part three
identity practices
Language socialization is the human developmental process whereby a child or other novice (of any age) acquires communicative competence (Hymes 1972), enabling him or her to interact meaningfully with others and otherwise participate in the social life of a given community. Language socialization occurs primarily through interactions with older or otherwise more experienced persons (Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002; Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986a, 1986b), but also, in most cases, through interactions with peers (Dunn 1999; Farris 1991; Paugh 2005; Rampton 1995a). The child or novice’s development of communicative competence through such interactions is largely a matter of learning how to behave, both verbally and non-verbally, as a culturally intelligible subject. While mastering the formal features of the community’s language or languages so as to be able to produce grammatically and pragmatically well-formed utterances (Ochs and Schieffelin 1995), the child or novice must also learn how to use language in conjunction with various other semiotic resources as a means of actively co-constructing, negotiating and participating in a broad range of locally meaningful (though largely quite mundane) interactions and activities – a process that Schieffelin and Ochs (1996) characterize as ‘the microgenesis of competence’. In practical terms, this involves learning what social roles and categories of identity exist in one’s social world, and which among them are potentially viable options for oneself; how one’s choices among those options are likely to be interpreted and evaluated by others, and what social consequences are likely to result; how engaging in particular kinds of activities indexes (either directly or indirectly) particular roles, statuses and identities (Ochs 1990, 1993); how one goes about inhabiting or enacting such roles and statuses oneself; and how one manages multiple, shifting identities that
overlap and intersect in complex ways, and may sometimes conflict. Just as important, the child or novice must also learn how to recognize and respond to others’ verbal and non-verbal ‘acts of identity’ (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985).

All of these matters tend to be thrown into sharp relief in bilingual settings, where almost inevitably, a speaker’s use of particular linguistic resources in a particular context or at a particular moment of interaction will be regarded by his or her interlocutors as meaningful in and of itself. This is attributable in part to semiotic properties and processes that are inherent in language use, especially indexicality, the process whereby a speaker’s use of a particular linguistic form or set of forms ‘points to’, thereby making relevant to the present context or moment of interaction, a particular identity, discourse, set of beliefs, body of knowledge, domain of activity, prior event, etc. Indexicality is a key factor in the ideologically mediated, culturally and politically inflected processes through which the linguistic resources potentially available to speakers within a given ‘bilingual’ community come to be divided and differentiated into more or less distinct codes in the first place. The sustained coexistence of two (or more) normatively differentiated codes within a particular community is rarely an unproblematic, politically neutral state of affairs; it tends to be a focal point of metapragmatic, discursive and ideological elaboration, and often, of social and political tensions (Garrett 2004; Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002). Certain kinds of linguistic differences may be mapped onto other social categories and divisions based on such notions as ethnicity, nationality, class, race, gender, religiosity, political affiliation and generation; or they may be used as means of marking, reinforcing and policing the boundaries of such categories (Irvine and Gal 2000; Urciuoli 1995). Typically, conflicts or tensions which get played out through language, and on the surface appear to be about language itself, can be shown to be inextricably bound up with other, equally contested issues which are simultaneously being played out on multiple levels, from the household to the state. As they are socialized to use language and to engage in specific communicative practices and activities involving differential use of two or more normatively defined codes (Schieffelin 1994), children and other novices (such as international students and adult immigrants) also develop awareness of these intimately related issues, and of locally preferred and dispreferred ways of dealing with them.

But how exactly does this happen? How do bilingual subjectivities emerge? How do bilinguals learn to use language as a resource for constructing and asserting their identities, and for negotiating their interactions and relationships with others? How do they develop their characteristically subtle, finely tuned sense of when and how to draw upon the linguistic resources at their disposal so as to achieve a variety of pragmatic effects (intimate, distancing, authoritative, poetic, humorous, playful, etc.)? To what extent do they experience their everyday communicative practice as involving the use
of two distinct codes (Döpke 2000), and how and why does this vary across contexts (Urciuoli 1995, 1996)? How are speakers’ subjective experiences of bilingualism mediated by their ideologies of language, and by the power relations out of which these emerge (Pavlenko 2001; Schieffelin, Woolard and Kroskrity 1998; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994)? This chapter considers how the study of language socialization in bilingual settings can help to answer such questions. While centrally concerned with issues of linguistic and cultural reproduction, language socialization research also strives to take fully into account the agency of language learners – their capacity for creativity, improvisation, resistance, even subversion – and is thus attentive to the relational, dynamically emergent properties of linguistic and sociocultural systems (Kramsch 2002). In the pages that follow, in keeping with certain basic assumptions of the language socialization research paradigm, the bilingual subject is regarded not only as a locus of bilingual competence, but, equally important, as an agent of bilingual practice. To this end, the focus here will be on the emergence of bilingual subjectivities: their production and reproduction, and in many cases their transformation, through processes of language socialization.

subjectivity in language socialization studies

The notion of subjectivity, often associated with post-structuralist social theory, is largely concerned with the ontogenesis and ontology of consciousness: that is, the ways in which individuals come to know themselves, reflexively, as selves, and to experience the world and their own being-in-the-world accordingly. To be sure, scholarly concerns with such matters pre-date post-structuralism. Writing almost three-quarters of a century ago, George Herbert Mead (1995 [1936]: 86) suggested that increasing scholarly attention to what he variously characterized as ‘the experience of the individual’, ‘the point of view of the individual’ and ‘that…which is peculiar to the individual, that which is unique in his experience’ had grown out of the study of society and social organization by such pioneering nineteenth-century figures as Comte and Spencer. But these and related themes that would later become focal points of inquiry in the social sciences, such as how particular kinds of subject positions take shape within complex social systems, how and why particular individuals come to occupy or inhabit them, and how such processes are socially regulated and regimented, were not fully articulated and elaborated until the mid to late twentieth century, when they were taken up by late structuralist and early post-structuralist thinkers such as Lacan (1968 [1956]), Althusser (2003 [1966–67]), and Foucault (1970 [1966]). As developed by these scholars (particularly Althusser and Foucault), the notion of subjectivity serves to conceptualize the dynamic tension between the individual as social actor or agent and the subject position that she or he occupies within a given social order (which inevitably places certain constraints on agency). Crucially,
it takes into account that this tension is itself highly contingent in that it is modulated by a broad array of social and historical factors – particularly those implicated in the constitution and exercise of power, ranging from state apparatuses and religious institutions to what Foucault (1988) characterizes as ‘technologies of the self’.

The central role of language in producing and reproducing subjectivities (as acknowledged by all of the aforementioned theorists) suggests provocative questions for the study of bilingualism. What constitutes a bilingual subjectivity? In what ways might bilingual subjectivities differ from monolingual subjectivities? Inevitably, such questions demand attention to issues of socialization, in particular, language socialization. It is not yet clear how the young child first becomes aware of the ways in which, and the extent to which, members of his or her community organize the linguistic resources of that community as two distinct codes. For that matter, in many settings, such as those where a ‘creole continuum’ or ‘dialect chain’ can be said to exist, or where language boundaries are a matter of political and ideological contestation (Urciuoli 1995; Irvine and Gal 2000), these tend to be thorny matters for all involved, including the researcher. Whatever the circumstances, doubtless it is largely through language socialization that the child gains understanding of such issues and develops the ability to use the linguistic resources available to him or her in strategic, locally intelligible ways.

The development of locally intelligible subjectivities is a central theme (though it may not be couched in these terms) in virtually all language socialization studies (Kulick and Schieffelin 2004). Studies conducted in bilingual settings demonstrate that the availability of two codes, however they may be distinguished locally and however the relationship between them may be conceptualized, constitutes an important resource that speakers can and do draw upon in socializing culturally preferred subjectivities. One example is Fader’s (2001) study conducted in a Hasidic Jewish community in New York City, which examines how literacy practices involving English and Yiddish are used across home, school and other community settings to socialize girls in markedly gender-specific ways which, ultimately, constitute an important means by which symbolic boundaries separating the Hasidim from other groups (including other Jewish groups) are maintained. Another example is Baquedano-López’s (2001) study of the ways in which narratives in Spanish and in English serve to socialize children to differing kinds of identities (as members of a transnational Mexican-American ethnic community and as members of a much larger multi-ethnic society) in a Catholic parish in Los Angeles. Taken together, examples such as these suggest that virtually all aspects of subjectivity, including affective stances, morality, gender identity and ethnic identity, are shaped in culturally specific ways, and in accordance with local cultural preferences for the most part, through language socialization. Such studies reveal the extent to which notions of bilingualism are context-specific and ideologically mediated, while
demonstrating that they are instantiated in and through ethnographically observable communicative practices.

Recently, Kulick and Schieffelin (2004: 354–6) have urged language socialization researchers also to take into consideration ‘bad subjects’: those individuals, relatively few in number but found in every community, who persistently display culturally dispreferred traits and/or engage in non-normative, ‘deviant’ behaviours. (This notion of the ‘bad subject’ is thus used in Althusser’s value-neutral sense to refer to persons ‘who do not recognize or respond to calls to behave in particular, socially sanctioned ways’ [ibid: 355].) As Kulick and Schieffelin point out, ‘the focus on expected and predictable outcomes is a weakness if there is not also an examination of cases in which socialization doesn’t occur, or where it occurs in ways that are not expected or desired’ (ibid). In a bilingual setting, such an unexpected or undesired outcome might be the apparent failure or refusal of children to acquire both languages. Such outcomes may be blamed on the ‘failure’ of the children’s mothers, or of women in general, to transmit the community’s traditional or heritage language to the next generation (Constantinidou 1994; Pavlenko 2001); but as Heller (1994) points out, such judgements may be rooted in a ‘discourse of failure’ in which women themselves have a certain investment, and may mask (or render ambiguous) what might otherwise be regarded as quite successful outcomes of local socialization processes. In any case, language socialization research in such settings must account for processes of reproduction as well as ‘why socializing messages to behave and feel in particular ways may also produce their own inversion’ (Kulick and Schieffelin 2004: 356).

Language socialization research has yet to address these matters in depth, but there is evidence from other bodies of research to suggest that this is indeed an important and productive direction for future investigations. Some studies of adult second-language acquisition, for example, indicate that individuals may seek to learn another language as a form of conscious resistance: a means of self-consciously becoming, in effect, ‘bad subjects’ vis-à-vis their first-language communities of origin. Pavlenko (2001: 139) reports that some Japanese and Polish women ‘learn English in order to escape gender relations and gendered linguistic practices typical for their own cultures and perceived by them as hierarchical and demeaning’. Similarly, she notes, McMahill’s (1997) study of feminist ESL classes in Japan ‘suggests that for many Japanese students the concepts of English and feminism are closely related, which renders their learning and using of English empowering’. Other work cited by Pavlenko suggests that it is possible for a second-language learner to be a ‘bad subject’ vis-à-vis her host community: Siegal (1996) found that some Western women, while learning Japanese in Japan, ‘resisted dominant gender ideologies, encoded, in their opinion, in Japanese “women’s language,” even though at times their resistance came at a price of not “having an authentic
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voice’ in their second language and not being perceived as fully fluent and proficient’ (Pavlenko 2001: 140).

**studies of language socialization in bilingual/multilingual settings**

Most of the pioneering studies of language socialization (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986a, 1986b) focused on interactions between young children and their caregivers in monolingual small-scale societies; others were conducted in larger-scale societies such as the US and Japan, but likewise focused on relatively homogeneous monolingual communities (an important exception being Heath 1983). These studies stressed microethnographic analysis of ‘everyday life’ (Schieffelin 1990), yielding classic ethnographic descriptions of these communities as well as fine-grained, strongly longitudinal accounts of how individual developmental processes unfold within them. More recent studies carried out in postcolonial societies, dependencies with ties to distant metropoles, and indigenous and diasporic communities situated within the geopolitical boundaries of the US, Canada, Mexico, and other large, ethnically diverse societies have directed attention to the role of language socialization in the emergence of syncretic communicative practices, language shift, language obsolescence, and other contact-induced linguistic and sociocultural phenomena (Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002).

Language socialization research of recent years has thus become increasingly concerned with ideologies of language and political economy of language, and much of the impetus for these developments has come from work done in bilingual and multilingual settings. But in any study that has a socio-historical or longitudinal dimension – as do all language socialization studies, by definition – bilingualism cannot be taken as a stable state or property of either communities or individuals. Rather, it must be regarded as a dynamic, contingent phenomenon that takes quite different forms and trajectories in different sociocultural and sociohistorical settings, and that may be only a relatively fleeting phase in a community’s history or in the lifespan of an individual speaker. Kulick’s (1992) pioneering study of rapid language shift in the small Papua New Guinean village of Gapun set an important precedent for many recent and currently ongoing studies by demonstrating that language socialization practices, always a prime site of linguistic and sociocultural reproduction, may also be the source of far-reaching changes: in the case that Kulick examines, a community-wide shift from bilingualism to monolingualism.

Particularly relevant to the present discussion is Kulick’s analysis of how the two main languages spoken in this community, Taiap and Tok Pisin, have come to be mapped onto the villagers’ dualistic notion of the self. Taiap, the traditional local vernacular, is now steeped in associations with the ‘backward, pagan’ ways of the ancestors, and with hed, the willful, selfish, antisocial side of the self. Meanwhile Tok Pisin, a fairly recently introduced language...
of wider communication, is strongly associated with Christianity, literacy
and the world beyond Gapun; it is thought to express save, the sociable,
cooperative, enlightened side of the self. In Gapuners’ syncretic cosmology,
dramatic, instantaneous transformations of persons and things are possible,
and indeed are to be expected, provided that conditions conducive to such
transformations are in place. Therein lies their dilemma: an overabundance
of hed in village life, and a regrettable shortage of save, are causing Gapun to
remain mired in the old, backward ways. This renders the villagers unable
to kamap, that is, to develop, and to join the rest of the developed world in
enjoying a comfortable, modern way of life filled with technological marvels
and endlessly abundant consumer goods. The way out of this dilemma, they
believe, is to suppress outward manifestations of hed while cultivating (and
prominently displaying) save. ‘In using Tok Pisin,’ Kulick explains, ‘villagers
are thus expressing an important and highly valued aspect of self...But in
doing this, they are also constituting a situation in which their vernacular is
becoming less and less desirable and important’ – a situation in which Taiap
is literally ‘losing its ability to express positive aspects of self’ (1992: 21). The
ultimate effect, Kulick convincingly demonstrates, is that Gapun children
no longer get sufficient exposure to Taiap to become proficient speakers of
the language: ‘[T]here is no demand on children to speak Taiap, nor is there
any reward for speaking it’ (ibid: 222).

Viewing this situation in terms of subjectivity suggests that the introduction
of Tok Pisin and exogenous cultural forms of which it is the primary medium
(particularly Christianity) has resulted in a significant reworking of the
relationship between language and subjectivity in Gapun. Kulick notes that
prior to the introduction of Tok Pisin, multilingualism was highly valued;
being able to speak the vernaculars of other groups in the region (with whom
there was intermittent contact) was ‘the traditional cultural ideal’ (1992: 69).
To be a Gapuner was to be bi- or multilingual. But this was an era in which
the local languages coexisted in a more or less egalitarian, non-hierarchical
relationship; no particular language was regarded as intrinsically superior,
and no group sought to impose its language on other groups. This changed
drastically with the introduction of Tok Pisin, a language spoken by powerful
outsiders (such as plantation labour recruiters and missionaries) whose clear
intent was to impose both their will and their ways on others, and in effect,
to transform them into wholly new kinds of subjects, such as indentured
labourers and Christians.

New kinds of subjects, in turn, meant new kinds of subjectivities: new
ways of experiencing and understanding the known world and one’s place
within it. For Gapuners, this entailed, among other things, new ways of
being bilingual and of experiencing bilingualism – that is, new forms of
bilingual subjectivity. Gapuners’ newfound conviction that suppressing hed
would enable them to kamap – a collective aim that would scarcely have been
conceivable prior to the introduction of Tok Pisin and the exogenous cultural
forms with which it was associated – gave them a new goal to strive for, one that entailed a whole new way of being. To suppress hed was to suppress Taiap, which in effect was to suppress one’s own bilingualism, one’s own bilingual self – all in the interest of radically changing Gapun’s place in a heretofore unknown, indeed unimaginable social and cosmological order. Kulick’s study thus makes clear that processes of sociocultural reproduction and change, in bilingual settings as in all others, cannot be explained without reference to the complex relationships among political economy, ideology, and everyday communicative practices, particularly language socialization practices.

**The socialization of age-appropriate bilingual subjectivities in St Lucia**

By examining how individual developmental processes unfold within their broader sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts, from micro to macro levels of analysis, language socialization researchers are able to investigate how events and interactions in the everyday lives of individuals shape their perceptions and experiences of their social worlds, and of their own positions within those worlds. Language socialization research is not just a matter of producing detailed ethnographic accounts of individual developmental trajectories and the local settings in which they occur; an important overarching goal is to understand how the experiences and actions of individuals relate to (that is, how they shape and are shaped by) larger sociocultural and sociohistorical processes.

In bilingual communities, shifts in the (re)production of bilingual subjectivities tend to become particularly salient at the junctures between generations, as members of one generation are socializing members of the next in ways that may or may not result in the production (or reproduction) of a succeeding cohort of bilingual speakers and subjects. In my own language socialization study, conducted in the Caribbean island of St Lucia, I examine a situation in which members of the first local generation of bilinguals – young adults at the time of my fieldwork, and in most cases parents of young children – were socializing those children in ways that yielded a wide range of outcomes, from near-monolingualism to varying degrees of bilingualism. The two languages involved are Kwéyòl, an Afro-French creole language which is a legacy of the island’s French colonial period (1651–1814), and the present-day official language, English, which became established during a subsequent British colonial period (1814–1979). The English spoken by most St Lucians in everyday conversation is actually a distinctive non-standard variety of English that I have described elsewhere as Vernacular English of St Lucia, or VESL (Garrett 2003). For present purposes, however, I apply the label ‘English’ broadly (as St Lucians generally do) to encompass the full spectrum of local variation.
At present in St Lucia, Kwéyòl–English bilingualism is widespread, and the majority of the population is bilingual to one degree or another. But St Lucian bilingualism at the present historical moment (as in numerous other societies) encompasses a broad span of variation, arrayed between elderly rural Kwéyòl monolinguals and an emerging generation of young urban English monolinguals. In the small rural community where I conducted my fieldwork, Morne Carré, many of the oldest residents are monolingual speakers of Kwéyòl, while most persons middle-aged and younger are bilingual (to varying degrees) in Kwéyòl and English. This generational difference reflects in part an important shift with regard to formal education: many members of the eldest generation never attended school, but their children were able to do so, particularly after a primary school was established in Morne Carré itself in the early 1970s. Most of today’s generation of children are also bilingual to one degree or another, their proficiency in Kwéyòl and English broadly reflecting the extent to which each language is (or is not) used with them by their caregivers and other members of their households. This varies considerably: in some households, caregivers are diligent about speaking only English with children, while in others, particularly those where grandparents or other elderly relatives reside, Kwéyòl may be used almost exclusively. Consequently, even within this small community, some children, during their pre-school years, are virtually monolingual Kwéyòl-speakers, while others are virtually monolingual English-speakers.

Most Morne Carré households, however, fall somewhere between these two extremes, with adults speaking mostly Kwéyòl among themselves but showing a strong preference for the use of English with children. The preference for the use of English by children is even stronger; children are expected to respond in English even when addressed in Kwéyòl by an angry or impatient caregiver. Most St Lucian adults subscribe to a sort of locally adapted notion of subtractive bilingualism: it is widely and quite firmly believed that the simultaneous acquisition of Kwéyòl has a profoundly detrimental effect on children’s acquisition of English. As a result of Kwéyòl’s putative potential for interference (contamination would not be too strong a word), adults insist that children must learn to speak English before they are allowed to begin speaking Kwéyòl. While English must be explicitly taught to children, Kwéyòl need not be taught at all; it will come naturally, adults say, and they assume that children will eventually begin speaking Kwéyòl of their own volition.

In Morne Carré, as the preceding suggests, there are strong community norms of age-appropriateness with regard to the use of Kwéyòl and English. Attention to how these norms of age-appropriateness are manifested in everyday interactions yields insight into how age-inflected subjectivities take form (i.e. are socialized) in individuals of various ages. Just as important, it offers insight into how those subjectivities are continually changing over time: both human developmental time (i.e. time as reckoned with regard to the lifespans of individuals) and sociohistorical time (i.e. time as reckoned with
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regard to the local community and/or the broader society’s trajectories over the course of successive generations, and as the life experiences of members of those generations differ due to social and historical factors).

Below I consider some excerpts taken from my recordings of everyday interactions in Morne Carré. My focus is a particular dimension of subjectivity formation that I take to be of universal relevance: the age cohort or generation dimension. While its significance for everyday social life clearly varies across cultures and communities, this dimension tends to be highly salient in language socialization studies that have been conducted in bilingual settings and others characterized by episodes of language contact (e.g. Kulick’s study as described above). For present purposes, the central concern is how a child develops a sense of himself or herself as ‘belonging to’ a particular age group vis-à-vis other age groups, and how socialization to use (or not to use) particular linguistic resources contributes to that process.²

rosie’s mixed input

In most Morne Carré households, young children are immersed in a richly verbal environment in which both Kwéyòl and English figure prominently. The proportions vary considerably from one household to another, however, depending on such factors as the age, occupations and social networks of the child’s elders and caregivers. For example, if grandparents are present in the household, they may be monolingual Kwéyòl-speaking farmers who have never attended school and who rarely leave the village. At the other end of the spectrum are elder siblings and cousins, who are likely to be oriented toward secondary schools, peer groups and wage-earning jobs in the capital city; these adolescents and young adults speak primarily English, and may in fact have quite limited proficiency in Kwéyòl.

However much Kwéyòl is spoken by a child’s caregivers, in many households relatively little Kwéyòl is directed to the child herself; or else it is directed to the child and then immediately followed by an English utterance more or less equivalent in meaning (as often happens when a caregiver is distracted, frustrated or impatient), with no real expectation or desire that the child respond to, or even demonstrate understanding of, the Kwéyòl utterance. It is expected, however, that the child will attend to, and respond immediately to, English utterances, particularly imperatives, such as those in the following excerpt from a caregiver’s speech to a young child. The interaction is between Coletta, a 21-year-old woman, and a 20-month-old toddler named Rosie. Coletta is the daughter of Rosie’s mother’s sister, and one of Rosie’s primary caregivers; Rosie’s mother died of an illness shortly after the child was born, whereupon Coletta’s mother took her into their household. In this excerpt, Coletta is calling out from the house because it is time for Rosie to have her bath. Rosie is in the yard, where she has been quietly amusing herself by searching for discarded bottle caps.
As this small torrent of words issues forth, it is likely that only a few among them, such as come, bathe and drop, stand out as meaningful for Rosie. Rosie knows that she must respond, and respond immediately; but it is Coletta’s posture, the hard fixity of her gaze and the tone of her voice, at least as much as the propositional meaning of her utterances, that make it unmistakably clear to Rosie that she must stop what she is doing (she has been scolded before for picking bottle caps out of the dirt) and ‘come’ at once. For her part, Coletta knows well that Rosie does not understand everything that she has just said, some of it in Kwéyòl, some in English. But from Coletta’s perspective, it could hardly be otherwise, even if she had spoken only in English. Rosie is not even two years old yet, after all; Coletta has been talking as much to herself as to the child.

The above comments are semi-conjectural on my part, but they are not merely speculative; they are based in ethnographic insight into St Lucian ideologies of language and folk understandings of how children’s language acquisition unfolds. Despite adults’ concern that young children, from the time they first begin to produce recognizable single words, should acquire English and English only, many caregivers do use Kwéyòl in addressing children, particularly when irritated or impatient. But English is the preferred code for use with children, particularly young children, and it is assumed that they understand English better than Kwéyòl; hence the tendency for adults to juxtapose English imperatives with Kwéyòl ones, as Coletta does in lines 3 and 5 in the excerpt above. Notice that she does not provide an English equivalent in line 4, which is an instance of what Goffman (1981) characterizes as ‘self-talk’; Coletta neither intends nor desires that Rosie understand this utterance. It seems plausible that the same can be said of line 6, despite the seemingly vocative mention of Rosie’s name.³

From the perspective of Rosie and other young children in this bilingual community, an implicit but unmistakable message can be inferred from such instances of mixed input: on those occasions when adults use two different codes in their child-directed speech, only the utterances in one of those
two codes, English, need be attended to, understood for their propositional content, and responded to. Doubtless the juxtaposition of Kwéyòl utterances with their English equivalents is a means by which young children (quite possibly even preverbal children) begin to develop an understanding that their elders recognize two distinct codes, and that the boundary between the two, quite porous at times, is much more sharply drawn at other times, particularly when children are involved. Such juxtapositions are also a means by which children begin to recognize the systematic correspondences (phonological, semantic and syntactic) between English as spoken locally and Kwéyòl (Garrett 2003), and by which they begin to develop some degree of ‘passive’ understanding of Kwéyòl, or at the very least, of a subset of commonly used Kwéyòl imperatives, scolds, rhetorical questions and other affect-laden utterances (Garrett 2005). But any inclination that young children might have to produce Kwéyòl utterances of their own is effectively squelched by language socialization practices such as those examined below, which cumulatively and recursively emphasize that English, not Kwéyòl, is the language that children are to use, and that Kwéyòl is an ‘adult’ code. Thus children become conscious from an early age, perhaps well before they begin to speak, that the only subject position available to them in their bilingual community is that of the monolingual English-speaking child who may (but need not) also have a fair degree of passive understanding of Kwéyòl. As a direct function of their age and corresponding social status (with all of the behavioural constraints that this status entails), to be a speaker of Kwéyòl, or a bilingual speaker, is not an option for them – at least, not yet.

Tonia’s code-mixing

Morne Carré children sometimes do produce Kwéyòl utterances, however; and like children growing up in bilingual environments everywhere, they sometimes code-mix. Adults consider these to be problems that must be corrected as quickly as possible, lest they become entrenched and impede the child’s acquisition of English. Indeed, local language socialization practices are to a great extent oriented toward this particular end – which doubtless has the ancillary effect of reinforcing and reproducing among adults their own ideologically based notions of English and Kwéyòl as two wholly separate, unproblematically discrete codes (cf. Garrett 2000). The following interaction occurred in another Morne Carré household between a child named Tonia (age 2;11) and her mother, Paya, a woman in her early twenties.

1 Paya: Your hand dirty?
2 Tonia: Yeah
3 Paya: With what?
4 Tonia: Zo
Bone
5 Paya: Zo?! Bone!
Tonia’s hand is greasy because she has been eating a piece of chicken. In line 4, in response to her mother’s question, she produces the Kwéyòl word zo, ‘bone’. Paya’s immediate response – following a repetition of Tonia’s utterance that functions here as a rhetorical question – is to model the English equivalent bone, in an urgent tone of voice. Although she does not do so here, in many such cases Paya made sure that Tonia repeated the modelled English utterance and pronounced it in a passable manner. At another point during the same recording session, Tonia code-mixed fairly extensively in an utterance directed to me, prompting a more elaborate correction from Paya:

1  Tonia: Paul, sòti la before me knock ou.
2  Paya: What you tell Paul?
   Sòti la avan ou knock li?!
   Get away from there before you knock him?!
   Say ‘Come out from there before I knock you’,
   that’s what you have to say.
3  Tonia: [Unintelligible]
4  Paya: You cannot talk. You can talk?
5  Tonia: Yeah
6  Paya: Talk for me to hear you.

Although Tonia’s initial utterance is a mix of English and Kwéyòl forms (line 1), when Paya repeats it in the form of a rhetorical question, shifting the two pronominal forms accordingly, the only English form retained is the verb knock (line 2); otherwise the utterance is rendered entirely in Kwéyòl, suggesting that Tonia’s use of Kwéyòl forms a moment earlier was much more salient to Paya than her use of English forms. Paya follows her rhetorical question with a model utterance in English, prompting Tonia to repeat it verbatim. Tonia’s failure to repeat the model utterance clearly (line 3; she may be playfully garbling it) is met with the suggestion that she ‘cannot talk’, a semi-playful reproach which suggests that Tonia is behaving in a babyish manner, that is, not acting her age (line 4). But another noteworthy aspect of this interaction is that Paya is so intent on correcting the code-mix (or simply Tonia’s use of Kwéyòl) that she makes no comment at all about what Tonia is saying to me, which under other circumstances would almost surely have prompted a rebuke (or at least a warning) to the effect that Tonia is being ‘womanish’, that is, being too forward or assertive for her young age by directing an unmitigated imperative and physical threat to an adult. Although verbal teasing between adults and children is sometimes tolerated and occasionally even encouraged (Garrett 2005), adults rarely allow children to initiate a teasing exchange. In general, children’s speech, both to adults and to other children, is fairly rigidly constrained by local norms of age-appropriate forms of speech, and adults are quick to correct a child who violates those norms. In these and other ways, children are encouraged
to be highly conscious of age-appropriate behaviours, particularly verbal
behaviours; and as suggested by the excerpts above, exclusive use of English
is one of the most fundamental aspects of age-appropriate speech for young
children, so important that it sometimes trumps pragmatic considerations.

The importance of age-appropriate use of language is made further evident
by the fact that even primary-school-age children in Morne Carré take it upon
themselves to engage their preschool-age siblings in corrective routines like
those examined above. In the following excerpt, elder brother Shawn (age
7) corrects younger sister Tonia (age 2;10) in an interaction that I recorded
approximately one month earlier than those above. In this excerpt, two other
persons are also involved: Tonia’s elder sister, Brita (age 5), and once again
the children’s mother, Paya, who is overhearing their interaction from an
adjoining room.

1 Tonia: Shawn, ga’ sa
2 Shawn: Not ‘Ga’ sa’, ‘Look at that’
3 Brita: ‘Look at that’
4 Tonia: Look at that
5 Shawn: You know the word,
   [exasperated] when you finish you not saying it. Say ‘Look at that’
6 Tonia: Look at that
7 Shawn: ‘Look at that’, eh
8 Brita: ‘Ga’- You saying ‘Gadé sa’?
   [to Tonia]
9 Tonia: Gadé sa, gadé sa, gadé sa!
   [mischievously]
10 Paya: Say ‘Look at that’
   [from adjacent room]
11 Tonia: Look at that

As this excerpt suggests, by the time children reach the age of Tonia’s elder
siblings, their notions of Kwéyòl and English as two separate, separable codes,
one of them suitable for use by children and the other not, are well established.
By their fifth year (the year in which they begin school), most Morne Carré
children have become well accustomed to monitoring their own speech as
well as that of their peers and (especially) younger children for instances of
code-mixing; indeed, they tend to be almost hawkishly vigilant about it.
Of course, sometimes the transgressions are wilful ones. The phrase gadé sa
‘look at that’, often reduced to ga’ sa in casual speech, is well known to most
children from their earliest years, and is brief enough that older children can
often get away with using it in contexts of loosely supervised play with their
peers. In the excerpt above, it is not clear in line 1 whether Tonia is aware that
ga’ sa is a Kwéyòl expression, and hence unacceptable for her to use (that is,
likely to draw expressions of disapproval and corrective measures from her siblings and mother; but by line 9, after Shawn has corrected her, provided the English equivalent (with a bit of reinforcement from Brita) and had her repeat it, it is clear enough that Tonia is using *ga(dé) sa* self-consciously and mischievously: now she chants it in a sing-song voice, only to be reproved by Paya and compelled to repeat the English model once again. As might be expected, Paya’s intervention settles the matter, at least for the time being.

**older children’s use of kwéyòl in unsupervised peer contexts**

Despite adults’ concern that children become proficient speakers of English without interference from Kwéyòl, most Morne Carré children do acquire some knowledge of Kwéyòl, and in most cases some speaking proficiency, particularly during middle to late childhood. As this suggests, many children actively resist, at least occasionally, the age-based restrictions on their use of Kwéyòl that were outlined above. Not surprisingly, this resistance increases as children get older and begin striking out on their own, spending more and more time with peers and beyond the earshot of adults. Corresponding roughly to the early to middle primary school years, this period is marked by a number of important shifts in children’s levels of responsibility and self-sufficiency in home and community contexts. Beginning school is itself a socially salient developmental milestone; children of school age begin to be entrusted with other responsibilities such as taking care of younger siblings in their mothers’ absence, running errands that involve travelling several minutes’ walk from home, and performing tasks that involve some element of potential physical danger to self, other persons or property, such as using a cutlass (machete) to cut weeds or tending to the burning of the household trash pile. Doubtless, being deemed competent to take on responsibilities such as these, and spending increasing amounts of time in the company of peers, can be correlated with important shifts in children’s subjectivities.

In the following excerpt, a small group of boys ranging in age from four to seven years are playing together near the community soccer/cricket field. The field lies on the village’s periphery, just beyond the last houses where the settled area gives way to a mix of cultivated land and ‘bush’ (forest). Other than I, there are no adults within earshot. Up to this point the boys have been using mostly English while playing and chatting among themselves. But as they have traipsed toward the playing field and have gotten farther and farther from their homes, they have begun to use Kwéyòl more and more freely. In this unsupervised context, they noticeably begin to act out adult masculine identities; no caregivers are around to make them use English, so they are free to switch to Kwéyòl, speaking like older boys or men rather than like small children. Beyond issues of code selection, note the coarse remark made by Rick, the oldest boy present, in line 1; such an utterance certainly would not have been tolerated if overheard by an adult, and Rick would have been scolded for using language that is *twòp nomn* ‘too man[nish]’. The same
can be said of his use of the word bonnda, ‘ass’, in line 5; the more polite Kwéyòl term is fès, and even more preferable for a child Rick’s age would be an ‘English’ term such as the hypocoristic bumbum. In the excerpt below, the boys engage in a sort of quintessentially masculine bonding experience, collectively stopping by the side of the road, at the edge of wajyé-a, ‘the bush’, to urinate. Much to the amusement of the other boys, seven-year-old Zacchie decides to take this as an opportunity to defecate as well.

1 Rick: Kité mwen ladjé pisa. Bon tibway- !
   Let me take a piss. Hey boy-!

2 Zacchie: Sòt’ la, Maklin!
   Get away from there, Maklin!

3 Rick: Paul, mako’y! Aaah, Paul fè – !
   [pretends he has a video camera]
   Paul, peer at him! Aaah, Paul went – !

4 Maklin: Ba mwen fè an try eh Rick, ba mwen fè an try
   Let me have a try eh Rick, let me have a try

5 Rick: Sa kay djouké bonnda’w
   That’s going to poke your ass

6 Zacchie: Mwen vlé tjò- a piece of toilet paper
   I want a piece- [switches to English]

7 Maklin: Paul, ay pwan an tjò toilet paper anba wajyé-a ba’y
   Paul, go get a piece of toilet paper in the woods for him

8 Paul: Lò ni toilet paper anba wajyé-a?
   There’s toilet paper in the woods?

9 Zacchie: Wi. Sa ki toilet paper mwen wi
   Yeah. That’s my toilet paper [holding up a leaf]

10 Paul: Ohh?!

11 Zacchie: Um, um, pli lotan, sa- um, moun té ka- um, fè pou-
   Um, um, more long time, that- um, people- um, used for-

12 Rick: Toilet paper yo wi
   Their toilet paper

13 Zacchie: Toilet- toilet paper yo wi
   Toilet- their toilet paper

14 Paul: Oh, ki moun ki di’w sa?
   Oh, who told you that?

15 Zacchie: An moun ki di mwen sa wi, Paul
   A person/Someone told me that, Paul

Zacchie, whose family is particularly strict about his use of English, has been trying his best to keep up with the Kwéyòl banter of the other boys, one of whom is younger than he. Maklin, the youngest boy present, lives in a predominantly Kwéyòl-speaking household where his near-monolingual grandmother is one of his primary caregivers; consequently, his proficiency
in Kwéyòl far exceeds Zacchie’s. (This, along with his lack of proficiency in English, are both fairly unusual for a child of Maklin’s age and of this generation.) Noteworthy here is Zacchie’s apparent reluctance to use the English borrowing *toilet paper*: in line 6 he hesitates, apparently searching momentarily for a Kwéyòl word before resigning himself to a code-switch (which involves producing an entire English noun phrase, despite the fact that he has already produced the Kwéyòl word *tjò,* ‘piece [of]’). His use of the term *toilet paper* is effectively ratified by both Maklin and Paul (lines 7–8; there is in fact no equivalent Kwéyòl term in common usage), whereupon Zacchie uses it again himself, this time without hesitation, in line 9.

Soon thereafter, Zacchie seems to come up against the limits of his Kwéyòl grammatical proficiency in attempting to construct an anterior-tense utterance (line 11); he is apparently trying to say *An tan lotan, moun te ka sévi sa-a pou toilet paper yo,* ‘A long time ago, people used to use that [leaves] as their *toilet paper*’. It may also be that he is once again hesitating to use the English term *toilet paper* as part of this ambitious foray into Kwéyòl; in any case, this is what the older boy Rick understands to be happening, as evidenced by his suggestion of the term in line 12. Zacchie quickly accepts the candidate term proffered by the elder, more fluent Rick, who by proffering it has effectively sanctioned its use.

The preceding excerpt suggests that Kwéyòl indexes adulthood for these boys, and that certain kinds of Kwéyòl lexical items and turns of phrase (*ladjé pisa, bonnda*) index adult masculinity. It also underscores the extent to which Kwéyòl and English have become compartmentalized for children of this age – possibly even more so than for some adults. From a developmental pragmatic perspective, Zacchie’s apparent hesitation to use the commonplace English borrowing *toilet paper* might be regarded as a kind of overgeneralization or hypercorrection phenomenon. Making his best effort to keep up with the other boys’ use of Kwéyòl, he is reluctant to resort to the use of any identifiably English form, notwithstanding the fact that English borrowings and code-switches are quite heavily used among male adolescents and all but the oldest male adults.

**intergenerational conflict over older children’s use of kwéyòl**

As noted previously, and as seen in the above excerpt, the degree to which children in Morne Carré are spoken to in Kwéyòl and allowed to speak Kwéyòl themselves varies considerably from one household to another. Even within the same household, adults’ attitudes and practices may vary, giving rise to occasional disagreements. In the excerpt below, such a disagreement between Bettina, a woman in her late thirties, and her daughter Coletta, age 21, flares up in regard to Calton, the nine-year-old nephew of Bettina and cousin of Coletta who lives with them. Coletta is largely responsible for supervising Calton, as her mother works in town and is away for most of the day. Coletta does not allow Calton to speak Kwéyòl in her presence, and chastises him...
severely if she overhears him speaking it to anyone else (but this very rarely happens). Although she herself often addresses Calton in Kwéyòl and expects him, unlike the much younger Rosie, to understand her when she does so, she permits him to reply only in English. (Note that Coletta uses nothing but Kwéyòl with her mother as well as with Calton in the exchanges below.) Bettina, on the other hand, takes a more balanced view: she thinks that it is important for children to know both Kwéyòl and English, and that while they should be encouraged to use English, they should not actively be prevented from (much less punished for) using Kwéyòl. Most of the time her opinion does Calton little good, however; along with Rosie, he is usually under Coletta’s strict supervision, and he sticks to English out of fear of her harsh reprisals.

As this excerpt begins, I have just asked Calton a question in Kwéyòl about what he is doing. Stooped over a large basin of water in the yard, he is washing leaves for his aunt, who is in the kitchen preparing to use them in making a herbal skin remedy. Calton is in an ill humour at having to do this chore, and he has mumbled a short answer to my question in English. But Coletta, sitting about three metres away, has not heard him clearly, and is under the mistaken impression that Calton has responded to my Kwéyòl question in Kwéyòl (or ‘Patwa’, as it is referred to here and in casual conversation by most St Lucians).

1 Coletta -> Calton: Sa ou di la, Calton?!
   What did you say there, Calton?!
   Tann mwen waché lanng ou an djòl ou wi!
   Just see if I don’t rip your tongue right out of your mouth!

2 Bettina -> Coletta: Kité timanmay-la bat mizè’y, Coletta. Tjups
   Leave the child alone, Coletta. Tjups

3 Calton -> Coletta: [complainingly]
   She say- You always there telling somebody something

4 Bettina -> Coletta: Kanté timanmay ka palé Patwa,
   So many children speak Patwa,
   mi Paul vin’ apwann Patwa,
   here’s Paul come to learn Patwa,
   ou pa vlé Calton palé Patwa?!
   [and] you don’t want Calton speaking Patwa?!

5 Coletta -> Bettina: Calton pa ka palé pyès Patwa
   Calton doesn’t speak any Patwa

6 Calton -> Coletta: When I get big, what I will say?

7 Bettina -> Coletta: I bon pou djòl ou,
   It’s good [enough] for your mouth,
   i pa bon pou djòl li?!
   [but] it isn’t good [enough] for his mouth?!
Coletta’s luridly threatening rebuke of Calton for speaking Kwéyòl (line 1), characteristically, is in Kwéyòl. Bettina’s response (line 2) is likewise in Kwéyòl, as are virtually all of her everyday exchanges with Coletta. Calton’s protest (line 3), however, is in English; he knows well that for him to speak Kwéyòl here would only exacerbate the situation, and he would not dare to speak Kwéyòl to Coletta in any case. Indeed, the fact that he responds at all in this situation is somewhat uncharacteristic; he probably would not have done so if Bettina had not already stepped into the fray and made clear that she does not agree with Coletta. This becomes still more explicit as Bettina elaborates her position by pointing out that many children speak Kwéyòl, and that I have come all the way from the US to learn the language (line 4); she follows this with a rhetorical question implying that Coletta has no business telling Calton not to speak Kwéyòl. Coletta’s response (line 5, delivered in a sullen tone – she knows that she will have to defer to her mother) that Calton ‘doesn’t speak any Patwa’ is pointedly disingenuous. Coletta is well aware that Calton can speak some Kwéyòl; what she means here is that he does not (and had better not) speak it in her presence. Calton’s response to this (line 6), again in English, but posed rather daringly in the form of a rhetorical question (he is only able to run the risk of addressing his elder cousin in this fashion because Bettina is there to shield him from Coletta’s response), alludes to the fact that at nine years, he is fast approaching the age at which Coletta will no longer be able to exert the kind of control that she is accustomed to having over his use of language. Bettina finally settles the matter (for the moment, at least) by posing a rhetorical question to Coletta (line 7), pointing out that if Kwéyòl is good enough for Coletta to speak, it is good enough for Calton to speak.

The various excerpts that have been examined here reveal that children in Morne Carré are both implicitly and explicitly socialized to distinguish sharply between two normatively differentiated codes, Kwéyòl and English, and to observe fairly strict norms of age-appropriate use of those two codes. Notions of age-appropriateness prove to be somewhat fluid and contingent, however, permitting some opportunities, particularly as children get older, to experiment with the use of both codes and with the ideologically constructed boundary between them (a boundary which in practice proves to be rather fuzzy). As they do so, children are gradually making their way along a loosely age-graded developmental trajectory that both constrains and enables them in the course of everyday interactions as they position and re-position themselves in relation to others through participation in an increasingly diversified range of activities. Ultimately, the ability to draw on both English and Kwéyòl as communicative resources, and to deploy the forms and features associated with these two codes in socially and pragmatically competent ways, is crucial to the emergence of locally intelligible adult subjectivities – a hallmark of which, at the present sociohistorical moment in Morne Carré and in St Lucia more generally, is bilingualism.
Kulick and Schieffelin (2004: 351–2) remark that an important shortcoming of certain influential works of contemporary social theory is that ‘the socialization of habitus, or the early reiterations of language that initiate processes of becoming a culturally intelligible subject, are assumed and asserted more than they are actually demonstrated...[W]e know that they happen...but we don’t know how.’ The preceding examples of language socialization activities, fleeting moments extracted from the flow of everyday events in the lives of a few children in one St Lucian community, illustrate some typical types of interaction through which these children’s emergent bilingual subjectivities are progressively, recursively shaped through mundane interactions with significant others: adult caregivers, siblings, peers, even visiting anthropologists. The language socialization research paradigm offers a powerful and versatile approach for gaining insight into such developmental phenomena. Even the few brief interactions that have been examined here provide insight into important age-graded shifts in children’s developmental trajectories as they move from the relatively rigid constraints on language use to which they are subject in early childhood to the relative autonomy that becomes increasingly (if intermittently) available to them during middle childhood.

In bilingual settings where children’s acquisition and use of two codes is a value-laden, ideologically charged, discursively elaborated process – as seems to be the case more often than not – a language socialization approach can also yield important insights into the ways in which local, face-to-face contexts and interactions are impinged upon (often orthogonally or indirectly) by extralocal factors. In the St Lucian case, these include recent and still ongoing changes in the relationship between English and Kwéyòl in St Lucian society, the imperatives of nation-building (Garrett 2007), and the ongoing shift from a primarily agricultural to a primarily service-based economy (which in Morne Carré has implications for the relevance of formal education, for household subsistence strategies, for the life chances and personal aspirations of members of the younger generations, etc.). Mapping out these sorts of micro–macro connections for the St Lucian case is beyond the scope of this chapter, but Kulick’s (1992) study of Gapun provides an elegant model, as do several other ethnographic studies of language contact phenomena in bilingual/multilingual settings (e.g. Errington 1998; Gal 1979; Hill and Hill 1986; Rampton 1995b; Tsitsipis 1998). All of these cases suggest that transformations of local subjectivities via changes (often quite subtle changes) in everyday communicative practices play a pivotal role in determining the extent and degree of bilingualism among individuals, as well as the relative stability of bilingualism at group and community levels.

The notion of subjectivity taps into the tension between individual agency and the social factors that simultaneously enable and constrain it. Applied in concert with language socialization approaches, it offers excellent
possibilities for bridging the gap between socially oriented and psychologically oriented approaches to bilingualism, bilingual acquisition, and related phenomena ranging from code-switching to language shift. Such an approach proceeds from the assumption that bilingualism, in addition to being a socially, culturally and historically diverse phenomenon, is rooted in political economy: in contingent relationships of hierarchy and inequality, dominance and subordination. These contingent relationships, in turn, are ideologically mediated in ways that may not be readily discernible, but are enormously consequential in that as they guide individuals’ understandings of the world and their actions in it. Longitudinal, empirically grounded, ethnographically informed investigations of the ontogenesis of bilingual subjectivities can illuminate processes of individual human development, processes of sociocultural reproduction and change, and crucially, the dynamic relationships that link them.

notes

1. Since 1979, St Lucia has been an independent nation-state. English remains the sole official language and language of instruction, but Kwéyòl has gained increasing prestige and official recognition in recent years (Garrett 2000, 2007).
2. For a related analysis and discussion involving members of three distinct age groups (adults, older children, and younger children), see Garrett (2005).
3. These two utterances, particularly line 6, are perhaps not ‘pure’ instances of self-talk; they may be more akin to what Goffman characterizes as ‘afterburn’, an affect-laden type of utterance that is intended to be (over)heard, but not attended to or responded to, by a co-present other or others. The fact that I was present as an observer (engaged in videotaping Rosie) when Coletta produced these utterances is yet another factor that must be taken into consideration in these regards. (As is typical among young adults in Morne Carré, Coletta and I used a liberal mix of English and Kwéyòl in our day-to-day interactions.)
4. I was present, of course, but as a sort of tag-along companion rather than as a caregiver; the children knew very well that I was not at all averse to their use of Kwéyòl. (For that matter, they also knew that I, quite unlike most adults, was not averse to taking part in children’s play activities from time to time.) As a single non-St Lucian adult male who had no children of his own but spent much of his time with small children and their (mostly female) primary caregivers, and who was making special efforts to become a proficient speaker of Kwéyòl, I occupied a rather unconventional (though warmly accommodated) subject position in village social life.
5. I lived in the same household compound as Calton (in a small freestanding house of my own) and interacted with him on a daily basis. I often spoke to him in Kwéyòl, and virtually without exception, he always replied in English. This informal arrangement was unusual with respect to local norms of adult–child interaction, but it was standard practice for the two of us and was accepted as such by others, including Coletta, out of deference to my need to practise my Kwéyòl as much as possible. Even so, as this excerpt suggests, under no circumstances would she have tolerated Calton using Kwéyòl in replying to me.
references


language socialization and the (re)production of bilingual subjectivities


