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Standards of Evidence, Ethnographic Methods and Analysis

Abstract/Summary
Drawing on the author's own research on Corsican bilingual schools, this paper explores the relationship between ethnographic research practices and sound standards of evidence for analytical claims. The presentation will consider *time, breadth, intensity, and systematicity.* I hope to illustrate how sustained and systematic observations over time make it possible for the ethnographer to assess behaviors/events at a specific moment in light of histories of interaction, particulars of relationships between people, histories of individual practice, explicitly expressed philosophies or ideals—not to mention histories that go beyond the ethnographic moment (for example, personal and professional trajectories and patterns of socialization or apprenticeship; intergroup relations etc.). Time depth also allows the ethnographer to make empirically grounded assessments of whether a particular utterance or event or interaction is widespread/habitual/representative vs. relatively unusual—either for an individual, or for a collectivity. Both the unusual and the habitual can be telling examples, but they are telling in different ways, and it is crucial to be able to make appropriate distinctions. The second them, breadth of ethnographic research, clearly relates to an ideal that can only ever be partially realized, particularly in complex societies: that the ethnographer's goal should be to try to come to a grasp of the wholeness of the lives of the people being studied. That means attempting to observe those people in multiple contexts, or to observe multiple aspects of a particular setting (for example, an institutional one). The impossibility of doing this fully is one of the constant frustrations of the ethnographic project, but it is one that should be an enduring reminder of the limits of any individual ethnographer's understanding. Finally, I want to emphasize that though there are many emergent and contingent dimensions of ethnographic research, ethnographic observations, interviews and other data collection can be held to standards of rigorous, systematic research design.

Example: in a forthcoming article[1], I analyze the distribution of pedagogical and social functions across Corsican and French in a French literacy lesson for 5 and 6 year olds. The analysis shows that the teacher's use of French is confined almost exclusively to voicing the written text, and that most significant pedagogical work is done in Corsican. I interpret this as a conscious effort to position Corsican as a legitimate language, and to counterbalance the dominance of French in the society at large and in the children's daily lives. At the same time, I note that the this counterbalancing is not done in a way that squeezes French out of the lesson; on the contrary, it is there in significant proportions and is the language of formal literacy. I interpret this as one of the ways in which the teacher acknowledges children's French competencies and makes them matter in the classroom. My general point is that we can view the teacher's language choice as a form of stance-taking that simultaneously positions her vis-a-vis the two languages of the classroom and positions those languages vis-a-vis each other.

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[1] "Codeswitching and stance: Issues in interpretation" to appear in the *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*.

In this analysis, I draw on the following ethnographic sources of evidence, which depend crucially on observations of the same people, over time, in a variety of contexts that are situated historically, socially and politically.

Ethnographic Sources of Evidence:
1. The sociolinguistic context: language shift, diglossia, language revitalization.
2. The political and pedagogical context of bilingual education and the teacher's explicit philosophy of language choice/use.
3. The teacher's sociolinguistic repertoire; her control and distribution of code choice/mixing in the school and elsewhere.
4. Teacher discourse:
   a. the indexical link between classroom utterance types and social positions/identities and   hierarchies,
   b. the modeling function of all teacher discourse
   c. audience design: the attribution of audience competencies and identities through
   teacher performance.

1. The sociolinguistic context: language shift, diglossia, language revitalization.
         Here I make a pretty obvious point, that Corsican teachers view themselves as taking part in a historical process of reversing language shift, and undermining diglossia. This makes them particularly sensitive to the way that school confers linguistic authority.
         I also draw on my knowledge of the teacher's membership in a group of bilingual teachers who talked explicitly about the differential authority conferred to classroom languages relative to the importance of their functions. I also knew, from participating in a continuing education course with them, that this issue had been brought up by the cadre of instructors from the IUFM (Teacher Training Institute).
         This lends weight to my assessment that her codeswitching was intentional and purposive; something that I argue you cannot see from the data alone.

2. The political and pedagogical context of bilingual education and the teacher's explicit philosophy of language choice/use.
         Here I bring in the political and ideological context of teaching in Corsican. I draw on my knowledge of both the first (1980s) and second generations of Corsican language teachers and their pedagogical and political philosophies to support the claim that Corsican language is framed by its practitioners as a form of resistance to mainstream language hierarchies (and the dominance of French) as they are embraced by the public and as they are embodied in the schools. I connect the teacher's personal trajectory to this general pattern, and extrapolate from conversations with her and with many other language activists over time a shared experience of supporting a cause that pits them against local politicians, national decision makers and Corsican public opinion. Survey data (not my own) supports their perception of public support: Corsican respondents in a recent poll (in 2002) were still split in their support of mandatory Corsican education, with 46% opposing it vs. 36% supporting the idea.
         This has several implications for the analysis. It establishes that for this teacher (like all teachers of her generation), making the decision to teach bilingually could not be viewed as a politically neutral, mainstream occupational choice. On the contrary, it was a career choice that

was entered into and is widely interpreted as a form of linguistic, cultural and/or political activism.[i]

I go on to describe this teacher's particular social stance on the basis of her experience, practice and explicit commentary. First of all, she was one of the first cadre of bilingual teachers who volunteered their schools and classes in 1996, the first year that bilingual education was made possible by the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, she and her co-teacher had been using Corsican in the classroom a great deal even before the bilingualism of their school was officially sanctioned, going well beyond the three officially allowed hours allotted to Corsican, and using the minority language as a medium of education in other subjects, not just as a subject of linguistic instruction. That is, even before the bilingual education act was passed, this teacher had taken a non-mainstream, militant position with regard to Corsican teaching and had stretched (if not defied) official policy in her pedagogical practice. She was/is politically nationalist, a member of a nationalist teacher's union, and a member of the Ecole Freinet, a non-mainstream French pedagogical movement centered around the use of cooperative learning, student-centered curriculum and the use of "authentic" and student-generated texts. For her, teaching bilingually was thus part of a larger complex of values and practices that involved strong political and cultural commitments, and was part of the way she defined and positioned herself in her professional and social life as a person who more often than not went against the norm. At the same time, she was widely recognized, both by other teachers and by the Academy, as being an expert practitioner, and was often called upon—along with the other teacher in this school—to talk about Corsican language teaching philosophy and practice for a variety of audiences, including other bilingual teachers, teacher trainees, and wider national (and even international) audiences. This expert role carried with it a requirement to articulate quite explicitly all her pedagogical practices, including those involving language choice, and brought and helped to keep the issue of language choice and pedagogical function to consciousness.

All of this information frames and supports my understanding of her ideological position vis-a-vis Corsican. It also supports an underlying premise of the analysis of her codeswitching: that it was the result of conscious reflection and choice. This is not a claim that this teacher was in explicit, conscious control of all her language choices throughout every day, but rather, that she had given a great deal of thought to the proportion of Corsican vs. French she used, as well as to the distribution of Corsican and French across different classroom genres.

Extensive observational data gathered in her classroom over a period of 11 months bore out what she said explicitly about her practice: that she tried to use Corsican as much as possible in as many activities as possible in order to compensate for the French immersion that most of the children experienced in the home and in the wider society. If she had had her way, she told me, the first two years of school (ages 3 and 4) would be Corsican immersion and not the bilingual program prescribed under current regulations.

My observations of other classrooms, the comments of other teachers and parents, and comments made by this teacher about herself and about others' practices also corroborated that her use of Corsican in class was exceptionally high, even among bilingual teachers. For example, she talked somewhat disparagingly about other bilingual first-grade teachers' hesitation to use Corsican in any activity concerning a French text (although she understood the pressure exercised by parents to "deliver" French literacy during that year). And of course, as I have mentioned before, her use of Corsican in a French literacy lesson was also dramatically marked-off as deliberate by the fact that it was sanctioned in Academy documents.

My view of her codeswitching—and in fact, of all her practices—as part of a consciously constructed and ideologically motivated agenda is also supported by another kind of indirect evidence about how the institutional framework shapes bilingual educational practice at this moment in Corsican history. I mentioned that there was a very low level of top-down regulation of bilingual teaching. During a three-week continuing education course for bilingual teachers that I attended with the teacher in question, I found out that this lack of official guidance/regulation was coupled by a lack of normative practice generated by teachers themselves. I was able to listen to a wide range of responses to this situation on the part of the participants in this course, and found out that for some (particularly beginning teachers), it was a source of some stress and anxiety. For others, it was a source of freedom that they relished in comparison to the regulation of the curriculum they experienced with respect to French. It was clear that no matter how it was experienced, the lack of established or mandatory practice meant that teachers were more or less forced to develop, on their own, a personal philosophy of bilingual educational practice. They could not just step in, unreflectively, to a well-established set of practices. Thus, in addition to what the teacher told me explicitly, both this data on the general context of teaching in Corsican, and the specific conditions of teaching Corsican at that particular historical moment helped to explain her language choices in this classroom sequence and to support the claim that they were relatively premeditated, and concerned with redressing the imbalance of Corsican and French in the lives of the children outside the school doors.

3. *The teacher's repertoire, control and distribution of code choice/mixing in the school and elsewhere.*

To summarize the claims and evidence so far, in this analysis, I made the claim that both because of the contemporary social context of Corsican bilingual education, and due to more personal political and ideological reasons, this teacher was engaged in a relatively conscious performance, which I use to justify my attribution of intentionality to codeswitching in this particular classroom sequence.

But further evidence is needed to support this claim. First of all, there is the question of the teacher's repertoire and competence: whether she is equally likely or able to sustain particular classroom functions in both languages. This assessment requires observation over time, in multiple contexts. In my observations over the course of a year, I saw the teacher functioning equally well in both languages for all classroom (and professional) functions. In fact, like most Corsicans her age (early forties), the bulk of her own educational experience and her teacher training had been in French. Corsican had been a language of passive competence for her until her twenties, when she "reappropriated" it as part of a personal cultural and political and (later) professional agenda. If anything, then, her ability to do school in French was more developed than her ability to do school in Corsican, though at the time of my observations, over seven years of practice had inscribed the use of Corsican firmly in her professional repertoire. Nevertheless, using Corsican for professional work was by no means "easier" for her than using French: it was a choice she had worked hard to be able to make.

Another issue is her ability/tendency to stay in one language. That is, we have to ask the question of whether or not she is able to control codeswitching (if so, we can view codeswitches as more "intentional" than if not). This also involves a knowledge of her sociolinguistic practices across a variety of different situations, both in and outside the classroom. Again, my observations over time show that she was a frequent codeswitcher, and that codeswitching was a part of almost all her communicative practices in and out of school. However, she was also

highly sensitive to audience and situation, and she engaged in monolingual practice in a number of different kinds of situations, many of which involved accommodation to the language abilities of the audience. What it is important to note here is that the ideal of accommodation can be known by all bilingual speakers, but some speakers exercise greater control over their codeswitching.

This assessment of degree of control is crucial to my interpretation of her switching as a sociolinguistic stance. It is also a piece of supporting evidence for one of the secondary claims of this research: that children are able to interpret the teacher's sociolinguisic stance from her codeswitching behavior in context. That is, in anything more than fleeting encounters, interlocutors build up a "case study" kind of knowledge of a speaker's repertoire and degree of control. This accompanies (and sometimes supercedes) the framework for interpretation provided by their knowledge of "macro" or conventional-societal meanings.

There is another way in which I use observations of the teacher across different context to support claims about this particular teacher's stance. Here, I draw on her patterns of linguistic accommodation to audience or situation. My observations were that she displayed an ability and tendency to speak monolingually in relatively formal contexts, but codeswitched relatively freely in casual conversation. Thus for her, we can see an association between monolingualism and formality/authority/distance. It is not just that she responds to the inherent formality of an occasion with the "right" choice, but rather, that in using Corsican monolingually, constitutes it as a formal, distant, authoritative register on a par with French. Put another way, her practice in these public places self-consciously does NOT differentiate between the relationship (formal) she has with a Corsican audience and the relationship she has with a French audience. This is a political position. And interestingly, it is a political position that had absolutely opposite consequences for code choice in other circumstances, in and around the school. For example, when she gave directions to the smallest children in Corsican, she very frequently addressed the nursery aide in fairly long stretches of monolingual Corsican as well, even though the woman was not able (or willing) to speak Corsican, and even though she sometimes displayed signs of not understanding. This lack of accommodation had a pedagogical purpose: it was a form of display to the children, and it was part of how she made their listening environment bilingual. It may also have had a slight interpersonal edge, since she felt that the town hall's hiring of a non-corsophone aide sabotaged the project of the school, and would have liked the aide to make more of an effort to learn to speak. This example also shows something else: that the status of "Corsican space" in the conduct of the classroom was different from the status of "French space" in that it was something to be protected.

I have a hunch, from observation, that her codeswitches to French during lessons that were framed as Corsican-matrix ones were used in response to children's use of French, for asides, explanations, conversational management etc., but did NOT turn Corsican into an "object language" in the way that the use of Corsican in the sequence analyzed above turned French into an object language. However, I have not done the systematic data analysis of French use in Corsican lessons from my classroom recordings that would be needed to lend empirical support to this hunch.

4. *Teacher (and perhaps more broadly) classroom discourse:*
A crucial aspect of my argument depends on the link between the discursive functions and the social/political meanings of codeswitching. This hinges on both teacher and student knowledge of the following:

a. the indexical link between classroom utterance types and social positions/identities and hierarchies,

b. the modeling function of all teacher discourse

c. audience design: the attribution of audience competencies and identities through teacher performance.

Under a), the first issue I want to take up has to do with the social and metalinguistic functions of evaluative utterances. A great deal of research has been devoted to the I-R-E sequence in teacher discourse (Initiation-Response-Evaluation). The Evaluation step in this sequence is the prerogative of the teacher; it is here that the teacher exercises her institutional power to define what counts as knowledge, what counts as correct, as well as to judge and rank students with respect to academic criteria. If we reformulate this with respect to the idea of stance, we can say that evaluative language indexes an authoritative stance.

Observation and analysis of this classroom, and of countless other classrooms shows that both teachers and students are aware of the indexical relationship between evaluative language and speaker authority, because this awareness is an essential condition for the conduct of classroom behavior and the management of classroom activities and identities. We can see this awareness on the part of students every time they orient towards the third slot in the IRE sequence as being about evaluation; for example reformulating an answer in response to teacher silence, questioning repetition of their utterance or ambivalent ratification. Thus, evaluative moves in the classroom are moments in which teacher authority is made manifest. My argument, then is that teacher authority is transferred to the language she uses. In this lesson, there was significant authority transfer to Corsican, but the fact that the teacher did not use Corsican exclusively to do the work of evaluation made her codeswitching between the two languages for this particular function an index of parity: it positioned the two languages as equally important and powerful.

A second form of sociolinguistic and contextual (classroom-based) shared knowledge about the social functions of language that is important to my analysis is the modeling function of teacher's utterances (b, above). Here, I make a general claim that the teacher's role defines his or her speech as a model for children to follow. In relation to stance, this means that the teacher's practice displays her personal relationships to the languages of the classroom as models for the development of children's relationships to those languages.

The issue of modeling and stance is interesting and quite complex if we look at teachers' expansions of children's utterances—something this teacher switched to Corsican to do in the lesson I analyzed. If we look at these practices in the literature on language socialization as well as in education, we see that as the adult or teacher takes the prerogative of being able to 'speak for' the child, they simultaneously position that child as a novice speaker (as incompetent) and treat the child 'as if' he or she was able to participate fully in a complex discourse or interaction (thus, as competent).[ii] The 'as if' dimension of this kind of move constitutes a sort of apprenticeship, where the child is discursively incorporated into an idealized, adult model of appropriate language, argument and action. So, the fact that the teacher uses Corsican for expansions confers on that language the authority embedded in the modeling function of teacher speech, at the same time as it performatively links the child (through their expanded utterances) to the code (Corsican) used by the teacher. It too suggests that the child should and could have the relationship with Corsican that the teacher does.

The ultimate significance and effects of this complex positioning of Corsican as, alternately, equal to and superior to French through code choice and codeswitching in evaluative

discourse have to be assessed in the wider context of evaluative practice in the school. Here, the ethnographic data shows that the priority given to Corsican as a vehicle for evaluation in the lesson that I analyzed is more the exception than the rule. At the time of my research, there were no mandated assessments of children's Corsican competence, but there were regular standardized tests of French and other core subjects (like Math). Moreover, the teachers in this school tested the children in writing more often and more extensively in French than they did in Corsican. institutional forms of student assessment (particularly standardized tests) which are much more extensive and formalized in French than they are in Corsican.

Finally, the argument about stance is related to issues of audience design (c), as I claim that teacher discourse is not just a response to a group of hearers whose identities and competencies pre-exist the moment of interaction. On the contrary, teacher discourse constitutes students as particular kinds of audiences; it addresses them as though they could/should understand and participate (even if they cannot participate at the same level as the teacher). Here, my interpretation is based on my knowledge of the children's Corsican and French language competencies. As the example of 'speaking for' the child through expansions shows, codeswitching in the lesson I analyzed does not cater to the competences of the children, rather, it projects a model of an ideal classroom participant, and ideal relationships between languages in the classroom. This allows me to interpret teacher talk in this lesson as doing both pragmatic and symbolic scaffolding. It scaffolded language learning with attention to the actual competencies of the children; it scaffolded identity and identification by building imagined competencies into the structure of teacher discourse (see Jaffe 2003).

This leads me to a final comment, which has to do with uptake. Much codeswitching research, including my own analysis here, has focused on production (or audience design) and speaker intention rather than on hearer uptake (or audience response). Particularly in educational contexts, it is critical to measure in some way how the intended (and unintended) meanings of adults or experts are taken up by children or novices. Here, I would argue for the same combination of ethnographic, sociological and conversational data and analyses.

To summarize, then, codeswitching in this sequence is ideologically and politically motivated. The teacher deploys the authority of her role, against the backdrop of norms of language use in the institutional context, to establish relationships of both parity and differentiation between the two languages of the classroom. This kind of codeswitching does not use conventional associations between a particular code and identities, power relationships and other social, cultural and political meanings to do pedagogical or interactional work. Rather, it is the pedagogical and interactional work done by the teacher that lends meaning to the codes in question. In effect, what she is engaged in is socialization to stance: she is using the authority of her position to create a new set of associations between Corsican, literacy and legitimate classroom practice.

This analysis is built on a variety of levels and types of data. First, there is the detailed analysis of the differentiated roles that Corsican and French play in a particular instructional discourse. However, I have argued that the significance of this patterning can only be fully understood with reference to sociolinguistic and ethnographic data. This includes the political, cultural and institutional framework of Corsican language education and how it frames the experience of both teachers and students in bilingual classes. It also includes speaker-specific data having to do with the linguistic repertoire and overall patterning of the focal teacher's language choices in and out of the school context. The triangulation of these various orders of

data is both the evidential support for the analysis presented here, and the basis for the production and interpretation of sociolinguistic stance in the classroom itself.

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