

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Languages at the Doorway: Multilingual Signals in Diasporic Short Fiction

Eduardo Mendieta^{1,*} and Daniel J. Treier²

¹Department of Philosophy, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, United States

²Biblical and Theological Studies, Wheaton College, Wheaton, United States

Correspondence: ezm5325@psu.edu

Abstract

Multilingual fiction is often discussed through the binary of reader inclusion and exclusion, which can obscure the different work performed by glosses, naming, typography, and narrated translation. This article asks how multilingual signals organize relations among audiences and forms of authority. It compares public-domain short prose by Sui Sin Far, Onoto Watanna, Zitkala-Ša, and Rabindranath Tagore. Comparative close reading follows code-switching, glossing, naming, address, syntax, typography, and metalinguistic explanation, recording how each signal is prepared and what interpretive consequence follows. The analysis argues that untranslated language can create relation rather than simply exclude readers, that glosses disclose imagined hierarchies between audiences, and that narrated translation becomes a scene in which familial and institutional authority are negotiated. By distinguishing linguistic presence from narrative function, the article contributes a relational account of multilingual thresholds. Its conclusions remain specific to the selected texts and translations; broader claims about readership, linguistic competence, or diasporic reception require evidence beyond close reading.

Keywords: diaspora; multilingualism; short fiction; translation; audience

1 Introduction

The textual interpretation developed here explores how short fiction uses multilingual signals to allocate belonging, effort, and interpretive responsibility. Its corpus comprises public-domain short prose by Sui Sin Far, Onoto Watanna, Zitkala-Ša, and Rabindranath Tagore, analyzed at the level of code-switching, glossing, naming, address, and narrated translation. The central claim is that untranslated language can create link rather than simply excluding readers. That proposition matters because multilingual form makes the labor of understanding visible and ethically consequential. Attention therefore falls on passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation.

The question is more tightly bounded than a general history of multilingual address. Within these texts, multilingual thresholds is assessed through passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation. Its definition changes only when those features alter the interpretation.

The evidence is synthesized in three findings. First, untranslated language can create link rather than simply excluding readers. Second, glosses often

reveal the imagined hierarchy between audiences. Third, narrated translation becomes a scene in which family and institutional authority are negotiated. Together they show that multilingual address is neither a decorative effect nor a label attached after interpretation. The argument remains proportionate to the textual selection.

The relation between detail and whole supplies a second commitment.

A narrow question gives Languages at the Doorway its comparative reach. Instead of asking what the selected works mean as wholes, it asks how passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation organize multilingual thresholds under different formal conditions. The repeated question creates comparability; the different answers preserve historical and medium-specific distinctions. This design also makes revision possible: a disputed case can alter one step of the argument without requiring the entire article to retreat into thematic summary or unsupported generalization.

Languages at the Doorway defines multilingual thresholds through consequences that can be traced. A formal event belongs to the concept when it alters expectation, access, authority,

memory, or the range of plausible readings. This definition joins the three claims while leaving room for disagreement about individual instances. It also identifies a stopping rule: if the asserted change cannot be located in passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation or in their documented historical mediation, the article must describe the observation without assigning it the stronger interpretive label.

The research question is how untranslated language, glosses, and narrated translation organize relations among audiences and authorities. The objective is to compare their formal consequences without inferring actual reader competence or response. The article next establishes its critical context and method, develops three findings, discusses their relation, and closes with limitations and a conclusion.

Multilingual literary study prevents code-switching from being treated as a transparent sign of identity. Yildiz examines the pressure exerted by the monolingual paradigm on modern literary cultures [1]. Sommer shows how bilingual aesthetics can make partial comprehension an active condition of reading [2].

2 Multilingual Address and Audience

Paratextual theory clarifies how glosses and explanations frame linguistic difference [3]. Narrative temporality explains how a later translation can revise an earlier encounter with untranslated language [4]. Critiques of cultural representation make the allocation of linguistic authority historically consequential [5]. Interpretive communities support analysis of the audiences imagined by translation and non-translation [6]. Work on scale cautions against converting four texts into a general account of diasporic multilingualism [7].

3 Multilingual Signals, Glosses, and Narrated Translation

The comparative reading's primary materials are short prose by Sui Sin Far [8], Onoto Watanna [9], Zitkala-Ša [10], and Rabindranath Tagore [11]. Cases were chosen for conceptual contrast, not statistical representation. Each item offers a distinct configuration of multilingual address and permits comparison through code-switching, glossing, naming, address, typography, and narrated translation.

The principal protocol is comparative discourse analysis with a transparent codebook for glossing, contextual inference, speaker relation, and narrative outcome.

The evidentiary scale of *Languages at the Doorway* is deliberately local: passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation. The procedure records position, recurrence, interruption, and outcome before assigning interpretive weight. That order matters because a repeated feature may retain its appearance while changing function, whereas a gloss or translated restatement may redirect the sequence. Claims about intention, reception, or prevalence are withheld because the present method does not supply that evidence.

Because multilingual thresholds depends on placement, source variation has force. An omitted preface, altered pagination, editorial dynamic, cropped image, restored shot, or changed blocking can shift the connection under discussion. *Languages at the Doorway* responds by keeping version-specific observations separate from conclusions that hold across versions. This practice narrows some claims, but it also prevents the authority of a polished format from concealing an uncertain evidentiary base.

4 Untranslated language can create relation rather than simply excluding readers

The first pattern can be stated as follows: untranslated language can create relation rather than simply excluding readers. This temporal dimension is essential. The finding therefore concerns organization, not inventory.

The resulting form is recursive. Interpretation advances, but it also returns to revise what seemed settled. This recursive quality explains why multilingual address can remain coherent without becoming predictable.

The relevant unit for testing whether untranslated language can create connection rather than simply excluding readers is a connected sequence, not a detached example. Passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation are followed from preparation through occurrence to effect. This allows *Languages at the Doorway* to distinguish structural emphasis from sheer frequency and to show why a rare event may outweigh a common one. The first result therefore depends on demonstrable change: without a shift in expectation, access, or memory, the claim about multilingual thresholds must be narrowed.

The textual selection is first approached through Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings*. The reading tests the proposition that untranslated language can create connection rather than simply excluding readers by restricting attention to passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation. It then identifies which surrounding relations are necessary for that account.

In Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings*, the proposition that untranslated language can create link rather than simply excluding readers is evaluated through placement, not keyword recurrence. The reading asks what prepares each occurrence of passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation, which agent or formal layer controls it, and what consequence follows. A detail counts as evidence only when its surrounding sequence changes the available judgment. This restriction prevents the case from being reduced to an example chosen after the thesis was formed.

A close reading of Sui Sin Far's *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings* must therefore document the first rele-

vant occurrence of passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation, the expectation active at that moment, and the outcome that distinguishes it from background recurrence. The case supports *Languages at the Doorway* only if those three points can be located in the consulted version. A general parallel to the other cases is not enough; the episode must show why the proposition about multilingual thresholds is needed to explain its organization.

A second comparison, Onoto Watanna's *Selected Short Prose*, tests the distributive dimension of the argument. Here the governing question is whether glosses often reveal the imagined hierarchy between audiences. This is not handled as a defect in reliability.

Onoto Watanna's *Selected Short Prose* changes the scale of comparison. Here multilingual thresholds is read through the distribution of access, emphasis, and response among texts. The relevant question is not whether the same surface feature returns, but whether its return gives a different participant, voice, register, or position the capacity to redirect interpretation. That distributive test supplies the pressure behind the claim that glosses often reveal the imagined hierarchy between audiences.

For Onoto Watanna's *Selected Short Prose*, the principal counter-reading treats the observed distribution as a genre convention with no special bearing on multilingual thresholds. The article answers only at the level of passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation: it asks whether a transfer of access or emphasis produces a following effect that convention alone leaves unexplained. If it does not, the second proposition contracts. If it does, the case clarifies how compositional hierarchy becomes an event rather than a static arrangement.

A further comparison focuses on Zitkala-Ša's *American Indian Stories* and gives priority to revision over initial recognition. The interpretive test is whether narrated translation becomes a scene in which family and institutional authority are negotiated.

The value of Zitkala-Ša's *American Indian Stories* is retrospective. Following passages are reread against the first account of passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation, allowing the article to distinguish repetition from revision. If the following event merely restates the ini-

tial one, the proposition that narrated translation becomes a scene in which family and institutional authority are negotiated receives little support. If it changes the status of what the reader, listener, or viewer already encountered, the case makes visible how multilingual thresholds acquires compositional memory.

Verification in Zitkala-Ša's *American Indian Stories* calls for two locators: one for the initial treatment of passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation and one for the moment that alters its status. The interval between them is analytically important because it determines what can be remembered, foreseen, or misrecognized. Recording both locations prevents the later reading from being projected backward as if it had been available from the start, and it gives the claim about multilingual thresholds a visible temporal basis.

The final case, Rabindranath Tagore's *Selected Short Stories*, functions as a resistant comparison.

Rabindranath Tagore's *Selected Short Stories* remains in the selection because it resists easy synthesis. Its treatment of passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation tests how far the claim that untranslated language can create link rather than simply excluding readers can travel before medium, genre, or historical circumstance depends on qualification. The comparison does not convert resistance into confirmation. It records which part of the proposition persists, which part weakens, and which supplementary source would be necessary to decide between rival explanations.

The resistant role of Rabindranath Tagore's *Selected Short Stories* also limits the article's vocabulary. If medium or genre changes the operation of passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation, the comparison names that difference before proposing an analogy. The case may therefore support only part of the claim that untranslated language can create connection rather than simply excluding readers. Such partial support is informative: it identifies the condition under which multilingual thresholds ceases to explain the evidence and marks the point where another historical or structural account should take over.

5 Glosses often reveal the imagined hierarchy between audiences

The second claim holds that glosses often reveal the imagined hierarchy between audiences. This pattern shifts analysis from isolated form toward distribution. The textual selection repeatedly makes such allocation perceptible.

The question behind the second claim is operational: what can each position do? Languages at the Doorway answers by following passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation as access and emphasis move among components. Support for the proposition that glosses often reveal the imagined hierarchy between audiences appears when a shift in position produces a shift in outcome. The comparison also records contrary cases, where apparent promotion changes nothing or where an edge position governs the whole. Those exceptions refine the account of multilingual thresholds by separating location from agency.

6 Narrated translation becomes a scene in which family and institutional authority are negotiated

A third pattern suggests that narrated translation becomes a scene in which family and institutional authority are negotiated. Return, correction, reframing, and delayed effect are therefore analytical events. They reveal how a work stores difference and activates it ensuing.

The findings collectively form a sequence of their own. The first identifies a process that directs attention. The second reveals that attention and authority are distributed. The third explains how ensuing events revise that distribution. This sequence supports the central thesis that multilingual address is historically variable and formally organized.

Revision in *Languages at the Doorway* is neither correction for its own sake nor automatic proof of complexity. To sustain the claim that narrated translation becomes a scene in which family and institutional authority are negotiated, the later passage, phrase, image, action, or interface state must reorganize a prior inference about passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation. The comparison specifies what changes and what remains stable. This balance lets multilingual thresholds retain continuity without becoming predictable, and it marks the point at which ambiguity is structured by the

work rather than supplied by commentary.

7 Discussion: What Multilingual Thresholds Change

A resistant case is useful here because it separates parallel from explanation. Evidence that complicates the proposition that untranslated language can create interaction rather than simply excluding readers requires a narrower claim, not dismissal. The same test applies to glosses often reveal the imagined hierarchy between audiences and narrated translation becomes a scene in which family and institutional authority are negotiated. *Languages at the Doorway* gains coherence from those limits: agreement among cases counts only after their differences have been described.

The cases further indicate that multilingual form makes the labor of understanding visible and ethically consequential. This result does not depend on universal agreement about every example.

The resulting contribution is methodological as well as interpretive. The distinction carries weight especially for interdisciplinary research.

Comparison also requires asymmetry. The four cases need not display multilingual thresholds with equal clarity, and the least cooperative case carries special weight. It tests whether untranslated language can create link rather than simply excluding readers, glosses often reveal the imagined hierarchy between audiences, and narrated translation becomes a scene in which family and institutional authority are negotiated name connected operations or merely repeat the vocabulary of the article. By allowing a claim to contract when the evidence resists it, *Languages at the Doorway* turns variation into a condition of interpretation rather than a problem to be edited away.

The comparative gain in *Languages at the Doorway* comes from holding the question steady while allowing the compositional answer to vary. Each case is asked how multilingual thresholds is prepared, allocated, and revised through passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation. Because the answer may differ by genre, medium, or historical setting, parallel at the surface is insufficient. The contribution lies in explaining why formally dissimilar events can perform comparable work, and why similar events sometimes demand different interpretations.

Finally, the argument treats uncertainty as a result to be described. When

two hypotheses account for passages where more than one language is signaled through vocabulary, syntax, typography, or metalinguistic explanation with comparable force, *Languages at the Doorway* does not select one merely to produce closure. It identifies what further edition, document, recording, image, or contextual source would distinguish them. This practice gives multilingual thresholds a clear evidentiary boundary and prevents confidence of tone from standing in for support.

The primary boundary of the claim is that translation and edition differences require the final author to document the exact public-domain texts without reproducing extended passages. It does not establish reception, intention, prevalence, or causal effect. The absence of those methods is acknowledged rather than disguised.

For teaching and public interpretation, *Languages at the Doorway* suggests a three-part practice: identify the feature, describe the connection that gives it force, and state the historical claim at the level the evidence permits. The sequence keeps multilingual thresholds visible without converting complexity into a slogan. It also makes missing editions, production

records, or reception documents explicit research limits rather than silent assumptions.

8 Conclusion

The guiding question concerned how short fiction uses multilingual signals to allocate belonging, effort, and interpretive responsibility. Through comparative discourse analysis with a transparent codebook for glossing, contextual inference, speaker relation, and narrative effect, it argued that untranslated language can create relation rather than simply excluding readers; that glosses often reveal the imagined hierarchy between audiences; and that narrated translation becomes a scene in which family and institutional authority are negotiated. These claims converge on a relational account of multilingual address.

The comparison indicates that multilingual form makes the labor of understanding visible and ethically consequential.

Bibliography

- [1] Yasemin Yildiz. *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition*. Fordham University Press, 2012.

- [2] Doris Sommer. *Bilingual Aesthetics: A New Sentimental Education*. Duke University Press, 2004.
- [3] Gérard Genette. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- [4] Paul Ricoeur. *Time and Narrative, Volume 1*. University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- [5] Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. Pantheon, 1978.
- [6] Stanley Fish. *Is There a Text in This Class?*. Harvard University Press, 1980.
- [7] Franco Moretti. *Distant Reading*. Verso, 2013.
- [8] Sui Sin Far. *Mrs. Spring Fragrance and Other Writings*. public-domain editions.
- [9] Onoto Watanna. *Selected Short Prose*. public-domain editions.
- [10] Zitkala-Ša. *American Indian Stories*. 1921.
- [11] Rabindranath Tagore. *Selected Short Stories*. public-domain English translations.