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**On the theoretical and empirical
bases of translanguaging**

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On the theoretical and empirical bases of translanguaging

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Abstract

Studies in the 1960s-70s (and continuing later) produced a systematic and sustained understanding of codeswitching but this now seems to be unravelling under the weight of the new term, Translanguaging. It is therefore imperative that we closely examine (i) what new generalizable knowledge is offered by the theoretical construct of translanguaging, and (ii) what new empirical coverage it provides. Addressing these questions, this paper argues that translanguaging does not take our theoretical understanding of bilingual language use beyond what the sociolinguistic studies of code-switching have offered, and that there is a lack of empirical support for its claims to move ‘beyond’ named languages, creating ‘new language practices’ that are different from ‘a synthesis of different language practices’ or ‘a hybrid mixture’. Instead, the paper (re-)claims the theoretical status of code-switching – as an active, agentive, socio-cognitive mechanism employed by social actors to produce and interpret the ‘meaning potential’ (Halliday 1985) of linguistic symbols/acts/utterances/features in the multilingual universe we inhabit, drawing on indexical biographies of linguistic resources (Blommaert 2015) organized as archives (languages) of epistemic communities, deployed in various social-indexical meanings in interaction.

1. Introduction

One of the dominant theoretical constructs that has emerged from recent studies on late-modernity, globalization, and super-diversity, is MOBILITY of resources: human (migration, transnationalism, and diaspora studies; Cohen 1997; Blommaert 2009; Piller 2016); cultural (global flows of cultural products, of hip-hop; Pennycook 2007; Alim, Ibrahim and Pennycook 2009); and linguistic (polylinguaging, translanguaging, translingual practice, translanguaging; Jørgensen 2008; Canagarajah 2013; García and Li 2014). The focus on sociolinguistic mobility has released new perspectives on traditional understandings of our unit of sociolinguistic analysis, of linguistic community, of linguistic repertoire, and linguistic practice. Linguistic communities are replaced increasingly by notions of communities of practice (Eckert and Wenger 2005); linguistic repertoires focus on the individual (a shift away from communal) and are understood now as flexible, unstable, dynamic, and layered (Blommaert and Rampton 2011); and linguistic practices are now largely viewed as complex, hybrid, and unpredictable (Blommaert 2015).

The center-piece of the object of linguistic inquiry, LANGUAGE, and its associated terms such as dialect, variety, code, seem to have fallen out of favor in this shifting theoretical landscape, giving way to a new term, LANGUAGING, which refers to the users’ use of their repertoire resources to meet communicative goals (Becker 1991; Jørgensen 2008). The straightforward theoretical consequences of this shift can be seen in the emergence of a new set of terminology to address the communicative dynamism in contemporary multilingual behavior: polylinguaging (Jørgensen 2008), metrolingualism (Otsuji and Pennycook 2010), and translanguaging (García 2009; García and Li 2014; Creese and Blackledge 2010). To be

sure, these terms seek to displace traditional linguistic vocabulary (“languages”, “codes”, “code-switching”), and underlying ideologies, seen as analytically inadequate in the study of post-modern diversity (Makoni and Pennycook 2007; Blommaert and Rampton 2011). In this paper we focus on TRANSLANGUAGING, a term that has caught a fair bit of traction in the sociolinguistics of multilingualism, asking two important questions:

- i) What new generalizable knowledge is offered by theoretical constructs such as Translanguaging (and associated terms such as polylinguaging, transidioma, etc.)?
- ii) What new empirical coverage is offered by theoretical constructs such as Translanguaging (and associated terms such as polylinguaging, transidioma, etc.)?

We believe that in order to make meaningful progress in sociolinguistic theorization, such questions must be asked and fully interrogated so that we don’t, even unwittingly, indulge in “erasure” of established paradigms of understanding only to re-present (parts or all of) it as new, different, or paradigm-changing. It is with this caution that we explore the theoretical and empirical bases of the term TRANSLANGUAGING. Specifically, we provide empirical evidence and theoretical arguments to claim that the concept of translanguaging provides neither new generalizable knowledge nor new empirical insights that its proponents claim. In fact, we show that adopting this term as an analytic category leads to loss of explanatory power both in terms of our ability to explain (a) WHY certain patterns of code-switching are regularly observed and (b) HOW linguistic forms in bilingual performance get linked to communicative-indexical functions in various acts of meaning making.

The paper is organized as follows: in the next section, section 2, we briefly discuss the notion of *language* as an organized social-semiotic system (cf. “archive”: Blommaert 2005) that is used by social actors in routine interactional contexts to perform certain communicative goals. We then briefly explore the notion of *linguaging*, as the entire theoretical edifice of trans-/poly-linguaging is predicated on this notion, and discuss how it compares with the standard view of the study of language in its socio-cultural contexts. In section 3, we discuss the notion of code-switching, its theoretical understanding and its empirical coverage. We then focus on the notion of translanguaging; what it means, what empirical evidence is offered to motivate this notion, and what theoretical mileage is offered by this term in our understanding of multilingualism. Finally, we discuss our conclusions, re-claiming the theoretical status of code-switching: as an active, agentive, socio-cognitive mechanism employed by social actors to produce and interpret the meaning potential (Halliday 1985) of linguistic symbols, acts, utterances, and features in the diverse universe we now inhabit. We conclude by claiming that translanguaging as a theoretical construct does not offer any significant progress in our understanding of bilingual language use that is not already covered by the term code-switching.

2. Language and Linguaging

2.1 Language

There is general agreement among linguists that the *object* of linguistic inquiry, language,

carries remarkable communicative potential in so far as social actors and actions displaced in time and place are easily discernible and understood in surprisingly uniform, systematic ways. There is, however, little agreement on the *unit* of linguistic analysis: Is it the individual idiolect—as part of the theoretical methodology of generative grammar (e.g. Chomsky 1986)—or is it the speech community, as demonstrated in the works of Labov (1966)? These two theoretical approaches, in our view, diverge from each other in terms of how the research question is framed: what language is, or, what language does. The standard theory of language—cognitive-generative model (Chomsky 1986)—is concerned with understanding the biological foundation or mental-cognitive structure that underlies language use (of an “ideal” speaker/hearer). It takes language as an internal, abstract system that is relatively uniform, whereas variation among languages (Hindi/Hungarian/Hausa) is understood as a function of a restricted set of parameterized options offered by the Universal Grammar (UG). Specifically, under this view, language is described by a set of discrete principles and potentially fixable parameters. This restrictive view of language, however, does not have a universal acceptance among linguists due mainly to two strategic confounds: (i) the tremendous linguistic diversity of the world’s roughly 7,000 languages does not confine itself to the space afforded by the parameters of UG (cf. Evans and Levinson 2009, and the commentaries that follow), and (ii) the fundamental differences between the form-meaning permutations — how languages work — can be traced to the logic of cultural models and socially situated communicative practices, absent under the generative-cognitive view of language (Everett (2012), for instance, presents evidence from Pirahã to claim that several aspects of language structure are affected by culture).¹

The social-functionalist approaches, on the other hand (Gumperz 1958; Labov 1966; Hymes 1974; Halliday 1985), assert the centrality of linguistic diversity (language variation) within and across speech communities as the fundamental part of linguistic description. These approaches had long recognized the unstable, dynamic nature of language that invariably results in variation (gender, age, class, region) and change (see especially, Labov’s discussion of “dynamic synchrony”). Consider, for instance, excerpt 1 below: a small Kashmiri family gathering where a newly-wed Indian woman, a Hindi-dominant multilingual speaker, asks her father-in-law and her father, in the same interactional moment, if they would like to have tea.

1. *Experiential-Ideational function of language*

(a) Turning to her father-in-law:

Papa-ji, aap chaay piy-eN-ge
 Papa-Hon you (polite) tea drink-2Pers-FutPIMasc
 “Papaji, will you have tea?”

(b) Turning to her father:

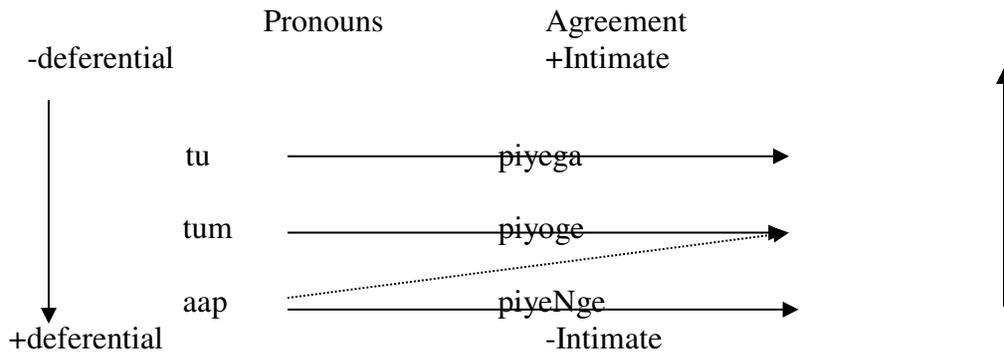
Daddy, aap bhii piy-o-ge
 Daddy you (polite) also drink-2Pers-FutPIMasc
 “Daddy, will you also have (tea)?”

¹ More appropriately, perhaps, as part of the cognitive-cultural hybrid (cf. Evans and Levinson 2009).

What is remarkable about the data in (1) is the subtle, almost unobvious violation of the subject-pronominal agreement in Hindi by the speaker in (1b). The Tu/Vous pronominal agreement paradigm in Hindi is illustrated in (2) below. Two quick comments on the Tu/Vous use in Hindi: (i) the pronominal choice is scaled along a deferential function, whereas the agreement morphology is scaled on an intimacy function, and (ii) the plural pronouns, *tum* and *aap*, can be used to address a single person, however, the agreement morphology reflects the grammatical plural paradigm.

The data of interest for us is the dotted arrow in (2), indicating the linguistic choice in (1b). The choice in (1b) while grammatically unlicensed in form becomes creatively nuanced in its social-indexical function: we argue that the newly-wed woman expresses, through a subtle morpho-syntactic transgression, the indexical difference of intimacy between her father-in-law and her father. Such linguistic creativity is routinely expressed in interpersonal-interactive contexts and functions, thereby forcing a view of language shaped and organized in relation to its (socio-functional) use. It is this approach to language as a social semiotic resource, or "meaning potential," that undergirds our general approach to the study of language (cf. Halliday 1985), one that has a long, established and rich tradition in the field of sociolinguistics.

2. *The Hindi Tu/Vous paradigm: 'Will you (sing/pl) drink (tea).'*



2.2 *Languaging*

The shift in theoretical focus from the study of language use to languaging is rather recent; moving away, in particular, from the Cartesian notion of language as a system of reified abstractions to a notion of language-as-action (Harris 1981; Love 1990; Taylor 1986, 2017). In the latter, integrationist view, language is understood as a prescriptive-normative 'second-order' human construct (Love 1990), an abstraction, a metalinguistic generalization which, as part of language users' practical knowledge or 'know-how', both reflects and informs concrete 'real-life' language use, called languaging (Taylor 2017). Languaging, the first-order linguistic activity—what human beings do—refers to an on-going, here-and-now, and contextually meaningful, uniquely-individual, communicative activity (cf. Pablé and Hutton 2015).

Individual acts of communication under the integrationist view of languaging find support in data like (1) above where the speaker exploits the ‘functional-potential’ of the morpho-syntax of Hindi agreement system to index an affective difference between her addressees. This creative linguistic move, however, is predicated on the assumption that the speaker is aware of the logic of Hindi morpho-syntax, and it is this ‘knowledge of language’—the form-function correlations—that she uses to secure the kinship distinctions without flouting any community norms of politeness. The data also points to a familiar trope; of ‘language-as-system’, a social-semiotic archive that operates within the logic of a cultural (here, kinship) grammar (cf. Bright 1968): the alterations in the linguistic grammar by the ‘languaging’ individual (in 1) are acceptable as long as the norms of the cultural grammar are honored, and, in fact, prioritized.

Taking a slightly different approach to languaging, Becker (1988) proposes a shift from language “as something accomplished, apart from time and history” to *languaging* “as an ongoing process ... something that is being done and reshaped constantly” (1988: 25)—a view familiar to us from Gumperz’s (1958, and *passim*) work that shows how language habits are constantly in a state of flux, and from Labov’s (1972) notion of ‘dynamic synchrony’ (cf. also Jakobson 1960). The ‘Multilingual Turn’ (May 2014) and the ‘Mobility Turn’ (Blommaert 2010) have brought back into focus ‘language use’ as the object of linguistic inquiry with, however, a different set of terminologies. Jørgensen, for instance, argues: “We use language to achieve our purposes, we are languagers, and we perform *languaging*. ... What we do when we use the uniquely human phenomenon of language ... is *languaging*” (2010:152). More specifically, *languaging*, and its sister term *poly-languaging* refers to language users’ deployment of “whatever linguistic features are at their disposal”, (including features that are “perceived by some speakers as not belonging together”) (Jørgensen et al. 2011: 34), to achieve their communicative aims as best they can (regardless of how well they know the languages involved). However, we argue that speakers’ deployment of linguistic features, as in the contextually-driven creative reconfiguration of Hindi morpho-syntax in (1) above, assumes, crucially, access to and stability of recognizable indexical meanings associated with the linguistic system to derive the profit of socio-affective distinction (compare (1a) with (1b) as discussed above). As such, our view of language, following the works of Firth, Halliday, Gumperz, Hymes, and Labov, diverges, albeit marginally, from both the integrationist and humanistic traditions of languaging: in our terms, a privileged focus on language *use* enables us to capture the sociolinguistically significant generalizations of the ideological distribution of variation in mono-/bi-/multi-lingual contexts.

3. Code-switching and Translanguaging

3.1 *Code-switching*

One of the most significant properties of multilingual communities is members’ ability to use various linguistic resources to creatively accomplish their communicative goals in routine (inter-personal) interactions. This linguistic creativity, most visible, and audible, in bilingual²

² We use “bilingual” as a cover term for use of two or more languages or dialects.

interactions is enabled through a process, formally termed code-switching. Before a detailed description of its theoretical understanding, we first provide two illustrations, (3) and (4) below, of its empirical presence in sociolinguistic studies.

In (3) below, Tavis Smiley, the African American host of the Tavis Smiley Show (on PBS), while interviewing the Black American actress Pam Grier switches to African American Vernacular English when voicing the Black community's concern about Grier's portrayal of a lesbian woman on the HBO television drama series, *'The L Word'*.

3. *Dialect switching: Standard English and AAVE (Britt 2008)*

Smiley: You know as well as I do that gayness, homosexuality, lesbianism, still very much a taboo subject—not as much as it used to be, but still very much a taboo subject inside of black America specifically

Grier: Oh, espe- yeah.

Smiley: And black folk love Pam Grier. Everybody loves Pam Grier, but black folk especially love Pam Grier. What do you say to black folk who say, *Now, Pam Grier you done got caught up in it. Now you done gone too far.*

Britt (2008) argues that Smiley's switch to AAVE, following all the face-work preceding it (including the use of bare nouns without plural concord: "black folk ... love")³, is socio-functionally significant: by switching to the community voice—to, especially, the voice of the authors of this oppositional stance—Smiley, the interviewer, is able to distance himself from the folks in the black community who are unhappy with Grier's lesbian portrayal on the show, and yet at the same time claim symbolic (ethnic) solidarity with her by appealing to the shared knowledge of the AAVE community, mitigating the potentially face-threatening nature of criticism.

While (3) above shows how switching flags face-issues, (4) below shows an aspect of intra-sentential code-switching that is quite pervasive in most studies of bilingual language use: each Hindi switch expresses a culturally-specific meaning, intertextually tied to the Hindu religious texts—the switched text serves as the interpretive context.

4. *English-Hindi switching (Bhatt and Bolonyai 2011)*

There have been several analyses of this phenomenon. First, there is the 'religious angle' which has to do with Indian society. In India a man feels guilty when fantasizing about another man's wife, unlike in the west. The *saat pheras* around the *agni* serves as a *lakshman rekha*.⁴

³ Although, as Raj Mesthrie confirms, both 'folk' and 'folks' take plural verbs in Standard English.

⁴ Source: *Times of India news-brief*, www.timesofindia.com, Oct 12, 2. 2007. *saat pheras*: seven circumnavigations; *agni*: fire (metaphorically, acting ritually as a priest in a Hindu wedding); *lakshman rekha*: line one doesn't cross—a reference to an episode in the Hindu text, Ramayana, where Lord Rama's younger brother, Lakshman, draws a circular line (*rekha*) around Rama's wife, Sita, that had the supernatural power to destroy anyone crossing that line, and thus protecting Sita, who was going to be alone in the forest.

The two examples above illustrate what has been referred to as inter-sentential code-switching, or code-switching (3)—where the switch takes place external to the clause—and intra-sentential code-switching, or code-mixing (4)—where the switch takes place within the clause (cf. Kachru 1983; Myers-Scotton 1993). Such observations, of bringing together elements from two (or more) languages, have a long, rich tradition going as far back as the work of Espinosa (1914)⁵ who observed mixing of English words and phrases into the Spanish of New Mexico, in Barker’s (1947) study of bilingual Mexican Americans in Tuscon, Arizona, and Gumperz’s earlier studies on Indian multilingualism (1958, 1964).

From earlier observationally adequate understandings of code-switching, the field came into its own with Blom and Gumperz’s (1972) work on code-switching between two Norwegian dialects, local Ranamål and standard literary Bokmål, yielding two descriptive categories: situational code-switching and metaphorical code-switching. Code-switching, as Gumperz would note later (1982), “signals contextual information equivalent to what in monolingual setting is conveyed through prosody or other syntactic or lexical processes. It generates the presuppositions in terms of which the content of what is said is decoded” (ibid: 98). Accordingly, code-switching serves as a contextualization cue, providing the hearer information beyond the referential content of the utterance—how the utterance must be understood! The insights in Gumperz’s work on code-switching spurred interest in code-switching among scholars of multilingualism, along at least three sociolinguistic tropes: social-psychological (Markedness) model (Myers-Scotton 1993; Myers-Scotton and Bolonyai 2001), political-economic approaches (Heller 1988b, 1995; Gal 1987), and conversational-analytic approaches (Auer 1984, 1998; Li 1998).

While these three approaches to code-switching differ from each other in terms of their paradigmatic stances, they do however share one important sociolinguistic-theoretic insight: that code-switching is a skilled and strategic performance that exploits the discreteness of languages while seeming to flout it (Myers-Scotton 1993: 47; Heller 1995: 167; Gal 1987: 639). Code-switching, as a sociolinguistic practice, is understood uniformly under these three approaches as “the alternate use of [elements of] two or more languages in the same utterance or interaction” (Grosjean 1982: 145; cf. also: Hymes 1971; Valdés-Fallis 1976: 53; Di Pietro 1977: 3; Scotton and Ury 1977: 5; Gumperz 1982: 59; Auer 1984: 1; Heller 1988a: 1; Myers-Scotton 1993: vii; Milroy and Muysken 1995: 7; Muysken 2000: 1; Bolonyai 2005: 8; Bhatt 2008: 182; Bhatt and Bolonyai 2011: 523; Demirçay and Backus 2014: 31; Kharkhurin and Li 2015: 153). These uniform understandings (i) produced a rich array of descriptive generalizations in terms of the social-indexical functions that code-switching serves, and (ii) provided sociolinguistically significant insights into bilinguals’ creativity.

The social-psychological perspective (Markedness Model, Myers-Scotton and Bolonyai 2001) explains code-switching by a speaker as flagging a shift in Rights and Obligations (RO), similar to Goffman’s (1979) notion of footing shifts, the variable stances, voices (see Myers-Scotton 1993: 69-70 on the similarity between ‘choice’ and ‘voice’) or identity positions that individuals take within an interaction. Excerpt (3) above is one instance of that; excerpt (5) below illustrates this more clearly, where in essentially one semiotic frame, the different roles (“voice”) the 58 year old, upper middle-class, Kashmiri woman in New Delhi assumes are flagged by switches in languages (Bhatt and Bolonyai 2011: 534): *Hindi*, *Kashmiri*, and English.

⁵ Benson (2001) provides a detailed overview of the use of the term code-switching in the United States.

Excerpt 5

1. *mai jab chotii Thii* (“when I was little”)
2. *jab meri shaadi hui* (“when I got married”)
3. *mujhe bhii yahii lagtaa Thaa* (“I also used to think/feel”)
4. *ki myaanyan shuryan gos na kashmiri accent gasun* (“that my kids should not get the ‘Kashmiri accent’”)
5. so, I spoke to them in English mainly
6. (pause) *bas yahii hai* (“That’s it!”)

The speaker in (5) above starts out in *Hindi* in the role of the narrator (lines 1-3), switches to Kashmiri (line 4) indexing a rather pervasive stance of Kashmiri Diaspora mothers, and then switches to English to express the community stance that prides itself in English language proficiency associated with (Upper/Upper-Middle) class and caste (Brahmin) identities. Similar patterns of intersection of identity complexes (class, caste, race, region and ethnicity) and code-switching are observed in Rampton’s (1995) work on Crossing — code-switching across boundaries of race, ethnicity and language communities — as acts of linguistic transgressions among adolescents of Asian, African-Caribbean and Anglo descent in a neighborhood in the South Midlands of England, and in Bailey’s (2002) work on code-switching among Dominican American youth.

Similarly, but from a political/economic-theoretic vantage-point, Heller (1988b) shows how the use of code-switching among Anglophone speakers in Quebec introduces *strategic* ambiguity in what they could say and do, “indeed be *two* or more things when normally a choice is expected” (ibid: 93), i.e., maintain a position locally in the francophone corporate culture while maintaining ties to Anglophone identity, which has (symbolic) value on the global market. Such political-economic perspectives have thus been able to yield functional insights of code-switching as acts of linguistic resistance or symbolic dominance (Heller 1992, 1995).

The bilingual creativity discussed above is also evidenced in micro-discursive acts of code-switching, most visibly expressed in conversational-analytic approaches. Li (1998, 2005), Auer (1998), Gafaranga (2001), among others, have shown how code-switching serves several conversational functions: accomplish repair, mark dispreferred responses, enhance turn selection or make participant identity ‘relevant’. The sociolinguistic acts of identity—participant identity—are most clearly visible in the articulation of transnational subjectivities in late-modern contexts of global (migrant) mobility, as demonstrated in Catedral (2018). Catedral presents a short narrative of an Uzbek migrant woman in the U.S. whose code-switches reveal a number of identity acts: she (i) switches from English to Uzbek to describe o’zbekchilik – ‘Uzbekness’ – and the Uzbek halq – ‘nation’; (ii) switches back to English describing the demands of the neoliberal behavioral script (‘in America you have to stand up for yourself’); (iii) switches to Uzbek again to further describe the type of speech associated with *ibo hayo*, and then (iv) switches again to English to clarify the type of behavior associated with a neoliberal microhegemony (Catedral 2018: 32). Catedral specifically argues that “this constant switching illustrates how Umida, as a transnationally mobile migrant, is operating within a third space (Bhabha 1994) where she is constantly

orienting to both the home and host countries ... (and that) while the constant switching highlights the complexities of operating within transnational contexts, the ideological and social separateness of the codes of English and Uzbek allow Umida to construct relative moral stability for herself within this third space” (ibid).

In addition to a focus on the verbal behavior of transnational subjects, recent research on the sociolinguistics of globalization has also shifted the empirical focus from sounds to (written) words, and from speakers to (public) spaces, accommodating multi-modal expressions of signs and signified (Blommaert 2015). This methodological shift, to accommodate sociolinguistic expressions of late-modernity (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999; Rampton 2006), engages with the semiotics of visual communication, focuses on urban spaces, and draws on the intersections between old (traditional) and new (modern), yielding a *third-space* analysis (Bhatt 2008) where (historical-sociolinguistic) stability yields to ambiguity, and where hybridity emerges as the dominant interpretive norm. The data in (6), a sign outside a restaurant in an upper-middle class neighborhood in New Delhi, India shows the intersections of language, space and contemporary socio-cultural processes affecting urban spaces in modern India. Lyons and Karimzad (forthcoming) in their analysis of (6) show how the nostalgia for the past—DESI KHANA (traditional food)—is re-imagined in the present, late-modern world with ENGLISH HYGIENE, offering a space where the modern and the traditional coalesce into a hybrid outlet: ANGREZEE (English) DHABA (an informal Indian eatery)!⁶

6. *The new old: Angrezee Dhaba*



⁶ Lyons and Karimzad (forthcoming) offer a nuanced analysis of this sign using an interaction of two chronotopes: Indo-Chic nostalgia and global cosmopolitanism

These complex juxtapositions of language/script choices offer a uniform understanding of the sociolinguistic mechanisms by which “spaces” get ideologically saturated with new archives of linguistic representations that derive their synchronic coherence, and meaning, in the inter-animation of local and global, past and present, and traditional and modern. The complexity and creativity of such linguistic juxtaposition is becoming common-place as English establishes itself as a global language, intermingling with the use of local languages. The Burger King street ad in Budapest, see (7) below, shows creative, playful mix of English and Hungarian in a stylized form of ‘expressive transgression’ that appears to create an effect of non-discreteness of language boundaries. The data of particular interest to us in this ad is “XtraYO,” a creative hybrid mix of English and Hungarian. While visually XtraYO doesn’t look Hungarian, it sounds Hungarian: English YO invokes its homophone in Hungarian, JÓ (“good”), pronounced as YO, thus creating a cross-linguistic pun where “XtraYO” comes to be read/heard “XtraGOOD”.

7. Hungarian-English Mixing



The double-meaning of the pun, in (7), however, is available only if the different linguistic-semiotic archives are accessed — at the phonetic and orthographic levels. That is, in order to fully appreciate the meaning of this creative trans-modal hybrid, one has to be able to trace it to its discrete, language specific, written and phonological elements: YO—in the context, also an interpellation—the voice of American “cool” (as a slang expression of excitement and cool “addressivity,” *à la* Bakhtin 1986), merges in a heteroglossic fusion with

Hungarian JÓ (“good”) and thereby inter-discursively imbues the Hungarian word ‘jó’ with a new symbolic connotation and status. The ad thus represents a ludic encounter of two archives as global brand Burger King’s iconic bun gets playfully localized and valorized in a way that is distinctively tied to Hungarian.

All of these data of code-switching show the subtle and complex ways in which new indexical orders emerge, obliterating the established (historical) paradigms of language use, literacy practices and attitudes; expressing agency, bilingual creativity, and a new political economy. And, importantly, code-switching recognizes ‘enregistered’ (fixed) associations with languages as systems, remixed in playful ways to create fluid identities (cf. Hall and Niley 2015: 614).

What emerges as the overarching claim in the sociolinguistic studies of code-switching we have surveyed is that bilingual creativity, in all the different modes, is produced and understood within the context of ‘archives’ (*à la* Foucault 1972: 128; Blommaert 2005: 103) from which specific resources are strategically and skillfully recruited in bilingual language use. To be precise, these archives — conveniently labeled as languages (e.g., Hungarian, African American English, Uzbek, Hindi) — have a lived cultural history and geographic embeddedness, and offer chronotopic affiliations and identities. Knowledge of, and access to, an archive or archives, forms an epistemic community that uses all of the archives available to them to fully exploit the communicative potential of their repertoire.

3.2 Translanguaging

If code-switching captures the generalization of bilingual speakers as active, agentive, social actors engaged in the production and mobilization of their multilingual resources in practices of meaning-making, then we must ask what translanguaging offers that is (above and) beyond the theoretical scope and empirical range of the term code-switching. In other words: what new generalizable knowledge is offered by the term translanguaging (and its kin: polylinguaging, translingual practice, transidioma, etc.)? In this section, we present various definitions and theorizations of translanguaging, and explore their consequences for a theory of bilingual language use that includes the notion of code-switching. For reasons of brevity and clarity, we focus specifically on the scholarly works of the main proponents of the term, translanguaging: Ofelia García, Li Wei, and Ricardo Otheguy.⁷

García (2009: 140) refers to translanguaging as “*bilingual languaging*” (emphasis in original):

“the act performed by bilinguals of accessing *different linguistic features* or various modes of *what are described as autonomous languages*, in order to maximize communicative potential. It is an approach to *bilingualism that is centered, not on languages* as has often been the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable. ... Translanguaging therefore goes beyond what has been termed codeswitching, although it includes it. For me, the concept extends what Gutiérrez and colleagues have called ‘hybrid language use,’ that is, a ‘systematic, strategic, affiliative, and sense-making process...’”(ibid, emphasis added).

⁷ For a brief, succinct overview of the origin of the term, see Pennycook (2017).

The focus away from languages and instead on linguistic features (*à la* Jørgensen 2008) is claimed to be one of the important innovations in the theory and practice of translanguaging. However, features engaged/accessed in acts of translanguaging are themselves identified as belonging to specific languages (with specific indexical values/meanings in a given context), leading to a familiar paradox that Seargeant and Tagg (2011: 504) noted:

Feature identification uses a comparative approach between different notional systems of linguistic patterning, and so reference to different codes, varieties, styles and ‘modes’ is necessary despite the fact that, ..., a central concern ... is the problematisation and complexifying of just these conceptual categories.

The empirical instantiation of this paradox, within the paradigm of translanguaging studies, is best exemplified in the Gujarati-English bilingual use discussed by Creese and Blackledge (2010), cited also by García and Li (2014: 92, 115-116). The extract below in (8) is from the head teacher speaking to an audience of parents, students and teachers assembled at the end of the day at a complementary school—promoting community languages—Jalaram Bal Vikasama in Leicester, UK.

8. Gujarati-English Translanguaging

Mixed Gujarati-English	English translation
<p>. . . what’s going to happen here Jalaram Bal Vikasama? Holiday nathi . . . awata Shaniware apne awanu chhe. we’re coming here awta shaniware . . . [several students put up their hands] . . . Amar? . . . [picks on Amar or Amit to reply] . . . Amare kidhu ne ke GCSE presentation chhe . . . awanu chhe. I know that we’re finishing on Friday in mainstream school, pun aiya agal badhayne awanu chhe . . . I know, it’s a surprise. Khawanu etlu fine chhe, K warned me today. . . it’s something all of you will like, teachers will like . . . something for all of us. . . [points to the class sitting in front of her] a balko a varshe GCSE karwana chhe etle next year a badha awshe mehman thayne, mota thayne! . . . we’re not going to take much time, ‘cause I’ve got few other things to tell you as well . . .</p>	<p>... what’s going to happen here in Jalaram Vikasama? <i>It’s not a holiday, we’ve to come here next Saturday</i> ... we’re coming here <i>next Saturday</i> ... [several students put up their hands] ... Amar? ... [picks on Amar or Amit to reply] ... <i>As Amar said there’s GCSE presentation, you have to come.</i> I know we’re finishing on Friday in mainstream School, <i>but you all have to come here</i> ... I know, it’s a surprise, <i>lovely food</i>, K [a parent] warned me today, it’s something all of you will like, teachers will like ... something for all of us ... [points to the class sitting in front of her] <i>these children are doing GCSE this year so next year they will come as guests, all grown up!</i> ... we’re not going to take up much time ‘cause I’ve got a few other things to tell you as well ...</p>

Based on the data in (8), Creese and Blackledge (2010: 108) claim that (ia) **both languages** are needed simultaneously to convey the information and (ib) **each language** is used to convey a different information message; (ii) it is **in the movement between two languages** that the teacher (SB) engages with her diverse audience—the teachers, children and parents

have different level of proficiency in both Gujarati and English and the teacher uses **her languages** to engage her audience; (iii) however, her “languages” do not appear separate for her in the social acts but rather a resource to negotiate meanings and include as much of the audience as possible. They conclude that the teacher’s utterances “are examples of translanguaging in which the speaker uses her languages ... Gujarati and English are not distinct languages for the speaker in the context ... (ibid: 109). In other words, the speaker is claimed to move between languages—the switch between English and Gujarati as evidence of that—as an act of linguistic accommodation (audience design), but then the authors claim, without evidence/proof, that the speaker appears not to have the languages separated, as she is accommodating to, and signaling identity-alignments with, parents, students and teachers with varying proficiency of Gujarati and English. The claims Creese and Blackledge make, and the conclusion they draw, present the clearest evidence of the paradigm trap: the focus on languages (claims ia and ib) and the movement between them (claim ii) can theoretically coexist with a claim (iii) that languages are not separate so long as the conclusion is consistent with the assumption of translanguaging that the two languages of bilinguals are not distinctly coded in any way (cf. García and Li 2014).

García and Li (2014) advance their notion of translanguaging as “the act of languaging between systems that have been described as separate, and beyond them” (ibid: 42). However, they insist

“translanguaging does not refer to two separate languages nor to a synthesis of different language practices or to a hybrid mixture. Rather translanguaging refers to *new* language practices that make visible the complexity of language exchanges among people with different histories ...” (ibid: 21, emphasis in original).

What is *new* perhaps in their view is the focus on bilinguals’ creativity (although see Kachru 1987, *inter alia*); what is *not new*, however, is their inability to shift the focus away from *language* exchanges in bilingual interactions. It is the notion of code-switching, they insist, that focuses on “languages”, which is different from translanguaging in the following way (García and Li 2014: 22):

“Translanguaging differs from the notion of code-switching in that it refers not simply to a shift or shuttle between two languages, but to speakers’ construction and use of original and complex interrelated discursive practices that cannot be easily assigned to one or another traditional definition of language.”

We present empirical data from the works of García and Li to demonstrate what differences, if any, can be used to discriminate between translanguaging and code-switching and to explore what is *new* (i.e., unlike code-switching) about the language practices, in terms of complexity and creativity. The data in (9) below, discussed as an instance of translanguaging as pedagogy by García and Li (2014: 99), comes from a bilingual science classroom in a high school for recently arrived Latino students.

9. Translanguaging in the science classroom

Teacher: Hit the bar. *Vamos con el foco. ¿Quién me puede leer lo que dice el foco, en inglés?* [Let's go to the focus. Who can read to me what the focus is in English?].

Student 1: (Reads in English) Earthquakes are usually caused when rock underground suddenly breaks along a fault. The spot underground where the rock breaks is called the focus of the earthquake.

Teacher: What does it say?

Student 2: Focus is *foco* ... y *abajo*, underground, *cuando hay un break*, *allí es que ocurre el earthquake*. ...

Teacher: The earthquake happens *cuando hay un break* underground. *Y qué es el focus?*

Student: *El focus es dónde ocurre el earthquake, dónde está el break*, when rock break.

Even a cursory look at the empirical data in (9) reveals that there isn't *any* discernible difference between translanguaging and code-switching. The teacher's inter-sentential code-switches in (9) contextualize recognizable discursive functions of class management such as shifts from pre-task instruction to content-related instruction and to eliciting student contribution. Intra-sentential code-switching serves an additional functional division of labor: English is used for key scientific terms and information content, while the switch to Spanish for the reiteration of the student's contribution serves to promote learning and legitimize the student's voice in meaning making. Crucial here is the observation that the use of two languages reflects a recognizable pattern. While language occurs as an individual locally-situated phenomenon, it does not occur in a random fashion or in a social vacuum; rather, it occurs "simultaneously, as a collective and relatively stable social phenomenon" (Blommaert 2007: 4). It is the dialogic relationship of the individual and the socio-cultural that enables the emergence of context-specific indexical meanings and structured, patterned communication (bilingual or otherwise) organized by the interacting forces of normativity and creativity. Under the Markedness Model (Myers-Scotton 1993), the pattern of code-switching in excerpt (9) is rendered as overall switching as an unmarked choice in that English and Spanish are both indexical of positively valued identities, even as individual code-switches within overall switching as an unmarked choice fulfill recognizable discourse-pragmatic functions that have been widely documented in the code-switching literature (Auer 1984, *inter alia*). In other words, the empirical data presented in García and Li fail to provide evidence that would support any notion of translanguaging as "original", "new language practice" and so complex that it cannot be assigned to any language—i.e. what "some call English" or "Spanish". Treating translanguaging as an unproblematic (quasi-) analytic lens that in and of itself explains bilingual language use risks glossing over, or reducing to irrelevance, the richly diverse, complex and systematic patterns in the practice of meaning making that decades of research into code-switching as a communicative resource has uncovered, as we have discussed in section 3.1.

Otheguy, García and Reid (2015) clarify translanguaging, "establishing it as a particular conception of the mental grammar and linguistic practices of bilinguals" (ibid: 281). It refers to "*the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for watchful adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages*" (ibid; italics in original). They do, however, concede that the notion of

code-switching is understood “by many informed scholars in a dynamic and creative fashion as the expressive transgression by bilingual speakers of their two separate languages, endows these speakers with agency and often finds in the very act of switching elements of linguistic mastery and virtuosity” (ibid: 282). The data (4-10) presented in section 3.1 above, do indeed point to linguistic virtuosity and creativity that bilinguals express in oral, written, and other visual semiotic modes.

The key theoretical claim that Otheguy et al. (2015, 2018) make that differentiates their account of translanguaging from sociolinguistic research on code-switching is that translanguaging does not involve two (or more) separate languages/linguistic systems. And as a corollary they offer a *unitary* view of translanguaging where the myriad linguistic features mastered by bilinguals occupy a single, undifferentiated mental grammar [idiolect/linguistic repertoire] (Otheguy et al. 2015: 294, *passim*; 2018: 2, *passim*). These features/resources, distinctive of the speaker’s idiolect, offer a description of translanguaging “based strictly on the internal categories of lexical and grammatical structure” (ibid: 297).

Given the data on bilingual language use we have discussed, (3)-(9), the claim that translanguaging does not involve two separate linguistic systems is untenable: we lose tremendous explanatory power in terms of the social-indexical functions that are mobilized in bilingual language use if linguistic resources are understood as complex arrays of disaggregated structural features that are not integrated into linguistic systems (García and Otheguy 2014: 644-645). Under our view, named linguistic systems, understood as archives of historical-cultural expressions organized as specific chronotopes (of form-meaning-context pairings), are the critical resources that are creatively exploited in bilingual language use to express various complexes of nuances of meanings, as we have shown in our data throughout this paper. The switch to AAVE by Tavis Smiley, (3) above is audible only in terms of its syntax that contrasts in subtle but significant ways with the syntax of Standard English. This difference between the two dialects — as separate linguistic systems — is *noticed* by the speakers who control them, as Smitherman (2000: 2) argues, as they develop “adequate enough code-switching skills” to make themselves intelligible to those who “carry on the affairs of the English-speaking people.” What is most remarkable is that Smitherman uses her code-switching skill rather seamlessly, but deliberately. The movement between the two linguistic systems — between the two morpho-syntaxes, of AAVE and Standard English — allows her AAVE voice to be heard forcefully, to be intelligible, and also to align with the (dominant) System. Similarly in diglossic contexts of Arabic, Albirini (2011: 537) shows how “speakers create a functional division between the two varieties by designating issues of importance, complexity, and seriousness to SA [Standard Arabic], the High code, and aligning less important, less serious, and accessible topics with DA [Dialect Arabic], the Low code.” These functional affixations with linguistic forms (cf. Stell and Yakpo 2015) that generate particularized social-indexical meanings in bilingual use do not find an account under the *unitary* view of translanguaging where the myriad linguistic features mastered by bilinguals occupy a single, undifferentiated mental grammar [idiolect/linguistic repertoire] (Otheguy et al. 2018: 2, *passim*). The two linguistic systems, of form-meaning-context pairings, (i) do not appear in hermetically sealed boxes, and (ii) are readily available and accessible to bilinguals to draw from in message-construction, as we have argued throughout this paper.

The strict differentiation Otheguy et al. (2018) make between the external language system of the speaker — sociocultural construct of community languages around which

identities might be formed — and the internal language system of speakers enacting those identities could be read as a tacit acknowledgment of the fact that the idiolect of the individual speaker is dialectically constituted in dialogic interaction with community (social/conventional) languages. If so, then the speaker’s idiolect consists of features organized around grammatical systems (in their view, “assembly of features”, *ibid*: 5) of those languages and their individual indexical biographies (*ibid*: 5)—the total linguistic repertoire.

However, such a reading is negated by their explicit claim (*ibid*: 4) that “the dual ontology of the two separable named languages is anchored in *sociocultural beliefs*, not in psycholinguistic properties of the underlying system” (emphasis in original). They claim that the “key finding of psycholinguistic research on bilingualism does not support at all the notion that the bilingual has a binary competence and a binary system, and in fact tilts initial plausibility in the direction of the translanguaging claim of a unitary linguistic system” (*ibid*: 12). In the remainder of this section, we present a quick examination of recent research on psycholinguistic, cognitive and neural correlates of bilingual language use to determine whether or not bilinguals show evidence of two linguistic systems.

First, we discuss studies that show the cognitive and neural mechanisms that drive bilinguals to switch between languages. The behavioral and the ERP data present an interesting insight (Proverbio, Leoni and Zani 2004; Van Hell, Litcofsky and Ting 2015; Litcofsky and Van Hell 2017): there were asymmetric switching costs such that the switch from a dominant language (L1) to the weaker language (L2) incurs higher switching costs than switching from the weaker to the dominant. These asymmetric switching costs do not receive an account under the unitary linguistic system view of translanguaging theory.

Furthermore, bilingual production studies (see Hartsuiker and Pickering 2008, for a review) also show that syntactic cross-language activation is strongest in shared word orders, implying that code-switching is easiest in syntactic structures that are same across languages (Kootstra, Van Hell and Dijkstra 2010; Kootstra 2015). The shared word order advantage in code-switching, however, cannot follow from standard architectures of a unitary view of linguistic system of translanguaging theory.

In addition to the shared word order effects in code-switching, (un)grammaticality of mixed utterances has been shown to have an effect in bilingual production tasks. Gollan and Goldrick (2016) elicited production of mixed language connected speech by asking Spanish-English bilinguals to read aloud paragraphs that had mostly grammatical (conforming to naturally occurring constraints) or mostly ungrammatical (haphazard mixing) language switches, and low or high switching rate. They found a robust effect of grammaticality: bilinguals produced paragraphs with grammatical switches relatively quickly and more accurately than those paragraphs that had ungrammatical switches. These results add support to a growing consensus in the field of bilingual processing that some language control mechanisms are automatic and language specific, i.e., independent of domain-general executive control mechanisms. A translanguaging view of unitary linguistic system cannot adequately account for these results.

Studies of bilingual aphasia have provided evidence that a bilingual selectively loses one language while the other is spared (Albert and Obler 1978; Paradis 1983); in fact, a patient may show evidence of impairment in her/his first language, not the second language on one day, while showing the reverse pattern the next day (Abutalebi, Cappa and Perani 2001). The aggregation of these studies strongly suggests that the neural representation of different

languages of bilinguals is differently organized (Paradis 1995, 2001). Consider, especially, a recent case of JZ, a Basque-Spanish bilingual individual with aphasia, studied by Adrover-Roig et al. (2011) using clinical and neuro-imaging technique. JZ's aphasia impacted his languages to different degrees: his first language, Basque, was more impaired than his second language, Spanish. In particular, the Bilingual Aphasia Test revealed deficits in first language production, but intact production in his second language. Such differential language loss does not find an account in translanguaging theory: a unitary linguistic system cannot explain why one language is impacted (more) than another in differential bilingual aphasia.⁸

As the last piece of evidence against the unitary view of translanguaging, consider the results of Myslín and Levy (2015), who argue that socio-pragmatic, psycholinguistic and discourse-informational factors are the primary drivers of code-switching. Using mixed-effects logistic regression to analyze spontaneous Czech-English conversations, they observe that Czech and English encode different information-content: Czech encodes low information-content material whereas English encodes high information-content material. The key explanatory factor in their study was that bilingual speakers code-switch words and expressions that carry a high amount of information in discourse: that code-switching is a formal marker of information content, with switches (from Czech) to the less frequent—and thus more salient—language (English) serving as a cue to less predictable meanings that comprehenders must attend. In a translanguaging framework of assumptions, where mental grammars are conceived of a unitary linguistic system of large and complex arrays of disaggregated structural features that do not belong to two different languages, Czech-English bilingual language use does not receive an account—unless, as we suggested above, one “assembly of features” in the mental grammar/idiolect is discourse-informationally coded differently from another “assembly”; which, however, makes their proposal similar to the dual-linguistic models of code-switching they critique.

We close this section discussing Li's (2018) latest revision of the translanguaging theory. He clarifies his position on translanguaging stating that:

- (i) “in everyday social interaction, language users move dynamically between the so-called languages, language varieties, styles, registers, and writing systems, to fulfill a variety of strategic and communicative functions. *The alternation between languages*, spoken, written or signed; *between language varieties*; and between speech, writing, and signing is a very common feature of human interaction” (ibid: 26, italics added);

and

- (ii) “For me, Translanguaging has never intended to replace code-switching or any other term, although it challenges the code view of languages” (ibid: 27).

⁸ While most of neuro-(psycho-)linguistic literature we surveyed seem to provide inadequate information about the subject's pre-lesion bilingualism, or suffer from methodological considerations that could provide robust results on bilingual language representation (cf. Higby et al. 2013), we mention Androver-Roig's study here as it uses a very careful methodology and precise neuro-imaging techniques that result in the determination of the representational difference. A translanguaging theory will need to show that recovering bilingual aphasics either use/activate the same brain areas or that there was no change in activation patterns in switching from one language to the other and back. We thank Peter Auer for bringing our attention to this issue.

The first quote betrays the familiar language-identification paradox among translanguaging scholars, noted by Seargeant and Tagg (2011) and discussed above. The second quote, with the attendant presuppositions, concedes that code-switching is not replaceable by translanguaging. However, he maintains that the term translanguaging does challenge the code view of language. We believe this position stems from what we call the representational fallacy: that a bilingual speaker's repertoire contains a "single array of disaggregated features" (García and Li 2014: 15; cf. also Otheguy et al. 2015, 2018). We have discussed above the fallacy of such representational unification, both from the perspective of sociolinguistic and psycho-/neuro-linguistic studies. The code view of language not only provides a certain theoretical-analytical purchase in terms of indexicality and indexical field, it also emphasizes agency of the speaker who must do a quick appraisal of the context (audience, situated in time/place complexes) and deploy code-choices aligned to accommodation or non-accommodation, to negative or positive politeness, to power or solidarity, and to various other social-affective identity positions and meanings. We can't emphasize enough that the audibility of switch in (3), with concomitant indexical meanings, is only available because the English words are strung together in the syntax of the AAVE code, pointing to the obvious conclusion that the knowledge of form-function patterns is the core of creative competence, much of what we observe in code-switching!

4. Conclusions

The congeries of studies in the 1960s-70s (and continuing later) that produced a systematic and sustained understanding of bilingual language use — codeswitching, specifically — seem to be unravelling now under the weight of the new term, Translanguaging (and its kin). This term has acquired uncritical recognition in the field of bilingualism (save for MacSwan 2017) through various rhetorical methods and ideological strategies used in *academic branding*, discussed in Pavlenko (2018). It is, therefore, imperative that we closely examine what is offered as new in translanguaging research so that meaningful progress in sociolinguistic theorization can be made.

Although translanguaging scholars have brought attention to students' linguistic resources as a meaningful and important part of classroom pedagogy (but see Jaspers 2018 for a critique of this view), their claims that translanguaging moves "beyond" named languages, and creates "new language practices" that are different from "a synthesis of different language practices" or "a hybrid mixture" are not empirically supported. And it certainly does not enhance any theoretical understanding of bilingual language use beyond what the sociolinguistic studies of code-switching have offered.

In conclusion, then, in this paper we presented empirical arguments to (re-)claim the theoretical status of code-switching—as an active, agentive, socio-cognitive mechanism employed by social actors to produce and interpret the "meaning potential" (Halliday 1985) of linguistic symbols/acts/utterances/features in the multilingual universe we inhabit. On this view, the indexical biographies of linguistic resources (Blommaert 2015), organized as archives (languages) of epistemic communities, play a role in the deployment of various social-indexical meanings in bilingual interactions, as we have argued throughout the paper.

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