

Day 3 (Friday June 4)

Narratives and power: controlling narratives in institutional and public contexts.
Narratives in interview. Story ownership.

Readings

Johnson, A. 2008. 'From where we're sat ...': Negotiating narrative transformation through interaction in police interviews with suspects. In A. De Fina and A. Georgakopoulou (eds.), *Narrative analysis in the shift from text to practices*. Special Issue of *Text and Talk* 28 (3): 327-350.

Optional

*Maryns, K. and J. Blommaert. 2001. Stylistic and thematic shifting as a narrative resource. *Multilingua* 20 (1): 61-84.

'From where we're sat ...': Negotiating narrative transformation through interaction in police interviews with suspects

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Abstract

This paper examines narratives told in police interviews through a case-study approach with three interviews from a small corpus of twenty. The interviews are conducted by different police interviewers in different parts of England. Narratives given by suspects in initial storytelling episodes are examined along with negotiating activity that develops from this start point. We see how lay narratives are transformed into institutionalized and evidential ones and how content is reshaped through negotiation that challenges and transforms narrative material. Negotiations over role, responsibility, resistance, participation, and assessment of evidential value of story elements occur. This activity sometimes recontextualizes (Sarangi 1998; Linell and Sarangi 1998; Iedema and Wodak 1999) and transforms the start-point narrative, giving it evidential value; that is, value in relation to institutional and generic goals of establishing the facts of an alleged crime, for use in any future trial. Transformation is therefore seen as a negotiated (re)construction and recontextualization of narrative detail, part of the (re)productive work of institutional talk that produces an altered reality and responsibility that orients to the institutional rather than individual perspective.

Keywords: narrative; recontextualization; negotiation; assessment; institutional discourse; police interview.

1. Narrative in context

In this paper I focus on two aspects of narrative in police interviews: the 'free narrative', that is, any narrative account given freely, on invitation, following arrest for a suspected crime, and the activity of eliciting narrative detail through elicitation and response during interrogation. The

suspect's story, first couched in lay terms and often unevaluated in terms of culpability and responsibility, is reshaped and transformed through negotiating wording, meaning, additional detail, and stance that make it more valuable as evidence in relation to the crime for which the suspect may be charged and later tried. It is therefore chiefly through dialogue rather than monologue that narrative material is 'occasioned' (Edwards 1997) and negotiated, becoming institutionalized and evidential through questioning, rather than given in first accounts.

Police interviews aim to establish 'the facts' and the role of the suspect in the story world. After being invited to tell his/her own story, interrogation explores, develops, and 'recontextualizes' it (Linell and Sarangi 1998), often through turns that reword or 'formulate' (Garfinkel and Sacks 1970; Holt and Johnson 2006; Stokoe and Edwards 2006) the suspect's words within an institutional frame and through activity that moves the suspect from resistance to participation. This work is often external to the narrative, in interruptions to the initial story or in a subsequent interrogation of it in interviewer turns. Formulations function by 'fixing' (Heritage 1985) the version of events in an institutional voice and making it evidentially valuable. These practices are part of the process of recontextualization, an institutional phenomenon that is reproductive in the sense that it employs resources that have lasting semiotic effects for the individual and their narrative. Recontextualizing practices have the power to transform realities in ways that orient to institutional meanings.

My aim here is to show how narrative resources are shared and negotiated to produce an authoritative account of 'the facts'. Blommaert (2001), in his analysis of interviews with African asylum seekers, shows how interviewees often lack the linguistic and stylistic resources to make their stories count as narratives of escape that are successful in the asylum-seeking process. There is a resulting narrative 'inequality', since 'asylum seekers cannot make their motives and causes for seeking asylum fully understood' (2001: 414). But native-speaker interviewees sometimes fare no better, particularly suspects in criminal cases, who may have good reasons why they might not wish to fully articulate cause and motive: punishment and incarceration. A different kind of inequality is therefore observable in police interviews with suspects, to which I shall return after the data analysis.

Negotiation is often carried out through evaluative moves, as my title quotation suggests. 'From where we're sat' is from an interviewer turn and illustrates a persuasive attempt at getting the suspect to talk by getting him to consider the interviewer perspective. It comes in direct questioning of the suspect's story in an interview where the suspect has invoked his right to silence but has agreed to questions being put to him

and shows just one of the resources employed by interviewers. Negotiating resources are those that enable interviewers to work with suspects to enhance narrative detail. In an interview involving a fight in a pub, where one man has suffered a fractured skull and the other has been arrested and is being questioned, negotiations involve legal evidence of intention, responsibility, and recklessness. The suspect admits hitting the victim, but did he intend to cause him serious injury? The suspect believed that the victim was threatening him, so was the suspect in fact the aggressor? Could the suspect simply have spoken to rather than hit the victim and was he reckless in not considering the result of his actions? Negotiated responses to these questions transform narrative material into something evidentially valuable. These causes and motives are resisted by suspects in their own first tellings.

While the police interview is a specific type of interview and discourse activity, there are other interview types that embody similar dispositions of negotiation over institutional goals, such as news interviews, disciplinary hearings, and barrister questioning in court. The paper therefore aims to provide an analysis that theorizes talk-in-context in a way that may be generalized to other institutional settings, particularly those with an overhearing audience (Heritage 1985) or 'superaddressee' (Bakhtin 1986) such as in the law and media, when speech is as much directed to the generalized other, an assessor of facts, often located outside the immediate context, as to physical interlocutors.

I take as my point of departure recent research which theorizes three key areas: narrative, discourse, and context. Labov and Waletzky's (1997) work on narrative is extended and revised in recent research by Bamberg and Andrews (2004), Edwards (1997), and Stokoe and Edwards (2006), who take a discursive psychological approach that analyzes the talk surrounding narrative as much as the narrative itself. In terms of research on specific mechanisms that are important to understand narrative discourse in context, I borrow from Akman (2001) and Goodwin and Goodwin's (1992) and Hunston and Thompson's (2000: 6) focus on evaluation and assessment. Finally, I rely on a notion of identity as a process of construction and attribution negotiated by participants in interaction (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998).

Also important here is the notion that activity is 'context-shaped' and 'context-renewing' (Heritage 1984), meaning that context changes from moment to moment in interaction. (See also Gumperz 2003; Duranti and Goodwin 1992; Zimmerman 1998.) Context is dynamically co-produced as part of joint activity that creates the conditions for negotiation over narrative content and meaning, conditions that are not conducive to the kind of spontaneity and openness achieved in everyday conversation.

Interviewers evaluate the legal point of the story: actions and their results, states of mind and behavior, intent, cause and effect, in order to transform it, and this is done for an overhearing audience, who is not present, but only encountered in the future, if the case goes to trial. Therefore Bakhtin's notion of the 'superaddressee' is relevant here. The talk is performed for a higher authority, a judge and jury, though these are only represented by the tape recorder, with the interviewing officers standing in as servants of the justice system. The need for a particular kind of narrative, one that is evidentially meaningful and valuable, is therefore part of this wider context that can only be partially understood by the suspect.

Evaluation of the evolving narrative by both interviewer and interviewee is therefore another central component of negotiation. Hunston and Thompson (2000: 6) describe the function of evaluation as involving a reflection on the speaker's 'value system . . . and their community'. Since it is as much interviewer as interviewee who evaluates, the way that this is done is important to the evidential value of the suspect's words. As Hunston and Thompson (2000: 8) point out, evaluation can be used 'to manipulate the [hearer], to persuade him or her to see things in a particular way'. According to the constraints of the institutional role, the interviewer is obliged to 'withhold expressions of surprise, sympathy, agreement, or affiliation in response to lay participants' describings, claims etc.' (Drew and Heritage 1992: 24) and assessments of this kind by interviewees, following stories and of story elements produced in questioning, are noticeably absent from institutional talk (Heritage 1985: 98). Therefore evaluation is not done through explicitly attitudinal comments (in expressions like: 'Oh my god!' or 'Surely not!') but through questioning that follows a suspect's storytelling, more subtly evaluating in clauses, such as 'you think so' or through eliciting evaluation.

Labov and Waletzky (1997: 34) say that 'unevaluated narratives are exceptional as representations of personal experience, and . . . lack structural definition', but they do not account for conversational evaluation that is negotiated between speakers following stories. Cortazzi and Jin (2000: 110) extend the Labovian model by showing that evaluational activity is not just done *in* and *through* narrative, but also *of* narrative, in questions and comment that surround it and 'jointly produce' it, 'giving feedback and mutually constructing and reformulating meanings'.

Narrative questioning is thus a site for establishing, reflecting on, and negotiating lexical choice, meaning, participation, individual and social responsibility, and culpability. In this process, the suspect comes face-to-face with himself and his social identity from another institutional perspective offered by interviewers, who attempt to move him from an

identity in which culpability is resisted to one where it is recognized and acknowledged.

2. The interviews

Data for this paper come from three police interviews taped by police forces in the usual course of investigation, which form part of a larger research project (Johnson 2005). The three interviews analyzed here are:

- ‘Assault Girlfriend’, referred to as ‘AG’, where the suspect is suspected of multiple stabbings in an assault that nearly ends in his girlfriend’s death.
- ‘Fight in Bar’, referred to as ‘FB’, where the suspect hit the victim, who suffered a fractured skull.
- ‘Assault Infant’, referred to as ‘AI’, where the suspect is suspected of causing serious injuries to his stepson, a baby under one year.

My examination of the data focuses particularly on the different types of negotiation activity in questions and responses:

- Negotiation over the suitability of the story for the potential audience
- Negotiation over responsibility in the story world through maximizing responsibility and seeing the self from the perspective of others—‘perspectivization’ (Linell and Jönsson 1991)
- Negotiating evaluation for evidentiality
- Negotiating participation and role—roles of storyteller, questioned suspect, or the legally invoked right to silence

In interviews FB and AI, the start-point narrative is transformed, but this is not the case in all interviews and is also actively resisted as the examples will show.

2.1. *Orientation: Negotiating audience and frame*

Imagine a bare room simply occupied by four seated humans and tape recording equipment. This is the usual environmental context for storytelling in police interviews. Two of the occupants will be police officers (one of whom will be the principal speaker), one will be the suspect, and there may also be a lawyer present, as in Extract (1).

(1) (AG)

Police interviewer (POL), suspect (SUS)

- 1 POL: Can I can I just perhaps interrupt you there for moment
- 2 just so I can get a full picture. What sort of a state were

- 3 both of you in I mean were you drunk, happy?
 4 SUS: Well I was pretty happy.
 5 POL: Drunk I'm talking about.
 6 SUS: Well it's quite true to say that I had been drinking. I was
 7 not paralytic. I was tired. I was wondering why she
 8 was shouting and screaming and hitting me because I did
 9 not understand that. I knew [victim's name] was stoned
 10 as well as pissed. I knew that she'd drunk quite a fair
 11 amount and I knew that she was stoned.
 12 POL: You're you're saying to me that you knew that she was
 13 drunk and high on drugs. Is that what you're –
 14 SUS: -yes
 15 POL: I'm sorry you- everybody must understand exactly what
 16 you're saying er ok then. So she's banging your head
 17 against the wall did you say?
 18 SUS: Yea I kept trying to walk away.
 19 POL: Yes.
 20 SUS: And she's there shouting at me, don't walk away from
 21 me. And she was repeatedly like pushing me against the
 22 wall.

With this restricted setting in mind, if we consider Extract (1), we can see that the word 'everybody' (line 16) is incongruous. The extract comes from close to the start of the interview, after the opening formalities and mid-way through the suspect's monologue narrative, which follows an interviewer invitation to tell his story: 'Now I need to ask you [first name] in your own words what happened?'

The first negotiation here is over turn taking. The interviewer signals (in lines 1 and 2) that he is interrupting the suspect's narrative to 'get a full picture' and wants to find out how drunk he and the victim were just before the assault, asking only sufficient questions to clarify this point before handing narration back (lines 17 and 18), giving a restart cue: 'So ... did you say?'. However the recontextualizing work that is done in this brief interruption is considerable. The police officer first uses both the formal and the informal words 'drunk' and 'happy', happy being a synonym of drunk in the shared vernacular. The suspect's informal, colloquial words, 'stoned' and 'pissed' (lines 9 and 10) are then relexicalized by the interviewer with more formal lexis: 'drunk' and 'high on drugs' (line 13). The interviewer also makes a strategic shift in his use of pronouns, moving from 'you' and 'me' (line 12) and then from 'you' to 'everybody' (line 15) in a 'self-repair' (Jefferson 1974), which replaces the specific addressee, 'you', with a more neutral and general 'everybody',

the ‘superaddressee’ (Bakhtin 1986) who might ‘judge’ the story. Coupled with the choice of formal lexis to construct a different reality (Danet 1980), the self-repair constitutes a shift in context from an informal one, assumed by the suspect, to the more formal, institutional one signaled by the interviewer.

Clayman and Heritage (2002: 158–159, 174–175) analyzed similar self-repairs in news interviews where interviewers move from taking responsibility for an assertion to attributing responsibility for it to another party. This kind of revisionary maneuvering, where ‘an interviewer begins to launch into an assertion, but then aborts and revises it so as to invoke a responsible third party’ is explained as ‘evidence that interviewers are working to sustain a neutralistic footing’ (2002: 158). This clearly works too in the case of ‘everybody’, but this lexical choice also shows interviewers’ stronger attentiveness to the ‘overhearing audience’ (Heritage 1985) and higher authority. ‘Everybody’, a ‘contextualization cue’ (Gumperz 2003), indexes a wider, formal context and signals the potential future audiences that the taped interaction may have: the suspect and his legal representative may listen to it again. So might barristers, a jury, judge, the public, news reporters, and then newsreaders.

At the start of the interview the suspect has been ‘cautioned’, which means that he is told about his right to silence, but in England and Wales he is also told:

You do not have to say anything. But it may harm your defence if you fail to mention when questioned anything you later rely on in court.

This means that members of the court may draw inferences from his failure to mention during interview any facts that are later revealed in court. Indexing this potential future audience draws attention to the absent others and the interpretative context. The interruption therefore signals a number of ways in which context works:

- ‘[T]alk can be contextualized by other talk’ (Duranti and Goodwin 1992: 3) through formulation (‘you’re saying’ and ‘is that what you’re saying’, lines 13 and 14) and reported speech, reshaping narrative and transforming it from lay to institutional.
- The participation framework of narrative can be redefined in the telling process: here a wider, future, overhearing legal audience (signaled by the word ‘everybody’) is prefigured.
- The definition of a new audience implies a reshaping of the narrative (since the audience ‘must understand’ what is being said, informality becomes inappropriate and lexical choice needs to be less colloquial).

- The narrative context constrains its form. A legal frame requires precision and formality in the exposition of facts.

The effect of the interruption and narrative recontextualization is that the suspect is institutionally positioned to see the story recipient as a representative of the invoked ‘everybody’ who is absent in the present but present in the future. The formalization of the colloquial (‘pissed’ to ‘drunk’) disturbs the present and foregrounds the wider contextual frame of the institutional judicial system that now comes into view against the bareness of the fairly empty room.

2.2. *A start point for negotiation: Negotiating responsibility*

In this section I look in two ways at how the suspect’s own narrative monologue is used as a start point for negotiation. First, we see how a suspect minimizes responsibility, which is then drawn out by the interviewer. Second, we see how the interviewer moves the suspect into seeing his story from other perspectives, thus getting him to recognize his own culpability and articulate responsibility for his actions.

In Extract (2), the suspect has hit the victim during a fight. He does not deny this, but neither does he position himself as an aggressor in his own start-point narrative:

(2) (FB)

- 1 POL: Do you just want to tell me, in your own words, what
2 happened?
3 SUS: Right, there were a- a group of us lads, seven or eight
4 of us, we were sat in one corner and [name](my
5 brother) he were- now I know what it were about, my
6 brother were on about war, ‘cause his girlfriend’s dad
7 works in Germany and he were slagging him off about
8 it.
9 [...]
10 So [the] bloke stood up, it’s, like, there’s a bar sort of-
11 and he- he walked round, picked up a stool half way
12 round and he had like lifted it up and I seen him he
13 was going to s- to swing for my brother, so I just
14 jumped up, I was at the side. Jumped up, hit him and
15 then he just went and fall down. And that’s- that’s all
16 that happened, then he were laying on the floor and
17 they came over saying get out behind bar staff. So I
18 left, then an ambulance come, then I don’t know what
19 else happened then.

- 20 POL: Right. We'll just take it a step at a time, obviously
21 because it's er because he's received a fractured skull
22 it's- it's a serious incident so-

The suspect's position at this point is that the man was going to hit his brother, so he hit him first, to prevent this. Responsibility is thereby assigned to the man who police categorize as victim, the suspect assigning himself a protector role.

Suspects' narratives in police interviews differ from the Labov and Waletzky (1997) data as they provide much more than 'some point of personal interest' (1997: 29) and do not 'emphasize the strange and unusual' (1997: 30). They often seek to minimize the unusualness of their actions to articulate a noncriminal, nonculpable identity, using words like 'just' (lines 13 and 15), while also ending with 'that's all that happened' (lines 15 and 16). This clearly produces a start point for negotiation in subsequent questioning. The interviewer evaluates the story very simply as 'a serious incident' because, as the interviewer puts it, '[the victim ha]s received a fractured skull' (lines 21 and 22). The interviewer also indicates that he is going to begin questioning. For evidential purposes of bringing a prosecution, the suspect's own story has limited value.

During the process of trying to move the suspect from minimized involvement in activity that could be considered criminal, to a more engaged position, the interviewer may shift the perspective. The suspect's own perspective is one that rejects or avoids taking responsibility for his actions. In questioning, the interviewer provides the alternative perspective of 'the people who work in the pub' (Extract [3], line 5).

(3) (FB)

- 1 SUS: They were all the same, nobody were like drunk drunk
2 just, like, everybody just had a few drinks and we were all
3 just
4 having a laugh.
5 [Cough]
6 POL: 'Cause speaking to the er- the people who work in the pub
7 and said that a- as a group you were quite noisy and erm that
8 you were talking about the war-
9 SUS: (Yeah.)
10 POL: And the Germans and I think it would appear that this has
11 been upsetting this fellow 'cause he's made some comment
12 about it, about your brother talking about the war-
13 SUS: Yeah.
14 POL: Would you agree with that?
15 SUS: Now that I know that, yeah, I would that's- sounds like me, I

- 15 were puzzled why- why would one bloke would start if there
 16 were a big group. It's not in his- his- well, I don't know.
 17 POL: Yeah.

Here we see that negotiation over responsibility between interviewer and interviewee leads to a transformation in the suspect's presentation of his position. In his start-point narrative (Extract [2], lines 3–19), he talks about four participants: his brother, his brother's girlfriend's dad, the 'bloke' (the victim), and himself. By implication the girlfriend is also present. The brother is talking about the war "cause his girlfriend's dad works in Germany and he were slagging him off about it" (Extract [2], lines 6 and 7). This assigns the family group's conversation to private jibing, which the 'bloke' who comes at the brother with a stool seems to intrude on in an aggressive manner: 'was going to swing for' (Example [2], line 13). The suspect minimizes his own criminal responsibility, putting himself in the role of simply hitting the aggressor to protect his brother. However, the interviewer initiates negotiation by asking what state the family group were in (Extract [3]), to which the suspect replies 'nobody were like drunk . . . we were all just having a laugh' (lines 1–3), but the interviewer gives a new reason (lines 5–7, 9–11) for the reaction of the assaulted man, and supports his evaluation of the facts through the presentation of other testimony (the people in the pub).

At this point the suspect changes his narrative. The new perspective is accepted ('Now that I know that', line 14) after the interviewer offers the suspect the opportunity to allow for the alternative view as a reasonable explanation of the victim's angry approach (line 13). Notice how in line 13 the modal 'would' is used to seek agreement on a point that is evidentially based (Edwards 2006). This negotiation allows the suspect to reject his original belief that the man was simply being aggressive and accept his own culpability.

Thus recontextualizing the event in the light of another's perspective allows the interviewer to offer the suspect another subject position, one in which he is an actor capable of seriously injuring another party, who is accepted as having a legitimate, rather than aggressive, reason for approaching him. The suspect accepts that he 'were puzzled' (line 15), but 'now' (line 14) knows something different. This move from past to present signals what Zimmerman (1998: 92) describes as 'identity-as-context' in that the 'activity of talking with one another is coincident with assuming and leaving discourse identities'. The analysis illustrates a moment in the interaction where one identity begins to be left and another one assumed since the suspect passes from affirming innocence to admitting some measure of guilt.

However, this identity is not entirely recognized until the end of the interview, through offering other perspectives. In Extract (4), other witnesses are introduced in addition to the pub employees.

(4) (FB closing)

- 1 POL: So you've hit him, he's fallen back, lost his
2 balance and he's banged his head on one of the
3 wooden beams, is that right?
4 SUS: Yeah, that's what- our [name] banged his head
5 or that's why it's fractured 'cause I c- I didn't hit
6 him hard enough to do 'owt like that, to, like- I'm
7 not right big so can't imagine doing a punch that
8 hard.
9 POL: Why didn't you just grab hold of the stool?
10 SUS: I don't know, I just- I just did it instantly, just hit
11 him.
12 POL: Cause can you describe this fellow to us?
13 SUS: No, not really. I remember something and it did
14 bother me afterwards, when some lad's come
15 over saying he were an old bloke, but I- at the
16 time I didn't think he were that old to look at.
17 POL: He's- he's fifty four year old.
18 [...]
19 POL: Is he er- is he bigger than you?
20 [...]
21 POL: I mean did he look the type that were going to
22 cause trouble?
23 SUS: Well, no but- well, that's what someone- if
24 someone's got a stool above their head, going to
25 swing it, how else- that's what they look like, that
26 they are causing trouble, aren't they?
27 POL: 'Cause other people have said that he had the
28 stool but he didn't have it above his head in a
29 threatening manner, he were just holding the
30 stool.
31 SUS: He didn't, he'd- he'd lifted it up and that's why I
32 jumped up and hit him before he had chance to
33 swing it.
34 POL: Do you agree that er you could have just
35 grabbed the stool and stopped him swinging it
36 down?
37 SUS: Maybe so. I don't know.

- 38 [...]
- 39 POL: But do you agree that erm, looking back, you
40 should've just grabbed hold of the stool and
41 restrained the fellow preventing him from hitting
42 your brother?
- 43 SUS: Yeah, now I do, but it's too late now, isn't it. It's
44 already happened.
- 45 POL: But you admit that erm you stood up and
46 punched him in the side of the face?
- 47 SUS: Yeah.
- 48 POL: Which caused him to lose his balance, fall
49 backwards, bang his head, which resulted in him
50 receiving a fractured skull in two places.
- 51 SUS: Yeah.
- 52 [...]
- 53 POL: Is there anything you want to say, anything
54 else?
- 55 SUS: No, that's- that's about everything.
- 56 POL: Nothing you want to say?
- 57 SUS: No, I think we've covered it all. Although I'd
58 admit now I were in the wrong to do it but it was
59 the spur of the moment, I didn't have time to
60 stand and think, well, shall I go for a stool or
61 shall I do this, I just-
- 62 [The interview concludes in 15 turns.]

The suspect is given multiple perspectives on his actions, all of which force him to re-evaluate his own perspective. These are:

- “Cause speaking to the er the people who work in the pub ...” (Extract [3], line 4) (pub employees' perspectives)
- ‘Did he look the type that were going to cause trouble?’ (Extract [4], lines 21 and 22) (police perspective)
- “Cause other people have said that he ...” (Extract [4], line 27) (other drinkers)
- ‘But do you agree that erm looking back you should've ...’ (Extract [4], lines 39 and 40) (own perspective with hindsight)

Given alternative perspectives, including his own, but with the benefit of hindsight, the suspect starts to recognize a culpable position, although not without some opposition (lines 23–26). The interviewer invites a final open participation (lines 53, 54, and 56) eliciting an admission (‘I'd admit’) and evaluated responsibility ‘I were in the wrong’, a first-person ‘now’ perspective (lines 57 and 58).

2.3. Negotiating evaluation for evidentiality

In this section we see how interviewers (in FB and AI) use evaluation in their questioning. In AI, evaluation is used persuasively to try to negotiate participation in the interview. In FB, where the suspect does participate, it is used to evidentially transform the suspect's narrative from the start-point narrative (Extract [2]) to an end position (Extract [4]) that articulates a different position on the story. The narrative and the subject have undergone transformation over the course of the interview through questioning that involves offering other perspectives, but the narrative is also transformed through evaluation and that is where I now turn.

In Extract (2) we saw that the free narrative elicited from the suspect was largely unevaluated and lacking in evidential value other than that he 'hit' the victim and 'he just went and fall down' (Extract [2], line 15). This start-point narrative differs quite considerably from the end position revealed in Extract (4). In Extract (4) (with the relevant lines shown again below), the enhanced narrative (underlined) offered to the suspect for agreement has become evaluated and institutionalized with detail and cause and effect.

(4)' (FB closing: start)

- 1 POL: So you've hit him, he's fallen back, lost his
 2 balance and he's banged his head on one of the
 3 wooden beams, is that right?

(4)' (FB closing: end)

- 45 POL: But you admit that erm you stood up and
 46 punched him in the side of the face?
 47 SUS: Yeah.
 48 POL: Which caused him to lose his balance, fall
 49 backwards, bang his head, which resulted in him
 50 receiving a fractured skull in two places.
 51 SUS: Yeah.

The simple verbs 'hit' and 'stood up' are given added institutional weight in the use of the evaluative verbs 'caused' and 'resulted' (lines 48–50). We also see the action of 'hitting' transformed to 'punching' (line 46), the action of an aggressor, and the result, 'a fractured skull', is 'received', a verb that carries institutional meaning, signaling victimhood; victims receive injuries from aggressors.

In addition to verb selection, the interviewer elicits evaluative commentary on the narrative that was not offered in the start-point narrative. This is only possible following the negotiation of other perspectives, once the

suspect has begun to question his own version of events. The interviewer's logical sequence of events, which includes the victim losing his balance, elicits an evaluative reflection: 'that's why it's fractured 'cause I c- I didn't hit him hard enough to do 'owt like that' (Extract [4], lines 5 and 6). The suspect accepts the contributory cause of the victim overbalancing and introduces the verb 'punch' in the self-evaluation: 'I'm not right big so can't imagine doing a punch that hard' (lines 6–8), which the interviewer picks up. Other evaluation is elicited by the interviewer's turns that focus the suspect on the recklessness of his actions (what he could have done—grabbed hold of the stool—but didn't) in the face of another perspective that the victim was much older and 'just having a quiet drink with his wife'. The suspect re-evaluates his actions 'at the time' of the event in relation to 'afterwards' and 'now':

- 'it did bother me afterwards' (lines 13 and 14)
- 'at the time I didn't think he were that old to look at' (lines 15 and 16)
- 'now I do, but it's too late now' (line 43)

Here the suspect evaluates his actions in line with the questioner's position, but in other turns (lines 18–37) he resists the implied evaluation of his culpability, indicating his resistance through the discourse marker 'well' coupled with negation ('well no') and the hypothetical 'if' (line 23). Evaluation by the suspect, through discourse markers, such as 'well', negation ('no'), modality ('maybe so', line 37) and hypotheticality ('if' clauses), resists acceptance of intending serious injury. In doing this he continues to minimize the effect and limit damage to his own position by opposing the other perspective.

The most striking opposition, though, is in a brief exchange (Extract [5]).

(5) (FB)

- 1 POL: So he approached your brother with a stool?
- 2 SUS: Yeah.
- 3 POL: You thought that er he was going to hit your brother with
- 4 it?
- 5 SUS: Mm, well, I knew that he were, he would have done.
- 6 POL: Is that what you think?
- 7 SUS: I know. It's not what I think, it was obvious, it were how it
- 8 were going to happen. He was- why else would he have
- 9 left us- why else would he lift a stoo- stool up and swing
- 10 at him.

There is an interesting negotiation enacted through verb selection and tenses, with matched disagreement between officer and suspect in 'thought'

versus 'knew' and 'think' versus 'know'. The suspect reinforces his resistance to the interviewer's assessment (lines 3 and 4) with matched past ('I knew') and then present tense ('I know'), negation ('it's not what I think') and evaluation ('obvious'), thereby resisting an alternative assessment of his state of knowledge offered in the interviewer's verb choice. He asserts his claim to 'know' his own mind in both the past and the present situation, making this point salient and resisting transformation. Identity is therefore transformed or maintained in response to talk and through resistant talk, in what Duranti and Goodwin (1992: 5) call 'the dynamic mutability of context', characterized by 'the ability of participants to rapidly invoke within the talk of the moment alternative contextual frames'. In this case, the suspect makes salient his ability to narrate the experienced 'facts'. In doing so, he negotiates power through establishing his *role as storyteller*, then and now, a point to which we shall return in Section 2.4.

However, in the closing phase of the interview, the interviewer, in negotiating acceptance in a 'but you admit' clause (Extract [4], line 45) that powerfully expects agreement, reassesses the narrative as one where there is one aggressor and one victim. In the interviewer's version, which the suspect accepts, aggressor and victim have changed places, both through other perspectives and through evaluation of the actions and demeanors of the participants. In this way, negotiating responsibility and reassessing the roles of the parties move the suspect into a different position, one of guilt. The suspect gradually cooperates with the process of transformation, entering into the interviewer's offered perspective to view himself from the other position. The end point represents an arrival at a point of agreement that constitutes a confession to serious assault, but without premeditated intent to cause harm.

2.4. *Negotiating participation and role*

In this final section I examine the way that interviewers negotiate participation in talk (in interview AI). The analysis moves from a focus in Section 2.3 on negotiations over story-world responsibility to a focus here on role, particularly the suspect's role as teller. As we saw in relation to negotiating evaluation of the narrative in interview FB, suspects can powerfully resist the official evaluation by invoking their authority as teller of facts. In interview AI, however, where the suspect is accused of causing serious injuries to an infant under the age of one, he adopts his legal right to silence. (SOL is the suspect's solicitor, his legal representative, who begins the extract.)

(6) (AI) (Begins at turn 9)

- 1 SOL: Can I just say at this point that I've advised [suspect]
 2 about his rights and he's decided to exercise his right
 3 of silence throughout this interview. I'd ask you to
 4 accept the decision. Obviously you're entitled to put
 5 your questions and you'll do that-
- 6 POL: Yes.
- 7 SOL: -but that's the decision he's made at this stage.
- 8 POL: Okay, but we'll still put some questions to you, okay?
- 9 SUS: (No reply).
- 10 POL: [Name], we know that you have been living with
 11 [female partner's name] for the last four months, is
 12 that right?
- 13 SUS: Yes.
- 14 POL: And that she has-
- 15 SOL: You don't have to answer any questions, [name], at all
 16 if you don't want to, even straightforward questions
 17 like that.
- 18 POL: It's up to you - all right?
- 19 SUS: Yes.
- 20 POL: And that she's got two sons, [name A] and [name B].
 21 Is that right? You're nodding - yes. Right, could you
 22 say 'Yes', I am sorry, [name], - okay?
- 23 SUS: Yes.
- 24 [There follow four straightforward Qs with 'yes' responses.]
- 25 POL: On Wednesday [Name B] was admitted to - and I
 26 believe it was the casualty department at [Hospital
 27 name X], but correct me if I'm wrong there. I'm not
 28 sure whether it was [Hospital name Y] or whether it
 29 was [Hospital name X].
- 30 SUS: [Hospital name X].
- 31 POL: [Hospital X], and you actually took him there because
 32 you . . .
- 33 SUS: By myself.
- 34 POL: Sorry?
- 35 SUS: By myself, yes.
- 36 POL: You weren't happy about his condition, is that right?
- 37 SUS: That's right.
- 38 POL: Can you tell me what condition that was that made
 39 you think, 'I've got to get this baby to a hospital'?
- 40 SUS: I've no comment.
- 41 POL: Was the baby poorly?

42 SUS: Yes.

43 POL: Obviously poorly enough for you to be concerned?

There are a variety of roles that the suspect may adopt. He can adopt the role of teller by responding to the invitation to give an account in his own words and can respond to questioning, collaboratively reconstructing the story after viewing it from other perspectives and re-evaluating it in the light of new knowledge. In interview AI, the suspect adopts a legally invoked silent role, or as we can see, semi-silence, choosing when to speak. His lawyer explains the decision (lines 1–5), but also underlines the police right to ‘put questions’, placing the interaction on a difficult footing. The police may ‘put’, rather than ‘ask’ questions, since they cannot expect answers. The lawyer interrupts the interviewer’s third question (lines 15–17) to reinforce the salience of silence, even with ‘straightforward questions’.

When the suspect chooses to answer, first with ‘yes’ (line 19) and then with a nod (‘you’re nodding’, line 21), the interviewer indicates that she interprets this as a response that needs to be vocalized for ‘the tapes’. Thereafter the suspect vocalizes his responses until line 40, when he invokes his right to silence, in response to a request to recount the event that led to the baby’s hospitalization (lines 38 and 39).

In this extract it could be argued that selective silence is more harmful to the suspect’s defense than the more active negotiation seen in interview FB. In relinquishing the role of storyteller, since he does not tell his own free narrative at the start, his storytelling is restricted to fragments offered in relation to specific questions put to him. This gives the major role of storyteller to the interviewer. Contrasted with FB, then, where the suspect actively negotiates narrative fact, this suspect is at the mercy of other-narration and speculation. His story is constituted by what is asked, agreed, minimally told, and withheld in silence where a nonparticipative role is adopted only in relation to potentially incriminating facts. Within a nonparticipative frame, the interviewer can only be questioner and the suspect can only be questioned; only when the frame moves to participation can interviewer inhabit the story recipient role and suspect become storyteller.

In order to try to move the interview in this direction, the interviewer attempts to persuade the suspect to talk rather than simply respond, by moving from an institutional frame to a more therapeutic one (Extract [7]).

(7) (AI)

- 1 POL: We have to find out what’s happened to the child. That
- 2 is our major aim as police officers.
- 3 [19 turns omitted]

- 4 POL: It's important to you, just for you, to tell us what's
 5 happened. You need to get it out of your system
 6 because at the moment from where we're sat you're
 7 quite screwed up really about it all.

A change of stance is marked by change in pronominal reference from 'we' and 'our' (lines 1 and 2) to 'you' and 'us' (line 4). Formality also moves to informality, marked by the move from the uncontracted 'that is', and use of the institutional lexis 'major aim as police officers' (lines 1 and 2) to the contracted 'it's', non-standard 'sat' and pseudo-therapeutic lexis 'get it out of your system' and 'screwed up' (lines 4–7). The changing contextual frame in these two turns (19 turns apart) positions the suspect in different ways, first as a giver of facts in response to an institutional 'aim' and second as a human being in need of a sensitive audience in the participative role of teller and talker. Coupled with the negotiation of the other perspective ('from where we're sat', line 6)—the listening police, rather than the putting-it-to-you police—the suspect is pressed with persuasion. However, since participation is not stimulated, the interview is suspended.

Later, the suspect asks to speak to officers without his lawyer and begins by saying: 'I know that I've done it'. He responds to a request to tell his story ('tell us what you want to speak to us about'), which indicates a new participative context for talk. In addition, even though the interviewer immediately transforms the context into an institutional one with a precise formulation, 'So you think you've caused those injuries', the suspect continues to talk, indexing a stance in which he accepts culpability, rather than simply the need to talk (Extract [8]).

(8) (AI) (Begins at turn 344)

- 1 POL: But are you saying to us then .. How are you explaining
 2 those bruises on his face? Can you sort of remember
 3 any time that you could have caused a bruise?
 4 SUS: I've got this tendency to .. if he's in bed and he like
 5 wakes up, if he won't lay his head down - because he
 6 lays on this side, you know, on his right-hand side - and
 7 if he won't lay his head down I've got a tendency to, like,
 8 you know, push on his head to like make him lay his
 9 head down. But I don't mean to push on his head to hurt
 10 him, you know what I mean, to make him lay down, but
 11 I think with me just like blacking out I think I push on it
 12 too hard.
 13 POL: Okay, can you ...
 14 POL: Sorry [second police officer].
 15 POL: Has he screamed out when that's happened to him?

- 16 SUS: Could have done.
17 POL: Which might have made you do it again, say, you know,
18 because . . . Do you understand what I mean? Because if
19 a baby's hurt or pinched then it cries, doesn't it? So if
20 you have done that to him it might have hurt him and he
21 would have probably cried again. Can you remember
22 those things happening?
23 SUS: I don't remember him screaming at all. Like I say,
24 sometimes - sometimes I don't even remember getting
25 out of bed on a night and, like, [partner's name]'ll say,
26 'Oh, how come you got out of bed so many times last
27 night?' and I can't even remember it at all. I can't even
28 remember getting out of bed to see to him.
29 [8 turns omitted]
30 POL: Do you think you might have used your fist on
31 sometimes?
32 SUS: I don't know.
33 POL: Your knuckles, say?
34 SUS: I don't know if I'd go that far, but like I say, sometimes I
35 don't know.
36 POL: Okay.
37 SUS: I wouldn't ever hurt him intentionally. I love all three of
38 them. That's what I want to have a word with (inaudible)
39 about, I wanted to tell her today before she went, just so
40 that she understood, you know what I mean? Because I
41 don't want her thinking I'm really bad.

This new stance contrasts sharply with the earlier part of the interview (Extract [6]). The context is transformed by a participative role, which correspondingly transforms both the subject and the narrative. The talk bears many of the hallmarks of casual conversation in the matched use of backchannel markers (underlined), although it is clearly also talk in an institutional context. This indicates a change of stance and a transformed participative framework where the suspect has chosen an identity that recognizes and articulates responsibility. This change of stance is particularly clear where the suspect initiates a turn without being asked a question (line 37) and articulates his understanding of the implications of his disclosure, his identity shifting in relation to his girlfriend's view of him in this new context ('because I don't want her thinking I'm really bad', lines 40 and 41). In this turn, he shows that he is accommodating to this culpable identity within the talk, the story only becoming tellable in a context that recognizes responsibility.

3. Conclusion

We have seen how negotiation is used as an institutional resource to reshape, evaluate, and transform narrative from a start point that minimizes responsibility and lacks evidential value for the institution. Most of the negotiating resources are in the control of interviewers, but we have seen that suspects have some control over their own narrative evaluation and in negotiating culpability and role. In the fight in the bar, negotiation of responsibility and narrative evaluation results in a transformed evidential narrative, and in the infant assault, negotiation over role results, in time, in a transformed stance in relation to storytelling and disclosure. There are dangers and inequalities, however. Interactional resources are unequally distributed to institutional speakers, which may result in later retractions of admission by suspects. Since suspects have been negotiated with, as much as negotiated, they may feel they have been talked into something they later do not stand by. Leo (1996) articulates a position on police-interviewing tactics that labels them ‘a confidence game’ and Rock (2001), too, talks of ‘simulated concern’ by an interviewer taking a statement from a witness who is struggling to remember details of the event. This suggests that the context that is opened up for talk is a synthetic one that simulates interest, but exploits the suspect’s position in a transitory relationship of trust in order to achieve institutional goals of evidence collection and confession. It is therefore a matter of perspective that allows us to discuss these interactions as negotiation; another perspective would view the interview as a ‘manipulation and betrayal of trust’ (Leo 1996: 260). Leo suggests that interviewers exploit ‘the suspect’s ignorance [of the situation] to create the illusion of a relationship that is symbiotic rather than adversarial’ (1996: 284–285).

Thus, a conflicting picture of negotiation emerges. For interviewers, trust is vital to achieve their goals, but, at the same time, since this is not a social relationship, the activity can be viewed as exploitative, manipulative, and a ‘con’ trick. For the interpreter, in terms of the position of justice for victims, one can view the negotiating power of the institution as a useful resource, but from the perspective of civil liberty, negotiation is manipulation.

Stories in police interviews are (re)contextualized, interrogated, and negotiated in many different ways. I have suggested here that the interview is a transformational process in which the suspect actively engages and where contextual presuppositions and interpretative frames are signaled through cues. Invoking absent others, as in the case of ‘everybody’, moves the context for the story from the personal to the general, or as Sacks (1992: 550–551) remarks of the pronoun ‘everyone’, rather than re-

ferring back it is ‘a categorical usage which doesn’t have as its members, specific reference’. Particular words are used in context for particular reasons, in this case invoking a more powerful ‘superaddressee’ whose presence adds a higher order judgment of the facts. Negotiation of meaning, role, responsibility, register (formal, informal), frame (institutional, conversational), and participation (cooperation or nonparticipation) are all features of the recontextualizing work carried out in this context, which is one that involves cooperation, collaboration, and resistance. The activity constitutes an ‘interactively constituted mode of praxis’ (Duranti and Goodwin 1992: 9) that involves transformation of the story and the social individual. For the suspect, the difficulty is of articulating a ‘contranarrative’ against the ‘master narrative’ (Bamberg and Andrews 2004) ‘from which there seems to be no escape’ (Bamberg 2004: 359–360). Cultural expectations, such as young men do not fight with old men, or parents are protectors, constrain the participants in the interview. Interviewers have to find ways for suspects to narrate for themselves the ‘macho male aggressor’ or ‘parent as attacker’.

Maintaining silence or accepting transformation is an interactional choice made possible in a context for disclosure. The interview attempts to transform the suspect and his story, offering a more authentic subject position in which guilt or innocence can be recognized and articulated, or resisted; thus the interview is an intervention moving the subject away from an illusory or disengaged position of minimized responsibility to one that maximizes responsibility and engagement and transforms the event into one that is institutionally and evidentially valuable.

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Stylistic and thematic shifting as a narrative resource: Assessing asylum seekers' repertoires*

KATRIJN MARYNS AND JAN BLOMMAERT

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to come closer to an empirically grounded view of the functions served by shifting and mixing *within* an intrinsically mixed speaker's repertoire. We shall do this by means of a detailed narrative analysis of a fragment taken from an autobiographical narrative of a West African asylum seeker. In the data a large variety of 'shifts' can be detected at various levels: phonetic, grammatical and paralinguistic. Small linguistic details are iconic of general moves and switches in the narrative, the total shape of which is in turn indexical of speaker identity. This provides arguments in favor of an indexical view of code-switching and related phenomena. At the same time, the data invoke issues of the unequal value of linguistic-narrative resources. In the asylum procedure, different preconditions for narrating are brought into the encounters between asylum seekers and officials, different conditions on sayability and interpretability are present and some of the meanings produced or sought fall in the gap between what is recognized and what can be produced. We shall address these 'pretextual gaps' in terms of event perspective, resource control, deterritorialization, transidiomaticity.

Introduction

In recent discussions on multilingualism, the monolingual norm which has dominated linguistics and sociolinguistics until now is fundamentally called into question and views of simultaneity and intrinsic mixedness of multilingual language use are being developed (e.g., Rampton 1995, 1998a, 1999; Woolard 1998; Matras 1998, 2000; Zentella 1997; Auer 1999; Alvarez-Caccamo 1998; Meeuwis and Blommaert 1998; Blommaert 1999a, 2000). Research has shown that in many instances of multilingual language use no clear boundary between 'languages' can be drawn synchronically nor diachronically. Concepts such as 'bilingualism' when interpreted as 'competence in two languages' do not account accurately for what happens in speakers' language behavior, and perhaps one should take multilingualism and mixedness, rather than monolingualism and linguistic purity, as defaults in language use (cf. Woolard 1998: 3–7). In much of this work, connections are made between such more complex patterns of multiple language/code usage and identity work. Simple language–

identity relations are no longer tenable, and even old and respectable concepts such as ‘speech community’ come under fire (Rampton 1998b; Jacquemet 2000).

The aim of this paper is to come closer to an empirically grounded view of shifting and mixing *within* an intrinsically ‘mixed’ speaker’s repertoire. We want to offer more precise insights into the way in which variation within a continuum of mixedness can be organized and can be imbued with discourse functions. And we want to approach this matter from the perspective of what this means to the language user, i.e., what kind of salience and relevance such functions may have in terms of identity, social opportunities, power and so forth. We thus subscribe to what Auer (1998: 13) calls an ‘interpretive approach to bilingualism’ – a view that gives priority to how speakers handle codes as resources for accomplishing interactional goals.¹ In light of this, what has come to be known as code-switching will be treated slightly differently here, focusing on the indexical nature of patterns of switching and mixing. Code-switching can productively be seen as a ‘range of intermediate usages, bespeaking a register-like gradience of form under stratification’ (Silverstein 1998b: 413): a repertoire which is organized not in categorical ways but rather as a continuum, and dominated by social indexicalities of unequal value.²

We shall apply this approach to a brief fragment of an autobiographical narrative from a Sierra-Leonian asylum seeker living in Belgium. In these data, the linguistic-communicative repertoire of the speaker is best defined as a continuum of ‘Englishes’, ranging from hypercorrected English to full Krio (Sierra Leone creole). The narrative shaping of individualized experience through contextualization processes entails a shaping of linguistic and narrative tools that operate as contextualization cues (in a Gumperzian sense). We will explore the indexical relationship between linguistic-narrative details and asylum seeker social identity in an attempt at demonstrating

1. how narration is organized along a continuum of linguistic and narrative cues (such as an intricate play of codes, intonation, rhythm, images, auto-stereotypes, etc.);
2. how these cues correlate with more general narrative patterns (viz. thematic, epistemic and affective variation in the narrative) and in this way add up to the narration;
3. how all this leads to narratives that are almost completely indexical: the entire act of narrating (blending linguistic and narrative variation) indexes delicate shifts in speaker identities and voice.

In the next section, we will provide some general theoretical orientations for our analysis and for situating the data. Next, we will present the data sample (section 3) and move into the analysis of shifting as a narrative resource (section 4). Section 5 concludes and offers some wider reflections.

1. Narrating displaced lives

This paper fits into a larger research project on African asylum seekers' narratives. In this project we investigate the discursive and narrative patterns in these stories, and we address the ways in which these narratives meet (or fail to meet, as is more usual) procedural–discursive expectations in the Belgian asylum application procedure. The project thus follows lines of inquiry into linguistic and narrative inequality as a social problem, developed, for example, by Hymes (1980, 1996) and Briggs (1996, 1997).³

In the Belgian asylum procedure, the applicant's narrative is crucial. Applicants have to tell the story of their escape in considerable detail and need to specify the precise reasons why they escaped from their country. Usually such narratives include accounts of violence and suffering, and accuracy in narration often involves detailed contextual stories of 'home' – 'home narratives'. The stories are then used as the central element in assessing the asylum application. An overwhelming majority of decisions on applications is based on arguments that are narrative and textual: inconsistencies, contradictions, failures to be precise on certain topics, lack of coherence or of plausibility (Blommaert 1999b). In what follows we will clarify some of the main features of these data.

1.1. *Deterritorialized – transidiomatic language and displacement*

Asylum seekers' narratives can almost by definition be characterized in terms of what Jacquemet (2000) calls *deterritorialized* and *transidiomatic* language (cf. also Rampton 1998b).⁴ Both terms have a language–ideological load and point to connections between linguistic resources and aspects of ownership rights and authority. They presuppose that a number of 'global' processes have called into question the assumed fixity of languages and localities – the latter seen as a conglomerate of spatial, temporal and sociocultural features. At the same time, such processes have been met with (paradoxical) tendencies toward hegemonization and 'centering' of language and linguistic practices, generating emphases on purity and ownership rights as part of the political imagination of 'groupness'. Phenomena of deterritorialization and transidiomaticity therefore open up a space of struggle over the value and function of codes and varieties in language. (See the discussion on 'locality' in Silverstein 1998b: 403–406; cf. also Silverstein 1998a).

In our approach, the term 'deterritorialized' refers to the use of communicative codes that are 'out of place', i.e., that are not usually associated with the geographical, social or psychological *space* in which they are used (note the different connotations of 'space'). The widespread use of different varieties of English as an international lingua franca is a case in point. Asylum seekers

rarely communicate in codes that are perceived to be ‘local’ by Belgians: they usually speak in varieties of English, French or Portuguese; when they speak ‘local’ languages – Dutch or French – their realizations of these languages are perceived as distinctly ‘non-endogenous’. In light of what has been said before, it is obvious that there need not be a ‘true’ relation between codes and localities. Even when both parties use a lingua franca and none of them would qualify as a ‘native speaker’, one of the parties can claim ownership rights and authority over the code used in the interaction.

In a similar vein, ‘transidiomaticity’ refers to the use of communicative resources that are not associated with a (perceived) linguistic *community* (in the sense of Silverstein 1998a: 285, 1998b: 406–408) and that are therefore subject to authority judgements from ‘idiomatic’ users of the language or code (e.g., nonnative speakers are subject to correctness judgements from native speakers). Observe that here also, ‘idiomaticity’ need not be ‘real’. The transidiomatic linguistic resources are only apparently free-floating or nobody’s language; in practice, they are appropriated and all sorts of idiomaticity claims can be made about them. Transidiomatic language use therefore involves struggles over social indexicalities – what sort of symbolic load is attached to communicative codes – and can be used as ‘unpredictably mobile resources for identity construction’ (Rampton 1999: 501). We will come back to this issue towards the end of this paper.

Deterritorialization is active also at another level in asylum seekers’ narratives. Asylum seekers are ‘displaced’ in the literal sense – they live far from the place they (geographically, socially, emotionally, psychologically, culturally, etc.) perceive as ‘home’, in another place which in turn carries all sorts of social, cultural, emotional and so forth connotations. Narratives are, as a consequence, inevitably about ‘place’, and they display many characteristics of the Amerindian stories of displacement discussed by Collins (1998). The life narrated by asylum seekers is a life that revolves around moving across different places, each of them connoted to events, qualities, histories, people, experiences and hence crucial indexical and referential spaces. ‘Place’ here obviously also induces time-frames: traveling from one place to another, and narratively referring to these places, also invokes different temporal frames of references. The narratives discussed here are not only instances of deterritorialized language use, they are also narratives about deterritorialization. We will see in our analysis how place becomes an organizing element in the shaping of a story.

1.2. *Consequential narratives and pretextuality*

As noted earlier, asylum seekers' stories are not 'innocent': they are forms of narration that are heavily 'loaded' and can have enormous consequences for those who produce them. Displacement and the complex play of reference and indexicality it generates obviously creates very complex contextualization demands, both in production and in reception. The amount of documentary work the narrator sometimes has to do is astonishing – names of politicians, places, organizations and institutions of the home country, the structure of conflicts, the precise content of one's own involvement in political action or in conflicts, etc. Similarly, the amount of careful listening and decoding indexical and referential tracks in the narrative (while simultaneously converting the story, almost on the spot, into a depersonalized 'case') to be performed by the Belgian asylum official is huge. To this two features should be added, both of which create unfavorable conditions for successful narration and hence structure narrative inequalities in the asylum procedure.

The first feature is *event perspective*. The conflict in the home country is a lived experience for the asylum seeker, and it is often a deeply personal affair not reducible to general categories of 'the good and the bad'. Asylum seekers therefore often offer a very idiosyncratic account of political conflicts, war or famine, and the focal point of reference in the story is not so much, for instance, 'the war in Angola', but rather 'my war as an Angolan'. The event perspective is thus experiential, unique, and dependent on numerous well-known factors when it comes to narration. Traumatic experiences can lead to difficulties in remembering and storytelling, one's perspective on events may change over time, some experiences are impossible to put into words, others can only be told under very specific circumstances (Ochs and Capps 1996).

If we turn to the asylum officials, the event perspective is of a different nature. Individual experiences have to be convertible into established categories used in processing asylum applications (e.g., 'political prosecution victim', 'war victim', 'economic refugee', etc.). Depersonalization is therefore a hardly avoidable feature of bureaucratic story processing. Also, officials' knowledge of events in the countries of origin is often superficial and based on general social and political categorizations (e.g., 'war', 'civil war', 'government', 'police', 'rebels', 'opposition party', etc.) that do not fit the highly fractured and idiosyncratic descriptions of such realities provided by the applicant. Differences in event perspective are institutionally inscribed – stories have to be converted into legally established categories – and do have an effect on how stories are treated by officials.

So far, our use of 'event perspective' does not seem to differ much from what Goffman called 'footing' – changing orientations towards what is being said. But in view of the deterritorialized dimension of such narratives, place again

emerges as a feature of event perspective. The changing orientations are often also narrative articulations of physical displacement: parts of the story are told ‘from here’, other parts ‘from over there’, and these displacements generate shifts in the deictic centers and, as we shall see, in style.

The second feature is *resource control*. Narration events involving asylum seekers and asylum officials often proceed in a lingua franca – English or French – or in African languages (often also lingua francas) when an interpreter is present. The translation trajectory of stories involves issues of how much control participants have over the codes used: who speaks ‘best’ English (by no means an easy question), who is able to express and interpret nuanced statements, choose accurate and precise expressions, and more than anything else, who controls the transidiomatic code used in the interaction? It is clear that African asylum seekers are often disadvantaged in such asymmetrical situations where idiomaticity can be institutionally claimed and fortified by the officials alone.

Together with the pressure to narrate a very specific event perspective in terms that allow the transformation into a legally transparent ‘case’, proficiency in a lingua franca and literacy provide differing *pretextualities* (in the sense of Hinnenkamp 1992).⁵ Different preconditions for narrating are brought into the encounters between asylum seekers and officials, different conditions on sayability and interpretability are present, and some of the meanings produced or sought fall in a gap between what both participants can bring into the encounter.

It is against this background that we have to look at discourse data such as the ones that will be presented in the next section. The data are situated (and should remain situated), and what people do in talk has to be related to what features this talk bears at higher levels of social structuring. Assessing what repertoires mean to people involves close attention to what these resources mean to other people – and in this case, to institutions – as well.

2. The data

In the Autumn and Winter of 1998, students of the African Studies program of Ghent University conducted a fieldwork project supervised by Jan Blommaert, in which approximately 100 hours of autobiographical narratives from African asylum seekers residing in Belgium were audiorecorded and transcribed. (The particular circumstances of this project are explained in more detail in Blommaert 1999b). Katrijn Maryns continued fieldwork and data collection in 1999–2000, and the data that will be discussed here were collected by her. The narratives, provided by refugees from all parts in Africa, were given in English, French, and (in one or two cases) Dutch.

The short extract we will show is from an interview with a young West African male asylum seeker, and it illustrates the type of narratives that involve contextualizing work in terms of linguistic and stylistic micro-shifts which are indexical of thematic, epistemic and affective components of the narrative. It is useful to indicate at this point that the speaker claims to be a Sierra Leonian refugee, but that his identity as a Sierra Leonian (as with so many other Africans) was a matter of dispute (see Maryns, forthcoming). The extract is taken from a long monolog in which the interviewee tells the story of his escape from Sierra Leone to the interviewer. We shall first give the ‘field transcript’ of the fragment – the typical sort of ‘flat’ and provisional transcript fieldworkers produce shortly after having recorded data.

(1) *Field transcript*

So in '95 in September '95 I came here . in . Belgium .. to Zaventem
 whe I=*when a pass the border I went to the =the city .
 (?a*gɛbɛdʒu*muwɛ) ask me.. where is my passport .. I say ‘yeah’. I
 no get nothing I no get passport. I no get document . they say so if I no
 get document I for go Salone .. but see de are for no go Salone Salone
 de were (I) there boKU::: everybody de die .. so . de all for stay here
 ... and I went to talk. I ex*plained to *them. What is *happen. and I
 say yeah. what explain to them is not so *clear . *so I for *go again to
 =to *talk. (?b_Λ *may) I sa*bi say .. what *there they *tell *them . is
 *always that they *tell *them ./ but *yeah

Transcription, as is well known, is part of the analysis and the choice of transcription method reveals theoretical and methodological preferences (Ochs 1979; for this particular case see Blommaert and Slembrouck 2000). A first step in the analysis is to retranscribe this fragment ethnopoetically, in an attempt to bring about internal features of narrative structuring and patterning. We do this by using, on the one hand, a more refined transcription technique in which more attention is given to phonetic and prosodic detail (leading, incidentally, to a number of corrections in the transcript). On the other hand, we use established linguistic and pragmatic markers of narrative structure, adding narrative patterning to the transcript and dividing it in a number of narrative units. Markers include the well-known ethnopoetic ones (see Hymes 1998): discourse markers such as ‘and’, ‘but’, or ‘so’, intonation, prosody and pitch, repetitions and parallelisms, style shifts, the use of reported speech and so forth. On the basis of these formal characteristics, nine ‘verses’ can be distinguished, sometimes consisting of one single line (units 6 and 9), sometimes consisting of more elaborate sets of related lines. Additionally, five large thematic units can be distinguished and can be labeled: (1) setting, (2) event narrative, (3) commentary, (4) refrain, (5) coda. These thematic units can overlap with single

verses (e.g. ‘setting’ and ‘coda’), but they more usually group a set of thematically related verses.⁶

- (2) *Ethnopoetic transcript*
- 1 1. Setting:
- 2 *So in ninety *five (1)
- 3 in Sep*tember ninety *five
- 4 I *came here ..
- 5 in . *Belgium ..
- 6 to . *Zaven*tem
- 7
- 8 2. Event narrative:
- 9 WHE I= *WHEN a *pass the *border (2)
- 10 I *went to the =the *city .
- 11 (? a*gɛbɛdʒu*muwɛ) *ask me .
- 12 *where is my* passport ..
- 13
- 14 I say (3)
- 15 *yeah .
- 16 I *no get nothing
- 17 I *no get passport .
- 18 I *no get document .
- 19
- 20 they say (4)
- 21 so if I* no get document
- 22 I for* go Sa*lone ..
- 23
- 24 3. Commentary:
- 25 **But** . *see (5)
- 26 de are for *no go Sa*lone
- 27 =Sa*lone de were (i) there bo*KU::
- 28 *everybody de *die ..
- 29
- 30 so . de all for *stay here (6)
- 31
- 32 4. Refrain:
- 33 **and** I *went to *talk (7)
- 34 I ex*plained to *them. what is *happen .
- 35 **and** I say *yeah
- 36 what I ex*plain to *them is *not *so *clear
- 37
- 38 *so I for go again to =to *talk (8)

39 (? b_Λ *may) I sa*bi say
 40 what *there they *tell *them
 41 is *always that they *tell *them .
 42
 43 5. Coda:
 44 **but** yeah (9)

The nine verses are ethnopoetically marked by means of initial discourse markers such as ‘so’ or ‘but’, pauses, pitch differences and so forth, and degrees of internal patterning of the various units are marked by means of discourse markers (e.g., ‘and’) or style shifts (shifts into reported speech, parallelisms and so forth). They can in turn be organized into thematic units on the basis of episode patterns (e.g., in the setting, the event narrative and the refrain) and argumentative cohesion (e.g., in the commentary). We now move into a more detailed discussion of this fragment.

3. Shifting and narrative structure

Detailed analysis of what seems a fairly transparent piece of discourse at first sight, reveals its deeply embedded complexity. As will be shown, various forms of fusion and micro-shifting at different levels are interwoven in the narrative, generating complex patterns of discursive shaping of experience. In the extract we see on a microscopic scale how the speaker organizes narration along a continuum of linguistic–thematic–epistemic–affective patterns, indexing epistemic and emotive viewpoints.

All of this happens in ‘packages’ which we will identify as forms of ‘fusion’, a notion which deserves some clarification (4.1). We will then take a closer look at different aspects of fusion in the fragment: the phonetic repertoire of the speaker (4.2), his grammatical repertoire (4.3) and paralinguistic repertoire (4.4). We will systematically correlate loci of shifting and switching with thematic patterning in the narrative. We will conclude with a brief synthesis of our analysis (4.5).

3.1. *Fusion*

Peter Auer (1999) identifies different language alternation phenomena in terms of a continuum, a suggested interpretation of which implies the transition of code-switching to language mixing and fused lects. In his typology, Auer defines these alternation phenomena by means of a set of salient features: *code*

switching (preference for one language at a time, functional *qua* alternation, etc.); *language mixing* (not functional *qua* alternation, no preference for one language at a time, etc.) and *fused lects* (obligatory alternation, additionally positive grammatical constraints, etc.). Similarly, Yaron Matras (2000) uses the term *fusion* to refer to speech situations in which speakers (Matras 2000: 11–12)

do not differentiate systems while carrying out certain linguistic processing operations, but instead draw on the resources of just one single system for a particular class of functions. Fusion is thus a wholesale non-separation of languages in both forms and functions of a given category or class of expressions ... Fusion differs from lexical re-orientation and selective replication in that it is not a deliberate or conscious process, and that it targets items that are high on the scale of automatized processing functions rather than on the scale of referential or situative saliency.

The data discussed, however, do not strictly belong to any of these categories. First of all, the alternating codes in the extract are structurally so close that they are separated only by a number of basically phonological features. Most of the remaining linguistic usage is hence identical for the two varieties in contact. Therefore the boundaries between what can be perceived as code-switching of closely related varieties and the perception of one code showing internal variability are blurred. Moreover, functional code-switching and mixed language usage often co-occur in discourse so that it is far from analytically evident to disentangle the two alternation phenomena. To start with a fairly transparent case of code alternation, the passage in which the speaker in a way acts out the interaction between himself as an asylum seeker and the officials (lines 14–18 in [2]) gives evidence of the indexical value which can be attributed to codes:

To the extent that the narrator ‘puts on stage’ the words of the other, she or he employs certain means to do so, thereby shifting the footing of the interaction. In bilingual conversations, a standard way of staging another person’s speech is by switching the language ... a few morphophonemic and lexical differential markers are maintained to signal different communicative roles and social identities. (Alvarez-Caccamo 1998: 28–34)

The data appear to balance between unconscious and automatized processes on the one hand and situative saliency on the other: although alternation is not obligatory in a purely grammatical sense, we are dealing with narrative constraints here, i.e., fusion at different levels indexes the act of connoting thematized spaces emotionally, culturally, epistemically, politically, etc., which in turn conditions identity work (getting across an idiosyncratic, individualized

account of the events). The following data samples may illuminate this intermediate position in between pragmatic and obligatory alternation. (The data come from the interview of which the fragment in section 3 is a part.)

- (3) but see de are for no go Salone Salone de were i there *boKU::: everybody de die ...
- (4) de was boKU: = boKU:: drugs to take
- (5) boKU:: power to = to drink

The use of the adjective 'boku' (Krio word for 'very much'), embedded in larger shifts into Krio (which in themselves can be seen as code-switching), gives evidence of frequent turn-internal language juxtaposition. Yet, rather than the separate varieties involved, it seems to be these alternating switches which in themselves constitute the language-of-interaction. The adjective 'boku' here displays a transitional movement from code-switching to linguistic fusion. The linguistic microshift from English to Krio maintains a part of its pragmatic function: it appears to be indexical of a meaningful narrative switch from the narration of recent past experiences in the country of refuge to remote home narration, which in turn expresses the speaker's positioning towards the narrated events. In other words, a linguistic device develops into a rhetorical-stylistic device and finally into an identity-building tool.

In Peter Auer's terms the type of shifting observable in our data can be labeled 'participant-related switching': 'codeswitching signals "otherness" of the upcoming contextual frame and thereby achieves a change of "footing"' (Auer 1999: 312). The data provide empirical evidence of the way in which code alternation can contextualize conversational activities: 'code-switching serves a conversational function, but at the same time it links up with larger facts about the speakers' life-world' (Auer 1998: 5), the conversational function here being the function of narrative structuring which in turn indexes certain aspects of speaker identity.⁷

However, even though initially the use of Krio in examples 1–3 above can be considered a locally meaningful contextualization strategy, recurrent preference for the Krio form and frequent juxtaposition has weakened the contextualization value of this cue. To put it in Auer's (1999: 320) terms, 'the more frequently codeswitching occurs, the less salient it becomes; as a consequence, the potential for using it in locally meaningful ways is diminished'. Whereas in English, the adjective, in order to be qualified, has to be preceded by an adverb (viz. the combination 'very + adjective' such as in 'very much'), Krio speakers realize this added emphasis through intonational prominence, viz. in the case of 'boku', by stressing the second syllable of the adjective ('boKU:::'). Yet the speaker here systematically appears to opt for the Krio form as the most appropriate term to give strong emphasis to the adjective. It seems that

this Krio form has become part of the speaker's grammar in the sense that with regard to this constituent, Krio tends to be the obligatory variety, which points to a stabilization of a function–form relationship. Code alternation has come to be used as a mixed code rather than code-switching in the literal sense of the term, and hence what used to be a locally significant contextualization strategy has been reduced to a weaker pragmatic force, involving a certain degree of fusion. This provides empirical evidence for Auer's observation that 'at a given point, the identity-related purposes of this style may become more important than the discourse-related tasks code-switching has served so far' (Auer 1999: 320). Yet it should be mentioned that this tension between code-switching, mixing and fusion is a matter of tendencies rather than categorical rules.

3.2. *The phonetic repertoire*

On the basis of phonetic features, the repertoire used by the narrator in this fragment can be described as a continuum, the extremes of which are more or less 'standard British' English (SBE) on the one end, and full Krio (the Sierra Leonian English creole language) on the other. In between, a range of varieties of 'Englishes' occur, some of which can be related to West African varieties of English (more precisely, Sierra Leone English, SLE, see Maryns 2000). There is a noticeable French accent in some of the utterances of the speaker (e.g., he nasalizes the final vowel of the Krio word 'Salone' – Sierra Leone – whereas such nasalizations do not occur in Krio), pointing towards a migration substratum (MS): the narrator brings along a background of exposure to French and this produces phonetic interferences in Krio and SLE. At one or two points in the fragment the man shifts into what is presumably a West-African language (e.g., *a*gɛbɛdʒu*muwɛ*, line 11) and phonetic realizations displaying presumably an endogenous West African linguistic substratum also occur (e.g., *paspuɔt*, line 17 and *evribuɔdi*, line 28). Undoubtedly, the degree of variation in the repertoire is indicative of the migration pattern followed by the man. Presumably, he is a native speaker of a (or more) endogenous West-African languages, presumably he has been exposed to French before he became exposed to Krio and SLB (thus casting some doubt on his Sierra Leonian identity), and presumably SBE varieties reveal his prolonged presence in Europe.

Strict boundaries between the elements of the repertoire cannot be drawn. Phonetically, what we hear is fusion, a 'deep' mixture of different varieties sometimes in the space of a single word: 'Salone' is both Krio and displays a French migration substratum through the nasalization of the final vowel. Bivalency (to use Woolard's 1998 term) is widespread here. What can be distin-

Table 1. *The distribution of phonetic features over narrative units*

Phonetic fusion	Setting	Event narrative	Commentary	Refrain	Coda
SBE	sep'tembər, hɪə, ɪn		bʌʔ		
SLE	so:, ke:m	'bɔdə, dɔkumet	si, fɔ, ste:	so:, go:, eks'ple:n	bʌt, jea
Migration sub stratum (MS)		Salone			
Krio		wɛ. di, nati	dɛ	sabi	
Endogenous languages		dʒumuwɛ, papuɔt	wɔɛ, evribuɔdi		

guished is a general pattern of distribution and 'outspokenness' of particular varieties, and interestingly, this pattern appears not to be a random one. Table 1 shows correlations between the distribution of phonetic markers and the units in the narrative.

The pattern of phonetic distribution reveals interesting information about orientations to place and to the time frames associated with it. Whereas for passages dealing with remote past events in Sierra Leone (especially in the commentary, unit 3) the speaker displays a preference for Krio material, he draws more on SBE and SLE when dealing with his current situation in the country of refuge, Belgium, as well as when describing synchronic contacts with officials (in setting, event narrative and refrain). So we see a kind of phonetic iconicity of speech variety and place, and hence of identity: talking about Sierra Leone proceeds through talking *as* a Sierra Leonian – in Krio; talking about Belgium proceeds through talking in the lingua franca used for contacts with Belgians.

3.3. *The grammatical repertoire*

The phonetic features of fusion can be corroborated with grammatical ones. Syntactic fusion – verb inflection, tense and aspect marking – can again best be presented in terms of gradations on a continuum ranging from SBE to Krio, with fuzzy boundaries between varieties. Considering verb inflection throughout the whole interview (so not restricted to this fragment) for instance, the

Table 2. *The distribution of grammatical features over narrative units*

Verb inflection	Setting	Event narrative	Commentary	Refrain	Coda
SBE	came	pass(ed), went		went, explain(ed)	/
SLE		ask, is			/
Pidgin		I no get			/
Mix SLE/Krio				what is happen, ma sabi say	/
Krio		I for go	I for go, everybody de die die, de all for stay here	I for go	/

speaker appears to move along a continuum where at a certain point the inflections totally disappear.

1. SBE forms: use of the perfective, the progressive, of modal auxiliary constructions with contraction, of irregular past participles, of infinitive constructions
2. Hypercorrections such as *I was forCED*, with stress on the final syllable and full realization of the /e/ vowel
3. Erroneous SBE forms such as *He were there*
4. Mixed English–Krio forms such as *I no want to fight*
5. Full Krio forms: e.g., *everybody de die*

Table 2 displays the correlations between the distribution of grammatical features and narrative units. Again, and corroborating earlier patterns, we see that the distribution of features across narrative units is not random.

A clear distinction can be made between (a) passages with standard use of irregular and regular verbs as for instance *came, went, was, passed, explained, asked*, etc., (b) passages with pidginized verb constructions such as *I no get nothing, I no get passport, I no get document* and (c) passages with non-standard use of verbs partially coinciding with Krio (stem forms used for past reference) such as *run, stay, catch, he done die*, etc.

Again this stylistic shifting correlates with thematic patterning in the narrative, more specifically with orientations to place: whereas for passages dealing with the remote past experiences situated in Sierra Leone the speaker makes use of Krio and mixed English–Krio verb forms, he appears to use SBE con-

structions for recent past experiences in Belgium and pidginized forms when referring to contacts between himself as an African and the white officials. In other words, the data appear to be organized by moves in the deictic locus of the narrative, indexed by syntactic shifting: the speaker switches from Krio to mixed English–Krio and English verb forms to mark the narrative’s transition from past to present relevance.

Deictic moves in the narrative are multifunctional. The moves not only give evidence of particular time–space orientations ‘outside’ the narrative, but are also indexical of a phase in the life of the narrative itself: it reveals the speaker’s positioning towards the events. Yet, apart from the spatial deictic moves, another prominent form of deixis emanates from the person addressing the speaker: this form of deixis marks the register in which the narrated conversation took place. Conversations with officials for instance can be characterized by fairly formal speech, viz. a variety approximating SBE. There is a connection between speech variety and social categorization here, to which we will return further on.

3.4. *The prosodic, intonational and metrical repertoire*

According to Roach (1991: 86) prominence is determined by four different factors: loudness, length of syllables, pitch movement or tone (cf. low- and high-pitched notes), and quality of sounds (i.e., contrasts with background sounds). On the basis of stress placement and intonation, the speaker can be identified as a prototypical African English user, one of the characteristic features being shifting of primary stress to the last syllable as in /govament/, etc. and shifting tonic stress to the final syllable of the utterance as in ‘I explain to *them*’, etc.

But prominence also serves crucial stylistic functions in the narrative. First, it can mark narrative units. The transition between the first unit (setting) and the second one (event narration) is marked by a strongly high-pitched ‘WHE I=WHEN’, following a long pause and contrasting with the low-pitched previous utterances. Also, prosody, intonation and meter give shape to various modes and degrees of performance. The first unit, the setting, is narrated in low pitch, slowly, and with unmarked intonation contours. It is markedly slower and lower-pitched than any other unit in the narrative. With respect to content, the narrator produces two statements, one on time (ninety five) and one on place (Belgium), each time accompanied by a second line in which more accuracy is added, both about time (*september* ninety five) and place (*Zaventem*, i.e., Brussels Airport). Note that this unit is produced in a linguistic code close to SBE.

A comparable (yet less prominent) paralinguistic pattern can be seen in the introductory part of the second unit, the event narrative. Apart from the high-pitched introductory syllable, the utterances are again relatively low-pitched

and spoken at an unmarked pace, when compared to the remaining part of the fragment. The reported conversation between the narrator and an official (lines 16–18) is marked by parallelisms: three times we get an identical syntactic pattern ('I no get X'), and three times we get the same intonation contour (stress on 'no', dragging intonation). The predicament of the asylum seeker – endlessly repetitive bureaucratic encounters – is here iconicized in grammar, intonation and prosody. Linguistically, as soon as the conversation is narrated, SLE and pidginized English forms are most prominent.

The transition into the next unit – 'commentary' – is a transition into a very different sort of performance. Speed increases considerably from the moment where the narrator shifts into full Krio ('de are for *no go Sa*lone' – they won't go to Sierra Leone, line 26), and the three lines in which the narrator motivates his resistance against going back to Sierra Leone are marked by full Krio, high speed of delivery, and outspoken performance elements such as vowel lengthening in 'bo*KU:::' (line 27). Unit 4, the 'refrain', is again a highly repetitive unit in which two utterances beginning with 'and I – (verb)' are followed by two utterances that form a lexical and tone rhyme ('I ex*plained to *them' – 'wha' I ex*plain to *them', lines 34 and 36). A similar pattern is observable in the second part of this unit, where the two lines 'what *there they *tell *them' – 'is *always that they *tell them' (lines 40–41) also contain lexical and tone rhyme. In this unit, a mixture of different linguistic codes is used, mainly centered around SBE and SLE (but containing one Krio expression: 'I sabi', line 39).

The prosodic, intonational and metrical features do not seem to come at random. They appear to be part of general shifting patterns in the narrative, in which thematic transitions (e.g., between setting and event, between event and commentary, etc.) go hand in hand with shifts in preference for or dominance of linguistic codes (SBE–SLE–Krio) and with prosodic, intonational and metrical features or modes. Taken together, these packages of deeply 'fused' features shape the story, and they provide crucial contextualizing information. This will become clearer when we bring all the elements of our analysis together, and to this we now turn.

3.5. *Synthesis*

The micro-shifts discussed above serve important functions in the ethnopoetic organization of the narrative which is in turn indexical of the message the speaker wants to get across. Definitely, the data give evidence of an intrinsically mixed repertoire, which implies fusion at various levels. We are witnessing iconic fusion, i.e., an association of *what* is being told with *how* it is being told in terms of packages in which linguistic, thematic, epistemic and affec-

Table 3. *Time-place frames in the narrative*

Unit	Time	Place
1. setting	Recent past	Belgium
2. event narrative	Recent past + synchronic	Belgium
3. commentary	Remote past	Sierra Leone
4. refrain	Recent past + synchronic	Belgium
5. coda	/	/

tive elements are intertwined and provide shape and structure to the narrative. In particular, shifting orientations to place appear to involve complex shifts in shape. And place orientations, as we have seen, are intrinsically connected to temporal frames of reference.

We are facing multi-layered iconicities here: iconicities at one level of structure are embedded in higher-level iconicities. Phonetic, grammatical, and paralinguistic features are iconic of orientations to place–time, in turn iconic of general moves and shifts in the narrative, and the total shape of these moves in turn iconicizes voice. This leads to a narrative the building blocks of which are almost exclusively indexical. Let us have a closer look at some of these indexical features.

Table 3 shows how the speaker articulates places in his narrative, most prominently Belgium, the country of refuge, and Sierra Leone, his home country. In addition, these places can be associated with a particular period in the asylum seeker’s life: the remote and the recent past, respectively the period before and after he left his home country. The distribution of place–time orientations allows us to regroup the narrative units in terms of three place–time frames:

1. ‘home narration’, i.e., remote past experience in the asylum seeker’s home country: commentary;
2. narration of recent past experiences in the asylum seeker’s refuge country: setting, introduction to the event narrative, introduction to the refrain
3. synchronic intercultural interaction between the asylum seeker and the officials: event narrative, refrain.

In other words, orientations to place–time structure the narrative, and in turn condition voice. As noted earlier, these places are geographical entities but at the same time they are oriented towards in terms of affect and epistemic format. Whereas in the case of remote past experience, the asylum seeker voices strong personal affiliation with his home country through expressions which can be situated at the Krio end of the continuum, in the case of recent past experience he expresses the rigidity and distance associated with the Belgian asylum procedure through expressions at the SBE end of the continuum and the

interaction with the officials through a pidginized form of English. This raises the issue of ‘deep’ detail in narrative analysis: narrative resources – the building blocks of the narrative – are neither ‘linguistic’, nor ‘thematical’, ‘epistemic’ or ‘affective’: they are all of this simultaneously.

Moreover, each of these places seems to be affectively marked, and for each of them there appear to be associative epistemic conditions for expressing ‘veracity’. When talking about Belgium, precision and detail dominate the narrative mode (in the ‘setting’ unit) and a ‘deterritorialized’ and ‘transidiomatic’ code is used: SBE; when talking about Sierra Leone, a ‘territorialized’ and ‘idiomatic’ code is used and full performance indexes the trauma and emotion of past experiences, thus making the expression of these experiences plausible.

In other words, place here serves as a locus of affect and identity with the experiences of the civil war in his home country on the one hand, and with the rigidity and routine associated with his country of refuge on the other hand. The narrative gives evidence of voice shifts, i.e., shifts from a voice expressing an epistemic self – a preoccupation to instruct the recipient in the complexity of the asylum procedure on the one hand and the Sierra Leonean civil war on the other – to voice expressing an affective self, that is, the voice of the victim, both as an actor in the Sierra Leonean war situation as in the rigid asylum procedure. Truthful narrative orientation towards these places involves stylistic work, noticeable in propositional-rhetorical structure as well as in performance and code choice.

Stretching the discussion of perspective and voice a bit further, it appears that the subject’s positioning in the narrative also implies different forms of identity work. As soon as the asylum seeker takes on a different voice, he also takes on a different self-categorization: projecting himself as a victim, a rebel in the Sierra Leone civil war, as a victim of the rigid asylum procedure in Belgium, etc. This self-categorization includes an ironic projection or styling of the ‘prototypical black man in Europe’ (cf. Rampton, 1999) who always has to justify himself to the white institutions: *I no get nothing, I no get passport, I no get document*. The variety the speaker employs corroborates this kind of self-stereotyping: he uses pidgin English – a variety which is generally used by the ‘prototypical black man speaking English’ – rather than other varieties from his repertoire, i.e., on the one hand Krio (presumably too specific for Sierra Leone and therefore not accessible to Europeans) and on the other hand SBE, which is not characteristic enough of the Black English speaker. Consequently, we are not only dealing with iconicity with regard to the asylum procedure (immutability of the procedure), but also on the part of the searching subject itself (justification to white institutions, self-positioning as a black person who is always approached in the same way by the whites).

In sum, the narration of experience is mediated through a number of microshifts and this at various levels: structure (intonation, grammar, etc.), mo-

bilizing heavy stylistics, place–time articulations (narrative mode associated with place) and through identity work. Packages of performance can actually be identified as ‘voice’ and identity-building.

4. Conclusion

The analysis presented here raises a number of theoretical issues, and they can be divided into two main blocks. A first set of issues has to do with the nature of shifting, mixing, and fusion in data such as ours; a second set has to do with the more general semiotic economies in which these data have to be situated, with normativities and values attributed to linguistic-communicative resources. Both sets are obviously related, but will be kept separate here for the sake of clarity.

Let us turn to the first set of issues. One thing that can be derived from our data is the observation that conventional treatments of code-switching and mixing often simplify the voicing and identity aspects of code alternation. To some extent, this is due, we believe, to the levels of linguistic structuring that are taken into account in attempts at defining relations between code alternation and identity work (cf. Rampton 1995; Woolard 1998; Silverstein 1998; Stroud 1998). To the extent that prominence is given to grammatical features (as, e.g., in Myers-Scotton 1993), more nuanced forms of phonetic and paralinguistic shifting are left aside, even though the grammatical, phonetic, prosodic and intonational features come in packages in real talk, and even though all this appears to be embedded in argumentative, emotive or epistemic moves in talk. Voicing, in our analysis, took the form of a subject ‘walking around’ in his narrative – articulating places *in* which he articulates identities (bureaucratic client, prototypical-African-in-Europe, victim of war, etc.) through complex discursive work of which (conventionally conceived) code-switching was (just one) part. The shifts in voice were numerous, and they demonstrated the ‘unpredictably mobile’ potential for identity work offered by variations in language big and small (Rampton 1999: 501).

The shifts were numerous indeed, but mobility was not unrestricted or unpatterned. The way in which discourse and identity work were deployed was through narration, a particular communicative activity in which resources are activated in patterned, sense-making ways. The play of codes could be observed through the window of the organization of the narrative. Peter Auer argued in favor of an approach to code-switching as conversationally organized and requiring ‘close attention to be paid to the details of its local production in the emerging conversational context which it both shapes and responds to’ (1998: 1–2). We believe that a similar argument can be made with regard to narrative. Paraphrasing Auer, the function of variation can be determined by

‘the details of its local production in the emerging *narrative* context which it both shapes and responds to’. And it is useful to recall the crucial role of indexicality in all this: variations in talk are made indexical of a range of emotive, epistemic and affective orientations to places and events, and this form of indexicality makes forms of talk emblematic of subject positions vis-à-vis the narrated events and experiences.

This brings us to the second set of issues. The skilful deployment of narrative skills and the tremendous complexity of narrative work should not blind us to the fact that, when narratives such as these are brought into procedural interactions in the context of the asylum application procedure, they often *do not work*. The enormous contextualization demands in narratives such as these have already been mentioned. The narratives are dense, and certainly when linguistic and narrative detail are taken into account, the chances of such narratives surviving processes of translation and bureaucratic entextualization must be judged to be minimal. Assessing asylum seekers’ repertoires is a practical problem in which observations about structure, coherence and meaning have to be brought to bear on established normativities and value judgments inscribed in the bureaucratic procedures in which these repertoires are deployed.

The point here is that, on top of the sheer complexity of events and contexts that need to be narrated, the resources by means of which they have to be narrated are language-ideologically marked. In its simplest form, asylum seekers’ narratives meet a ‘centered’ bureaucratic language system, semiotizing a more general project of ‘nation-state’ political and cultural imaginations (cf. Silverstein 1998: 412–413). ‘Different’ ways of speaking, seen from the perspective of bureaucracy, are positioned vis-à-vis this bureaucratic semiotic center, usually in ways that stress the importance of pretextual conditions for making sense, viz. standard codes, literacies, modes of narration, etc.

Rampton’s (1995) concept of ‘crossing’ is a useful point of comparison here in the sense that the deployment of resources in identity ‘styling’ in the concept of crossing is seen as deeply politicized. And in her comments on a collection on styling, Jane Hill warns us that ‘it seems likely that styling and crossing practices will vary subtly according to political, economic and legal status of speakers’ (Hill 1999: 550). They do indeed, and not always subtly. The sort of crossing and styling performed in our data evidences important pretextual gaps between what is expected and what is or can be produced. Hinnenkamp’s observation is useful here, though it needs some twisting around: ‘even the simple fact that saying something always implies the right of doing so, namely making a sayable out of the said’ (Hinnenkamp 1992: 131). What happens with narratives such as the one we have discussed here is that the link between the said and the sayable (the latter here interpreted as the ‘territorialized’ and the ‘idiomatized’) is by no means secure nor a matter of just rights. Rights may be in place, but the pretextual gaps we identified above may guarantee that

certain rights simply cannot be realized by those who have them. The said, in cases such as the ones we have discussed here, is very often not made into a sayable because it is not said in codes and styles that match the conditions of sayability in societies such as ours. A deterritorialized and transidiomatic narrative, however beautiful and appealing to the linguist, stands no chance in situations where territorialization and idiomization are the norm for making sense.

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Notes

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- 1. Auer opposes this interpretive approach to a 'structural' one, and argues that 'while most approaches to the pragmatics of code-switching have started from the presupposition that there are two languages which are used alternately, and proceeded to ask what functions switching between them may have, it may well be advisable to ask the question in the opposite way: that is, to start from the observation that there are two sets of co-occurring variables between which participants alternate in an interactionally meaningful way, and then proceed to seeing them as belonging to or constituting two "codes"' (Auer 1998: 13; see also Alvarez-Caccamo 1998; Meeuwis and Blommaert 1998; for a similar argument see Woolard 1998: 5).
- 2. Silverstein (1998: 413) puts it this way: 'The social meaning of the various configurations and ratios of language forms in a segment of discourse must be modeled in terms of a scheme of identities that emerge in the flow of discourse by association with graded (stratified) values mediating between polar-opposite denotational code structures.'
- 3. Another, perhaps less obvious source of inspiration is William Labov's *Logic of Nonstandard English* (1970), still a groundbreaking study in which linguistic inequality is addressed from the perspective of the consequences attributed to it by institutions such as schools.
- 4. Note that we do not use the notion 'idom' here in its more common sense as a lexico-grammatical fossilization which is collocational.
- 5. Commenting on doctor-patient interactions, Hinnenkamp states: 'I also take expectancies of the parties involved as highly differentiated. To yield oneself to pro-

fessional expertise is certainly different to routinely handling and dealing with bodily malfunctions. Questions arising from this *pretextual knowledge*, so-to-say, will somehow precipitate in doctor–patient interactions ...’ (Hinnenkamp 1992: 130–131, italics in original).

6. Transcription symbols are: **bold** for discourse markers that have a narrative-structuring function, *italics* for reported speech, indentation for displaying relations between main propositions and subordinate ones, * for stress on the following syllable, / for an intonationally marked clause boundary, CAPS for heightened pitch, : for vowel lengthening, dots for pauses, ? for unclear parts of the utterance.
7. These shifting and pragmatic code-switching phenomena can in fact be subsumed under what Celso Alvarez-Caccamo describes as the ‘tactical manipulation of speech varieties’ (1998: 38–40):

not all individual alternations of speech varieties carry interactional meaning; often it is the overall effect of using a ‘code-switching style’ that is tactically exploited for group identification ... Integrated community repertoires are tactically mobilized in non-transparent ways for identity-building purposes ... what is known as fluent conversational code-switching can be envisioned at the structural level as an alloy of two or more speech varieties, which signals a number of situational and local intentions through a number of codes. When repeated alternations constitute a ‘recurrent’ cue that points to a given episode or implied social identity, switching the code may entail an emic change in the overall composition of the linguistic alloy – typically a marked obtrusion in the proportions of A-variety and B-variety material in discourse.

This can be related to what Rita Franceschini defines as ‘the underlying linguistic and social flexibility of speakers in conversation’ (1998: 67). Moreover, this type of code alternation which also occurs in our data bears resemblance to the alternation between London Jamaican and London English as described by Mark Sebba and Tony Wootton: stretches of London Jamaican – just as the stretches of Krio here – which are framed by London English – Sierra Leonean English here – on either side ‘usually correspond to a part of the message regarded by the speaker as most salient, either in that the LJ stretch contains the most important information, or else because it is central to the theme of the turn’ (Sebba and Wootton 1998: 266).

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