

PROPOSAL FOR A COLLOQUIUM AT ISB 6, 2007

Title: Bi- and multilingual practices in hip-hop lyrics

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Topics: Bilingual communities, code-switching, discourse, identity, literacy/biliteracy, sociolinguistics

Expanding the increasing research interest in bi- and multilingualism in planned discourse and the performance arts, this colloquium will bring together scholars from sociolinguistics, discourse analysis and applied linguistics to discuss bi-/multilingual practices in hip-hop lyrics from various languages. Hip-hop is a particularly rich site of language contact processes due to its character as hybrid cultural practice; its 'glocal' character as an African American cultural form that is globally diffused and locally appropriated; its worldwide appeal to marginalized and minority populations; and its heavily poetic performance practices. The data to be discussed draw on linguistic repertoires which variably encompass a majority/national language, a range of minority/migrant languages and (African-American) English. Topics to be addressed on a micro level include the patterns of code-switching and language mixing found in lyrics; their relationship to spontaneous bilingual speech; and the relationship of language choice to topic, narrative voice, and genre structure. Topics on a macro level will include the relationship of rappers' bilingual practices to the discursive construction of hybrid/multiple identities; the effect of institutional constraints (e.g. commodification) to bilingual practices, and the implications of these practices for wider processes of ethnolinguistic diversity, resistance to monoglot ideologies, and the commodity value of bilingualism in a globalizing world. The contributions draw on data from various speech communities and contact settings, including Cantonese/English in Hong-Kong, Swahili/English in Tanzania, Maori/English and Samoan/English in New Zealand, Spanish/English in the US, Quebec French/English/migrant languages in Canada, and German/migrant languages in Germany.

Requires a **3-hour time block**, consisting of six 25-min. papers (incl. discussion time) and a concluding 30-min. session led by the discussant. All papers will have been circulated and read by all participants prior to the colloquium. Chairs: Sarkar (papers 1-3), Androutsopoulos (4-6).

PARTICIPANTS AND PAPERS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Christina Higgins

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Battling HIV in Bongo Flava: Advocating for Tanzanian sexual morality in multiple codes

Tanzanian rap draws on Swahili, English, and “Swahinglish”, a new urban code, to address behaviors which encourage the spread of HIV, and hence which entextualize (Silverstein & Urban, 1996) Western culture. As these codes are also used to offer advice on sexually responsible, explicitly ‘African’ lifestyles, they do not merely mimic the voice of the Western ‘other,’ but rather have been appropriated in the local context.

Angel Lin

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Bi-literacy with an Attitude: Code-mixing/switching in Hip Hop Song Lyrics in Hong Kong

This paper analyses the bi- and multilingual (Cantonese/English, Cantonese/Korean/English) discourse of local hip hop artists in Hong Kong. Often socially conscious, their lyrics address both global and local issues, intertwining texts from diverse sources and juxtaposing voices from different languages and cultures.

Mela Sarkar, Lise Winer and Bronwen Low

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Subversion, domination and code-switching in French Quebec rap

French is the official language of Quebec and the main language of Quebec hip-hop lyrics. Montreal rappers from diverse backgrounds use several other languages as well as several varieties of both French and English in their lyrics. This paper examines tensions between local and continental French as well as between French and immigrant languages, as reflected in rap code-switching. New processes of Quebec youth identity formation are shown to be at work that resist government-imposed categories of “francophone, anglophone, allophone”.

Jannis Androutsopoulos

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Bilingualism, ethnicity, and genre in German-based migrant hip-hop

This paper examines uses of migrant languages (e.g. Turkish, Italian) in German hip-hop productions from the mid 1900s to date. Based on an analysis of their frequency, their distribution across the genre structure of rap songs and, the propositional content they convey, it argues that migrant languages have a primarily symbolic, rather than communicative, function. This allows artists to target mainstream monolingual audience by laying claims to their ethnic heritage.

Clare Mar-Molinero

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Subverting Cervantes: Reggaeton, rap and Latino pop on a global stage

This paper discusses the phenomenon of grassroots appropriation of global Spanish by examining US Latino popular music. It argues that its topics and code-switching patterns are a manifestation of a linguistic community crossing 'contact zones' (Pratt 1987, 1992, 2005) to bring their own particular form of Spanish to the global stage.

Tony Mitchell

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Bilingual Constructions of Indigeneity in Aotearoa Hip-hop

This paper will examine ways in which indigenous identities are negotiated through language in hip-hop music in Aotearoa/New Zealand, focusing on the work of Te Kupu, who raps in both English and the Maori language, and Feelstyle, who mixes English with Samoan. It argues for affinities between the rhetorical formations of Aotearoa hip-hop and Maori and Pacific Islander traditional cultures, and for the use of hip-hop by indigenous artists to re-engage with traditional aspects of their culture.

Discussant:

Mark Sebba

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