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Creole Metaphors in Cultural Analysis: On the Limits and Possibilities of (Socio-)Linguistics

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Abstract [i]

It is sometimes suggested that creole language study provides important concepts and metaphors for the analysis of cultural processes within globalisation and transnational flow. This paper argues, however, that although it may have served as a useful heuristic in certain cases, most of creole linguistics has been grounded in a set of assumptions and procedures that now look increasingly doubtful, both within linguistics and anthropology more generally. After some critical comments on politics and methodology within this subdisciplinary area, there is an overview of the challenge presented by a number of larger shifts in language study, and the paper concludes with a socio-linguistic analysis of situated interaction which, we argue, provides a much better framework for understanding the dynamics of syncretic practice than the study of creole grammar.

1 Introduction

In their attempt to model cultural processes within globalisation and transnational flow, anthropologists have wondered whether linguistic research on creoles and creolisation might provide a helpful set of metaphors. In a series of influential discussions (1987, 1989, 1996), Hannerz suggests that working as 'a root metaphor', linguistic creolisation might help to promote a research agenda which involved:

a) a decentring of anthropological description, freeing it from totalising assumptions about integrated cultural systems and homogenous communities;
b) a distributive view of culture as systems of meaning, which also reckons with the reflexivity of human agents, and with the ways "in which people develop a certain awareness of, and familiarity with, cultural forms which are not primarily theirs, at least not at the given moment; even if these forms are out of reach.. or not actually well understood" (1987:549)
c) an engagement with popular culture and with the ability of media technology "to create new social relations and contexts" (1987:555);
d) a recognition of the ways in which "the merger of quite different streams can create a particular intensity in cultural processes" (ibid).
e) an analysis that addresses global inequalities but that allows "small facts [to] get in the way of large issues, [that isn't] too sure that the dominant is totally dominant, [and that is] concerned with what the peripheries do both for themselves and to the centre" (ibid 556).

This paper very much agrees with Hannerz on the significance of these issues, and to the extent that 'creolisation' has in fact already served as a useful heuristic in the development of this kind of 'macro-anthropology', we welcome it as a valuable example of cross-disciplinary borrowing and adaptation. At the same time, though, we are concerned that the underlying view of creole language study might be just a little too kind to the linguistic traditions in which it emerged.

In a number of key respects, creole linguistics belongs to the very same 'episteme' that Hannerz seeks to transcend, and it displays several major features that are potentially antipathetic to the interests that he expresses. In what follows, we will (i) offer a characterisation of some of the main debates that have shaped creole language

study, at least in the Atlantic and Caribbean, arguing that it has been heavily influenced both by ideologies of 'race' and by emphatically modernist preoccupations with total explanation, system and autonomy. After that, we will (ii) try to situate creole linguistics within linguistics more generally, pointing to a major paradigm shift currently in progress, and then (iii) illustrate the recent development of alternative modes of sociolinguistic analysis which, we think, are likely to provide much sharper purchase on the issues that Hannerz is concerned with.

It is worth beginning with an outline of some of the central ideological strands in creole language study.

2   Ideologies in Creole Linguistics

There is general agreement that pidgins and creoles developed as a result of interaction in different parts of the world between mainly European traders and colonisers on the one hand, and mainly colonised, mostly black or brown people on the other. One of the most geographically extensive and also most historically abrupt examples of this was the forced collision associated with the Atlantic slave trade and its aftermath, and debates within creole linguistics reflect the continuing resonance of this.

Right up until the mid-20th century, debates were dominated by a crude view advanced by white European and North American linguists that pidgins and creoles were defective corruptions of 'higher' European languages and that they were not really worthy of serious study (cf Holm 1988:13-70). According to Holm, "[t]he 'thick lips and thick minds'[ii] theory of the origins of black speech varieties has a long history, even in the works of creolists who were enlightened for their times" (1988:23). Creole speakers were considered uncivilised and incompetent learners of standard European languages, and the origins of pidgins and creoles were, for example, sometimes explained in terms of 'baby-talk', a theory that Holm [1988:33] attributes to Schuchardt at the start of the 20th century but that can also be found in Bloomfield

> "Speakers of a lower language may make so little progress in learning the dominant speech, that the masters, in communicating with them resort to 'baby-talk'. This 'baby talk' is the masters' imitation of the subjects' incorrect speech. There is reason to believe that it is by no means an exact imitation, and that some of its features are based not upon the subjects' mistakes but upon grammatical relations that exist within the upper language itself. The subjects, in turn, deprived of the correct model, can do no better now than to acquire the simplified 'baby-talk' version of the upper language." (1935:472)

This interest in the origins and development of creole languages points to a recurrent sense of their 'Otherness', of their typological distinctiveness and of the ways in which they differ from 'normal' European languages. But it also carries a major methodological problem. Analysis of the early history of creoles is considerably impeded by the limited availability of written historical records on the original creole speaking populations. The subordinated position of these populations generally compelled them to develop and rely on largely oral and covert traditions (Scott 1990), and as McWhorter (1996) noted in oral debate

> "[even b]efore I was born, we [creole linguists] noticed that these Creoles tended to be spoken in places where there used to be plantations, and we decided well, it must be the plantation demographics that created these languages, but we must remember that it wasn't filmed, it wasn't written down, nobody was there, that's just a hypothesis, we don't know." (1999:315)

McWhorter points to the necessarily very speculative character of research on the origins and development of creole languages, and in fact, one of the most common phrases appearing in the work of creole linguists as they attempt their reconstructions of the past is "must have". For example:

"Bilingualism and multilingualism were already common in pre-colonial Africa, and there must have been many polyglots among the enslaved Africans in Jamaica" (Alleyne, 1989:122)

"But, as the population [of slave plantation societies] soared, these early immigrants too were reduced to a small percentage of the population. Increasingly, throughout the growth period, newcomers must have acquired whatever knowledge of the superstrate they could gather, not from native speakers, nor even from those who had learned from native speakers, but from those who had learned from non-native speakers, speakers who in turn may have had very limited exposure to non-native varieties of the superstrate. In other words, the growth phase must normally have been characterised by a progressive dilution of the superstrate." (Bickerton, 1989:18)

"The existence of a Pidgin English at Kormantin, expanded beyond the jargon stage, has been shown to be highly unlikely. While a restructured variety must certainly have existed, this very probably was used for communication with whites only and therefore there would have been no motivation for using it in [McWhorter's] plantation diglossia" (Huber, 1999:103).

This relative lack of empirical evidence not only creates a wide space for theoretical speculation. It also provides open ground for ideological contention, and this can be seen, for example, in the dispute between universal and substrate theories of the origins, development and classification of creole languages.

The Danish linguist Otto Jespersen, for example, attributed their origins to universal processes of language acquisition, judging that the minds of their speakers were "just as innocent of grammar as those of very small babies." (1922:228; Holm 1988:36). In the interactions where pidgin and creole languages emerged, subordinated populations were credited with little creative influence, and little significance was attached to the source languages that they had brought with them (for example, Yoruba, Ewe or Akan among creole and pidgin speakers from West Africa).

The influence of African source languages – the 'substrate' – became an especially significant issue, however, in the wake of the movements in the 1960s for independence in Africa and the Caribbean and for black power and civil rights in the US. Here, the emergence of creoles was construed as spectacular collective survival and creativity, accomplished by people living in conditions of extreme subordination, and Alleyne's comments point to the ideology that motivated this view:

'In the early sixties when the work began to take shape in my own mind, my interest in creole language studies was overwhelmingly academic and objective ... The study of so-called "creole" languages and of the language of Afro-Americans in general has since taken on new dimensions and a new significance, having become involved in the social, cultural, and political conflicts of our times ... "the Black revolution" threw Afro-American studies into a new focus and gave them a new urgency ... In the Caribbean, the reevaluation and regeneration of non-European-derived forms of behaviour is seen as a necessary factor in the development of the area.' (1980:1; see also eg Dalphinis 1985; Warner-Lewis 1996).

In line with this, there was an intense interest in those aspects of the social history of Africans in the Americas that led to African cultural retentions, and language was treated alongside music, dance, religion, art, folk-tales, proverbs etc ("Language is similar to other aspects of culture in that it is learned in the socialization process. It undergoes change and development in relation to social interactional processes" (Alleyne, 1993:167)).

Between these two perspectives – the universalist and the substrate – there has in fact been a heated argument that has continued in a number of different guises to the present, with one side implicitly seeing subordinated creole-speaking peoples as relatively

passive vessels for the operation of general linguistic and psychological processes, and the other treating language as the product of people struggling to retain cultural roots in spite of repression. But among other things, both sides have been united in a search for *total* explanation, licenced by the paucity of the historical record. Given its emphasis on historically situated struggle, one might expect that mixed or partial explanations would be at least potentially acceptable to the substrate position, but according to Alleyne, comprehensive theory retains its prestige as the central goal of inquiry:

> "... to the extent that language is an aspect of culture, a theory of Afro-American language will be informed by a general theory of Afro-American culture. Stated otherwise, a theory of Afro-American language will be more powerful as it is more general in terms of accounting for Afro-American culture in general" (Alleyne, 1993:168).

Indeed, Mühlhäusler - himself a creolist - identifies a number of other features that draw substratists and universalists together inspite of their disagreements. Their positions diverge to the extent that

> "[u]niversalists believe that human agency in grammar making is just superficial tinkering and biologically-based forces will determine the more basic and lasting aspects of Pidgin and Creole grammar. Substratists, on the other hand, regard Pidgin and Creole as new containers for old culturally determined knowledge." (1995:244)

They share, however, a common metaphorical frame which comprises:

> "1. the reification metaphor that languages are things which can be looked at objectively outside their temporal and social context;
> 2. the conduit metaphor which assigns a central role to the grammatical code - the device which transforms messages into signals and vice versa;
> 3. a kind of container metaphor, that Pidgins and Creoles are containers which can be filled with either substratum or biologically founded grammatical rules."(1995:244)

At this point, it is worth turning to the position of creole language study within linguistics more generally.

3   Creole language study and the shift in linguistics

So far, our characterisation of creole linguistics has pointed to a history of ideologically charged arguments about the pedigree of creoles (their origins, development and classification), to the limitations of the data available for such analysis, and to the totalising ambitions of the creole language theory. Finally, we cited Mühlhäusler on a number of problems in the conceptualisation of language itself, and it is this that the current section elaborates on.

Within the linguistics academy, there are a number of ways in which the study of Creole languages has actually been quite radical. Both Sebba (1997:288) and Mühlhäusler (1992) talk about it as a 'theory-buster', challenging gradualist ('family tree') models of language evolution and the synchronic bias of structural linguistics, and there can be no doubt that in some quarters, it has involved a very profound rethinking of the basis of linguistics - LePage and Tabouret-Keller (1985), for example, argue that creoles provide a model for a great deal of language generally, and they use this to develop a fully dialogical - indeed rather Bakhtinian - view of language (1985). Even so, an enormous amount of the day to day empirical work appears to accept the assumptions that have dominated linguistics at large, namely:

1.   that language study is centrally concerned with systematicity in grammar (and coherence in discourse)

2.   that people learn to talk grammatically (and coherently) from extensive early socialisation in families and fairly stable local social networks.

In line with this, grammatical systematicity has, as Mühlhäusler intimates, been something of the creole linguist's holy grail (= 1), and the question of whether or not there are infants and children involved has been central to differentiation of a creole from a pidgin (= 2).

In fact, the tenacity of assumptions 1 and 2 extends well beyond creole studies, and can even be found in those branches of language study where one might least expect them. Sociolinguistics has long contested Chomsky's prioritisation of grammar and his idealisation about homogeneous speech communities (cf Mühlhäusler's 'reification metaphor'), and it has made variation and diversity its *raison d' être* from the 1960s onwards. In spite of this, however, the belief has been that variation and diversity are describably *structured*, and whenever they've met it, sociolinguists' strongest instinct has been to unearth what they supposed was an orderliness and uniformity beneath the surface, an orderliness laid down in the early years of socialisation.[iii]

More recently, however, a number of linguists have been attending to debates about late modernity in sociology and cultural theory, and to the kinds of issue that Hannerz foregrounds (cf (a) to (e) in Section 1 above). There is a growing resonance when Zygmunt Bauman wonders whether "the reality to be modelled is... much more fluid, heterogeneous and under-patterned than anything sociologists have tried to grasp intellectually in the past" (Bauman 1992:65), and this kind of reconceptualisation is carried over into creole and socio-linguistics by papers such as LePage's "Focussing and diffusion" (1980), or M. L. Pratt's "Linguistic utopias" (1987). To get a glimpse of the shift in progress, it is worth briefly reviewing some of the ways in which notions such as 'speech community' and 'grammatical regularity' are being reassessed.

Historically, a speech community has been conceptualised as an empirically identifiable 'real' thing, a body of people who interact regularly, who have attitudes and/or pragmatic rules in common, and who constitute the largest unit that one can generalise about in any given study (cf eg Gumperz 1968; Labov 1989). That view, however, is now breaking down and the concept is splitting in two (actually compatible) directions (cf Rampton 1998 for full discussion). In one direction, the concept translates into an intensive focus on the lived texture of situated experience in 'communities of practice' - community here being face-to-face interaction in well-established settings and social relationships like workshops, classrooms, marriages etc (cf eg Eckert and McGonnell-Ginet 1992). In the other direction, following scholars such as Anderson 1983, "community" is analysed as itself a totalising concept, an ideological sign that is used to constitute groups and to link languages with peoples (Gal and Irvine 1995).

These reformulations substantially complicate the traditional idea that a creole is the language of a "new speech community". The fragmentation of community entailed in the first approach synchronises well with late-modern uncertainty about grand totalisations, and it invites us to conceptualise any given creole as just one element in a much larger local multilingual repertoire, with different varieties operating in different communities-of-practice . In the second perspective - 'community' seen as an ideological sign - attention turns to the social and political mechanisms and interests involved in the definition, description and evaluation of creole-using groups, thereby providing us with analytic purchase on exactly the same kinds of issue that were addressed in Section 2 (stereotyping, othering, total explanation).

Turning to the issue of grammatical regularity, another set of problems arises. For most of the last 30 years, linguists working on natural speech data have given primacy to language use that is relaxed, informal and unself-conscious, judging that this is where grammatical system and regularity can best be found. Recently, however, there has been a very substantial growth of interest in *artful performance,* where "there's heightened awareness of both the act of expression and the performer" (Bauman 1986:3; Bauman & Briggs 1990), as well as in intertextuality and double-voicing, where there is an uneasiness in speech produced by its penetration by other people's talk (see below and footnote 9). Developments like these start to challenge the emphasis that mainstream variationist sociolinguistics has given to the idea of an unconscious core vernacular, making it look rather Fordist, and they are underpinned by a larger shift in our sense of

the origins of meaning, a shift which moves the locus of meaning from system to situated practice (cf eg Verschueren 1999). Instead of seeing language simply as system output, language-as-a-set-of-conventions-or-mental-structures gets pushed down to being just one among a number of semiotic resources available for local text production and interpretation. And instead of system itself being viewed as the main carrier of meaning - cf Mühlhäusler on the 'conduit metaphor' - meaning gets analysed as a process of here-and-now inferencing that ranges across all kinds of locally contingent percept, sign and knowledge, and that is carried out by agents with often very different sense-making resources at their disposal. All of these developments now make it much easier for linguistics to engage in the nonce, the anomalous, and the spectacular (cf (b), (c) and (d) in Section 1 above).

As the quotation from Mühlhäusler itself testifies, a number of creolists are responding seriously to developments like these, and according to Jourdan 1991:189, there is now "a new conception of social formations that puts the indvidual at the center of social relations, thus stressing the dialogic, contextual, and fluid nature of individual and collective praxis and agency" (1991:189, and Sebba 1993 for an excellent example). Even so, it is important not to underestimate the extent to which these reorientations carry consequences for creole studies as a whole. The traditional idea that "[c]reoles... are... pidgins which have become the first language of a new generation of speakers" (Mühlhäusler 1997:186) falls into disarray when the study of contemporary pidgins identifies processes of grammatical development that "result... from [their] use in new media (radio, print) and [their] use as a form of art" (Mühlhäusler 1997:184; also Sebba 1997; Jourdan 1991; also (c) in Section 1 above), and if it is likely that the dynamics of interaction and artful performance are important for the development of grammatical complexity - if the maturation of infant brains is no longer adequate as an explanation - then decontextualised texts, filleted ready for structural analysis, are no longer adequate as data, and lexical or grammatical analysis are no longer sufficient as analytic tools. Invoking social context *ad hoc* as an auxiliary factor when grammatical analysis ran aground may have been acceptable in the past (Hymes 1971:9; LePage 1994), but this can hardly be an option if the situated use of a language might actually play quite a fundamental role in determining its grammatical shape. All in all, any approach which treats language as a stable, delimitable object of study - the 'reification metaphor' - becomes highly problematic.

Since neither of us are committed creole linguists, we are not in a position to assess the extent to which creole studies has successfully adapted to the growing influence of these alternative perspectives, though in passing it is perhaps worth noting that they produce some tangible uneasiness in the concluding chapters of the textbooks on creoles and pidgins by both Mülhäusler (1997) and Sebba (1997). Even so, there do seem to be good grounds for doubting the value of traditional creole language study as a ground-breaking model or template for the analysis of cultural contact. Although there are some outstanding exceptions (eg LePage and Tabouret-Keller), on the whole it would be safer and more accurate to regard creole linguistics as the relatively recondite product of a subsidiary special interest group rather than as a beacon for the investigation of intercultural pocesses. In fact, if one wants to see some of the fundamental ways in which people process cultural mixing, translation and difference, then it would be much better to go *directly* to dialogic interaction, and it is this that we will try to illustrate in the next section.

4 Interaction as a site of 'transcultural' encounter

In this section, we shall look closely at a short stretch of face-to-face interaction between a white monolingual Anglo adult and several adolescents, one of them Anglo and two of second-generation migrant descent. In it, both of the boys of Pakistani descent switch into a strongly accented Indian English, one of them uses (a version of) Jamaican Creole, and the Anglo boy produces some playground Panjabi.

This kind of switching into other people's ethnic languages - or 'crossing' as it is called in Rampton 1995 - is actually fairly common, both in Britain and elsewhere (see also Hewitt 1986, Back 1995, Rampton (ed) 1999), and in the data-set that the extract comes from,[iv] there were about 68 episodes in which white and African Caribbean adolescents used Panjabi, about 120 exchanges involving stylised Asian English, and more than 250 episodes in which a Jamaican creole influence was clearly detectable in the speech of white or Asian youngsters. Given the dearth of empirical data on interactional processes leading to the emergence of Atlantic and Caribbean creole languages, we certainly can't claim that the social and interactional relations evidenced here should be of special interest to creole linguists. But we are confident that in many parts of the world, broadly comparable processes can be found in situations of domination, inequality and ethnic difference (cf Rampton (ed) 1999), and that generalised speculation about the way in which groups are or were likely to respond to such conditions provides very little purchase on the intricate patterning of actual linguistic behaviour.

The analysis that follows differs from traditional creole linguistics in paying relatively little attention either to grammatical processes or to the reconstruction of linguistic history. In their place, however, it points to a framework for socio-linguistic analysis that

- offers a much richer set of tools for addressing cultural processes within globalisation and transnational flow (cf (a) to (e) in Section 1)
- retains an ability to engage with historical processes
- is well-tuned to the reconceptualisations of language practice outlined in Section 3, and
- also affords productive connection with traditional anthropological notions like ritual and liminality.

In the 30 seconds or so of talk that the data extract covers, institutional power differences, ethnic inheritance, racism and histories of imperialism are all at issue. They are transposed, however, to a level of local interactional negotiation where one can observe human agents reflexively reworking the baggage and boundaries of ethnic descent, tentatively constructing new solidarities through language switching.

Here is the extract:

Extract 1

Participants: Asif (15 yrs old, male, Pakistani descent), Kazim (15, male, Pakistani descent), Alan (15, male, Anglo descent), Ben (the researcher/author, 30+, male, Anglo descent).

Setting: 1987. Having recorded these three friends with radio-microphones during their informal recreation, Ben is trying to get some feedback on extracts from the recordings. But the boys are in high spirits, Asif and Alan have just been talking playground Panjabi into the microphone from close up, and Ben is now trying to reestablish their commitment to the listening activity.

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 1    Ben: right shall I- shall we shall we stop there
 2  Kazim: no
 3   Alan: no come | on carry on
 4   Asif:         | do another extract
 5    Ben: le- lets have (.) | then you have to give me
more=
 6   Alan:                   | carry on
 7    Ben: =attention gents
 8   Asif: ((quieter)) yeh | alright
 9   Alan: ((quieter))     |   alright
10   Asif: ((quieter))     |    yeh
11    Ben: I need more attention
12  Kazim ((in Indian English)):  I AM VERY SORRY BEN JAAD
                                 [ AI Qm veRi sÅRi  ben dZAˇd]
13   Asif ((in Indian English)):  ATTENTION BENJAMIN
                                  [´thenSAˇn bendZ´mIn]
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14       :  | ((laughter))
15   Ben:  | right well you can- we cn-
16  Alan:  | BENJAADEMIN
17   Ben: we can continue but we er must concentrate a bit
18          | more
19  Asif:  | yeh
20  Alan: alright             | (go on) then
21 Asif((in Indian English)):  | concentrating very hard
                                [ kÅ)ns´stRetI˜ veRi AR]
22   Ben: okay    right
23       : ((giggles dying down))
24 Kazim((in Indian English)): what a stupid (      )
                                [v√d ´stupId ]
25   Ben ((returning the microphone to what he considers to
be a
           better position to catch all the speakers)):
concentrate
           a little bit-
26  Alan: alright then
27 Kazim ((in Creole)): stop movin dat ting aroun
                                [ dQt tIN ´®AUn]
28   Ben: WELL YOU stop moving it around and then I'll
won't
29          need to (.)  r|ight
30 Kazim ((in Creole)): | stop moving dat ting aroun
                                [dQ? tIN ´®AUn]
31   Ben: right okay   |
32 Kazim:              | BEN JAAD
33  Alan: ((laughs))
34   Ben: what are you doing
35  Alan: ben jaa|ad
36   Ben:        | well leave (    ) alone
37 Kazim: IT'S HIM that ben jaad over there
38   Ben: right
((Ben continues his efforts to reinstitute the listening
activity))
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We will return to more general transcultural issues in due course, but before that, it is worth taking a little time to attend to two aspects of the fine grain in the interaction here:

i) the precise siting of the switches into different speech varieties, particularly stylised Asian English and Caribbean creole (taken here as an emic local dialect rather than as an analytic problem space); and

ii) the processes of symbolic evocation involved in these switches away from ordinary vernacular English.[v]

(i) Interactional siting: Ritual and remedial interchanges

It is fairly obvious that the extract involves a struggle between two different definitions of the situation - very approximately, Ben's research-oriented 'retrospective-participant-commentary-on-extracts-of-recorded-data' vs their 'havin'-a-good-time-listening-to-Ben's-tapes'. But within this higher level indeterminacy, the precise moments when the boys actually switch codes are also significant.

In lines 5 & 7 of the extract, Ben lays down the conditions for carrying on with the listening activity, and he also implies that the boys have made it pretty difficult hitherto and that it'll be their own fault if the event's terminated. Asif and Alan appear to accept the conditions, and then a small sequence of ritual remediation begins in which the boys use stylised Asian English: Kazim apologises in line 12; Asif declares his allegiance to what Ben wanted in lines 13 and 21; and Kazim seems to take Ben's

perspective in line 24's muttered disapproval. But of course none of this can be taken at face value. According to Goffman (1971), in apologies people split themselves into two parts - the self that was guilty in the past, and now the new self that recognises the offence and disavows the self of old. And so normally, you'd expect people apologising for noisy disorder to signal the split by switching into relatively quiet, serious, sincere voices. Not so here. In this episode the boys apologise for messing around by moving into a conspicuously false accent, which is accompanied with an equally contradictory loudness and hilarity.

In fact a moment later, just as Ben seems to be signaling 'back-to-business' by repositioning the microphone, the boot moves to the other foot, Kazim switches into creole in line 27 and himself directs a 'prime' at Ben, this time constructing *Ben's* activity as an impropriety. Rather than a remedial sequence, this leads to a short 'run-in' in which Ben accounts for his action by laying the offence with Kazim, a move which Kazim ignores by simply repeating his directive. Ben doesn't then take issue with this, but instead continues his efforts to reinstate the listening activity, using some optimistic boundary markers ("right, okay, right" - lines 29, 31 & 38). The boys respond with "ben jaad", a nickname in multi-ethnic peer-group Panjabi, which is later discovered to be an accidental invention of Alan's, falling ambiguously between [ben jAR], meaning 'Ben, friend', and [pEn tSçd], 'sister fucker'.

The main structural point to make is that the boys switch into Asian English, Creole and Panjabi just at the moments when transgression and impropriety are made the focal issues. As we've already said, our sense of the common moral order of everyday life is temporarily jeopardised when infractions arise, and when this happens, we don't simply seek to repair whatever's been damaged or disrupted. What we mainly look for are signs of the culprit's more general respect and regard for social rules and the order we approve (Goffman 1971:98).

What the boys provide, of course, is something rather different. It's not just that they withhold support for the norms and decorum that Ben's appealing to. They actually switch into language varieties which symbolically activate domains of meaning where a white man's judgment *loses* a lot of its legitimacy. The boys switch into Asian English in a sequence where they bow to Ben's calls to order, and in doing so, they conjure a stereotype of Asian 'babu' deference which is historically ensconced in white British racism and which can be depended on to embarrass a white liberal conscience. The switch indexes race stratification as a potentially relevant issue in our encounter, and this strategic racialisation was carried further in the switch to Creole, a code associated with the rejection of illegitimate white power.[vi] [vii]

Summing up so far, our first point is that there are points of indeterminacy - of liminality [viii] - in the interaction order that become showcase moments for the symbolic display of one's social allegiance, and second, that people use these for all sorts of social play and experimentation, some of it contesting dominant orders, or seeking to redefine them. We can now move on to a third point, which has to do with the way the boys seem to position themselves around the symbolic voices they evoke, and the kind of historical consciousness that this evidences.

(ii) Processes of symbolic evocation: historical consciousness in situated code-switching
When the boys used stylised Asian English, there was a fairly clear break between the deferential words uttered through the 'babu' persona on the one hand, and on the other, their obvious commitment to enjoyment on their own terms. In contrast, in the case of Kazim's creole, it is not at all clear that he doesn't mean what he says: there aren't any obvious accompanying cues to suggest he's joking, and the switch starts a sequence in which dispute is much more explicit than before.

This difference fits with a very general pattern in the data-set: when adolescents used Asian English, there was nearly always a wide gap between self and voice, whether they were subverting the control of adults, criticising age-mates, or pretending to be the referee in games.[ix] In contrast, when they crossed into Creole, the gap substantially diminished, and language features that that youngsters tended to identify as black often worked their way into routine vernacular language use.[x] Both of these patterns connected with local adolescent views of the different social worlds indexed by each code.

It was clear from interviews and other data that Asian English wasn't only associated with the babu stereotype: it was also associated (a) with adults who had come to England from India and Pakistan, and (b) with recently arrived Bangladeshi peers.[xi] Youngsters generally expressed solidarity with their family relations, while there was intense hostility towards Bangladeshis, but in one way or another, Asian English consistently symbolised distance from the main currents of adolescent life, and in all of its connotations, *it seemed to stand for a stage of historical transition that most adolescents now felt they were leaving behind.*

In contrast to the retrospective time frame conjured by Asian English, Creole stood for an excitement and excellence in vernacular and mass-mediated youth culture which many kids aspired to, and it was even described as *'future language'*. In line with this, when it was used in interaction, Creole tended to lend emphasis to evaluations that synchronised with the identities that speakers maintained in their ordinary speech. The use of Creole lent power to the speaker, and indeed when it was directed towards deviance, it often expressed approval.[xii]

It is sometimes assumed that if one opts for relatively fine-grained interactional micro-analysis, one loses a view of history. Here, however, the different self-voice dynamics evidenced in the interactional use of these two varieties look very much like the small-scale refraction of much larger, longer processes of historical migration and transnational flow, with adolescents using language code selection to position themselves both in relation to their family's past in the Indian subcontinent, and in relation to their futures in a multi-ethnic UK. In fact, if we turn back to Extract 1, we can provide a more acute characterisation of how the broader symbolic resonance of these two speech varieties could fit into the ongoing interactive negotiation of social relations. In Extract 1, switching into Asian English and Creole was closely associated with moments of disagreement and tension, and in their different ways, both language varieties were counterposed to the dominant order of the interview, one subverting it through mock subservience, the other contesting it more overtly. The boys' symbolic display of historical consciousness was activated, in other words, in quite a sharp micro-political encounter. At the same time, however, it's vital to recognise the lack of fit between 'map' and 'territory', between the symbolic imagery of race relations and the here-and-now actuality of who was participating on whose side in the event. Even though stylised Asian English and Creole might conjure images of white domination and black resistance, the interaction itself didn't break down into white/Anglo vs black/Asian. Alan was also present, he was white, and as his playground Panjabi 'ben jaad' made clear, he was with Asif and Kazim. In sum, it is not only that the use of these linguistic resources displayed a sense of historical trajectory in which Asian youngsters were developing an alignment with young people of African Caribbean descent (through Creole as 'future language'). In the situated dynamics of the encounter itself, white friends in the same subordinated position could also be included.

Language, history and changing group relations have of course been defining concerns of creole linguistics, and so it is perhaps worth clarifying the way in which the approach illustrated in the analysis of Extract 1 is different. Unlike much of creole language study, our analysis makes no attempt to show how the economic and political relations between groups leads to the historical development of particular types of language or lexico-grammatical structure. Though we certainly accept that material conditions are linked to ideologies of ethnicity and 'race', which are linked to situated interaction, which is linked grammar, for us anyway, both the multiple connections and the partial autonomy of these 'levels' makes the analysis of how history impacts on language a dauntingly complex task. But this inability to run a line of causation from, say, population movements down into the details of language structure doesn't entail a return to the static, a-historical analysis that creole linguists originally broke away from (Hymes 1971:7; Bickerton 1975:166), motivating them to construct the dynamic models of creole system and structure that anthropologists have found attractive (e.g. Drummond 1980). Indeed, although our analysis might lack the grand empirical sweep of the creole linguist's effort to reconstruct the historical origins of a particular pidgin or creole, it lays a great deal more emphasis on agency, and it brings us far closer to the kind of practical consciousness that new social formations can emerge from (Williams 1977; Gal 1988).

What we can see in Extract 1 is a felt sense of historical positioning, inscribed in practical consciousness, articulated through symbolic language use in situations that lead, cumulatively, to the development of new solidarities that cut across the 'ethnic absolutism' of dominant ideologies (Gilroy 1987, Hall 1988). This is close to what Williams calls 'creative practice' - "not casting off an ideology, or learning phrases about it, but confronting a hegemony in the fibres of the self and in the hard practical substance of effective continuing relationships" (1977:212). [xiii]

This line of interpretation, we suspect, is likely to be quite compatible with Hannerz's general approach to cultural processes. But the apparatus lying at the centre of our interaction analysis owes little to creole linguistics - instead, it is an eclectic mixture of Hymes, Gumperz, Goffman, Bakhtin and conversation analysis, broadly comparable to what one can find in Duranti's 1997 textbook on *Linguistic Anthropology*. In conclusion, we would briefly like to review the kind of contribution that sociolinguistic discourse analysis can make to Hannerz's agenda for research on globalisation and transnational flow.

5 Conclusion

Although there are limits to what a single extract can reveal, there are a number of ways in which the analysis of interaction in Section 4 connects to Hannerz's agenda.

In terms of the substantive issues he raises, there is only a glimpse of half-understanding and unevenly distributed linguistic resources in Alan's 'ben jaad' in line 36 of Extract 1 (compare [b] in Section 1 above), but phenomena like this were constitutive features in the language switching and crossing evidenced more widely (Rampton 1995). They were often associated with the kind of interactional intensity displayed in the laughter and dispute in lines 14-30 ([d] in Section 1), and popular media also had a major influence, conspicuously affecting young people's rights and access to the interactional use of another language (Section 1 [c]; Rampton 1995: Part IV).

Methodologically, sociolinguistic micro-ethnography provides rigorous constraints on the totalising explanation and the free-wheeling analytic speculation that we associated with the 'must have' tradition in creole linguistics in Section 2 (see also [a] in Section 1). Conversation analysis, for example, operates with an analytic 'aesthetic of slowness' (Silverman 1999:415) which insists that one tries to track participants' sense making procedures from one moment to the next, and this provides a validity check on notions like 'contradiction', 'liminality' and 'ambivalence', which in macro-studies sometimes seem more like analyst attributions than participant experiences. Alternatively, because one is usually working with dozens (even hundreds) of examples, "small facts continually get in the way of large issues" (Section 1 [e]), and it's blindingly obvious that there are lots of different things going with, say, a set of acts that one might broadly call 'resistance'. Indeed, with any single one, there is usually a lot of data on the context, and so if you're interested in political analysis, you can look at a particular act as a micro-political intervention in specific social relations there-and-then. All of this makes it quite hard to fall head long into romantic David-and-Goliath interpretations, and in the project described above, for example, while one could sometimes see Asian English as a subversive probe directed at white adults, elsewhere it was used in the crudest forms of racism.

Our overall position, then, is that it would be a great shame if anyone thought that creole language studies represented the sum total of what (socio-)linguistics has to offer to the understanding of transnational processes. We are obviously not speaking here as disgruntled disciplinary purists, and if in the past, the linguistic modeling of creoles has helped anthropologists like Drummond to escape the hold of static synchronic structuralism,[xiv] we would welcome this a valuable interdisciplinary process, in the same way that we appreciate the inspiration that 'creolisation' has provided in Hannerz's analyses of cultural complexity (1992, 1996). But at the same time, it's important not to mistake the metaphorical resonance of linguistic concepts for the weight they have in the field where they find their centre of gravity. If you do, you risk losing sight of the fact that for certain dimensions of social life, interactional and ethnographic socio-linguistics really do provide the most accurate analytic tools that we have. Quite how and how far

language, discourse, and interaction articulate with other levels of cultural organisation and flow, and exactly how easily reconciled the different theoretical idioms used in their analysis might be, we are not sure. But from our point of view anyway, that is one of the most important things for an interdisciplinary research programme to address, and we hope we have managed to provide just a glimpse of what non-creolist socio-linguistics can offer.

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Transcription conventions

[   ]   IPA transcription, revised to 1979

(.)   pause of less than a second

`(1.5)`	approximate length of pause in seconds
`|` `|`	overlapping turns
`CAPITALS`	loud
`(      )`	speech inaudible
`(text)`	speech hard to discern, analyst's guess
`((text:))`	'stage directions'
`bold` Jamaican	stretches of speech conspicuously influenced by Indian English and Creole

ENDNOTES

[i] We would like to thank Steve Vertovec and Charles Stewart, organisers of the seminar series where an earlier version of this paper was first presented ('Considering Creolisation', Department of Anthropology, University of Oxford, Autumn Term 1999 [part of the ESRC Research Programme on Transnational Communities]), as well as two anonymous CoA reviewers for their helpful comments . This paper is also published electronically in the Programme's working paper series (http://www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk/wwwroot/working_papers.htm).

[ii] Holm credits Dillard 1972:11 with this characterisation of creole theory.

[iii] This can be seen in the variationist's quest for the vernacular; in research on code-mixing and code-switching, where the emphasis was on systematic patterns established within relatively stable bilingual ingroups; and even in work on cross-cultural conflict and misunderstanding, where the problem was attributed to the gap between integrated cultural and linguistic systems.

[iv] The extract comes from an ESRC-funded project entitled *Language Use in the Multiracial Adolescent Peer* Group, in which the ethnography of communication (Hymes 1972) and interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz 1982) provide the main methodological tools. The project involved two years of fieldwork with 23 eleven to thirteen year olds of Indian, Pakistani, African Caribbean and Anglo descent in 1984, and approximately 64 fourteen to sixteen year olds in 1987. Data-collection focused mainly on a youth club and on lunch and breaktime recreation at school, and it included radio-microphone recording (approximately 145 hours), participant observation, interviewing and retrospective participant commentary on extracts of recorded interaction. The research is written up in full in Rampton 1995.

[v] What follows reproduces the data-analysis contained in Rampton 1999, where it is set within a discussion of how interactional sociolinguistic research can contribute to discussions of liminality in cultural studies.

[vi] Especially for boys, (versions of) Jamaican creole had strong symbolic connotations of toughness, vitality, excellence in youth culture and opposition to authority (cf Hewitt 1986; Sebba 1993; Rampton 1995).

[vii] The switch into multiracial playground Panjabi worked on a slightly different tack. One of its effects could be to evoke a world of jocular peer group recreation in which the best role a monolingual adult could hope for would be the role of a benign but gullible onlooker. Another could be to maintain the ties with Alan, who was white like Ben but who was also a regular participant in multiracial playground Panjabi.

[viii] For a full discussion of liminality in interaction, cf Rampton 1999.

[ix] When Asian English was used to criticise a peer, either seriously or in joking, it was used as a 'say-for', a voice not being claimed as part of the speaker's own identity but as one that was relevant to the person being targeted. In fact, these peer criticisms seemed to achieve their effect as a negative sanction by threatening the recipient with regression, symbolically isolating them on a path of historical development now abandoned by adolescents who had arrived at an endpoint they now took for granted. In games, Asian English was used as a language of commentary, it featured in praise and encouragement ('very good shot'), and it served to announce or keep the score. It still connoted a certain remoteness from the main currents of multi-ethnic adolescent youth culture, but whereas before this was something to be scorned, in games the detachment become much more altruistic and authoritative, helping to place the speaker at some remove from the competitors' concentrated struggle for advantage. See Rampton 1995:Ch 6 for a full elaboration of these patterns.

[x] The invariant question tag 'innit' was, for example, analysed as being originally black, and young people most often attributed Creole roots to new words in the local English vernacular. Other elements of unself-conscious local speech that could be identified as have Creole origins were: the omission of 's' in the possessive, in the plural and third

person singular present tense; zero realisation of the indefinite article; absent past tense and participle markers; and copular and auxiliary omission. See Rampton 1995:127-128 for further discussion.

^{xi} See Rampton 1995:Ch 2 for a full account of this.

^{xii} These processes can in fact be articulated in the terms of Bakhtin's theory of double-voicing: the self-voice opposition running through the uses of stylised Asian English resembles Bakhtin's 'vari-directional double-voicing', while the much closer self-voice identification in Creole conforms to his account of 'uni-directional double-voicing'. When they engage in double-voicing, speakers use someone else's discourse (or language) for their own purposes, "inserting a new semantic intention into a discourse which already has... an intention of its own. Such a discourse... must be seen as belonging to someone else. In one discourse, two semantic intention appear, two voices" (Bakhtin 1984:189). Bakhtin describes several kinds of double-voicing, and one of these is described as 'uni-directional'. With uni-directional double-voicing, the speaker uses someone else's discourse "in the direction of its own particular intentions" (1984:193). Speakers themselves go along with the momentum of the second voice, though it generally retains an element of otherness which makes the appropriation conditional and introduces some reservation into the speaker's use of it. But at the same time, the boundary between the speaker and the voice they are adopting can diminish, to the extent that there is a "fusion of voices". When that happens, discourse ceases to be double-voiced, and instead becomes 'direct, unmediated discourse' (1984:199). The opposite of uni-directional double-voicing is varidirectional double-voicing, in which the speaker "again speaks in someone else's discourse, but... introduces into that discourse a semantic intention directly opposed to the original one". In vari-directional double-voicing, the two voices are much more clearly demarcated, and they are not only distant but also opposed (Bakhtin 1984:193).

On Bakhtin's notion of double-voicing in sociolinguistics, see Hill and Hill 1986, Cazden 1989, Fairclough 1992, Rampton 1995:Chs 8.5 and 11.1. In cultural studies, see eg. Mercer 1994:62ff and Bhabha 1996:57.

^{xiii} Volosinov's (1973) notion of 'behavioural ideology' is also relevant here - see Rampton 2001.

^{xiv} Following Bickerton's 1975 attempt to describe the variation in Guyanese creole language as a single grammatical continuum, Drummond 1980 suggested that the use of ethnic categories in Guyana could also be theorised as a continuum system. There is nothing controversial in Drummond's emphasis on ethnicity as a set of relational identities which a lot of different people share some knowledge of, but more than 20 years later, we would have to say (a) that the emphasis on ethnicity as a fundamental principle driving local social activity (e.g. 1980:363,368) now looks very reductive; (b) though the conceptualisation of system itself might be reworked in Drummond's paper, the attempt to force local cultural knowledge into a single account resembles the same kind of totalisation that we criticised in Section 2; and (c) any appropriation of the continuum model would now have to confront a number of serious theoretical and empirical problems that linguists have subsequently identified in Bickerton's approach (see Sebba 1997:Ch 3.5).