

Writing Spaces

Assignments & Activities Archive

Map-Making and Storytelling

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Overview

Transnational, multilingual students have extensive experiences negotiating language difference by translating, translanguaging, and drawing from their literacy and rhetorical resources (Canagarajah). Further, by traversing physical and digital borders, these students habitually engage in the transnational flow of ideas and information, which gives them access to a wealth of information and literacy resources, both from other places and from the border, i.e., where meaning emerges (Anzaldúa). However, transnational students don't always recognize their translingual repertoires and vast knowledges as assets; often, indeed, they view their language difference as an obstacle or as something that needs fixing (Horner et al.).

In this activity, students create maps that visualize and narrate their movements across space and time. The goal is for students to develop awareness of and reflect on the many communicative, literacy, and rhetorical resources they draw from in different contexts of their lives and the complexity and versatility of the communication. The emphasis on spatial, temporal, and multimodal aspects in the map-making is to visualize and visibilize the shifting and complex literacy practices transnational, multilingual individuals participate in. The collaborative component supports community-building and understanding of their classmates' lived experiences. The storytelling aspect not only draws students' to their rich stories; it also highlights that all stories exist in rhetorical situations. For example, as students recall specific stories while doing this activity and they choose to share or not share them with their classmates and teacher in this particular place and time and situated in a specific material and discursive ecology.

Time Commitment

Part I and II each takes 30-45 minutes. Part II is due a week after the last in-class activity.

Materials

Laptop, internet connection, and Google Maps are needed.

Activity Process

Part I: Individual Creation

- Students receive an overall description of the activity: “In this activity, you will be working on maps that visualize and narrate your movements across space and time. We will use the activity to reflect on how you all communicate with different people and different groups as you move through our lives. You will reflect on how you use language and other communication strategies when you communicate and think about what causes these changes as you move across contexts of your life.”
- To get started, students open Google Maps on google.com/maps. Click “Create a new map”. In the top left, where it says “Untitled map”, they can click to edit and give their map a name. Next, in the middle under the search, they can click “add marker” to drop a pin. They can also click “draw a line” to show connections between locations. Drop pins at all the significant physical places they move through on a regular basis in their current life where key social, professional, academic, and other parts of their life unfold. This should be as granular as possible. When they drop a pin, note the name of the place, what they do there, what people they engage with and how they use language broadly speaking. Language includes (a named language, a variation,

a style, a set of symbols, pictures, music etc.)

- Next, once students have pinned all the physical places they move through, add digital spaces: this can be phone calls, virtual meetings, social media, media, music, videogame buddies etc. Again, students are instructed to note the name of the place, what they do there, what people they engage with and how they use language in the broadest sense.
- In this optional step 3, if time permits, students continue adding to their map by tracing their movements back over time, year by year, thereby repeating the first two steps.
- Finally, students reflect on what this map they have created represents to them? What story/ies does it tell about them?

Part II: Collaborative Creation

- Students are instructed move into groups and share their maps. First, they take another look their own map and make some choices about how they want to talk about it to and the stories it tells their group members.
- Next, students present their map to each other and discuss the similarities and differences in their communication journeys.
- Students, then, individually, write an observation in their notebook about their response to their group members' maps and stories. They are also asked to reflect on how the verbal storytelling guided their understanding of their group members' maps. At this point, they can also add to their own map if they realize they had missed anything.
- Next, the groups come back together and start a new collaborative map in the Google app. They are instructed to assign a different color to each group member's pin, by

clicking the paint can icon. Then they all drop their pins from their individual maps, and they start to notice how their pins and communicative situations intersect and/or take different routes.

- In a final reflection, students write an observation about what they believe the group's collective story tells. They share their observations with each other and note any differences in their observations.

Part III: Post-activity writing

- In a 300-400-word reflection, they address the following questions:
 1. Describe the experience of creating this map and reflecting on the many communicative situations they move through and have moved through in their lives.
 2. Reflect on the experience telling and listening to each other's stories about their maps. How did the multimodal storytelling shape the way they told their own story and how they understood their group members' stories? They are asked to share a few observations from class about their group members' stories and their collective story once they laid their maps on top of each other.
- A possible extension of this activity is that students generate stories about their resources, practices, and journeys across borders for selected audiences. This optional writing activity can also invite students to play with genre and multimodality.

Learning Outcomes

Students engaging in this activity/assignment will:

- Develop awareness of the communicative, literacy, and rhetorical resources they draw from in different contexts of their lives
- Re-see these resources as assets
- Create collaborative maps with other students to gain awareness of similarities and differences in others' resources, practices, and experiences
- Think rhetorically about sharing the stories about their own resources, practices, and journeys across borders

Learning Accommodations

- The teacher models the creation of the Google Map on a shared screen/projector to ensure students understand the steps in the map creation process. Written instructions are available alongside the verbal instructions.
- For students who prefer analog map-creation, world maps can be printed out and distributed. Color markers can be provided as well as Post-its on which students can use to add notes and observations about the sites of communication.

Works Cited

- Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderland: the New Mestiza = La Frontera*. Fourth edition, twenty-fifth anniversary, Aunt Lute Books, 2012.
- Canagarajah, Suresh. *Translingual Practice: Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

Horner, Bruce, Min-Zhan Lu, Jacqueline Jones Royster, and John Trimbur. "Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach." *College English*, vol. 73, no. 3, January 2011, pp. 303-321.