Nobody canna cross it: An interactional perspective on discourse in motion[1]

AXEL BOHMANN

The University of Texas at Austin

Department of English

208 W 21st Street Stop B5000

Austin, TX 78712-1040

USA

Email: axel.bohmann@mail.utexas.edu

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ABSTRACT

The concept of speaky spoky, a pejorative label for hyper-correct speech in Jamaica, has thus far been described in terms of the linguistic features it hinges on. In this paper, I analyze a stretch of speaky spoky discourse, its reception, and its re-contextualization. The theoretical perspectives from which the data are examined are that of the sociolinguistics of globalization (Blommaert 2010) and of entextualization (Bauman & Briggs 1990, Silverstein & Urban 1996). The method of analysis draws on Goffman's writing on frames (1974) and participation frameworks (1981). I argue that a purely linguistic description of the speaky spoky concept as reflecting speech community norms falls short of capturing its ideological dimensions and its interactional versatility. Instead, I propose it is best understood as a dynamic and relational "construct resource" (Fabricius & Mortensen forthcoming) that speakers draw upon to highlight social meaning in interaction.

1 INTRODUCTION

Linguistic interaction in Jamaica can be described as taking place on a continuum (DeCamp 1971, Rickford 1987) between Jamaican Creole (the BASILECT) and Jamaican Standard English (the ACROLECT). These two represent idealized poles, with the vast majority of actual speech production situated somewhere in between, the so-called MESOLECT. There is substantial evidence that mesolectal speech itself is highly structured by sociolinguistic rules (Patrick 1999). Each speaker commands a certain range on this continuum, being able to move in between more basilectal and more acrolectal speech within the confines of that range. However, the normative status of English occasionally pressures lower-mesolectal speakers to aim at producing a target beyond the range of their natural competence. Often, though not always, such behavior results in mockery or derisive comments from other speakers, who accuse their counterparts of talking SPEAKY SPOKY.

Such was the case when Clifton Brown, a resident of the rural community Roberts Field, was interviewed by a TV Jamaica (TVJ) crew in June 2011. Heavy rains had flooded a road, effectively cutting off Roberts Field from the rest of the island and reporters were on site to shoot a news story on the issue. In the footage Brown is seen wearing a white hard hat with the flooded road in the background. He explains that the current is very dangerous to cross and that he and other locals are on the spot to help people get safely from one side to the other. He also urges officials to commission the building of a new bridge across the river. What caught the audience's attention, however, was not its political message, but the way Brown spoke. Cues on various levels of linguistic description suggested that he

was attempting to speak ‘proper English’ for the camera while at the same time clearly lacking the linguistic competence to do so. The interview with Brown became famous when Jamaican DJ Kevin Hamilton (’DJ Powa’) remixed samples from it over an electronic beat and published the result on the video-sharing website Youtube. The music video went viral and sparked a wave of subsequent interviews, parodies and meta-linguistic commentary. The title of the song – “Nobody canna cross it” – has become emblematic of this entire phenomenon.

In this paper, I focus on the early stages in the reception and re-contextualization of Brown’s utterances. I trace their path, from the initial interview to their re-keying as musical performance to their uptake as identifiable texts in a language game in which Brown himself involuntarily participates. The prevailing attitudes are humor and mockery, although I argue that the framings leave room for different kinds of relational positioning vis-à-vis Brown’s discourse and its linguistic form. I focus on the linguistic material not primarily as an object of study for its own sake, but rather to determine which parts of it hold significance from a local perspective, how they are drawn upon by participants to construct Brown’s discourse as speaky spoky and what social meanings they attach to this label.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 *Speaky Spoky*

Peter Patrick (1999) gives a definition of the linguistic elements involved in speaky spoky: a speaker “typically manipulates a few prestigious, highly salient sociolinguistics variables, rather than an entire grammatical system” (277, cf.

Patrick 1997, Patrick & McElhinny 1993). The main features in question are the rounding and sometimes raising of low back vowels and the insertion of [h] in front of syllable-initial vowels, even in contexts where Standard English lacks these sounds. According to this pattern, the word *rafting* will be pronounced [rɒːftɪŋ] or [rɔːftɪŋ], and even unmarked prepositions such as *in* receive a glottal fricative before the vowel. /ɔː/ is a phoneme that is entirely absent from JC, whereas word-initial, pre-vocalic [h] is an optional resource for stress. Additional elements include malapropisms when speakers attempt to use 'big words' but fail to do so correctly as well as certain elements of voice quality (Patrick & McElhinny 1993: 288).

Yet Patrick acknowledges that linguistic criteria alone are "neither necessary nor sufficient" (1999: 277) for framing a stretch of discourse as speaky spoky, and mentions ideologies of ownership of and access to 'proper English.' His theoretical orientation, however, prevents him from dwelling on the issue. In order to emphasize structural systematicity within the Jamaican speech community, he reads speaky spoky as an indication of shared rather than conflicting norms, because acceptance of the label spans all social classes and does not cast them in conflict with each other (278). In what follows, I argue that taking a different perspective, that of enfolding interaction on the ground, sharpens our focus on competing norms and ideologies in speaky spoky and indeed demonstrates that these are central to the concept.

2.2 *Language, mobility and globalization*

The data at hand concern a stretch of discourse that travels from its original context of utterance to new ones and in the process receives new interpretations. Mo-

bility is an important issue here, and so is globalization. Although I confine my analysis to uptake within Jamaica, both technologies (the Internet, and in particular Youtube) as well as discourses of globalization shape the path of Brown's utterances and the reactions they inspire.

Given this focus, the key concepts of Blommaert's (2010) "sociolinguistics of globalization" provide a good theoretical vantage point from which to approach 'Nobody Canna Cross it.' These comprise an emphasis on repertoires over abstract languages, on mobility across "SCALES" (32–5) and on POLYCENTRICITY (39–41). Blommaert points out that the resources at a speaker's disposal never encompass the entirety of what is traditionally understood as 'a language' and almost always contain forms from more than one language. Therefore, it makes empirical sense to investigate repertoires of specific resources in interaction rather than purely linguistic abstractions. In late modernity, these repertoires are less confined to specific localities than they used to. Thus, the mobility of resources deserves attention over the traditional notion of locally defined speech communities (102–6).

On the other hand, mobility does not equate freedom from local constraints. People and their linguistic repertoires may travel, but they will always find themselves measured in terms of locally salient norms. Here, the concept of polycentricity (39–41) becomes important: norms are never defined purely in terms of one "center" (39), such as the nation state's codified standard. Instead, there are numerous institutions at various levels – from the peer group to internationally circulating discourses such as 'globalism' (15–16) – that enter into the process of norm formation by structuring "ORDERS OF INDEXICALITY" (37–9). This fact creates uneven territories for linguistic exchanges, in which multiple and

potentially conflicting standards may apply. Determining which of these become salient is a matter of determining the "scale" on which an interaction takes place (34–7). Here, inequality crucially enters the picture: the ability to jump between scales (and especially up on the scale hierarchy) is unevenly distributed. Some actors and some resources travel across scales easily while others are highly localized and lose or change their meaning as they enter new scale levels. Brown, firmly rooted in the periphery of the Jamaican context, can be expected to belong to the latter group.

2.3 *Entextualization and enregisterment*

In addition to being subjected to new interpretations while traveling through different scales, Clifton Brown's words also witness a change in status: from straightforward utterances in an institutional interaction (the news interview) to cultural texts, rendered recognizable through their framing in DJ Powa's music remix and quoted and elaborated upon by participants in later interactions. Thus, they need to be read through the lens of performance rather than measured by any standard of authentic speech. As such, they are lifted out of the flow of everyday interaction and moved "into a reflexive arena where they can be examined critically" (Bauman & Briggs 1990: 60). This detachment from the immediate context of interaction in which the utterances are originally produced is referred to as ENTEXTUALIZATION (Bauman & Briggs 1990, Silverstein & Urban 1996).

Yet, the text that results from such processes is only apparently stable. Each time it is drawn upon and re-contextualized in a new interaction, there is potential for participants to attach new stances, participant roles and social meanings to it (Siverstein & Urban 1996: 12–14). Thus, subtle differences in the way a text

is embedded in different settings can shift and recalibrate its meaning. In the discussion below, I draw attention to such differences between the videos under analysis and to the way different embeddings of Brown's entextualized utterances enregister them (Agha 2005) as speaky spoky.

2.4 *Frame analysis and production formats*

With this rough sketch, we have a promising perspective on discourse in motion. To sharpen the empirical focus, I draw on an additional range of tools developed by Erving Goffman (1974, 1981). The notions of scales and scale-jumping hold purchase for the analysis below, but Blommaert remains relatively vague on how the navigation between scales is achieved in interaction. Here, Goffman's writing on FRAMES (1974) is helpful. In principle, every "strip of activity" (64) in the world is subject to interpretative acts of re-framing or "rekeying" (79). Several re-keyings can (and often do) exist on top of and in competition with each other. Tracing the transition of a stretch of discourse through different levels of keying can teach us a good deal about its evolution as a text. As new frames are applied to it, new ways of interpreting its meaning and its relation to the contexts around it emerge. In this process, aspects that were marginal to the original stretch of discourse may be foregrounded and transformed to become central elements of the newly defined text. Likewise, important features of the initial activity may be neglected or erased.

Another feature of re-keyings, and one that applies more directly to language, is that the different agencies behind the production of an utterance may be separated from each other. Goffman's (1981) distinction between AUTHOR, ANIMATOR and PRINCIPAL is helpful to illustrate the processes at work here. The

author is the (real or purported) original source of an utterance. In any current moment of utterance the animator is the person actually engaging in the articulatory work of producing discourse, whether his words are understood to be his or those of a separate author. That these two agencies do not always coincide can be seen in the example of reported speech, where the current animator claims to merely recount words originally spoken by someone else. Finally, the principal is the agency that lends force to the statements formulated and commits to their propositional content. A case in which speakers act as animators but not principals of utterances is vari-directional double-voicing (Bakhtin 1984, Rampton 1997), such as ironic styling of someone else's speech.

Goffman's writing provides the methodological tools to examine participants' understanding and negotiation of the interactional situation as well as their self-positioning with regard to the discourse they animate. Hence, it allows a structured analysis of the subtle differences between embeddings of Brown's entextualized discourse mentioned above and concomitant attention to the semiotic work achieved through these differences.

3 THE ORIGINAL INTERVIEW

In this section, I introduce the original interview with Clifton Brown in its context of the news story about the road flooding in rural St. Andrews Parish. I examine the linguistic material of Brown's utterances as well as their sequential positioning in the report and the implications of this arrangement for the the frame in which the interview is keyed.

My transcription of the data follows the orthographic system proposed by the Jamaican Language Unit (2009), with the addition of phonetic symbols for sounds not included in their conventions, which are designed to represent basilectal JC. Short pauses are represented as a full stop in parentheses; any pause longer than 0.5 seconds is transcribed as its length in seconds in parentheses. A question mark at the end of an utterance indicates rising intonation, not necessarily interrogative syntax. To provide additional information on the reception of the video, I include laughter (represented as "@@@") that occurs in another youtube video of people watching the original airing. These instances are aligned with the points in the original video that trigger them and enclosed in curly brackets to indicate that they are not part of the original interview situation. Editing decisions such as cuts are indicated as commentary in parentheses. Likewise, unclear utterances are coded as the transcriber's best guess, followed by a question mark and enclosed in parentheses. Bold features are of particular interest for the discussion below.

After a brief announcement by the studio announcers in a standard variety of Jamaican English that approximates RP, the floor is given to the on-site reporter, Dara Smith. Her speech can be characterized as acrolectal, although it has a decisively Jamaican ring, most notably in rhythm, pitch movement, and vowel realization. She introduces the inundation in St. Andrew Parish, mentioning the fact that several hundred people have been left marooned by the floods, and listing three roads that have been rendered impassable. Following this is a cut to an interview with a female local resident who expresses her concern in lower-mesolectal JC. Next, in three brief sentences Dara Smith redirects the report to the road flooding at Roberts Field before there is a cut to the first part of the interview with Clifton Brown:

(1) TVJ Interview: Part 1

1	2:10	Rait nou (.) is onli uu (0.8) kyan manij di w**[ɒ:]**ta
		"right now, it's only those who can manage the water"
2	2:13	ar if wii aroun to help dem
		"or if we are around to help them"
3	2:15	lif dem **h**ova (1.0)
		"lift them over"
4	2:17	is onli sa dem kyan get (.) fi kom **h**ova
		"it's the only way they can get to come over"
(CUT)		
5	2:19	noobodi kyana kr**[ɒ:]**s it= {@@@?}
		"nobody can cross it"
6	2:20	is onli uu andast<u>e</u>n it (.)
		"only those who are experienced with it"
7	2:22	laik a fisham**ee**n (.) an a fisha**h**um**ee**n (0.5) {@@@}
		"like a fisherman and a fisherwoman"
8	2:24	uu kyan swim
		"who can swim"
9	2:26	ka if yu kyanat swim (.)
		"because if you cannot swim"
10	2:27	chos me (.) yu g**[ɒ:]**n to s**e**n tomas pan
		"trust me, you are going to Saint Thomas Pond"

Next, Dara Smith recounts how a truck has stalled in the middle of the flooded road. She then moves on to give a local perspective on the situation, expressing residents' anger at not receiving adequate support in their predicament. After explicitly stating "they are appealing for help" (2:52), there is another cut to Brown:

(2) TVJ Interview Part 2

11	2:54	yestedei (.) de bos was kaming fram taun
		"yesterday the bus was coming from town"
12	2:57	wi=almos luus (.) a boslood a piipr
		"we almost lost a busload of people"
13	2:58	jos de m[ɜ]rsi af gaad
		"It's just for the mercy of God"
14	3:00	wai de bos don go **h**ova
		"that the bus didn't tip over"
(CUT)		
15	3:01	wi niid som asistaan=wi niid a brij (0.5)
		"we need some assistance, we need a bridge"
16	3:03	rait hiir in rob[ɜ]rts fiil (0.8)
		"right here in Roberts Field"
17	3:05	biko(s) natim de kidz dem kyan get=m (.) go tu skuul
		"because not even the kids can go to school"
18	3:07	de l**[ɒ**:**]**s taim orikien av ded op (.) to beri op de tap {@@@}
		"the last time a hurricane (???)"

19	3:11	an nou (.) noting kud appen (0.5)
		"and now, nothing happened"
20	3:13	so laik (.) wi lak awei in de wildanes? {@@@}
		"so it is like we are locked away in the wilderness"

The report then comes to a close with a brief concluding statement by Dara Smith and another short interview with the female resident mentioned above.

In terms of individual features, most of Brown's speech can be classified as mesolectal. It includes creole forms such as the absence of the copula ("wii aroun tu help dem", line 2), purposive *fi* ("fi kom hova", line 4), zero past marking ("wi=almos luus a boslood a piipr", line 12), final consonant cluster reduction (e.g. "almos", line 12, or "asistan", line 15), and zero passive marking ("wi lak awei in de wildanes", line 20). But there are also forms more closely aligned with acrolectal speech such as overt marking of past progressive in "de bos was kaming from taun" (line 11) or the use of *ai* as first person subject pronoun, instead of invariant *me*. Additionally, there are several indermediate forms that share elements of both lower as well as upper mesolectal speech. The expression "kyanat swim" (line 9) features palatalization of [ɑ] after a velar stop, which is a non-acrolectal, though wide-spread feature of JC. On the other hand, negation is explicitly marked with *nat* instead of nasalization of the vowel ("kyahn"), which would be the basilectal strategy. Likewise, "de kidz dem" in line 17 uses the basilectal plural marker *dem* after the noun, but the noun itself is a metropolitan form that contrasts with JC *pikni*. The plural is also reduntantly marked with the standard English plural allomorph [z]. A feature that could not be represented in

the transcript is the rhythm of Clifton Brown's utterances. He rapidly produces stretches of two to ten syllables with typically short, but audible pauses in between. The result is the impression of "burstiness" (Schnoebelen 2010).

For the most part, then, Brown's speech seems a typical instance of mesolectal rural Jamaican. However, there are several features which indicate that the speaker is aiming for a position up on the acrolectal end of the continuum outside his competence. Both elements of speaky spoky mentioned by Patrick (1999: 277) are present in the excerpt: insertion of [h] in front of vowel-initial words ("hova" for *uova*, lines 3, 4, and 14; "fishahumeen" for *fisha uman*, line 7) and rounded realization of low back vowels ("w[ɒ:]ta", line 1; "kr[ɒ:]s", line 5; "g[ɒ:]n", line 10; and "l[ɒ:]st", line 18). Additionally, there is a feature which Patrick does not mention, but which also falls into this category: fronting and raising of the low back vowel ("fishameen" and "fishahumeen" in line 7 and "sen tomas" in line 10), resulting in a pronunciation that approaches [ɛ]. These variants are not traditional features of speaky spoky, but may reflect a re-orientation towards North American varieties as carriers of prestige (Hinrichs 2006: 13). Particularly the word "man" is a very salient lexical item which has a raised and fronted vowel in most North American varieties of English.

Linguistically, then, Clifton Brown fulfills all the criteria given by Patrick to stamp someone as talking speaky spoky. It is important, however, that this interpretation is one imposed from the perspective of the center. What Brown is doing, according to his perception, is very likely not talking speaky spoky, but the English he deems appropriate for an interview on national television. Neither is his orientation towards this target reducible to mere opportunism. Quite contrary, Brown seems aware of normative pressures that force him to do 'better' than he

can in his normal speech production, or else risk not being taken seriously. The result is precisely the kind of unfinished discourse that Blommaert points us to (2010: 106). From the local perspective of Brown, however, it is as close to 'good English' as possible.

Next, with the support of additional evidence (the laughter from the youtube video of people watching the interview), I argue that the features mentioned above are indeed what made Brown's speech so humorous to many Jamaicans. The first instance of laughter that can be heard on the video follows the statement "noobodi kyana kr**[ɒ:]**s it" (line 5). Two lines down, the person holding the camera bursts out into giggles following the utterance "laik a fisham**ee**n (.) an a fisha**h**um**ee**n" (line 7). These two brief snippets neatly contain the three elements of speaky spoky identified above: rounded realization of a low back vowel ("kr**[ɒ:]**s"), pre-vocalic h-insertion ("fisha**h**umeen"), and raising and fronting of the low back vowel ("m**ee**n", "fishahum**ee**n"). The next clearly audible instance of laughter again follows an intonation unit (line 18) which contains one of these features ("de l**[ɒ:]**s taim"). This suggests that listeners are attuned to Brown's infelicitous manipulation of linguistic variables beyond the reach of his competence. A final burst of laughter follows the last line of the interview. This one, I argue, does not react to any specific feature of the preceding discourse, but rather serves as a "bracketing" device (Goffman 1974: 252). It marks the end of "the funny part" and is not triggered by any specific utterance, but gives a retrospective summary of the entire preceding discourse's humorous key, which at the same time marks a transition out of that key.

The framing of individual voices in the news story guides the interpretation of the linguistic material it contains. It follows a pattern which assigns clearly

defined participant roles to the different speakers. Viewers are addressed by a very officially dressed female announcer in the TVJ studio whose speech register is that of the written standard and approaches RP-like pronunciation. Next, there is a cut to the on-site reporter who is filmed standing in front of the flooded road, in the midst of the action. Her speech is completely standard in terms of grammar, but has a decidedly more "local" flavor in terms of pronunciation. The persona Dara Smith embodies serves the double function of maintaining the serious, high-register frame of news reporting but at the same time vouching for local authenticity via her physical presence on site as well as her language being closer to the vernacular. Alternating with Smith's report is the voice of a local female resident who speaks a lower-mesolectal variety. She is depicted standing in front of thick greenery and bamboo, evoking a place image of wilderness, in stark contrast to the metropolitan setting of the the TVJ studio.

Hence there is a clear progression: from a) the studio, a place of editorial authority where people dress properly and standard English reigns to b) the voice of the on-site reporter, who performs the double function of representing the network and its supposedly metropolitan viewers in her dress and speech while at the same time evoking credibility, involvement, and proximity to locals and, finally, c) the voices of locals themselves, relied upon to construct the immediate, unmitigated, and authentic experience of the rural working class, an identity they are expected to reflect in their speech. Iconic connections (Irvine & Gal 2000: 37) are thus drawn between appearance (dress; skin color also enters the picture), place (urban vs. rural), social class and language production. The binary distinction between the sets [urban, educated, upper-class, light skin, 'proper English'] and [rural, uneducated, working-class, dark skin, 'bad English'] is

recursively applied to the way each pair of juxtaposed speakers (news announcer – Dara Smith, Dara Smith – local resident) contrast with each other.

Into this framing and the expectations created by it, enter Brown, whose depiction in work attire in front of a flooded road in the wilderness reinforces a perception of him as a rural, working class individual. But Brown's language performance does not conform to the expectations raised by this framing. Rather than performing the 'authentic' rural speaker, he makes his best attempt at 'proper English' to convey what is an important message to him. This brings about tension with the language ideological backdrop of the entire news story. The label speaky spoky provides a readily available resource to account for this tension and locate blame in the speaker while leaving the basic ideologies intact. It is not exclusively Brown's linguistic material that renders his discourse as speaky spoky, but at least in part that discourse's embedding in a context that very rigidly relies on and reinforces specific images of language and social organization.

While the linguistic description Patrick gives of speaky spoky, then, is accurate, a closer look at the social context of speech production opens up some tensions with the author's evaluation of the concept. Patrick sees speaky spoky as indicating "not conflict between social groups so much as among comparable members of the same group" and being employed "to brand [someone] a social climber, opportunist, lame or traitor" (1999: 278). It would be a stretch to depict Brown in these terms in the context of the interview. He is apparently present at the site to help people cross the river prior to the arrival of the news team, which is the reason he is selected as an interviewee in the first place. And while he does frame himself as perhaps a somewhat heroic figure in the interview, he consistently speaks in the second person plural (lines 2, 12, 15, 20), emphasizing com-

munity solidarity. Likewise, the bottom line of the interview is not self-praise, but a call for the construction of a bridge, concern for the children in the community, and frustration with government neglect.

Likewise, it would be inaccurate to say that class distinctions do not play a role in the present case. The way in which the arrangement of the news story recursively applies the distinctions mentioned above to participants is certainly shot through with politics of class. What I wish to emphasize is that speaky spoky is not as easily reducible to a shared set of norms as Patrick's theoretical focus suggests. Questions such as who gets to define a stretch of discourse as speaky spoky, who gets to laugh at what precise aspects of said discourse, and what happens to the originally intended meanings of it are non-trivial and politically relevant. I will turn to these questions as I trace the entextualization and keying of parts of Brown's original interview through various contexts.

4. Going viral: DJ Powa's remix

Clifton Brown became a mass cultural phenomenon when Jamaican DJ Kevin Hamilton ("DJ Powa") chopped and looped samples from the interview and remixed them with a self-produced electronic beat. The resulting youtube video reverberated beyond Jamaica and has currently collected over four million clicks. Apart from the beat, both the linguistic and visual material of the music video are made up of parts of the original news story. Much of the appeal of 'Nobody canna cross it,' then, relies on the creative juxtaposition and rhythmic patterning of this material. Here, I focus on how this creation highlights aspects of Brown's speech, erases others, and creates new texts that were not part of the original data.

Example (3) is the chorus, which is repeated five times throughout the song. The transcription conventions are the same as above, except that places where there have been cuts to the original material are marked by a double slash.

(3) Nobody canna cross it: Chorus

6	0:14	noobodi kyana kr**[ɒ:]**s it
7	0:15	is onli uu= // kyan // andastan it= // kr**[ɒ:]**s it //
8	0:17	noobodi kyana kr**[ɒ:]**s it
9	0:18	is onli= // fisham**ee**n (.) an a fisha (.) // **h**um**ee**n= // chos me //
10	0:20	noobodi kyana kr**[ɒ:]**s it
11	0:21	is onli uu (.) // kyan manij di w**[ɒ:]**ta //
12	0:24	is onli so (d)em (.) // kom **h**ova //
13	0:25	arai if wii aroun to hel= // hel= // help dem

Two aspects of this excerpt are striking. First, in only eight lines, there are 14 cuts made to the original material. This process builds on and enhances the impression of burstiness in Brown's speech. Second, there is a high density of the three linguistic features characteristic of speaky spoky. Table 1 gives absolute counts of these in the song, as well as their relative frequencies in the song and the original. The rates of occurrence for [ɒ:] are significantly higher than in the original interview. The other two features remain fairly stable as to their relative frequency, but the fact that they cluster densely in the chorus likewise foregrounds them. Thus, DJ Powa's remix highlights all the non-normal parts of Brown's discourse, his rhythm and his speaky spoky phonetics, in particular the vowel [ɒ:].

Table 1: *Feature frequencies in* Nobody canna cross it *and in the TVJ interview*

Feature	Counts in the remix	Relative frequency in the remix	Relative frequency in the original
[ɒː]	33	0.078	0.030
[h]	12	0.028	0.030
[ɛ]	12	0.028	0.023

At the same time, there are aspects of the original interview that DJ Powa's remix downplays or erases completely. Erasure is a central semiotic process that sustains linguistic ideologies. It "renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible [if they are] inconsistent with the ideological scheme" applied to a stretch of discourse (Irvine & Gal 2000: 38). In the present example, as musical originality, play with sound, and disorderly language use take center stage, the actual situation that caused the interview to be conducted in the first place is lost from sight. What remains of the original story are samples of Dara Smith's voice-over that bracket the beginning and the end of the song. The phrase "natim de kidz dem kyan go to skuul" (56) is the only line in the song that retains traces of Brown's political message. His call "wi niid som asistaan=wi niid a brij" (line 15 in the original interview) is entirely omitted from DJ Powa's remix. These omissions are consequential, as they help to contain the possibility of the original interview's serious frame spilling over and bleeding into the new one (Goffman 1974: 35–6). As it is, the outcome is a text that is purely performative and comic and virtually emptied of any propositional content.

But not only do elements of the original text get highlighted or erased, new forms also emerge. Playing on and intensifying the "unfinished" collocations

(Blommaert 2010: 106) Clifton Brown uses, 'Nobody canna cross it' forges together constituents of the original interview in a way that creates new utterances. The most prominent one is "de bos kyan swim", which is found five times altogether (3 times in line 39, once in lines 40 and 44) in the song. This sentence was never produced by Brown, but is a blending of "**de bos** was kaming fram taun" (line 11 in example (2)) and "uu **kyan swim**" (line 8 in example (1)). The fabrication of this phrase alludes to another feature typically associated with speaky spoky, the use of malapropisms in an attempt to use "big words" (Patrick & McElhinny 1993: 288). It is not coincidental that the resulting collocation sounds awkward (with an inanimate subject and a verb generally reserved for animate agents) and thus further frames Brown as maximally distant from the linguistic standard.

What happens in the case of 'Nobody canna cross it' is similar to reported speech, for which Goffman (1981) provides helpful analytical tools. Here, the author is credited with producing linguistic material but loses control over its re-appropriation and animation in new contexts. Insofar as DJ Powa is at liberty to cut, mix, clip, and distort the original utterances at his will, he can be described as the animator, although he never actually utters words in the strict articulatory sense. This gives him the freedom to re-contextualize and re-key Brown's speech at will. Finally, identifying the principal behind the song is not an easy task. On the surface level, the video shows the face of Clifton Brown virulently accompanying his words. In this regard, it would seem adequate to name him as the authority committed to the song's words. However, despite the individual words being the same as in the original interview, their propositional content gets virtually lost in the act of remixing. The question arises, then, what exactly is being committed to in

'Nobody canna cross it.' There is simply no clearly identifiable message beyond the meaning of individual lines. One interpretation would be that the song effectively erases the principal as an agency in this specific instance of speech production.

The frequent repetition of individual lines demonstrates the entextualizing work the song does, "rendering discourse extractable [and] making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit – a text – that can be lifted out of its interactional setting" (Bauman & Briggs 1990: 73). This is most often understood as loosening ties to the specific context of utterance. Yet I suggest the music remix goes a step further, by not only mitigating contextual embedding, but effectively stripping away any content associated with the original discourse. The result is an almost purely decontextualized language object that is maximally self-referential and contained, and hence freely re-contextualizable. Referential meaning gets entirely replaced by the indexicalities of linguistic form (Silverstein 2003), inviting reflexive attention to these forms themselves.

5 Resurfacing of the author: Clifton Brown on Smile JA

I now turn to an interaction that brings the author of the original discourse back into contact with his entextualized words. Shortly after the song went viral on youtube, Clifton Brown and Kevin Hamilton were invited to an interview on SmileJA, a breakfast show on TVJ hosted at the time by Neville Bell and Simon Crosskill. As the interview unfolds, different perspectives on the importance of the texts in question arise and compete with each other. These can be fruitfully interpreted as attempts to impose different frames on the interaction. I analyze two

stretches from the 12 minutes long interview.

The transcription conventions used below extend the above ones in order to deal with the messy flow of real-time conversational data. In addition to line numbers and time code in the video, a column for speaker is added. NB is show host Neville Bell, SC his co-moderator Simon Crosskill, CB Clifton Brown, and DJP Kevin Hamilton (DJ Powa). Overlapping turns are aligned vertically below each other and marked with opening square brackets at the point where the overlap begins. Three dots in parentheses mark stretches of discourse that are not clearly audible. Lexical stress is indicated through use of all capitals. A particular problem lies in representing the different varieties of the speakers orthographically. For Clifton Brown, who speaks lower-mesolectal JC throughout, I continue to use the orthography proposed by the JLU. NB and SC, however, speak fairly standard-like English for most parts of the interview. I represent their speech with standard orthography and only depart from this in cases where they markedly diverge from standard pronunciation.

In the first few lines of the studio interaction, not much is said, but a lot happens. Immediately after the cut into the studio, NB and his colleague are shown shaking with laughter. It takes them seconds to control themselves and address the audience. This is quite an unusual way to open an interview and it breaches the conventional rules of doing so, even in a relaxed atmosphere. Beginning in this way is a powerful bracketing mechanism that leaves little doubt as to the keying of the ensuing interaction. What is to follow, it implies, is not mere light-hearted humor but sheer hilarity that is so overwhelming as to override the demands of genre conventions. Thus, even before Clifton Brown is addressed, before the camera pans in on him for the first time, a frame is established that guides

interpretations of the following interaction. Being keyed in such a way, there is little hope for CB to engage in a serious conversation on equal footing; yet engage he must. At 0:58 there is a cut to CB's face, as he is introduced by NB. He is smiling along with the moderators, but the expression on his face suggests that he is not sure what exactly is so funny. The answer is made perfectly obvious to the audience early on, as NB engages CB in conversation:

(4) Smile Jamaica interview: Prompting

1	1:15	NB	The second thing I was trying to identify is why Clifton Brown was standing up in the people river telling that
			[(.) noobodi kyana kr[ɒ:]s it
2	1:20	SC	[@@@
3			Clifton [@@@ wa appen
			"what was going on?"
4	1:22	NB	[so (.) ey let's hey (0.5) let's start let's start with you (pointing at CB) (.) why were you why were you there?
5	1:30	CB	okei is de kamiunitii weer hai liv
			"okay, it's the community where I live"
6	1:31	NB	mhmm
7	1:32	CB	(.) ai hav tu kom kr[ɒ:]s (.) dat [brij
			"I have to get across that bridge"
8	1:34	NB	[@@@
9	1:34	SC	[@@@
10	1:35	CB	tu go w[ɜ]k.

			“to go to work”
11	1:36	NB	so you couldn’t kr[ɒ:]s it either?
12	1:38	CB	(.) ya laik mii (.) we liv a de kamiunitii
			“yeah, like me, who lives in the community”
13	1:40	NB	yea
14	1:40	CB	kyan kr[ɒ:]s it an laik (0.5) fiu mar=ada piipr (0.8)
			“can cross it, and like a few other people”
15	1:44		bot laik di piipl dem (.) outsaid di ka[miunitii de outa de jangl [.] dem kyana kr[ɒ:]s it
			“but, like, the people outside the community, out of the Jungle, they cannot cross it”
16	1:47	NB	[they kyana kr[ɒ:]s it
17	1:48		@@@
18	1:48	SC	[@@@
19	1:48	CB	so wen a sei noobodi kyana kr[ɒ:]s it (.) a simplii miin laik
			“so when I said nobody can cross it, I simply meant like”
20	1:53	NB	only yuu an a fiu ada=
			“only you and a few others”
21	1:54	CB	=ya uu kyan manij di w[ɒ:]ta
			“yes, who can manage the water”
22	1:56	SC	@@@
23	1:56	CB	biikaa if yu kyana manij di w[ɒ:]ta
			“because if you cannot manage the water”
24	1:57	NB	yuu kyana kr[ɒ:]s it
25	1:58	CB	di w[ɒ:]ta will tek yu awei

			"the water will take you away"
26	1:59	SC	Clifton
27	2:00	CB	[ye sa
28	2:00	SC	[we=we di aksent kom from?
			"where does the accent come from?"
29	2:02	CB	(0.4) wel ai get the apsent fram b[ɜ]r=[fram mai [maami yu nuo
			"well, I got the accent from birth, from my mother, you know"
30	2:04	NB	[@@@
31	2:04	SC	[@@@

This entire sequence is quite obviously engaged in by NB and SC with the sole purpose of prompting Clifton Brown to produce as many instances of the words "(noobodi kyana) kr[ɒ:]s it" as possible, at this stage clearly a text of its own, quite independent of its original context of utterance. NB's reference to it as "these now immortal words" in line 3 attests to this fact. Even before addressing Brown directly, Bell introduces this theme by quoting his interlocutor in line 1 of example (4), performing the text "noobodi kyana kr[ɒ:]s it". This is met with spontaneous laughter by SC. When NB gives over the floor to Brown, it is ostensibly with a straightforward question about the situation at Roberts Field at the time of the inundation and Brown's involvement in it (line 4). But as the latter starts to explain, it becomes clear from NB and SC's reactions that what they really are interested in is getting Brown himself to animate the text "noobodi kyana kr[ɒ:]s it". The patterning of laughter is telling. All of NB and SC's outbursts

until line 30, which usually occur in conjunction, follow instances of CB producing variants of the text in question (lines 7, 16), with the exception of his saying "ya uu kyan manij di w[ɒ:]ta" (line 21). This last instance contains at least the vowel in question, making it clear that this is the feature that listeners cue into throughout the exchange.

What is going on here can be described as a form of verbal play which extends the original humorous act of watching DJ Powa's video and quoting from it. Now, it is no longer sufficient to produce the text at the center of the game; the new challenge arises from getting the original author to re-animate the words for the other participants' amusement. In this sequence from the beginning of the interview NB and SC are quite successful in their endeavor. The resources available to them to ensure success are their institutional roles, their more extended competence in acrolectal Jamaican speech and the ideologies that privilege their social identities over that of CB. The latter seems oblivious to the status his discourse has acquired and produces instances of it apparently in complete ignorance of these facts. At the end of (4), SC even points him to his accent being the comic feature in this interaction by asking about where it comes from (line 28), but Brown still answers in a straightforward, serious manner. Stating that this is his normal, vernacular way of speaking (line 29), he refuses to acknowledge the recontextualization of his previous statements as comic texts that are read as iconic of speaky spoky.

This pattern continues for most part of the interview, whenever Brown is selected by the moderators as their interlocutor. As they push the game further and further, Brown is getting visibly irritated. However, institutional inequalities and the hosts' manipulation of the flow of interaction leave him little room to lead the

conversation in a direction more aligned with his purposes.

In the course of the interview, as CB gets increasingly wary of his interlocutors' intentions, they give more of the floor over to him and attempt to hold back their outbursts of laughter. This prompts CB to continue engaging in 'straight talk' and picking up the topic of the bridge. But rather than an accommodation to CB's interactional position, the hosts' behavior is a form of FABRICATION, "the intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that [another participant] will be induced to have a false belief about what it is that is going on" (Goffman 1974: 83). It is not an attempt on the part of NB and SC to leave the comic frame, but to make CB believe the comic frame has been left while in reality it is still intact. That this is the case, and that the hosts' strategy is successful, becomes obvious from the hosts' reactions as soon as CB lets himself get involved enough to produce further instances of "kr[ɒ:]s".

It is telling that despite the clearly marked frame of mockery that extends over almost the entire 12 minutes of the interview, CB never confronts the moderators directly. During their bursts of laughter, when the camera is on him, an uncomfortable and annoyed look registers on his face, but he never verbalizes these feelings explicitly. This fact may be read as evidence for the strongly felt imbalance of institutional power between the hosts and the studio guest. The former speak acrolectal Jamaican English (except for deliberate code-switches), represent the urban upper class, and clearly have a better command of the interactive domain of television talk. In this situation, it is not hard to imagine Brown's linguistic and social insecurity preventing him from speaking his mind. Yet, neither does Brown give up on the framing he initially expected, serious talk about the need for a bridge in Roberts Field. Throughout the segment, he sticks to this topic

and continuously attempts to redirect the flow of conversation into its direction. While this provides NB and SC with countless opportunities to elicit instances of "kr[ɒ:]s it" and other enregistered features of speaky spoky from Brown, it also keeps the political question on the agenda and requires more and more effort from the moderators in their attempts to maintain the comic frame.

6 Discussion

The symbolic violence Brown suffers from the series of entextualizations traced above is both obvious and extensive. The remix as well as the SmileJA interview erase his message, highlight disorderliness in his speech and single him out as an object of ridicule. Thus, we can read the above as a case study of mobile language in a globalized world in Blommaert's terms: a stretch of discourse from the periphery, crafted in accordance with a local understanding of what constitutes 'proper English,' moves towards a center (relatively speaking), in which new scales, new orders of indexicality apply. From this new perspective, the language used appears unfinished, and this unfinished character draws attention to itself, obliterating the intended message. Brown's discourse is doomed to be met with mockery and disapproval.

However, several points need to be added. The first is that, in all three videos analyzed above, symbolic violence is not something that just happens to Brown's language as it moves through TimeSpace (Blommaert 2010: 34–6). Rather, linguistic disorderliness is actively highlighted and in part created through the entextualization of the discourse in all three cases: a) the sequential positioning in the news story, b) the foregrounding of specific features and erasure of

propositional and illocutionary content in DJ Powa's mix, and c) the way in which NB and SC contain Brown and openly mock him and his linguistic insecurity in the SmileJA interview. While much of this behavior can be explained in terms of systematic inequalities, these inequalities should not be regarded as entirely external and prior to the unfolding interactions. They are available as interpretive backgrounds for the participants, but it is those participants themselves and their choices on the micro-level of interaction that actualize them and render them relevant for the given exchanges in particular ways. As I argue below, how precisely they do so and how they position themselves vis-à-vis their discourse leaves considerable room for individual manipulation.

For this reason, I prefer the notion of frames over Blommaert's scales. As pointed out, both have a good many aspects in common. However, Goffman's framework is developed from a more truly bottom-up perspective, asking how participants come to understand a given situation. Blommaert's focus is on structured inequality, which is an important aspect to keep in mind if we want to avoid drifting towards post-modern, anything-goes attitudes that unreflectedly celebrate globalization. Yet the metaphor of scale in particular seems to elevate modernist notions to the level of theory, thus leaving little room for empirical research to actually challenge them. In particular, it carries strong implications of convertibility, unidimensionality and universal value ascription. Maps, for instance, can be drawn to different scales but essentially represent the same geographical space. The scale is a mathematical ratio that defines the relationship between a map and the terrain (or between several maps) in absolute terms, and the closer to reality a scale comes, the better the quality of the map. This is the more true since Blommaert combines scales with notions of vertical movement up and down, where

'up' connotes generally valid and less restricted by local constraints (2010: 35). Frames, on the other hand, are potentially multi-facetted and layered, and applying a new frame to a situation can result in new, less predictable relationships.

From this call for close attention to interactional dynamics on the ground follows my next point. DJ Powa's remix and the SmileJA interview both effect a dismissive reading of Brown's language use, but there are important differences between the two. These become most obvious from the audience reactions generated by each. While the music video went viral and was largely met with praise, there was considerable protest after the airing of the SmileJA interview. Shortly after, Neville Bell resigned from his post and publicly apologized to Clifton Brown and the viewers. Clearly, quite different readings were applied to the two texts. So what are the differences that sparked such diverging reactions? I argue that the different ways in which participants position themselves and others with regard to language use in these videos play a decisive role here.

The remix comes close to cases of DIALECT STYLIZATION as described by Coupland (2001). He defines it as "a form of strategic deauthentication" (345), but not in the sense of evoking pure inauthenticity. Rather, the practice provides speakers (and audiences) a reflexive distance to the language form being stylized and thus leaves open a range of options for identification and alignment:

> [S]tylized utterance dislocates a speaker from the persona he or she voices, and from the pragmatic implications of what is said. This means that, under stylization, it can often be unclear just what levels of ownership, authorship, and endorsement are being implied in a given utterance. (Coupland 2001: 366)

Coupland moreover highlights the performative nature of stylization (346). All of these aspects apply to DJ Powa's remix. The difficulty to identify a principal mentioned in section 4 speaks to the dissociation from pragmatic implications of the utterances. And while the song empties Clifton Brown's speech of its propositional content, it does not give any explicit contextualizing cues (Gumperz 1992) that help pinpoint the relationship between Brown's language, DJ Powa and the audience. The fact that speech is re-framed as musical performance and that much contemporary music in Jamaica is strongly associated with lower-mesolectal JC allows for interpretations of Brown's status as something akin to a dancehall performer, with an element of ironic but perhaps not malevolent distance. The stress on the unusual and inauthentic mentioned above, however, also leaves open the possibility of more condescending interpretations. The video is semiotically bivalent (Woolard 1999) in this regard. It leaves open various shades of identification and distancing.

The same can not be said for the SmileJA interview. Here, the show hosts openly set out to mock not only the linguistic practice of speaky spoky, but the specific speaker. Brown is present in the interaction and becomes the constant target of ridicule and the dupe of Bell and Crosskill's language game. The fact that they put so much effort into getting Brown himself to produce instances of the texts he has become known for coincides with this orientation. There is a shift in what is the object of amusement: it is no longer a decontextualized linguistic form, but a specific speaker who is physically present. Bell and Crosskill go to lengths in order to not only demonstrate Brown's lack of linguistic competence, but also put his linguistic insecurity on display by keeping him in the dark about the key of the interaction. Moreover, the hosts do not even try to separate their

metalinguistic humor from the catastrophic situation in Roberts Field. In fact, they freely allude to this situation to edge Brown further on. Thus, there is considerably less room for (dis)identification and (de)authentication in this sequence than in DJ Powa's remix. In a nutshell, the latter leaves open the possibility of laughing with the language that is stylized, while the former clearly is laughing at it (Coupland 2001: 371).

At this point, it becomes necessary to revisit Patrick's description of speaky spoky. The three videos analyzed and the different interpretive frameworks applied to them by audiences indicate that a speech community perspective, emphasizing a "common framework and set of symbolic resources" (Patrick 1999: 278), falls short of explaining the dynamic and strategic ways in which speaky spoky is evoked. One cannot help but notice that the agreement Patrick locates is that among those labeling others' discourse as speaky spoky. Once such labeling has occurred, it may indeed meet near-unanimous agreement, since it reflects the attitudes perpetuated by the dominant ideology. But it precisely depends on ideological mediation and should therefore not be confused with a 'linguistic fact.' On the micro-level, there can by definition be no agreement, at least if we assume speakers committed to the content of their utterances. It would be absurd for speakers to produce discourse which they are aware will be labeled as speaky spoky, unless they wanted to explicitly draw attention to linguistic form. On the other hand, neither should we assume, as Patrick's description implies, that they produce such discourse exclusively and necessarily out of opportunistic motives. Even without the disconfirming evidence from the present study, the burden of analytical proof should rest with those drawing such connections.

Next, there is some terminological confusion in Patrick's description. He variously defines speaky spoky as "a mode of talk" (Patrick & McElhinny 1993), "a creole style" (Patrick 1997: 44) and "a negatively-valued label" (Patrick 1999: 277) and oscillates between providing an objectified linguistic description and a rationalization from the perspective of dominant ideologies. As the above discussion shows, both linguistic features and ideological constructions play an important part in circumscribing speaky spoky. For a more accurate descriptive term than currently applied, I draw on the notion of CONSTRUCT RESOURCES recently proposed by Anne Fabricius and Janus Mortensen (forthcoming). The authors describe construct resources as complexes of social valuation that cluster around emically understood ways of speaking, such as result from processes of enregisterment (Agha 2005). On the linguistic side, they can encompass fully fledged varieties in the descriptive sense, but may just as well include only a small number of features, provided participants read meaningful social distinctions into these. While there is often a degree of shared-ness of construct resources among speakers from similar backgrounds, the concept does not presuppose community agreement. Rather, Fabricius and Mortensen emphasize its subjective and relational character, and hence its variability across speakers and malleability over time. Such a focus makes it possible and necessary to study the construct resource in interaction, paying close attention to situational details such as stance-taking, positioning of self and other and the framing of the situation at hand. Thus, understanding speaky spoky as a construct resource, rather than a speech community norm, focuses attention on the kind of analysis exemplified above. I submit that this is necessary to develop a full understanding of the concept in its ideological and interactional versatility.

7 Conclusion

In this paper, I have followed the reception and re-contextualization of Clifton Brown's news interview through different stages. The theoretical background to my reading has been Blommaert's sociolinguistics of mobile resources in globalization as well as work on performance and entextualization. Methodologically, I paid close attention to the framing of each of the videos analyzed and the ways participants positioned themselves with regard to each other and to the language forms in question.

I have shown that speaky spoky is a concept that leaves considerable room for strategic and multi-valent deployment in interaction and argued that an account of it in terms of speech community norms falls short of capturing its capacities in their entirety. Rather, I have argued, speaky spoky should be understood as a construct resource (Fabricius & Mortensen forthcoming). Additionally, I have tried to make a methodological case for studying language in globalization from the bottom-up perspective of enfolding interaction and pointed to some promising tools for doing so. Finally, a theoretical critique of the notion of scale in Blommaert's otherwise useful framework was offered on the grounds that the metaphor it runs the danger of elevating modernist notions of unidimensionality, convertibility and universality of value ascriptions to the level of theory.

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