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Heteroglossia and boundaries

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processes of linguistic and social distinction

Language is the primary semiotic tool for representing and negotiating social reality, and it is thus at the centre of social and political life. Among its myriad social and political functions is to position speakers relative to a wide variety of phenomena including co-present interlocutors, the activities in which speakers are engaged, and various dimensions of the wider world, including social identity categories and their relative value. To speak is thus to position oneself in the social world, i.e. to engage in identity practices (cf. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985).

All language provides linguistic and discursive forms rich in social connotations for the negotiation of identity. Monolingual individuals exploit various registers, accents, sociolects, word choices, etc. for the omnipresent tasks of positioning themselves and others within social categories and the larger social world. Members of bilingual communities typically have an expanded set of linguistic resources for these ongoing social negotiations and often a broader range of relevant social categories to enact or contest. On the linguistic level, they can draw forms from two languages as well as hybrid forms resulting from language contact. On the social and cultural level, many straddle social and cultural boundaries and are familiar with relatively diverse cultural frameworks for interpreting and evaluating the world and positioning themselves and others within it.

In this chapter, I use the notion of heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981) as a conceptual entrée to social meanings of bilingual speech¹ and related identity negotiations. Heteroglossia addresses (a) the simultaneous use of different kinds of forms or signs, and (b) the tensions and conflicts among those signs, based on the sociohistorical associations they carry with them (cf. Ivanov 2001). The first part of this definition of heteroglossia subsumes formal definitions of bilingualism (as the coexistence of two linguistic systems) or code-switching (as the alternation of codes within a single speech exchange) (Gumperz 1982;

Heller 1988). While heteroglossia denotes the use of different kinds of forms or signs, the term does not refer, particularly, to the 'distinct languages' that are commonly seen as constituting bilingualism. To the contrary, Bakhtin coined the Russian term *raznorechie* to refer to intra-language varieties within Russian, varieties with competing social and political implications, and the term is sometimes translated as 'the social diversity of speech types' rather than 'heteroglossia'. The fact that heteroglossia encompasses both mono- and multilingual forms allows a level of theorizing about the social nature of language that is not possible within the confines of a focus on code-switching.

While code-switching research commonly treats the distinctiveness of codes as a given, from a phenomenological perspective, languages or codes can only be understood as distinct objects to the extent to which they are treated as such by social actors. From the socially-infused perspective of heteroglossia, judgements about what counts as 'different kinds of forms or signs' are based on the way social actors appear to distinguish among forms, rather than analysts' *a priori* claims.

The second part of the definition of heteroglossia captures the inherent political and sociohistorical associations of any linguistic form, i.e. its indexical meanings (Peirce 1955), or social connotations. These indexical meanings, or historical voices, are not explicit or static, but rather must be interpreted on the basis of constellations of forms in particular interactional and sociohistorical contexts. Such meanings are thus shifting, subjective and negotiated.

I approach identity in similarly processual terms. Following Barth's (1969) seminal work on ethnic groups, I approach identity as constituted through the *boundaries* that groups construct between themselves, rather than the characteristics of group members. The term 'identity' comes from Latin, *idem*, meaning 'the same', and identities are constituted by socially counting as 'the same' as others or counting as 'different' from others. This formulation foregrounds the subjective, social reality of individual actors, in that it is their judgements and activities, rather than static characteristics of individuals, that serve to constitute categories. Social identity is a function of two subjective processes: 'self-ascription' – how one defines oneself – and 'ascription by others' – how others define one (Barth 1969: 13). These processes of ascription are not based on the objective sums of differences or similarities among groups: 'some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied' (ibid: 14). All individuals have multiple characteristics and allegiances, so it is the situational and selective highlighting of commonalities and differences that is characteristic of identity groupings (Moerman 1965). Analysis of identity thus revolves around the questions of how, when and why individuals count as members of particular groups.

The same semiotics of distinction involved in social boundary work can be applied to ways of speaking (cf. Irvine 2001 on 'style'). Ways of speaking are constituted as distinct through contrast, rather than through any inherent characteristics, just as identities are constituted through boundary marking processes (or lack thereof). As is the case with identity categories, what counts as a socially meaningful opposition among linguistic forms is subjective, shifting, and ideologically infused. To a linguist whose perspective privileges formal categories, for example, any bilingual speech may be highly salient because of the alternation of two codes, thus constituting a distinctive style. To the monolingual majorities in the US and most of Western Europe, monolingualism is an emblem of citizenship and belonging, and any language alternation is an exercise in distinctiveness. To a bilingual child of international migrants, however, code-switching in intragroup peer interaction may not commonly be perceived by members as very distinct from speaking to such peers without alternation.

These subjective processes of differentiation are linked to power, and in relatively stable social and linguistic situations, the social and linguistic categories favoured by dominant groups come to be seen as natural through processes of hegemony or symbolic domination (Bourdieu 1991; Heller 1995). In the United States, for example, White, English monolinguals are the dominant group, both economically and politically. This economic and political power is extended, via symbolic domination, to broader standards for social evaluation. Even though the majority of historical immigrants to the US have not been English-speaking, and even though the country is increasingly Latino and non-White, being a monolingual Anglophone, speaking a variety of Standard English, and being White constitute one as an unmarked American. Highly naturalized categories of race, language and national identity thus merge in the popular mind into an essentialized unity.

Social change, through migration, can serve to denaturalize and problematize boundaries and essentialized unities. Bilingual children of international labour migrants, for example, problematize boundaries through straddling linguistic and social worlds in their language and identity practices (Auer 1984; Poplack 1988; Gal 1988; Zentella 1997; Bailey 2002). Similarly, in urban, postcolonial contexts in Africa, migration has blurred traditional social boundaries and associations of particular identities with particular ways of speaking (Myers-Scotton 1993). Code-switching in such contexts is often frequent, intra-sentential, and unmarked in intragroup peer interactions, serving as a form of unmarked, discourse contextualization or serving no identifiable function at all. By failing to treat two or more languages as a meaningful opposition in certain contexts, such social actors effectively erase the boundary that constitutes the two languages as distinct. This calls into question the very foundation of bilingualism as a rubric or perspective for socially-oriented research on language.

Children of immigrants also undermine naturalized language–race–nation unities by (a) asserting or enacting identities that cross-cut received categories in ways that expose and controvert the assumptions on which the categories are based, and (b) bringing with them social classification systems that were dominant in the countries of origin but that contradict host country categories (Bailey 2001). In the United States, for example, the categories Black and White have been a central organizing principle of society for centuries, but many post-1965 immigrants from Latin America and Asia do not fit neatly into these categories. Latinos from the Caribbean, in particular, bridge the categories Black and White in ways that undermine the popular American notion of Black and White as representing unbridgeable distance. Such immigrants not only bridge such categories in terms of phenotype, they also maintain understandings of themselves as essentially Latino or Spanish, thereby countering the primacy of phenotype-symbolized race in US social classification. This problematizing of essentialized boundaries can occur in any situation in which the macro-social categories in countries of origin, the result of specific histories of social relationships, do not match those in destination countries (Mittelberg and Waters 1992).

In this chapter, I first contrast popular and formal linguistic approaches to language with more heteroglossic, social ones to contextualize the historical privileging and constitution of code-switching as a discrete object of study. I then briefly review research on code-switching in order to introduce the type of code-switching – code-switching as a discourse mode (Poplack 1980) – that particularly problematizes assumptions of difference in bilingual talk. A short segment of bilingual speech from Dominican American peer group interaction is presented to highlight the utility of the notion of heteroglossia relative to a narrower focus on code-switching, in analysing identity negotiations in talk. Finally, I argue that code-switching and bilingualism might best be approached as social constructions, as is common with identity categories. The social constructionist perspective affords analytical insights while recognizing the power of the on-the-ground hegemonic social reality that bilingual speakers face in societies with monolingual language ideologies.

popular and linguistic approaches to language

Among the intertwined reasons for the distinctive salience of bilingualism in Western societies are a) the naturalization of monolingualism in the ongoing nation-building projects begun in Europe during the last several centuries, and b) the referentialist nature of modern, Western language ideologies, both popular and academic. As the historical development of language–nation ideologies is explicitly discussed in Part One of this volume, I briefly review contemporary popular language ideologies and epistemology in formal linguistics.

Language is popularly understood as denotation, in which words stand for, or represent, things or ideas. The function of language is seen as the communication of propositional information, as in a conduit metaphor (Reddy 1979), and the maximally efficient transfer of such information is seen as ‘good communication’. This folk theory of language, communication and efficiency is intertwined with living in capitalist, industrialized, bureaucratized, widely literate societies, which privilege certain types of productivity and efficiency. Social functioning of language is seen as epiphenomenal in this folk model, except when social variation is perceived as impairing the efficient transmission of propositional information.

This folk understanding is layered with hegemonic ideologies that privilege language varieties that are associated with powerful and privileged groups in society. These varieties are seen as being ‘accentless’ and ‘correct’, and ideal for ‘good’, i.e. propositionally efficient, communication. Divergences from this ideal standard – whether associated with class, ethnicity/race, or region – are considered marked and less desirable. In the United States, for example, varieties of English that are associated with written language and the speech of educated, middle- and upper-class White Americans in the Midwest (Lippi-Green 1997; Silverstein 1996) are identified as normal and desirable, even by speakers whose speech does not approach these varieties.

Formal linguistics also treats the social and political functioning of language as marginal, approaching language as a semiotic system in and of itself. The primary interest is in relationships among elements of this system, abstracted from any actual uses or instances of language. The boundaries of the system are implicitly taken to be the boundaries of the language, an idealization that is not necessarily compared to actual speech, which may or may not be bilingual (see Auer, this volume). Linguists generally focus on meanings that remain stable across time, speakers and contexts – i.e. denotational meanings – and pay relatively little attention to actual use of language, i.e. social action. In taking a formal, synchronic approach to language, formal linguists thus neglect relationships between linguistic forms and the social and political worlds that are described and negotiated through those forms.

Both folk and formal linguistic models of language may reflect more general cognitive predispositions. Silverstein (2001), for example, has shown that awareness of pragmatic function of language is closely tied to the degree to which forms are referential, segmentable and context-reflecting. Thus, people can articulate form–meaning relationships relatively well when the relationship is referential; when the forms are segmentable (as are morphemes) rather than scalar (as is pitch); and when the forms refer to some pre-existing phenomenon or situation rather than establishing it through the act of speaking. The popular notion of language as a system of discrete (segmentable) symbols for describing (referentially and context-reflecting) a pre-existing world, as well as the linguistic emphasis on form, may be partly a

result of the fact that some dimensions of language are simply more accessible to conscious awareness than others.

From both a popular perspective of language-as-denotation and a linguistic perspective of language-as-synchronic-system, code-switching represents an aberration. From the linguistic point of view, it involves the overlapping of two systems that are *a priori* conceptualized as distinct and discrete. From a popular view, it appears redundant and irrational. If language is an instrumental vehicle of propositional information, then why use more than one language, unless a linguistic deficiency prevents one from making utterances entirely in one language (Woolard 2004: 75; Meeuwis and Blommaert 1998: 78)?² Code-switched speech also diverges radically from the ideological ideal way of speaking, which is monolingual and shows no effects of language contact such as phonological effects of other languages (i.e. 'foreign accent').

The popular and linguistic perspectives that monolingual speech is normal and natural subtly inform code-switching research even in more socially and politically oriented disciplines such as anthropology. Researchers in linguistic anthropology and related disciplines regularly attend to bilingual speech in ways that they do not necessarily attend to monolingual speech. The driving question of much anthropological code-switching research, 'Why do they do that?' is not put with equal force to the myriad other things speakers do in talk that are not bilingual. By casting bilingual speech as a marked form that calls for explanation of a type that monolingual speech does not, such research implicitly reproduces the folk and linguistic beliefs of monolingual speech as the natural form (Woolard 2004: 75).

heteroglossic and anthropological approaches to language

In contrast to formal and folk-models of language, heteroglossia takes as its starting point the social and pragmatic functioning of language: '...verbal discourse is a social phenomenon – social through its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning' (Bakhtin 1981: 259). The notion of heteroglossia is thus congruous with traditions in anthropology of approaching language as essentially social, e.g. 'the main function of language is not to express thought, not to duplicate mental processes, but rather to play an active pragmatic part in human behaviour' (Malinowski 1965: v2: 7). This orientation does not deny the referential, or denotational, function of language, but conceptualizes reference as merely one pragmatic function among many in a system that is intrinsically pragmatic (Silverstein 1976: 20).

The Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia overlaps in significant ways with the semiotic and linguistic anthropological notion of non-referential indexicality as developed by Peirce (1955) and Silverstein (1976). Both are types of intertextuality, in which meanings of forms depend on past usages and associations of those forms rather than the arbitrary referential meaning carried by the

form. From these perspectives, language is never a neutral instrument of pure reference, as actual speech always occurs in a social context, which is never neutral or ahistorical. Talk and texts thus need to be understood in terms of past and ongoing social and political negotiations of which they are a part, not as forms in isolation:

The living utterances...cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threats, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. After all, the utterances arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it – it does not approach the object from the sidelines. (Bakhtin 1981: 276–7)

Non-referential indexical meanings are linked to history just as Bakhtinian voices are. Such indexical form–meaning relationships arise from historical usages by speakers in particular social positions. It is through recurrent connections between a social phenomenon or context and a linguistic form that non-referential indexical meanings are constituted to begin with (Peirce 1955). Particular phonetic patterns index a speaker's regional origins, for example, only through associations with actual speakers and their talk.

The emphasis on the inherent political dimension of all talk separates the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia from many sociolinguistic approaches to language variation, in which correlations between forms and categories of speakers is the focus, rather than the sociohistorical connotations or voices of the forms. In US correlational sociolinguistics (cf., e.g. Rickford and Eckert 2001), social categories have been treated as given, i.e. pre-existing any interaction, and the agency of individuals and the role of ideology in language use has been downplayed, or even denied (cf., e.g. Labov 1979: 328). Emphasizing the political and historical dimensions of language also stands in stark contrast to formal linguistics, of course, which takes a synchronic approach to language and meaning.

While indexicality and Bakhtinian heteroglossia encourage social and political readings of language and interaction, they are very difficult to operationalize. Indexicality, for example, has been described in relatively concise theoretical terms, but it encompasses a very large range of phenomena. Non-referential indexical forms are highly varied, ranging from phonetic features, to word choice, to visual features, to other stylistic dimensions of talk. The nature of indexical objects and the spatial and temporal distance between the indexical form and its object can also vary greatly (Silverstein 1992). While the scope of this semiotic dimension of talk makes it an attractive area for theorizing, it is difficult to make such theory operational because of the social, contextual and individual specificity of form–meaning relationships in the indexical mode (Hanks 2001: 120).

**code-switching research: from degeneracy,
to metaphorical strategy, to local discourse
contextualization, to no identifiable function**

Research on social functions and meanings of code-switching since the 1950s has repeatedly shifted in emphasis. Many language analysts through the 1960s, including those focusing on bilingualism (e.g. Weinreich 1953: 73) treated (intra-sentential) code-switching as linguistic interference, with connotations of linguistic, social or cognitive deficit. This orientation simply mirrors the dominant Western language ideology of monolingual speech as normal and code-switching as a mixed-up jumble that reflects speakers' inability to speak properly.

Starting in the early 1970s, John Gumperz (Blom and Gumperz 1972; Gumperz 1982) led research that countered this orientation, presenting code-switching as a form of skilled performance through which individual social actors could communicate various social and pragmatic meanings. Rather than representing a linguistic deficit or degeneration, code-switching was presented as complex, systematic and socially strategic behaviour.

Gumperz's (Blom and Gumperz 1972) early formulation focused on two functions of switches. *Situational* switches were made in response to changing situations, e.g. the need to accommodate to co-present speakers in one language or another. *Metaphorical* switches were more socially indexical. By partially violating an expected situation-code correlation, some aspect of meaning (parallel to a Bakhtinian voice) associated with the switched-into language is brought into the conversation. In such metaphorical switching, then, changes in language *effect* changes in context and social roles, without apparent prior changes in the physical or outward context.

At one level this formulation tends toward an essentialized linking of language, identity and sociocultural worlds. It is only when there are relatively conventionalized associations between language and social meanings that switches generate metaphorical meanings. Empirical research has shown that such metaphorical meanings are most often generated in situations where codes are relatively compartmentalized (e.g. Kroskrity 1993) or politically charged (e.g. Heller 1992) and have strong 'we' vs. 'they' associations (see also Maehlum 1996 for a critique of Blom and Gumperz's original work). More generally, empirical work shows that analysts' ideologies of languages as discrete systems are only sometimes consonant with the ideologies to which speakers appear to orient when talking. The empirical variation in ideologies to which speakers demonstrably orient illustrates the shortcomings of privileging the formal category of code-switching. A more socially oriented perspective, such as heteroglossia, can better account for this variation across social and historical contexts.

Beginning in the early 1980s, many researchers began documenting code-switching that was not done in response to changes in situation and

did not generate metaphorical meanings. Auer (1984, 1988, 1995, 1998) pioneered an influential and ongoing tradition of work that linked such socially unmarked code-switching to the omnipresent local exigencies of coordinating interaction. In this conversational management, or discourse contextualizing, mode, switches do not necessarily co-occur with external changes in the context (situational switches) or effect significant shifts in sociocultural framework (metaphorical switches). Individual switches instead serve local contextualization functions. In such unmarked discourse contextualization switching, conventionalized associations between particular codes and social worlds are at least partially suspended by participants (although not necessarily by co-present overhearers). Shifts in codes function as signals that there is a concurrent shift in speech activity – e.g. to a repair sequence or to a rhetorical question – but not necessarily in sociocultural framework. The act of alternation itself, rather than the direction of the shift, is the important dimension for discourse contextualization. This use of code-switching as a tool for local discourse management has been documented by numerous researchers, often with disparate labels. Zentella (1997) refers to such switching in terms of 'conversational strategies', 'in the head communicational factors', and, following Goffman (1979), 'footing'. Myers-Scotton (1993) calls this 'code switching as the unmarked choice', and Gumperz (1982) subsumes it under a larger category of 'conversational code switching'.

In these contexts of unmarked code-switching among peers, it is not always possible to ascribe *any* function to a particular switch. In a corpus of 1,685 switches among young New York Puerto Rican girls, for example, Zentella (1997: 101) assigns fewer than half of the switches to specific conversational strategies, or functions, because most of the individual switches do not have a clear, analytically defensible function and do not co-occur with particular interactional patterns. Similarly, Meeuwis and Blommaert (1998: 76) find that multilingual talk among Zairians in Belgium can represent 'one code in its own right', and that the insistence on two distinct languages as the frame of reference for this form of speech is not helpful in terms of interpreting it. Such work fundamentally challenges the taken-for-granted distinctiveness of the languages used in code-switching and the taken-for-granted distinctiveness of code-switching as a communicative phenomenon.

Key to such research have been methods and epistemologies associated with conversation analysis and with anthropology. Conversation analysis, which shaped Auer's seminal work, insists on empirical, electronically recorded data. This insistence, in conjunction with the availability of portable electronic recording devices by the late 1970s, is one reason for the increased documentation of unmarked, frequent and intrasentential code-switching. This type of code-switching is most common in informal, intragroup peer interaction, and portable recording devices allowed taping in the natural settings where this type of talk spontaneously occurs. Recordings – and resultant transcripts – made such switching patterns impossible to ignore.

Conversation analysis methods also limit the effects of individual subjectivity and assumptions by prescribing very narrow bases for explanation and argumentation: the analyst can invoke only those social constellations that interlocutors themselves demonstrably treat as meaningful in the interaction. While this can lead to austere analyses that are limited in scope to formal structures of conversation, the rigour of the method has encouraged more defensible claims about social meanings within code-switching research.

Interlocutors publicly display, and continuously update for each other, their ongoing understandings of talk. Implied in each turn is an understanding, or uptake, of the prior turn. Thus, the turn 'Fine' in response to the turn, 'How are you?' displays a particular understanding of that prior turn. Because interlocutors must make these negotiations visible to each other to achieve a degree of intersubjectivity, analysts can 'look over their shoulders' to gain a window onto the understandings that interlocutors themselves display of these processes (cf. Heritage and Atkinson 1984: 11). If individuals do not treat code switches in their interlocutors' prior turns as socially loaded, metaphorical actions, the analyst has no empirical basis for arguing that such switches encode significant metaphorical meanings, even though the analyst may *a priori* assume that they do.

A parallel methodological orientation in anthropology also contributes to efforts to see past popular and formal linguistic ideologies. The fieldworker consciously works to bracket cultural assumptions and understand subjects' worlds through members' categories, i.e., from an emic or native's point of view. The active suspension of commonsense assumptions helps one to partially overcome the omnipresent social science problem of subjectivity, e.g., to see meanings of code-switching as a code-switching subject might see them.

heteroglossia and identity in a bilingual segment of talk

To illustrate heteroglossia and its application to issues of identity, I present a segment of transcript below that documents a few moments of bilingual talk between two Dominican American high school students in an everyday interaction during a break at school. The two students, Janelle and Isabella, define themselves, and are defined by others, in multiple ways. Janelle was US-born and raised, and therefore a citizen, and had been to the Dominican Republic only once, as a baby. She identified herself as Spanish or Dominican, but outsiders frequently took her to be Black American until they heard her speaking Spanish. Isabella, who came to the United States at age 7, identified herself as Dominican or Spanish, and was occasionally seen by outsiders as Black American or Cape Verdean American.

The socially based construct of heteroglossia has several advantages over the narrower and formally defined construct of code-switching as a means to understanding social identity negotiations in this talk. Specifically, (a)

heteroglossia can encompass socially meaningful forms in both bilingual and monolingual talk; (b) it can account for the multiple meanings and readings of forms that are possible, depending on one's subject position; and (c) it can connect historical power hierarchies to the meanings and valences of particular forms in the here-and-now.

[JS #2 12:26:40] Isabella (came to the US around age 7) and Janelle (US-born) are sitting on steps outside of the main school building at the end of their lunch period. Isabella has returned from eating lunch at a diner near the school, and she has been describing the turkey club sandwich and cheeseburger she had just eaten.]

- Janelle: Only with that turkey thingee // *ya yo estoy llena*. ['I'm already full']
 Isabella: //Two dollars and fifty cent.
 Janelle: That's good. That's like a meal at //Burger King.
 Isabella: //That's better than going to Burger King, you know what I'm saying? And you got a Whopper, french fries, and a drink. And the french fries cost a dollar over there.
 Janelle: For real?
 Isabella: *Sí, sí cómo no?* ['Yes, really.']
 Janelle: *Mírale el ombligo. Míralo. Se le ve, ya se lo tapó.* ((looking at a passerby)) ['Look at her belly button. Look. You can see it, she already covered it.']
 (.5)
 Isabella: *Seguro porque se lo enseñó.* ['She must have showed it.'] ((laughing))
 (1.5)
 Isabella: But it's slamming, though, oh my God, mad ['a lot of'] turkey she puts in there.
 Janelle: That's one thing I l-, I love the way *como l-* ['how th-'] the American be doing sandwich, they be rocking ['are excellent'], them things, yo, they put everything up in there, yo.
 Isabella: De pla:ne, de pla:ne. ((an airplane passes overhead))

The notion of code-switching is less useful in analysing this interaction than the broader and socially-infused concept of heteroglossia. Janelle and Isabella code switch into Spanish several times in this segment, but none of the switches generates any obvious metaphorical meanings. One switch into Spanish – *Mírale el ombligo...* – functions to hide the meanings of their talk from a non-Spanish-speaker passerby about whom they are talking, but it is not obvious what social functions, if any, are served by the other switches.

While such switches are locally unmarked, the concept of heteroglossia affords attention to meanings in a larger sociopolitical field. Janelle and Isabella's switches are *locally* unmarked in terms of identity negotiations, but frequent switching as a discourse mode is always socially marked in a wider US society in which being a monolingual English speaker is an ideological default against which difference or distinctiveness is constructed (Urciuoli 1996). The perspective of heteroglossia allows one to distinguish between *local* functions of particular code switches and the functions in the larger sociopolitical field of identity formation in ways that a more formal perspective of code-switching does not (cf. Myers-Scotton 1993: 149; Zentella 1997: 101).

Meanings of code-switching are contested in this larger sociopolitical field. Various nativist English-only groups, for example, have sponsored legislation to criminalize the use of languages other than English in many contexts, including school, government and workplace. They portray such language alternation as undermining American unity, citizenship and decency. Many academics of the last 25 years, in contrast, have treated such code-switching as a discourse mode which can be seen as a form of resistance to dominant discourses of unquestioning assimilation (Gal 1988: 259), or as a means of constructing a positive self in a political and economic context that disparages immigrant phenotypes, language, class status and ethnic origins (Zentella 1997: 13). The ways in which these meanings vary depending on one's subject position – speaker, nativist American, or socially oriented language analyst – illustrate the subjective and social construction of heteroglossic meanings that is characteristic of talk more generally.

The focus in code-switching research on constellations of linguistic features that are officially authorized as codes or languages, e.g. 'English' or 'Spanish', can contribute to neglect of the diversity of socially indexical linguistic resources within codes. The English that Isabella and Janelle use in the exchange above, for example, includes prescriptivist standard American English forms, non-standard vernacular forms, lexical forms associated with African American English, and grammatical forms that occur only in African American English. Their talk also includes an explicitly intertextual reference to popular culture: Isabella's *De pla:ne, de pla:ne* as she observes a plane passing overhead. This utterance represents an example of Bakhtinian double-voicing, in which words are spoken as if they are to be understood as being in quotation marks. Her utterance is an intertextual reference to the words spoken by actor Herve Villechaize at the opening of each episode of the television show *Fantasy Island*, which premiered on US television in 1977. Villechaize spoke these words with strong second-language phonology as *de plane, de plane*, and the phrase entered the popular culture vocabulary of many Americans, who still use it to verbally mark the passing of airplanes overhead.

Their Spanish similarly indexes particular linguistic histories. Their pronunciation of word-initial *y* as an affricate /dʒ/ (e.g. in *ya yo*), and their

elision of syllable final /s/ (e.g. in *e(s)toy*), for example, are characteristic of Caribbean Spanish, particularly Dominican and lower class varieties (Lipski 1994). Word order used by Isabella – *mad turkey she puts in there* – suggests the influence of Spanish discourse patterns on her English. She preposes the direct object of the verb in this segment in what has been called fronting, focal object construction (Silva-Corvalán 1983: 135), or focus-movement (Prince 1981). These heteroglossic forms in both English and Spanish – whether at the phonological, lexical, grammatical or discourse level – index social histories, circumstances and identities in ways that a binary perspective of code-switching commonly neglects.

A further strength of heteroglossia as a perspective is that it directs the analyst to historical social relations, rather than just details of surface form, to interpret language meanings. Each of the locally unmarked linguistic features enumerated above, for example, draws its meaning from contrast with an implicit field of alternate forms, the relative valences of which are a function of historical power relations. Code-switching and other language contact features are meaningful only in contrast to monolingual speech. Caribbean Spanish phonology is meaningful in contrast to Mexican, South American and peninsular varieties, particularly Castilian. African American English is meaningful in contrast to varieties associated with White Americans, and the youth vocabulary contrasts with the vocabulary of adult speakers.

In each case, the meaningful opposition is between an unmarked form associated with groups historically or currently in power (monolingual Americans; speakers of Castilian varieties of Spanish; White Americans; and adults) and marked forms that index lower positions in social hierarchies. Meaningful oppositions arise in this instance not on the basis of formal distance among forms, but on the basis of historical power differentials with which particular forms are associated. The perspective of heteroglossia explicitly bridges the linguistic and the sociohistorical, enriching analysis of human interaction.

The variety and juxtaposition of linguistic resources by Janelle and Isabella in the above exchange reflect their negotiations of social boundaries and meanings. Their alternation of English and Spanish and contact forms diminish a linguistic boundary that others have created. Their ongoing use of forms (e.g. code-switching, African American English, and Dominican phonology) that are disparaged by dominant groups suggests resistance to hegemonic belief systems regarding language. Maintenance of non-prestige forms can serve as a vehicle of resistance to disparaging discourses on language, race and identity from dominant groups in society and reproduce local solidarity. Their use of forms associated with urban African American youth, particularly Janelle's use of African American English syntax, suggests both longer-term contact with African Americans and identification with African American experiences. Janelle's use of the term 'American' to refer to a group that is implicitly distinct from her suggests (although she is US-born and a US citizen)

that she identifies herself with reference to another nation-state or in terms of racial/ethnic categories in which she doesn't count as 'American'.³ The juxtaposition of diverse linguistic elements in single utterances, e.g. *I love the way como I- the American be doing sandwich* reflects social negotiations and a social reality in which neither linguistic practices nor social identities fit into static, unitary categories of language and identity.

It is tempting to label Isabella and Janelle's identities and ways of speaking as 'hybrid', 'mixed' or 'syncretic', but I argue against the *analytical* use of such terms here because they so easily express and reproduce dominant ideologies of essentialism. The term 'hybridity' is only meaningful against a backdrop of essentialism that analysts generally claim to have rejected. While many postcolonial theorists use the term to refer to novel cultural forms with roots in seemingly disparate experiences, others struggle with the terms. Critics argue that 'hybridity', like popular folk-terms such as 'diversity', 'multicultural', 'heterogeneous' and 'pluralism', can all pay lip service to certain types of social difference, while implicitly reinforcing the political and economic boundaries that constitute those groups as different and unequal (Hutnyk 2005; Young 1995; Chow 1998).

In labelling a system as syncretic, an analyst highlights the discrete heritage of individual components of a system and suggests some incommensurability of those parts. Since all social systems are a function of multiple influences and histories, what counts as a relevant opposition within a system is a contested, subjective and shifting question. As with the term 'hybridity', 'syncretism' carries with it connotations of pure and coherent anterior systems. Beliefs or practices are most often termed syncretic when they violate Western analysts' implicit assumptions of purity and inherent discreteness.

In anthropology, for example, the term 'syncretic' has often been used to describe the religious practices of the Afro-Caribbean, as if European Catholicism and African religious beliefs and practices were each pure and fundamentally different. When Christianity includes pagan practices such as celebration of evergreen trees around the time of the Winter solstice, however, it is not seen as syncretic. Linguistically, English is not commonly seen as a hybrid, or creole language, despite the readily apparent effects of Norman French on the language(s) of Britain from the period following the Norman Conquest in 1066. Languages, or language change, that develop from European colonization of other parts of the world, in contrast, are typically seen as hybrid or creole, e.g. Jamaican creole or Haitian creole. Whether one counts two aspects of a system as discrete and not-entirely-compatible, and therefore syncretic, depends on one's subject position and historical power relations rather than the nature of the forms or systems in and of themselves. While analysts can use these terms as parts of projects that are not essentializing (e.g. Hill and Hill 1986), these words are intertextual, carrying with them connotations of usage in essentializing projects.

code-switching as a social construction

While the notion that identity categories such as race or ethnicity are socially constructed is now an academic commonplace, bilingualism, as both a popular and analytical category, is not generally seen as a social construction. There are fundamental parallels, however, in the social and political processes through which difference is constructed among social identity categories and among the linguistic forms that count as bilingual talk. Both, for example, are popularly seen as having self-evident, empirical bases, and both form parts of the highly naturalized assumption of a language-race-nation unity. In both cases, however, the conceptualizations, salience and social significance of the categories are a function of social and political processes rather than inherent, or essential characteristics of members of the categories. The fact that bilingual speech draws both popular and academic attention may tell us relatively little about the nature of code-switching, and relatively more about popular and academic language ideologies of Western nation-states.

Conceptualizing bilingual speech as a social construction does not minimize its on-the-ground social implications. An example from social identity categories can help make this clear: the fact that Black-White race in the United States is a social construction, for example, does not make race an illusion or socially insignificant (Omi and Winant 1994). Race has been, and remains, a central organizing principle in the United States and a way of representing, rationalizing and reproducing tremendous social inequality. Approaching race as a social construction, however, allows one to see that race is not about essential biological difference (which is how race is popularly construed) but about social history. What is socially significant about race is a distinctively violent history of coercion and inequality, not details of hair texture, skin shade or other morphological features. The social constructionist perspective directs attention to the political and historical processes through which race has been constituted and given such significance in the US.

Similarly, approaching monolingualism and bilingualism as socially constructed does not change their social force at the level of lived experience, but it does show that this social force is not a function of formal, or inherent linguistic differences among what count as languages. If bilingual talk is an especially meaningful mode of speaking, it is not the nature of the forms that make it so but rather particular social and political histories.

Studying bilingual talk can be a route to understanding social boundary work not because of the formal nature of bilingual talk, but because all talk is social and political. In contexts such as Western societies where code-switching has been made to count as particularly socially meaningful, insights into identity negotiations can come from attention to the social and political processes that have made monolingual-versus-bilingual speech a meaningful opposition. Analytical constructs that are based on form, such as code-switching, or that imply anterior, pure essences, such as hybridity, divert attention from the social

and political nature of language, behaviour and meaning. More processual and socially-infused constructs such as heteroglossia and indexicality better direct attention to the irreducibly sociohistorical and ideological bases of language meanings and identity construction. Heteroglossia and indexicality are fundamentally about intertextuality, the ways that talk in the here-and-now draws meanings from past instances of talk. Such terms encourage us to interpret the meanings of talk in terms of the social worlds, past and present, of which words are part-and-parcel, rather than in terms of formal systems, such as codes, that can veil actual speakers, uses and contexts.

notes

1. In this chapter I use the terms 'bilingualism', 'bilingual speech' and 'code-switching' interchangeably. My interest in bilingualism here is only in its instantiation in speech, not as a state or capability.
2. This language ideology is also reflected in commonly expressed folk explanations for code-switching: 'they/we switch because they/we don't know the word in the other language'; 'they/we switch so that person X can understand better'; and 'they switched to hide what they were saying from person Y'.
3. In everyday Dominican American usage, the term 'American' (or *americano*) refers to 'White American' (cf. Urciuoli 1996 among New York Puerto Ricans). United States-born Dominican Americans such as Janelle identify themselves as 'American' in some contexts, e.g. in referring to citizenship or the passport they have, but they identify 'what they are' as Dominican/Spanish/Hispanic. These categories are mutually exclusive from the category White/American in local terms.

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