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Translation Moments at Knightly Latino News

Writing for Knightly Latino is not about writing in Spanish. It’s not about writing in English. It’s about living all the time in both worlds and knowing where to go in the moment.

—Natalie, Knightly Latino News

Using the framework of A Revised Rhetoric of Translation discussed in chapter 4 and the analytical units of translation moments introduced in chapter 1, I here illustrate the multilingual and multimodal translation practices of student translators and bilingual news broadcasters at Knightly Latino News (KLN), a bilingual, student-run organization in news broadcasting, located at the University of Central Florida (UCF) in Orlando. Students in this organization create and translate news stories published on the student-run English network Knightly News from English to Spanish, for their Latinx community. To present the translation work that takes place at KLN, I first provide some background and contextual information about this organization and its student translators. I then share a story that illustrates the relationship building that made this collaboration possible. Finally, using the framework of A Revised Rhetoric of Translation, I further discuss multilingual/multimodal translation practices as they were enacted by student translators at KLN. I thread conversations in multilingual/multimodal communication through this discussion, highlighting how translation moments can inform the analysis of multilingual communicative practices.
Background on KLN

I began working with KLN when I was introduced to the director of the organization, Katie Coronado, during my faculty orientation at UCF. Katie, an instructor at UCF and an immigrant from Cuba with decades of experience in the field of news broadcasting, started KLN because she wanted to give bilingual Latinx students at UCF the opportunity to work in both Spanish and English news networks. As a faculty member in the Nicholson School of Communication (where KLN is housed), Katie built this organization to help her students leverage their linguistic and cultural resources as they go into industry, where some have acquired jobs at Univision, Telemundo, and several other Latinx news networks.

One of the many things that inspired me to work with KLN is the location of the school that houses this program. UCF, where I earned my...
BA and MA degrees before working as a full-time writing instructor from 2011 to 2013, is the second largest university (based on student population) in the United States. With over sixty thousand students, this university is home to thousands of students from all over the United States and abroad. Hosting a Latinx student population of 21.5 percent, UCF became listed by the federal government as a Hispanic-serving institution in 2016. Latinx students at UCF are primarily children of immigrant parents from South and Central America as well as children from Puerto Rican descent.

Together, Spanish-speaking UCF students represent dozens of different nations and language variations. In turn, to “speak Spanish” at UCF can mean a wide range of different things—different norms, variations, and levels of linguistic experience and expertise. Having learned a bit about the Latinx population at UCF through my previous experiences, I know that many of the Spanish-speaking students at UCF are full-time students with full-time employment outside of the university. In fact, all of the students working at KLN during my data collection period had other jobs and internships outside of the university (at news stations, banks, grocery stores, and restaurants) and were considered at least partial financial contributors to their households. Hence, for many of the students in this organization, the decision to volunteer for after-school activities is difficult, requiring them to manage already overwhelming work and school schedules.

I mention all of these factors to introduce KLN because context is important when considering the linguistic practices of any population. The translation work taking place at KLN is a product of cultural, economic, and social negotiation, as participants navigate their cultural and linguistic experiences while also juggling several academic and economic pressures. These factors all come into play in the translation process, when linguistic adaptations and the accuracy of these adaptations rely on the experiences and expertise of the translators and their communities of practice. Thus, translation work at KLN illustrates the three primary pillars of A Revised Rhetoric of Translation (explained in chapter 4), helping us understand translation as a situated practice that requires rhetorical movement across languages, modalities, and cultures.

I began formally collecting data with KLN in 2013, during the first year of my PhD program at Michigan State University. I was experiencing my own transitions as I adapted to life in Michigan, so visits to the KLN studio were a sort of homecoming for me. Because I grew up in similar ways to the students at KLN, my interactions with these participants were not founded on the typical participant-researcher binary. While I had not met
any of my participants before collecting data for this project (since the students at KLN change every couple of years), forming relationships with these students was the most important and most rewarding aspect of this project.

To introduce translation at KLN, particularly through the framework of A Revised Rhetoric of Translation, I share the following excerpt from one of the journal entries I wrote after my initial meeting with KLN students during the fall of 2013. I wrote this entry on the plane ride home after the meeting, which was the first time I returned to UCF after moving to Michigan (hence the title of the entry, “Coming Home”). I present this entry both to introduce my participants at KLN and to provide some insights into the relationships that later fueled my methods and methodologies for working with this community.

This journal entry illustrates an early development of A Revised Rhetoric of Translation, showcasing how I came to understand the practice of translation as culturally situated (pillar 1), cyclical (pillar 2), and creative (pillar 3) and as best understood in situated rhetorical contexts. As you read the story, notice the discussions of language and brief linguistic shifts that take place (e.g., movements from English to Spanish) and how these shifts are prompted by other material factors (e.g., the comfort level among students and myself, the setup of the room, and the sharing of personal experiences). All of these elements ground the rhetorical work of translation and play critical roles in my analysis of translation moments with this organization.

Gonzales Journal Entry, 15 October 2013: “Coming Home”

I walked into the conference room where my first meeting with Knightly Latino students would take place, armed with bags full of snacks and an overly active mind that kept racing. I knew from the beginning that this place felt like home. As an immigrant from Bolivia who grew up in Florida, I know what it’s like to commute to school every day after working long hours to support yourself and your family.

Unlike most other meetings I attend, I knew that my best prep for this meeting would be to simply sit and share—to listen to and tell stories. As I continued setting up, a young woman walked into the room, eyes tired but bright, smile shining at the sight of sandwiches, wearing a sweatshirt and flip-flops, with her hair put up in a bun ten seconds before leaving the house. I knew this girl, without introductions. I had been this girl, and in many ways, I’m still this girl (though flip-flops do not work in Michigan).
“Hi miss, are you the one here to talk to us?” she said.
“Yep, come on in and get some food. I’m Laura, by the way.”
“I’m Ana. Hey do you need help moving the tables? I can help.”
“Sure, thanks,” I said, hoping she would be more spatially aware than I am and therefore able to make sense of how to best rearrange the tables in the room.

After Ana and I rearranged the room, got our sandwiches, and continued chatting, more students walked in the room—all smiling, all doubtful but welcoming, all tired and happy to see sandwiches.

Don’t get me wrong, I had a PowerPoint (I always do), with maps, diagrams, and numbers. But as we sat around those oddly arranged desks and tables and looked at each other, a sense of comfort came over the room that I couldn’t break by pulling up any slides.

We sat.
We ate sandwiches.
We introduced each other—not with the typical “My name is ——, and my major is ——,” but, admittedly following my lead, with “My name is ——, and I’m here because ——.”
“My name is Laura, and I’m here because I know you do cool things and I want to learn from you—also because it’s warm here and because my heart is in Florida with UCF students.”
“Hey, my name is Ana, and I’m here because it’s my only day off work so I come to campus and do as much as I can.”
“Hi, my name is Natalie, and I’m here because Katie told me you want to work with us and she said you’re bringing lunch.”
“Hola, me llamo Albert, and I’m here porque, ¿porque no? My friends are here.”
“Well, thanks for coming. I really appreciate you taking the time out of what I know is a busy day to be here. Like Katie may have mentioned, I’m here because I’m hoping to work with you. Katie told me about the incredible work you do with Knightly Latino, and I would love to learn more about what you do for the group. But before I tell you about any of that, I want to tell you a long-winded story about why I’m really here. It’s mostly because of a grudge I started to have in fifth grade.
“No, I’m serious. Fifth grade.
“In fifth grade, I was about to graduate from Bonneville Elementary School right down the road, by Lake Picket Road. Any of you go to Bonneville? Yeah? Guess I’m not that old yet.
“Anyway, in fifth grade, I asked my teacher, Ms. Weiss, to recommend me for advanced language arts in Middle School, partly because I had an A
in English, but mostly because my best friends Michelle and Melissa were going into advanced language arts and I wanted to be in the same class as them. You know how it is in middle school—your friends are your lifeline.

Despite my current A in language arts, Ms. Weiss said she wouldn’t recommend me for advanced language arts in middle school, because I was ‘special.’ She learned from her colleague, Ms. Dupuy, whom I had in third grade, that I had been in ESOL for two years before coming into her fifth-grade class. She told me that she learned English is not my first language and that advanced language arts is for people who learned English first.

On that day, I went home and told mi papi that Ms. Weiss said I couldn’t go to advanced language arts in middle school, so I wasn’t going to be in the class with Michelle and Melissa. I also told him that I didn’t think it was fair—partly because nothing is fair when you’re in fifth grade, but also because I thought my English could never be good enough if people kept knowing that I speak Spanish as my first language. I had to hide that. I told him, ‘I have to hide my Spanish and pretend I don’t know it. Then I can go to college and major in English and teach new students and tell them they don’t have to speak English first to be advanced.’ Yep, I was a pretty vengeful fifth grader. And not much has changed.”

As Ana, Natalie, Albert, and the other students from Knightly Latino listened, I knew we were connecting. There were the familiar nods and hmms and ughs I typically hear from people who not only sympathize with my story but also relate to it—it’s their story as much as it’s mine.

“So when I tell you I’m here because of a grudge, I’m not lying,” I continued.

“But also, as I’m sure you can imagine, Ms. Weiss isn’t the only one I have a grudge against. I also hold a grudge against people who say students who speak languages other than English are less smart. I hold a grudge against the faculty members who complain about international or immigrant students’ ‘struggles’ in the classroom. I hold a grudge against people who say we need ‘help’ to learn, when really they just need help to listen.

“I want to be a professor. They say it’s a professor’s job to ‘build knowledge’ about their very specific area of study. I’m here because I want to build knowledge about how smart, creative, and resourceful we are. But I’m not here to study you. I’m really here to listen to you and to share your ideas with others when, where, and if you think it might be useful.”

We talked about methods. We talked about how to visualize translation through screencasts and about empirical methodologies commonly employed in writing studies and in technical communication. We talked
about research as collaborative practice, and we decided to build knowledge together. This is the most exciting work I’ve ever done, with the best lessons I’ve ever learned.

As we continued planning what now (to my joy) became our project, one student, Janisa, looked up and said, “Yo quiero decir algo” (I want to say something).

“You know how you were talking about ESOL? I just wanna say that I feel you. Like, when you say a grudge, I know what you mean. ‘Cause, like, I was in ESOL in high school, and they would keep you in the same class as everyone else but then give you an extra thirty minutes or something on your tests. And it’s nice and everything, and I would always take the extra thirty minutes to read, but I always thought I was stupid because everyone else would be done earlier. Then I got to college, and I’m not in ESOL, but I’m in these big classes. They take the thirty extra minutes away, but then a teacher will give everyone, like, four hours for a test, and everyone will still leave before me. I always take the whole four hours, and I still somehow feel stupid for taking longer than other people. Like, my grades are good, but I feel stupid because I was told the slow kids need the extra thirty minutes. So I’m like, am I taking more time because my English is still not good—like, is that what that means?”

As Janisa told this story, Natalie was nodding incessantly, saying, “Yeah, exactly. Yup.” Then Natalie added, “You know, like, we’re always questioning, Is my English ‘good’? Is my Spanish ‘good’? I don’t know about y’all but when I write in Spanish, I use the dictionary and Google just as much if not more than when I write in English, ‘cause I don’t practice writing in Spanish that much. So I guess what I would wanna show in this project is that writing for Knightly Latino is not about writing in Spanish. It’s not about writing in English. It’s about living all the time in both worlds and knowing where to go in the moment, figuring out how you can say your ideas to the people you’re trying to inform in the way that will be best for them, whatever it takes—English, Spanish, Spanglish, Google, whatever it takes to inform our people.”

Since the 2013 meeting described in the preceding journal entry, Natalie’s comment regarding translation as a practice that requires multilingual communicators to live “in both [Spanish- and English-speaking] worlds” and to make rhetorical decisions about “where to go in the moment” using “whatever it takes” has resonated with me throughout my work both with KLN and with other community organizations that practice translation. This practice of moving “between worlds” while simulta-
neously transforming information across languages reflects all three pillars of A Revised Rhetoric of Translation, allowing us to see the rhetorical practices and situated elements of translation as cultural, cyclical, and creative activities that echo contemporary definitions of multilingual/multimodal communication. In the sections that follow, I provide specific examples of how multimodal elements are used in translation moments in the activities of the translators at KLN. In addition, I continue demonstrating that a multimodal analysis of translation moments allows us to understand how language transformation encompasses the deployment of visual, embodied, and digital elements.

Multimodality in Translation at KLN

As other scholars have noted (e.g., Ball, Arola, and Sheppard; Banks; McKee and DeVoss; Selfe; Shipka), multimodal composition, at least in contemporary models, is not about a specific tool or technology but about the importance and rhetorical ability to move between and across tools, technologies, and other semiotic resources and practices to make meaning for and with different audiences. Effective multimodal communication is not about mastering a particular digital platform but about figuring out which combination of platforms and tools within those platforms most successfully meets the needs of a particular audience at a particular moment in time. In essence, then, multimodal communication is about the ability to “go” where your audience needs you to “go in the moment,” about figuring out how to help ideas move across “worlds” or contexts, and about using and leveraging the appropriate tools and technologies needed to make these transitions in situated instances.

A video montage is available (https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9952377.cmp.2) that serves as an additional introduction to how participants at KLN navigate among “worlds” (e.g., languages, technologies, and cultures) through their experiences translating news stories for their communities. As you watch the video, notice both what participants are saying and how their bodies are moving in their interactions with each other and with me as their interviewer. Note particularly how participants’ body language shifts as they speak in Spanish, English, or a combination of the two languages (i.e., Spanglish). This video includes clips from several meetings that I recorded in the KLN office, as well as clips from artifact-based interviews with participants and with Katie, the director of KLN.
As evidenced in the video montage, translation at KLN is an everyday cultural practice—taking place at every meeting, every interaction, and every story and linking back to the individual histories of specific participants while simultaneously reflecting the identities and goals that tie the community together. In line with the first pillar of A Revised Rhetoric of Translation, the translation moments I encountered at KLN frequently led to culturally situated stories regarding participants’ backgrounds and histories. For example, approximately twenty-six seconds into the introduction video mentioned above, a participant, Ana, discusses why she decided to pitch her story in English (rather than Spanish) during that day’s meeting. As she explains her decision, Ana tells a story about her early experiences in elementary school, stating, “I was raised speaking Spanish, but the [education] system was designed to, instead of helping me embrace my first language, to tell me, ‘No, we don’t do that here. We don’t speak that language here.’”

As she continues her story, Ana shares the internal dialogue that occurred when she thought of Spanish at a young age: “All I could hear is ‘No, we don’t do that here.’” When she would try to speak Spanish in her classroom or to use Spanish when words in English were not readily available, Ana’s teachers would reprimand her, telling her, “No, that language is not acceptable here.” For this reason, now that she is in college, she does not feel as comfortable communicating in Spanish as she does in English, primarily because she worked so hard as a child to “get rid of” her Spanish use.

Translation moments such as the ones exhibited by Ana took place repeatedly during the KLN meetings I attended. As KLN members share knowledge with each other and plan for future events as a community, they have to consider not only which languages will be comfortable for their audiences but also which languages the translators themselves feel confident using. As Juan Guerra explains (“Cultivating”), the movement between languages is a rhetorical choice for multilingual speakers, one that is often influenced by cultural histories and power structures. For some students, losing confidence in their heritage languages comes as a result of the educational system that they experienced, one that consistently favors the use of normed standardized American English. Now that the movement between languages is more accepted within mainstream US classrooms, students like Ana are struggling to implement their heritage languages into their practices. Although programs like KLN encourage and even require the use of Spanish, some students who have spent many years in English-dominant spaces struggle to regain expertise in
their heritage languages. This causes them to experience more translation moments, both as they translate from their heritage languages into English and vice versa.

In another translation moment exhibited in my introduction video, Katie, the director of KLN, discusses the purposes and history of KLN, during an interview with me. At about 0:52 in the video, Katie pauses as she begins to think about how to answer the question “What is your goal for students working at KLN?” During this pause, which lasts from 0:55 to 1:05, Katie stays silent, trying to figure out how to word her answer. At approximately 1:06, Katie admits, “I think I’m thinking in Spanish.” At this point, I tell her, “You can talk in Spanish,” and Katie’s face brightens up. Her eyebrows move up, and she excitedly says, “I can? Ok.” No more than three seconds later, Katie goes on to give an elaborate response to my interview question, explaining how KLN provides opportunities for students to connect with both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking audiences across the world.

Figure 6 presents a multimodal time map with images illustrating still shots from approximately one minute of the video’s interaction between Katie and myself, where Katie initially struggles to answer my question in English, realizes she can answer in Spanish, and then continues to provide her response. The figure allows us to pay close attention to the transitions Katie was experiencing during this brief translation moment. In the beginning frame on the left-hand side, Katie’s lips are scrunched and her eyes are looking up, as she deliberates an approach to my question. The second frame shows the moment after Katie reluctantly admits, “I think I’m thinking in Spanish.” You can almost see shame in her face; her eyes turn, and her teeth become slightly exposed as she gently grinds them. After I say, “You can talk in Spanish,” Katie’s face lights up, her eyebrows lifting and her eyes broadening, as shown in the third frame of figure 6. In the fourth frame, Katie takes a moment to collect her thoughts, her lips coming together to frame her pensive expression. Lastly, as evidenced in the video clip and in the last frame of figure 6, Katie moves her shoulders to help her sit up straight, as she looks directly into the camera and begins to speak in a fluent, confident Spanish, explaining exactly what she could not express in English alone. In this way, for the last remaining seconds of this interaction, Katie speaks consistently, using broad hand gestures and looking confidently at me (her audience), as she proudly describes the work of KLN.

For Katie, negotiating the translation moment illustrated in figure 6 encompassed multimodal interactions in that it required the layering of
linguistic codes in both Spanish and English. To answer my question about her goal for students working at KLN, Katie had to decide on an answer in her mind and then decide how she could present the answer to me as her audience. Much like many academic spaces in the United States, Katie initially perceived this interaction to be limited to the constraints of the English language, causing Katie to pause and momentarily lose confidence in her answer, perhaps recalling previous experiences of being shamed when using Spanish, in the same way that her students recall these experiences during the conversations depicted in the introduction video.

Upon being told that this interaction was not constrained to English alone, however, Katie was able to eloquently present her answer, using multimodal resources (in this case, through her confident stance and hand gestures) to firmly make a case for the value of KLN and the future of her students. In this case, multimodal elements were brought into Katie's translation moment, both through her gesturing and through her movement between English and Spanish. Throughout the entire interaction, the way that Katie used language and the rhetorical choices she made in her language use were tied both to her own cultural background and to her
goals as the leader and representative of the KLN community. Katie wanted to represent herself and her language abilities in the video while simultaneously discussing the goals and motivations of KLN as a whole. Understanding Katie’s response to my question required acknowledgment of Katie’s linguistic strengths as well as of her linguistic history and culture-specific experiences as an immigrant in the United States who learned English as a second language.

Like many multilingual students who do not identify English as their strongest language for every rhetorical situation, Katie was never lacking in an answer to my question. Indeed, she did not say, “I don’t know how to answer that question,” but instead reluctantly admitted, “I think I’m thinking in Spanish.” The distinction between thinking in one language and speaking or writing in another language was common among all participants at KLN, perhaps signaling the rhetorical work that individuals undertake as they translate their ideas across modes and modalities. In this particular instance, without making the assertion “You can talk in Spanish” in our conversation, I could have very easily assumed that Katie did not have an answer and/or that she was not prepared to describe her own goals and investments in the students at KLN. Instead, Katie was simply experiencing some hesitance to translating her ideas successfully, even though these ideas were effectively crafted and presented in Spanish. For this reason, as we continue enacting A Revised Rhetoric of Translation, linking linguistic diversity to culture and history, it is important to open up the possibility for composing in our classrooms and workplaces by emphasizing the fact that, should they choose to, students and professionals can both think and communicate in codes and languages outside of the normed SWE.

Rather than assuming that students and professionals cannot answer our questions, we should remain open to the possibility that students are merely answering questions in a language other than English, and we should make space for these rhetorical practices whenever possible (Guerra, “Cultivating”; Williams and Pimentel). Our communicative practices are never separate from our cultural histories and our lived experiences, and the motivation for communication can often be tied back to our communities of practice, particularly for multilingual communities of color who fight adversity to move forward in the English-dominant United States (Williams and Pimentel). Understanding translation practices (and composing practices more broadly) through the first pillar of A Revised Rhetoric of Translation (both at KLN and in other spaces) can help us intentionally link verbal and written acts of communication to invisible and perhaps seemingly irrelevant cultural/linguistic experiences.
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In addition to multimodal translation experiences that echo KLN’s cultural makeup, participants at KLN layered other multimodal communicative practices to translate news stories for their community. Analyzing the translation moments that KLN participants experienced in digital spaces, in particular, helped me further understand the cyclical, creative rhetorical work that is at play as multilingual communicators negotiate meaning during translation moments. This understanding aligns with the second and third pillars of A Revised Rhetoric of Translation.

Digitally Mediated Multimodality at KLN

During my time working with student translators at KLN, I asked several participants to use Camtasia Relay, a screencast recording software, to record their computer screens as they worked on story translations for KLN. Two of the KLN participants, Natalie and Brigitte, consistently submitted screencast recordings of their work throughout the duration of the project. As they submitted screencast recordings of their translation processes, I coded and analyzed their practices and conducted artifact-based interviews with the participants to further understand their reasoning and motivation for completing translation activities. During these interviews, I would meet individually with either Natalie or Brigitte and play clips from their screencast recordings, asking whether they were doing what I thought they were or if they could tell me more about what they were using to translate a specific word or phrase in a specific story. By conducting artifact-based interviews with participants throughout my coding process, I was able to triangulate my analysis with my participants’ own interpretations of the data. Through these collaborative efforts, I was able to draw some conclusions about how Natalie and Brigitte moved simultaneously across languages and technologies to rhetorically and creatively translate news stories for KLN.

Brigitte’s Translation Practices: Using Resources to “Get a Start”

When I first met Brigitte, she had been working at KLN for less than one semester. An immigrant from Venezuela, Brigitte moved to Florida with her family when she was in elementary school. She first learned to speak English there. After years of working to “perfect” her English, Brigitte actually felt more comfortable writing and speaking in English in her daily interactions once she was of college age. However, because Spanish is really
important to Brigitte, she enrolled in KLN as a way to practice her heritage language and to gain experience that would help her become a bilingual news broadcaster.

During one of our early interviews, Brigitte described her translation practices by stating, “Since I’m new to translating, I’m not always sure how to start the translation. I use Google Translate to get a start. Once I see the word choices, I can fix them to sound better, but it’s hard for me to come up with the words at first.” Brigitte’s claim that she “fixes” the translation options provided by Google Translate is evident in the screencast recordings of her translation process. In figure 7, I provide a visualization of a typical translation sequence for Brigitte, illustrating how she uses Google Translate as a site of invention when navigating translation moments. In the key provided on the right-hand side of the image, I provide icons to represent three different strategies I found in my coding of the translation moments I analyzed at KLN. These coding strategies include the use of digital translation tools (e.g., Google Translate); negotiating, which was coded as any instance when translators were debating between several possible translation options (e.g., asking, “Should I use this word or that word?”); and deconstructing, which took place when translators conjugated or broke down words in their translation to grammatically fit within the sentences they were writing across languages.

Figure 7 visualizes three translation moments that Brigitte experienced when translating a news story from English to Spanish. During this sequence, Brigitte was translating a news article related to student loan debt in the United States and its potential impact on the US economy. Specifically, she was working on translating the sentence “The increase in student loan subsidies will be an investment that will lead to economic growth.” Rather than breaking the sentence apart or translating it in pieces, Brigitte began by translating a set of words and phrases in the sentence, before typing any translation. As figure 7 illustrates, Brigitte put the words *investment* and *increase* and the phrase “will lead to economic growth” into Google Translate right away and then used the first definition provided through this digital translation tool in her translation. However, after looking up the initial sequence of words and phrases in Google Translate, Brigitte used negotiation strategies (making decisions between word options) and deconstruction strategies (conjugating words or phrases to fit within the translated sentence) to present a final translation of the entire sentence. For instance, rather than using the word *aumentar* as the translation of *increase*, Brigitte deconstructed the word into *aumento* in her final translation.
During her artifact-based interview, Brigitte watched her screencast recording and explained, “I use Google Translate to translate all the parts of a sentence that I’m having trouble with first, because I have a hard time coming up with the words I want to use in Spanish.” Although Brigitte could not think of the translation for the word *increase* initially, once the word *aumentar* was provided by Google Translate, Brigitte did know how to adequately conjugate and deconstruct the word to accurately fit her translated sentence. Hence, Brigitte explains, “Once I see the word, I know how to fix it to fit what I’m trying to say, but since I’m used to talking in English most of the time at school, I have a hard time coming up with the words at first.” In this example, Brigitte used Google Translate as a form of invention, getting and adapting definitions to fit the context of her writing. When she could not think of a specific word in her translation, Google Translate served as a site of creativity and innovation for Brigitte, one that would prompt and launch her ideas.

During another translation moment, Brigitte translated an article regarding a new building in downtown Orlando. The article referenced tensions between the popular tourist appeal of International Drive (an area of town that hosts many theme parks and tourist attractions) and the more locally recognized venues located in downtown Orlando. Similar to the
process depicted in figure 7, Brigitte began by putting several words and phrases into Google Translate, including *downtown, city, and building*. Rather than using the first translations provided for all words put into Google Translate, however, Brigitte further negotiated these translations through the use of other digital and rhetorical resources.

Google translated *downtown* to the Spanish phrase “centro de la ciudad,” which is a literal translation meaning “center of the city.” During her interview, Brigitte explained that she did not want to use that more formal phrase, because “people who live in Orlando wouldn’t talk about downtown like that, like center of the city.” Dissatisfied with Google’s translation of the word *downtown*, Brigitte went to Telemundo’s website, a bilingual Spanish/English news network. Using that site’s search bar, she searched for “downtown Orlando” on the site and found several entries that referenced “Orlando” without referencing downtown. After visiting Telemundo’s website, Brigitte went back to her article and used the word *Orlando* without referencing downtown. She omitted Google’s suggested phrase, “centro de la ciudad,” and instead used *Orlando* to reference downtown Orlando and used “la international drive en Orlando” to reference the tourist area described in the English article.

During her interview, Brigitte described her negotiation process in translating the references to “downtown Orlando”: “A lot of times, I’ll Google a word if I have no idea how to use it, and I’ll look up the word on Telemundo or Univision, just to get some context clues for how it’s used in the media.” After looking up the word *downtown* on Google Translate, Brigitte had enough rhetorical knowledge to understand that the Latinx community in Orlando would not use the formal phrase “centro de la ciudad” to reference their city. Additionally, Brigitte knew to leverage other digital resources by visiting bilingual news sites that would be familiar to her intended audience, using articles from the websites for Telemundo or Univision (another Spanish/English news station) as a reference point for her translations. Thus, Brigitte ensured that her final translation would be not only literally accurate (as the phrase “centro de la ciudad” would be) but also culturally localized to the Orlando Latinx community she aimed to reach.

As these brief examples illustrate, Brigitte’s digital translation practices required that she find not only accurate representations of words and phrases across languages but also culturally appropriate language substitutions that met the needs of her intended audience. As a bilingual speaker who lives in Orlando, Brigitte knew how to coordinate digital, bilingual
resources to come up with a translation that is both accurate and culturally appropriate, even if she at first felt as though she could not come up with the words to translate. In this way, Brigitte’s movement across digital platforms, including Google Translate and the Telemundo and Univision websites, rendered a cyclical, recursive translation process that encompassed rhetorical composing across languages and platforms.

Brigitte’s translation was never based on a linear, input/output model but instead required Brigitte to go back and forth between digital resources as she decided how to culturally localize translations to accurately meet the needs of her community. Although Brigitte was translating using traditional word-processing software (i.e., Microsoft Word), her digital coordination practices revealed a multimodal orientation to composing that echoes Shipka’s call for teachers and researchers to pay attention to both multimodal products and multimodal production (*Toward a Composition*). To reach accurate translations, Brigitte had to navigate between digital platforms, going back and forth between the Word document that she was writing and the multiple sites (i.e., Google Translate, Telemundo, and Univision) that helped her make rhetorical decisions throughout her translation process. Although much of the digital coordination work that Brigitte was doing may have remained invisible from the final translation that she submitted, using screencast recordings in correlation with artifact-based interviews allowed me to more intricately trace the rhetorical work embedded in the translation moments that Brigitte experienced.

**Natalie’s Translation Practices: Figuring Out “Where to Go in the Moment”**

As the student leader for KLN, Natalie had been translating stories for the organization for three years when we began working together on this project. During one of her initial interviews, she explained that she joined KLN because she wanted to get experience producing news stories in Spanish. As an advertising and public relations major, Natalie understood the importance of reaching the Latinx population in Florida. “Latinos are Florida,” she explained during her interview, adding, “You can’t say you are talking to Floridians if you’re only producing news in English.”

After being born in the Dominican Republic, Natalie moved to Orlando with her family at the start of middle school (sixth grade). While in the Dominican Republic, she had learned to speak Spanish first, but she had started to learn English even before her family moved to Florida. “To
my family,” Natalie stated, “both languages [Spanish and English] have always been important, because our family lives in both places [the Dominican Republic and Florida].”

Natalie’s translation practices reflect her keen ability to seamlessly move between English and Spanish, valuing both languages and understanding the cultural implications of each language for specific communities. Like Brigitte, Natalie frequently used a digital translation tool, Google Translate, as a starting point for her translation. At the same time, she often layered deconstruction and negotiation strategies with the results she received from Google Translate. In this way, Natalie contextualized the translations provided by Google Translate, to address her audience more effectively. Figure 8 illustrates a typical translation moment for Natalie, where she layers the use of digital translation tools with negotiation and deconstruction strategies.

In the translation moment illustrated in figure 8, Natalie was translating the word *threaten* as it appeared in the story title “Development Plan Threatens Orlando Park.” Natalie first put the word *threaten* into Google Translate, and Google provided four translation options: the word *amenazar*, the phrase “proferir amenazas contra,” and the words *acechar* and *amagar*. All of these options were identified by Google Translate as synonymous to the English word *threaten*. Rather than using any of the initial options provided by Google Translate, however, Natalie searched for Spanish translations of the English word *harm*. Google Translate provided nine options for this translation, and Natalie decided to use the first option, the word *daño*, in her final translation. After negotiating between the word *threaten* and the word *harm*, Natalie deconstructed the word *daño* by conjugating it to fit grammatically into the article’s title. She then decided to go with the word *daña* as her final translation.

During her artifact-based interview, Natalie explained why she did not use any of the initial suggestions provided by Google Translate: “The word *threaten* seemed to be translated into something more related to physical harm. If I ‘amenazar’ someone, for example, I’m threatening them physically. Threatening a park is completely different, because we are talking about an object and not a person, so I decided to look up options for the word *harm*, because I thought that might give me results that are more like harming a physical object instead of a human.” As she negotiated between the implications of the words *amenazar* and *daño*, Natalie also negotiated her cultural understanding of both English and Spanish. In turn, Natalie localized the translations provided by Google Translate to better fit her intended audience, navigating between the digital translation tool and her
own cultural knowledge to make a rhetorical decision in her translation.

It is interesting that after realizing that the word *threaten* was translated by Google to *amenazar* and deciding that word was not appropriate for her context, Natalie decided to put another English word, *harm*, into Google Translate. Rather than searching for Spanish synonyms for *amenazar*, Natalie knew enough about the functionality of digital translation tools to select another word in English to help with her translation. During her artifact-based interview, Natalie explained why she looked up a second word in English (i.e., *harm*) rather than searching for Spanish synonyms: “The online tools are always better if you look something up in English. If you look something up in Spanish on Google, it won’t be as accurate as if you can look it up English.” Indeed, through this example, Natalie exhibits technical knowledge that aligns with current research regarding the state of digital translation tools. As explained by Chen and Bao and by Balk et al., digital translation tools in general and Google Translate in particular are guided by English-centered algorithms.

Although Google Translate now has capabilities to translate between
seventy-two different languages (Arce), Balk et al. found, through a study of Google Translate’s accuracy, that the most accurate translations are yielded when users use Google to translate from English to another language. Rather than translating between Spanish and French, for instance, studies have found that more accurate translations are provided when users translate a word from Spanish to English, English to French, and so on (ElShiekh). The algorithms used to organize Google’s dictionaries are developed with English at the center. Therefore, searching Google Translate for words in English will always yield more accurate translations. Users like Natalie have found ways to hack Google’s digital translation tool by combining their own cultural and linguistic knowledge with Google’s algorithmically designed dictionaries.

As Natalie continued her interview, she explained that the translations provided by Google Translate “are just inspiration sometimes,” adding, “I wouldn’t have thought of the word dañar on my own necessarily, but seeing that amenazar was an option helped me think of similar words to look up in Spanish and English. The Google translations gave me options.” Hence, as Natalie explains, digital translation tools are most successful when they are paired with the cultural knowledge and creative expertise of human users. The use of digital translation tools encompasses just one aspect of participants’ multimodal translation practices, those that combine cultural and technological skills to transform information across languages.

As evidenced through Natalie’s example, using the translations provided by Google Translate requires that users incorporate linguistic and cultural knowledge in two languages—in the case of Natalie’s example, both Spanish and English. For Natalie, Google Translate served as a tool to help her own abilities to move between languages. Once multilingual communicators like Natalie find inspiration in digital translation tools or other digital platforms, they layer additional rhetorical strategies (e.g., deconstructing and negotiating) to come up with final translation versions representing cultural and linguistic knowledge that can be understood by specific communities. Thus, as multilingual communicators navigate digital platforms to translate, they creatively repurpose language to meet the specific needs and orientations of culturally specific audiences, continuing to reflect the three pillars of A Revised Rhetoric of Translation through multilingual/multimodal composing processes that are rhetorically and culturally situated.

As KLN participants illustrate, translation is often accomplished via multiple, layered, and sequenced strategies that require a fluidity among
languages and modalities (both material and embodied). It is very rare for a translator to only use one strategy or mode during the process of language transformation. Instead, translators like Natalie and Brigitte exemplify the complex negotiations of history, culture, and language that takes place as users translate words and phrases into English and/or Spanish. Those negotiations are most accurately completed by human translators who have enough experience and context to situate information across languages. Any single language, tool, or mode has its limitations in translation practices. Multilingual communicators like the ones depicted in this chapter make rhetorical decisions and work across communication spaces to reach translations that are both accurate and representative of both the source and the target languages that play a role in the story or the information being presented.

Through the negotiation of words like *downtown* and *threaten*, translators at KLN revealed the benefits of cultural knowledge to the translation process. In their navigation of translation moments, participants like Natalie and Brigitte were focused more on conveying experiences (e.g., emotions about downtown Orlando) than on providing “objective” or literal definitions of the translated words. While digital translation tools like Google Translate provide several translation options that are deemed grammatically accurate by machine algorithms, successfully negotiating translation moments requires that multilingual communicators move beyond precise or dictionary-based definitions and translations for specific terminology, privileging language variations and combinations that resonate most directly with the target population being addressed in specific interactions or contexts.

Translators like the ones at KLN have to exhibit the creative rhetorical dexterity required to successfully navigate the tools of multimodal communication. Although translators do not always know how to use all terminology in every language (just like multimodal composers do not know how to use every tool, modality, or technology), successful translation hinges on the rhetorical ability of multilingual communicators who coordinate the semiotic resources at their disposal to transform information in ways that most directly meet the needs of their particular audiences in specific moments in time. As Natalie, Brigitte, and other KLN participants illustrate, translation software and other digital tools and platforms are not places where multilingual communicators go for answers in the translation process; rather, these digital resources function as one portion in a bigger network of language and cultural practices that allow communicators to make rhetorical decisions during translation. Hence, translation tools and
other digital platforms are sites for creativity and invention rather than for machine-automated answers, providing additional resources to accurately and successfully transform language. While these digital technologies are useful, I have found, after analyzing thousands of translation projects across two research sites, that digital platforms and translation software remain insufficient and inaccurate if they are not paired with the creative rhetorical ability of multilingual communicators who can manipulate language and technology simultaneously. Without Natalie’s understanding of the algorithms embedded in digital translation software and without her creative manipulation of those algorithms as she chose what words to put into Google Translate, the translation work at KLN would not be as successful or culturally situated.

Student translators like Natalie and Brigitte (as well as the participants showcased in the video montage that frames this chapter) are critically aware of their roles as communicators who have to constantly move between audiences to share their ideas. Sticking to one language and/or one mode is not an option for translators at KLN, as they have to consider how the translation options presented to them by specific experiences and digital platforms would be interpreted by various audiences. It is important to note how lived experiences and histories influence the translation strategies enacted by multilingual communicators. For example, Brigitte’s relatively new role at KLN caused her to experience several translation moments really early in her translation process. As evidenced in figure 7, Brigitte often put several words and phrases into Google Translate at the beginning of her translation sequence, using these initial options as “inspiration” for the rest of her process. Although Natalie also used Google Translate to get inspiration for her translation, her extended experience working at KLN and now heading the organization led her to focus on fewer (but more extended) translation moments. For instance, where Brigitte started her translation by putting three sets of words and phrases into Google Translate right away, Natalie put a single word, *threaten*, into Google Translate, taking more time to think through one single-word translation than Brigitte took in deconstructing and negotiating among her three initial translation moments.

As evidenced in the video montage discussed early in this chapter, KLN translators discussing news stories and potential translations often relive and retell stories they have experienced as bilingual immigrants living in the United States. The experiences that multilingual communicators have as they learn new languages, particularly when they are learning these languages in a new country, constantly influence how they engage in new
communicative contexts. Like Katie’s hesitation to speak Spanish during her interview, multilingual communicators may sometimes exhibit hesitancies to blending languages in their daily communication, not necessarily because they are not proficient or capable of using their linguistic resources, but because previous experiences have shown them that despite any recent efforts to pluralize language use in US contexts, all of our linguistic resources have not, in fact, historically been welcomed or accepted in traditionally English-dominant spaces (e.g., US classrooms and workplaces). Thus, it is important to note that the composing and communicative practices that we see in our classrooms and workplaces, particularly from multilingual communicators, do not always reflect the actual extent of the communicative potential present in these spaces. For example, multilingual communicators’ pauses as they translate information in their minds do not necessarily indicate that they are incapable of answering or contributing to the conversations at hand. Understanding language practices through A Revised Rhetoric of Translation and acknowledging the rhetorical work of multilingual communicators pushes us to expand the ways in which we listen to and for language difference, so that we can understand pauses in translation as rhetorical work rather than as communicative deficits.

The work of student translators at KLN provided some insights into the rhetorical negotiations that take place during the translation processes of multilingual communicators. In particular, the analysis of translation at KLN allowed me to trace some connections between various multimodal elements embedded in translation, including the use of digital translation tools as well as the links between digital translation and lived experiences. Further, analyzing the translation practices of translators with different levels of experience in translation, such as Natalie and Brigitte, allowed me to trace some connection between how translators’ level of comfort and expertise with the profession of translation may impact their coordination of modalities and technologies to transform language. In the following chapter, I extend on these connections between translators’ professional training experiences and their approaches to navigating translation moments. Introducing the work of professional translators working in the Language Services Department at the Hispanic Center of Western Michigan, I highlight how translation in professional contexts embodies intricate, multimodal communication with high-impact exigencies and consequences.