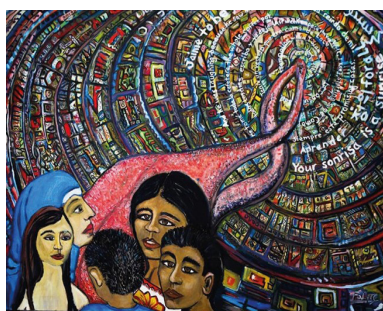


## BOOK REVIEW



**TRANSNATIONAL LITERACY  
AUTOBIOGRAPHIES AS  
TRANSLINGUAL WRITING**

Suresh Canagarajah

ROUTLEDGE

<b>Title:</b>	Transnational Literacy Autobiographies as Translingual Writing
<b>Authors:</b>	Suresh Canagarajah
<b>Publisher:</b>	Routledge
<b>Year:</b>	2019
<b>No. of pages:</b>	281
<b>ISBN:</b>	0367201836
<b>Reviewers:</b>	ADCHARAWAN BURIPAKDI & THIDAPORN JUMPAKATE, <i>Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand</i>

*Transnational Literacy Autobiographies as Translingual Writing* written by Suresh Canagarajah is a timely, thought-provoking and ground-breaking book that pushes for and justifies the use of literacy autobiographies (henceforth, LAs) as effective tools in second language (L2) education and research. A literacy autobiography is a personal narrative reflecting on how one's experiences of spoken and written words. Aimed at applied linguistics scholars and enthusiasts, the author intends to educate the audience on the complex nuances of LAs and demonstrate their effectiveness as a translingual writing tool in classroom settings through real-world samples. Seventeen chapters are divided into two parts in this book. Part I (Chapters 1-6) situates the theoretical and pedagogical orientation of LAs. Essentially, it acts as a guideline for English educators and practitioners to apply this teaching approach to transnational and translingual writing in their classrooms, with a focus on the exchange of linguistic repertoires and 'code-meshing' (the use of localized English and other types or dialects of English in a formal assignment). While Part II (Chapters 7-17) consists of LAs produced by international students over the duration of their coursework. Appendices also complement greatly to research and pedagogy in this area.

Chapter 1 first attempts to connect the author's own LA with transnational and translingual realities intertwined with teachers. Canagarajah emphasizes the significance of LA on literacy/discourse development since it allows writers to recall, discuss and verbalize their own past events. He reveals how his own LA helped him "develop a more resistant and critical disposition, open to appropriating competing discourses creatively for his own voice, rooted in his preferred cultural and linguistic traditions" (p.20). To this point, he further insinuates that LAs can help international students, especially Asian students who are not familiar with publicizing their personal lives and sometimes embarrassing memories, to feel more comfortable about their literacies by reflecting on their learning experiences. Plus, LAs also encourage creative and arousing stories from students as they report on their personal thoughts. Readers will witness the benefits of LAs in this chapter, as well as the robust relationship between LAs and diverse

disciplines such as social sciences, psychology, and linguistics.

Chapter 2 delves deeper into details, addressing research methodology and analytical tools. Canagarajah intensively describes methodological issues in the analysis of LAs. He begins with a challenge in applying LAs to pedagogical practices, “Teachers don’t always describe the pedagogical activities or classroom conditions that shape the LAs of their students” (p. 37). Thus, the author provides useful course descriptions, course objectives, sample syllabi as well as activities for readers who are teachers in Appendices 1 and 2. To analyze the production of LAs, *narrative analysis* is required since LA production is considered as a contextualized process. Contexts then are vital for understanding LAs. Both readers and scholars need to know how to analyze narrative writings by exploring the circumstances that form the setting, statement, or idea. Narrative analysis would then be applied to analyse different types of contexts in LAs, through namely, their rhetorical context, production context, and material context.

Chapter 3 is a prominent chapter in a way that it focuses more on theories and analyses of the emergence of the translingual subject. Canagarajah indicates that ideologies construct semiotic and symbolic resources in L2 writing of literacy autobiographies. Desire, alienation, and subject-in-process are some of the trajectories of emergence shown in students’ work from the author’s coursework. One eminent strength of this chapter is the excerpts of his international students’ works along with the description of how these trajectories are stated in the writings. Interestingly, the author points out that native speakers also face conflicts and struggles like non-native English writers while writing their own LAs. As a result, it is revealed that monolingual or native speakers who speak or write only in English also adopt code-meshing in their writing, based on their moods and tones (p. 54).

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 respectively explore negotiation strategies in transnational literacy, dispositions of transnational literacy, and self-reflection from the author on what can be transferred from LAs. These three chapters are initiated by an authentic LA written by Canagarajah himself. In Chapter 4, the author examines the way texts gain meaning in contexts of mobility, contact, and diversity. Then, he goes straight to the core concept of the chapter, “negotiation strategies” (p. 75) which help both readers and writers to negotiate meanings of the texts. Chapter 5 discusses the dispositions prevalent in transnational literacy, otherwise defined as the process of one’s socialization and everyday life. “Dispositions can be shaped by material and social structures that frame one’s social life” (p.99). Thus, in other words, dispositions refer to the social structures that surround the LAs’ writers. Chapter 6 revisits an excerpt from Canagarajah’s own LA. This chapter is dedicated as a self-reflection on what the author has gained from LAs’ application. So, readers will have a chance to capture Canagarajah’s understandings of his own writing. At the end of Part I, a thank-you letter from his students who experienced writing LAs in a L2 writing course forms a strong linkage between Parts I and II and would definitely intrigue readers in seeing the significance of LAs as a pedagogical tool.

If Part I constitutes a response to theories of LAs, then Part II is the practice. This section presents a collection of LAs, all written by Canagarajah’s international students. Drawn from a second language literacy course work, Chapters 7-17 serve as a showcase of the role authentic

LAs play in literacy development. Through these eleven chapters, multilingual college students, among whom are of Korean, American, and Chinese descent, wrote diverse, intriguing, and compelling stories. These LAs take the readers through the journey of the writers. These narratives center around the trajectory of writers' identities and struggle over the course of translingual writings as being both language learners and teachers. The highlight of each chapter is how the author captures their mobility from their lived experiences e.g., a cross between L1 and L2, the shuttling between the home and school, street and academic literacy, and family and social institutions. Over this mobility, the writers reflected on their ideologies while developing, negotiating, appropriating their translingual discourses in a hybrid and fluid way. The practice includes English, writers' L1, poetry, images, and scholarly citations. These can be of use for classroom materials. This original organization of the book might satisfy experienced readers familiar with LAs. However, to serve practical purposes, the book also has a wide readership and is especially worth reading for novice or early career educators, considering that the author synthesizes or inserts his analysis at the end of each student's LA in each chapter.

Overall, the author justifies the strong theoretical orientation behind the use of LAs in English classrooms. Hence, scholars and practitioners who are intrigued by using LAs as a teaching or research tool will find this book valuable. This book also advocates for the use of LAs by both experienced and novice English educators on the common ground of promoting storytelling, imagination, and writer identity. Readers can also appreciate the examples from a variety of writers with diverse cultural backgrounds. Essentially, this book demonstrates that there is a place for using literacy autobiographies both in teaching and research as illustrated in this book via the analytic strategies adopted in L2 writing and teaching. It is important to promote LAs as a site of empowering language learners, personal narratives, and imaginative writing. As such, LAs deserve to have a place in both curriculum and policy in literacy education.

## THE REVIEWERS

**Adcharawan Buripakdi** is an assistant professor at School of Foreign Languages, Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand. Her research interests include L2 pedagogy, World Englishes and postcolonial Englishes, L2 writing, and Language and identity. She is co-editor of *Situating Moral and Cultural Values in ELT Materials: The Southeast Asian Context* (2018, Springer, London)  
[adcharawan@sut.ac.th](mailto:adcharawan@sut.ac.th)

**Thidaporn Jumpakate** is an English lecturer at Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand. She received her M.A. in Applied Linguistics for English Language Teaching from King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Thailand. Her research interests include internationalization, English language teaching and intercultural communication.  
[thidaporn.j@sut.ac.th](mailto:thidaporn.j@sut.ac.th)