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Composition 2.0: Toward a Multilingual and Multimodal Framework

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Steven Fraiberg

## **Composition 2.0: Toward a Multilingual and Multimodal Framework**

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This article argues that tracing multimodal-multilingual literacy practices across official and unofficial spaces is key to moving composition into the twenty-first century. Key to this remixing of the field is a situated framework that locates multimodal-multilingual activities in wider genre, cultural, national, and global ecologies.

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I exit my apartment in Tel Aviv and cross Kikar Rabin, the city center where the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin was shot and the square where endless gatherings and demonstrations take place on what seems to be a weekly basis. As I continue down the street, I see the phrase “know hope” spray-painted on a wall, reflecting the ambiguity and uncertainty of the political situation, one that shifts between “no hope” and “knowing hope.” Along the way, I see other evidence of the ways that English is woven into the fabric of everyday life in Israel: graffiti on the walls, storefront signs, printed slogans on T-shirts, and finally the sign of the Internet design company sponsoring my research, Networkd, posted above a row of mail boxes.<sup>1</sup> Walking up the three levels to the entrance of this company, I find a converted apartment that houses approximately thirty programmers, graphic designers, and managers. It is a Sunday morning, the beginning of the work week in Israel, and workers at the company are busily

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engaged in meeting deadlines to complete Web applications and websites for high-tech start-up companies and many of the leading firms in the Israeli high-tech industry. The company itself is bustling with activity and sound, as people wheel in and out of rooms, telling jokes and shouting. Directly across the street is the *shook*, or open market, where one can hear the shouting of vendors yelling “*xamesh shekel le kilo le toot*” (“five shekels for a kilo of strawberries”). Networld, however, is aiming for a very different market. In this article, I wish to

examine the mixing of these official and unofficial spaces and the ways English is woven into these contexts. This work is a response to calls in composition for developing a perspective capable of understanding the teaching of English

**This work is a response to calls in composition for developing a perspective capable of understanding the teaching of English writing within the context of other languages and globalization.**

writing within the context of other languages and globalization (Horner and Trimbur). Contributing to this area, scholars have argued for multilingual writing as design (Lu; New London Group), code meshing (Canagarajah, “Subversive”), and understanding literacy practices as shaped by and shaping a constellation of historical, economic, social, and ideological factors called “cultural ecologies” (Hawisher and Selfe). In this study, I map out the ways these cultural ecologies operate in situated activities by drawing on examples from six months of ethnographic research in Israeli society. Through the situated study of multilingual and multimodal literacy practices, I argue that this multilingual-multimodal framework is a key for moving our research and teaching into the twenty-first century.

### **Remixing Composition: Mashing Multilingualism and Multimodality**

Reimagining writing studies within national and global contexts, Bruce Horner and John Trimbur call for an integration of ESL, composition, and other language instruction. This remixing of the disciplines is key for moving composition and rhetoric into the twenty-first century, in which we find ourselves with an increasingly heterogeneous student body for whom traditional categories of second language do not neatly fit. This is evidenced by the increasing number of generation 1.5 students (Harklau, Losey, and Siegal) who are “in between worlds” (Chiang and Schmida), a phenomenon pointing to the complex, dynamic, heterogeneous, and emergent nature of cultural and linguistic identities. Despite this growing diversity, scholars argue that the field has yet to embrace multilingualism because of a tacit monolingual policy (Horner and Trimbur)

and “myth of linguistic homogeneity” (“Myth” 638) that has undergirded much of composition scholarship and teaching. Furthermore, Horner, Trimbur, and Matsuda (“Composition Studies”) have traced the historical factors shaping this social formation and the resultant disciplinary split between composition, ESL, and other language instruction. The multilingual and multimodal framework mapped out in this special issue is a move toward bridging this disciplinary divide.

Crossing these disciplinary, linguistic, and geographic boundaries, this work draws on and extends Suresh Canagarajah’s essay “The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued.” In this essay, he shifts from code switching and code mixing to what he refers to as code meshing (see also

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Young). This concept merges world Englishes with African American and Latino rhetorics, bringing together Ben Rampton’s notion of *crossing* and Geneva Smitherman’s *crossover*,

as a strategy for writers to mesh their own native language with the dominant discourse (in this case standard English).<sup>2</sup> Picking up where Canagarajah leaves off, I call for attention to “code mashing,” or the complex blending of multimodal and multilingual texts and literacy practices in our teaching and research. This move is aligned with recent shifts in world Englishes by Alastair Pennycook and other scholars (see also Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook) who examine global hip-hop to argue for attention to transcultural flows with a focus on *fluidity* and *fixity* or the ways “cultural forms produce new forms of localization, and the use of global Englishes produces new forms of identification” (Pennycook 7). As part of this broader framework, multilingualism is one resource in a more complex semiotic repertoire distributed across local and global contexts. This move furthermore intersects with research on multimodality in which scholars have argued for a broader definition of writing as design (New London Group; Kress and Van Leeuwen). Within composition, these calls for a more inclusive framework (Selfe, “Aurality”; Yancey, “Made”) incorporate image (George), aurality (Halbritter; Selfe, “Aurality”), gesture (Prior et al.; Wolfe), and even smells and tastes (Shipka). The aim of this broader approach, as Cynthia Selfe articulates, is to increase the bandwidth of semiotic resources for communication in order to make available all means of persuasion.

To date, however, there have been few situated studies of multilingual or multimodal composing. Within digital writing research, for example, a range of scholarship exists on multimodality and technology, yet only recently is there

work emerging on the production, distribution, mediation, and reception of multimodal texts (beyond interpretive and hermeneutic analyses). Moving toward a practice-based framework are studies of the ways digital youth *use* new communications technologies (Alexander, “Digital”), text messaging practices in national and international contexts (Lee; Ito; Sun), and in situ observations of multimodal composing (remixing) with attention to jointly mediated activity (Johnson-Eilola; Prior, “Remaking”; Spinuzzi; Slattery; Swarts). In the area of Internet and communication studies, a work by Mizuko Ito, Daisuke Okabe, and Misa Matsuda and another work by Ito et al. further take up an ethnographic approach to examine the ways that social dynamics in spaces such as schools, families, and public transportation are co-constituted by new media. Despite such moves, rich, longitudinal accounts tracing the construction of multimodal texts—mediated by an array of texts, tools, actors, and spaces—remain scarce.

Turning to the area of world Englishes—as well as anthropological linguistics, sociolinguistics, and applied linguistics—the field as a whole remains predominantly focused on talk. Additionally, most of the work on writing focuses on the product as opposed to process. The subset of studies that in fact focuses on process furthermore tends to take a quantitative and cognitive approach as opposed to a situated stance that locates the production, distribution, and reception of texts in wider social, political, cultural, and national contexts. In the area of English as a Second Language, Guadalupe Valdés wrote in 1992 that there were as of yet few studies examining multilingual composing. The same holds true today as Dwight Atkinson and Ulla Connor concur, noting the dearth of studies on situated composing: “Yet it must be admitted that research on multilingual writing development has traditionally been rather limited” (515). Taking up this point, Canagarajah (“Toward”) argues that traditional static and bounded models of multilingual writing have focused on the product rather than on the process. Arguing instead for a less bounded and dynamic understanding of language, he proposes a process-oriented approach that conceptualizes the writer as strategically and creatively negotiating or “shuttling between discourses.” It is to this issue that I now turn and in so doing argue that the field of rhetoric and composition needs to turn in the twenty-first century.

### **Toward a Situated Framework of Multilingual-Multimodal Composing**

As I proceed to map out an alternative theoretical and methodological framework, it is useful to consider how the enterprise of language studies is bound up in the construction of the nation state. As Monica Heller articulates, “If

we understand, organize, and draw on those resources as belonging to whole, bounded systems we call ‘languages’, it is because that notion makes sense in the context of the ways language has been bound up in ideologies of nation and state since the nineteenth century” (2). It is only recently with the onset of globalization and the reorganization of space and time that we are seeing

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shifts in this bounded philosophy to language studies: “Now that conditions are changing, it is possible to challenge the hegemony of that view, and to offer another one better able to account of the

ways speakers are drawing on their resources at a time when boundaries are often deliberately played with” (Heller, “Social” 2). In the area of globalization studies, we find a variety of metaphors reflecting this less-bounded approach: global flows or mobilities (Lash and Urry); the global *mélange* (Pieterse); the network (Castells), and deeply disjunctive scapes (Appadurai). The theoretical and methodological framework articulated in this article offers a way to examine how these flows or scapes are co-constituted in everyday reading, writing, speaking, and design practices. In making this move, this framework “mashes” research in multilingualism and multimodality from North American genre theory, sociocultural studies, activity theory, linguistic anthropology, mediated discourse analysis, new media, and literacy studies. These disciplinary border crossings are key to remixing composition in the context of globalization. Mapping out a less-bounded approach—conceptualizing language as situated, dynamic, heterogeneous, co-constitutive, and contested—this theoretical and methodological framework integrates four analytically separate but deeply interwoven concepts that are described below.

### *Ecologies*

In composition, Kristie Fleckenstein, Clay Spinuzzi, Rebecca Rickly, and Carole Clark Papper have called for an ecological approach for our teaching and research. In this manner, we might understand language as circulating in complex institutional, information, genre, cultural, and global ecologies. Discussing the manner in which literacy practices are deeply situated within complex cultural ecologies, Hawisher and Selfe argue:

In both global and local contexts the relationships among digital technologies, language, literacy, and an array of opportunities are complexly structured and

articulated within a constellation of existing social, cultural, economic, historical, and ideological factors that constitute a cultural ecology of literacy. These ecological systems continually shape, and are shaped by people (Giddens)—at a variety of levels and in arrange of ways—as they live out their daily lives in technological and cultural settings. (619)

The study of literacy practices, then, requires attention to the ways they are deeply woven into a constellation of factors. These ecologies are always a “site of contestation between emerging, competing, changing, accumulating, and fading languages and literacies” (629). Within rhetoric and composition, there have been a number of closely re-

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lated concepts for studying the ways that these constellations of factors shape and are shaped by everyday mundane and routine literate practices. Perhaps most closely aligned is Clay Spinuzzi’s concept of genre ecologies.<sup>3</sup> This concept is an extension of genre sets (Devitt), genre systems (Bazerman, “Systems”), and genre repertoires (Orlikowski and Yates). For instance, one might observe the ways classroom activity is jointly coordinated by student laptops, whiteboards, notepads, textbooks, and assignment sheets.<sup>4</sup> While Spinuzzi was referring primarily to durable texts within institutional contexts, we might further examine the ways nondurable and evanescent texts are also part of these genre ecologies, such as the classroom genre Initiation-Respond-Evaluate (IRE), in which the teacher initiates a question, the students respond, and the teacher evaluates. It is important to emphasize that such structures are not conceived of as static or bounded, but as “stabilized for now” (Schryer) or fluid, fuzzy, dynamic, and dialogic. It is within these fluid typifications that we can examine the compound mediation (Spinuzzi) of multilingual texts. By further mapping on Hawisher and Selfe’s concept of cultural ecologies, we can complicate this analysis through closer attention to the blending of constellations of wider historical, social, cultural, national, and global factors.

### ***Knotworking***

The second concept is the notion of knotworking (Engeström, Engeström, and Vähääho) or the continual tying and untying of genres, objects, texts, and people. This is the process through which ecologies are co-constituted, improvised, shaped, and re-formed. As Fleckenstein et al. argue, the ecological metaphor imagines writing as a web of interlocking social, material, and semiotic relationships and practices conceptualized as clusters or “knots” (394).

This framework is key for studying literacy practices as the “*knotty* nature of such interdiscursive complexity is what we must seek to understand” (Irvine, “Commentary” 72; emphasis added). To illustrate with an example from a high-tech workplace, for instance, we might examine how the sketch of a sticky note mediates a conversation in Hebrew and then how this sticky note is passed to a graphic designer who uses it as part of a new “knot” to design an image in conjunction with a graphic design program (with an English interface). These knots, furthermore, shape the fluid and fuzzy pathways shaping the circulation of discourse, the alignments and positioning, participant roles, and topics taken up for discussion. These institutional spheres are furthermore knotted into wider cultural, national, and global spheres in a continual process of tying and untying.

### **Remediation**

The third concept, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin’s concept of remediation, is key for understanding the ways that texts circulate across the fluid, fuzzy pathways constituted through knotworking.<sup>5</sup> Remediation is the notion that each medium is refashioned from an already existing medium. While Bolter and Grusin’s concept is primarily focused on repurposing or transformations across media, Prior et al. argue the concept is applicable to all semiotic modes (gesture, image, gaze, talk, writing) in the context of situated practices. They introduce the term *semiotic remediation*, a concept that moves beyond an understanding of the ways that writing is coordinated with other semiotic systems to a fully dialogic understanding of all semiotic modes. In practice, for instance, one might look at the ways text on a Web page (in English) is taken up in a conversation (in Hebrew), and then how elements of this conversation are remediated into written notes (in English) and finally stretch into longer chains of remediation. Across a range of disciplines, there have been numerous closely related concepts that have been used to capture the key dimensions of this phenomena: reported speech (Voloshinov), double voicing (Bakhtin), antecedent genre (Jamieson), shadow conversations (Irvine, “Shadow”), resemiotization (Iedema), constructed dialogue (Tannen), and entextualization (Duranti and Goodwin).

### **Actant-Network Theory**

The fourth concept, Bruno Latour’s actant-network theory, erases the binary between objects and people; together the tools and individuals make up what he calls a third agent, as individuals shape the tools, and in turn the tools shape



the individuals. This move expands our notion of conversation; human actors are no longer in dialogue only with one another, but also with other texts and tools. In this manner, we might understand students and teachers as engaged in a (multilingual) dialogue with textbooks, Web pages, assignment sheets, conversations inside and outside classroom, and so forth. Each of these texts and objects is imbued with “affordances” that shape and are shaped by their uptake. Taking a cue from David Russell, who argues for an understanding of objects-as-genres, we might extend genre theory to understand all objects as stabilized-for-now (Schryer) “forms of life” shaping and shaped by everyday interaction. Space, then, is not a static backdrop or stage against which activity takes place, but is co-constituted by the participants and deeply bound up in a process of (re)mediation.

In sum, these four analytic perspectives provide a framework for examining the links between structure and agency (Giddens), or the ways that situated practices shape and are shaped by wider sociocultural contexts. Attending to the process of knotworking, the complex tying and untying of tools (images, symbols, tropes, ideologies, written inscriptions, desks, whiteboards, computer screens, cell phones) and people, we can map out the processes shaping and shaped by the multilingual and multimodal flows (remediation)

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of discourse (broadly defined) over space and time. This continual tying and untying is an ongoing site of struggle as individuals act on the tools and tools act on the individuals, shaping the alignments and positionings of the actors (or, in Latour’s terms, *actants*) in an ongoing negotiation. Multilingual and multimodal literacy practices are deeply bound up in this process. Remixing composition for the twenty-first century requires a shift toward conceptualizing writers as “knotworkers” negotiating complex arrays of languages, texts, tools, objects, symbols, and tropes.<sup>6</sup>

### **Multilingual and Multimodal Composing at a High-Tech Company**

The term *convergence culture* from media theorist Henry Jenkins characterizes how “flow of content across multiple media platforms” collides, intersects, crisscrosses, and interacts “in unpredictable ways” (2). The Israeli high-tech sector is a key site for studying the convergence(s) of semiotic, technological, cultural, national, and global forces.<sup>7</sup> Over the past twenty years in Israel, there

has been a rapid growth in the high-tech industry, which currently has more start-up companies (three thousand) than any other place in the world other than the United States (Morgenstern). Resulting from this rapid growth has been a transformation in the economic and social landscape of Israeli society, as it moves from the socialist ideals of the kibbutz to a capitalist system based on globalized high-tech industries. Accompanying these shifts has been a move from Hebrew as the dominant language to a situation in which English is commonplace in many domains. Locating the shifts (from an emic perspective) in a historical context, Israel itself was founded based on the socialist and nineteenth-century Zionist movements to establish the state. Whereas once the kibbutzniks and farmers were pioneers settling the land, it is now high-tech workers who are the “pioneers” and helping to put Israel on the twenty-first-century map. In traditional stories of Israeli history, the trope of David and Goliath is commonly invoked, with a smaller, less-equipped Israeli army overcoming overwhelming forces and odds.<sup>8</sup> Now it is the Israeli high-tech entrepreneurs who are characterized as the national heroes overcoming great economic forces. Whereas once the small, elite commando unit was the symbol of Israeli know-how and capability, it is now the Israeli “high-tech warriors” who are characterized as the units on the front line of the global economy, so to speak. Indeed, to locate the links between high-tech and the military, one does not have to look far. In perhaps one of the most well-known start-up success stories, a software security company called Checkpoint was started by two friends from military intelligence. In the late 1990s, Checkpoint became the highest-traded company on the NASDAQ. Significantly, the name itself not only refers to software security but also indexes the checkpoints set up all along Israel’s borders. The linguistic borders in Israeli society are also being infiltrated by English, as indicated by the name of the company, which targets a global market in which English is the lingua franca.

These tropes and national narratives are part of wider cultural ecologies that are deeply “knotted” (converge) into the rhetorics of Israeli high-tech industry as evident on the website (Figure 1) at the high-tech design firm Network.<sup>9</sup> For example, on the Web page is a start-up company depicted as a commando unit. In this representation, however, the instruments of military power have been replaced with a pencil, megaphone, and wrench. A wrench is a particularly telling symbol as it suggests a garage mechanic using “low tech” tools and resonates with stories of Steve Jobs developing the first Apple computer in the back of the family garage. These narratives are deeply bound up in the ethos of the Israeli high-tech community, as is evident at the gather-

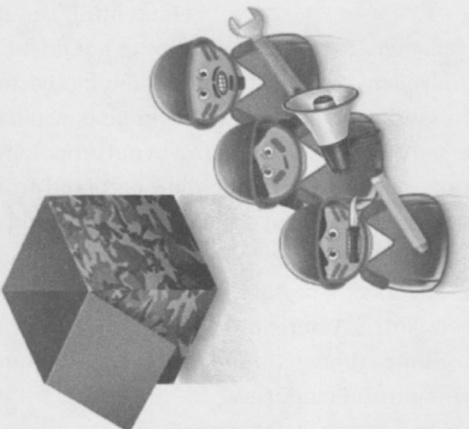
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English

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## Start Up On Demand

מקומים סטארט-אפ ועדיין מגויסים אנשי פיתוח?  
הדדליין לוחץ ועדיין אין לכם מוצר?  
נטי מציעה לכם פיתוח מיידני: צוות פיתוח להשכרה!

בעולם הטכנולוגי של היום, בו מהירות היא מילת המפתח להצלחה, time-to-market איש עד הערכת מחזור זמנים בלבד הוא התמיכה של משו מול קהל לקוחות תובעני. אינך לא מספיק לזמן להמסרים עם פיתוח דומה בזמנות מידית.

במקרה כזה, ליד ולזמן של צוות פיתוח מבוסס ומיומן אין תחליף. אך אלה הפך בה, לא פעם מציעת חברות סטארט-אפ עם דיוקן אנשי סטארט-אפ לקוחות סטנדרטיים רבים עד בלב ממוקדים של מוס אנשי פיתוח איכותי צוות מומחים.

נטי מאפשרת להכרות סטארט-אפ בהקמה לזמן על פניו תוכן והתקן המנועי ומציעה שוקה stop one של שירותי פיתוח לפי דרישה, כולל פיתוח קונסולס, אפליקציות סמולט, פיתוח תוכנה, עיצוב גרפי, מינוח ועיצוב מנוע שוקי.

עם השלמת גרסת המנוע הראשוני, נטיקה מעבירה את המטרה הפיתוח לזמן שניים הלקוח ונלווה אותו בליווי הפיתוח באופן לפי המטרה. נטיקה מאפשרת לקוחות לזמן לזמן ברמת מעט ביותר העדכרות בפיתוח המנוע - הלקוח יכול לקבל לידיו קוד ולהעביר לפתח אותו באופן עצמאי או לקבל לידיו מנוע, הכלול שירותי אינטגרציה ותמיכה המצויים.

עם פסוק נטיקה פיתוח תוכנה נותנת מומחים מבוסס ומיומן, נטיקה מנחה בכך למקלה מנוע הולרי ממוקדת במשאיות הפיתוח של צוות מומחים בתחומי ההייטק והמקצועיות במשאיות. על לקוחותיה המתחילים של נטיקה נמסרת, בין היתר, חברות עלת כמו אמדום, קומברס (RAD/visior) כמו גם חברות סטארט-אפ במחזור הדינמי.

לחצו כאן לקבלת פגישת עין ראשית ללא תשלום <

Figure 1. Network

ings of the high-tech technorati located at an industrial center in Holon, Israel, at a group called Garage Geeks. One can also see additional “mashing” in the Hebrew text, and one key term that I wish to foreground in this analysis is the word *megeyes*, which is both the word for the recruitment of employees and the drafting of soldiers for the military. Finally, we can see the ways that English is blended into the Web page with the company slogan and heading “Start Up On Demand” foregrounded at the top of the page similar to the ways that English is foregrounded in the work at these companies. Other English phrases and buzzwords are woven into the text as well, such as “one stop shop,” similar to the ways these phrases are often woven into workplace activities.

The fact that Hebrew and English are read from opposite directions might be seen as a “contact zone” (Pratt), and on the website one can see the two languages themselves bumping up against each other. This website further indexes other points of contact as suggested by a national narrative (indexed by the soldiers) that marginalizes Palestinians, Arab Israelis, and other sectors of society. Examining how such multilingual-multimodal assemblages are re-articulated “through fluid, contested, and contingent social forces in local situations” (Johnson-Eilola and Selber) is key to moving composition and rhetoric into the twenty-first century. This “mixing and matching” (Alexander, “Media” 2) challenges the nature of reading and writing and points to

**Even without our being fluent in another language, however, there is much that we can do in our own teaching and research to integrate multilingual-multimodal texts and textual practices.**

the need for rearticulating our teaching, research, and administration. In fact, scholars have recently argued for remix (Johnson-Eilola and Selber; Yancey, “Re-Designing”) as a key metaphor for reimagining the field. Yet such work

poses serious challenges for those of us who are not fluent in another language or culture, and indeed my own mastery of Hebrew has been an ongoing struggle. My reading of this website, for instance, includes consultation with two native Hebrew speakers, the academic literature in anthropology and Israeli studies, and triangulation with ethnographic data gathered from field work in the high-tech industry and a range of other contexts. I would argue, however, that this cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary engagement is key to forming new disciplinary “knotworks” necessary for moving our understanding of literacy practices beyond North American contexts. Attention to this process also suggests the need for composition and rhetoric programs to more strongly emphasize learning world languages.

Even without our being fluent in another language, however, there is much

that we can do in our own teaching and research to integrate multilingual-multimodal texts and textual practices, including partnering with speakers of other languages in local and global contexts. Forming partnerships also means working closely with multilingual writers in our classrooms. We might, for instance, integrate multilingual-multimodal texts into our assignments by seeking out assistance from native speakers of other languages to perform rhetorical and situated analyses of everything from cereal boxes to street signs. Incorporating our students' multilingualism into the classroom could help move them from deficit positions by (re)locating them as experts in their own language with knowledge and experience that they can share and contribute to the class. This shift also means moving beyond the linguistic signs and attending to the ways that all semiotic modes coordinate literate activity and are dialogic in their own right. In terms of image, for instance, we might move from Bakhtin's concept of "double voicing" to "double vision," by examining the ways that images are always constructed in response to other images and texts, such as the image of the military commando unit on the homepage of Networkd in response to wider social, cultural, and national contexts.

In addition to locating multilingual-multimodal texts in broader historical contexts that circulate within cultural ecologies, it is important to examine the production, distribution, and reception of these texts in everyday literacy practices. In order to map out this phenomenon, I sketch out a portrait of the literacy practices of a key informant, Barak, who was one of the owners of the company Networkd. Raymond Williams writes that each nation has key words that serve as conceptual metaphors deeply rooted in each individual society. One key word that serves to describe the Israeli character is the metaphor of networking. Israel is a tightly knit society that is based on close networks of people, and this characteristic was evident in Barak's continual cultivation of side projects and connections (including his partnership with me). As he reflected at one of a seemingly endless series of high-tech networking functions, "*ha yisralim yodim networking*" ("the Israelis know how to network"). Indeed, Barak was part of a high-tech community centered around the development of social networking tools. The Web 2.0 community itself was a vast network of meetings, conferences, blogs, presentations, and online sites with events such as Garage Geeks, the Marker Café, the Coils, TWS 2008, Eurekamp, Geek Camp, Media Boom, and more, as the list seemed to continually grow as one site would spin off into another. It is within these dynamic, fluid, and fuzzy networks—composed of an ever changing array of actors, technologies, and spaces—that signs (including English) and symbols were remixed, remediated,

rearticulated, and redesigned. Barak was an active agent co-constituting these spaces in a continual process of knotworking as he orchestrated connections, deals, partnerships, and large-scale events through business cards, cell phones, text messages, emails, social networks, and face-to-face interactions in a mixture of Hebrew and English.

As this description suggests, Barak continually sought out strategies to infiltrate high-tech networks, including through attendance at high-tech “mixers” and establishing himself on high-tech social networking sites (these virtual and physical spaces also “mixed”). One of the principle social networking sites of the high-tech community was called the Marker Café, with what seemed the entire community registering for (and converging on) the site soon after it was established. The first time Barak was introduced to the Café occurred in the Networld meeting room at the behest of his marketing consultants (guns for hire). As the team examined the site on a large-screen computer posted on a wall, an instant message popped up from a user inquiring about the company, “*shalom lax . . . oz ma ze bediuyk Networld ba’am?*” (“Greetings . . . so what exactly is Networld Ltd.?”). With a chat ensuing between the online user and a marketing assistant at a wireless keyboard (the formation of a new “knot”), the conversation in the room continued as frames, alignments, and topics switched back and forth between the chat in progress, side conversations, and other marketing issues at hand (the various topics mixing). Broadly, this brief portrait is intended to capture the links between the virtual and physical spaces, as online interactions became woven into the discussions around the meeting room table. These virtual networks were not separate, self-contained spaces apart from the rest of social life but “continuous with and embedded in other social spaces” (8, Miller and Slater qtd. in Ito). Arguing that the digital revolution is a social and cultural one, Heidi McKee further writes, “Merging technologies may create the conditions for convergence to happen, but it is how people integrate these technologies into their lives, how they create cultures and social networks of use that is the real phenomenon at the heart of convergence” (105). This focus demands increased attention to ways that multilingual-multimodal activities are knotted into lived experiences.

Forming a new “knot,” Barak quickly registered for the Café and became a manager of an online marketing forum where he posted his own blog as a way to enhance his visibility and status in the community. Shaping these tactical decisions on how to market, position, and represent himself—typically formulated in sessions in the Networld meeting room—were wider institutional, cultural, economic, and global forces. Indexing the widespread influence of

America, for instance, it is commonplace to hear Israelis refer to their country as the fifty-first state and on Israeli Independence Day to see American and Israeli flags on cars side by side. These rhetorics naturally filtered into Barak's discourse with frequent references to America, as his alignment with the country was a way to enhance his ethos. For instance, in one blog entry (Figure 2) he posted a commentary on presidential candidate Barack Obama's Internet fundraising campaign as an example of the ways that the Internet could be exploited in the upcoming Israeli elections. Embedded in this entry was a picture of Obama standing before the American and Israeli flags. This image echoed the flags found together on Independence Day. In this manner, we can see the ways that images circulated or converged in everyday literacy practices. In this blog entry Barak further characterized the Israeli political candidates as *behind* America (a common trope) with insufficient foresight or time to plan a comprehensive Internet strategy for the upcoming Israeli election cycle.<sup>10</sup> Not insignificantly, he expressed

the hope that the Israelis would again prove themselves by displaying their trademark penchant for improvisation, resourcefulness, quick-wittedness, and creativity. Embedded in this narrative were tropes bound up in the construc-

tion of national identity echoed on the Networld website (e.g., a small, agile commando unit). These rhetorics furthermore extended to his everyday talk as he frequently dropped the phrase "yalla America" or "let's go America" at the completion of activities (such as reviewing a Web text during a meeting) in reference to a famous comedy sketch about the naive and pervasive belief that things were better in America. This code shifting marked not only transitions from one activity to the next but also broader cultural and linguistic transitions in the society. Through such broad-brush analysis we can begin to glimpse the ways wider sociocultural contexts, specifically in this case the influence of the United States, were deeply knotted into activity and dispersed across far-flung literacy networks. In sum, we might understand Barak as continually networking and "knotworking" through the creative and strategic deployment of multilingual-multimodal literacy practices. It is through this process that languages (primarily Hebrew and English), images, tropes, and symbols of all kinds circulated and converged.

Central to such analyses of literacy practices is attention to the ways that cultural ecologies are knotted into text messages, websites, blogs, emails,

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Figure 2. Blog entry: "Effect of Obama on Upcoming Israeli Election."

chats, and an array of other texts or genre ecologies. As a fine-grained example of this process, I return to the meeting room in which much of the activity at Networkworld took place and a discussion centered on the design of an online social networking tool allowing users to incorporate “enriching” content into their emails, such as quotes, recipes, and so forth. In this meeting, four members of the team (including myself) examined various websites to incorporate into the site as they commented on them, drew on scrap sheets of paper, wrote on a whiteboard, and took written notes on laptops and notepads in a mixture of Hebrew and English. These different objects formed genre ecologies that were often fragile, fleeting, and configured “on the fly.” Attention to the tying and untying of these text, tools, and objects—knotworking—is key to the study of the production, distribution, reception, and representation of multilingual-multimodal texts.

The activity itself was centered on evaluating, filtering, aggregating, and remixing (of images, texts, languages, and symbols), or what Johndan Johnson-Eilola refers to as symbolic-analytic work. Central to this activity was the Marantz computer screen on the wall (indicated in the previous section), and as the images and websites on the screen changed, so too did the topics of discussion, positioning, and alignments of the participants. In this setting, the screen oriented the participants (where to look, how to scroll, what content to click on), and the participants oriented the screen in an ongoing negotiation. The screen, furthermore, coordinated activities in conjunction with a range of other texts and tools through compound mediation (Spinuzzi) or textual coordination (Slattery) with English deeply sedimented into these objects.<sup>11</sup>

It is furthermore the complex tying and untying of texts and tools that



shaped (and were shaped by) the dynamic pathways through which languages, images, sounds, and symbols circulated. For instance, at one point scanning an image of a recipe from a Betty Crocker website with the logo spelled out across the top, Barak proceeded to ask, “*mi zot* Betty Crocker?” (“Who is Betty Crocker?”). In this manner, Betty Crocker entered the conversation as it flowed from the screen and into the room. In this sense, the screen served as a “border crossing” mediating not only the activity in the room but also the boundaries between local and global contexts as languages, images, ideologies, and cultural representations converged. Serving as a contextualization cue (Gumperz), the discussion quickly centered on a debate about what content to import from the Betty Crocker site, how to import it, and even if the content should be imported at all. Taking the position that it would be both ethical and legal to use this information, the co-founder of the start-up Yaniv argued that they would be doing “Betty Crocker” a favor by providing free marketing through distributing its content on their site, as he argued “*hi trsrixa lehadid otanu toda*” (“she needs to thank us”). Particularly relevant is the reference to Betty Crocker as “she.” This social construction shaped the addressivity of the dialogue with “Betty” (as she was often referred to) literally positioned as a participant in the conversation. On the other side of the debate, the programmer Hadara expressed an opposing point of view as she read from a section on the site about copyright entitled “is the Betty Crocker Content free, and are there any restrictions?” In reading this text aloud, Hadara was giving voice to (animating) the Betty Crocker site, and in this way Betty Crocker had a real (embodied) voice in the conversation. In addition, however, Hadara was accenting the text with her own meaning as she emphasized the phrase “for your personal use,” a move that implied her own personal position on the issue. In this manner double voicing (Bakhtin) captures the ways that participants shaped (and were shaped) by the Betty Crocker site, in an ongoing negotiation. In this scenario, wider struggles related to copyright and ownership (international legal regimes) converged. As Alexander articulates: “media convergence needs to be understood not only as a powerful way of manipulating ‘texts’ to create new meanings, but also a site of authorial contestation, particularly as more traditional definitions of composing, authoring, and ownership come under scrutiny, are challenged, and shift in the production of multimedia texts” (“Media” 4).<sup>12</sup>

In fact this scene launched an extended struggle over the nature of the site itself in a debate involving several changes in the participants’ positions, both in their theoretical stances and their physical positioning in the room. Indeed these shifts were inextricably intertwined. Woven into these interac-

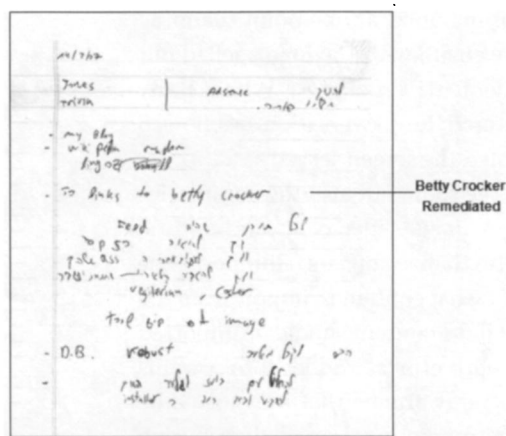


Figure 3. Multilingual notes: Betty Crocker remediated into notepad.

tions, Betty Crocker was resemiotized into oral remarks (primarily in Hebrew), a whiteboard (written as “Betty C”), and Yaniv’s written notes (composed in a mixture of Hebrew and English). The notes (Figure 3) formed part of a “knot” or improvised genre ecology that shaped the remediation of “Betty Crocker.”<sup>13</sup> As the conversation continued, Betty Crocker continued to circulate inside and outside the meeting room across a range of other spaces and places as it became knotted in new genre ecologies, referred to as “Betty Crocker,” “Betty,” and “Betty Crocks.” The remediation of Betty Crocker across texts and talk was bound up in a struggle in which both

“Betty” and the participants were continually repositioned.

Traditionally, the concept of genre ecology has been used to understand the ways that institutional settings shape (and are shaped by) workplace practices, and this example extends this concept by showing how it can be used in a similar fashion to trace global flows of language and culture (i.e., merged with the concept of cultural ecologies). Such tracing is an argument for a return to writing process studies with close attention to multilingual-multimodal activity. Further a response to post-process critiques (Petraglia), this move calls for attention to the ways that texts position the actors and are knotted into wider social, cultural, national, and global ecologies.<sup>14</sup> In this view technologies such as the Internet—as well as an assemblage of other tools—need to be understood as deeply intertwined in activities as opposed to a domain of “cyberian apartness” (Miller and Slater). Composition studies is uniquely situated for studying these intersections across companies, community, and classroom contexts as it moves toward a twenty-first-century multilingual-multimodal framework.

### Re-articulating Composition

Overall this analysis suggests a need for a re-articulation, re-assembly, and remixing of teaching, research, and administration. First and foremost this analysis suggests a return to the study of the writing process as bound up in complex cultural and genre ecologies with writers reconceptualized as “knot-

workers” engaged in a continual process of tying and untying of languages, texts, tropes, narratives, images, sounds, and ideologies distributed across far-flung networks. Drawing on Foucault’s microphysics of power, we might understand these ecologies as structures of distribution, access, and value, or what Jan Blommaert refers to as “literacy regimes.” Key to locating the ways actors are co-constituted by these regimes is Bakhtin’s notion of authoritative discourse with “knotworkers” continually engaged in negotiating centripetal and centrifugal forces.

Second, this move toward multilingual-multimodal composing calls for attention to “convergence culture” or the point at which global scapes converge in local contexts. Useful for locating these points of convergence is the notion of uptake: “uptake is knowledge of what to take up, how, and when: when and why to use a genre, how to select an appropriate genre in relation to another, how to execute uptakes strategically and when to resist expected uptakes, how some genres explicitly cite other genres in their uptake while some do so only implicitly, and so on” (Bawarshi 653). These uptakes or convergence points are sites of struggle involving durable and symbolic tools sedimented with orientations or tendential forces (Johnson-Eilola).

Third, this shift requires renewed attention to space and place and the ways it is co-constituted by literacy practices. While the examples above have foregrounded work in the high-tech environment, similar analyses can be applied to community contexts or the writing classroom. In an EFL or ESL composition classroom, for instance, we might examine the uptake of Western textbooks in local contexts. As Canagarajah argues, teaching methods and textbooks are not neutral, “but ‘constructs’ put together by specific social groups for particular ends on the basis of their social practice and interests” (“Resisting” 104). The influence of such constructs is not a case of totalizing *linguistic imperialism* (Phillipson), with the teachers and students wholly adopting its perspective. Instead such curricula are “double voiced” (Bakhtin). This perspective means tracing the ways such objects are taken up, resisted, and transformed. As part of this analysis, it further calls for attending to the ways the uptakes of classroom curriculum are coordinated through a process of “textual coordination” (Slattery) or “compound mediation” (Spinuzzi) with other languages, texts, tools (blackboards, whiteboards, desks), and ideologies.

Fourth, this move means tracing activities beyond bounded and institutional spaces such as companies and classrooms. This less-bounded approach as I have demonstrated in the high-tech sector is part of the “cultural” (Scott and Longo) turn in technical communication away from a “sometimes narrow

contextual focus on discrete organizational discourse communities” (3). In workplace contexts, for instance, we need to examine the ways writing is shaped by water cooler conversations, lunch time interactions, and a range of other unofficial practices that filter into workplace activities inside and outside the bounded walls of a company. This understanding necessitates attending to the ways that writing (and design) practices are deeply bound up in polycontextuality and the tracing multilingual and multimodal activity across space and time.

Similarly, in the classroom, we might study how textbooks, blackboards, and classroom conversations become knotted into new genre and cultural ecologies (and vice versa) in libraries, homes, emails, Facebook, Twitter, instant messages, text messages, and more. These shifts necessitate attention to the extracurriculum (Gere) bringing “together the writing outside of school and that inside” (Yancey, “Made” 308). Within writing studies, we have seen a recent move toward this less bounded approach: Jenn Fishman et al.’s study of student performances; Paul Prior and Jody Shipka’s study of the literate activities of writers across school, home, and an array of other contexts distributed across space-time (referred to as “laminated chronotopes”); and Kevin Roozen’s fine-grained case studies tracing the intersections between academic and non-academic contexts (“From Journals”; “Journalism”; “Math”). Examining hidden literacies (see also Dyson; Finders; Kamberelis and de la Luna) can be extended to the study of multilingual-multimodal literacy practices.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, remixing writing studies in the twenty-first century calls for an expanded definition of writing itself. Johnson-Eilola and Selber argue that

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remixing is, in fact, a rhetorical act of composing and meaning making. Under this extended definition, we need to concep-

tualize multilingual-multimodal writers as rearticulating, reassembling, and redesigning complex genre and cultural ecologies. Making this shift in our classrooms, we might engage students in activities involving juxtaposition, filtering, selection, and recombining. Incorporating multilingualism into these activities, we might ask multilingual speakers or world language learners to use Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands* as one model of multilingual composing. We can also extend Tom Romano’s multigenre essay asking writers to incorporate multiple languages and design choices. In doing this work, we might ask native English speakers to collaborate with speakers of world languages to design and remix texts (broadly defined) targeted at a range of local and global audiences. Linked to such work could be reflective papers to articulate

(or in Johnson-Eilola's terms *rearticulate*) their linguistic and design decisions. Such activities additionally could offer productive frameworks for collaborations between ESL and composition. We might further seek partnerships with international classrooms and speakers of world languages by having students conduct mini-ethnographies in their own local contexts and cultures and target this research toward international audiences as part of a cross-cultural exchange. Such work would offer students opportunities to imagine global audiences and to receive responses from cross-cultural perspectives. These global partnerships might be developed and sustained through technologies such as online video conferencing. Using technologies, we might furthermore ask our students to study (and implement in our own research designs) multilingual and multimodal composing through the use of screen captures (Geisler and Slattery), digital photos, and digital audio and video recording. In this area, we might follow the lead of Hawisher and Selfe, who are using writing process videos of transnationally connected individuals attempting to record their everyday literate activity (Prior "Writing/Disciplinarity"); their aims are to show how these practices shape—and are shaped by—the global contexts in which they are deployed.

In making such moves, this remixing of composition calls for reconceptualizing teachers, researchers, students, and administrators as "knotworkers" engaged in forming new knots with disciplines, technologies, languages, signs, symbols, spaces, and actors. Critical to this reassembly is the formation of sustainable global partnerships (Starke-Meyerring, Duin, and Palvetzian) with multilingualism conceptualized as one tool in a writer's wider rhetorical repertoire. Min-Zahn Lu defines composition as boundary work. Tracing multilingual-multimodal literacy practices across official and unofficial spaces necessitates crossing disciplinary, geographic, and linguistic boundaries as composition moves into the twenty-first century.

**In making such moves, this remixing of composition calls for reconceptualizing teachers, researchers, students, and administrators as "knotworkers" engaged in forming new knots with disciplines, technologies, languages, signs, symbols, spaces, and actors.**

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## Notes

1. The name of the company and the participants in this study have been changed to protect their identities; this study has received Internal Review Board approval.
2. Min-Zahn Lu also merges research in world Englishes with African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Native American studies.
3. Clay Spinuzzi uses genre ecologies to examine micro-, meso-, and macroscopic levels of activity within institutional contexts. In his work, the contradictions at one scope (e.g., macro-institutional policies) are linked to breakdowns at another (e.g., micro-incorrect key stroke). This research extends the application of genre ecologies to show the ways they are linked not only to institutional contexts but also to cultural, national, and global contexts. In addition, this research shows how the concept can be extended to the study of multilingualism and the tracing of linguistic and cultural flows.
4. This process has been variously referred to by scholars as compound mediation (Spinuzzi), textual coordination (Slattery), and environmental selection and structuring practices (Prior and Shipka).
5. The term *remediation* is used instead of *circulation*, which may mistakenly imply billiard balls rolling across a table (Agha); remediation points to friction, struggle, and transformation.
6. I am indebted to David Sheridan for helping to clarify the focus of writers as “knotworkers.”
7. Jonathan Alexander and Heidi McKee extend the application of *convergence*, recently taken up in computers and composition, beyond media to a range of spaces at local, national, and global levels. McKee rightly cautions that the term *convergence* itself is potentially misleading as it may imply a “singularity,” and feels it is more accurate to say, “we are living in an age of convergences” (“Ethical” 119).
8. I wish to emphasize that this national narrative is from an emic perspective (how Israelis tell their own history). Indeed, revisionist Israeli historians (Morris) have argued that the Israeli army was in many key ways superior and better organized than the Arab armies in the 1948 War of Independence.
9. Reading this site as intertext, i.e., a response to a sea of other texts (Bazerman), offers a framework for conceptualizing such objects as complex assemblages of tropes, ideologies, languages, images. Useful for framing such analyses is a description of intertext from Vincent Leitch: “The text is not a unified object, but a set of relations with other texts. Its system of language, its grammar, its lexicon, drag along numerous bits and pieces—traces—of history so that the text resembles a Cultural Salvation Army Outlet with unaccountable collections of incompatible ideas, beliefs, and sources” (qtd. in Porter 59).

10. This positioning of Israel relative to the United States was a theme that Barak reiterated at other points, such as in another blog post titled *America adeyin le-faneyu* (America Is Still Ahead of Us) about Israeli venture capitalists still having “a lot to learn” about adopting Web 2.0 principles.

11. While I lack space to fully develop this point, it is important to note that wider national tropes and narratives were orienting the uptake of the tools and technologies. See Ito et. al. (“Personal”) for a similar framing to analyze the ways cell phone communication in Japan is bound up in the concept of *keitai*.

12. Making a similar point, Johnson-Eilola and Selber note that remixing “inhabits a contested terrain of creativity, intellectual property, authorship, corporate ownership, and power” (393).

13. The fact Yaniv’s private notes were in English—and self-talk as he uttered “Fifty links of Betty Crocker” while writing this phrase down—suggests the extent to which English was embedded in his high-tech *habitus*.

14. Jonathan Alexander (“Digital Youth” 371) similarly argues for attention to both process and ecology.

15. Arguing for attention to unofficial literacy practices that locate writing as one tool in a wider rhetorical repertoire, Cynthia Selfe argues, “We need to better understand the importance that students attach to composing, exchanging, and interpreting new and different kinds of texts that help them make sense of their experience and lives” (642). Within multilingual studies, Canagarajah (“Place”) similarly contends: “it is outside the classroom that students seem to develop communicative competence and negotiation of strategies for ‘real world’ needs of multilingualism” (592).

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