for their English language skills when they were perfectly fluent. Participants and I were often in a dance of authority, as I was relying on them for their expertise in multilingualism and they were often deferent to me as an English language expert. All of these reflections led me to continually revise my interview protocol, more consciously share with participants my own experiences with language learning, acknowledge the limits of what I could understand about multilingual writing and immigration as an only-partial bilingual and non-immigrant, and extend my explanations of methodological positioning in this very chapter.

Analysis of Power

As stated above, feminist methodologies generally share a common concern for analyzing power structures in relation to inequality, coloniality, and exclusion. In its reliance on theories from sociology (Bauman; Beck), critical applied linguistics (Blommaert *Sociolinguistics*; Heller *Bilingualism*; Pennycook *Global Englishes*), transnational feminist rhetoric (Hesford and Schell; Schell and Rawson), and other critical standpoints in literacy, writing, and rhetoric studies, the analysis throughout these chapters aims to situate participants’ individual experience in macro social structures and the transnational influence of global actors like NGOs and international schools. In fact, it was the structured and systematic analysis afforded by grounded theory that

highlighted the regulatory power of social structures and the equally powerful individual practices of participant writers.

A social and material analysis shows how participants' writerly agency is a "complex and often contradictory...struggle over power and resources" (Hesford, *Framing* 74). Chapter Three, for example, sets women's lived writing experiences in opposition to the fatalist discourses of downward social mobility, aiming to allow more agency in participants' practices, but resisting the romantic potential of their language and literate practice to completely make change in their lives during immigration. While I hope to highlight how "women migrants contribute to their local and global communities...as they move around with their educational capital, negotiating state boundaries and public spheres," a systematic analysis of the data shows that this is not always possible in the face of institutional and social structures that shut down rather than open up further mobility (Cuban, "Home/Work" 84). Analyzing agency in the context of material constraints recognizes that "narratives of mobility and travel...are characterized less by 'freedom' and choice, as by loss, fear, deprivation, and pain" an argument "made repeatedly by feminists" such as hooks, Massey, and Pratt (Lee and Pratt 227). And the transnational analysis that runs throughout the chapters is feminist in its concern for the physical experience of those who move in its desire to uncover the "differential conditions of mobility" of both people and texts that circulate (Hesford *Rhetorica* 70). For example, the material analysis of letter writing in Chapter Four shows participants' letter writing practices to be not only efforts at keeping in touch, but also attempts to intervene in national bureaucratic processes and material traces of the transnational power of an NGO.

As Joy Ritchie says, "the strength of feminism is its ability to hold in tension an array of theoretical and practical perspectives" and "constantly connect intellectual activity—the study of

literature, language, and ideas—to the history and experience of people’s lives” (85, 101). In this way, this study is feminist in its design rather than its conclusions. While gender is not the endpoint of each chapter’s conclusions and arguments, the design of the study itself is grounded in feminist concerns about women’s experiences, the researcher’s role in meaning-making processes, and the analysis of transnational power.

Data Collection

In order to understand how these 25 immigrant women writers traveled with their language and literacy practices, I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews that ranged from 30 minutes to two hours. As a data collection method, qualitative interviews mitigate the constraints inherent in researching a phenomenon that moves over time and space. Educational researcher Sharan Merriam explains, “interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them...[and] when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate” (72). Because I could not observe participants as they migrated, nor ask them questions along the way, the research had to be designed to elicit recollections and interpretations of past literacy experiences in relation to current ones. Barton and Hamilton also point out that literacy practices “are not observable units of behavior since they also involve values, attitudes, feelings, and social relationships” (7). Therefore, interview questions are necessary to probe beyond the observable use of language and text to their social meaning and use. Finally, open-format qualitative interviews like those conducted for this study are especially designed to draw out the “substantial experience, often combined with considerable insight” held by writers who move across locations and languages as a matter of everyday experience (Charmaz, “Qualitative Interviewing” 312).

Therefore, in interviews I used a semi-structured protocol in order to elicit descriptions of reading and writing practices taking place over the span of a lifetime and across multiple geographical contexts. Studying the social situations around texts—studying what people do with their texts rather than the texts themselves—calls for data collection methods that draw out descriptions, memories, values, and interpretation of interaction with text. Such an open interview format allowed for flexibility and adaptability during the interview, allowing me to “respond to the situation at hand [and] to the emerging worldview of the respondent” (Merriam 74). Educational researchers also explain that less structured interviews give interviewees the floor, treating them “as an expert” in their own lived experience and in turn elicit in-depth descriptive material (Bogden and Biklen, 99; Fontana and Frey). This yielding of research authority was particularly important in the context of a feminist research design as explained above and in light of the power differential inherent in a research/participant relationship. Because of the inevitably shifting positions of power between researcher and participants, the interviews were essential for letting participants be the expert of their own experience, giving them room to clarify if I assumed too much—many responses to my re-phrasing questions started with “No” or “that’s not what I mean”—and especially interpret and analyze multilingual phenomena from their own point of view.

This study’s semi-structured interview questions were organized into three categories—literacy and language memories, current literacy and language practices, and opinions on communicating as a multilingual person. Interview questions aimed to elicit experiences of reading and writing memories in home countries and native language(s), current in- and out-of-school literacy activities in English and other languages, and reactions to scholarly translingual theories (see Appendix A). I carried out interviews over the course of a year in order to achieve

“data saturation” and “detail in the theory” (Cresswell 120). As I reached 25 interviews, I felt I had spoken to immigrants from varied backgrounds and life experiences and was beginning to hear echoes of patterns across their responses to my questions.

Nearly all the interview questions, especially those in the first two sections, focused on the literacy practice as the unit of study. Interview questions aimed to give shape and specificity to multilingual writing in everyday situations, for example, letter-writing, speech-writing, advocacy writing, writing newsletters for work, keeping lists and charts at home, writing notes, and so on. I did not aim to trace genres, since genres can act as a focus of practice but are not the entire practice itself. A practice includes everything around the genre—traditions, beliefs, purposes—which all together create a practice bound up in the values of a particular family and culture, repeated over time for specific occasion. In this way, this dissertation research is grounded in new literacy studies’ theory of literacy practices (Barton, Hamilton, and Ivanic; Brandt; Gee; Heath; Scribner and Cole; Street *Social Literacies*), which understands literacy practices to be “cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives...more usefully understood as existing in the relations between people, within groups and communities, rather than as a set of properties residing individuals” (Barton Hamilton, and Ivanic 7-8). The collection of literacy practices was meant to reveal what writers were already doing with their literacies rather than how literacy, as a stable entity, had a measurable impact on them. Prior and Shipka note that understanding writing activity is understanding how we “constantly make our worlds—the ways we select from, (re)structure, fiddle with, and transform the material and social world we inhabit” (182). Similarly, in interviews, I set out to understand how multilingual writers “select from” and “fiddle with” their literacy repertoires in order to transform their inhabited worlds after immigration. This research was not designed to understand

language acquisition, language or literacy proficiency, or any cognitive element of multilingual writing. Instead, it was designed to understand how literacy activities were put into practice as writers themselves moved, carrying all of the social and cultural values and beliefs bound up in the practice with them as they traveled.

Further, the literacy practice, as the unit of study, sets seemingly quotidian or random acts in the context of ideologically-regulated social repetition. Tracing “process and practice” rather than “community and identity” helps researchers connect “the observable ways in which people draw on linguistic resources in situ” with “ideologies of language, society, culture” and the “activities where resources and discourses are produced and distributed” (Heller, *Bilingualism* 341-342). Practices can serve as “a middle, mediating level between...language structure and language events” helping us “investigate the doing of language as social activity, regulated as much by social contexts as by underlying systems” (Pennycook, *Practice* 120, 114). This is the middle, or “meso-political level” potential of the practice—its ability to draw together and reveal the mutual reproduction of everyday activity with abstract social structure and organization (Pennycook *Practice* 123). Because I didn’t set out to look for the presence of social and ideological structure, its appearance and influence in the data was something of an unintended byproduct of a focus on practice. Thus, this study’s use of the literacy practice as the unit of study helped the analysis to foreground, rather than bracket, the never-neutral power dynamics of literacy activities within the contexts in which they take place.

Data Analysis

In the course of this research, I collected data from participants with widely varied linguistic, cultural, and geographic backgrounds, and used grounded theory both to carry out an analysis that would speak to my research questions and to engage in an analytic process that was

adaptable but principled. In order to successfully analyze transcripts from 25 interviews, I needed some kind of procedure. Grounded theory is defined by its ongoing cyclical comparison of codes, and is a particularly appropriate methodology for supporting rigorous but flexible empirical research (Glaser and Strauss; Glaser; Strauss and Corbin). Sociologist Kathy Charmaz explains: “We can use grounded theory methods as flexible, heuristic strategies rather than as formulaic procedures” because this methodology does not “detail data collection techniques; [it moves] each step of the analytic process toward the development, refinement, and interrelation of concepts” (Charmaz, “Grounded Theory” 510). Charmaz is one researcher among many who has moved grounded theory away from Glaser and Strauss’s original assumptions that data and theories “are discovered” and toward the recognition that “we construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (10; see also Clarke).

In this way, I used grounded theory as a heuristic analytic process, rather than strict guidelines to be accomplished step-by-step. I followed Glaser and Strauss’s coding process, moving through three rounds of coding—initial or open coding in which I gave almost every segment of transcript text a code, axial coding in which I compared one code to another to look for patterns and themes, and finally focused or selective coding during which I refined categories and built theoretical arguments from them (Cresswell). I followed Glaser’s (1978) recommendation to code with gerunds as often as possible in order to focus on processes, practices, and a sense of the activity of multilingual writing on the move, rather than states of being. Grounded theory methodology was further appropriate and helpful for this study because of its writing-intensive analytic process. As I collected data and went through rounds of coding, I wrote topical “memos” to refine interview questions, to refine codes as I transcribed more

interviews, and to keep track of exemplary quotes for each code (Charmaz “Qualitative Interviewing”). This memo-ing process, similar to anthropological journaling, is understood by grounded theory practitioners to be integral to the methodology and to the process of theoretical integration. The twelve memos developed throughout the analysis process were visual records of the point at which my arguments were reaching a data saturation point—when there was enough data for an idea or theme to evolve into an argument.

As data analysis pushed the observation of themes into the articulation of arguments, I generated my theories from the data in front of me as much as possible. However, as Charmaz notes, I constructed my theories through my “past and present involvements and interactions” with rhetorical understandings of language and communicative action and was thus influenced by my training in writing and rhetoric. My analysis did not set out to classify rhetorical strategies or styles of multilingual writers per se, or to search for the rhetorical strategies of proficient multilingual writers. Instead, my data analysis and theoretical integration was shaped by neo-sophistic (Crowley; Jarratt; Poulakos) and epistemic (Scott; Brummet) rhetorical traditions that understand language, and knowledge about language, to be first, contingent and second, emergent. This is especially clear in the fifth chapter’s argument that multilingual writers become attuned to language not from literate resources that exist prior to immigration, but in the process of communicating through migration. McComiskey and other scholars list the precepts of “neo-sophistic epistemic rhetorical theory,” derived primarily from the older sophists Gorgias and Protagoras, as pragmatic, skeptical of absolute truth, and reliant on discursive, provisional, and probable truths (Baumlin; Crowley; Jarratt; Poulakos; Scott). Thus, knowledge, and the language we use to come to know, are contingent and dependent on “a mode of reasoning and decision-making which allows humans to act in the absence of certain, *a priori* truth” a process

which is both “at the heart” of rhetoric and one that helped me attend to the unstable, slippery, accidental, and always-in-process multilingual activities my participants’ were describing (Jarratt 8).

Further, sophistic understandings of kairos shaped my analysis of the constant evocation of time and space in immigration research and in my participants’ experiences of migration. Hesford, for example, calls kairos an “analytic method,” important to feminist rhetorical studies for its ability to foreground “the temporal and spatial features” of transnational analysis and “recognize transnational publics not as static but as always in the process of becoming” (*Rhetorica* 56, 62-63). Hesford’s understanding of kairos as representing “a qualitative notion of time and space that is adaptable, opportune, and contingent on material circumstances” (55) is akin to sophistic treatments of kairos as shaping language as emergent and always in the process of being created (Carter; Consigny; Hawhee; Hesford, *Rhetorica*; Jarratt; McComiskey; Rickert; Untersteiner). These scholars de-stabilize notions of time and space by drawing “attention to situations that are still in process, situations that are structuring new perceptions and shaping new environments” (McComiskey 105) and by foregrounding the movement inherent in analysis of literate activity across time and space like those taken up in this study. For example, Hawhee’s analysis of the god Kairos fuses writing and movement: “Kairos’ winged feet, when considered together with discourse...foreground movement, the movement of time, the movement of language” (21). Hawhee argues that kairos “thus might be read to mark the celerity and multi-directionality of discourse; as such, the mythical figure bears witness to rhetorical ‘movement’” (21). An analysis influenced by kairos can ask why the in-betweens matter, and why movement across time and space isn’t just a fact of immigration but a discursive move that makes meaning that should be analyzed and accounted for. It should not be lost on us that the older sophists have

been described as “wanderers” who “traveled widely” and thus were “cross-culturally aware” (Bizzell and Herzberg 25).

Therefore, these rhetorical influences shaped how I moved my analysis from observations of multilingual phenomena into arguments about the contingent value of mobile repertoires, the not-neutral quality of literate movement, and the emergent process of attunement to language. These understandings of contingent and provisional language are not the province only of rhetorical analysis. Certainly linguists themselves have theorized how multilingual speakers “shape the very context in which language is used” (Kramsch) and have posited that “a focus on movement...draws attention to the relationship between time and space, to emergence, to a subject in process,” a very kairotic understanding (Pennycook *Practice* 62). Rather, in analyzing codes and transcripts, I treated all instances of language use as rhetorical by virtue of their appearance in a writer’s lived communicative situation. Thus the empirical quality of the study—asking writers what they do with their language every day—embeds rhetorical understandings of language into any analysis.

Overview of the Chapters

Arguments shaped in the course of this analysis form the basis for the three chapters that follow. Each chapter foregrounds a different element of the mobile literacies phenomenon: social conditions in Chapter Three, literacy practice in Chapter Four, and resources and repertoires in Chapter Five. This switching of lenses is intended to provide different angles on the same phenomenon—multilingual writing.

In Chapter Three, I will examine when and why certain literacy practices travel with writers while others do not. The chapter addresses the occasional but still-present belief that increased skill in multiple languages brings about greater social gains by showing how

multilingual writers' literacy practices both do and do not help them accomplish what they hope to in the United States after immigration. Throughout the chapter, I analyze the lived literacy experiences of five multilingual immigrant writers, showing how their literacy and language practices do indeed travel with them from one place in the world to another and from one language to many others. Khadroma's exposure to western literacy conventions in China help her write productively after immigration to the U.S., while Defne's fully developed academic writing practices in three languages do not bring her the social gains she had hoped for. Alicia's multilingual schooling experiences in Argentina align with the academic expectations in North American universities, while Tashi's multilingual academic preparation runs up against discriminatory institutionalized language practices. And Faridah describes her life after immigration as a slow shutting down of her previously robust multilingual literacy practices, values, and beliefs. Ultimately, I argue that the value and effects of these writers' literate practices shift as they travel, as they are redefined by the social, political, educational, and institutional contexts they meet along the way.

In Chapter Four, I focus on the movement of just one literacy practice, letter writing, in order to understand the implications of a practice that produces text meant to be on the move. While the literature on letter writing—mostly analysis of famous figures' letters or anthropological description of letter writing in specific cultures—treats correspondence as a method of maintaining cultural relationships, I argue that letter writing reveals the global institutional forces that shape those cultures and relationships. In the chapter I describe the proliferation of letter writing practices across almost every participant in the study, and then highlight three letter writing narratives—letters crossing the nation-state, letters following money, and letters leaving war behind. These examples show that letter writing is a distinct

literacy practice, deemed successful not by the textual content produced but by the material outcomes brought about. The writers featured in this chapter produce correspondence both to get along in times of global change and to intervene in those same global changes. This push/pull tension, noted in the previous chapter, regulates letter-writing practices and often provides the impetus to write at all. In other words, the presence of so much letter writing activity in immigrant daily lives does not show that letter and email writing is frequent because of greater distance or greater ease of technology. Instead, as I argue, letter writing reveals the power and presence of transnational institutional forces that push writing around and away from individuals, compelling them to send their writing to and fro in order to satisfy the push and pull of international interests.

In Chapter Five, I aim to understand the shape and effect of the literate resources and repertoires so often evoked in multilingual writing theory. I ask what these resources look like as literacy practices, how they might be conceived of as a mobile repertoire, and how writers create, adapt, and act with these resources and repertoires as they travel. By looking across the literacy practices of eleven different writers, I argue that literacy practices on the move create rhetorical attunement—an ear for, or a tuning toward, difference and multiplicity. By virtue of their daily experience with linguistic difference, the writers in the chapter become tuned toward the communicative predicaments of multilingual interaction. These predicaments are both idiosyncratic and ordinary, moments in which rhetorical strategies are practiced and often created. The chapter moves through these moments, exploring the conditions of difference and multiplicity—multilingual societies, globalization, geo-political influence—and the writing activities—teaching, essay writing, public writing, journal writing—that reveal the ongoing, negotiated, flexible quality of language. The chapter shows how multilingual writers aren't

aware of this quality *a priori*, but come to know—become rhetorically attuned—across a lifetime of communicating across difference.

The chapters below show that writers do not write from a static repertoire of skills, but instead create and adapt literate resources in motion, traveling with highly charged experiences, values, and beliefs that influence the ways in which they are or are not able to call on their literate resources in certain situations. I have distilled the broad theories of this dissertation into four principles that cross its chapters and comprise the theoretical framework for this study. The chapters do not treat these points one by one, but, instead, show their convergence:

1. Multilingual writers travel with vast but variable literate repertoires which they put into practice to attune themselves to language.
2. These repertoires contain unstable literacy practices, sometimes called resources, that are created in specific situations, revealing the traces of the social conditions under which they were formed.
3. It is in treating literate practices and their textual outcomes as mobile that we can clearly see the social, political, and institutional boundaries that are crossed and the powerful forces that move language around.
4. Writers experience both success and struggle as they write through and against these social and political forces.

Specifically, the chapters show that enacting a theory of mobile literacy brings into sharp relief

- social conditions and constraints under globalization
- the vast, specific, contradictory, and fragile components of a literate repertoire
- the production of literate resources from practice
- the spectrum of intentionality of resource use, from accidental to purposeful
- the perceptions gained by practicing literate multiplicity, difference, and instability as a lived, taken-for-granted norm

This dissertation aims to account for the in-betweens of language practices—not the levels of language proficiency or the wielding of rhetorical strategies that can be observed and measured before and after migration, but the unstable, ongoing, and generative quality of writing along the way, the composition in motion.

Chapter 3

Multilingual Resources on the Move: Shifting Value and Contingent Effects

Life ambitions are more often than not expressed in terms of mobility, the free choice of place, travelling, seeing the world; life fears, on the contrary, are talked about in terms of confinement, lack of change, being barred from places which others traverse easily...Freedom has come to mean above all freedom of choice, and choice has acquired, conspicuously, a spatial dimension.
Zygmunt Bauman

We are all on the move, every day. We move with our language and literacy practices in and out of workplaces, countries, schools, and other people's lives, even as we find ourselves moved—emotionally, politically—by written language. Writing also moves with us, as material text, gained experience, habit, or memory. But in a world increasingly characterized by the mobility of capital, products, ideas, and people, the relationship of writing to movement has become paradoxically tenuous: who, exactly, can count on writing to provide what kinds of movement? If “the mobility of people also involves the mobility of sociolinguistic resources” (Blommaert 5), how do writers use these resources to write themselves into motion?

To examine the complexity of these writing conditions, this chapter looks closely at the lived literacy experiences of five multilingual immigrant writers, showing first, how they have moved their literacy practices from one location in the world to another, and second, how the value and effect of these practices shift as they move, becoming redefined by the social contexts they meet along the way. This chapter argues that multilingual literacy practices are indeed resources that writers use in new locations and languages, but they are unstable ones, very much dependent on gendered, classed, and politicized dynamics for their effect and outcome. These effects and outcomes are too contingent, too situationally varied to be easily accessed and deployed by writers for social gain. Thus, even when these writers travel with fully developed

multilingual repertoires, including fluency in English, they do not always experience the social mobility that is often promised.

The everyday accounts of the multilingual immigrant writers below show that literacy practices can, in fact, travel. This chapter aims to make that literacy travel explicit—foregrounding the mobility of practice from one language and location in the world to another—and to unsettle the durability of these literacy practices on the move. For if we are to understand first, how languages and literacies move with writers, and second, what the outcome is of that movement, we must always keep in mind how uneven and unstable these literate practices can be. Even if moving writers travel with their repertoires, and this chapter shows that they can, the resources that comprise these repertoires appear to be uneven, without effect, or inaccessible in new locations. In the context of globalization, “linguistic and communicative resources are mobile or lack semiotic mobility, and this is a problem not just of difference, but of inequality” (Blommaert *Sociolinguistics* 3). In other words, while literacy and language repertoires can travel, their meaning might not make the journey. And because literacy practices can move through social contexts that value literacies as resources in unequal amounts, what these practices mean is valued unequally.

The Complexity of Resources

Scholars have studied literacy practices on the move as multilingual practices, transnational practices, or cultural community practices, in homes and community settings, and most often in classrooms. Most of this work treats the movement of these literacy practices implicitly, as an assumed background element of the literacy practices that have come from elsewhere—other places, cultures, languages—and appear in front of them (Canagarajah “Translanguaging; Cuban “Downward Mobility;” Guerra “Putting Literacy;” Martin-Jones and Jones; Menard-Warnick;

Norton; Sarroub; Warriner). Few studies have treated the movement of literacy more explicitly, as literacy practices or texts that can “travel” or “move” (Bruna; Kell; Stein and Slonimsky; Vieira). In both cases, scholars show writers carrying out literate activities in one linguistic or geographic context learned in another. For example, Juan Guerra shows writers keeping journals and writing letters between English and Spanish to maintain transcultural ties and develop bilingual identities. Bonny Norton describes multilingual women learning English in Canada with differing levels of success in their personal and professional lives. Loukia Sarroub depicts young writers in her study creating multilingual cultural texts like wedding invitations in order to fuse Muslim and American traditions. Canagarajah (“Critical”) describes college writers successfully incorporating grammatical constructions, cultural themes, and rhetorical moves from multiple languages into their academic writing.

In order to argue that multilingual writers compose with intention, calling on skills and strategies learned elsewhere, much of the scholarly work above relies on an understanding of literacy as a durable resource that writers call on to compose. However, the literature below shows that literate resources, themselves, are too dependent on shifting social contexts and a contextual re-valuing of social capital to be reliably resourced by writers. Literacy and language “resources” should be better understood as elusive, in-process, and often slipping away or changing when writers reach for them to communicate. This section mines the paradox of traveling literacies—why some travel with writers while others do not—showing how multilingual literacy practices might be better understood as unstable resources for writers, rather than stable pre-formed resources in durable repertoires, or founts of social capital to be used for further social mobility.

*Literacy as Resource*⁹

Just as writing studies has “treated tools and toolkits as givens, as cultural inheritances...that people use or fail to use” (Prior and Shipka 228), multilingual writing studies has treated literacy practices, in multiple languages, as stable tool-like resources and durable toolkit-like repertoires that multilingual writers can or cannot access. Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur, for example, claim that linguistic difference is “a resource for producing meaning in writing, speaking, reading, and listening” (299), while both they and Canagarajah have promoted a “resource discourse” rather than a “rights discourse” of linguistic variety. They claim that while a rights-based discourse “simply affirms the existence or preservation” of different codes and languages, a resource-based discourse views “language differences and fluidities as resources to be preserved, developed, and utilized” (Canagarajah “SROTL” paragraph 8; Horner et al. 300).

Elsewhere, Canagarajah describes his case study, Buthainah, as a writer who “considers her background as a resource” and “draws actively” from her “multimodal resources for expression” (“Codemeshing” 407). Anis Bawarshi says we need to understand the “resources students bring with them” and how students “negotiate between and make use of their varied linguistic and discursive resources” (197). Applied linguists have made similar claims for multilingual resources, saying that multilingual immigrants “bring with them knowledge of the world, varied content, experiences, and interpretations” (Shohamy 422) using “the languages at their disposal as a resource in communication” (Cenoz and Gorter 358). Block says “there is a

⁹ Literate resources and repertoires are often evoked as siblings or sometimes synonymously. They should not be synonymous—repertoires are a foundational concept in sociolinguistics that mean “the totality of linguistic resources,” or a “complex of communicative resources” including varieties, dialects, styles, genres, and acts of speaking or “all those means that people know how to use...from linguistic ones (language varieties) over cultural ones (genres, styles) and social ones (norms for the production and understanding of language) (Gumperz *Directions* 20-21; Gumperz *Discourse*; Blommaert “Superdiverse” 23). Repertoires have been understood similarly in genre theory, as overlapping or interacting sets of genres (Devitt, Orlikowski and Yates). Thus repertoires and resources are related with the characteristics of one having to naturally color the other.

need for teachers to draw on the considerable language resources that such students bring with them to class” (80). The repetition of “resources” here should indicate the frequency of the term’s repetition across language and literacy studies. Just in these instances, resources are variously described as multimodal, linguistic, discursive, and knowledge and experience-based. According to these depictions, they are brought to classrooms, drawn on actively, and maintained at writers’ disposal.

Evoked often in calls for change, the intention of the word is admirable, since its use was originally meant to push against or reframe deficit models of multilingualism, bringing attention to the resources and repertoires that all writers have indeed formed over the course of a lifetime and moving research attention away from the multilingual writers’ lack of standard varieties. However, because languages are “not fixed codes by themselves [but] are fluid codes framed within social practices,” we cannot rely on language resources to be similarly fixed or existing outside of social practice (Garcia 32). Nor can we rely on modalities, discourses, knowledge, experience, or any of the other resource descriptors to be stable entities to be reliably drawn upon for communicative success. Language is an activity rather than a structure, something we do rather than something we take up and use: “Languages are not tools that are used in contexts...not pre-given entities but the results of practice” (Pennycook *Practice* 133). Thus, treating resources as always socially dependent and contingent challenges the idea that a resource can be “a prior object that...exists out there in the world and can then be taken up and put to some use” (Pennycook *Practice* 8). Because they are made of discursive matter, resources are fickle, as are the repertoires they comprise.

Literacy as Capital

In fact, if resources are considered to be a kind of capital—a perhaps fitting conflation if one thinks of both economically—it becomes even more clear why resources are so situationally-dependent. Following Foucault and Bourdieu, Allan Luke argues that literate capital is not defined by literate competence that is “acquired in the school and fully credentialed through grades or degrees,” but is mediated through and converted into further capital by power structures within particular institutional and discursive domains (“Genres” 327). This further capital—economic, cultural, social, and symbolic—is granted or withheld depending on one’s access to the institutions or domains that grant it (Bourdieu).

In other words, no matter the extent of one’s literate repertoire or the deft wielding of one’s literacy and language resources, this literate capital cannot bring about further social or cultural capital without accessing specific institutional sites. If one is already at risk of being barred from certain institutions, as are oftentimes immigrants, migrants, refugees, or dialect speakers, the realization of social capital is “contingent on institutional pre-conditions which delimit and authorize what one is ‘entitled’ to do” and, indeed, will be very hard fought (Luke, “Genres” 329). If a writer cannot access the graduate program, workplace, or community center because of their accent, lack of documentation, or financial status, they cannot put their existing resources to use to bring about further social mobility. Writers may carry their resources with them, but if they cannot access them for further use, the resource may remain inaccessible and invisible. Therefore, according to Luke, the value of literacy capital has no “intrinsic power of the skill, text, competence or genre acquired” but instead depends on 1) any given market’s valuing of that resource and 2) access to institutions, social networks, or powerful individuals who can convert those resources into further social purchase.

These understandings of resources—they are made of language; they are kinds of capital—partially explain the instability of resources. One further factor is globalization’s penchant for creating “new and complex markets for linguistic and communicative resources” (Blommaert 3). Many of the accounts below show writers attempting to access resources that have been formed under conditions of globalization for use in new contexts also shaped by global forces. But as markets have formed and re-formed under neoliberal globalization, they have become by definition competitive among literate “winners and losers.” For example, as the Slovakian English learners in Prendergast’s study migrated between Slovakia and England or America “they felt they had less grasp of the language, not more” because their English, while superior for Slovakia, was still accented Slovakian English in the U.S. and England (Prendergast 53). Globalizing markets for literate resources, those that immigrant writers experience before, after, and along the paths of migration, constantly re-value these resources, like certain varieties of English. As moving writers encounter various shifting markets, so too do their resources experience high or low value, again often at the whims of powerful global institutions and organizations.

Literacy as Social Mobility

All of this isn’t to say that multilingual writers are completely agent-less and incapable of calling on any of their resources in the face of a globalizing world. Surely the accounts below show this to not be the case. But understanding resources as a kind of unstable and shifting linguistic capital helps explain some of their volatility, lifting some of the burden *off* the writer, in fact, if these resources do not bring about the social mobility, political power, free will, or wholesale social improvement sometimes promised or expected. In fact, treating literacies as uneven and unstable resources sheds light on the literacy paradox sometimes considered an impasse between

autonomous and ideological models of literacy (Brandt and Clinton; Collins and Blot): on the one hand, literacy learning, especially in western forms of English, will bring about social mobility and change in writers' lives; on the other hand no amount of literacy will bring such change since literacy is always socially situated.

In the first case, literacy is commonly assumed to bring about certain kinds of mobility, especially upward social mobility.¹⁰ Claims that literacy produces social mobility often appear in educational discourse in the U.S. (think "Race to the Top"), as well as in international or government-run literacy programs created in the hopes that increased reading and writing skills will result in social progress. For example, Uta Papen describes a literacy program in Namibia whose slogan "Educate the Woman, Educate the Nation," tightly links increased education in the individual to increased capacity in a nation to push against economic and political forces that keep it in place (44). Papen calls this belief in literacy an "unquestioned assumption" and a "mobilizing metaphor that is used to promote the government's literacy program" (44).

Researchers carrying out ethnographic work in other parts of the world similarly associate gained literacy with mobility, saying knowledge of global languages like English, Chinese, and French are "the best—and sometimes the only—opportunity currently available to many bright people...for social and geographical mobility" (Jacquemet 267) and often can "secure a job with a foreign company that pays significantly more...and enables the exchange of ideas and perspectives" (Crawford 82-83). Others focusing on basic literacy in English say literacy programs will grant individuals "access to knowledge and opinions through printed

¹⁰ A common sociological definition of social mobility is "the quantity of movement and the distribution of its direction and distance" along "a social hierarchy that defines a dimension of social inequality in a society" (Borgatta and Montgomery). This understanding of mobility looks like, for example, sociologist Ruben Rumbaut's finding that "an immigrant's legal status is a critical factor in shaping mobility" or that "English proficiency is a correlate of upward mobility," and "socioeconomic mobility among children of immigrants hinge on their access to public colleges and universities" (206, 219, 232). Most sociologists working under this definition understand mobility as an outcome of other factors rather than as an ongoing process.

materials” in schooling that can bring about the ability to regain power in the home, increase one’s self-esteem, foster “civil engagement,” and “engage in increasingly complex activities over time and gain individual autonomy while doing so” (Stromquist “Political Benefits” 91, 97-98; Stromquist “Women’s Rights” 143).¹¹ Both Jacquemet and Crawford are cognizant of the neoliberal discourse that regulates such promises for mobility, but Stromquist invests heavily in an autonomous model of literacy not situated in any system of power.

In the second case, against the association of gained literacy with social mobility, literacy researchers claim that “literacy in itself does not promote cognitive advance, social mobility or progress: literacy practices are specific to the political and ideological context and their consequences vary situationally” (Street *Social* 24). Brian Street seems to be responding directly to Stromquist when he explains that many programs develop curriculum and policy under the “assumption that literacy in itself—autonomously” will enhance “cognitive skills, improving their economic prospects, making them better citizens, regardless of the social and economic conditions that accounted for their ‘illiteracy’ in the first place” (77). Street especially critiques national and international literacy development programs because their literacy-as-individual-skill model “assumes a single direction in which literacy development can be traced, and associates it with ‘progress’, ‘civilization’, individual liberty, and social mobility” (*Social* 29).

Other scholars similarly find that literacy and language resources are not a guarantee for mobility (Graff; Hernandez-Zamora; Luke “Genres;” Luke and Carrington; Prendergast). For example, Prendergast says, “no amount of English fluency would allow” the subjects in her study “to completely transcend” the stereotypical designations the “global economy had assigned them,” designations that hindered rather than aided their potential for social betterment in the

¹¹ Stromquist’s definition of literacy is “the ability to read complex material and express a variety of ideas in writing [as achieved through] formal schooling” (“Political Benefits” 89).

European Union (4). In fact, as the region changed around them, the English language knowledge they had worked so hard to gain in order to become socially (and geographically) mobile “was no longer the knowledge that counted” (53). Thus, literacy “by itself [holds] no guarantees of wealth, mobility, or even fair rewards” and “can only be realized and articulated through a series of contingencies which arise in the cultural and social field” such as the contingencies of swiftly shifting markets under globalization (Graff 149; Luke “Genres” 330). This is why some mobile language resources and repertoires will “allow mobility while others will not”—because such resources “follow the predicament of their users: when the latter are socially mobile, their resources will follow this trajectory; when they are socially marginal, their resources will also be disqualified” (Blommaert *Sociolinguistics* 24, 47). In other words, language and literacy resources are absolutely bound up with the social positions in which writers find themselves as well as the social forces through which they write.

We can see in the juxtaposition of these arguments—literacy produces almost any social change or literacy produces nothing on its own—the impasse at the juncture of autonomous and ideological models of literacy. It is possible this impasse is bolstered by the fragility of literate resources, since erratic capital- and market-dependent resources both can *and* cannot bring about social change. So while New Literacy Studies treats socially-contingent literacy practices as assumed norm in academic circles, assumptions that “literacy naturally makes one a better person by changing one’s internal cognitive capacities and moral fibre” retain just as much currency in policy and governmental contexts (Luke, “Genres” 312). But whether or not gained literacy resources always bring about social mobility is rather beside the point, since the literature above and the accounts below seem to suggest that it does both.

Foregrounding an analysis of movement helps us see why this might be. In an attempt to shift our focus away from outcomes and toward mobile, ongoing activities, this chapter shows how the mobility of literacy practices, their movement from one place and language to another, can de-stabilize literacy and language resources, making them both contingent on social situation and constantly re-valued by social actors. Understanding literacy through movement shows how language-in-use makes writers both socially mobile but also socially marginal since mobile resources are not stable—their value and capital is always in flux. The lived experiences and material practices of the multilingual immigrant writers below underscore this complexity. Writers on the move can successfully reach for their vast literacy and language resources just as often as these writers are *immobilized*—unable to access their resources—by forces beyond themselves. In this way, foregrounding the mobility of literacy can also illuminate how multilingual writers actively manipulate their mobile literacy resources, but also carefully tempers the romantic idea of mobility as uninhibited freedom and choice.

Multilingual Resources on the Move

The following accounts show how literacy practices travel. The five accounts below give shape and specificity to multilingual literacy practices on the move, emphasizing the range of literacies practiced by moving writers. They describe writing as professionals, mothers, and students to audiences as varied as their children, employees, classmates, students, imagined public audiences, and themselves. The accounts reveal moments of literacy practices successfully traveling, as writers explain how their ability to move their literacy practices helped them to make gains in their lives. But these moments are tempered by stories of immobility, in which attempts to draw on literate resources leaves writers feeling stuck, lost, or silent. In both cases, accounts show the presence of powerful social actors—government institutions, globalizing

educational curricula and policy, NGOs—and shifting social expectations. On occasion, these social structures supported these writers, staying out of their way and remaining invisible as these powerful women wrote themselves through immigration. On other occasions social forces become powerful impositions in these writers' accounts, de-valuing their extensive language and literacy resources. This section will follow both analytic lines, showing that when literacy practices travel between locations and languages their values shift and change, not only because the writers themselves are innovative, smart, and adaptable, but also because the social forces they experience through immigration shift and change just as frequently.

The immigrant women in this study do not completely adhere to the narrative of downward mobility, the “eerie repetition of the same” in which educated and uneducated women with “distinctive class histories,” education, and differing migration paths “find themselves in disturbingly similar circumstances” (Lee and Pratt 226). While many of them did experience a de-valuing of their experience and certifications after immigration, many were simultaneously able to leverage different language and literacy skills to return to school, change professions, and adapt. As in literacy researcher Martin-Jones' work, the analysis below attempts to “highlight the active ways in which women respond to the circumstances in which they find themselves as a consequence of migration, drawing on the language and literacy resources available to them” (168). At the same time, the analysis ignores neither the instability of these resources—they attempt to write but suddenly cannot—nor the social contexts that value these resources in unequal amounts.

Alicia

Alicia, a high school ESL and social studies teacher, spoke, read, and wrote among Hebrew, Spanish, English, and Arabic as she grew up in Argentina, though she also took French in high

school because she was “curious” and learned basic Portuguese from the “bunches of books” her family would buy when they traveled to Brazil. She attended a private Jewish bilingual Spanish/English primary school and a Jewish technical high school run by ORT.¹² The presence of religion in these schools exposed Alicia to nine years of written and spoken Hebrew. In the context of these multilingual schools, Alicia wrote often to understand religion, history, and culture, writing herself across multiple geographic and cultural locations using the western academic methods she was taught early on in her unconventional schooling.

One of the earliest writing assignments Alicia remembers is an elementary school project in which her assigned team picked a region of Argentina and wrote about its resources and history: “The idea was that we had to explain the resources of the area, and then I remember using tracing paper for different layers [to show] the resources, the geographic features.” This first project set a precedent for an understanding of language that Alicia has carried since that time—that languages have layers and histories that can be traced back through time. This understanding was fostered in high school when Alicia joined an extracurricular oral history group whose leaders taught her to write interview protocols and interview notes about Jewish communities in Argentina:

I’ve had the chance to interview people that were part of our military dictatorship in the 70s and 80s. I interviewed holocaust survivors. And we also had like two trips to different Jewish colonies around in Argentina and we got to interview a lot of the people who are probably dead now.

Alicia explains that even though her high school teachers did most of the analysis, her written inquiry into these other groups exposed her to the existence of more than one language and culture within national borders. Her transcription of the narrated histories of conflict, displacement, and cultural belonging proved a literate resource for understanding her own Jewish

¹² The name 'ORT' was coined from the acronym of the Russian words *Obshestvo Remeslenofo zemledelcheskofo Truda*, meaning The Society for Trades and Agricultural Labour. See <<http://www.ort.org/asp/essay.asp?id=523>>.

history in Argentina and the linguistic history of her own family. Interestingly, because the extracurricular oral history group had developed a relationship with a small liberal arts college in the U.S., Alicia applied to this college and was accepted, deciding to major in anthropology. Thus, this one resource in her literate repertoire helped her write herself into motion and attend college in another location and language, aided along the way by an international relationship between an Argentine high school and U.S. university.

In this new university setting, Alicia had help moving her existing academic reading and writing practices from her Argentinian high school to the U.S. and between Spanish and English. She said she would visit the writing center on campus regularly and describes meeting with “one of the toughest professors with his corrections” at least once a week to talk through her essay writing. She says these one-on-one meetings taught her to read closely for the structure of English writing. Eventually, she says, she “understood, okay this is the way they write. . . .this is how their reading looks like, so this is what I should be doing.” While Alicia doesn’t express being taught explicitly to read models to understand “the way they write,” it seems that talking about her writing in English helped facilitate her awareness of the differences in style and guide her choices about writing in each.

In an oral history class for her major, Alicia continued to develop her ethnographic writing practices when she researched Patagonia and “did a lot more analyzing and actually wrote a paper about . . .the Jewish community there in comparison to the Jewish communities in agrarian areas.” She explains that interview-based writing was some of her most successful writing in college, saying “[my professors] were pretty proud of my writing skills considering the fact that I had only been in the states for like six, seven months at that time.” This literacy practice proved to be quite mobile, traveling with Alicia to the U.S. and helping her establish her

academic abilities. The institutional structure of this particular U.S. college acknowledged the value of Alicia's existing writing practices and validated its use in English. Her ethnographic writing, learned in Spanish in Argentina and continued in English in the U.S., also taught Alicia to pay attention to the context, the historical construction of language, and especially to audience. She explains that it was writing that built these abilities:

These are things that I didn't stop to think about until actually I wrote a paper in college about this. Cause when somebody in my family gets something in their throat we go "Allah, allah!" And I was like holy shit, we're saying Allah Allah! We're Jewish, what the hell? Doesn't make any sense! But that's the way my great grandparents did it, the way my grandparents did it and then the way they did with my parents. And that's the way I learned to react to that. And it's just the way it is.

She explains that these skills of analyzing "what does this mean in the time period," "who are the people that wrote that," "making general assumptions like what does this mean and taking it further from there," are, for her, "skills that regardless of whether [she] learned them in English or Spanish [she] was able to apply" in the U.S. Most importantly, Alicia says her ability to "think a lot about the context," traveled with her from Argentina, helping her reflect on "the way [she] learned to react to" her family and cultural history, facilitating a critical understanding of language and audience. It was her particular academic setting that supported the smooth travel of these conventions, highlighting Alicia's academic potential in a social setting that could have set up barriers of testing or transfer requirements, but instead essentially got out of her way.

This mobile literacy practice of ethnographic writing allowed Alicia to be "very conscious about the way that [she is] pronouncing things and the word choice." She says, "I'm very picky and conscious about who my audience is." And as she continued to travel between the U.S., Argentina, and then Mexico to study abroad, she took this critical understanding with her. She further developed a meta-awareness of audience when she returned home to Argentina

during college and wanted to tell her friends about what she had learned in the U.S. in English.

But Alicia struggled to relay the content of her courses:

How do I translate like the phonological system of the Neanderthal? I just learned this in biological anthro but I don't know how to explain this in Spanish. So there were certain circumstances when I was like oh I wish I could just open my mouth and use English on this occasion or I wish I could open my mouth and speak Spanish in this occasion, but sometimes the audience prevents you from doing that so you have to be selective.

This moment shows one outcome of a mobile literacy practice—traveling with her ethnographic practices allowed her to develop audience awareness. Alicia carried her intellectual curiosity and excitement with her, but in a Spanish-only context, could not share this curiosity or excitement.

This was the moment, however, that made her aware of the limits of language and the benefits of an audience who might be multilingual like her.

By moving her ethnographic writing between Spanish, English, Hebrew, Arabic, between Argentina, Mexico, and the U.S., Alicia came to understand how languages are historically and contextually contingent and how cultural contexts shape one's writing for certain audiences. Her ethnographic writing practices served her well in more than one location and language, which in turn heightened a kind of intellectual mobility attuned to language and audience. Further, the mobility of Alicia's literacy practices did allow her to be socially mobile, facilitating her entrance to a private college in the U.S. where she met her middle-class husband and received an education she's proud of. This writing practice also prepared her for future research projects when she studied abroad in Mexico and completed an ethnography there, which in turn was an experience quite attractive to her current employers. Alicia is an intrepid woman, clearly, but the mobility of her literacy repertoire, and her subsequent social mobility was also supported by larger social structures—student visa status, cross-national university projects, her young age and single status—that encouraged these mobilities as well.

Khadroma

Khadroma, a Tibetan nursing student from China, was also able to move a particular literacy practice between languages and locations—translation between Tibetan, Mandarin, and English. This mobile literacy practice exposed her to a wide variety of cultures and languages in China and the U.S. and ultimately helped her understand how multiple languages, as she says, help you “analyze people’s situation from different perspectives.” Khadroma used these translation practices in China and in the U.S. for occupational gain, but also for intellectual growth. Educational opportunities in her region of China supported this practice, which was then called upon in a higher educational context in the U.S.

Khadroma spoke Tibetan at home and Mandarin in school until she attended a teaching college where her classes were conducted in English, Chinese, and Tibetan, a multilingual setting that Khadroma explains was noteworthy for its inclusion of Tibetan language in the curriculum. This wasn’t “just for the sake of language,” or the learning of the languages themselves, says Khadroma, but also to experience courses in sociology, anthropology, and world literature in these different languages. After college, she decided not to become a teacher and instead took a test to enter what she described as an English training program funded by “a couple of American foundations.” It was in this program that Khadroma was trained in interpretation and translation and was exposed to American culture through her teachers, many of whom were from California. At this time, Khadroma was employed as a civil servant for the government, writing eulogies for a newspaper and essays on health information for politically important retirees. But to keep up her relationships with her American teachers, Khadroma also wrote translations and interpreted for American NGOs who were doing work in Tibet. She explained they usually “needed someone who is able to speak English and Tibetan and Chinese to help the traveling.” She did

these jobs on the weekends and was happy to be able to travel and speak in her multiple languages. In this work she helped “with the traveling” but also was able to travel herself, using her literacy practice as a mechanism for cultural and intellectual movement.

After immigrating to the U.S., none of her school credit, credentials, or work experience transferred. She decided she would “start all over” and become a nurse because she hoped for a meaningful career in which she could care for other people. She attended a local community college and then transferred to a four-year university and entered their nursing program. During that time she offered her translation services to the county public health department to work with Chinese and Tibetan immigrants. Khadroma was then called on by the university to translate documents in the nursing program and finally by the chancellor’s office in preparation for the Chancellor’s trip to China. Khadroma’s professional trajectory shows how the mobility of this literacy practice helped Khadroma achieve other kinds of mobilities—social mobility as she earned extra money from her translation work, cultural mobility as she moved between working with Tibetan refugees, fellow international nursing students, and American professors, and intellectual mobility as she shared her linguistic knowledge with employers as prestigious as the Chancellor’s office.

Khadroma feels that this intellectual mobility is particularly acute to her, knowing that her translation work affects how she “perceives certain ideas” and allows her to understand how language reveals “how we were raised up or how we understand certain things.” One of Khadroma’s narratives especially illustrates how practicing translation helps her achieve this understanding:

Yesterday we went to a museum. We were looking at some art pieces and analyze from nursing perspectives. So the artist is from Japan, there are some characters on the picture. So when I look at that I feel like “ooh, I know that” because...on that picture, when you look at this Japanese characters, I was able to read that. ...So my instructor was like

“what does that say? If you know” and I said “the store opens at 10:30.” “wow that’s good to know!” [laughing]. I feel like I understand something more...a little bit additional you know.

In this way, the literacy practice of translation, as Khadroma wrote and spoke across English, Mandarin, and Tibetan in China and the U.S. helped her build a complex kind of intellectual awareness. The “little bit additional” that she knew allowed her to become an expert in an English-dominant student context and to draw on Mandarin to infer meaning from Japanese characters. She explains that she feels “fortunate to know more than one language” because “we always have one perspective when we use one language, [and] we tend to judge based on that language.” Khadroma’s practices in translation moved with her from one country and multiple languages to others, and from this movement she was made mobile in a variety of ways. The mobility of this practice also provided material and economic support for her social status in the U.S., even as it fostered a sense of pride and utility for her multilingual capacities. And like Alicia, Khadroma’s mobile literacy practices were supported by macro-level social forces woven throughout her memories and experiences—global educational networks and capital, international NGOs that supported Tibetan language and education, and U.S. universities and institutions that valued Khadroma’s translation skills in this particular historical moment.

Both Khadroma and Alicia’s accounts describe literacy practices successfully traveling. Movement has worked out well for them both. In their accounts, we see the lived experiences of multilingual writers supporting scholarly claims that writers travel with developed language and literacy resources that they draw on to make their way in the world (Bawarshi; Canagarajah, “Toward”; Horner et al.). Because of the presence of international and NGO-run schools in their countries of origin they were familiar with western educational values and were pro-active and

independent in ways that helped them leverage their resources in U.S. contexts. This in turn responded well to their motivation, valuing their resources as much as they did. Further, their multilingual repertoires were fully developed, if uneven—Alicia’s Arabic is basic and her Hebrew is not conversational; Khadroma believes her English is not as proficient as her Mandarin and Tibetan—but included academic-level English. Both women are young, in their mid-twenties, married, without children, and living in stable, well-furnished living situations.

In general, we can understand Khadroma and Alicia’s accounts to be the pleasant tale, the one that resists a narrative of downward mobility for women after migration and embodies a bootstraps trope that results in upward social mobility. But importantly, the descriptions also contain moments when something did not make it: none of Khadroma’s school credit, credentials, or work experience transferred to the U.S.; Alicia felt unable to explain in Spanish what she had learned in English. These moments of immobility, scattered throughout experiences of successful movement hint that the process of traveling literacies is not straightforward, not always positively progressing, and much more complicated than expected.

Tashi

Tashi, a Tibetan woman from India, is a former science teacher who decided to return to school to be a nurse after immigration to the U.S. Tashi has an MS in biology and speaks Hindi, Tibetan, English, and Kannada, the language of the Indian state where she attended and then taught high school science. She describes her schooling experience as “the same as British system” because “India is under British rule for 200 years.” Thus, she explained that she learned English from first grade and read and wrote everything in English. Her English learning started from “parts... words in the English class in first, second, third, standard and lots of vocabularies” and reached full composition writing in 5th grade when “they would grade it and give us back”

sometimes having students who get a “very good mark” read it out loud “so everybody gets encouraged by that person following the example.” However, her classmates did not “speak in English cause we stay together with the group. ...Teacher teaches in English, but students answer in Tibetan or sometimes in English.” This school, influenced by British colonialism and funded by English-medium NGOs remained multilingual and Tashi grew up speaking, reading, and writing among English, Hindi, Kannada, and Tibetan.

As a daughter of farmers who could not read or write, Tashi guided her own learning, at times “teaching them back what [she] had learned” as she taught her father to sign his name or helped her mother interpret the occasional mail. She says they let her “take control of [her] education.” And Tashi did. During the time allotted for homework at the Indian boarding school she attended for Tibetan refugees, she would study English-language newspapers and books on her own with an intensity that is detailed further in Chapter Five. Tashi completed her education in a boarding school funded by international sponsors, and then attended college to learn how to teach in the secondary school for Tibetan refugees and orphans where she herself had lived as a student.

During this college experience in India, Tashi wrote a piece of writing that changed her social reality, which then became a literacy practice she continued in the U.S. She explains that at the end of her last year in school, she participated in an inter-collegiate speech competition with 25 other participants from colleges across India. She says that she wrote and revised a speech on the topic of charismatic leadership with the help of her teachers:

The day before the actual competition I had kind of presented to them and they were saying like it’s kind of little away from the topic. Then I went back home that night and I tailored my writing and then I practiced and we tape recorded. My friend pretended she was jury to practice. Next day when I went for the competition, I was the last person to call because my name is T, so they go in alphabets. Every student was taking like 10

minutes, so it was long in between. So I was sitting over there and then finally I delivered the speech. And I was the first.

Tashi won the competition and felt great pride in her writing: “I won and it was nice. I was like a winner because it’s for the different colleges and I am the only Tibetan. All are Indians, so competing against them.” For Tashi, winning the speech competition didn’t only mean that she had superior facility in writing, revising, and speaking in English. It also meant that her writing skills distinguished her in a community in which she had previously felt repressed. She says growing up in India, “they just keep reminding us of like being as countryless,” and she was often told “you guys are refugees here, you didn’t have your land, you should go back.” In this way, Tashi used her writing to alter the right she felt to speak in such an atmosphere. She made gains for herself and for her Tibetan community by writing, revising, and delivering in English a winning speech on charismatic leadership.

After immigrating to the U.S., Tashi attended a community college since her credentials and degrees did not transfer to the U.S. but she still “need some skill cause [she] had lots of education and should not be just ending up like any other thing who have not studied.” Though she found much of the coursework to be repetitive, she learned “the basic components of being a nurse” to be “compassionate, ready to help,” saying this was nursing’s “main language.” She described being already fluent in this language, being trained to be compassionate as a Tibetan teacher, and described herself as already prepared to read and write in a U.S. university science program. She says her essay writing practice in high school and college in India “made it really easy to study psychology, sociology, and all because I can express, especially easy when it’s writing.” She says the lack of multiple choice testing in India gave her this practice as well as a preference for essay testing—“I like it more than doing multiple choice.” She says, “if you didn’t get time to read” for a multiple choice test “you are out, like out. But if you know to express you

can get some concept.” Tashi seems to be drawing on her existing practices in essay writing, relying on her skills in expression rather than rote retrieval to succeed in her courses. She explains:

You need to have like four or five concepts just to write a big paper. Just maybe elaborate on one point and you fill up like for one point you can have one paragraph or you can have two paragraphs. First paragraph doing kind of analyzing it and you coming to the conclusion. So that’s how I was thinking.

Tashi’s essay writing practices, self-taught in elementary school and revised during college, traveled well to the U.S. and this successful wielding of her literate resources enabled success in her courses, and created the potential for social mobility through a graduate degree and new career. However, just as these literacy practices acted as resources for Tashi and allow her to write with success in the U.S., her practices all the while are informed by her heightened awareness of the inequity of language. When Tashi writes among her languages she feels like a “jack of all trades and master of none.” She says “in a way that’s good because I’m with the average of groups; I can express myself...[but] I don’t get pointed out for being too weak.” She explains this need to get by as coming from her status as a refugee in India: “Being a refugee, we have no choice but to follow and be, when you are in Rome, be as Roman. So do as Roman do and be as Roman.” Tashi describes an incident in which she forgot her own practice of being “with the average of groups”:

This one Tibetan friend in my class, I make sure I work with her in English because I tend to speak to her in Tibetan as soon as I see her face. And if do this mistake, at the bedside of the patient, that’s breaking the policy. ...I had the experience in my class, when I see my partner I speak in Tibetan and the patient felt kind of offended. So my clinical instructor, she called me aside and she was like ‘[Tashi] you are not allowed to speak in your language when patient is there. And she was offended.’ I was sorry, it was so unconscious, like when I see her face, just comes out. ...I thought, it can be true because patient like, all patient might not be feeling bad, but still, like some patient do have concern. And in her case like she has a right to feel offended because I didn’t ask for permission, so she might have felt hurt and she might have felt isolated or excluded? I told [my partner] sorry, but after that she chose another partner.

Tashi didn't control her Tibetan at that moment; she saw her partner's face and it just "came out." And this automatic use of the language with which she associated her own and her partner's "face" was against the policy of the nursing program which seems to allow only English for the safety or potential "offense" of the real clinical patient. In this way, Tashi's multilingual resources, while beneficial in public speaking, in essay testing, and science writing still run up against social structures in the U.S. that don't allow her to access her language and literacy resources at will. These contexts—monolingual policies, high-stakes graduate schooling, linguistic discrimination or at least misunderstanding—do not value her multilingualism. In fact, this incident shows an example in which more language resources can become a liability.

Multilingual Resources Not Moving

In these three accounts, we see immigrant writers moving their literacy practices across multiple languages and global locations, showing how a writing practice developed in one geographic context certainly is carried with writers to another as an element of a literacy repertoire writers draw on to communicate or express themselves. These writers' experiences support the idea that multilingual writers bring their literacy and language resources with them when they migrate or move. Alicia, Khadroma, and Tashi manipulated their literacy and language repertoires to express, communicate, and make gains through writing, drawing on these resources to make themselves socially and intellectually mobile. The potential of recognizing and encouraging these mobile literacy practices is great: when multilingual writers are allowed or asked to draw on these resources when they write, they seem to better understand culture, history, and language, are hyperaware of audience, can articulate similarities and differences among writing styles in multiple languages, and can eventually write themselves into new intellectual and professional status.

However, these accounts also show the presence of powerful social structures that both granted the success of these traveling resources, as in the case of Alicia and Khadroma, or else withheld them, as in the case of Tashi. For Alicia and Khadroma, multilingual schooling at the primary, secondary, and college levels created a norm under which these writers considered literate movement between languages to be a given. Exposure to globalizing academic practices like ethnographic methods, international schooling networks, and exchange teachers, enabled both women to smoothly enact their own literacy practices developed under these institutions. Street has noted that literacy, in schools or in out-of-school literacy development programs, is often “introduced along with a whole range of features of western society—forms of industrialization, bureaucracy, formal schooling, medicine, and so forth” (*Literacy* 37). Therefore, it is not surprising that Alicia and Khadroma’s resources carried a Western tinge that seems to have facilitated their smooth travel to the U.S.

But how might we understand the dilemma of highly educated, rhetorically developed multilingual writers whose literacy and language resources are not always mobile in this way and become, sometimes randomly and without notice, shut down, frozen, or held in place? Tashi was able to travel with many of her literacy and language practices, but when she wanted to draw on her multilingualism to reach out to a fellow Tibetan she broke the social contract of English dominance. Thus her resources were not rewarded and she was reminded to return to her go-with-the-flow state conditioned by her refugee status.

Similar moments have appeared in other studies of moving and multilingual writers (Luke and Carrington; Hernandez-Zamora). Prendergast describes English language learners as stuck among the broken promises of the cultural and economic power of English. Amidst a European Union economy that “saw little value in their steady linguistic devotions” because they

were still Slovakian, Prendergast's subjects were not able to move up in professional, social, or cultural class, and instead felt "stuck in motion, bound in freedom," experiencing "immobility within movement" (147). Anthropologist Sondra Cuban describes a former teacher who was "unable to advance" as an immigrant in England: "I have the impression, by doing things, meeting people, I will get somewhere. I hope. No results. I am still stuck in the job. Stuck in one place, not developing yourself" ("Home/work" 182). These writers feel "stuck," "fixed," "lost," "bound."

As the next section shows, Tashi is not alone in experiencing this differential valuation of literate resources. Defne and Faridah write from developed multilingual repertoires, carrying their literacy practices with them from Turkey and Algeria to the U.S., from Turkish, German, Arabic, and French to English. Their practices in academic essay writing, literary reading, journal writing, and writing for translation have certainly traveled between locations and multiple languages. But when they reach for these resources in the U.S., their language and literacy skills seem to have stalled or slipped away. This is not just a matter of less- or more-developed literacy and language repertoires, nor of economic class or educational background, because these vary for both women. Instead, these writers find their literacy practices immobilized—stuck, fixed, held in place—by social structures and expectations that re-value their resources, making them unreliable and ultimately contingent. The paradoxical possibility of simultaneously mobile and immobilized literacy resources reminds us that practiced literacy, in English or any other language, does not always bring about social change for the writers who have set out to better their lives. While writers certainly can write themselves into motion, and bring their writing practices with them as they travel, the outcomes of that movement can be uneven and fragile.

Defne

Defne is a thirty-five-year-old Turkish woman from an upper-middle-class family who moved to the U.S. for graduate school but has now left her graduate program to teach part-time as a lecturer at a community college. Defne's literacy practices were developed in Turkish, German, and English throughout her primary and secondary schooling years. She says she was "always reading reading reading reading" by herself, especially the translated work of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. She says, "day and night with no sleep...I tried to make sure that I read all of his books." Defne explained that her mother would take her and her brother to book fairs in the "small, conservative" Turkish city she grew up in. Her brother would find James Bond books while she would be able to find "stuff that [she would like]." She also wrote poems in a journal her professor mother gave her, writing about things that "bothered" her, "those images that kids see. ...Yeah, it was just this emotion stuck in there that made me."

Defne learned German simultaneously with Turkish because her family lived in Germany for the first three years of her life. At seven she began learning English, and she remembers singing songs like "Brother John" and "London Bridge". In middle school she traveled back to Germany for three months to continue learning German, and in high school she visited Cambridge for a summer English immersion program. She says during this trip "it was the first time [she] was exposed to actually thinking creatively, writing things." In college she lived in Austria for two months to continue her German study and she "finally was able to get some classes that were really appealing" to her. She says she wrote well in these classes, receiving "very positive feedback" from her teachers who were "kinda impressed by the quality of the writing." Thus, Defne's rich and varied literacy background was supported by this privileged

movement between countries and languages, which she fostered especially through creative expression.

After immigrating to the U.S., Defne continued to move between her literacies and languages in a highly conscious way. When asked how learning to write in Turkish influences how she writes now, she answered:

I think it's not about how I write, it's about how I think. ...I am using a lot of uh, how do you say in English like the using, for example, softness, the way the snowflakes fell on your arm? You use that kind of resemblances to other things, right? [R: Analogy? Metaphor?] Yeah, I might be using a very Turkish way because it's very cultural. ...And I do carry it to the English language for sure. Cause I don't see it as an obstacle. I see it as a resource, I mean it sometimes might sound funny, but. ...Just today I was writing an email to my friend and "I feel like all the cells in my body are crinkled," yeah. Like crinkled. And I think it might be more like the Turkish way.

Defne herself has identified that she carries resources with her, and that her literate practices in more than one language should be considered a beneficial resource on which to draw rather than a barrier to communication. Defne is also highly aware of this process and the effect such writing innovation has on others.

Defne also writes with rhetorical control and intention in English, receiving positive feedback from professors in the U.S. for mixing genres in her academic writing. She said her professors were "impressed by the quality of the writing, kinda mixing different stuff in the political, sociological papers that I was writing." To do this, she says, "I would find poems that related to it or some stories from real life stories. ...I was reading a lot so I relate to the other stuff that I read, so then I would be able to integrate it in the papers to clarify a concept in a more artistic way." She was also aware of the essay-writing conventions of the U.S. university:

Coming up with a thesis statement from the first thing is a very difficult thing. You have to read a lot before you really come up with something. ...I always wrote the introduction last. So, I mean, then in the introduction I would give a brief summary, what's my argument, you know I'm gonna talk about this argument.

However, even with this heightened rhetorical awareness, an ability to move among her languages including English, encouraging feedback from professors, and a supportive educational background, something else made Defne unable to produce writing that would bring about the social, professional, and emotional mobility she desired or needed. Describing her struggle being a single mother in school, Defne says,

Well they trashed me. Their assumption of the grad student and the work that was supposed to be based on a functioning family who had kids or a single who have nothing to do but just TA and study a lot, study work a lot. And in my case I had this small baby girl. I was all alone. I was immigrant. I had no social connections. I felt lost for a long time.

Under the institutional pressure of time, structure, and productivity, Defne became more and more disconnected from a sense of place or social belonging. She feels “lost” and place-less, not able to see a way to move forward when she doesn’t know where she stands. Under such social conditions, Defne was not able to deploy her writing repertoire to keep up or stay connected to peers, mentors, and employers.

Defne acknowledged that many people wouldn’t understand why she wouldn’t return to Turkey in such a situation, saying that even other immigrant friends didn’t understand why she would stay in the U.S. feeling so hopeless. Even though Defne knew that she would have free health care in Turkey and the support of her well-off family she said: “It’s just this psychology for me that I also have a daughter now who identifies as being American. And I feel like I re-invented my life in a way.” In this way, Defne has become newly rooted in the U.S. Through pride, dedication to her daughter’s burgeoning identity, and loyalty to her own self-invention, she is unwilling to pull up roots once again to move back to a social situation in which she might easily call on her literacy and language repertoire.

Further, as she did when she was young, Defne identifies strongly as a writer. While writing a personal essay in a community college course, she found herself saying: “Oh! There you are! I’m writing again. . . .Because you know, I feel like I lost it. I don’t even write poems. So I kind of stopped, something happened to me, who knows why. And I stopped.” Again, Defne characterizes her inability to write as being “lost” or “stopped,” a particular kind of immobility now applied not to her physical location in space, but to her writing practice and process.

Defne partially explains this immobility in her writing as a reaction to academic structures she felt were “too intense, especially with sociology writing. . . .The pressure to express yourself in a certain way.” In other words, she felt she couldn’t write in English because the expectations were too intense for the time she had available as a single mother. However, she also felt she couldn’t write for herself in Turkish, which was very much part of her identity:

Academically I was trained with the English language. I wouldn’t be able to write in Turkish academic pieces. . . .But it might be also another reason I stopped writing poems though. Because I’m not capable in my native language. It’s not really connected to my soul anymore, let’s say that way.

Defne is stuck in any language, and thus is unsure how to move forward with personal writing, and has essentially given up on the academic writing that she believes will bring about the credentials, citizenship status, and financial security she needs for herself and her daughter.

Faridah

Faridah is an Algerian woman who immigrated after her husband received a spot in an immigration lottery and now teaches Arabic part-time at a small, private Muslim school. Like Tashi, neither of Faridah’s parents read or write, and like all the women described here, Faridah traveled with a developed multilingual repertoire. She says her parents weren’t “after me to read or write, so I was doing the homework by myself.” While Defne and Alicia were supported in

their literacy learning by middle-class wealth and family expectations, Faridah was instead motivated by her mother's desire for her and her four sisters to achieve what she couldn't:

In her heart she was dreaming of having her kids do the things that she can't do. She can't open any book. When she's doing clean-up at home, whatever paper, she is saving it because she doesn't know if it is important or not. She dreams that she can read or write. You know like in our country when you are fifteen, sixteen, you start to get the idea of marriage, but my mom, she was really different of these women. Even we are five sisters, her first thing is to go to college and do a PhD and that and that and that. And reach.

Coming from a traditional muslim family in a conservative and low-resourced region in Algeria, it seems remarkable that Faridah's mother would express this conviction to her daughters, so regularly and so publicly. Because Faridah didn't describe the relative uniqueness of her mother's convictions, it's hard to say if her mother would have stood out among her community or in her family as a strong woman or feminist, but she seems to have passed on to Faridah a desire to always want more for herself. Faridah often refers to "reaching" in this way as an action that might illuminate a way to move forward in social status, educational accomplishments, or life satisfaction.

Faridah describes sitting at shared tables in her Algerian public primary school with "a kind of hole that you put the ink in," using ink pens and ink wells to learn how to write, saying "in my time this teaches us how to be patient. If you are doing any mistake you can't erase it, the ink gonna be all over your notebook." Faridah was especially supported in her English learning by her older sisters who were practicing their English around the house before she began to learn it herself. Faridah developed literacy practices first in Arabic, then in French in third grade, and English in sixth. She says, "It's three languages that you have to do with homework, with all these things." Faridah explained that it was common and expected to move constantly between these three languages for reading, writing, and homework activities, saying "you know, you are

saying the sentence, it's two words Arabic, two words French and like that [slaps hands together] and it's a word!" Faridah echoes, almost as a matter of cultural common-sense, the values of scholars above who have shown how languages are flexible and malleable in just this way.

In college, Faridah majored in French translation but disliked what she describes as “the classic one of Shakespeare and Moliere and bla bla bla” and instead switched to studying the Arabic language—“how it was, and how it is now. History of language, linguistic, we call it.” Such educational choices show her attraction to language study and her self-identification as a highly literate individual. This identity is further demonstrated in her reported success in essay writing and essay testing, both of which were commonly assigned. She describes her developed and successful writing process in this way:

So you have to do a map in your brain, the introduction, the subject that you are talking, this is the point that I'm gonna talk, dut dut dut. ...you have to use your brain more than use the information, you know? And because maybe there is some people, they have tons of information, but they don't know how to organize their ideas.

Faridah recalls that when writing one of these essays on the topic of pollution, “we have to do the introduction, what is pollution, then what is the effect of this pollution. Then in the end you give your own opinion.” Faridah describes these essays as very structured, “really organized” with requirements to leave lines after a “full stop” and two lines after the introduction. These rigid formatting and punctuation requirements become all the more stark in contrast to the more fluid requirements for the languages to be included in the essays. In this essay on pollution, she had “a little bit mixed with French, because even sometimes I wanna say something in French and then I'm gonna write it the English way.” She explained that her teacher did not critique her mixing because “sometimes you do some mistakes like that, which is not really mistakes. ...With practice, you're gonna have the habit, you know, to work two languages.” Faridah works her

languages habitually, pulling from her resources with intention, even as she is aware of the benefits of working with more than one language.

Faridah's multilingual literacy resources are further shown to be highly developed previous to immigration when she explains that she's "more comfortable writing" in multiple languages than speaking them. She says such a preference for writing gives her time to decide "why I am using this word, this is what I mean from this word." She says that for her, in Arabic "a word has many meanings. And you can choose this word and maybe it can make this person really mad. You cannot use another word that has the same meaning to make him happy."

Further, Faridah deeply identifies as a reader and writer:

Me, I was crazy about reading. I found the paper on the floor? I'm gonna get and read it. In primary school there is a paragraph describing spring, I'm gonna read it. I'm gonna keep the beautiful words here in my brain that I can use them. I find difficult book that big writer? I have to finish it. Like the last time, that I did read, it was Arabic and then translation English. I'm in the bed like almost sleeping, but I have to finish it! And my husband was like, what's the secret about this book? It's that, it's you know, inside you. ...Cause when you are reading the book you are taking from the book and you are giving. You are taking from the book, you are writing the paragraph, you are giving your experience, your opinion, your feelings too, in the writing.

Even the rhetorical repetition of Faridah's response reveals her poetic attunement to effective communication. She knows how language works.

But like Tashi and Defne, Faridah does not feel that her current writing practices have been valued in the U.S., nor are they able to have the same effect on her immediate environment since that environment itself has changed so drastically after immigration. She explains that in Algeria, her husband was what she describes as "a genius guy in the university." Faridah taught Arabic at a high school and also wrote occasionally for a newspaper. This newspaper in fact offered her a permanent position, but she decided instead to follow her husband to the U.S. Now her husband works as a public school custodian and Faridah feels that "joining him here, kind of

kill some of your dreams you know. Because here to go back to school it's impossible. It's not even hard, it's no way. You have to, I don't know how much you're gonna pay." She says, "maybe when the kids are grown up." Even with a fully developed multilingual repertoire, deep desire to learn, and talented attunement to language, social structures beyond Faridah's control have quietly shut them off.

Consider the multiple social structures that are moving in on Faridah: gendered expectations of supporting one's husband, financial barriers to further education while living on a custodian and part-time teacher salary, the time dedicated to raising children in a new country without the support of a large family network. In the U.S., Faridah experienced a confluence of gendered and economic responsibilities which made the value of her literate resources irrelevant. She explained that she was simply too tired to engage in the writing, both in and out of an academic environment, that holds meaning for her.

Faridah hopes to return to school to earn a degree from the U.S. and return with it to Algeria, but more so to continue her development as a writer and thinker:

Yeah, I'm having questions that I'm thinking. Maybe some of the people they are scared you know having questions, but for me I enjoy that. ...And I feel like if I can't write it's a lot of things inside me, a lot of feelings that I can't um, I can't send them to other people you know. Cause uh, I find myself when I'm writing.

Faridah's sense of self and her ability to communicate with others, to even leave the house to talk to the neighbors, depends very much on remaining "attached with the books, attached with learning." Otherwise, she says, while "being a mom is good, being a wife is wonderful...as a mom, as a wife, if you don't do that you're gonna find yourself just clean and that...you're gonna forget who you are, you know, as a person." She says remembering these attachments is essential "to show who you are or you gonna be lost." Faridah's mother seems to be speaking through her in this particular articulation of her selfhood. Her mother has indeed passed on

educational and literate priorities that should take precedence over being a good mom or taking on traditional female housekeeping roles, and these priorities have traveled with Faridah to the U.S. as well. However, the still present gendered expectations, along with the economic devaluing of she and her husband's professional skills in the U.S., have left her resources inaccessible to her. In an echo of Defne's expression of feeling lost, Faridah explains that it is through writing that she is able to find herself. These two women share this particular need to write their way back to themselves, explaining why, without that writing, they might not know where they stand.

Both Defne and Faridah exemplify the narrative of downward mobility that is common in much of the research on immigrant women's literacy (Cuban "Downward;" Norton; Sadeghi; Warriner). Defne started off in a well-educated and economically stable family, she experienced a downward slide in economic stability after immigrating to the U.S., getting married and divorced, having a daughter, and eventually leaving her PhD program to find part-time teaching at a community college. Faridah climbed economically from her family's status, attending college and working as a professional journalist, but after immigration to the U.S. experienced a kind of return, while contextually different, to the economic status of her parents. This is the criteria of social mobility by which many immigrant women's mobility is understood in migration studies. Especially terms like "climbed" and "slide" are evocative of a successful or failed bootstraps mentality. However, Defne and Faridah, and to a certain extent, Tashi, experience immobility beyond the social. The instability and contingent outcomes of their literate resources create, more than economic outcomes, a silencing of their sense of self. This, in turn, disables their ability to write.

Shifting Values and Contingent Effects

Alicia, Khadroma, Tashi, Defne, and Faridah are five among many multilingual writers who are on the move with their language and literacy practices. These are everyday writers, teachers, translators, and nurses, who have immigrated to the U.S. with intricate and complicated literate repertoires. But the increasing mobility of our times can have a fixing effect. Defne's academic research writing in English is highly valued in the Turkish higher education system, but is viewed by her advisors in a research university in the U.S. as grammatically inept and simply too slow. Faridah's desire to study literature and write translations is possible in Algeria because a support network and manageable cost of living exist there, while the lack of these in the U.S. make further writing and reading study impossible. Tashi's academic writing is received well in her nursing program but her oral multilingual abilities are regarded as transgressive. This is why multilingual writers experience problems, as Blommaert says, "not just of difference but of inequality." Their resources—multiple languages, rhetorical attunement, intentional language play—are valued in unequal measures.

In fact, the preceding analysis is "at odds with a celebration of migrancy and mobility as boundless and opportunity" in a way that some scholars have pointed out is built into the structure of transnationalism and globalization (Lee and Pratt 227; Bauman; Warriner). As Warriner notes, "literacy practices we have called 'transnational' are just as likely to contribute to—or exacerbate—existing inequities and injustices" (210). And Bauman says globalization, as a phenomenon, "refers primarily to the global *effects*, notoriously unintended and unanticipated, rather than to global *initiatives* or *undertakings*" (60). In other words, globalization is a phenomenon of uncontrollable outcomes, rather than controllable actions. This chapter has shown these uncontrollable effects and exacerbated inequities as continued or created just as

much by the social structures that writers cross when they move as the practices these writers carry with them.

But no particular social roles and contexts can be consistently blamed for the immobility described above. We might guess that educational preparation or family educational values might influence these writers' abilities to call on their resources. Both Faridah and Defne say it is their reading habits and mothers' educational motivation that has helped them learn how to write well. As Faridah says, writing well is an expression of "the beauty that is inside you...and that comes from what? From reading a lot." But Defne and Tashi, who both came to the U.S. with existing graduate degrees, find their resources immobilized while Alicia and Khadroma, who have just finished and are still in college, respectively, find their resources quite mobile. One might also wonder if socio-economic class shapes how these writers are able to call on their resources after immigration. But Khadroma, who comes from a large, lower-middle class family in China is finding writing success just as easily as Alicia, who is from an upper-middle class Argentinian family.

And certainly the successive presentation of five women's accounts implies a belief that a gendered social structure is the main culprit that has shut down these writers' resources. In fact, the one constant that might be seen across these five women is that the women who had children (Tashi, Defne, Faridah) struggled quite a bit more in carrying out their writing practices the way they hoped than those who did not (Alicia, Khadroma). Both Faridah and Defne specifically site their dedication to their children as a reason they aren't able to pursue professional practices that might draw on their literate resources to write themselves back to a fuller sense of self. But it is clear, as in the incident of Tashi's being silenced for speaking Tibetan, that women's roles and responsibilities are not the only factor in the immobility experienced by these writers. In fact,

Faridah explains that it is stereotypical male roles that are holding both she and her husband back from taking full advantage of their literate resources: “I feel bad for him and all these smart things inside him. But you know the money issue to go back to school...It is, it is, with the family. The kids and the wife, it’s uh to pay the rent a thousand something. To pay the electricity two hundred something. And all this, it’s impossible.” Somehow after immigration, both Faridah and her husband were forced out of the equal professional statuses they enjoyed in Algeria and into traditional gendered roles in the U.S. that equally devalued their literate resources.

In other words, no singular social context or system can be pointed to as the most powerful immobilizing or devaluing factor. Sondra Cuban finds in her studies that migration paths and trajectories are mediated by “numerous factors” including “capitalism, patriarchy...the racial division of labour” and “work/life balance” (“Home/work” 82). Defne herself agrees that these factors are interwoven and complicated: “This is very bourgeois stuff [graduate school]. I didn’t know that before. It’s funny. I was a sociologist and I didn’t know that before. But definitely, not only bourgeois, but maybe life stage and life development. It’s like you know, gender, gender.” As a smart sociologist, Defne knows that socio-economic values, and especially the flexible time that comes with a “bourgeois” status, were just as influential on her writing practices as were gendered expectations for her life stage. Thus, these immigrant women’s experiences of mobility are not dictated only by the state of their language and literacy resources or just by gendered or class expectations, but instead by the confluence of shifting and converging powerful social structures they negotiate as they move from one location to another. The value, worth, effect, or outcome of their literate resources are shifting and contingent because of who or what they encounter along the way.

Mobility and Immobility

As seen in the sections above, a mobile analysis helps us make out the contours of these shifting powerful social structures as well as the shape of the practices writers undertake to move through them. In an interesting social sleight of hand, when language and literacy resources fail to provide social mobility as in Defne and Faridah's experiences, social structures that impede movement—gender, class—are clear and often blamed; when literacy and language resources are successfully accessed by writers as in the accounts of Alicia, Khadroma, and Tashi, the powerful social structures that have helped them along are often invisible. So even though scholars have struggled to show whether well-developed literacy and language practices do or don't produce social mobility—whether or not standard or nonstandard Englishes or mono- or multilingual practices can bring about success in educational or professional contexts—this analytic line misses the point. The question is not whether literacy, or multilingual literacy, can bring about social change for individual writers. The question is instead how the global circulation of writing activity makes literate resources vulnerable to social shifts and the whims of various powerful social actors. Thus, focusing on the mobility of their literacy practices makes it hard to ignore all of this: the practices, the structures, the volatility.

Foregrounding the mobility of literacy similarly shows how literacies on-the-move have the potential to simultaneously empower and disempower writers, a fact that this chapter has attempted to foreground. Scholars note that the romanticizing of mobility causes mobility to lose its analytic purchase (Canagarajah "Translanguaging;" Urry). Therefore mobility must be analyzed together with immobility, understood to be "profoundly relational and experiential" (Manderscheid 38). For example, Blommaert identifies "translocal norms" for English that exist under globalization, showing that while global Englishes empower speakers to communicate

globally, features such as accent and register have “very different effects and functions” depending on the local setting (195). In this way, English can certainly have “low-mobility” forms, holding speakers and writers in place rather than empowering them to move up and out (195). The experiences of Faridah and Defne, though, show not only that literacies have high- or low-mobility forms determined by such features as grammatical correctness, idiomatic word choice, or appropriate enactment of a genre—what might be approximated as accent and register in writing—but also that the social structures these writers meet as they move create low- or no-mobility conditions for writing.

That Alicia, Khadroma, and Tashi are able to call on their resources with ease while Defne, Faridah, and also Tashi cannot is not just a matter of luck. Neither are these writers exceptions to a language-learner norm, nor fully representative of the experience of writing through movement. Instead, their lived experiences show how practices captured at particular moments in certain places can point backward along the path that has been traveled and reveal not only how abilities and practices were developed, but how social structures encountered during travel may have shaped where they have ended up. This is an optimistic view of the paradox of mobility because this is the locus of potential action: we are all complicit in the social conditions that value certain literacies, languages, varieties, and forms over others, and thus we have an opportunity to change these conditions and eventually influence the way literate resources circulate with writers through on-the-move global systems. The next chapter will focus on the circulation of just one traveling literacy practice, letter-writing, tracing immigrant writers’ navigation of these global systems as they engage in complex, multilingual epistolary practices.

Chapter 4

Material Mobility: The Transnational Trace of Immigrant Letter Writing

When asked how her life would be different if she didn't know how to write, Faridah says, "If I can't write it's a lot of things inside me, a lot of feelings that I can't um, I can't send them to other people you know?" That Faridah casts writing as a kind of *sending* is revelatory of the ubiquitous presence of mobile written material in this study. Of the 26 distinct literacy practices described by participants in this study, letter writing, including emailing, was the most commonly mentioned. In fact, it was often mentioned first or described as the only writing a participant was doing. The activity of writing a letter, note, or email and then sending it away accomplishes for these writers both the most mundane and the most life-changing tasks. Letters and emails, made to be on the move, travel across distances created not only by migration, but also by fathers working in other countries, wars that create borders where there were none, and NGO-funded schools far from home. These are the geographic and cultural contexts traversed by letters and by letter writers as they experience the economic and political forces of globalization.

Immigrants do not write letters only to stay in touch. As this study has shown, immigrants' multilingual writing activities are uneven resources that writers draw on, adapt, or create in response to specific conditions. Letter writing, though seemingly simple and mundane, is a particularly fertile and fraught practice for immigrants. Their letters are deemed successful rarely by the quality of their composition or language proficiency and much more by the material outcomes they bring about. Further, the literacy practice of letter writing proves to be just as mobile as the letters produced, appearing across continents and generations in the recollections and descriptions of letter writers. As the analysis below shows, immigrant writers produce

correspondence both to get along in times of global change and to intervene in those same global changes. This push/pull tension, noted in previous chapters, regulates letter-writing practices and often provides the impetus to write at all. In other words, the presence of so much letter writing activity in these writers' daily lives does not show that letter and email writing is frequent because of greater distance or greater ease of technology. The literature below shows that writers have always been compelled to write across distance with different understandings of "new" technology. Rather, this common activity reveals the power and presence of transnational institutional forces that push writing around and away from individuals, compelling them to send their writing to and fro in order to satisfy the push and pull of international interests. As immigrants engage in a flurry of correspondence, they produce the mobile material that bares the traces of global economic and political change.

This chapter analyzes the material and mobile qualities of one literacy practice on the move, letter writing, asking what foregrounding these two aspects can reveal about immigrant writing activity and the larger economic, political, and social forces that impact it. While other chapters have analyzed the multilingual elements of mobile literacy practices, this chapter flips this lens by foregrounding the literacy practice itself, letter-writing, allowing multilingualism to exist as a background thread running through these activities. This focus is intended to make concrete previous theoretical suggestions of literacy's transnational potential—that it can move across borders, make maps, paths, and leave textual trails. For example, Min-Zhan Lu has suggested we should "create alternative 'discourse maps,' ...which trace patterns of traffic conducted by users of English...within and outside the U.S." ("Afterword" 315) and Wendy Hesford has said we need to "analyze discursive intersections—the rhetorical webs of thought—that constitute action at a particular historical moment" (*Rhetorica* 62). These calls for material

analyses of transnational phenomena echo Paul Prior and Jody Shipka's appeals for studies that trace the "chains or trajectories of activity that are often ambiguous and fuzzy...that stretch across official cultural boundaries" (208). These theoretical orientations—chronotopic lamination, discourse maps, rhetorical webs—aim to understand "the dispersed and fluid chains of places, time, people, and artifacts that come to be tied together in trajectories of literate action" (Prior and Shipka 181). This chapter takes these calls seriously, making material the literate maps and webs created by transnational textual movement.

The analysis of immigrant letter writing below uses "mobility" to mean movement through space and "material" to mean the matter and substance that become mobile. For example, a family literacy tradition of Yolanda's, a Colombian science teacher, is mobile and material in this sense:

- Y My mother, so, when somebody dies and then the viewing thing? Like when you go see the dead person at the? Yeah she writes on paper, like a message to god I guess. ...She writes a paper saying, like, "oh, help me with this. Da da." She folds it very small; she puts it there.
- R In the coffin?
- Y Yes! Where the body is and she says oh the message gets wherever she wants it to go.

By writing a letter instead of saying a prayer, Yolanda's mother turns prayer—often an oral activity during which one aims thoughts or recitation toward a higher being—into a mobile, material text. She uses materials with substance—paper, pen, coffin, dead body—to write down a message and place it in a vessel that will journey up to heaven where it will be received by or hand delivered to god. What might be considered the most metaphysical of communication has become quite physical, literal, and concrete. This letter writing practice could be understood as "cuckoo," as Yolanda describes it, or instead, it could be seen as revelatory of the cultural, social, and political values bound up in a seemingly small letter. Though "letters to the gods, letters to the dead, and letter prayers suggest the flexibility of the letter form to establish and

elaborate communicative situations,” they also show a social investment in writing and a deep belief in the power of text (Bazerman 18). With these small scraps of paper flung into coffins, Yolanda’s family believes “the message gets wherever [they] want it to go.”

Thinking of these letters as material and mobile turns this seemingly mundane practice inside out, foregrounding its socio-cultural qualities: Yolanda’s mother has made prayers into letters on purpose—as the only woman in her Colombian family to go to college, writing has served her well and shaped her identity. According to Yolanda, she maintains great faith in the promise of reading and writing and enjoys making her literacy, and thus her education and family status, visible. But her mother’s coffin-letter practice is one Yolanda now recalls with nostalgia; after immigrating to the U.S. she could not carry on her mother’s practice or risk being seen as cuckoo herself. Yolanda moved across a cultural, geographic, and linguistic border that regulates the family practices Yolanda can or can’t bring with her. These are the social forces that shape the letter writing practices presented below at every turn. Letter writing undertaken by immigrants, when understood as a material and mobile practice, can reveal perhaps better than many literate activities, the strong shifting undercurrents of political and global change.

From Fixed Form to Material and Mobile Practice

While much has been made of letter writing as a text and a social practice, little attention has been paid to its ability to move as a material object or the consequences of this movement within a global context. Scholars in writing and rhetoric studies, classical and religious studies, anthropology, and education have described the history of the letter and its form and generic qualities. They have examined the social functions of letter-writing, connecting these activities to bureaucratic or cultural changes in a nation or region. But on the whole, few scholars have accounted for how and why these texts are sent by certain individuals *across* borders, nations,

and institutions; nor have many considered how the movement of these texts is linked to writers' own migratory movements. Studies have framed letter writing as an activity carried out within a nation-state or cultural group rather than one that travels across them; scholars have argued that letters are evidence of cultural change rather than a driver of it. This chapter is attempting to move toward the latter half of these distinctions. As the section below shows, while letter writing will almost always occur within personal and cultural relationships, in the context of migration and among immigrants, letters are never innocent of the transnational pressures of paperwork, money, and the identity-laden forces of globalization.

Fixed Form

Scholars note that letter writing is just as ubiquitous in societies throughout history as it is in the group of writers in this study, and they have dedicated much analytic space to describing the form and features of the letter from whichever time and place they have chosen to analyze: Ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt (Bagnell and Cribiore; Bazerman; Doty; Muir; Stirewalt); Medieval Europe and China (Kirkpatrick and Xu; Perelman); 18th and 19th century Europe and U.S. (Chartier; Dauphin; Gerber; Hall; Decker; DeHaan); 20th century Polynesia, West Africa, Mexico, and the U.S. (Besnier; Guerra; Kalman; Scribner and Cole). Even so, scholars describe letters as a “conservative and stable” genre, in that it has changed little over time and cultural context (Doty 9). Letters have almost always contained a salutation and signature, are most often formulaic, and very often self-referential, containing content that refers to the process of correspondence and to shared writer/reader knowledge (Bazerman; Besnier; Decker; Doty; Muir; Perelman; Stirewalt). Letters seem to have always been flexible enough to create correspondence relationships not only one-to-one but also one-to-many, as in the philosophical, poetic, and moral epistolary work of Aristotle, Plato, Isocrates, Demosthenes, Horace, Quintillian, Epicurus, and

other ancient and medieval letter writers (Doty 3).

In ancient Greece, “the letter was the *koine* [common] form of *koine* written communication in *koine* society” (Stirewalt 26). While letter writing originated to carry out business, the activity was adapted to personal needs, becoming “a common practice among people of all positions in life” (26). In medieval Europe and China, letters were written by all classes both to display and gain access to varying social hierarchies (Kirkpatrick and Xu; Perelman) and in 18th century France they were written for business communication in economic centers (Chartier). Besnier notes that letters are “a common and valued use of literacy,” claiming that “letters probably represent a major percentage of the written output of members of many societies” (73). And Decker says of early colonial United States, “there is almost no portion of society to which the letter at some time does not belong” (14). So while the elite enjoyed higher rates of literacy and access to paper, postage, and writing time, “there was never a time...when people without material advantages did not also write letters” (Decker 60). In other words, letter writing is an ancient and wide-spread activity that has been taken up in a variety of communities and social classes. But few of these observations analyze the sending of letters across, rather than within, cultural boundaries. In almost all of this work, this ubiquitous practice has been treated curiously as a placed phenomenon—one bound to specific cultures or nation-states—rather than as a lived phenomenon that moves with and away from writers.

Similarly, the growing body of work that shows how letter writing is indeed a social-situated literacy practice for the most part analyzes that social quality within the context of bounded cultural groups. Scholars explore the letter’s potential to create interpersonal relationships (Decker; Gerber; Gring-Pemble; Hall, Robinson, and Crawford; Maybin), maintain cultural cohesion (Ahearn; Besnier; Duffy; Guerra; Fishman; Kell; Martin-Jones and Bhatt), and

reinforce bureaucratic and social hierarchy within bounded times and places (Chartier; Kalman; Perelman). In this way, scholars have documented how letter writing reveals social convention within cultural regions and times: Perelman notes that “notions of social hierarchy” shaped a foundational notion of *ars dictaminis*, “causing a writer not to ask first, ‘What am I going to say?’ but instead, ‘What is the rank of the person to whom I am writing this letter?’” (102). Kirkpatrick and Xu trace social hierarchies in medieval and contemporary Chinese letters: “Special names are given to documents depending on whether they are written among equals (pingxing gongwen), by inferiors to superiors (shangxing gongwen) or superiors to inferiors (xiangxing gongwen) (Dai 7ff)” (67). This work on the social and cultural situatedness of letter writing does much to activate understandings of the letter, giving shape to the context around the text rather than simply describing its contents or form. Still, these situations tend mostly to encompass singular cultures or languages rather than the movement across or among them in ways that can’t tell us much about the highly mobile and multilingual letter writing practices of the writers in this study.

Further, most research tracks letter writing onto cultural change instead of the other way around. Ubiquitous letter writing is understood as, not a catalyst for, but the result of geographically expanding empires, rising literacy levels, increasing migration, growing bureaucracies and their subsequent lust for documentation (Bazerman; Besnier; Decker; Doty; Chartier; Kalman; Kirkpatrick and Xu; Perelman; Stirewalt). Perelman, for example, relates “the development of letter writing as a distinct and formal branch of rhetorical and political study” directly to the “historical circumstance” of an evolving Roman empire—new illiterate monarchs and a ready supply of Romans educated in *ars dictaminis*, the medieval rhetorical art of letter writing (Perelman 98). Decker agrees that letter writing is dependent on “a society’s

spatiotemporal orientation,” claiming that North American nineteenth century migration “compelled many people to become letter writers” (4, 88). Chartier says of 17th and 18th century France that “the most powerful...factors” inducing letter writing being “put to practical use” were “the construction of an administrative and bureaucratic state, the opening up of the economy, and increased geographical mobility” within France (20). Similarly, Stirewalt claims that “the spread of letter-writing reflects the characteristics of the age...in which travel, communication, wide dissemination of common culture, the Roman imperium—all contributed to the consciousness of citizenship in one Western world” (26). He says, in other words, that practice follows culture—“one Western” culture—instead of changing it or moving across cultures. In fact, most of the literature claims that letter writers engage in correspondence to keep a national or cultural unit together as history tries to pull it apart. But we must somehow account for both forces, the centripetal with the centrifugal. Immigrant writers in this study write letters to keep things together—their families, their cultural norms—just as often as they write to adapt to or to make change in the social and political conditions they move across.

Thus, letters, as a genre, have long been defined not only by textual arrangement or form, but by “institutional and social setting...the roles available to writer and reader, the motives, ideas, ideology, and expected content of the document” (Bazerman 16). In fact, letters may seem formulaic and mundane “because they are so overtly tied to particular social relations of particular writers and readers” as implied in the features that make a letter a letter—a salutation and a signature. But this “humble” façade only means “they reveal to us so clearly and explicitly” the social nature of letter writing—“they give the game away so easily” (Bazerman 27). Still, few scholars have placed this social game in a larger context of social circulation. Very little writing is neutral in the global circulation of power, people, and money that defines our

current communicative moment, and so to fully understand a literacy practice in this context, we must also take into account how material letters and letter-writing practices move across social structures, cultural boundaries, and geographic borders, how they mediate social and political exchanges, and move through transnational currents along with their writers.

Mobile Material

Shifting from a fixed toward fluid analytic lens might help us better see how letters cross contexts, bringing about a more critical and transnational understanding of mobile literacy practices like letter writing. Existing analyses of material and mobile elements of letter writing in the literature point the way toward such a shift. For example, the elaboration of the material qualities of letters and the letter-writing process begin to illuminate how this material moves with and against transnational forces. Scholars describe how letters that have been written on everything from wound leather to papyrus to messengers' staffs and shoe soles (Doty). Writers squeezed script on to one sheet of expensive papyrus in Ancient Egypt (Muir) or scarce paper in 18th century U.S. (Decker), and on *ostraca* (broken pieces of pottery) in Ancient Greece, upon which ancient writers would scrawl texts "distinguished by their reduction of the message to an unpolished minimum," (Doty 4).

But the materiality of letters themselves betrays their social force and mobility. Speaking of 18th century French letter writers, Dauphin says that letters' "purely material aspect...the franking, the envelope, the paper, the signature, and the margins all served to mark out the correspondents in social terms" (143). As an "object" and a "ceremonial," the "concrete and visible" elements of letter-writing stratified rather than leveled social difference (Dauphin). This is why, though a letter's "materiality consists most evidently in the inscribed document itself" its materiality points out toward "the circumstances of its inscription, transmission, and reception,

considerations that involve the education and socioeconomic standing of correspondents, postal technologies, and many other contingent conditions” (Decker 38). In other words, as scholars have described the substance of letters, they have implied the activity’s social implications—the socioeconomic standing of correspondents—and to a certain extent its circulation—its transmission and reception. That messages were written on the bottom of (or sometimes hidden in the soles of) messengers’ shoes show most concretely that these letters were made to 1) be on the move and 2) move across unknown and untrustworthy geographic areas (Doty).

Two scholars in particular, Niko Besnier and Catherine Kell, have accounted for both the mobile and the material in ways that lay the groundwork for a transnational analysis of letter writing. Besnier’s work on the Polynesian Nukulaelae community closely ties moving people to mobile letters, showing how the “outward-oriented activities” of correspondence tracks onto people’s movements to and from their homes (81). Besnier explains that Nukulaelae letter writing was a literacy practice taken up naturally in conjunction with their ancient inclination to travel widely, but one that, in the contemporary context that he studied was used to maintain contact with “the outside world” and with “relatives traveling away from the atoll” (81, 91). In this way, Besnier links Nukulaelae letter writing to global economic change. As Nukulaelae workers traveled from home for school and work, relatives at home sent letters to ask for money, gifts, food, and provisions. Besnier says, “By far the most salient motive for writing letters is to monitor, record, stimulate, and control economic transactions associated with the exchange of gifts between Nukulaelae residents and their off-island relatives” (93). Besnier explains this link reveals “the monitoring role that letters play in economic transactions” as well as the extent to which letter writing has become “thoroughly incorporated into the socioeconomic life of the community and in the economic ties between the community and the rest of the world” (101, 93).

A material analysis foregrounds this economic experience, an analysis supported by the analyzing the letters' movement across space and correspondents. The material connection between migratory work abroad and letter writing at home previews the heavy global circulation of migration- and economy-related letter writing of the last two decades.

Similarly, Catherine Kell's work in South Africa similarly traces the movement of letters across certain borders, even if within the same cultural group. Kell argues that South African letter writers' use of "literacy skills distributed across a range of complex social networks" reveals the "deeply etched cultural and historical patterns...which have formed part of the repertoire of skills and resources which have ensured survival under the harsh conditions set by conquest, colonialism and apartheid (216, 223). Besnier and Kell's analyses show that the space traveled by the letter itself is "an open-ended transactional space that can be specified, defined, and regularized in many different ways," particularly in economic, political, and transgressive ways (Bazerman 18). Letters and letter writers travel through these open-ended spaces, crossing many hands, responding to and hoping to influence agendas and pressures beyond any bounded culture or language.

Letters as Mobile Material

With all of the scholarly attention to letters, we have yet to fully examine the implications of a mobile material practice carried out by writers who are themselves on the move. What can we make of a letter's ability to "mediate a huge range of human interactions" when those interactions occur in increasingly global and instantaneous contexts (Barton and Hall 1)? How do we account for the "depth and authenticity" of relationships "managed" by letter writing when powerful transnational forces also play a hand in this management (Maybin 168)? While letters forward a uniquely composed interpersonal space—the interplay of salutation and signature, first

and second person voices, simultaneously constructs writer and reader (Barton and Hall)—this practice engages in more than reader-writer correspondence. Bazerman describes letters as a reader-writer “transaction” and *ars dictaminis* rhetorician Demetrius instructs pupils to consider letters as “a kind of gift” (Muir 19). But still these lateral terms lack dimension. Putting the letter and the letter writer in motion, we see multiple writers (their communities and sponsors) and multiple readers (committees, agencies) or sometimes no readers at all. We see the bureaucratic and cultural contexts through which these letters and letter-writers move—the top-down forces of national policies and the bottom-up pressures of correspondents in need. These are the multiple dimensions that come to bear on letter writing practices as they are carried out in globalizing contexts.

In other words, as a practice, letter writing is uniquely equipped to capture Lu’s discourse maps because it is made to move across space. And letters encapsulate Hesford’s “discursive intersections” because they constitute a genre at a crossroads—stabilizing and regulating communication through bureaucracy and cultural ties, but enabling the agitation of those same institutions. As Bazerman says, “Letters have helped us find the addresses of many obscure and remarkable places for literate meetings and have helped us figure out what we would do and say once we got there” (27). As we’ll see below, the writers in this study compose letters in order to “find the addresses” of future possibilities, identify where they might head, and “figure out” how to compose themselves into the places they imagine.

In the accounts below, participants write letters in order to accomplish tasks ranging from the very ordinary—leaving a husband a note—to the very significant—writing a testimonial letter for a relative’s immigration application. The participants in this study wrote letters, notes, and emails in their current day-to-day writing activities and throughout their literacy memories,

more frequently than any other literacy practice mentioned in their accounts: Yolanda remembers writing letters to baby Jesus for Christmas “to ask for things;” Alandra, a Brazilian graduate student, remembers writing “the most beautiful love letters in Portuguese;” Aldene, a Brazilian classroom aide, writes letters for her Spanish-speaking students to bring home to their parents; Nina, a Ukrainian pharmacy student, writes “just short emails” to her friends in Ukrainian, to her sister-in-law in English, and to her daughter in Russian; and so on across almost every participant in this study. By foregrounding the mobile and material aspects of this letter writing activity, we can better see how letters, as physical objects on the move, cross borders and are subject to larger global forces. The experiences of the immigrant writers in this study show that letter writing is an activity that not only reveals the presence of institutional influences but also allows writers to take part in the currents of global correspondence. This section analyzes three types of letter exchange that echo across the immigrant writing experiences described by participants in this study—1) immigration and citizenship processes, 2) NGO- and corporate-sponsored schooling and employment, and 3) self-maintenance during social and political change—showing how letter writing illuminates the presence of powerful entities as well as the attempts of writers to insert themselves into these powerful movements.

Letters to the Nation-State

Almost all the participants in this study described writing letters and emails to family and friends living far from home. They wrote to maintain these relationships and to navigate, through correspondence, the changes brought about by life during and after immigration. Rosalia, a Guatemalan community activist, describes writing letters from Guatemala to an aunt living in the U.S. Andrea, a Venezuelan college student and nanny, similarly describes writing from Venezuela to her sister who had immigrated to the U.S. when Andrea was very young. Haneen, a

Palestinian architect, and Kunthi, an Indonesian stay-at-home mom, both write from the U.S. on a daily basis to relatives who live in the middle east and south Asia. The points of departure and arrival of these letters have shifted as these writers have moved across continents over the course of their lives. Thus, immigrant writers in this study have left transnational trails of correspondence all over the world, the products of which—letters and letter-writing practices—reveal the impact of this movement on their lives. In these writers’ lived experiences, letter writing is not as mundane as it may seem.

In particular, Tashi, Houa, a Hmong nursing student, and Ishtar, a Syrian religion teacher, have sent letters around the world to satisfy the needs of national bureaucracies, fine-tuning their own letter writing literacy to successfully move themselves and others through bureaucratic labyrinths. Tashi, for example, explains that during immigration proceedings “there was only one interview, but I had to write down some stories...all through the writing straight.” Tashi’s first experiences with bureaucracy in the U.S. made her quickly aware of their deep reliance on and respect for documentary text in this country. She explains that a number of writing activities were required of her for successful immigration—writing stories to prepare for the interview, writing application papers, writing *about* the written application papers: “Sometimes when your papers are turned down you have to prove to them that um, and then you have to write letter saying this this that. Then you forward it back.” Tashi developed her first understandings of the governmental character of the U.S. through her experiences with its immigration procedures, and she came away understanding that the U.S. used written text as proof of status and identity. She learned that careful attention to papers, not necessarily to people, can “prove to them” mistakes and amendments of immigration status. She had attempted to “talk to the people” during the process and was told to put it all in writing. In her final letter to the immigration

office, she wrote a careful narration to them of her immigration application writing process: “So I had done this mistake in the last document, then here are the documents I attach and this other one.” Tashi believes strongly that, as she says, “writing matters” for these reasons—her existing letter writing practices and her realization at how much “writing matters” enabled her to navigate immigration proceedings successfully and join her husband in the U.S.

Similarly, Ishtar’s innate respect for writing was vastly expanded during her experiences with citizenship procedures after immigration to the U.S. Ishtar is a bilingual Muslim teacher from Syria who strongly identifies as a reader, writer, and lifelong learner of languages. When asked when she may have used her writing practices to get something she needed, she turned immediately to the context of her citizenship proceedings:

For me, like basically everything here needs good level of writing. I mean whatever you want to do, like texting, emailing, like everything, everything. Like even when I worked on my citizenship, like everything needs writing, so you have to improve your language, your reading and writing. ...I did need to write sometimes letters or you know. Seriously, I mean without noticing, like everything you do in your day depends on writing and reading! It is seriously!

Ishtar is not only aware of the prevalence of literate output in the U.S., but is motivated to “improve [her] language...reading and writing” in order to succeed in these paperwork-driven settings. Her initial emphasis on “here” is particularly indicative of her awareness of how writing expectations have shifted for her after immigration. She sees writing requirements everywhere and describes practicing her writing in English to the point that her children wonder at her hard work. She describes scenes in which she carries out self-sponsored literacy activities—listing, completing worksheets, translating—as her children finish up their homework next to her and move on to other activities, expressing their confusion at her diligence. But Ishtar intuits that “without noticing” she immigrated into literacy contexts that now depend entirely on writing and reading. She expands on her mention above of letter writing in the context of citizenship, saying,

You need to fill out applications, forms, whatever. And they did some mistakes so I had to write letter explaining everything happened and how they did a mistake with a name. It was like long story. But I mean, I needed to write you know, to explain to them that everything was their fault. So I needed to explain all the details. So that's why I'm saying, anything you do, you know, requires writing something at least.

Ishtar wrote letters to communicate with U.S. citizenship officials and offices. She did not write letters for any of the reader/writer relationship functions often mentioned in the literature on letter writing—to build a personal or community relationship with them, keep in touch with them across distances, update them with news, or engage in business dealings. Rather, she wrote to government officials to “explain to them that everything was their fault.” This letter writing relationship is of an entirely different sort and indexes larger forces at play in correspondence contexts. Ishtar knew she “needed to write” in order to “explain all the details” and push her way through this particular bureaucratic hurdle. Far from a mundane everyday activity, these citizenship letters were Ishtar’s way in to the bureaucracy that regulates global immigration.

When asked how she knew how to write the letters and in what order and language they should appear, Ishtar replied, “I’m still not sure if I did it correctly you know?! [laughing] You know I tried my best to like explain, and it worked! So honestly, I’m still not sure if it was correct. But at least, you know, they were able to understand what I wanted to tell them.” In this way, the success of Ishtar’s letter had little to do with correctness of form or proficiency of language and everything to do with the material change the letter brought about. In fact, Ishtar’s letter writing was almost based on faith—she already believed in the power of writing and thus was lucky that her belief in text matched that of the institution she was trying to please. Thus, her letter writing activities were a continuation of the literacy practices she carried out in Syria, but were far more heightened as she moved into the raised stakes of citizenship elsewhere. Tracing her and Tashi’s letter writing movements in this way—across the context of multiple nation-

states, for multiple and often faceless bureaucratic readers—illuminates the complex dimensions of global letter writing and the presence of powerful literacy expectations beyond the letter writers themselves.

Houa’s letter writing recollections are similarly inflected with the presence of national and transnational interests. Her experience with immigration status is by proxy—she was naturalized in the U.S. having arrived as a five-year-old, and thus her immigration letter writing was in support of someone else’s application. Houa, a Hmong nursing student in her twenties, explains that she rarely communicates with her relatives who still live in Thailand and Laos. She only visited once when she was young and rarely communicates by phone because she “feels like [she] processes more in English and trying to translate that into Hmong [is] difficult.” While her relatives are fluent in Hmong, she becomes frustrated during phone conversations when she has to describe around an idea in Hmong rather than plainly stating the “simple word” for it, which she says she usually doesn’t know. However, Houa’s experience with writing letters in Hmong was more successful.

I did write letters for my uncle. When he was talking to my aunt from Laos, and you know how the whole marriage process works? [I shake my head no.] Yeah I don’t either, but you’re supposed to have like proof that you guys are actually dating before you get married or whatever? And my uncle didn’t know how to write it in Hmong, so. And he’s more fluent in English too. So he’ll write it in English and ask me to translate it cause he’s embarrassed to like have my aunt read it or whatever. And I’m more of a child so it didn’t really matter.

Houa’s letter writing process is complicated. She acts as a literacy broker for her uncle, translating a letter from English to Hmong, even though she admits she doesn’t consider herself to be fluent in Hmong either. Because her uncle was too embarrassed to have his prospective wife read his faulty Hmong, he had a teenager, his niece, write the letter out for him. In this way

the letter was a transaction (Bazerman) not between writer and reader, but between two writers pooling their language and literacy resources for collaborative correspondence.

Letter writing by literacy brokers has been examined to a certain extent (Besnier; Kalman; Kell) and has been said to show how whole communities, rather than individual members, engage in letter reading and writing together, distributing literacy resources and maintaining cultural norms. But this letter writing experience reveals more than the economic use of literacy resources within a community. Interestingly, Houa's letter was not written for an authentic communicative purpose at all—it was written only as “proof” that her uncle had an authentic relationship and intended to marry a woman in Laos who was trying to immigrate to the U.S. This was a letter, written in Hmong, not English, that served as an object of proof for the English-dominant U.S. immigration services. One could conjecture that its appearance in Hmong, rather than English, made it more authentic, and thus more credible, to U.S. bureaucrats even though the writer(s) were not fluent in Hmong and neither, most likely, were the bureaucratic readers.

When asked if she received a reply as the writer of the letter, Houa said, “maybe she wrote back but I've never read it.” Nor did Houa's uncle and future aunt normally carry on correspondence through writing: “They talked but it isn't like, they just didn't really communicate with writing.” Clearly this letter was not written for communication between writers and readers, but served an entirely different purpose. Houa continues,

You just had to have something there. I think it's more for immigration, you know, the marriage. Cause they wanted to get married but it was something about, I don't want to say it was part of a law, but it was part of the paperwork to get that whole process going that you have to prove that you're in a relationship. ...I guess they want to prove that you're not gonna just bring this person over just because.

Houa's immigration letter was a written piece of correspondence that did not expect a reply—she just “had to have something there.” Houa's uncle, through the literacy brokerage of his niece, did not want a letter written for reasons conjectured in the literature above—to create or maintain a relationship with his future wife living in another country, nor to convey any emotional or informative output her way. In fact, he didn't really want or need to hear back from her at all; he just needed to send it. The act of sending the letter away, putting it in motion toward another country, was enough to create a textual object that convinced immigration officials of the relationship's authenticity. This symbolic text, simply “part of the paperwork,” was the green light to “get that whole process going” and start immigration proceedings. The letter's success was measured not by its content or quality, which neither Houa nor her uncle seemed to care much about, but rather by its ability to bring a woman to the U.S. Says Houa, “It worked out, yeah. She's been here for about five years now.”

Analyzing the practice of letter writing carried out by Hmong immigrants in a midwestern city, John Duffy argues that anti-immigrant rhetoric published in letters to the editor was offensive enough to compel an immigrant group to intervene in public discourse by writing back in a form they “had not practiced previously” (226). The writers in Duffy's study co-opt existing models of published letters for their own rhetorical interests. Here we see something slightly different. These writers did not adopt an entirely new practice, but continued the letter writing practices they had carried in their previous geographic locations, without a definite idea whether or not their letters would be deemed successful. None of these writers had models to follow, but they wrote nevertheless. In his study, Duffy says Hmong immigrant literacy practices were “motivated and shaped by the rhetorical worlds in which they lived and in which they sought to intervene” (226). But these immigrant writers were compelled to respond to powerful

bureaucratic interests beyond the scope of their immediate community or national context. For Tashi, Ishtar, Houa, and others, the rhetorical world in which they intervened was the world of transnational and global bureaucracy, which compelled and required them to write letters and in which all three participated in order to bring about their own or their close family's material gains.

Letters as Currency

As Bazerman notes above, the proliferation of letter writing practices, and the mundane character of their commonality, can mask their social complexity. In addition to the common bureaucratic experiences above, writers in this study also frequently engaged in letter writing that was closely aligned with transnational flows of money. This close involvement of letters and funds could be considered incidental compared to the more pressing need for immigrants to keep in touch across distance. But the frequent mention of funds, salary, or donation in relation to letter writing is not insignificant in the context of globalization. Consider the phenomenon presented below of absent fathers working in locations far from home: What are the economic conditions that call fathers away for work? How are letters implicated in working elsewhere and why is this the practice chosen to maintain father-daughter relationships? Such questions widen the context in which letter writing occurs, taking into account multiple writers and readers and economic and political changes brought about by globalization. In this widened context, foregrounding the motion of letter writing illuminates the paths along which letters travel and the funds that often pave these paths. These circuits of currency both follow and precede letters sent abroad, all the while enticing and rewarding letter writers on the move.

Many participants described correspondence as the principle way they came to know their fathers during their childhoods. Andrea discusses writing her father letters as he traveled

around the world working for an oil company. Rosalia, Harriet, a Chinese nursing student, Sabohi, a Pakistani school principal, and Raani and Shirin, both Pakistani teachers, all remember writing their fathers letters as they worked away from home. Raani says she used to write letters to her dad “cause he was out of the country most of the time.” She recalls, “Yeah, sometimes he would actually send me letters and essays...so that’s how I would communicate to him.” Raani explained that her father would send her model essays that he would expect her to practice and return to him, and he would do the same with letters. Her communication with her father was instructional in a way, mirroring the in-person essay practice Raani says she and he would engage in when he was at home. So in addition to the financial support he sent home to his family, Raani’s father also sent literacy instruction, developing an educating relationship with his daughter and maintaining involvement in her language learning even as he was absent.

Rosalia, Harriet, Shirin, and Sabohi also described learning to write by corresponding with their fathers. Harriet found her dad’s letters “difficult to read because it’s not printed, it’s in [characters]”—her father insisted on writing to her only in Mandarin and offered Harriet constant practice reading written Mandarin. Rosalia wrote to her dad who was working in Germany when she was four years old. She says she was “very, very little...so [she] didn’t write much,” but remembers scrawling on the letters together with her sister. Shirin and her sisters, who wrote to their father while he worked elsewhere, also continued their letter writing practices even when their dad was at home. She and her sisters together decided to compose a letter to him as if he was gone: “We wanted to go somewhere and uh, my father was like ‘no we cannot go there.’ So all of us three sisters, we wrote a letter to him and put it in the mailbox so he gets it from there.” This repetition of activity to a present and absent reading father shows these young writers testing out a literacy practice in development. To them, writing an official letter of protest to

their father was play, but was also a nod to the formality of the letter form. They acknowledged the heightened authority of the letter, the act of signing it together and not handing it to their present father, but placing it in the mailbox. They were repeating, step by step, the requirements of successful letter writing in order to, playfully or not, talk back. An absent father had conditioned their literacy practices in a way, to the extent that they continued them even when he was at home.

Finally, Sabohi would “write all the time” to her dad who “would be always on the official tours” for work. She describes a letter-writing scene that has become treasured lore in her family:

I’d always write to him to bring me this and that and the dolls, and there was actually um, the first letter I wrote to my dad when I was a kid was from a book. I didn’t understand much but I knew that it was a letter. It was somebody had written to his uncle asking for something and I had written, exactly copied it the same. I knew how to write it, but I didn’t understand much of it. That is like the laughing stock now in our family, like how [I] wrote letter. And I had even signed that person’s name! It was just example in the book to show how to write letter because back home it’s very formal thing how you write formal letters, how you write letters to this and that and birthday invitations and all that. ... Writing used to be a big deal back home. I mean, in Urdu there is like the way you start, and that, it has to be really poetic and it has to be really nice.

That Sabohi wrote letters intending to ask for gifts but subsequently learning Urdu letter writing reveals the complicated layers of these correspondence relationships. She was not only maintaining a relationship with her father as he moved around for work, but she was also practicing reading, learning how to use models to write, and tapping in to the poetic history of a language, understanding that writing “back home” in Pakistan is “a very formal thing” and “a big deal.” Scholars have noted that letter writers in their studies “mined letter-writing manuals for language and suggestions” just as Sabohi describes doing, but also “imitate what they read in letters received,” finding instruction in the writing of their correspondent as well (Decker 100; Kell). Researchers maintain that this imitation is an attempt to “build a relationship through

written dialogue,” creating textual gestures of goodwill toward absent family members or friends (Hall, Robinson, and Crawford 146). Just as Raani’s father carried out writing instruction with his daughter in absentia, Sabohi’s dad sent opportunities for literacy learning by writing his daughter a letter and expecting a reply. Further, without knowing Sabohi’s father’s exact profession, we can speculate that it was “official,” perhaps governmental, and thus an additional force in this father/daughter correspondence: Because Sabohi’s father was called away to work, Sabohi was called to write letters, her learning regulated and funded by a silent corporation or government organization.

Like Sabohi, many of the immigrant letter writers in this study engage in this larger system of global forces with their literacy practices, attempting to insert themselves into these forces for their own benefit and write against them when it is not in their interest. The presence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in participants’ literacy memories further speak to the close alignment of letter writing and money. Four participants in this study—Alicia in Argentina, Khadroma in China, Nimet in Azerbaijan, and Tashi in India—attended schools or were involved in educational organizations funded by Western-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Alicia attended a multilingual Jewish science and technology magnet school funded by NGO-organized worldwide Jewish donors, Khadroma attended a multilingual school for Tibetans funded by an American NGO, Nimet started a national English teaching association funded by American and English NGOs, and Tashi attended a boarding school for Tibetan orphans in India funded by a European NGO based in England. But it was only Tashi who wrote letters to directly help fund her NGO-supported education. In fact, Tashi’s experiences with letter writing at this school are so remarkably tied up in the global economy that they deserve a detailed treatment here. Reading her letter writing activities through a lens of

mobility shows the ways in which her letter writing was influenced by global forces but also the opportunities she took to regulate her own education.

Tashi attended her boarding school in northern India from third to tenth grade. Having essentially been raised in this school, she was absolutely immersed in the routine of a boarding school education, being able to detail with great specificity the schedule of her school days with times for class, eating, study, tea, playtime, prayer, and more study. Tashi also had an unusually vast knowledge of her school's budgetary operations. She said, "40% of the finance comes from the international SOS...I think it's um, international red cross. And then basically it's run on sponsors' scholarships. Like almost every children there have sponsor from, majority from Europe and some from America, and every building is built from sponsor's money." When asked how she could have known so much about how the school was run as a young student, she explained that "all the teachers, they keep telling us, this much amount comes from that, this much amount from this," and said teachers would reiterate this financial set-up at annual gatherings of the entire school:

They would just declare to us, you know, like 'do you know if you don't study hard it's not good for you because such people over there abroad they're working so hard to make you study, putting in money. Look, all the sponsors are not rich sponsors. Whoever is sponsoring you they are usually commoners and poor people. How did they make adjustment? They don't go out on the weekend, then money they save and they send it. And sometimes they don't have three times meals and they will go for two meals and then save one meal's money and send it. So you guys should really work hard. You should not kind of waste these money.' And you know. We believe in karma and they will say 'in your next generation you will not be happy by taking money from someone and wasting it.' ...So they take us to the reality. So that people do not think that life is so easy and they get everywhere free everything. No. They would just tell us how money come to us and how hard people undergo to save those money.

In this context of responsibility, guilt, and motivation, Tashi and her fellow classmates carried on a letter-based correspondence with the individuals who sponsored 60% of their education. The quote above shows that these students would have been writing with a very specific sense of

audience: They were writing to Europeans or Americans, not necessarily well-off, who were making sacrifices to support them in their boarding school education. Whether or not it is believable that Europeans and Americans willing to send money abroad are “commoners and poor people” who would skip a meal in order to pay for a far-away student’s education, this is the audience constructed for these young student writers. The school’s teachers created a very specific connection for these students between their individual educations and a larger international web of money and charitable organizations.

Tashi began writing letters to her sponsors in Norway when she was in fourth grade. She explained that at first she “would just draw hands, birds, or whatever” but eventually, Tashi explained, “I was writing ‘How are you? I am fine. Thank you for the gift. I miss you.’ And ‘this thing happened in our school.’” This would happen three to four times a year. Tashi says she would get called into the school office to respond to a letter that had arrived from her sponsors, sometimes accompanied with cards and gifts: “it’s like a kind of correspondence we do.” Tashi describes a writing scene in which she would read the letter with the office secretary nearby, who would then ask if Tashi understood and if not explain it to her. The sponsors, though Norwegian, wrote in English, as did Tashi in her response. Tashi says, “I really don’t remember how my English was then, but I would just try to convey and they would have got it surely. The main words I would have put over there, even my grammar.” This letter writing activity, carried out in English, perhaps not the dominant language of writers or readers, created an international relationship that wasn’t necessarily about cultural maintenance or the development of an interpersonal connection. One could charitably analyze Tashi’s correspondence with her sponsors as creating exposure to new cultures or building appreciation of her funded education. A more critical reading might conclude that the letters written back and forth were not an

authentic communicative exchange at all, but were instead the creation of a material object symbolizing connection, a receipt of sorts, to justify a global flow of money. In other words, the correspondence followed the flow of money, not the other way around.

This latter reading is particularly compelling in light of the content of the letters dictated by Tashi above: “How are you? I am fine. Thank you for the gift. I miss you.” Tashi explains that sponsors would occasionally visit the school and take students out shopping, though her sponsors never did. In other words, Tashi knew about her sponsors’ lives, but never met them in person. She explains,

They said like they are from countryside, they work in small countryside café or something? When they started out, they didn’t have kids. Then after that they had kids, so maybe they had financial problem? After that I kind of like lost contact with them. They no longer called me for writing.

Given the fact that Tashi had not met her sponsors in person and that her relationship with them was eventually broken off because they had their own children, one wonders at the use of “I miss you” in her letters. Perhaps this phrase was simply a convention, or perhaps it was suggested to Tashi by the hovering school secretary, but it rings slightly false in the context of a physical connection that was never formed. Either way, instead of an authentic communicative exchange, the letters seem to be, for Tashi, simply part of the very detailed and structured boarding school routine she elaborated as the context for her literacy practices. She was called for writing, so she wrote. For the sponsors, the letters might serve as an object of affirmation, material proof that their money benefited a human being and that they had done something good for someone far away. But they did not know each other—Tashi and the other students were not allowed to have the addresses of their sponsors because, as Tashi said, students might continue to write their sponsors and ask for more, which Tashi called a “minor privacy issue.”

Luckily for Tashi, the school found ways to continue to fund students whose sponsors had disappeared, so she wasn't made to leave the school. She explains that the school puts sponsor money "in the pool and circulates it." The school, in fact, takes "that pool money and invests it and takes the interest and runs the school." Importantly, this addendum to Tashi's explanation of the letter writing relationship shows that the sponsorship model was not a one-to-one exchange of money for letters. The donors' money was funding everyone; the letters were an exercise in personalizing those donations for sponsors. In this context, letter writing seems symbolic, laden with the influence of NGO habits and routines of the twentieth century.

Interestingly, Tashi carried this letter writing practice with her after immigrating to the U.S. When asked of a time when she used her writing to get something she needed, Tashi describes writing a long email to the scholarship director of a nursing program she had applied to, asking if she might still receive scholarship funds though the deadline had passed.

So what did I do? I just wrote to her and I told her I really need a scholarship because I am like a, I have a daughter like a dependent, and I'm not going to work and my husband doesn't earn so much and he's the support, so I really need the scholarship. And then she said okay, like she accepted...[and] I wrote this essay and they awarded me a scholarship for the underprivileged people.

In this case, Tashi's letter writing was, indeed, a direct exchange of letter for funds. Tashi had been practicing this kind of exchange since she was in the fourth grade, and now, as an adult immigrant living in the U.S., continues to practice her letter writing for her own educational advocacy. By following Tashi's letter writing from boarding school to Norway to boarding school to the U.S. we see clearly not only the ease with which letters can act as a conduit for global funds, but also the extent to which transnational interests regulate writing on the move.

Letters across Borders

Scholars note the unique potential of letter writing to create slippage between texts and writers. Decker says, “letters, like letter writers” depend “absolutely on the conceit of the sender’s embodiment in the artifact sent” (39). He argues that letter-writing relationships rely on the sleight of hand that is the substitution of paper, pottery, or papyrus for writer. Besnier notices a similar association in his work, showing how “letters [become]...surrogates for face-to-face encounters,” when one writer in his ethnography gives thanks “for the fact that [the writer and reader] can meet through this piece of paper” (88). This sense of the letter as carrying the *parousia*, the “presence” or “projection” of the writer, is essential to its social nature, and to the way it structures sender/receiver relationships (Bazerman). In ancient Greece, for example, letters were used to revive “the existence of a friendship when the correspondents were physically separated” during an age of expanding empire, and messages from rulers delivered afar were understood to carry the significance of the ruler who had sent them (Doty 12). In other words, letter writers always have maintained a certain faith that the letter is a material extension of themselves. Though Tashi and Haneen’s experiences below are very different, they share an impulse to send writing elsewhere as a substitution for their own physical travel. The accounts below show them moving across borders in letter form when their bodies could not physically leave. Understanding letter writing as a mobile extension of the self helps illuminate why writers may be drawn to such mobile practices for reasons beyond keeping in touch with others.

In fact, Tashi says, “that’s how writing saves.” When asked how her life would be different if she didn’t know how to write, Tashi responded:

Mm, then I would really feel kind of out of place. And yeah, I wouldn’t be here [in the U.S.] at all because...you see, if we cannot write, when my husband is away in U.S., I was there [in India]. He was here from 2000; I was there till 2007. So how long we got separated and if we cannot express through writing, we wouldn’t be having that relation

intact. ...Phone we can speak Tibetan but if I get to a place where there's no phone connection, I should do email. And if I don't know how to write I cannot maintain that relation. Yeah, email in English cause we didn't have Tibetan scripts. ...So I was like, yeah, that's how writing saves. And then I feel, might feel out of place.

After he had immigrated to the U.S. from India, Tashi and her husband corresponded by email as a second choice, since phone calls seem to have not been reliable. This emailing took the place of their physical relationship for seven years, carried out in the written English skills Tashi and her husband, both Tibetans, shared. Email, of course, complicates the idea of a material letter, but nevertheless mirrors a letter's embodiment of the writer when sent. Tashi exhibits great faith in writing's ability to maintain her marriage, as she and her husband sent writing across borders—a fraught idea for refugee Tibetans in India and for immigrants who must move from home for better work in other countries. Tashi's repetition that she would “feel out of place” without writing is particularly remarkable in light of the mobility of her letter writing. That she felt *in a place* because her writing moved *across places* seems counter-intuitive. And yet, Tashi seemed to know where she was—perhaps romantically or geographically—*because* she was able to send her writing somewhere else. Nevertheless, the confluence of literate and mobile forces in Tashi's account reveals most strongly the presence of political and global forces in her letter writing relationship with her husband: They wrote across borders for seven years because he was pulled away by a growing inequality of professional opportunity for Tibetans in India; they used a colonial language because the other language they shared was not available on computer keyboards; his moving abroad provided her the opportunity to continue and fine-tune the letter writing practices she had begun as a young student in an NGO-funded boarding school. These are the transnational forces that move writing practices around, even when the writers are, in this particular case, still in place.

Similarly, Haneen sent letters across borders both as a substitute for her own physical

movement and as a small act of literate resistance in a politically fraught region. Haneen has immigrated twice in her life—once from Palestine to Jordan and then again from Jordan to the U.S. Her family moved from Palestine to Jordan when she was in high school so that she and her siblings could attend better schools and escape the dangerous political situation in which she was raised. Haneen’s letter writing practices are very different from the accounts presented above, and they also resist the categorization set out in much research. A mobile and material analysis of Haneen’s letter writing shows that she wrote letters to send out of the country what she couldn’t write within it.

With much emotion, Haneen describes the home and school settings that regulated her early writing practices:

We lived in an area which had a lot of actions, as we say. They were always near. If you’re familiar with people moving from Palestine, this was a kind of life I was raised in. I was raised in a wealthy family, but we still were in this society that’s closed. That has a lot of demonstrations. Lot of shooting and guns; lot of stuff happening at the school. A lot of hierarchy.

Haneen explains that this level of violence together with the tight control of social hierarchy regulated not only daily life—who could leave the house when, and for what purposes—but also the content and skills taught in school. When asked to describe the writing practices she engaged in at school and at home, Haneen couldn’t think of any. She recalled only reading and oral activities—reading childrens’ books in a public library with her siblings and discussing certain topics at school in class. She relates these topics to being “raised in an area with big dispute and struggles,” with acceptable discussion points such as “girls and boys being equal.” However, in further explanations, Haneen switches to describing instead topics that were *not* allowed in discussion or writing: “freedom that we never left,” and “democracy.” She says such ideas were

“more controversial” and “there were a lot of topics that we were not allowed to talk about, politics.” She sighs audibly when she explains:

My parents would always say don't talk about occupation or anything in your writing even at school because this might bring something. It's not safe. Uh, it's a little bit complicated, a little bit complicated. Like I remember when my brother was almost shot in front of me and I really wanted to write about this and that's just for me. Even though I never wrote it, but like I really wanted to write this and say it to the world. ... There was a lot of things that you want to talk about, but at the same time, something is keeping you from saying a lot of stuff.

This is the highly controlled rhetorical situation which offered very limited options for writing activity. Haneen felt compelled to write and respond to the violent situations around her and “say it to the world,” but through local political, school, and family pressure, she felt prohibited from “saying a lot of stuff.” Writing is clearly seen here as a danger. Whether it is writing's permanent quality or its ability to circulate and transgress, Haneen was taught that writing would “bring something”—trouble, not safety. Haneen reiterates the gravity of language in that atmosphere saying, “it's just the whole society living in fear, that soldiers will come and harm your family for a word.”

When prompted to consider any kind of literacy being practiced around her neighborhood or at school, Haneen recalled protest signs and she recalled oral chanting, but she could not remember any writing of her own. In the course of the interview, she sat for long spells of silence, seemingly racking her brain for memories of writing. Until finally, quite suddenly and without provocation, she said, “Oh you know! I had penpals, oh yeah! I had like, when I was in 7th and 8th grade, I had around like 17 pen friends.” She explains:

Yes, yes! I had, and we shared, I had pen friends, and it was so fun to receive letters and write them letters. Oh I had a lot of pen friends from Turkey, Finland, England, United States, um, Egypt, uh, Tunisia. Many Arabic and uh, and I used to write in Arabic and some in English. Yeah, it was very nice experience because I learned a lot from my Turkish and Irish friends. And we were talking about family and um, whatever fights and thoughts. It wasn't like maybe if I read it now it's not professional written. But it was just

young middle schoolers and their ideas. Oh, we talked a lot about music and movies and Air Supply. [laughing] A lot of the Arabic music and American and British.

It is surprising how long it took Haneen to recall this high level of writing activity. Either she didn't consider correspondence to qualify as the writing practices under discussion, or else those letters were buried deep in her memories because, as she says, she "didn't talk about penpals for a long time." But keeping track of 17 correspondence contacts in multiple countries around the world in at least two languages must have taken enough effort to suggest that Haneen was engaged very actively in letter writing throughout her 7th and 8th grade years—the last two years before her family left Palestine for good. Haneen's sudden recollection of her participation in this wide swath of international correspondence could seem on the surface a straightforward teen activity of writing for novelty, writing to learn about music, movies, and families in foreign places. However, given the context in which Haneen was writing and the forces against which she wrote, she was engaging in a distinct type of discourse for distinct purposes, even as she produced casual notes to her penfriends.

When asked if she felt she could write whatever she wanted in her letters she said "Yes, yes," but if she could write similar things at school, she said, "No, no. No, no, you don't." This juxtaposition suggests that the content of her letters revolved around topics that would have brought her trouble at school. She gestures to the content of her letters, saying, "Even though I used to talk a lot about demonstrations and stuff like that, I wasn't scared of the letters." These were topics that she didn't fear explaining to teenagers in Turkey, England, Egypt, and myriad other locations in the world, but not in Palestine. Haneen creates a sharp distinction between writing which caused fear—anything political inside the country—and that which did not—political letters composed to be sent out of the country, and this distinction shows the marked function of letter writing for her. In a way, she seemed compelled to send herself out of the

country on the mobile back of a letter.

For Haneen the act of writing these letters seems almost more important than what is was she sent or received. She says, “Some of the letters I used to receive, and some letters I never received. There was like restrictions about sending tapes because authorities, they don’t want tapes to come out. . . .I wasn’t sure all of the letters will get there, but most of them get there.” Here we can see Haneen’s keen awareness, even as a middle schooler, of the government and military regulation of items moving in and out of Palestine. She knew that the “authorities” restricted the movement of tapes, but not the movement of letters. She is almost dismissive of this fact, revealing the powerful presence of regulatory eyes in her childhood life. Haneen also dismisses the potential of letters not making it across borders. While scholars such as Decker say this “miscarriage” of letters is a geographic space that “haunts letter writers,” a “death that is the space between correspondents,” Haneen explains that whether letters made it to their destinations or to her own home was just not something she could control (15). Instead, Haneen wrote letters in order simply to send them.

In her analysis of letter-writing relationships between prisoners and their penpals, Maybin suggests, “when people are socially isolated, they may turn to letter writing as one of the only channels available for contact with others” (151). Haneen was isolated in a way, but this was not necessarily the condition that compelled her to write. While she may not have been looking for “contact with others,” she was indeed looking for available “channels”—openings through which to send her writing away. Haneen’s “channel” presented itself when it arrived in her mailbox: “There was some INS, INSY? It’s a group of penpals. I’m not sure if it’s still running. INSApal? They used to send you brochure with addresses and pictures and it was so fun.” Haneen’s organization is either defunct or does not exist online, but one might assume from the span of

countries represented in her correspondence partners that this was an international organization.

Maybin also argues that the lack of physical contact between letter writer and reader opens up a “space within which the letter writers have the opportunity to represent or reconstruct themselves as people, and to rewrite their own histories in new ways” (168). Haneen may have sought that space, perhaps for the opportunity to rewrite the experience of violence around her, though she did not describe the exchange in this way. But certainly, Haneen was exchanging letters with writers abroad in order to engage in writing “beyond private acts of mind or the boundaries of supposedly coherent cultures” because there was no privacy in a culture of regulated writing and geographic and cultural boundaries shifted around her each day (Duffy 26). Duffy argues exchanging letters moves writers beyond these “familiar dichotomies” and allows them to be “compelled by other writing, words enmeshed with other words” (226). This is a mobile understanding of the potential of letters in that letters are understood to move among and between, rather than contain writing to one private mind or within one culture. But because of her life experience, Haneen had already lived beyond these dichotomies and was looking for a writing practice to match it. Letter writing happened to be the appropriate mobile practice for that need.

Liquid Letters

While the seemingly everyday letter writing practices above provide an ongoing hum of epistolary activity, foregrounding their mobile and material qualities draws attention to what letters cross—institutional, national, cultural borders—and the forces that send them around. As we’ve seen, letter writing practices are rather remarkable, both for their ability to record the most mundane and exceptional moments of a writer’s life and for their ability to slide so easily forward and backward along the paths of global movement. Decker agrees the epistolary form is

distinct, saying, “In its intersubjectivity, its habit of quotation, its liquid form...the letter, perhaps more than any other form of writing, enacts a recognition of the tendency of language to leak from established placements into the interstitial space of informal occasion, trial and error, play, and reinvention” (36). This tendency to “leak” resonates with critical linguists arguments about the liquidity of language. Perhaps letter writing practices, as they slip across borders, between hands, among languages, most epitomize a *trans* understanding of literate activity.

Importantly, many of the experiences above beg a question of technology: Can email be considered as material and mobile as letters—does an email actually *go* anywhere? Is it a similarly fluid practice that illuminates mobile social forces? It’s true that, for the most part, emails are an ever-present practice in the daily lives of these immigrant writers and present a challenge to arguments made about the prevalence and potential of letter writing. Any participant who had a job with a desk described emailing—Haneen, Rosalia, and Sabohi, who says she currently writes only “emails. Lots of them.” Haneen says she is mostly “writing at work through emails; I don’t believe I do any other writing. That’s the only thing.” Student participants like Khadroma, Nina, and Andrea describe feeling overwhelmed by the amount of email communication required of them in U.S. college settings. And almost every participant described writing emails to friends and family members who live outside the U.S. Interestingly, however, most participants treat these texts as true electronic mail—they compose them as they would a letter, sometimes just calling them “letters” anyway: Haneen says, “So basically if I can’t talk to my sister in Egypt...on the phone, I would just email with like long letter. And she would email back with longer letter.” Some participants also text, though only the ones in their twenties or those who have children in their teens and twenties. Ishtar texts to her children “instead of calling,” Houa and Paj Xyo, another Hmong nursing student, text their friends, and Yolanda texts

her step-kids “for everything,” a practice to which she responds, “That’s pathetic, but I think that’s the most writing I do right now.”

It is tempting to conclude that such frequent emailing and texting is the result of a fundamental change in our contemporary communicative situation—that technology now satisfies our need to communicate with more ease across farther distances. But, as Decker says, “The dream of instantaneous contact is...an old one,” and while scholars claim that the telephone “eliminated the multiple daily mails”—telegrams, letters—“that kept up a rapid circulation” of “lines sent to confirm or adjust a meeting time,” email and texting seem to have brought them back (240, 233). Claims that electronic communication is both brand new and damaging to writing do not hold up against, for example, the similarity of electronic phone texting to ancient Greek broken pottery *ostraca*, the “scrap-paper of the ancient world,” on which were written “simple receipts, short notes and messages, lists and records of the usual minutiae of everyday life” (Muir 15). In reading these *ostraca*, Muir says the writers “do not seem to feel that they are doing anything unusual in writing on broken pot” (15).

Further, the internet presents a “field of material constraints” just as much as does writing in general (Decker 240). Ishtar would like to write emails in Arabic but says “it’s a little difficult, you know, because I don’t have the keyboard so I just write in English,” just as Tashi could not type Tibetan and Paj Xyo says she would text more friends in Hmong if it didn’t “get confusing because it is the same alphabet” as English. In these cases, the impulse to use multiple languages in correspondence is hampered by the impediments of electronic keyboards—a material barrier. Muir suggests that *ostraca* was “used when you could not afford anything else: Zeno’s student, Cleanthes, was said to have taken down Zeno’s lectures ‘on *ostraca* and the blade-bones of oxen’ because he had no money to buy papyrus” (15). Similarly, Sofia doesn’t email because her

family in the Ukraine has “the same situation like I am in this country,” the situation of little access to email, the internet, and computers in general. She says, “We just talk on the phone. Connection through the phone and not much on computer.” Thus, there is no firm linear progression towards enhanced technological correspondence nor away from limited technological access. We might then reasonably suspect that the implications in the writers’ experiences above will not be lost in a wholesale shift to email, if such a shift is to occur. Newer technologies seem to enable and block mobility just as frequently as older ones. We also might assume that email also will just as readily reveal the powerful transnational forces that stand behind letter writing. And this is because emails, just like letters, both are put into practice across languages, geographic locations, and throughout these participants’ lives in an attempt to push against the centripetal and centrifugal forces of global movement. This chapter has traced one practice that indexes those forces, and the next will examine those global conditions themselves as well as the further multilingual practices these conditions bring about.

Chapter 5

Writing across Languages: Conditions and Practices of Rhetorical Attunement

I just feel like something keeps me moving, not stop there. ...I got a lot of opportunities because of my education. ...I did a lot of things and I kind of contacted with the different peoples from different background. And make me realize, well, I should keep moving [laughing]. I mean I don't know where I go or where is my destination, but I'll just keep doing what I've been doing.
Khadroma

Parents could get permission that the child release from language where they are because people just, people moving and they didn't want the child stressed. So for example, two years in Belarus, two years in Ukraine, two years in Georgia. ...School was in Russian...and every child could learn own language, except with military people because they had this situation with moving.
Sofia

Every increment of consciousness, every step forward is a *travesia*, a crossing. I am again an alien in new territory. And again, and again. But if I escape conscious awareness, escape 'knowing,' I won't be moving. Knowledge makes me more aware, it makes me more conscious. 'Knowing' is painful because after 'it' happens I can't stay in the same place and be comfortable.
Gloria Anzaldua

Jan Blommaert suggests the problem with research on multilingual communication is that “language repertoires are studied” as if they “are ‘fixed,’ so to speak, in space and time” (4). As Chapter Three showed, migrants’ literacy and language repertoires are anything but fixed as they move with writers across languages and locations. However, this claim—that literacy practices do travel—can belie the complexity of the practices themselves. These literate practices do not move as static, fully-formed resources with writers. Instead, writers call on or create literate resources in the process of making-do, asserting themselves, or communicating on-the-fly in specific rhetorical situations. The activities of creating, adapting, and acting with language reveals the rhetoricity of writing across languages. This chapter describes the shape of this experience and explores its rhetorical qualities: How does writing across languages create a certain rhetorical awareness or sensibility? What do multilingual writers do with this sensibility to take action with writing in their everyday lives? Through the accounts of eleven multilingual

writers, this chapter argues that literacy practices on the move, specifically between multiple languages, foster a distinct rhetorical sensibility for multilingual writers.

Multilingual writing activities, taking place under conditions that will be explored below, foster rhetorical attunement: an ear for, or a tuning toward, difference or multiplicity. Rhetorical attunement is a way of acting in the world as a multilingual writer that assumes linguistic multiplicity and invites the negotiation of meaning across linguistic differences. Like Krista Ratcliffe's "rhetorical listening," a purposeful identification across difference and otherness (19), attunement is rhetorical in that it is a way of acting with language in order to accomplish communicative ends. By virtue of their daily experience with linguistic difference, the writers in this study are tuned toward the communicative predicaments of multilingual interaction. These predicaments are both idiosyncratic and ordinary, moments in which rhetorical strategies are practiced and often created. This chapter moves through examples of these moments, exploring the conditions of difference and multiplicity—multilingual societies, globalization, geo-political influence—and the writing activities—teaching, essay writing, public writing, journal writing—that reveal the ongoing, negotiated, flexible quality of language. The chapter shows how multilingual writers aren't aware of this quality of language *a priori*, but come to know—become rhetorically attuned—across a lifetime of communicating across difference.

Importantly, this attunement should be considered cyclical: multilingual writers do not enter rhetorical situations with a sensibility that then dictates their writing activities. Rather, the writing activities that take place in these situations are interdependent with this sensibility, always intertwined and feeding back into the everyday literate practices that continue to shape how writers understand language. For the sake of analysis, this chapter separates the conditions

for, and the practices of, rhetorical attunement. But in reality, these elements are always co-occurring, allowing writers to constantly adapt and improvise how they act with language.

From Resources to Practices

As noted by Blommaert above, researchers in various fields have set out to describe multilingual writers' repertoires of resources—the knowledge and skills they draw on when writing (Canagarajah “Critical;” Canagarajah “World Englishes;” Guerra “Close to Home;” Horner et al., 2011; Lu “Professing”). This research has produced an understanding of the rhetorical traditions among or within the writing of particular cultural or linguistic groups (Baca *Mestizo*; Connor *Contrastive*; Kaplan; Kennedy; Mao; Liu & You; Smitherman; Stromberg; You) and has begun to show how linguistically diverse students express themselves and communicate through multiple codes and identities (Canagarajah “Toward;” Canagarajah “World Englishes;” Sarroub; Schuck; Ortmeier-Hooper; Harklau; Villanueva; Young). But much of this research focuses on writers' knowledge rather than their rhetorical activities—what their literate resources are rather than where they come from or how they use them. This focus can suggest that multilingual writers resources are fixed and stable, traveling directly from their home culture and language to the English-dominant U.S. in an unchanged repertoire of knowledge and skills.

For example, translation studies scholar Michael Cronin suggests that “interlingual traveling” provides “hidden epistemic benefits” for writers who move across multiple languages as they compose (3) and sociologist Nikos Papastergiadis suggests the “fissures within language and cultural identity” create a kind of “critical sensibility of innovation and improvisation” offering “a new interpretation of the flows of the world” (118). This “critical sensibility” could be understood similarly to Suresh Canagarajah's theory of “critical detachment,” which is created when writers “bring with them knowledge from alternate paradigms that can provide a

critical detachment from the dominant discourses” (“Critical” 134). He says this critical detachment, the ability to step back and rethink discourse in the context of hierarchies of power, fosters the following dispositions: “a curiosity towards the language, the ability to intuit linguistic rules from observation of actual usage, a metalinguistic awareness of the system behind languages” (“Critical” 134) as well as “characteristics of humility, wonder, and excitement over the power and complexity of language” (“Shuttling” 24). Canagarajah lists other “psychological and attitudinal resources” as “patience, tolerance, and humility, to negotiate the differences of interlocutors,” all of which inform how multilingual individuals communicate not only through speech but also through writing (“World Englishes” 593). These facets of awareness suggest what multilingual writers know: that language difference is common, open to negotiation, and not a detriment to successful communication.

This kind of rhetorical awareness—“critical sensibility” or “critical detachment”—helps govern the literate choices made by multilingual writers even if not revealing much about the choices themselves. These descriptions resemble what other scholars might call “meta-linguistic awareness,” a heightened consciousness or understanding about how language works. Brian Street, for example, cites sociolinguists when suggesting that meta-linguistic awareness might partially come from “the number of languages spoken in a region” (23). He says, “Where people are in contact with or themselves speak a variety of different languages, they are likely to have developed a language for talking about language, to be aware of the character of different kinds of speech (and writing) and of the subtlety of meanings in different contexts” (23). But scholars also are after a sensibility that is less meta-linguistic and more meta-socio-cultural. This sensibility, variously described above as “mestizo,” “critical,” “transcultural,” or “translingual,” can be understood as “the practice of connecting individual meanings of cultural difference

within the ‘large, many-windowed house of human culture as a whole’” (Papastergiadis 14).

These terms suggest that the proximity of cultural and linguistic difference makes writers aware not only of linguistic difference—“different kinds of speech” or “the subtlety of meaning”—but also of a system of discourse beyond an immediate moment of communication. This sensibility could be considered “feeling global,” indexing a “sense of being part” of literate practices larger than oneself (Clifford 256). This awareness, then, is a “full understanding of the medium”: the “local and global contexts...that shape the English language and those who use it” (Hattori and Ching 59).

But this elaboration of what multilingual writers know—their awareness, characteristics, skills—often stops short of showing where these resources come from, how writers adapt them or put them to use, or how they play out in specific moments of communication. In fact, recent work in contrastive rhetoric and writing studies has called for a more nuanced understanding of what this knowledge looks like in practice. For example, Ulla Connor wants to rename “contrastive” rhetoric “intercultural” rhetoric in order to describe “the vast complexities of cultural, social, and educational factors affecting a writing situation” (304). Reacting to a tendency in contrastive rhetoric to identify and describe “patterns favored by writers in a certain culture” in order to understand “difference from the rhetorical style of the learner’s language” as “problems” language learners have in their writing (Connor, *Contrastive* 160). She wants the field to “understand why and how individuals behave rather than simply study cultural artifacts and products” by researching “what went into the processes of writing as well as the historical background and context that affected the writing and the writer” (Connor, Nagelhout, and Rozycki 304). Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur’s “translingual approach” to multilingual writing highlights how multilingual writers manipulate their literacy and language resources to express,

communicate, and make gains through writing. For examples, they ask of language difference, “What might this difference *do*? How might it *function* expressively, rhetorically, communicatively? For whom, under what condition, and how?” (300-301, added emphasis).

Anis Bawarshi has asked similar questions, calling for teachers and researchers to attend more to how students “negotiate between and make use of their varied linguistic and discursive resources” (197). These scholars are pushing their fields to pursue the “how”: how multilingual writers use their rhetorical, discursive, and linguistic resources and repertoires in practice.

Applied linguistics provides some of this “how.” For example, Khubchandani shows how South Asian interlocutors engage in “bridging the gap” and “meeting halfway” while negotiating meaning orally, while Kramsch, Firth and Wagner, and Atkinson et al. have proposed theories of “alignment” in which interlocutors adapt to, integrate, and co-construct the meaning available in each communicative context. Cenoz and Gorter extend the intentionality and creativity of these strategies, claiming that “multilinguals may mix or switch languages because they have a lexical gap and need a word from the other language they know, but they also mix or switch languages in creative ways for different communicative functions” (358). Canagarajah explains that speech accommodation theory, in particular, accounts for how “multilingual people always make adjustments to each other as they modify their accent or syntax to facilitate communication with those who are not proficient in their language” and carry out “interpersonal strategies of repair, clarification, gestures, and back channeling...to negotiate speech difference” (Canagarajah, “World Englishes” 593). But these theories focus on multilingual speech, not writing, and few have made their way into writing and rhetoric studies.

In more recent work, Canagarajah does offer tentative conclusions about how these and other multilingual writing strategies are used through interaction with reading audiences, though

specifically classroom-based ones. He claims that those who write from multiple cultural and linguistic backgrounds write under a “negotiation model” in which, he says, they “wrestle with the divergent discourses they face in writing to creatively work out alternate discourse and conventions” (“Critical” 15). He identifies two specific bodies of rhetorical strategies—“recontextualization strategies,” in which a writer shapes context for a reader so he or she “will approach the text as a multilingual encounter” and “interactional strategies,” in which a writer and reader co-construct a text’s meaning together (“Translanguaging” 14-15). With these strategies, Canagarajah hopes to elucidate the choices made by multilingual writers in the process of carrying out translingual writing activities. However, these strategies depend on the classroom-like communicative set-up of student writer and peer-review reader. And he continues to depend on the notion that multilingual writers “intuitively” carry out these strategies and does not offer analysis of how these strategies develop over time or are shaped by origins other than “intuition” (“World Englishes” 593).

Finally, Damian Baca and Juan Guerra have developed theories of multilingual rhetorical practice, characterizing the rhetorical strategies specifically of Chican@ and Latin@ writers. Baca suggests these writers are “pairing metaphors, crossing genres, shifting back and forth from one medium to another and borrowing from both Western and Mesoamerican symbolic material” (7), echoing the claims of sociolinguists Cenoz and Gorter above that multilinguals “mix or switch languages in creative ways for different communicative functions” (358). Baca calls these practices together a “new rhetorical strategy” that fosters a “Mestiz@ consciousness” and creates “spaces in which it becomes possible to understand multiple local histories, memories, and rhetorics coexisting, beyond dichotomous assumptions” (5). Baca claims that these writers pair, cross, and shift with intention and in pursuit of a larger cultural consciousness. Juan Guerra

characterizes these rhetorical moves as “transcultural positioning,” seen in the ways Chican@s and Mexican@s “learn to negotiate” the “abundance of literacies that demand a reconsideration of the world-at-large” because of a “specific and felt everyday need to navigate” between languages, cultures, and literate practices (32). Here, Guerra aligns with Canagarajah’s negotiation model and alludes to a “world-at-large” sensibility similar to Baca’s Mestiz@ consciousness, Papastergiadis’ “house of human culture,” and Hattori and Ching’s “full understanding of the medium.”

The scholarly work above shows that multilingual writers use language to negotiate, cross, shift, and connect as they make meaning with others in specific rhetorical situations. However, these strategies and types of awareness still are presented as intuitive and stable resources, rather than as in-process practices stemming from social conditions. As noted in chapter 2, presentations of solid, pre-formed resources and repertoires are common in research on multilingual communication, and don’t necessarily show us how writers create, adapt, and take action with resources that are shaped by certain conditions over the course of a lifetime. However, language—the stuff of a resource—is always situation-dependent and often created in the moment of communication. Language is something that we *make as we move* rather than something static we carry around. In this way, multilingual writers’ meaning-making comes not from intuitive or cognitive tools but from external practices among social beings, and “resources,” then, must also be externally derived and socially practiced. Rhetorical attunement is an accumulation of meaning-making on the move, a sensibility that accounts for the ongoing, negotiated, and unpredictable use of these strategies over time. This chapter presents accounts of the ordinary moments in which rhetorical attunement is practiced and often created, analyzing first, how conditions of multilingual cultures, political change, and globalization foster rhetorical

attunement in multilingual writers, and second, how this attunement is practiced in the communicative predicaments common in multilingual teaching, essay writing, public writing, and journal writing.

The experiences of eleven writers presented below not only give shape and specificity to rhetorical attunement, but also best represent the range of conditions and practices described by all participants in this study. They describe writing as professionals, mothers, and students, and to audiences as varied as their children, employees, classmates, students, imagined public audiences, and themselves, negotiating language use for the sake of communication. The virtual chorus of multilingual voices included below is meant to embody the depth and breadth of these experiences as well as demonstrate the echoes of attunement across languages and cultures. However, the chapter does not aim to define the rhetorical capacities of all multilingual writers because lived multilingual experiences are too varied to essentialize. In fact, because the chapter analyzes performances and actions in social context, rather than the cognitive language resources of individuals, an essentialized definition of multilingual writers is beside the point. Instead, the chapter will show how rhetorical attunement is conditioned in common ways but put into practice in differing rhetorical situations for different communicative ends.

The Conditions for Rhetorical Attunement

The conditions that foster rhetorical attunement are those in which multiplicity is a norm and difference is inevitable. The writers in this study explain how they have written and communicated across multiple languages almost their entire lives, noting that the differences between their own languages and those of others are “normal,” “natural,” and “human,” what Pennycook agrees are “the everyday language practices of the majority of the world” (*Practice* 133). This isn’t to say that they wield their languages with the complete competence that ensures

communicative success, but that they are willing to try, using whichever pieces of various languages they have in their repertoires to carry out their daily writing activities at work, home, and school. Blommaert and Backus describe repertoires that are “composed of specialized but partially and unevenly developed resources” as “truncated” (Blommaert 23). However, the “extreme mixedness” that these “truncated” repertoires display does not reveal incompleteness, as the word “truncated” might imply, but instead illuminates the traces of acquiring more than one language variety under changing political and social conditions over the course of a lifetime (Blommaert 11). The women in this study use these mixed linguistic repertoires with an understanding that multiplicity, difference, accent, and change are normal and necessary in a multilingual world.

The majority of the 25 women in this study write across more than two languages, their acquisition of each dictated by their educational, cultural, and family experiences, and by the political contexts in which they were raised. For example, Nimet, a nursing student from Azerbaijan, speaks Turkish, Azerbaijani, and English, but also grew up with German and Russian under the Soviet Union. Aldene spoke only Portuguese until she was 18 in a household where her parents could read but not write, but was able to attend a Spanish private language institute in Argentina for two years, and then began taking English when she started her undergraduate degree back in Brazil. Shirin speaks Urdu and English and can read but not speak Arabic. In other words, the women in this study are already not only multilingual, but already fluent English speakers, many of them. Many of them used all of their languages, including English, in complex literate activities for varying purposes before their immigration to the U.S. And all of them describe becoming attuned to linguistic difference and multiplicity under conditions of multilingual diversity, political change, and globalization.

A Norm of Multiplicity and Difference

Sabohi, who was a journalist from Pakistan and speaks English, Urdu, Kashmiri, and Hindi, describes her multilingual writing practices with a shrug. She describes how she carried out her multilingualism as a TV journalist who delivered the news for a Kashmiri television station:

- S I would also present, which was not in English though, a program on the television that was in the native language. So I would do writing for that. I'd write my own script, what I wanted to say. And I always, it was in Kashmiri, but I wrote it in English.
- R So you wrote it out in English but you were presenting on TV in Kashmiri?
- S Yeah, I would jot, I'd note down that and then I would go along and just change.
- R As you were speaking.
- S As I was speaking, yeah.
- R That is very brave.
- S Yeah, that is very brave. [shrug]

On live TV, she was perfectly comfortable translating from what she had written in English on her script into Kashmiri in the moment she was speaking into the camera. She explains that every now and then she asked her co-presenter for some vocabulary help in Kashmiri, which is her third language and not the one in which she feels most comfortable writing. She would note a Kashmiri word here and there on the script, but for the most part, what she read in English she spoke fluently in Kashmiri. That Sabohi doesn't regard this multilingual writing practice as very remarkable is a testament to the norm of multiplicity she experienced as part of her workplace and everyday life in Pakistan. For Alicia, a bilingual teacher from Argentina, such multiplicity in her language repertoire is "just complex."

I learned Hebrew through Spanish, so Spanish and English are connected, Spanish and Hebrew are connected, but there's no connection between Hebrew and English [she draws a triangle on the table]. What I'm trying to say is that when I'm talking to somebody that speaks Hebrew and English my mind is a total mess because I feel like I have to listen in English or Hebrew then translate into Spanish, then switch to English or Hebrew, then back. There is no English/Hebrew bridge because that never was created. Well I can, but eooooo, it takes double the time.

This multiplicity is related to the conditions of linguistic and cultural difference that were

very common in participants' accounts of their literate practices. These differences are described as accent, cultural knowledge, vocabulary, or the construction of sentences, thoughts, and entire documents. Shirin, for example, explains, "the accent is a lot different" in the U.S. "Back in Pakistan we mostly talk in British English, not American English. And when you come here it's a little bit different. The English back there is pretty formal and here it is like pretty easy going." Sabohi also explains, "In India, you know that no, there are other things, there are other people. You learn that early on in your life." She says growing up she realized "okay this is Punjabi...this is Gujarathi, and this is Hindi and this is this. And you try to communicate and you see, okay it's different." These back and forth comparisons of language and accent variety shape much of what Shirin and Sabohi considered normal contexts for communication. Similarly, Ishtar, who speaks Arabic and English, knows that "two people can describe something in two different ways" because she attended multilingual schools in Syria and experienced literacy practices as naturally occurring between more than one language. And Alandra explains that she "grew up with American music and with translation of hamburger and what not, so English was definitely there." She says that as Brazilians they "have our neighbor countries that speak Spanish and our own Portuguese language is different than the Portuguese in Portugal and so we grew up with people who are different." Alandra is particularly proud that she could instill the same "understanding that people have different languages and different cultures and different ways to ask for things" in her trilingual daughter. She explained that by sending her to a dual-immersion school in the U.S., "it made more sense that other people spoke different languages" and her daughter grew more comfortable speaking and looking different from the majority monolingual children in her neighborhood.

Treating multiplicity as a norm and acknowledging difference in these ways could be understood as nothing more than a particular kind of consciousness that makes these multilingual writers more aware, more multiculturally savvy, or more understanding of the state of globalization. However, multiplicity and difference are *used* by these writers, actually put into action to help them understand how languages work and how to use English, in particular, in a new English-dominant setting. In this way, multiplicity and difference are not realities that exist “out there” for these writers, but instead are used every day to work, write, and communicate across difference.

This conditioning of attunement can be seen in the way they make comparisons across their various languages to write successfully in English. For example, when explaining how she wrote a letter to the bank, Aldene says, “It was easier in English [laughing]. No the structure is pretty much the same I think, but in Portuguese it would have been harder. There are more like grammar rules and more things that I would have to be attentive to that I don’t really do here.” And when describing writing her citizenship application materials in English, Ishtar explains, “but our language [Arabic] kind of tough language...grammar is really difficult, complicated. In English there is grammar and it’s not that easy to learn, but at least it’s not as complicated.” Such cross-language comparisons caused Aldene and Irene to conclude that English was not the daunting challenge they had assumed and motivated them to complete two high-stakes documents in a language that had previously intimidated them.

In a classroom-based context, Sofia, a saleswoman from the Ukraine, makes similarly comparisons across linguistic difference. When describing writing essays in her English classes in the U.S. Sofia says

My idea is that all my knowledges from school in Russian helps me write, helps me in English. But building the sentences give me problem because we have different structure

of sentences in Russian. If we write essay in English, so I did this in Russian, it helps that the idea is the same. But it seems to me in English it's more like structure, best is clear. In Russian if you begin writing you can describe that tree [pointing to a nearby tree] in Russian language, how I say, a lot. You can write a lot. In English it's more 'bum bum bum' just clear.

Sofia's separation of her writing into essay level and sentence level is interesting. She acknowledges that all of her Russian writing instruction helps her in English in general, and especially in writing essays. But at the sentence level, she finds the differences to be more distinct and has to work harder to translate the amplified quality of the Russian language—"you can describe that tree...a lot"—into the "bum bum bum" quality of English. While she may struggle with writing as she learns English, Sofia has already made a cognitive leap in understanding audience, using difference in language to make such conclusions.

By making comparisons across Portuguese, Arabic, and Russian to English, these writers are concluding that English is "easier," "clear" and structured, and less "difficult" or "complicated," than other languages. One might assume English would seem *more* complicated for these women who learned it as a second (Sofia), third (Aldene) or one of two native languages (Ishtar), but they are describing the exact opposite. This is not to say that writing in English is not hard for these writers, but that these are the characteristics of the English language itself—clear, straightforward, structured, simplified—they conclude they must master in order to write well in English. Alicia explains further:

I took the TOEFL and we had the English format-type essay with 'on the one hand, on the other hand,' but we [Spanish speakers] don't really write that way. When I think of writing in Spanish in comparison to English, we were encouraged to use longer sentences because you sound more sophisticated and like you know what you're talking about. That was very interesting process switching to English because it's the complete opposite. Chop chop chop, extra words extra words. No need. Where are your periods and sentences? Such things. ...In English I feel like there are some more precise way of doing things with writing...with the organization in general or your thoughts. If you read something in Spanish, it will give you the impression that it's messier than English.

Whether or not native English speakers agree that English writing is precise, short, and tidy, these writers have concluded, through comparison to the other languages they know, that this is successful writing for letters, essays, and tests in English. In this way, these writers have put multiplicity to use, not condemning English for being simple, but pragmatically making choices in order to communicate with a bank, get a good grade, or gain access to U.S. citizenship and universities. They don't only recognize that difference exists, they act on it, making savvy decisions about their writing and communication.

As Alicia says imagining others who review her writing, "I still have a lot of sentences that could be three, four lines long, but I like them that way, they make sense to me [pounding on the table]. Just give me your overall thought but don't give me crap about it." Like other multilingual writers, Alicia has a "relaxed attitude toward grammatical errors" not because she doesn't know the rules or doesn't "care about form," but because she makes standards "subservient to her rhetorical purposes" (Canagarajah, "Codemeshing in Academic Writing" 411). And her rhetorical purposes are shaped by all of her languages: almost all of the Spanish speakers in this study describe being taught that in "less *culta* texts, more coordination and more commas are noticeable" a fact that has some support in sociolinguistic research (LoCastro 206). As Alicia says, "you sound more sophisticated"—more *culta*—"like you know what you're talking about" when you *avoid* coordination and commas. Alicia gives in to sounding less *culta* in her writing for the sake of being rhetorically effective in English, but she knows both ways are right. As Renan, a Turkish lawyer, explains, monolingual speakers who make her "say things three times...are right because they need to hear correct pronunciation," but she emphasizes after a full pause: "They are right, but I am right also." In other words, these multilingual writers

know there are multiple “right” written and spoken forms because they’ve seen more than one standard succeed.

Political Change and Influence

Most of the writers in this study moved to the U.S. from countries that have undergone vast political change during their lifetimes. The accounts below show that these political changes are not neutral backdrops to the everyday use of literacy and language, but instead wield surprisingly direct influence over these writers’ access to literacy materials and language instruction, and on their identities as language users. These conditions attune writers to the political power of language, as evidenced especially in the quick slippage between explanations of personal language history and the political history of the place in which they learned language.

For example, in the course of explaining the features of the Russian language, Sofia instead feels compelled to explain the political history of the Ukraine:

So we will describe the tree in Russian, it will be a page or more. Of course we can make in English, but it’s a little bit faster. In Russian long. So I give you little bit idea about Ukraine and Russian situation in past. Ukraine, some of country speak Russian, where I am from and some parts speak only Ukraine. We are not separate, we are the same country, but in history something happened in south of Ukraine that they most speak Russian. And if the people speak Ukraine, it’s like mess, Russian and Ukraine together.

In describing her memories of reading and writing growing up as well as her current literacy practices, Sofia often relayed parallel explanations of language use, politics, and history. Political change is ever-present in her understanding of her own language use, revealing the conditions that shape an attunement to the powerful and socially grounded elements of language.

Sofia is not the only writer to exhibit such slippage. When asked what languages she communicates in, Renan said, “Turkish was my first,” and then after a pause continued: “Well my mother from Georgia, kind of a Russian state. But now they are separate, so I couldn’t speak Georgian because my father was a Turk, my mother was a Georgian, and they don’t speak as a

Georgian in my house.” Renan described her language repertoire not by what it contained, but by what it lacked—the Georgian language, a language that she seems to have expected to learn from her mother, but because of her father’s country’s dominance at the time, and his described dominance in the house, was not passed on. Nimet, too, in describing the language instruction of her younger school years provided a historical political context:

History, geography, mathematics, everything in school Russian. We learn the Russian, not just for academic language. Because just fifteen republics we have all one language, and at the same time they come together. State language is a kind of Russian. You are not obliged to learn but you have to because if you don’t know Russian you cannot find a job.

Nimet is describing the language context of her early schooling as a consequence of living under the Soviet Union. In describing her experiences to me, she often closely linked her literate practices in school and descriptions of the political situation of the Soviet Union and how that dictated the language, learning, and even employment opportunities in Azerbaijan. She often moved in this way between descriptions of her literate practices in school and descriptions of the political situation of the Soviet Union and how that dictated the language, learning, and even employment opportunities in Azerbaijan.

That these writers were speaking to what they could have assumed to be a geographically-naïve researcher at the moment of describing these experiences might partially explain their desire to provide such historical context over and over again. But the impulse is more noteworthy than that, both because it is hard to imagine a monolingual English-speaker feeling the need to provide a historical backdrop to their language history and because such descriptions of political conditions continued throughout writers’ accounts, particularly in explanations of how they felt about their own multilingual identities.

For example, Tashi grounds her experiences of learning to write in English in her identity as a political refugee. Tashi explains that when she communicates between her languages, she

feels like a “jack of all trades and master of none.” She says, “in a way that’s good, because I’m with the average of groups, I can express myself...[and] I didn’t get pointed out for being too weak.” But she says this linguistic identity comes specifically from her lived experience as a refugee.

Being a refugee, we have no choice but to follow and be, when you are in Rome, be as Roman. So do as Roman do and be as Roman. Here [in the U.S.] it’s like so big and international society, but back in India they keep asking me, ‘you guys are refugees here, you didn’t have your land, you should go back.’ And like you know they just keep reminding us of like being as countryless.

Tashi situates her language identity in a historical-political context that highlights the colonial past of India. She explains that the teachers and headmasters at the school “always reminded us, ‘you have extra responsibility,’ like you have to struggle to survive. You have to establish yourself.” This responsibility was explained to them as mastering English and doing well in their courses in order to not waste their sponsors’ investments or the trust of some of their parents (most were orphans). Tashi added, “See we did not have generations of our grandparents with a good education background with history records, nothing. So we just have to establish ourself, and if we do well in our life, younger generation will have a better life. That’s how we have to think of it.” She didn’t expand on the fact that her grandparents had no historical record because Tibetan is not a written language. Nor did she blame Indian colonialism for shifting responsibility on Tibetans to establish themselves in this way. But underneath all of these descriptions of her experiences in school runs a history of the differing power of each of the languages in which Tashi is a “jack of all trades and master of none”—Tibetan, English, Hindi, Kannada. Nearly all of her literate experiences bare the traces of the political past of India and Tibet, revealing the conditions under which Tashi has become attuned to difference, multiplicity, and language negotiation.

Similarly, Sofia described herself as a multilingual writer and communicator through the lens of politics. Sofia was raised in a military family under the Soviet Republic, and explains that because of the political situation at the time, she was only required to complete her schooling in Russian, and cannot write or communicate in Ukrainian.

I remember parents asking me if I want to learn Ukraine language and I said I don't want. ...Parents could get permission that the child release from language where they are because people just, people moving and they didn't want the child stressed. So for example, two years in Belarus, two years in Ukraine, two years in Georgia. ...School was in Russian, all schools. Russian was first and every child could learn own language, except with military people because they had this situation with moving.

Sofia's experience with difference and multiplicity is not one of access and opportunity, even though after moving to schools in 3-4 different countries she certainly would be willing to negotiate across difference in order to continue to get along in school. But her inability to speak Ukrainian as a woman from Ukraine is no small matter for Sofia; she is embarrassed by this lack of knowledge and blames her family's military status, and their constant movement across various national and educational systems, for this missed opportunity. In fact, it was only the children whose parents were not in the army who ended up learning Ukrainian in school. So Sofia explains that it was "legally an option" to learn the language of each of these republics, but even though she chose not to she says "it's not my fault." As Sofia describes her language learning experiences, she does so through the historical and political lens of the Soviet Union in order to provide what she feels is a full explanation of her multilingual identity. These conditions show how Sofia is attuned to the less benign side of literate difference and multiplicity and is particularly attuned to the way in which language acquisition can block access to power rather than enable it.

Globalization

Finally, the writers in this study develop rhetorical attunement under conditions of globalization.

In varying regions of the world and in a range of languages, these women explain how the dominance of English, the loss of language in younger generations, and language change due to shifting global power structures influences their understanding of communicating as a multilingual individual. In the background of many participants' life experiences, global non-governmental organizations (NGOs) sit quietly, deftly regulating language resources in various countries and acting as a platform for the global dominance of English. Nimet describes how NGOs conditioned the language learning environment in Azerbaijan:

We founded Azerbaijani English teachers association with one of my friend, she uses perfect British English because she worked at American embassy. ...So we just make this one association and the high school and university people come and apply ourselves...to this organization, Azerbaijan English teachers association. Yeah, we just contact, worked with the British Council and the American ambassador, American Council Education and Iris Company and Soros Foundation, they all have branch in my country. We go and ask, just let's involve this organization, help us with a book. We finish the book and we write it ourselves, not our government, government doesn't care. We also make the syllabus and take the syllabus to school our own children. And we saw the result. ...We begin just twelve people. Now we have eight hundred members.

This isn't to say that Nimet was agent-less under the weight of these NGO's resources. In fact, starting and growing such a teaching organization is a most impressive achievement and is indicative of Nimet's bustling personal and educational activism. Rather, Nimet's description simply reveals the presence of these global NGOs and their seemingly behind-the-scenes shaping of the English language conditions in one country.

Renan states it the most plainly, "I had a decision to visit the United States and other countries and I thought I need to learn English because English is a universal language." This is a sentiment often adopted without question in many participants' accounts. Shirin is similarly matter-of-fact about the status of English as what she calls "the global language." She explains that most schools in Pakistan and India are "native English" because "if you are graduating in a major subject, you need to learn English in everything." According to Shirin, the schools are

English-medium in every subject, rather than inclusive of the other local languages of Urdu, Hindi, Arabic, or Kashmiri. She also extends her matter-of-fact view of English to her current work situation in the U.S., explaining the prevalence of English in the Muslim school as simply a pragmatic necessity:

Like here the main language is English. That's how we communicate, cause I don't know Arabic. I can read it, but I cannot speak it. So that's how we communicate with the other communities, with the Muslim communities—in English. Otherwise we get stuck. They don't know Urdu and we don't know Arabic.

English becomes the lingua franca in a school in the U.S. in which students, teachers, and family members share a religion but do not share languages except for English. These are conditions of globalization encapsulated on a very local scale. Shirin is thus attuned not only to the norm of communicating across multiple languages, but also to the ease that English can provide in communicative predicaments between students and teachers who don't share their other languages.

Sabohi shares this view of English's global dominance and pragmatic use, and connects such power to an almost inevitable historical trajectory. Sabohi acknowledges the history and dominance of English but approaches the language almost pragmatically:

Well it goes back to India being English colony. And it is like that slave mentality, I mean this is my understanding of the things. It's just Indians were enslaved and they were treated really badly. And even though they resented the English, but they were made to call them masters, masters, masters, and actually masters are like superior and you tend to imitate that thing and you tend to be more like them or something. And that translates, that travels down because if I had been living in that era and then I was independent I would like to be like the English master. Then if I had a son I would definitely want him to be like that. And then I am inculcating in him that mentality and he in turn grows up with that mentality that passes on to next generation. And next generation. And until now it is about convenience because English is, everybody understands in India, outside India, most of the world, half of the world probably speaks English. So it's again, convenience.

Sabohi's generational description is more about colonialism than globalization, though she ends with a claim similar to Renan and Shirin's above that “until now it is about convenience

because...half the world probably speaks English.” Sabohi’s comments are striking in that they move so quickly from a narrative of colonialism to one of globalization, from ambivalence to pragmatism. In this way, the colonial domination of the past—as embodied in the use of English—is forgiven for the convenience of the language in the present. Growing up under such conditions, Sabohi recognizes the political power of English, but does not seem to blame or want to ban English for this history, though she admits there are plenty of others who do. Canagarajah notes that writing as a multilingual can “provide a critical detachment from dominant discourses” and Sabohi uses that detachment to recognize that there are high stakes in language maintenance, as well (“Critical” 134). She cites India’s move to revert cities back to their pre-colonial names, a move she says she understands as “people wanting to protect an identity and not keeping up altogether with the times.” In other words, her attunement to “the times” is one of inevitable language change and an almost dismissive attitude toward colonial remnants of language practice.

Interestingly, her comment also contradicts her own feelings toward language loss in her son’s education. Sabohi expresses dismay that her six-year-old son “has problem even understanding that there is other language” than the English he is growing up with in the U.S. She is disappointed that she cannot foster the same kind of understanding in her son at home because of what she considers to be the pressure of English-dominant culture in the U.S. Thus, her inability to pass on this understanding to her son in the U.S. also attunes her to language’s fickle nature. Alandra describes similar alarm that her daughter “responds to [her] in English when I speak with her in Portuguese. There might be two words of Portuguese in there...English, English, English the whole time.” And Shirin similarly expresses a complicated mix of regret and pride toward the relationship of Urdu and English, explaining that “yes, Urdu is vanishing

pretty quickly [and] I want my kids to know their own language.” Shirin describes communicative situations in Pakistan in which parents have stopped teaching their kids to speak and write Urdu, causing some Pakistanis to speak less Urdu than Shirin’s U.S.-educated son. Shirin says “the teenagers in our society talk to my kid and say, ‘oh my god you speak so much better than us. We don’t know these words.’ And he is very proud.” Shirin is proud that her son has retained the Urdu skills she taught him, but knows that English, as “the dominant global language,” will probably ultimately prevail, especially if her son has no one to practice Urdu with, even in Pakistan itself.

As Sofia describes a recent visit to her home country she entails each of the conditions of globalization—dominant English usage, language loss, language change—that shape participants’ rhetorical attunement:

I visit last summer and I want to say Rebecca, it was scary. They are saying everything in Ukraine language. And my god I see everything in English. I notice signs. I thought to myself good in English cause it’s a little bit easier for me to understand than Ukraine. ... This made me a little uncomfortable because I don’t know Ukraine language and everything in Ukraine and I don’t understand. I said, oh my god I can’t learn Ukraine, it’s enough to do English for me.

Sofia was overwhelmed by the language dynamics in the Ukraine during her visit because the country had changed, moving away from the Soviet Union’s Russian as the state language and toward a recuperation of Ukrainian on public signs, in schools, and in virtually every social and institutional setting. English, however, retained a presence as a global lingua franca, and appeared on some signs and some public notices. This was comforting to Sofia who speaks only Russian and English, but still left her feeling alienated and distanced from her country of birth that had experienced so much political change in her absence. Encountering the languages that carry the country’s political past leaves Sofia with a rhetorical attunement similar to most of the participants in this study—operating with a norm of multiplicity and difference, savvy but not

entirely hopeful about the power of language, but nevertheless ready to make use of their various languages in their daily writing lives.

The Practices of Rhetorical Attunement

Attunement is made rhetorical by the influence of historical and social conditions and the practices that continue to tune language. The multilingual writers in this study not only recognize the existence of multiple languages, cultures, and ways of communicating, but they also act on that recognition with writing to complete work, bring about change, or make decisions in their immediate life situations. In other words, these writers are acting with their language repertoires—not always with purposeful intention and not always to successful ends—but in ways that shape what they know and what they are attuned to in communication. Thus, not only are these writers experiencing certain conditions that bring about rhetorical attunement, but also they are carrying out activities—teaching writing, writing for the public, using dictionaries to write, writing in journals and writing essays—that are comprised of and create other rhetorical strategies and practices.

These accounts show eleven writers, by virtue of their daily experience with linguistic difference, welcoming the communicative predicaments, the common dis-identifications, of multilingual interaction. As Ishtar says, they are “talking or writing in the mind of another language,” keeping the whole of their literate repertoires “in mind” and attuning them to the negotiated and flexible nature of languages as they mix, mesh, and make choices across their languages. They use their personal experience to represent the whole “mess” of multilingual experience, associating themselves with multilingual traditions but continuing to assert their competence in the specific rhetorical circumstances in which they find themselves. Often these assertions transgress local circumstances, as Renan explains: “I didn’t know any language when I

was young, and my family didn't allow me to read any book. ... They expect me to cook very well like a house-woman. But yeah, I don't obey. I didn't obey the pressure. And I tried to study as a woman and I am successful." Renan's literate practices and the others below show how multilingual writers develop a rhetorical attunement tuned toward the ongoing, negotiated, and unpredictable use of multiple languages in everyday writing practices.

Teaching Writing

Of the many practices these multilingual writers describe, teaching is a particularly fraught and fertile opportunity for practicing attunement. Especially because these women, by virtue of their multilingualism, are employed as bilingual teachers or are teaching in multilingual schools, the communicative events that take place in these spaces are already full of language play and negotiation. In varying levels of intensity, they consider language negotiation a skill to be cultivated. Aldene, for example, explains that she uses Spanglish with many of her students—even though she worries that “it’s just getting too messed up”—in order to show them to “not worry about the grammatical structure so much or if it’s right or wrong.” She says that if she has a student struggling to write, she tells him, “Just write. Even if you have to put like some Portuguese or whatever language mixed up, just try, it’s just a start.” She endorses this practice with her own experience as a Spanish and English learner: “I always remember how hard it was for me and now it’s easier even to write in Portuguese.”

Alicia makes a similar connection between her own experience as a language learner and common experiences of Spanish writers moving to English writing, giving her own multilingual students advice about writing. She says, “I understood, it’s not that I’m doing it wrong, it just doesn’t fit this language” and she passes this realization on to her students. Speaking specifically of the long sentences that are common in Spanish, she says, “In English most people won’t be

okay with it, will find it too confusing or overwhelming or categorize it as bad writing skills. So I tell them—it's not that the way you write is wrong, it just doesn't follow the rules of English writing." Instead she teaches them, "you need to have your introduction and your connecting sentence and your argument, 1, 2, 3." Both Aldene and Alicia use their own experiences as multilingual writers to show, for their student writers, that they are not "wrong" for writing in Spanish or Portuguese-influenced prose, but that they need to better negotiate the multiple valid ways of writing that exist.

Yolanda takes this language negotiation beyond Alicia's acknowledgment of different rules or Aldene's rule-breaking to start writing. In describing the language mixing practices of her own multilingual students, she explains that she encourages improvisation and cooperation in a manner that assumed language struggle would be present and normal:

Sometimes I asked the kids when we're reading something scientific, "How do you think you say this?" And they say "I don't know." ... They know I don't know how to say it, so I ask them, "how do you think? How would you say it?" And they find a way to say it, and I say "let's use it." And then I ask one of the kids that I know dad's a biology teacher or something. "Ask your dad and tell us the right way because we're using this way but we don't know if it's right." [laughing] It would be nice to use the right way. Like me, hello I'm teaching biology and I don't know how to say the words we're writing. I mean, that's negative, but the thing is that I make it a comedy. It becomes a comedy for all of us, and then okay let's move on. ... And for kids that speak other languages you know, I have an accent, but look at me, I can do it, so go ahead. "But what if it's wrong?" Doesn't matter, look at me! You can say it wrong, you know. So I think I help the kids sometimes with that.

This literacy practice—reading science writing in English—is one she carried with her from her college education in Colombia where she had been trained as a veterinarian. Yolanda explains that in her Colombian university courses, they rarely had access to the required reading in Spanish—mostly scientific scholarly journal articles—and thus had to work together in small student groups to translate their reading into Spanish or occasionally hire outside translators. Yolanda calls on these resources—collaborative meaning-making and accessing language

experts—in a new context in which she was not the student, but the teacher. As a teacher, she accesses her students' native-speaker knowledge and consults outside experts, as she did when she asked a student to consult his biologist dad on the pronunciation of terms. As a teacher, Yolanda continues to put into practice these linguistic resources to get through a text and, as she says, “use the words the right way.”

This communicative event also invited Yolanda to create resources for her students in that moment, showing them that language is up for negotiation. She models for her students a norm of language difference, showing them how she hears certain words and has them practice hearing her accented pronunciation. She has them laugh with her at the occasional comedy of reading and writing across languages and helps them, as she says, “move on” from certainty in a manner that evokes Firth's let-it-pass principle. Canagarajah notes that multilingual writers have a tendency to “creatively negotiate meaning in context” (24) and Yolanda's account shows how she practices this negotiation in the specific rhetorical situation of her bilingual science classroom. Yolanda encourages students to use a provisional pronunciation, saying “let's use it,” showing students that they can continue to negotiate these meanings until they get it right. Yolanda not only reveals her own attunement toward language in this context, but also attunes her students to the normalcy of language uncertainty: “But what if it's wrong?” Doesn't matter, look at me!” When seen in use in this specific rhetorical situation, Yolanda's linguistic and discursive resources prove to be particularly complex, indexing a quiet resistance to common classroom practices that treat multiple languages as separate and always aiming toward a standard. This specific account captures Yolanda and her students engaging in literate activities Yolanda had cultivated over a lifetime, showing how she continues to tune her own ear toward difference as well as those of her students.

Using Dictionaries

Dictionary use is ever-present in the writing practices described in this study. In the activities of many of these writers, dictionaries are used as a resource for language learning—Ishtar says she would take “whatever paper, whatever bill, whatever anything” she could find, “go to the dictionary, translate it and feel the victory!” But dictionaries also served as texts that showed how languages overlap, change over time, and are at the whims of translators. In their frequent use of dictionaries, these multilingual writers become attuned to the unsettled and negotiated quality of written language.

For example, Sabohi is tolerant of language multiplicity because she knows that languages that seem standard are really a historical conglomeration of loan words—a fact linguists teach widely, but is little acknowledged in public discourse. She says,

Sometimes I went to the dictionary and I saw the first time “bond” in the dictionary and it means “strike.” It is “bond” and origin was Indian and I was like, yeah, there are so many things that are borrowed from other languages, and English too, so, what’s the big deal! I mean, you want to communicate something and you want to write something for pleasure, even if it’s literary, as long as somebody understands it and enjoys it so what’s the fuss about?

Because Sabohi is a dictionary user, a practice cultivated from learning to write simultaneously in Urdu and English, she notices patterns of language use, and concludes on her own that languages are already messy.

Nimet describes coming to similar conclusions because of her dictionary use, but under different circumstances. She explains that she can’t translate her first language, Azerbaijani, to English, her third language, without the mediation of Russian because of the dictionaries that were available at the time she was learning English:

We used Russian because we had no direct English/Azerbaijani dictionary at that time. Well there was professor who wrote one, but it was not high quality. We have English/Russian or Azerbaijani/Russian. We had a hard time, spent a lot of time to go

Azerbaijani/Russian, Russian/English. ...At the same time you have to learn two words. You have to understand Russian because this way you only can find the other.

The very availability of this resource, which was completely dictated by the political situation of the time, changed the way Nimet writes among her languages. She knows that language was available to her based on whichever political power felt inclined to grant that access, which in turn led her to believe that official or correct languages were related more to the whims of political change than to hard and fast rules. When she writes now in English, she still moves between multiple dictionaries, either as habit, or as method for making choices among her languages: “So I go synonym, go antonym, go homonym, and then come back. My god what kind of word can you substitute this one?! And my Azerbaijani dictionary, they know better than me what I am looking for. In Azerbaijani dictionary I can look for what I need, then look in English dictionary.” Nimet manipulates her languages, negotiating meaning both with herself and with her dictionaries as she writes.

Writing for the Public

Like many participants in this study, Sabohi knows that language is porous and open to change. As a professional journalist in Pakistan, Sabohi researched, wrote, and translated constantly among English, Urdu, and Kashmiri, but in the U.S., she writes almost exclusively in English for email communication and the school newsletter. She explains that the negotiation of meaning across multiple languages is not only a given in her work, but a necessity in order to win over listening or reading audiences.

When it comes to writing in mass communication, I have seen that in some newspapers, it is being done and it has been even effective to use different languages. Like when you are in India, it will definitely help you if you are communicating to the masses, what you are trying to get across to them if you use some Hindi words in there. And if you kept their culture, their beliefs, their traditions in mind, when you wrote that piece that you want to communicate them to, it will definitely help you to get across your point clearer than if you stick to, okay, literary Shakespearean English? No. I mean maybe few people

have done masters in English or something they'll understand you, what about others? If you want to write to the masses you have to use the language they use, right? I mean even if that means there's mixing of a few, in school newsletter for example, I don't mind. ...If you are able to add a few words, change a few words and still you are able to communicate, so what is the harm? So what if you don't protect it the way it is just because that is part of your identity and part of your culture you don't want it to be, um, contaminated, right?

Sabohi shows how she has carried a specific literacy practice—writing for a public audience—with her from Pakistan to the U.S. She, in fact, slides smoothly between these settings as she makes her point, thinking first of her writing experiences in Pakistan but then ending with her newsletter writing in the U.S. Whereas in Pakistan she wrote articles in both Urdu and English, and did her reporting live in Kashmiri, in the U.S. she writes short, informative pieces in English to her school's community. As she describes moving this practice between these two settings, she seems to be calling most on her resources for understanding a highly linguistically diverse audience and knowing how to manipulate language to achieve certain ends. As Sabohi says, an effective communicator “kept their culture, their beliefs, their traditions in mind, when you wrote that piece.”

Sabohi often considers her audience at length, and it is this resource that she draws on to describe the rhetorical effectiveness of negotiation. She describes communicating to an audience for whom reading in only one language would not only be unnatural, but detrimental to communication. She knows that “mixing of a few” words from various language is a way to extend a communicative hand to one's audience and show a willingness to work toward meaning-making together. From her lived experience writing across at least three languages as she grew up and now writing to an audience in a school where at least seven or eight languages are spoken, Sabohi uses her discursive resources to invent her audiences in a way, improvising communication across varied traditions and values. “What's the big deal?” is something of a

linguistic mantra for Sabohi, as she both practices rhetorical attunement in this way, but also continues to create her strategies for representing such attunement in her school newsletter articles and communication with the school parents.

Journal writing

Just as they practice rhetorical attunement in their public writing, many of these writers develop strategies of rhetorical attunement in their personal or private writing. While some writers such as Aldene and Alandra describe using their personal journals to do the more creative and boundary-breaking writing that school writing didn't allow, Alicia and Ishtar describe writing in journals to practice the multilingual negotiation and meaning-making that they also carry out in more public communication.

Ishtar says that she writes in her journal in Arabic but “sees [herself] putting some English words.” She says that because she is “used to speaking English mostly outside...you're used to the two different languages to express what you wanna say.” Ishtar describes struggling with this separation of public and private languages—English for “outside” public uses and Arabic for personal journal uses—and is frustrated that English pops up unexpectedly in her journal writing. She says she is now “kind of confused between Arabic and English” and so eventually stopped writing, saying “okay I don't want to do this. I can't really focus on one language to do it.” For Ishtar, the pull of language mixing is confusing and un-motivating, a reason to stop writing in a journal, though something she doesn't feel she can really control, since she describes it as “natural.” She especially resists what she describes as the inevitable trace of Arabic on her writing in English, that her reader can tell that she is “writing in the mind of another language.”

But for her daughter, who is a monolingual English speaker, the influence of Arabic thinking on written English is noteworthy and interesting, a practice that reveals “ways of describing stuff” that Ishtar says her daughter is amazed by. Ishtar will sometimes share her journal writing with her daughter or show her the writing exercises Ishtar creates for herself when she studies English at home. While Ishtar is unimpressed by her own mixed writing practices, and occasionally worries that she will be misunderstood by native English speakers, she is happy that her daughter “thinks it’s very interesting. She says ‘oh I like your way in writing.’ And I’m like, ‘really?’” Ishtar is pleased to make public, if only for her daughter, her personal journal writing, even as she struggles to fully adapt the practice of writing between Arabic and English.

Alicia describes writing in a journal for a much more directed purpose but with a similar lack of control over how her languages interact in the writing itself. While on an exchange visit in Tanzania with a group of anthropology undergrads, Alicia realized that she was speaking only in English and Swahili and hardly ever thinking, speaking, or writing in Spanish. She was finding it hard to switch into Spanish quickly to communicate with her family in Argentina over the phone and didn’t want to “lose her writing skills,” so she decided to keep a Spanish-only journal.

So my decision was to keep a journal and I was only gonna write in Spanish. That was tough because during the day I was exposed to English and Swahili at the same time, and at night I was forcing myself to write in Spanish. I was like ‘okay I’m just gonna stay to Spanish’ but then I went back to the doing it freely thing. I wanted to add some English words in there, switch and then back and then switch and then back, I just wanted to do it. ...By week two or three I was like okay, I’m just gonna mix some English in there cause that’s just the way it makes sense right now.

Alicia is less worried than Ishtar about her struggle to write only in Spanish. She was laughing as she described giving in to the presence of English in her journal writing. For her, the journal

remains important—she recounted her research and travel experiences at night, writing by herself, and is happy to have a record of the trip. The eventual desire to “switch and then back” between English and Spanish just made more sense to her in that immediate rhetorical situation. She was writing for herself, not for a teacher or for a grade, and knew that with herself as an audience, her journal writing could continue the language mixing and meshing she eventually passes on to her own students.

Essay writing

The writers in this study describe writing essays for a variety of purposes. Some remember writing essays in primary and secondary school, others still write them in current university or English classes. Those who went to university describe writing lab reports, literary and translation analyses, research reviews, and master’s theses. Others describe writing personal narratives for application or scholarship essays or brief essays for citizenship applications. Most writers, but especially those who have written essays in high-stakes situations for grades or entrance to programs or countries, describe practicing in their essays a very careful attunement toward multiplicity and language negotiation.

Aldene and Nimet represent the two extremes of this cautious attunement—Aldene expressing irritation toward essayist structure and Nimet welcoming such structural change. Aldene says of her essays both in the U.S. and at her university in Brazil, “I just don’t like to have a structure that okay, the thesis statement has to be in this paragraph and have to do this. Or ‘you can never use the first person.’” She explains that she sees all essays as “so tight and so structured” that she “cannot really write the way I want...when it comes to writing, if I have to follow a former structure it really annoys me.” Coming from a neighborhood in Brazil where very few people read and write and being the first person in her family to attend college, Aldene

has been very successful in writing her way through an undergraduate and masters degree in three languages. This success enables her to work within the writing structures she knows exist by exercising her creativity on the sentence level: “A lot of my writing that I use I’m pretty sure belong to the English vocabulary, but mostly I just make up words.” She is most proud of the application essay for her master’s degree to a research university in the U.S. in which she carried out this creative wordplay in service of narrating her educational history from Brazil to the U.S. Aldene is tuned to the limits of structure, just enough to push against essay structures that “annoy” her, but not too much that she limits her own access to institutions.

Nimet, on the other hand, is happy to take on new essay structures that she says are very different from those she was taught in school in Azerbaijan. She explains that after meeting with an advisor for the nursing school she learned that her application essay was “too long.” She says, “they want brief information, but I don’t know what is the expectation.” She was happy to hear from the advisor some of these expectations, many of which adhered to the understanding relayed above of English as brief, clear, and simple, but she was still puzzled by the purpose of such an essay.

You have to show something, some question you have to answer. You have to explain why, why you apply for this program. What is your purpose? What kind of benefit you will give to the community? ... Why, a lot of why.

Nimet explains that “a lot of why” felt uncomfortable to her because the essays she’d written in school in Azerbaijan were almost exclusively for end-of-year testing and required her to relay subject matter with no opinion, certainly no “why.” One could draw tentative conclusions that under a communist government such individual exploration and explanation was not welcome in school essays, whereas it is exactly the purpose for a U.S. university application essay. Once she understood the difference, Nimet said she welcomed the change but remained cautious:

You know this is different society. I grew up different society. You cannot match them because sometimes you write sentence. This society doesn't understand me and then I need to change to the other. But it takes long sentence [laughing].

Nimet is attuned to not only the differences among multiple options for essay structure dictated by multiple languages, but connects these options to the societies in which these structures are fostered. In this way, Nimet associates her individual experience of writing across languages to a larger social experience of communication across difference. Nimet understands the length of a sentence, the amount of language, it takes to switch between social expectations for writing. She knows that she is part of a larger multilingual tradition, and argues that sometimes such communicative predicaments “take a long sentence” to resolve.

Tashi's essay writing practices fall somewhere in between Aldene and Nimet's, though she is similarly conscious of and intentional with moving her writing between her languages. As a daughter of farmers who could not read or write, Tashi guided her own learning, at times taking on the role of teacher as she taught her father to sign his name or helped her mother interpret the occasional mail. Tashi explains that during the time allotted for homework at the Indian boarding school she attended for Tibetan refugees, she would study English-language newspapers and books on her own. She was motivated to begin such study when she realized that “whatever you have in your brain can't be seen by other people. You just have to write it down and show them that what you know.” She explains that in schooling in India, “it's not like here, not like multiple choice, over there everything in [English] essay. So you really need to express OUT all your brain.” She felt that her grades were suffering because she couldn't express the knowledge that existed in her brain in other languages through writing in English. So she set out to learn how this was done.

Tashi says she would collect books and newspapers and analyze “how they write...how they go about it.” She explains

I just marked all the vocabularies and like and I point out the phrase, how they use it. And then I note how they uh...play with the words. And in contrast, and in literal meaning and in applied meaning. All those. This makes me how to play around with the words and get the things done. And play around with the sentences. So yeah, then I really learned the skill of how to play around with the words and I really don't have to have a strict rule doing English.

If Tashi had been simply copying out grammatical patterns and mimicking them, or noting the organization of newspaper stories and following that structure herself, she would not seem to be negotiating meaning in her acquisition of written English. But in fact she was specifically looking for how these writers “used” the vocabulary and phrases she marked, how these were used to make “literal” or “applied meanings,” and how one might “play around” with sentences and words in English to “get the things done.” Tashi’s repeated use of “play” shows her acknowledgment that meaning is not fixed or static, but is up for change and negotiation. This is why she doesn’t “have to have a strict rule doing English.”

This practice of looking to textual models for the negotiation of meaning is one that Tashi continues in the U.S. She explains that after entering nursing school (she was formerly a teacher but her certifications including her master’s degree in education do not count in the U.S.), she continued this practice with her science textbooks in order to understand how science was taught differently in the U.S. She also attempted to pass on this multilingual practice to other language-learners. Tashi relays a story about a Tibetan friend who was frustrated with her slow acquisition of written English:

Then I was telling her, ‘You just have to take an essay and analyze how it is done. ...And whenever you see a piece you wouldn’t read for the content you will read for...how it’s played around.’ So I was telling her. And once you get grip hold of it you can manipulate whatever you want to with the language...and you know how things going around [swirling on the table] and then you understand for yourself how it works.

That Tashi could pass her literacy practice on, or at least recommend it to another language learner, shows how it serves as a resource she comfortably calls upon in new language and literacy learning situations. Her ability to access this resource allows her to continue to play with and negotiate meaning in the U.S., even after she has become a very proficient speaker and writer of English. Her continued use of this practice shows her to be very much the multilingual writer described by Canagarajah above: In her analysis of how English works, she exhibits “a curiosity toward the language, [and] the ability to intuit linguistic rules from observation of actual usage” (134). Now that she feels she has a “grip” on English, she delights in manipulating it to accomplish “whatever [she] wants to with the language.” This willingness to work with language, to read for the playfulness of language at the word, phrase, or sentence level, shows how deeply Tashi is attuned to the natural negotiation of communicating across multiple languages. In this way, nearly all of the literate practices described by writers in this study bare the traces of the political past of the places they’ve lived, revealing the conditions under which they have become attuned to difference, multiplicity, and language negotiation.

Connecting Practices and Conditions

These eleven writers’ accounts show how literate practices developed across languages and over the course of a lifetime are wide-ranging and complex, highly-personal and grounded in individual history but also surprisingly common. These writers share their multilingualism—they all write and communicate across multiple codes and languages—but the communicative situations in which they find themselves differ, and thus the manner in which they act with their literate resources are highly individual. This is to say that while the multilingual writers above show a common ear for difference and a shared use of negotiation and connection to make meaning, they do so in specific ways informed by their own histories, memories, and changing

life situations. Their attunement is both common and their own, because of a “specific and felt everyday need” to cultivate a “consciousness that travels well,” that moves with them as they travel across their own languages and their own locations in the world (Guerra, “Putting” 32). Their rhetorical attunement is honed by their discursive navigation of difference, and allows them to act with language in distinct, but powerfully common ways.

The common conditions under which these writers developed their language and literacy skills tell us that multilingual writing repertoires are forged in highly political and identity-driven situations, but also through everyday interactions across difference. All of these elements—the ordinary, the unpredictable, the political, the emotional—*also* exist in the literate repertoires that writers carry around with them, showing that these repertoires are not a collection of static skills, but are containers of highly charged experiences, values, and beliefs that influence the ways in which writers are able or not able to call on different resources in certain situations. Further, these repertoires are in-process, being constructed through current practices just as much as they were built through early schooling. All of this depth and complexity fosters rhetorical attunement.

So what does writing across languages do for the rhetorical capacities of multilingual writers? And what is rhetorical about writing across languages? This chapter shows how multilingual writers hear something distinct in language. They hear cultural history, difference, politics, negotiation, messiness. But it is their daily experience, their ability to act on what they hear, that makes their understanding of language rhetorical, enabling them to come to know how multiple languages can work in the world. Importantly, this is not to say that multilingual writers are smarter, more aware, or more linguistically advanced than monolingual writers. Applied linguist Fransechini suggests, “a monolingual can be as dynamic and variable in his or her use of

a language” because mono- and multilinguals are “just exploiting the inherent characteristic of language variability on the wider or smaller scale of languages they can use” (350). Thus, “the language knowledge of multilingualism turns out to be ‘the inherent nature of all language knowledge’” with “multilingualism [as] only a special case of variable use, languages being separated ideologically, but not psycholinguistically” (Franceschini quoting Hall et al. 350).

This inherent characteristic of variability in language is true of culture as well, since “the homogeneity of culture” is a “hoax [of] modernist and colonialist discourse” (Lavie and Swedenburg 10). As noted in the dissertation’s introduction, the modernist and colonialist “hoax” of singular cultures of course mirrors, or reproduces, the hoax of singular languages. In other words, all language is flexible and variable, and not only multilinguals know this. Hall et al. argue that mono- and multilinguals differ “not on number of languages, but on amount and diversity of experience and use”...because “all language knowledge is socially contingent and dynamic no matter how many language codes one has access to” (229). Monolinguals simply have communicated under different lived conditions than multilingual individuals and thus have less-developed attunement for negotiating that variability.

The multilingual writers in this study both agree and disagree with these theoretical tenets. While Sabohi doesn’t think she’s “smarter than anybody else who speaks one [language],” she suspects she might “have greater depth of things than when you are in only one culture.” And Aldene says it “just feels like ‘oh my god I know all those languages!’ and I feel really smart.” But the development of rhetorical attunement does not necessarily advance multilingual writers’ cognitive skills, it allows them to simply hear something different—they are tuned to language differently. One way to think about this difference is to consider its

potential for connection to a larger language picture—monolingual writers hear a note, multilingual writers hear a chord. As Alandra says,

I feel connected. I definitely have appreciation for English and Portuguese and Spanish, so that means I know that the other person knows that I appreciate their language and that I want to communicate. How would I describe that in Portuguese? *Conectado*. I think in other languages I would use a word more like empathy. So it would be even deeper.

Alandra feels connected by moving across languages when she writes. This is a connection to the experience of speaking other languages and a connection to a desire to communicate across difference. That she feels this develops “empathy,” and not simple cognitive capacity, points back to Ratcliffe’s code of cultural conduct and gives attunement a connecting quality—an ability to “jump” from individual experience to the “supersystem” of language: “the arena and the moment,” “the individual to the collective, the temporally situated to the trans-temporal, the unique to the common, the token to the type” (Cook 2; Uitermark 747; Blommaert 33). These connections are, in fact, the piece of rhetorical attunement that is missing in scholarship—how multilingual writers connect seemingly benign norms of multiplicity, difference, and communicative cooperation to an awareness of how language is a powerful conduit of domination and power. Alandra, like the rest of the writers in this study, is tuned to the experience of English, Portuguese, and Spanish all at once, hearing simultaneous discursive variability, and attuning herself, just as all the multilingual writers in this study do, to a larger global system of language.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Traveling Literacies

I have been watching writers move language around for quite some time. I have seen bilingual first graders slide Pablo Neruda stanzas between Spanish and English to understand metaphor, Ecuadorian undergraduates ferry an argument from academic Spanish to conversational English, immigrant student writers annotate their course readings with Hindi, Turkish, Mandarin before a class discussion. How is it that some writers are rewarded for this movement between languages (professional literary translators, students in foreign language courses) while others (young bilinguals translating for parents, multilingual graduate students, teachers with accents) are punished? This inequity of language movement begs for a more critical analysis of the language repertoires people carry around. In fact, this analysis is critical in a time when legislation, policy, and curricula are being created to hold languages and language travelers in place.

This is why I began this dissertation. I set out to understand how we might conceive of language and literacy practices as mobile activities in order to better see the contents of those language repertoires—the accumulation of genres, activities, texts in a variety of languages—and to understand the inequity built into that travel—whose literate practices were rewarded along the way, whose were not, and why. I hoped to give shape to the literacy maps, paths, networks, and bridges created in the wake of constant global movement. This conclusion will review the arguments made throughout this dissertation in pursuit of these understandings and will consider its contributions, limitations, and potential future directions.

Theories and Principles of Mobile Literacy

As Canagarajah has noted, those of us who teach, research, and treasure language have a tendency to romanticize its potential, particularly the potential of its multiplicity

(“Codemeshing”). We believe deeply in the power of language and encourage the accumulation of it—more literacies in more languages wielded in more accepting social and classroom situations must certainly mean more power. But throughout this dissertation, multilingual writers’ literacy and language experiences—the ongoing journaling, texting, dictionary-reading, speech-making, essay-writing, online chatting, note-taking and making—all prove to be uneven activities, the social and political value of which is not secure or guaranteed, but is highly dependent on time, place, and condition. As their lived insights about language show, multilingual immigrant writers know very well how unstable language can be. The chapters above show that writers do not write from a static repertoire of skills, but instead create and adapt literate resources in motion, carrying around containers of highly charged experiences, values, and beliefs that influence the ways in which they are able or not able to call on their literate resources in certain situations.

This dissertation aimed to account for the in-betweens of language practices—not the levels of language proficiency or the wielding of rhetorical strategies that can be observed and measured before and after migration, but the unstable, ongoing, and generative quality of writing along the way, the composition in motion. A theory of mobile literacy accounts for this instability: language and literacy practices must be understood as always in motion, always in between. The previous three chapters have hopefully grounded and provided the context for the theoretically principles presented in chapter 2:

1. Multilingual writers travel with vast but variable literate repertoires which they put into practice to attune themselves to language.
2. These repertoires contain unstable literacy practices, sometimes called resources, that are created in specific situations, revealing the traces of the social conditions under which they were formed.

3. It is in treating literate practices and their textual outcomes as mobile that we can clearly see the social, political, and institutional boundaries that are crossed and the powerful forces that move language around.

4. Writers experience both success and struggle as they write through and against these social and political forces.

Specifically, the chapters have shown that enacting a theory of mobile literacy brings into sharp relief

- social conditions and constraints under globalization
- the vast, specific, contradictory, and fragile components of a literate repertoire
- the production of literate resources from practice
- the spectrum of intentionality of resource use, from accidental to purposeful
- the perceptions gained by practicing literate multiplicity, difference, and instability as a lived, taken-for-granted norm

Each chapter foregrounded a different element of the mobile literacies phenomenon: social conditions in Chapter Three, literacy practice in Chapter Four, and resources and repertoires in Chapter Five. This switching of lenses was intended to provide different angles on the same phenomenon—multilingual writing. Below, I will briefly review the goals and findings of each chapter.

In Chapter Three, I examined when and why certain literacy practices travel with writers while others do not. The chapter addressed the occasional but still-present belief that increased skill in multiple languages brings about greater social gains by showing how multilingual writers' literacy practices both do and do not help them accomplish what they hope to in the United States after immigration. Throughout the chapter, I analyzed the lived literacy experiences of five multilingual immigrant writers, showing how their literacy and language practices did indeed travel with them from one place in the world to another and from one language to many others. Khadroma's exposure to western literacy conventions in China help her write productively after immigration to the U.S., while Defne's fully developed academic writing

practices in three languages do not bring her the social gains she had hoped for. Alicia's multilingual schooling experiences in Argentina align with the academic expectations in North American universities, while Tashi's multilingual academic preparation runs up against discriminatory institutionalized language practices. And Faridah describes her life after immigration as a slow shutting down of her previously robust multilingual literacy practices, values, and beliefs. Ultimately, I argued that the value and effect of these writers' literate practices shift as they travel, constantly redefined by the social, political, educational, and institutional contexts they meet along the way.

In Chapter Four, I focused on the movement of just one literacy practice, letter writing, in order to understand the implications of a practice that produces text meant to be on the move. While the literature on letter writing—mostly analysis of famous figures' letters or anthropological description of letter writing in specific cultures—treats correspondence as a placed social phenomenon, I argued that a mobile and material analysis of how letter writing crosses cultural and linguistic contexts reveals the transnational forces push writing around. In the chapter, I described the proliferation of letter writing practices across almost every participant in the study, and then highlighted three letter writing narratives—letters crossing the nation-state, letters following money, and letters leaving war behind. These examples show that letter writing is a distinct literacy practice, deemed successful not by the textual content produced but by the material outcomes brought about. The writers highlighted in the chapter produce correspondence both to get along in times of global change and to intervene in those same global changes. This push/pull tension, noted in previous chapters, regulates letter-writing practices and often provides the impetus to write at all. In other words, the presence of so much letter writing activity in immigrant daily lives does not show that letter and email writing is

frequent because of greater distance or greater ease of technology. Instead, as I argued, letter writing reveals the power and presence of transnational institutional forces that push writing around and away from individuals, compelling them to send their writing to and fro in order to satisfy the push and pull of international interests.

In Chapter Five, I aimed to understand the shape and effect of the literate resources and repertoires so often evoked in multilingual writing theory. I asked what these resources looked like as literacy practices, how they might be conceived of as a mobile repertoire, and how writers create, adapt, and act with these resources and repertoires as they travel. By looking across the literacy practices of eleven different writers, I argued that literacy practices on the move create rhetorical attunement—an ear for, or a tuning toward, difference and multiplicity. By virtue of their daily experience with linguistic difference, the writers in the chapter prove to be tuned toward the communicative predicaments of multilingual interaction. These predicaments are both idiosyncratic and ordinary, moments in which rhetorical strategies are practiced and often created. The chapter moved through these moments, exploring the conditions of difference and multiplicity—multilingual societies, globalization, geo-political influence—and the writing activities—teaching, essay writing, public writing, journal writing—that reveal the ongoing, negotiated, flexible quality of language. The chapter showed how multilingual writers aren't aware of this quality *a priori*, but come to know—become rhetorically attuned—across a lifetime of communicating across difference.

When taken as a whole, these three chapters together show the confluence of the principles above. Their contents detail the simultaneously idiosyncratic and patterned experiences of multilingual literate practices, and their conclusions illuminate how high the stakes are for language practice in globalizing times. One cannot deny the powerful tensions

present in Sabohi, Tashi, Defne, Alicia, Yolanda, Sofia, Hana's experiences, as they all do their best to write on the move.

Contributions

I began this dissertation in hopes of speaking to a wide variety of audiences. Multilingualism has garnered increasing currency in writing and rhetoric studies but also continues to be a pressing topic for teachers and administrators working with increasingly linguistically diverse university student populations. Further, multilingual people, especially immigrants, refugees, and the socially disadvantaged, are highly misunderstood in public discourse, as evidenced by immigration legislation in Arizona, Alabama, and Georgia that punishes teachers with accents or bans literature exploring the experiences of communities speaking languages other than English. While it is ambitious to hope that a dissertation might make its way to public ears, I hope that the theoretical principles above and the more practical implications might contribute, *poco a poco*, to a more informed understanding of the literate experiences of multilingual writers and speakers. Below, I detail specific contributions the dissertation aims to make to various scholarly areas, as well as to pedagogical practice, policy design, and public conversations.

Contributions to Writing and Rhetoric

Two recent trends in writing and rhetoric show that the field wants and needs further research on multilingual writing. First, interest in linguistic and rhetorical diversity has moved closer to the field's core interests as it has evolved from multicultural awareness (Severino, Guerra, and Butler; Horner and Trimbur; Lu; Matsuda and Silva; Royster) to grounded work on code-switching/meshing (Canagarajah; Elbow; Farr; Guerra; Young) and rhetorical studies that resist western to non-western comparison (Baca; Baca and Villanueva; Mao; You) to recent calls for a translingual approach to writing (Horner, Lu, Royster, and Trimbur). This growing interest is

evidenced by a recent spate of conferences themed around multilingual issues—Watson 2010, Penn State 2011, RSA institute sessions 2010 and 2012—and by special issues in *College English* on Latinidad (2009) and Transnational Feminist Rhetoric (2008), a CCC Symposium on Chinese Rhetorics (2009), and in *Written Communication* on Writing in Global Context (2011). While these issues have almost always been center stage for scholars and teachers working at comprehensive urban universities, changing university populations and the language multiplicity it brings are becoming almost everyone's concern, especially as decreased funding for instructional support meets increased demand for standards and outcomes.

Further, writing studies is experiencing a wave of internationalization that necessitates more multilingual research and participation. The two, and soon three, Writing Research Across Borders conferences, and the International Society for the Advancement of Writing Research (ISAWR) they produced, are the most clear evidence of this trend, as is the work of writing studies scholars on WAC and WPA movements abroad (Donahue; Russell) or collaborations with scholars abroad on traditional writing studies topics (Bazerman; Lillis and Curry). As in the case of linguistic diversity above, internationalism has for quite some time been a concern in the work of organizations like the International Writing Centers Association (though, admittedly, it has greatly increased in recent years) or in pedagogical and research trends in other countries (Barton and Papen; Donahue). As we know, the relative absence of international awareness in the field does not mean writing studies hasn't been already been occurring for quite some time in international contexts.

Both of these trends can benefit from the findings, and especially the grounded examples, this dissertation provides. First, the introduction should help bring about a more careful understanding of the field's shift from "multi" to "trans." Though prefix change may seem

inconsequential, such subtle shifts are indicative of the field's changing values, which in turn affect how writing is researched, taught, and assessed. The field is cataloguing a social phenomenon (increased tensions of mobility) in its lexicon and it benefits us hold such a change up for study. More importantly, the dissertation forwards a critique of two main claims often taken for granted in recent work on linguistic diversity and internationalism—that multilingual writers compose from stable literate resources and that multilingual writers can transfer those resources across languages and rhetorical situations. The theoretical principles above should help destabilize both resources and transfer, not rejecting them as fruitful concepts, but complicating them to give pause to the sometimes romanticized potential of multiplicity. Wendy Hesford's work is a good model of the important hedging that should always be an element to work on multilingualism, translanguaging, or global writing issues. The findings here have hopefully clarified why we must always integrate into analysis the powerful global institutional and social structures that play a regulatory role in writing across languages.

Contributions to Literacy Studies

This dissertation suggests that literate practices have geographic and linguistic histories. This idea shifts just slightly the material and the method that literacy studies—the body of empirical research that treats literacy as socially-situated practice—might pursue. The classic monographs of new literacy studies (Barton, Hamilton, and Ivanic; Besnier; Brandt; Gee; Graff; Heath; Scriber and Cole; Street) as well as more contemporary work (Baynham and Prinsloo; Daniell and Mortenson; Duffy; Luke “Material;” work from the Lancaster literacy scholars and the New London school) do attend to the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic issues bound up in literacy practice. However, this research has typically studied literacy in discrete points—then or now (historical *or* contemporary), here or there (abroad *or* in-country). By proposing that literacy

practices have geographic and linguistic histories, I am suggesting that literacy should be treated as current practice inseparable from its former linguistic and geographic arcs. In other words, what might be studied is not literacy as it was practiced in the past or literacy as it is practiced in the present, but the way current practices spring from past practices and how that connection creates a trajectory with consequences. If literacy and language practices have histories, then research should move us beyond observations of the practices with which writers arrive (in our classrooms, our writing programs, our communities) and toward investigations of the travel that informs those practices. Some literacy research has taken up these threads—Street, Royster, Richardson Bruna’s “Traveling Tags,” Brandt and Clinton’s “Limits of the Local,” and Kell and Stein and Slominsky’s chapters in *Travel Notes from the New Literacy Studies*. In this work, geographic and linguistic arcs are traced to a certain extent, but not many others have taken up such trajectories.

Similarly, literacy research might aim to understand the experience of writing among locations, rather than researching the social literacy practices in “other” geographic locations or the practices of “others” who now live in locations where researchers are based. In other words, while the defining characteristic of new literacy studies is to understand how literacy is practiced in social situations and cultural contexts, the dissertation’s findings suggests that movement, itself, is a situation and a context. This is a theoretical shift that should also understand that multilingual literacy practice *is* movement—among languages—and is an ongoing, lived situation for many writers that calls for further research. Literate mobility—being on the move among languages, practices, and locations—is a kind of social situation or state in which writing occurs and can be studied.

Contributions to Applied Linguistics

While this dissertation is most at home with the two audiences above, it may also speak to calls in applied linguistics and second language writing for grounded examples of translanguaging and socially and historically framed empirical linguistic research. As detailed in the introduction, contrastive rhetoricians like Ulla Connor hope to move contrastive rhetoric (comparative textual discourse analysis) toward intercultural rhetoric (discourse analysis that takes into account social and historical contexts). The complicated and rich participant experiences analyzed throughout this project hopefully further this move toward an intercultural rhetoric that accounts for contexts around and beyond text. Further, contrastive and intercultural rhetoric and second language writing might all benefit from less stable distinctions among languages and cultural rhetorical traditions. The findings here suggest that rhetorical analysis especially can help destabilize the idea of “language” and characterize language use as always generative. Critical applied linguists (Cenoz and Gorter; Heller *Bilingualism*; Larson-Freedman; Pennycook; Makoni) work with this destabilized notion, but a durable association between language boundaries and the nation-state still exists. The language and literacy practice by multilingual writers in these chapters defy the tidy boundaries sometimes taken for granted in comparative and contrastive study.

Contributions to Educational Practice and Policy

If literate practices have geographic and linguistic histories, as this dissertation’s findings suggest, then we should leverage those histories through educational policy and practice to better support multilingual writing. By policy I mean assessment design, the naming of programs and curricular tracks, the design of curriculum and outcomes, the creation of teaching materials like textbooks—essentially the name and shape of programs and pedagogies that regulate language teaching and learning. By practice I mean the implementation of all of these—how pedagogies,

materials, and assessments are put into use by teachers and administrators and how they are experienced by students. The accounts of participants in this study provide testimony to the fact that multilingual writing practice and policy, too intertwined to be treated separately, might be beneficially re-imagined in three distinct ways.

1. Rethink language norms. What is normal language use? What is the everyday language experience of most people around the world? Especially in the United States, language teachers and administrators are guilty of not treating language as the slippery, always-changing, complex phenomenon that this dissertation (and plenty of previous research) has shown it to be. We live in a country that seems, but never really has been, monolingual, and we perpetuate monolingual myths—i.e. English is the key to success—by teaching, testing, and publishing one standard language rather than the manipulation of many standards, registers, and codes. Horner et al.’s “translingual disposition” comes close to recognizing the reality and advantages of linguistic diversity, but it is just that—a recognition rather than a guide for implementation. In various conference settings, these scholars have stressed that translingualism should be an “approach” not a pedagogy, and thus might be better understood as a policy and practice attitude. This dissertation reveals glimpses into how this attitude can be embodied by teachers and administrators who strive to understand the full complexity of multilingual writers’ language realities and who recognize and facilitate the constant movement among languages that is the norm for literate practice around the world.

2. Build meta-awareness. One way to bring a translingual disposition or attitude into practice is to build students’ meta-awareness of the full range of their literate practice. Such meta-awareness is created by facilitating all writers’—whether understood as traditionally monolingual or multilingual—purposeful movement among languages. Students can gain this

meta-awareness in two main ways—first, by observing the linguistic movement of other writers, and second, by articulating the linguistic movements they call on to compose. Students can observe multilingual and nonstandard language use when such texts are made visible in class. Teachers might use multilingual student papers or professional models of nonstandard language use like those in the anthology *Rotten English* or in the work of Sandra Cisneros or Junot Diaz. Students can be taught how to react to multilingual or vernacular writing in these texts and in each others' papers when supplied with questions that pursue the effect or intentionality of nonstandard forms: "If you substitute standard English here, how does the sentence read differently?" "What past experience might the writer have had to make him or her choose this essay organization?" "How might this word choice indicate an expression of the writers' identity?" Students understand the concept of shifting registers for different audiences and are certainly able to apply that understanding to their analysis of linguistic movement.

These observations might then evolve into articulations of writers' own linguistic intentionality. This can happen when students are given opportunities to articulate why they've made a rhetorical choice among languages. During peer review, students can respond to writing partners who ask them why they've used a particular language in a particular way. During one-on-one conferences, students can respond to a teacher who asks them to explain when they've made such linguistic choices previously (In what language varieties? In which educational settings?) and what effects their linguistic choices might have now. Teachers might write similar questions in marginal feedback. Before beginning an assignment, students might be asked to write a reflection about when they've written a similar assignment (In what language varieties? In which educational settings?) and how what they wrote then might be different or similar to what they're being asked to write now. These opportunities for articulation are meant to build for

the student a cognitive bridge between previous literate experiences in a variety of languages and the current writing task. In this dissertation, the writers who most effectively wielded their literate skills were those who could articulate how the effect of a sentence or essay differed across their languages. If writers can think back and forth—move—across the bridges that span their variable language use, perhaps they will develop a more intentional translingual disposition of their own.

3. Consider the arguments made by assessments, tracks, and credit transfer.

Many participants in this dissertation described being placed or tracked into an English as a Second Language class when English was their first or one of the many languages in which they were fluent (Andrea, Alicia, Alandra, Harriet, Houa, Nimet) or described being sent to community colleges or barred from four-year programs because their previous credentials, graduate degrees, or professional experiences did not transfer or count (Alandra, Defne, Jin, Khadroma, Nina, Rosalia, Tashi, Yolanda). This mis-placement and mis-tracking is a frequent theme in research on L2 writing, especially for generation 1.5 students such as Houa and Harriet (Cox; Harklau, Losey, and Siegel; Roberge, Siegel, and Harklau; Schuck). While many participants did not mind taking extra courses or returning to school to completely begin their careers anew, all of them understood this re-routing to be caused by what universities in the U.S. value. They explained that they were placed in ESL because a university didn't like accents; they described abandoning their master's degrees because a program thought their professional methods were insignificant. In other words, these writers interpreted their experiences at university gates as expressions of academic values and beliefs. These participants' interpretations cohere with assessment research in which the dictum "assess what you value" (the ultimate guidepost to creating a valid test) can also be understood as "you value what you assess." In fact,

programs, departments, and universities are making arguments, often with metaphorical megaphones, about what they believe counts as a credential, as English, or as academic writing. Put simplistically—if an English department assesses grammar, it is arguing that grammar is what counts as academic English. This statement might seem obvious until one considers the assessments used for placement at one’s university, or looks closely at the guidelines for transfer credit, and then anticipates how those arguments might ripple out from individuals to become strongly held public beliefs.

As shown by scholars in L2 writing assessment (Cushing-Wiegle; Hamp-Lyons; Haswell; Poehner; Shohamy; Sweedler-Brown; Warriner), testing is perhaps one of the most effective methods of ignoring or denying a writer’s literate history, especially when it is designed to discover skills and knowledge altogether different from those a writer might bring. This dissertation details the experiences, skills, credentials, and practices that might be missed or pushed aside by many of the assessment practices in U.S. universities. In order to unearth less easily measurable qualities of multilingual writers, like rhetorical attunement, we should reshape assessment and programs so they make arguments that writing programs stand for. ESL programs might instead be called “Composition for Multilingual Students,” as they are in some urban universities. Writing programs might use Directed Self Placement (DSP) rather than multiple choice tests, as some assessment scholars have recommended (Inoue; Poe). Universities might invest in electronic portfolio systems and articulate these portfolios with global university partners. Most immediately, however, we might ask ourselves what we are assessing when we assess writing. Are we hoping to assess native proficiency in English? Or are we aiming to assess rhetorical skill and capacity with language? These are different goals, and the latter seems to

both more closely adhere to our field's values as well as more adequately draw out the existing literate knowledge multilingual writers bring to universities.

Contributions to Public Conversations

Academic research does not easily lend itself to public conversation. But debate about linguistic diversity and literacy is not new in this country and continues to create and distill myriad public controversies, legislation, and political beliefs. Therefore, the conclusions of this dissertation are not completely out of the ordinary for public debate and thus might contribute to public conversations that are already occurring.

Such conversations revolve around topics of immigration legislation (often understood as a reaction to changing migration patterns to non-urban areas), or the increasing admission of international students (often understood as a financial boon in an economic recession), or bilingual and multilingual cognition (as seen in the recent spate of news reports on work of psychologists Ellen Bialystok and Michelle M. Martin, which argues that “bilinguals are smarter”). These are conversations that circulate through news outlets, online forums and blogs, and public protests. None of these topics are new, per se, but all of them offer opportunities for contributions from this dissertation's findings and especially from the voices of its participants.

Indeed, the public contributions of this project are most salient in the detailed lived experiences described by the diverse multilingual writers in the study. Taken as a whole, these 25 writers show that many immigrants arrive in this country steeped in literacy and language traditions across a variety of languages, credentialed with a variety of educational and professional degrees, ready to contribute to the new social situations in which they find themselves. The dissertation should highlight how much human capital is lost in a society striving for monolingualism and how much could be gained by encouraging by not only

maintaining the existing multilingualism of many immigrants, but cultivating multilingual practice for everyone. However, the writers' in this dissertation also show how fleeting the control over multiple languages can be in the context of powerful, shifting social situations. In other words, the dissertation cautions that the achievements of some multilingual individuals cannot be held up as evidence that gained literacy always brings about social gain.

Certainly some might read these contributions to practice and policy as obvious or already known in the field of writing and rhetoric. But while many scholars read the field's journals and attend multiple conferences a year, it could be claimed that the majority of writing teachers in the U.S. are not those scholars. It is fair to propose that many writing instructors are graduate students in the process of their training, adjunct instructors trained in literary studies, or community college instructors who simply do not have the time to keep up with every theoretical shift in the field. Therefore, "we" do not necessarily practice the implications above, nor are we all trained to do so. So while the field's policy statements (SRTOL and the CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers) uphold current research in language diversity and are supported by this dissertation, the continued experiences of the multilingual writers in this study show that a wider dissemination of these policies and practices is still necessary.

Limitations

I consider this dissertation to be the first stage in an ongoing research project. In its current form, it has tentative conclusions to offer, but the reach of its conclusions are limited, as they are in any year-long study. The constraints that perhaps every research project faces—time, access to participants, space for observation—played a role in this dissertation as well. The project would certainly benefit from a longitudinal frame in order to better trace participants' literacy practices

across an even wider variety of social contexts or in the same social contexts for a longer period of time. Similarly, more participants, with more variation in background, would also bolster the claims made about multilingual writers in general. The more writers' experiences represented, the more robust a theory about writing experience. Specifically, the project's methodological attention to only women participants has added an interesting tension to the project's conclusions about multilingual writers.

As explained in the introduction, the project focused on women in order to complicate a narrative women immigrants' downward mobility in the literature in migration studies. The dissertation has indeed shown that women immigrants' literate experiences are not uniformly headed in a downward direction after immigration. However, my claims about "multilingual writers" throughout the project have become shorthand for "multilingual immigrant women writers." Therefore, readers who believe that there are distinctions among different genders' experiences of writing or among texts produced by different genders, might hesitate to extend this project's claims to all multilingual writers. However, the same caveat here can apply to any concern about representation in empirical work: the project did not set out to represent all experiences, but to offer insight into some experiences. This is an essential distinction in the understanding of empirical research claims. The methodological design of this study allowed for a small window into the life experiences of immigrant multilingual writers. It did not seek to represent, through random sampling or distributed demographic representation, all multilingual writers or all of their possible experiences. The sheer number of categories that have been used to describe multilingual writers—ESL, ELLs, resident ESL, ear/eye learners, Generation 1.5, international, immigrant, newcomer, foreign, parachute students, dialect speakers, basic, remedial, developmental—is enough to deter a researcher from attempting to represent them all.

Few year-long projects can accomplish such breadth. Therefore, this first stage in an ongoing project is meant to lay the feminist groundwork for attention to these women's writing experiences in the larger future context of studying multilingual writers in general.

The dissertation also could be understood to be limited because its conclusions are based on analysis of interview data rather than direct observation. Such hesitation might be framed as: "How can you know what they actually experienced? How can you know what they say to you is true?" This project aimed to understand the literacy experiences in locations and languages in the past together with the present, and because experiences that have occurred in other times and places are impossible to accurately replicate, interviews necessarily rely on reconstructed memories (Charmaz *Constructing*; Fontana and Frey; Merriam). Therefore, to bridge an understanding of past and current practices, interviewing elicits memories that are supplemented by the interpretations and reflections of the interviewees themselves, and these could be understood to be inaccurate. One way to understand this tension in empirical research is to acknowledge that interview data might in fact lead to a more "accurate" interpretation because it leaves room for the participant to shape the representation of that experience. We can't necessarily say that the researcher's interpretation of what they immediately observe is more accurate than what the participant interprets for the researcher later on.

Further, interviews, themselves, are emergent experiences in which both interviewer and interviewee are constructing experiences together, an understanding based in symbolic interactionism (Merriam). My participants knew this, often remarking that they hadn't considered a memory worthy of mention or reflection until being asked about it—"I think I haven't even noticed until now that you are asking me" (Yanila); "It's really interesting now that I'm talking with you, I'm like, I kind of thought about it, but not really deeply" (Defne).

Therefore, such use of social constructionist methods like interviews are not only commonly accepted in qualitative research, but absolutely necessary in the study of language and literacy memories. Therefore the limitations of qualitative interviews and grounded theory analysis could also be understood as relying less on a positive discovery of truth or true representation and more on a social construction of understanding (Charmaz *Constructing*; Crotty; Fontana and Frey; Guba and Lincoln; Merriam).

Future Directions

There is much work to be done to understand multilingual writing and immigrant writers. This dissertation has been able to address a small part of the large agenda that could call for research on authentic multilingual assessment, response and feedback strategies for teachers, the interconnectivity and transfer of multilingual reading and writing practices, university policies and pedagogies in countries with multiple official languages, and so forth. The future trajectory of this dissertation, as it is treated as a small first step in a continuing project, will follow two main paths—how traveling literacies can be further traced and how institutions can better support the existing mobile literacy practices of multilingual writers.

Qualitative interviews and grounded theory analysis have proved to be a very fruitful methodological frame for this study, but I suspect other methodological avenues exist to further understand how literacy practices move especially from one location to another. For example, a multi-site ethnography (Marcus) might create a different kind of frame for understanding the literacy trajectories of specific migrating communities. For example, conceiving of the migration of migrants from Oaxaca, Mexico to the California Bay Area and back as a closed literacy circuit might illuminate not only how practices move with writers from Mexico to the U.S., but from the U.S. back to Mexico. Further, it is possible that the addition of textual artifacts might ground

even further participants' literacy recollections and explanations of current practice. Asking future participants to bring texts to interviews or creating focus groups around a piece of multilingual text might elicit rich explanations of practice as well as evaluations of multilingual usage by multilingual writers. This expanded context for understanding multilingual writing practice would help us understand how much agency writers actually wield—as opposed to the agency of the institutions that regulate language—as they continue their literacy practices in the U.S.

The future directions for better supporting the existing mobile literacy practices of immigrant multilingual writers are more concrete than the methodological directions above, but also potentially more difficult since they rely on attitudes and actions of stakeholders invested in language standards. Future research in this area will be necessary, however, as writers who carry multilingual literacy practices increasingly enroll in U.S. universities, as we might hope they will. Therefore, future research will need to ask two main questions: What kinds of multilingual writing policies already exist? What stands in the way of implementing a translingual approach to pedagogy or a pedagogy that builds from existing mobile literacy practices? The first question would be supplemented by research about language policies especially in universities around the world that are already multilingual, exploring notions of standards, official languages, or disciplinary distinctions in language standards. To even begin to imagine how to build space for potentially provocative pedagogy, we might fruitfully look to other places in which multilingual writing is not provocative in the least.

Further, we need to know what barriers exist to supporting the multilingual writing practices immigrant writers bring to the U.S. Beyond the obstacles implied in the contributions to policy and practice above—uneven transfer articulation, not valid assessments, misinformed

educational legislation—and conventional concerns about time and funding, a handful of arguments reliably appear in conversations about linguistic diversity that maintain barriers to a translingual approach. For example, a common argument is that multilingual writing practices should not be supported or taught because this will not prepare writers for a standard-English-dominant workplace—that if you teach translanguaging you are taking time away from practice with standards. Future research would beneficially unearth both the real and fallacious elements of this argument: What kinds of workplaces use which kinds of English standards? Is an employee's success most determined by their standard language practices? Can writers shift varieties as they move across school and work domains? Do student multilingual writers in the U.S. always enter U.S. workplaces, or are they returning to workplaces in countries with other English varieties? Which countries and speakers are U.S. professionals most corresponding with now? Sociologist Marcel Suarez-Orozco says, "Today there are clear and unequivocal advantages to being able to operate in multiple cultural codes, as anyone working in a major corporation knows," but I'm not sure how "clear and unequivocal" these advantages are (18). This is just one example of a research trajectory that would unearth so much of what is assumed about standard language (not to mention what is assumed about the purpose of university education). Other arguments that hinder the adoption of multilingual pedagogies or negate the existing multilingual practices of writers could be elaborated similarly.

These future directions open up possible methodological and practical trajectories, hopefully in tandem with theoretical directions that remain, if hinted at, mostly untouched by this dissertation: For example, I wonder what the possibilities are of considering mobility as a kind of meso-practice (regional, familial) that traverses macro social structure and micro individual action (Fairclough; Pennycook *Practice*). Might a focus on the meso-level activities of mobile

writing open up the impasse between policy/autonomous and anthropological/ideological understandings of literacy (Brandt and Clinton)? What are the rhetorical precedents for understanding meso-level activity as discursive action? We also might pursue a deeper theoretical understanding of the instability of resources and repertoires: What situations allow a writer to reliably call upon a resource? Are their contexts in which repertoires actually are stable? These questions require sustained empirical and theoretical work that I hope will be the future focus of both mine and many others' research.

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Appendix A

Interview ProtocolLearning to read and write

Describe one vivid memory you have of reading or writing when you were young.

-- What kinds of things did you read and write in school? At home?

Did your family read or write at home?

-- What writing do you remember your parents or siblings doing?

Do you remember ever teaching yourself to read or write?

Do you have memories of being tested on your writing or with writing?

Is your experience typical in _____?

Which languages did you use as you learned how to read and write?

In your opinion, how did learning to write in _____ influence the way you write now?

Current writing and reading

What language do you usually write in now? Read in?

-- If you met someone new to the U.S., what would you say to them about learning to write in English?

When does your family read or write at home?

-- Does your family use writing or reading for any traditions or holidays?

When do you write at work? Who is this writing for?

When do you write at home? Who is this writing for?

What are you currently reading?

When do you write for school or self-education?

Describe a time when you used your writing practices to get something you needed.

How would your life be different if you didn't know how to read? Write?

Experience of multilingualism and multi-literacies

How do you use your writing practices from _____ in your life in the U.S.?

-- Are there any writing practices you haven't used in a long time?

Describe for me a time when you felt lucky or proud that you spoke more than one language.

Describe a time when you felt disappointed or hurt by your language practices.

Can you think of one word to describe how it feels to use more than one language when you speak?

-- What do you mean by that word?

-- Does the same word apply when you write in more than one language?

Would you call yourself multilingual? Why or why not?

Demographics

How old are you or when were you born?

When did you come to the U.S. and for what reasons?

Can you think of anyone else who might be willing to meet with me?