

# Why We Need Translingualism: An Antiracist Approach in the Writing Center

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## Research Questions:

- *How can translingualism be implemented in the Writing Center as an antiracist approach?*
- *How can the experiences of multilingual students inform pedagogical changes in the Writing Center?*

## Theoretical Research

In higher education institutions, Standard American English (SAE) is almost always a strictly enforced requirement. For the growing number of multilingual students admitted into said institutions, this creates destructive tension and sources of linguistic racism. The widespread presence of linguistic discrimination and racism is defined by [April Baker-Bell](#) as “any system or practice of discrimination, segregation, persecution, or mistreatment of language based on membership in a race or ethnic group” (2020).

Translingualism, as a pedagogical tool, supports the idea that speakers of more than one language or dialect cannot only shuttle in and out of tongues and codes, but also utilize their fluencies as interconnected resources ([Lu and Horner 2013](#)). As a practice, translingualism fosters opportunities to dismantle language biases and address linguistic racism that can be implemented in the Writing Center.

## Methods: [Statement of Positionality](#)

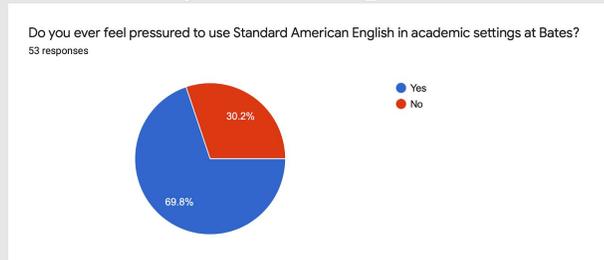
### Survey:

- Google Forms survey via email to Bates College student body to ask for participation from multilingual, multidialectal, and multicultural students
- Nine quantitative instruments
- Confidential responses and \$25 raffle

### Interviews:

- 60 minute recorded Zoom session
- Nine qualitative instruments
- Confidential responses and \$20 compensation

## Excerpt from Survey Data: 55 respondents



## Excerpts from Interview Data: 11 interviewees

*How would you define language justice?*

“Language justice, well for me, means being comfortable in an academic setting to speak your language or your dialect that you feel most comfortable with” (Interviewee 9).

*How do you navigate Standard American English (and White Mainstream English) in the classroom and in your writing at Bates?*

“It’s kind of like code-switching. I think it comes natural to me because I grew up with two different dialects. One being seen as superior to the other. For me, it kind of seems negative but I had to like drill in my head that that’s not proper, that’s going to get you higher in life. That’s why I learned the standard way of writing” (Interviewee 10).

*Can you share a story about a time when your languages, dialects, and cultures felt discriminated against at Bates in academic settings, if applicable?*

“When it comes to accents, like I acknowledge that I just have an accent, what am I going to do about it, it’s fine. Some people make fun of you, like yo I don’t care, it’s not my first language” (Interviewee 6).

## Trainings

Based on the data collected from multilingual students at Bates College and theoretical research regarding translingualism and code meshing, I created a three-part training for peer writing tutors and a strategy worksheet.

Part 1: Defining Language Justice

Part 2: Translingualism Theory and Practice

Part 3: Statement of Antiracist and Inclusive Writing Support

Each part is one hour and covers basic definitions of key terminology, group discussions surrounding language justice, and self-reflection activities designed to prepare tutors to better serve the needs and empower the abilities of multilingual students.

## Conclusion

Survey and interview data demonstrated a pattern of discrimination and pressure to use SAE in academic settings which led to the construction of the trainings listed above. Ultimately, this project was designed to inform changes in the Writing Center under the umbrella of translingualism as an antiracist and inclusive way to offer writing support to multilingual students. Bates College was used as the case study for this project, but this process could be replicated at other institutions.