Navigating the Dialogic Tensions and Self-Contradictions as a Bilingual Researcher

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Abstract
This autoethnography delineates how, I, as a bilingual researcher proficient in Korean and English, negotiated the tensions between conforming to English-only academic writing norms for survival in academia and embracing translingual writing practices during the composition of my dissertation. Based on the salient themes and repeating experiences that I penned in analytic memos, field notes and diaries, I meticulously rearranged the thoughts and emotions, weaving them into stream-of-consciousness-style narratives. Through this method, I aimed to vividly portray the inevitable tensions that might be experienced by numerous bilingual researchers speaking English as a second language. This autoethnography particularly portrays the troubles of conveying intricate cultural nuances when translating my research partners’ Korean responses into English. Also, I detail the process of how I negotiated the dilemmas between artistic translingual writing and writing solely in English for a broader readership. Such detailing processes eventually prompted me to contemplate whether I truly embodied the transformative linguistic practices that I kept advocating for in my research projects. This autoethnography, although entailing vulnerability, ultimately underscores the significance of practicing self-reflexivity through crafting authentic and vivid narratives.

Keywords
self-reflexivity, autoethnography, dialogism, heteroglossia, bilingual researcher

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Navigating the Dialogic Tensions and Self-Contradictions as a Bilingual Researcher

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This autoethnography delineates how, I, as a bilingual researcher proficient in Korean and English, negotiated the tensions between conforming to English-only academic writing norms for survival in academia and embracing translingual writing practices during the composition of my dissertation. Based on the salient themes and repeating experiences that I penned in analytic memos, field notes and diaries, I meticulously rearranged the thoughts and emotions, weaving them into stream-of-consciousness-style narratives. Through this method, I aimed to vividly portray the inevitable tensions that might be experienced by numerous bilingual researchers speaking English as a second language. This autoethnography particularly portrays the troubles of conveying intricate cultural nuances when translating my research partners’ Korean responses into English. Also, I detail the process of how I negotiated the dilemmas between artistic translingual writing and writing solely in English for a broader readership. Such detailing processes eventually prompted me to contemplate whether I truly embodied the transformative linguistic practices that I kept advocating for in my research projects. This autoethnography, although entailing vulnerability, ultimately underscores the significance of practicing self-reflexivity through crafting authentic and vivid narratives.

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As a bilingual researcher, who speaks Korean as a first and English as a second language, I often feel pressured to publish my research in English, preferably in its standard variety, particularly to reach a wider readership. I have implemented transformative language teaching practices for my research projects, and advocate translanguaging—that is, intermixing languages—for linguistically minoritized students in the United States. However, as a junior scholar, I tend to revise my original translingual writings, which are often poetic and artistic, into English-only versions to disseminate my work especially in U.S. academia (Habibie, 2022; Heng Harste & Kibota, 2014). The disparity between theory and practice in writing became more pronounced during the composition of my dissertation, which investigated the language and literacy practices of Korean transnational emergent bilingual youth in translingual online book clubs designed for these youth. Even though I advocated for translanguaging in my dissertation study, I found that the final product of my writing, while initially translingual, did not fully embody the principles that I espoused.

A limited number of bilingual researchers in U.S. academia, who speak English as a second language (bilingual researchers hereafter), have candidly shared the intricacies of effectively managing these tensions and inconsistencies between theory versus academic writing practice, for example, in the form of an autoethnography. That is, sharing the processes of self-reflexivity or “an awareness of the ways in which the researcher as an individual with a particular social identity and background has an impact on the research process” (Robson,
More importantly, engaging in rigorous self-reflexivity throughout the research journey is crucial because researchers’ historically or socially shaped subjectivities often determine what they see and how they analyze the data (Mao et al., 2016). Thus, it would be beneficial for bilingual researchers to explicitly write about their self-reflexivity in action to assess how their shifting linguistic positionalities shape their research trajectories and their writing processes (e.g., Creese et al., 2008; Creese & Blackledge, 2012).

In this regard, this autoethnography illustrates how I, as a bilingual researcher, dialogued with my theoretical belief about translanguaging two cultures and languages, and the perceived norms of U.S. academia during my dissertation study, especially when writing the final product. Drawing from my field notes, analytic memos, and personal diaries, I meticulously capture the pivotal moments that showcase my intricate processes of dialogic meaning making, the interplay of heteroglossic tensions, and the emergence of inconsistencies. I present these insights as a testament to my continuous self-reflection, employing a narrative style reminiscent of Joyce’s stream-of-consciousness technique. At its core, this autoethnography highlights how a bilingual researcher’s choice of language uses and the development of writing stem from the bilingual researcher’s own stories, self-introspection, sociopolitical circumstances, and the ongoing dialogue with two cultures and languages. Although the overall aim is to accentuate the reflexive processes experienced by a bilingual researcher during the act of writing, this article also holds methodological significance for qualitative researchers seeking to strengthen their self-reflexivity.

To this end, research questions guiding this autoethnography are:

1) What dilemmas and tensions does a bilingual researcher encounter when engaging in academic writing?
2) In what ways does a bilingual researcher navigate the dilemmas and tensions that arise during academic writing?

**Dialogism and Heteroglossia as a Conceptual Framework**

As dialogic beings, people respond to, and are responded to by, their surrounding contexts and their evolving inner selves to make sense of the constantly changing world (Clifton & Fecho, 2018). Bakhtin (1981) theorizes that such dialogic meaning making is influenced by two opposing forces: centripetal forces that are not questioned and maintain societal unity (e.g., academic norms, social norms) and centrifugal forces that entertain various perspectives (e.g., ideas that are against social norms). For example, my daily translingual language practices might look unusual in contexts where monolingualism is a norm. Because I am aware that Standard English is usually required when submitting final term papers to most professors at my institution or academic manuscripts to certain journals, I often monitor my language usage when writing for academic purposes. My daily translingual practices co-exist with academic linguistic norms while being in tension with the normative forces of academic language usage. Such mechanism could be defined as heteroglossia, or “the simultaneous use of different kinds of forms or signs, and the tensions and conflicts among those signs, on the socio-historical associations they carry with them” (Bailey, 2012, p. 504).

As a bilingual person, I constantly intermix Korean and English, while transacting with the cultural flows from Korea and the United States. From dialogic perspectives, my meaning making practices could be termed as dialogized heteroglossia in which different cultures and languages are intermingled as one and are in tension with each other (e.g., blending languages, evaluating something from two different cultural viewpoints simultaneously). That is, one’s meaning making repertoires are one intermingled and ever-changing heteroglot unit across
times and spaces (Bakhtin, 1981; Pennycook, 2007, 2017). Such dialogic explanation about heteroglossic meaning making practices helps us understand bilinguals’ intermixing languages and perspectives for meaning making, which is the embodiment of who they are and who they are becoming.

**Autoethnography as Methodology**

**My Dialogic Being and Becoming as a Transnational Bilingual Researcher**

I was born, raised, and educated in South Korea until my M.A. program. I served as an EFL (English as a foreign language) teacher at local middle and high schools in South Korea for 12 years before pursuing my PhD in the United States as an international doctoral student. I speak Korean as my first and English as a second language. I identify myself as a transnational, who physically and mentally moves between South Korea and the United States, and maintains cultural ties with both countries (e.g., watching K-dramas when staying in the United States, texting with friends in the United States when staying in South Korea). My fluid bilingual practices, or my translanguaging, represent how I constantly dialogue with two cultures and languages, which are intertwined with each other as one heteroglot ensemble. While at the same time, I make sense of how my surroundings change across time and space, and how my worldview has been changing because of varying social norms, conversations with friends, family, and faculties, or reading journal articles and books. Particularly, I constantly make sense of my shifting identities whenever crossing the national borders across Korea and the United States. In contrast to being a linguistic, cultural, and racial majority when residing in my homeland, I become an Asian who speaks English as a second language, thus becoming a racial and linguistic minority when staying in the United States. My ongoing reflections on these evolving identities have motivated me to work with minoritized youth in U.S. schools and society, particularly those facing challenges related to their linguistic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. To tackle those challenges, I draw upon transformative educational approaches, such as translanguaging pedagogy.

**Autoethnography for Enhanced Self-Reflexivity**

Autoethnography offers accessible, emotional, and even evocative accounts of personal experiences as well as various layers of consciousness in relation to culture (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). And autoethnography provides theoretical insights by connecting personal experiences and existing research (Cook, 2014). According to the aims to achieve from their autoethnographies, autoethnographers “vary in their emphasis on the research process (graphy), on culture (ethno), and on self (auto)” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 740). Also, autoethnographers can “speak against, or provide alternatives to, dominant, taken-for-granted, and harmful cultural scripts, stories, and stereotypes” and “can inform readers about aspects of cultural life that other researchers may not be able to know” from insiders’ perspectives (Adams et al., 2017, p. 3).

Cultural analysis is integral to conducting autoethnography, and autoethnographers reflect on, interpret, and analyze the cultural implications of their personal experiences within their sociocultural milieu (Chang, 2008, 2016; Wall, 2006). In this regard, autoethnography is both ethnographical and autobiographical, and is more than descriptive or confessional self-narratives (Chang, 2007, 2008). Autoethnography not only fosters an understanding of the researcher themselves but it has potential to inspire readers to embark journeys of self-reflection with its vivid and emotional narratives. These concrete and emotional narratives can
catalyze transformation and improvement in the lives of both the readers and the autoethnographers (Keleş, 2022).

While autoethnographers gain an understanding of the culture and themselves, they can also analyze, critique, and interpret their own reflexive processes via autoethnography. Scholars endorse autoethnography as a valuable way for documenting and examining researchers’ reflexive processes while conducting their research (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Humphreys, 2005; Richardson, 2000; Rosen, 1991). Ellis and Bochner (2000) call autoethnography as ethnographic memoirs, which can display “what went on in the backstage of doing research” (p. 741). Furthermore, employing first-person viewpoints in writing personal accounts enables autoethnographers to engage in reflexive exploration of themselves and share epiphanies encountered along their research journey (Humphreys, 2005). Through this revelation of selves and their research journey, autoethnographies can unveil “some of the complex political/ideological agendas hidden in our writing” (Richardson, 2000, p. 254), allowing readers to participate in their own reflexive dialogues with the autoethnography that they are reading (Rosen, 1991).

Recollection, Analysis, and Reorganization of Memorable Moments

For data generation and analysis for this autoethnography, I revisited and continuously reflected on each step of my dissertation study. To generate the data, I needed to remember what I felt and thought during the dissertation journey to write clear and detailed narratives for this autoethnography. Hence, I reread my analytic memos and my field notes which included my thoughts, feelings, and wonderings during the dissertation study as well as the vivid description of each meeting with my research partners (e.g., book club meeting, pre/post-interviews, unofficial dinners, phone calls).

Another significant resource for this autoethnography, albeit supplementary, was my diaries. I wrote diaries, mainly in prose and sometimes via photos, almost on a daily basis during my 5-year doctoral program to better remember my days as an international doctoral student, as a transnational, and as a bilingual. Although I started writing the diaries for personal purposes, the visual and verbal records within the diaries became a wonderful source for me to write this autoethnography (e.g., remembering a particular event or a particular context). The length of my daily diaries varied. The diaries included my reflections on online or in-person meetings or conversations with my friends and faculties pertaining to my research focus, such as translanguaging, linguistic justice in the classroom, and bilingual researchers’ language practices. Most importantly, the diaries show my dynamic journey of my becoming a transnational bilingual researcher advocating for linguistically minoritized youth.

Based on the aforementioned sources, I reassessed each step of conducting my dissertation study to understand my experiences as a bilingual researcher, particularly dissertation writing, to highlight related larger cultural issues (i.e., monolingualism in academia). While reviewing my analytic memos, field notes, and diaries for multiple times, I identified the salient and repeating themes of my experiences, thoughts, and feelings during my dissertation journey. As I examined the data set of this autoethnography, I also explored how I engaged with the theoretical framework of the dissertation (specifically, dialogism and translanguaging) during my research journey, and how I dialogued with the sociocultural circumstances surrounding the research and myself. Using the salient themes emerged from the data, I reorganized exemplary experiences, thoughts, and feelings into narratives resembling the stream of consciousness to accentuate my thought processes, struggles, and joys as a bilingual researcher. I made an effort to incorporate the exact words and sentences from my field notes, analytic memos, and diaries into this autoethnography narratives to effectively
deliver my ideas and emotions throughout the dissertation writing process, as detailed in the following section.

**My Stream of Thoughts and Feelings during Writing**

In this section, I present my stream-of-consciousness narratives that were carefully reorganized using my field notes, analytic memos, and diaries. The selected narratives serve as a means to revisit and reconstruct the memories, emotions, and thought processes that I experienced while working on my dissertation. I deliberately incorporate the present tense in the following narratives to amplify the complex thoughts and feelings that arose during this journey as a bilingual researcher, who had been conditioned to conform to English-only writing norms in academia.

**Translating Troubles: Navigating Linguistic Challenges**

In the narratives of this subsection, I delineate my journey in translating the book club discussions of my research partners, a pivotal component of the dissertation study’s findings. I showcase the delicate balance that I struck between preserving the original cultural intricacies and effectively conveying meanings in English, even at the risk of potentially losing some of the nuanced complexities:

The cursor is blinking on the screen as I find myself stuck on a Korean sentence that I cannot readily translate into English. Unbeknownst to me, four hours have already passed while attempting to translate the original one-hour Korean transcript of the book club discussion into English. In order to accurately convey my research partners’ intended meanings, I am revisiting the video of the book club discussions, and carefully observing their facial and bodily expressions. The task of translation would have been simpler if there were perfect matches between Korean and English expressions. However, I now realize that translation is akin to driving on a bumpy road – it is a dynamic and challenging process. My K-emergent bilingual research partners primarily used Korean during the book club discussions, especially when they wanted to express strong emotions. Translating these emotional nuances into English poses a significant challenge for me as seen in the following example transcript excerpt:

**Book Club Discussion Transcript Excerpt**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Transcript</th>
<th>Translated Version</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>시우:</td>
<td>Siwoo:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>저는 미국에서 살고 싶다고 졸러서 오게 된 것데, 그런데 Robin은 음, 음, 진실을 알고 나면,Robin은 정말 억울할 것 같아요. 친구들한테도 인사도 못하고 미국에서 할 수 있는 건 아무것도 없으니까요.</td>
<td>I came here because I <strong>insisted</strong> that I wanted to live in the United States. But Robin would, um, once she finds out the truth, Robin would feel <strong>this is so unfair for her</strong>, because she cannot contact her friends back in Korea to say good bye and she cannot do anything by herself in the United States.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the book club discussion mentioned in the transcript above, my research partners and I traversed between Korean and English focusing on the hardships faced by the main character, Robin, in the graphic novel that we were reading together. The graphic novel, *Almost American Girl: An Illustrated Memoir* (Ha, 2019), revolved around Robin’s experiences as a
newly arrived Korean immigrant in the United States. At the age of 14, she came to the United States, thinking she was going on a vacation to Alabama with her mother. However, she was taken by surprise when her mother got married to a Korean American man living in Alabama without informing Robin beforehand. During our discussions, my research partner Siwoo, a 15-year-old Korean emergent bilingual boy, analyzed Robin’s situation and speculated about her feelings. Siwoo drew parallels between his own experiences and those of the main character. In doing so, he used strong emotional expressions, for which there are no direct English equivalents. These expressions carry cultural nuances that cannot be easily conveyed by a single simple English word.

Due to the inherent complexities of language and the cultural nuances, it is challenging to capture the full meaning of certain expressions when translating between languages. I have to make difficult choices, attempting to find the closest approximation in English while acknowledging that some of the original essence may be lost in the process. I still feel that there is something missing in the translated version because the nuanced meaning of 조르다 (jo-reu-da, meaning insist in a persistent manner) and 억울하다 (eok-ul-ha-da, having no exact English equivalent) are not fully transferred in my English translation. I am contemplating how to deal with cultural nuances that can only be delivered in Korean, maintain the authenticity of the text, and ensure that English readers can understand the context.

조르다 (jo-reu-da) is akin to children pestering their parents, such as when children cry loudly for candies at a supermarket to pressure their parents into buying the candies. However, according to pre/post-interviews with Siwoo, he did not pester his parents to allow him to study and stay with his aunt’s family in the United States. Instead, Siwoo strongly insisted on living in the United States without resorting to coercive tactics. I want to deliver the sense that Siwoo intended, and I aim to match the Korean and English words as closely as possible. “Persuade his parents” closely matches 조르다 (jo-reu-da). However, I want to preserve the sense and meaning that Siwoo intended to convey by achieving one-to-one Korean-English matches. After a few minutes of consideration, I opt to use “insisted” instead of “persuaded his parents” because Siwoo did not use the word “parents” directly in the Korean sentence. By striving for precise Korean-English equivalence, I can more effectively uphold the intended sense and meaning that Siwoo wished to communicate.

However, a more significant hurdle arises when Korean emotional expressions cannot be directly translated because there is no English equivalent. This becomes the most difficult part for me as a bilingual researcher, who is also a translator of my research project. I am faced with the task of finding the closest English word or providing a concise explanation in English in the bracket. “억울하다” (eok-ul-ha-da) is used when a person feels intense anger and frustration due to an unfair situation. This strong emotional expression implies that the person is undergoing considerable stress and injustice caused by an event they did not bring upon themselves. Initially, I consider including an explanation of the cultural nuances of the Korean word in the translated transcript. However, upon reflection, I realize that doing so may disrupt the overall flow of the transcript. As a result, I opt to convey the sentiment by writing “Robin would feel this is unfair for her” to capture the essence of the emotion without adding the detailed cultural explanation. In this way, I am able to keep a balance between preserving the emotional depth of the original expression and maintaining the flow of the translated transcript in English.

While the resulting translated transcript may appear to be solely in English, it is, in fact, a product of my dynamic bilingual practices which are intricately and dialogically intertwined with my lived experiences, emotions, and perspectives developed in both South Korea and the United States. In essence, this seemingly monolingual translated transcript emerges at the confluence of the two rivers – Korean and English – blending with my personal experiences,
and memories across time and space. It is a reflection of the interconnectedness of these elements, shaping and enriching the way I express myself in the world. When translating, writing, or simply engaging in silent contemplation, I can sense the dynamic convergence of two rivers within my head, body, and soul — the rivers of Korean and English. I find myself riding the currents of these two languages, as they merge and remerge, shaping the way that I perceive and communicate with the world. Upon reading the Korean transcript, I instinctively draw upon all of my bicultural and bilingual resources, utilizing them to the fullest extent possible. I navigate between the two rivers, seeking the most appropriate and meaningful translation.

**Bridging Worlds: Navigating Monolingual and Translingual Writing**

My writing process is also translingual as I skillfully swim along the dynamic currents of both Korean and English to effectively convey my ideas and emotions. Oftentimes, I intermix Korean and English as they pop out of my head, and the first draft of my writing is the copy of my translingual thinking processes. However, for the publication of my research in the form of dissertation and academic journals, I opt to transform my initial draft into an English-only version. This allows my written product to undergo review by my committee members and peer reviewers of academic journals, some of whom may not be fluent in Korean. Because my dissertation committee members either speak English exclusively or are bilingual in English and Spanish, it is imperative to translate my original translingual version into English, serving as the lingua franca for effective communication with the committee and myself. Moreover, for submitting a manuscript to academic journals, I take reviewers, publishers, and readers into account, and I wonder if my Korean-English translingual writing would be comprehensible to them in the first place. This is another reason for me to change my original translingual version into a monolingual one so that my writing could be comprehended by my readers, which is the first and most important step for the readers to transact with the texts they are reading.

However, the monolingual versions sometimes lose the poetic and artistic vibes that only the translingual versions can transmit, which frustrates me as a bilingual writer. In the following narrative, I revisit myself when writing the discussion section of my dissertation, and show how I moved between Korean and English to best express my ideas and how I pondered upon the best ways of writing that can maintain subtle cultural and artistic nuances that can only be achieved by translingual writing:

I integrate a part of a famous Korean poem about a struggling youth called 자화상 (Ja-Hwa-Sang, meaning Self Portrait) written by Jeongju Seo and Herman Hesse’s quote from Demian to describe my research partners’ becoming transnational youth. My research partners’ becoming was not easy at times, and they had to navigate different school cultures, languages, and social norms in the United States in their early years in the United States. Their becoming was filled with challenges, wonderings, and joys at the same time. Thus, I decided to combine the quotes from the two literary masterpieces to emphasize the challenging processes of becoming, and these processes eventually lead to the growth of individuals.

**Original Translingual Writing**

As quoted in Hermann Hesse’s Demian, “The bird fights its way out of the egg.”

그리고 그것의 성장을 이루는 팔 할은 바람이다. (This is a revised quote from a Korean poem “Self Portrait” written by Jeongju Seo. This quote literally means eight out of the ten parts of growing pains consist of wind, symbolizing that the process of growth is predominantly characterized by struggles and obstacles.)
The translingual writing above could resonate poetically with bilinguals fluent in both Korean and English. The poetic resonance may be further enhanced for readers who are acquainted with the original Korean poem and the cultural depth associated with wind in the Korean language. And familiarity with the quote from *Demian* would add an extra layer of depth to the experience. However, after writing these sentences, I am thinking, “Would this work to the readers who do not speak Korean? Would this also sound poetic to the non-Korean-speaking readers with the bracketed explanation?” Moreover, I cannot help but wonder whether the readers can readily understand the symbolic significance of 바람 (ba-ram, meaning wind), a common metaphor in Korean language used to depict the struggles of youth during their growth. Then, should I consider providing bracketed explanations whenever I incorporate distinctive Korean expressions and sentences?

As a bilingual, translingual writing is a part of my daily meaning making processes (e.g., texting with friends, writing diaries). More importantly, such translingual writing aligns with the heteroglossic language practices that I advocate for. While at the same time, I also have to ask an important question, “Would my readers readily understand my translingual writing and would a strong sense of emotions be evoked within my readers even if they do not share the cultural and linguistic backgrounds with me?” I personally think that my writing becomes alive only when the readers can make meaning of what I wrote. Also, the explanations within the brackets can disturb the flow of rhythm of reading, which interferes with the poetic and artistic vibes. After a series of these thoughts, I decide to turn my translingual writing into English as following:

**Revised Version Written in English**

For a bird to fight its way out of the egg, it needs a safe space where it is cared and loving parents to embrace it with warmth. Even after it is born into the world, the bird has to learn how to spread its wings and fly from the parents. Everything related to growth is indeed a challenge.

I go the extra mile in preserving the symbolic meaning of the quotes from the novel and the poem. The wind could have explained everything in Korean. But without the wind, I included other sentences to explain the challenge of becoming. Although the English version might lose poetic rhythm, it carries the meaning and sense that I intend to deliver to my future readers, particularly those who do not speak Korean. I am torn between the linguistic choices, that is, whether practicing the theoretical belief that I live as a bilingual or following the norms in monolingual U.S. academia for my research to be read and disseminated. As an emerging bilingual scholar striving to thrive in academia, I almost always choose to follow the norms, the centralizing forces that maintain the academic system.

**To Live or Not to Live the Theory: Self-Contradictions and Navigating Tensions**

The narratives above suggest that I may have been socialized to adhere to the perceived standard of English favoring white, middle-class English over other variations since childhood, which could be also explained as Anglonormativity (McKinney, 2007, 2017). This might include viewing English taught by white American “native” teachers as superior English taught by “non-native” teachers from South Korea. Even after becoming an English teacher in South Korea, I kept being under the grip of Anglonormativity, and continued to monitor my English uses and pronunciation in the fear of sounding like a non-native English speaker to my previous emergent bilingual students. And as an international doctoral student in the United States, I have been trained to write in Standard English and I might have subconsciously chosen to
produce my work in English. In the following narrative, I share my thinking processes of navigating the tension between my theoretical belief and Anglonormativity as a bilingual researcher:

As I am writing my dissertation, I am feeling a little bit overwhelmed because I notice that there is a big gap between my theoretical belief and my academic practice in real life. Even though I exert efforts to transform English teaching and learning based on the theory of translanguaging, I am ironically subjugated to the centralizing power of monolingualism of the academia in which I should survive as an emerging scholar. Although my language practices with my emergent bilingual research partners might be transformational, I cannot help but wonder whether my academic writing practice is also transformative. The purpose of my research projects is to champion the integration of emergent bilingual youth’s heritage languages in their language and literacy education. However, the language practice of my final written product is not in line with my advocacy for carving out linguistically and culturally inclusive environment for minoritized groups of students. While my writing process is translilingual as mentioned earlier, such process becomes invisible in the final product as I transform my original translingual draft into English.

When writing my research, I opt to use English as the primary language to ensure clarity and accessibility for a wide readership, because English serves as a common language of communication in scholarly communities and facilitates understanding among researchers from various linguistic backgrounds. And I often become obsessed with using correct English uses as much as I can. This is maybe because I previously received several comments about my language from the journal reviewers, who are presumably “native” English speakers. The comments include “The writer’s English use is a bit off,” or “The writer should receive copy-editing from native speakers.” As I am writing my dissertation, the comments from the journal reviewers are still haunting me. And for my dissertation study to be published in journal articles in the future, I have to lean towards English to better communicate with my future readers. I could have chosen to write my dissertation using translingual practices. However, I have to include English explanations in brackets for the benefit of the readers, which sometimes disrupt the smooth flow of reading.

I can sense that I have branded my research as transformative without actively employing transformative practices in both public and academic writing. Despite encouraging my research partners to write translanguagingly, I find myself lacking the confidence to implement this approach in my academic writing for the sake of publication. While my research endeavors aim to resist monolingual norms in language and literacy education, I have become accustomed to Anglocentric language conventions due to my academic training and the expectations placed on English teachers in South Korean society, where native-like English proficiency is highly prioritized. Moreover, to effectively communicate the idea of linguistic justice, I believe it is essential to articulate my thoughts eloquently in English, thereby allowing a broader audience to read my advocacy for translanguaging pedagogy in my work. In other words, to effectively disseminate ideas about translanguaging pedagogy, I find it ironic that I must lean towards the use of Standard English. I have witnessed scholars’ endeavors to establish a translanguaging space for bilingual researchers at conferences, but it is a temporary liberation from the academic linguistic norms (see Bakhtin, 1984). As long as English, particularly Standard English, remains as an academic lingua franca, I might have to produce my work in English. I admit it. Self-contradiction bothers me immensely, but I also recognize the importance of not only surviving but thriving in academia.
Implications and Moving Forward

Theoretical and Methodological Implications

In the previous section, I illustrated my reflexive thinking processes during writing in the form of stream-of-consciousness narratives. I narrated how dialogism and translingual language practices were embodied in my meaning making processes, how I made sense of the inconsistency between theory and practice, and how I tried to balance between my effort to practice what I profess about as a scholar and the linguistic norms that I should follow to disseminate my work in academia. Theoretically, this autoethnography demonstrates the unavoidable tensions inherent in heteroglossic language practices, stemming from the monolingual pressures in both academia and U.S. society.

As a bilingual myself, I live translanguaging, and I advocate the integration of translanguaging pedagogy into classrooms for linguistically minoritized students who study in an English-dominant educational environment. However, my narratives of this autoethnography show that one’s advocacy work does not always align with real-life academic practices. Even the final product of this autoethnography is produced in English for wider readership, although data analysis and the writing processes were translingual. This is maybe why many bilingual researchers do not practice translanguaging for their academic performances such as research writing and conference presentations even though they might engage in translanguaging in their heads invisibly.

I am not arguing that an academic’s advocacy for linguistic justice is not valid if the academic does not exercise what they assert in their real lives. Rather, I would assert how important it is for a bilingual researcher to be critically aware of the tension between the normative power of monolingualism and the decentralizing forces of translanguaging before branding one’s work as transformative. In this regard, bilingual researchers should engage in a high level of self-reflexivity, and should be aware of the discrepancies between the theory of linguistic justice and the practicalities of achieving success in academia. And writing self-reflexive narratives to reflect on each stage of research would reap benefits. For example, via writing autoethnography, which is inherently designed to incorporate a certain level of self-revelation, I engaged in self-analysis, and took the courage to reveal my struggles and self-contradictions. That is, I am a bilingual researcher who ponders upon how to advance linguistically minoritized students’ language and literacy education. However, I am also a human being who constantly makes sense of the tensions between what I would like to pursue as a scholar versus what I should follow to survive and thrive in academia.

Writing an autoethnography after completing a research project might be accompanied by such vulnerabilities because researchers have to disclose what they might not want to share publicly. However, I would contend that writing an autoethnography after the completion of a research project can help the researchers grow as scholars who can rigorously and continuously re-examine themselves, social and research context, theories, and positionalities that shape their research journeys. After all, autoethnography as a methodology aims to illustrate “people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles” (Bochner & Ellis, 2016, p. 111, emphasis mine). More importantly, by focusing on the process of figuring out the meaning of struggles and what to do in research, or by being self-reflexive, researchers will eventually be able to elevate the integrity of their research projects (Mao et al., 2016). This is because practicing self-reflexivity is “a continuous process of critical scrutiny and interpretation, not just in relation to the research methods and the data but also to the researcher, the participant, and the context” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 274).

Likewise, preparing for and writing this retrospective autoethnography in the form of stream-of-consciousness narrative helped me re-examine my research motivations, method and
theory selection, and surrounding social contexts. While revisiting and writing about my research journey, I constantly dialogued with my ever-changing realities, and I came to understand my evolving unneutral worldviews and theories about language practices (Bakhtin, 1981; Cruz, 2015), which eventually impact the present and future research projects. By interrogating how my thought processes and how my language choices were operated in relation to linguistic norms of the society, I was able to critically examine to which extent translanguaging can disrupt monolingual norms.

In addition, the narratives featuring detailed portrayals of my emotional experiences effectively conveyed my thoughts and feelings during my dissertation study, a facet inseparable from the academic linguistic norms. My hope is that the details of my autoethnographic narratives can evoke real-life feelings and experiences within my readers, thus providing the readers with deeper insights into their own processes of self-reflexivity. I also aimed to share my struggles and wonderings as a bilingual scholar, hoping that readers could vicariously experience these contemplations via my candid narratives. However, some might contend that writing autoethnography for engaging in self-reflexivity is nothing but a self-indulgent practice, which is “under the guise of social research and ethnography” (Coffey, 1999, p. 155). Such risks arising from what-looks-to-be narcissistic narratives can be mitigated through the use of authentic and vivid narratives, with which the readers can easily connect, thereby fostering a reflexive dialogue between the author and the readers of the piece (Humphreys, 2005). I would also assert that openly sharing one’s detailed thought processes can augment readers’ trust, allowing the readers to empathize with the challenges faced by fellow researchers, both in their academic roles and as individuals.

**Moving Forward**

The aim of this autoethnography is to illuminate how a bilingual researcher’s writing processes are simultaneously influenced by two cultures and languages, a researcher’s self-reflection, and the sociopolitical contexts which the researcher inhabits. A bilingual’s writing involves more than a mere choice between two languages, but entails complex processes of meaning making that unfold moment by moment. As a bilingual, I dance between two languages and cultures, choreographing my unique dancing movement while considering the cultural and linguistic norms of both South Korea and the United States. Although this autoethnography is written in English on the surface, the written product is a dynamic whirlwind of cultures, languages, feelings, of which complexity cannot be delivered via third-person narratives. In this sense, writing retrospective autoethnography was one of the most viable options for me to highlight the complexity of my experience as a bilingual researcher. The detailed first-person narratives in present tense can proffer the sense of actually being there as well as the methodological insights regarding how to represent one’s evolving ideas and positionalities in a more descriptive and fluid manner.

Even if it is not a standalone autoethnography, researchers can incorporate autoethnographic vignettes from their field notes into their research writing to shed light on the relevant thoughts and emotions they experienced during the course of their research projects (e.g., Creese et al., 2008, 2016). Via including autoethnographic vignettes in their research writings or writing individual autoethnographies, researchers can repeatedly interrogate their positionalities, pose thought-provoking questions, and analyze social or political influences that eventually bring them back to their own selves. And lastly, for those who consider autoethnography is nothing but a narcissistic self-confessional tale, I must emphasize that autoethnography is “a provocative weave of story and theory” (Spry, 2001, p. 713). The provocative personal story along with theoretical considerations can powerfully help readers understand self and others, and can become an excellent knowledge source for the development
of social science (Chang, 2008; Humphreys, 2005). Most importantly, for individual researchers, engaging in self-analysis and self-disclosure can be cathartic and even potentially healing in its own right.

References


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