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Letter from the Guest Editors

Alyssa G. Cavazos

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Randall W. Monty

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

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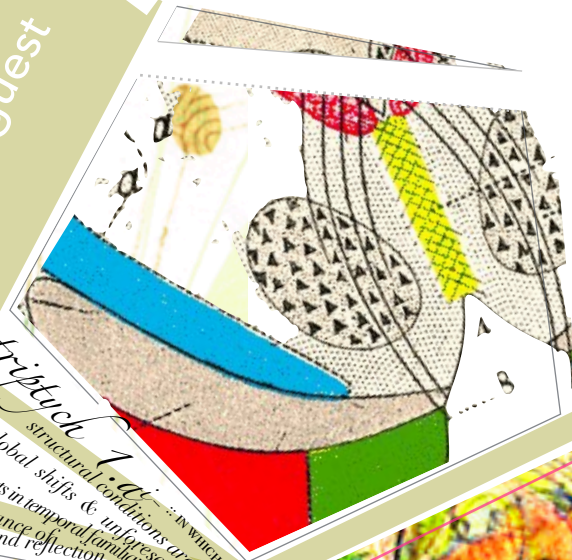
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tribut 7.1 ... in which
structural conditions are met
for global shifts & unforeseen
alignments in temporal familiarity &
a 90% chance of
diversity and reflection

alysa g. cavazos +
randall w. monty



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Letter from the Guest Editors

Alyssa G. Cavazos + Randall W. Monty

The presence of multiple languages and dialects in border contexts and the language experiences of linguistically diverse writers provides teachers and students with opportunities and challenges as they engage writing in personal, social, educational, professional, and community situations where audience, purpose, and language vary.

When we first came up with the theme and drafted the call for proposals for this special issue of *crosspol*, we hoped that writers would capitalize on the opportunity to incorporate the conceptual frameworks, political exigences, and linguistic realities highlighted in border studies and apply them to focused studies of the social, pedagogical, and logistical boundaries connecting secondary and postsecondary education.

In that call, we argued that, “The presence of multiple languages and dialects in border contexts and the language experiences of linguistically diverse writers provides teachers and students with opportunities and challenges as they engage writing in personal, social, educational, professional, and community situations where audience, purpose, and language vary.” We did not anticipate how prescient such a stance would prove to be, as the current political moment, not just in the United States, but in much of the English-speaking world, is one that seems to be pointing away from ideas that are important to us as researchers and people. These values include promoting pedagogies and policies of linguistic diversity, critical thinking, equitable access, and safe inclusion in our campuses and communities. Indeed, since our call was made, issues of social justices have been at the forefront of national and local discussions of education: [Teachers and students in Arizona sued to overturn House Bill 2281](#), bringing to federal court a challenge to a law that was specifically passed as a direct reproach of Mexican-American studies programs. [The U.S. Department of Education rescinded protections for victims of sexual assault on college campuses](#). In our home state of Texas, [individuals can now carry concealed handguns on community college campuses](#) (the law went into effect at four-year colleges and universities a year prior), while the anticipated “transgender bathroom bill,” which would have required people in the state to use public bathrooms—including those in K12 schools and at postsecondary institutions—based on their “biological sex,” [failed to pass during Texas’s biennial legislative session](#).

Initially, our focus in this special issue emerged from our shared scholarly and pedagogical interests in border theory and language diversity in writing instruction as well as our institutional context. As our institution, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, aims to become a “highly engaged bilingual university,” we are increasingly interested in exploring our roles as college writing instructors and the implications that the transition from high school to college writing has in our region. Beyond our local context, we were eager to learn what others are doing in their research and teaching as they explore what it means to teach writing within and across social, academic, political, and linguistic borders. With these motivations as guides, we envisioned the special issue as a space for processing and reflecting on how to (re)design classroom pedagogies to ensure linguistically diverse writers’ succeed across a range of educational and community contexts.

This special issue of *crosspol* includes projects that investigate and reflect on the ways in which like-minded individuals prepare for and enact instruction with different types of student groups. As we aim to respond to our institution’s goal to become a “highly engaged bilingual university” and challenge our nation’s current political and educational realities, we are inspired by our colleagues’ personal experiences, research, pedagogies, and collaborations across borders, languages, and communities.

Our personal experiences with literacy oftentimes influence how we perceive and engage language difference in academic and community contexts. In “This is My Story of Language,” Francisco Guajardo explores how his personal language journey continuously shapes the ways he approaches instruction and collaboration with local community organizations and school districts in efforts to build linguistically inclusive environments for students across educational settings, from elementary school to college.

Similarly, in order to respond to multilingual, global realities, we must be committed to engage in collaborative efforts across cultural and linguistic differences. This can include shifting the physical locations of these interactions, such as with the service learning project detailed in, “Re-Imagining Linguistic Competence and Teaching Towards Communicative Trajectories in Transnational and Translingual Spaces of Today’s Global Reality.” Here, Maria Houston explores how moving the classroom space outdoors and into a natural environment can facilitate cross-cultural epistemological practices across linguistic borders.

Lesley Chapa, in “A Change in Thought. A Change in pensamiento,” challenges linguistic borders as she explores how she negotiated meaning across different languages. Through a thought-provoking reflection of her literacy and language experiences, Chapa demonstrates how multilingual writers can use all of their language resources to learn, reflect, and create new knowledge through writing in educational contexts that privilege monolingual and language separation ideologies. Additionally, through a documentary, she invites future educators to

negotiate meaning through a translanguaging pedagogical approach to teaching writing.

Reflecting on when, where, and how writing takes place provides us with a renewed perspective on how we can foster inclusive and successful writing environments across academic and community contexts. In “‘Out in the Open and Free:’ Nature-based Settings and Literacy Learning at Adventure-Risk-Challenge,” Merrilyne Lundahl investigates how nature-based settings enhance students’ attitudes and motivation in literacy learning, and she explores implications for developing pedagogies centered on community-engaged and nature-based writing environments.

The place where writing occurs is essential to building pedagogies, activities, and writing projects responsive to context, region, and language specific needs. Gabriel González Núñez, in “Crossing Linguistic Borders: Teaching Writing Skills in Two Languages to Translators-in- Training,” explores the unique pedagogical needs of a translation program located on the Mexico/U.S. border focused on training future translators. Providing a framework for translation pedagogy in Spanish and English, the author repositions writing instruction as one centered around the acquisition of cultural, stylistic, and rhetorical tools.

Finally, Mark Dziedzic and Gretchen McClain interpret the concept of border as a way to draw attention to the institutional barriers separating high school and postsecondary writing instruction. “Engaging in Writing Dialogue: High School to College Writing Symposium” details the authors’ efforts—replete with a cache of replicable and modifiable resources—to bring writing instructors from across this divide into a shared physical space that promotes collaborative-cross-level dialogues.

At the same time that we were making the final arrangements and edits for this special issue, members of the UTRGV community were endorsing diversity and responding to the current political moment in some creative and impactful ways: faculty from the Asian Studies minor program hosted the inaugural [Southwest Texas Asian Symposium](#), stakeholders from across the university participated in the annual [MultiLinguaFest](#), while [students and faculty participated in a solidarity walkout](#) in protest of the proposed repeal of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals act (DACA) and [requested a Dreamer Center at UTRGV](#).

Viewed in light of events such as these, the topics and issues addressed in this special issue help provide context for the theoretical, pedagogical, and practical work that educators are doing with and for multi- and translingual writers. They also reveal the types of borders that exist between and among elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions, helping us to identify and understand these new sites for epistemological work. They give us cause to consider how physical spaces inform, advance, and inhibit different types of writing work and learning. And, most importantly, these articles reify the need to resist racist and discriminatory educational policies, and to advocate for linguistic and cultural inclusivity, including promoting safe educational environments for all students.