

Introduction: Heteroglossia, performance, power, and participation

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In this special issue, we¹ build on Bauman's seminal observation about performance, that 'the act of expression is put on display, objectified, marked out to a degree from its discursive surrounding and opened up to interpretive scrutiny and evaluation by an audience' (2000:1). More recently, scholars have moved to examining the performative role of heteroglossia, that is, the use of multiply sourced, semiotic (verbal and nonverbal) forms.² In particular, this line of research has shown how attention to heteroglossic performances and their local interpretations can illuminate the subtle politics of dominant and nondominant identities in different ethnographic contexts. This is particularly true of what Coupland (2007) calls 'high performances', which, as Bell & Gibson (2011:558) write, are privileged sites for allowing participants to indexically associate expressive forms with social personae. Thus, while all performances are inherently reflexive, heteroglossic performances particularly amplify that reflexivity with respect to their multiple frames, voices, and stances that they presuppose and establish.

The articles in this special issue thus investigate the diversity of heteroglossic resources, associated processes of social identification, participation frameworks, and political implications at stake in performance. The articles examine how performers evoke, stage and implicitly evaluate recognizable voices from the larger social world, and how audiences respond to and display their recognition of performers' aesthetically and politically charged stagings of those voices. As a collection, the articles then also explore how people use sets of semiotic resources to gradiently challenge and/or reinscribe normative ideologies and locally recognized, hierarchically organized identity categories.

Across the articles, a variety of social categories are at stake: ethnoracial, ethnonational, regional, and transnationally migratory. While diverse, all of these categories have histories of subordination relative to locally defined ‘mainstream’, dominant, ‘central’ norms and forms of belonging. Thus, one source of heteroglossia is the multiple types of linguistic and cultural belonging in the communities whose discourse the authors analyze, and the fact that members participate in fields of linguistic and semiotic action that are shot through with both mainstream and minoritized resonances. As a consequence, many of these performances evoke the intersections of multiple dimensions of identities, seen as marked with respect to locally understood, dominant norms. Such multidimensional identities are also often performed in dialogue with particular constructed social figures: the ‘authentic’ monolingual Corsican speaker (Jaffe), first generation migrants (da Silva, Koven & Simões Marques), white French citizens (Vigouroux) and Italian and regional (Veneto) speakers (Perrino). Each of these figures is then also constructed through intersecting TimeSpace scales: namely, the here-and-now of a given performance, and the diffuse time-space scales of ideologies of languages and nation-states.

Across the diverse settings examined in Europe and North America, we see micro-political dimension of performances that, in their form and content, disrupt and/or reproduce the taken-for-granted nature of dominant linguistic and social ideologies and hierarchies. Indeed, some performers are positioned as members of potentially stigmatized groups, who may seem to critically enact and challenge dominant visions of them, while others may seem to speak in voices that inscribe and assert more mainstream visions of dominant and subordinate identities. We thus see the different ways variously positioned performers and audiences may key and interpret the relationship of performed figures to dominant stereotypes—as celebratory, humorous, realistic, ironic, critical, risqué, or offensive. Participants (actors/co-present and online audiences) then have diverse views on whether and how given performances challenge and/or sustain local social orders.

We can then reflect further on the micropolitical consequences of such performances. Here we return to the frequent ambiguity of heteroglossic speech, which permits multiple frames and voices to coexist without definitive resolution. Pluralities and indeterminacies of stance also complicate any assessment of resistance. These ambiguities are central to the ‘mock’ varieties that figure in some of the articles, since the performer suspends the question of his or her alignment with the personae that are animated. What we see here, then, is ‘the power of the play frame to render ideologically marked practices and speech styles ambiguous in a domain already saturated with ambiguity’ (Bauman 2011:149). The range of these potential alignments relates to the differently positioned participants who produce, appropriate, and evaluate mock varieties. As a consequence, whether and how particular performances ultimately transcend or reinscribe dominant stereotypes may remain indeterminate (see Jaffe 2009). This indeterminacy is related to multiple scales and locations of heteroglossia. Not only do the embodied

personae call on both dominant and nondominant voices and semiotic repertoires, but the unitary nature of those repertoires and voices is also called into question. Thus, while in all of the articles, participants conjure up or nod to dominant ideologies in the performances themselves, they also locate ideological centers in diverse ways, revealing such centers as multiple, polycentric, and nested.

Many of the contributions thus ask about the nature and degree of ‘resistance’ that heteroglossic performances mobilize. One framework for assessing resistance involves evaluating how much the performance departs from fundamental ideologies about the unitary nature of language (and a ‘monoglot standard’ in Silverstein’s (1996) terms) and its ‘essential’ relationship to identity (Jaffe 1999). On these grounds, the act of putting a heteroglossic performance on stage is itself resistant, insofar as it presents as legitimate forms of linguistic, and by extension, cultural hybridity. At the same time, the humorous key of all of these performances may mitigate those claims on legitimacy, because comedy can be bracketed off from the ‘real’ and the ‘serious’. Assessing resistance is also complicated because heteroglossic performances thematize the multiple, polycentric nature of both dominant and nondominant regimes of language. There is not always, therefore, a single, clearly identifiable target.

Furthermore, this collection of articles addresses the complex and multiple ways in which performers and audiences interact, in terms of more immediate participant frameworks as well as more enduring social positionings. This is in part related to the diverse genres of performance treated in these articles, since the ‘higher’ the performance is, the greater the staged boundaries are typically established between performers and audiences (Bell & Gibson 2011). At the same time, in the corpora collected here, the boundaries between audience and performers are often porous in ways that do not simply reflect the stage. Members of the ‘audience’ may be part of the show, demonstrating that they are ‘insiders’ to the sociocultural world evoked on stage. Alternatively, performances may incorporate audiences as figures, and propose stance positions and alignments for those audiences to take up. Performances may also be intertwined with the everyday and/or put everyday practices ‘on stage’.

Audiences to these performances variously display that they recognize, identify, and/or distance themselves from the enacted stances and types, as the performances interpellate (see Althusser 1971; Butler 1993) audience members as insiders while positioning/constructing or excluding others as outsiders (Jaffe, Perrino, Koven & Simões Marques). This highlights the way that identification as an ‘insider’, as someone who displays acculturated sociolinguistic knowledge (Coupland 2007; Bell & Gibson 2011:563) and stances, presupposes and therefore creates ‘publics’ in alignment with certain circulating ideologies and stereotypical configurations (Gal & Woolard 2000). Responses to the performance may thus be the occasion for debate and tensions over the linguistic criteria of belonging. In this sense, performers beckon audience members, making them part of processes constituted through their interaction with ideological formations, such as those of nation-states.

In conclusion, despite a variety of themes, geographical areas, and media within the framework of heteroglossic performances covered, authors share an emphasis on linguistic and semiotic practices, and the pivotal reflexive role of the dynamic relations between time and space in sociolinguistic analysis. Together, the articles demonstrate that the study of heteroglossic performances is indeed fertile terrain for examining the dynamic relationships between ideologies, linguistic forms, and processes of identification.

NOTES

¹ Authors are listed by alphabetical order. Each of them has equally contributed to this special issue.

² A partial list includes Woolard (1999), Jaffe (2000), Pennycook (2003), Chun (2004), Hall (2005), Coupland (2009), Frekko (2011), Moriarty & Pietikäinen (2011), Androutsopoulos (2012), Queen (2012), Pietikäinen & Dlaske (2013), and. Jaworski (2014).

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