KALEIDOSCOPES OF INDEXICALITY: MULTIPLEX SYMBOLIC FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE AND UNFOCUSED SOCIAL CATEGORIES

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Abstract

Original data from an ethnographic study on the indexical meanings of language in a multilingual and ethnically highly diverse context in Belize, Central America, demonstrate that ascribing language to ethnic belonging does not necessarily work. The Belizean language Kriol, an English-lexified Creole that is Belize's dominant oral lingua franca, is a vehicle for several indexes. On the basis of social discourses on Kriol, which are interrelated with the culturally complex history of Belize – involving transnational ties to the former coloniser, to surrounding countries and to the US – I argue that Kriol has multiple indexical functions – as 'the language' of Belizeans, as expressing ties to race and place, and as creating a space of resistance towards Western ideologies of standardization. The case shows that, where social categories are not focused and naturalized, we find multiplex orders of indexicality and non-teleological processes of enregisterment.

I. Language, belonging and diversity on the periphery

Since its very inception, sociolinguistics has been concerned with language diversity and tends to concentrate on linguistic phenomena that display non-standard forms. In recent times, and as an effect of discourses of globalization, the interest in language diversity under conditions of multilingualism and language contact has predominated. This article discusses the multilingual complexity of a single village. The place is rural but nevertheless highly diverse due to its postcolonial, political and economic relationships.

I introduce data from Belize, where I studied the language ideologies of the residents of a small island in the Caribbean Sea. Belize has both a colonial history and a multicultural, national history, with older and newer ethnic formations and diverse trajectories of immigration and emigration, and is today part of the global tourist industry. It is a compelling example with which to study patterns of language and belonging in diverse contexts and to show that monolingual structures are not natural, but rather an effect of particular historical and political conditions in which both language *and* ethnicity are discursive categories

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dialectically linked to each other (as groundbreakingly illustrated in Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985). The study of the indexical functions of language (on indexicality, see e.g. Silverstein 1979) means scrutinizing the discourses that contribute to their emergence. To do this in a context in which language and ethnicity are not and have never been congruent promises crucial insights.

The article is therefore based on an ethnographic study of the indexical functions of different languages and focuses on the functions of Kriol. Kriol is a non-standardized Creole language that has gained considerable prestige in Belize and that indexes national belonging but at the same time remains tied to lower class belonging and expresses postcolonial resistance. So, how is it possible that a language of continuing low prestige can index national belonging? As will be shown, this is related to the fact that discourses on Kriol are simultaneously interwoven with complex and sometimes contradictory social discourses linked to different territorial scales – national and transnational – and therefore have multiple and paradoxical meanings.

To take up the 'kaleidoscope' metaphor invoked in the title of the article, I argue that indexical meanings change depending on the discursive positioning we take. The same person may have access to several such positions, particularly where social categories are not fully reified and stable, as is commonly imagined in Western modernist discourse. A 'kaleidoscope' framing goes beyond arguing that indexical meanings change depending on the group we belong to. Yet, despite arguing that indexical meanings of linguistic categories are shifting and multiple, and that therefore we cannot pin down the 'essential' nature of such categories, signifiers that express linguistic categorisation remain relevant in symbolising social difference. Where national epistemes are unstable due to social conditions, resources of multilingualism may still be ordered in categories, though not necessarily arranged in linear, hierarchical forms in the way the modernist, centralizing powers of the twentieth century hoped. Furthermore, resistance to modernist language ideologies characterized by fixity, linear order and standardization may be a more or less conscious part of postcolonial power struggles. Thus, the indexical functions of language may be kaleidoscopic – unfixed and contingent – as enregisterment (Agha 2007) is not a teleological process, and as several threads of enregisterment may exist side by side.

In the following section, I introduce the methodological approach used in the study, including background information on demography and language. In the third and main section, I focus on data from qualitative interviews and ethnographic observations to illustrate the complex and multi-faceted role of the Belizean language Kriol. In the discussion section, I

reflect on the relationship between language categories and social categories in highly diverse contexts such as Belize. The article ends with a short conclusion.

II. Ethnography in a Multilingual Caribbean Village

This study's research design is based on the assumption that we need to approach the indexical meanings of linguistic categories with qualitative and ethnographic approaches, as they are not 'given' but emerge in discourse. The ethnographic method ensures openness towards the documentation of unexpected meanings (Pérez-Milans 2015). The ethnographic field study undertaken in spring 2015 produced field notes from three months of participant observation in public spaces, a school and a kindergarten, as well as photographs and a collection of printed material. In addition, I conducted nineteen qualitative interviews of length from thirty minutes to two and a half hours, recorded two group discussions with pupils on the role of language in Belize of one hour's length each, and recorded twenty hours of interactions in the school, both inside and outside of class. Furthermore, I collected quantitative material on language attitudes in the form of 155 street interviews in which I asked permanent residents of the village about their language use across domains (family, friends, work). Since 2012, the on-site data collection has been supplemented by observation of online interactions and media (radio, newspaper, television), as well as by studying Belizean literature and the history of Belize.

Belize is a small country of about 300,000 inhabitants and is located south of Mexico and east of Guatemala, its eastern border being the Caribbean Sea. British colonial rule ended as late as 1981 (on Belizean history, see Shoman 2011) and introduced English as an official language. English is used in official and written communications, in education (officially) and in broadcasting. Yet, the country has been diverse from the beginnings of colonial times and probably even before. Kriol, Spanish, Mopan, Queqchi, Yucatec, Garifuna, Hindi, German, Lebanese and different varieties of Chinese belong to the better known diverse linguistic repertoires of the country (Statistical Institute of Belize 2011). In most families ethnic mixing is common, and most Belizeans grow up speaking at least three languages (Escure 1997: 37); it is therefore difficult to map language use and ethnic belonging. Due to immigration from Hispanic neighbours during the nineteenth century and again since the 1980s, Spanish is the demographically dominant language (see also Bulmer-Thomas 2012). Nevertheless, it is Kriol that functions as the country's lingua franca and is seen as indexing Belizean belonging (see Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985; also Balam 2013; Salmon 2015: 607). The term *Kriol* refers to an English-lexified Creole (the spelling *Creole* co-exists with Kriol, which also

refers to people of Euro-African descent) and, given that Creole languages usually do not carry overt prestige (see e.g. Morris 1999), the status of Kriol may come as a surprise.

One relevant aspect in understanding the prestige of Kriol is Belize's British colonial history, as speakers see Kriol as related to English. The particular colonial history of Belize led to (some) members of the group of Creoles forming the political elite of the country (see e.g. Barry 1995). Another explanatory factor for the positive prestige of Kriol is Belize's hostile relationship with Guatemala. Since the seventeenth century, Belize has been a contested territory, where first the Spanish and then the Guatemalan authorities questioned the legitimacy of the British presence (Bolland 1992). Even in 2016, bilateral relationships between Belize and Guatemala are difficult, and Belizeans' fear annexation by Guatemala, which has not officially recognised Belize's full status as a nation.[2] Many Belizeans (including Hispanic ones) thus feel a need to differentiate themselves from their Spanish-speaking surroundings, which is strengthened by the fact that Creoles are a cultural and linguistic minority in the region. The Kriol language, in being understood as a version of English, has important boundary-marking functions in its role in symbolizing Belize's 'uniqueness' and differentiating it from Guatemala (see also Ravindranath 2009: 129).

The village I studied has about 1500 inhabitants and is located on a small island in the Caribbean Sea. It is a famous spot for tourists, particularly North American and European divers.[3] Being surrounded by shallow waters that prevent the approach of large ships, the island functioned as hideout for British buccaneers until the eighteenth century. Since the mid-nineteenth century it has been permanently inhabited, dating from when Spanish/Yucatec-speaking refugees from the Mexican Caste War were given the island as a residence (as recorded in collective local knowledge). These 'original families' still reside on the island and, as some of them occupy political functions in local contexts, they are known among the village population. Streets are named after these families, and they tend to be materially well off, as the land parcels they own are now, after the tourist boom, worth greater or smaller fortunes. Due to the increasing economic opportunities on the island in the fishing industry and in tourism since the 1970s, there has been an increase in Kriol-, Garifuna- and other Spanish-speakers both from within and outside Belize, and an increase in speakers of international 'standard' English, as well as of other European and Asian languages. We can

[2] See Amandala 2014. For the Guatemalan perspective, see Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Guatemala 2010.

[3] The number of annual overnight tourists in Belize is 1.3 million; cruise passengers added another 957,975 to that figure in 2015, according to Amandala 2016. Both sojourning tourists and cruise passengers visit the island, which has about 1000 hotel beds (see Belize Tourism Board 2013, no exact information on numbers of visitors to the island is available), ;

summarize that, from all we know, the island was Yucatec/Spanish-dominant until 1970s, and is now highly diverse.

This figures in the quantitative data on language use across domains, given below (Table 1). This should not be misunderstood as documenting actual language use, but rather the language ideologies and attitudes of informants, who tend to say what they think they use, what they think they should use, or what they think the researcher thinks they should use. In the context of this Belizean village, many people clearly downplayed their knowledge of Spanish. Furthermore, some language practices indeed may not fit at all with such categorizations, which some informants also commented upon. Interestingly, these were particularly informants who cannot be assumed to have had access to institutional education (e.g. elderly men working in the fishing industries).

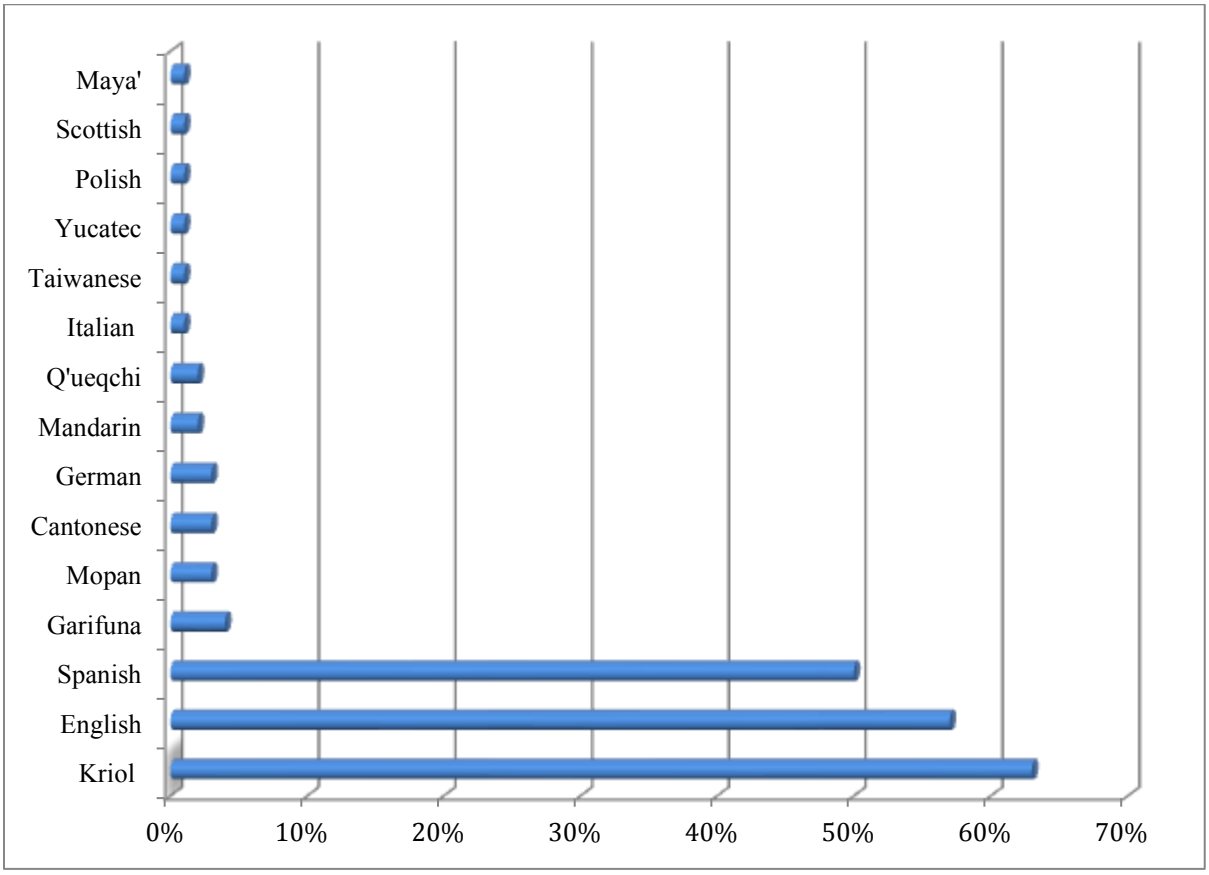

Table 1. Reported home language use, several answers possible (n=155)

As can be inferred, besides a rather large number of other languages where the boundaries between some of these *languages* may be unclear, Kriol is indicated to be the most frequently used home language, the different indexicalities of which are analysed below.

III. Kriol's multiple indexicalities

IIIa. National and transnational class hierarchies

Kriol is associated with lower class belonging, as it is a non-codified, oral code, intertwined with histories of slavery, despite its relative status in some contexts. Constructions of Kriol as 'broken English' do indeed appear in my data set, where some see Kriol as an index for the lower classes and a lack of education. In contrast to the aims of the National Kriol Council and a public discourse that is known among the educated elite, various local informants conceptualize Kriol as 'a dialect' of English and not as 'a language' in its own right (on the socially constructed nature of this distinction, see any introductory textbook on sociolinguistics). The following quote from an informant who is a high-school English teacher of Mestizo and Arab descent, and a proud speaker of Kriol, an internal class division is apparent within Belize, where Kriol indexes the lower classes:

Transcript 1

Even here on the island
You'll find a few
But I'm talking about those that consider themselves,
You know (.)/
Interviewer: / Superior
Person 1: Yes, in terms of, ahm, class
And that sort of thing.
How much money, you know,
They're making
And that sort of thing.
They won't have their children speak Kriol because (.)
Kriol is beneath them.

Kriol's lack of prestige is directly linked to constructions of class and economic prosperity. There is a small political-economic elite in Belize whose children attend prestigious schools usually run by US American religious institutions and who, when older, leave the country to study in the US. Some refer to his cohort of the population as the 'Royal Creoles', which apparently includes people of mixed ancestry (British/African or British/ African/indigenous American, sometimes also 'white' Belizeans; see also Johnson 2003: 602). The 'Royal Creoles', in their overall style (e.g. clothing) and patterns of consumption (e.g. of media, imported goods such as cars, food), as well as their linguistic behaviour (also in the

phonology of the quote above, which I do not discuss further here), are strongly oriented towards US American styles. Belize maintains transnational ties to the US in the form of economic relationships, mass media and emigration, thus entering the value system of the exonormative prestige of standard US American English.

Therefore, the Kriol language is mainly described here in terms of its indexing of class. To a certain extent, therefore, belonging to the upper and upper middle classes in Belize implies disconnecting oneself from national values, as it means using English and not Kriol. The devaluation of the 'Belizean' language is thus linked to the construction of class on a transnational level, as the performance of elite identity in Belize clearly ties in with US American habits.

Kriol's function as indexing lower class belonging therefore cannot be understood in isolation from the symbolic values of English. The indexical function of Kriol is embedded in a transnational value scale, co-produced locally, in which English ranks highest:

Transcript 2

Within the Belizeans
There's this social hierarchy
Where if you know how to speak proper English
That means you're going to be well educated
You're going to go somewhere in this world
You're not going to stay here and become just another you know
You're not going to fit into the cycle
You're going to be smart
You're going to get a scholarship somewhere
You're going to get out of this country
To locals it is prestige you can speak English
You read a lot
You know a lot.

In this quote, the informant evokes the national community ('Within the Belizeans …'), and regards getting out of that social space as being of high social value. While Kriol does have local prestige, being able to use English has overt prestige associated with education, intelligence, knowledge and social and geographical mobility. Clearly, here, English is imbued with the power to index educational advance and access to expert knowledge, of which the culture of literacy is an important aspect ('You read a lot, you know a lot'!).

Indeed, as a legacy of colonialism and its institutions, the British Queen is head of state, and standard British English enjoys exonormative prestige with which, however, only a small fraction of Belizeans identifies or can access.

Such observations show that national frameworks are not sufficient if we want to understand the indexical functions of language in a globalized context. The indexical meaning of Kriol interrelates with that of American Standard English. Economic and educational mobility in Belize requires, on the whole, geographical mobility – work or study in the US – so that Standard American English indexes these three forms of mobility. Yet many Belizeans do not master Standard American English since this competence is unnecessary for the majority of jobs in the local economy. Despite widespread positive attitudes towards Kriol, applying a transnational perspective, and considering the transnational economic relations, we may argue that Kriol speakers are left behind, socioeconomically and geographically.

IIIb. Racial alignment and national belonging

Kriol's indexicalities intersect with racial constructions and, due to their being historically the repertoire of slaves and the subordinate people, are symbolically related to people whose skin colour implies non-European descent – which can nonetheless clearly be part of positive local constructions of belonging. This can be seen in the following quote, in which 'race' is depicted as a central social category. The reader should be aware that the main local racial categories are 'dark-skinned' and 'Spanish', where 'Spanish' is an emic categorization for Hispanic people, irrespective of ethnicity (Belizean, Mexican, Guatemalan, Honduras, etc.). The following quote is from an interview with a young Belizean woman whose skin colour happens to be rather 'white' and who has attended elite schooling in Belize City:

Transcript 3

Every time I speak Kriol
But you're white!
You know, I would have never guessed that you're from here
And I was like
'I'm Belizean'
You know, that's (.)
It's pretty much the up the adaptation mode of it
If you're not pretty much Spanish-looking or dark-skinned,
You're automatically a tourist.

We can infer that Kriol is linked to racial constructs developed during colonialism, where only a non-'white' kind of skin colour is interpreted as indexing local belonging. 'Being white' means 'being from somewhere else', irrespective of when one's ancestors started to reside in the country. In the case of Belize, it may well be that a 'white' person's ancestors came to Belize earlier than those of someone who looks 'dark-skinned' or 'Spanish'. Another interesting observation is that the social role of 'being white' is no longer associated with British colonists but with tourists – a comparison of these social identity types might be worthwhile. In the quote above, it is very clear that Belizeans with a more European-looking phenotype are considered to be 'foreign' and consequently need to prove their authentic local belonging. One way to do this is by means of language – if you don't use Kriol, you are 'automatically a tourist' (a privileged outsider).

At the same time, the above quote is telling in demonstrating that the Kriol language is indexically linked to national identity: 'And I was like "I'm Belizean"'! Kriol is thus simultaneously linked to constructions of class, race and national belonging. However, race and class categoriations are not in a nested relationship with regard to the nation, nor with regard to the 'national' language Kriol – it is not a 'Chinese box' type of relationship. The kind of national identity that is indexed by Kriol does not necessarily include the Belizean upper classes. 'Racial' features (e.g. being 'dark-skinned') are not exclusive to Belize, and some of the 'racial' features of Belizeans are not regarded as being linked to the Kriol language. In addition, it can be inferred from the above that the local category 'Spanish' can be associated with Kriol, at least more easily than if someone is classified as 'white', even though in other contexts the (often derogatively used) ethnic ascription of 'Spanish' is associated with the Spanish language. 'Spanish' is a product of regional ties experienced through immigration, regional cultural contact, media from Hispanic countries, creating links to exonormative non-prestigious (lower class) *and* the prestigious (standardized) language Spanish. And yet, it is Spanish and not Kriol that is demographically the dominant language. According to statistical data, only 30% of the overall population declare Kriol to be their main home language (Statistical Institute of Belize 2011). This brings us back to the question of why Kriol is popular and why it indexes national identity, despite its lower class associations and minority numerical status. The following quote shows that Kriol is the *lingua franca* of Belize and demonstrates its prestigious social status:

Transcript 4

So, everyone who comes to Belize (.)
Learns Kriol (.)
Because it is spoken everywhere.
So, it doesn't matter if you're Chinese, Haitian, Arab, Indian, Mestizo.
Kriol is the common language.

In this quote by a local teacher and Kriol activist, Belize is constructed as a Kriol-speaking place. In the face of a complex and diverse ethnic and linguistic population, a discourse on linguistic sharing is an important element in constructing national belonging: 'It doesn't matter if you're Chinese, Haitian, Arab, Indian, Mestizo, Kriol is the common language'. In this national language ideology of 'one nation, one language', linguistic diversity is actively erased (on processes of erasure, see Irvine and Gal 2000), as well as the fact that competence in Kriol ranges on a continuum and – being a mostly non-scripted code with locally very diverse influences – differs across regions within Belize. Despite its linguistically unstable and diverse nature, positive attitudes towards Kriol strongly prevail (similar attitudes to Northern Belize are discussed in Balam 2013). In the high school where I conducted research, virtually all students were eager to confirm – with a large smile on their faces – that they spoke Kriol. This is despite the fact that the majority (about 90%) regard themselves as being of Mestizo ethnic background. The national discourse of 'one nation, one language' here overrules ethnic alignment.

Given the increase in the prestige and popularity of Kriol in recent decades, it should come as no surprise that in some parts of public discourse, a European modernist ideology of language – making it a 'real' language with a dictionary and a grammar book – has become popular. The National Kriol Council's activities are well known and reported in newspapers and on television (see e.g. Amandala 2013; Salmon 2015: 608). One of its greatest successes was the publication of the *Kriol-Inglish Dikshineri* (Herrera et al. 2009), and grammars of Kriol are also available (e.g. Decker 2013). The Council actively supports the use of Kriol as a written language in the media and in education. It has implemented a relatively phonetic spelling with the intention of making it visible that Kriol is different from English (personal communication with Council members). The activities of the Council are, however, contested.

IIIc. Postcolonial resistance

Besides practical issues related to the acquisition of Kriol literacy and the historical and ideological links to English that some speakers would like to see in writing, there is another, more profound ideological struggle when it comes to standardizing Kriol and using it in written and formal contexts. Some of my informants saw the enterprise of aligning Kriol with Western language ideologies of homogeneity, as well as the focus on form, as opposing what is the 'nature' of Kriol:

Transcript 5

That is actually the whole thing about Kriol.
There is no proper Kriol.
Nothing in Kriol is proper at all.
Nothing is set.
Everything is just
It's a sound
It's very phonetic
That's it
That's about it.
And it changes
[…]
And that the culture of Kriol is to have no standard
Because it develops
And everyone can be individual
And be much more creative with the language
Than if you have the actual idea that you have one.

This quote from an interview with a young villager who has attended elite schooling in Belize City shows that the actual idea of what is 'proper' is seen by some as being in opposition to the culture of *Kriol*. The informant uses the term 'proper', which is the common adjective used locally to refer to Standard English ('proper English'). The term 'proper' implies not so much a neutral description of linguistic form, but rather moral evaluations, which in the above case brings to mind Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977) and language ideological processes of iconization (Irvine & Gal 2000). Even though 'English' is not mentioned in the quote, the word 'proper' evokes the contrast of Kriol and English as 'proper' language. The informant above assumes that the concept of a fixed and standardized language – the idea of

being ‘proper – does not correspond to the practices that are associated with using Kriol. She regards the changing and idiosyncratic nature of Kriol to be in opposition to the standardized form. The final lines in the quote above further illuminate the speaker’s concept of Kriol. She argues that the actual idea of using Kriol is to be ‘individual’, to be ‘creative’, and that this stands in contrast to the idea of having ‘one’. The term ‘one’ is used ambivalently here, as it may either be interpreted as being an anaphoric reference to ‘standard’ (four lines above). However, it may also be understood as expressing that having ‘one’ ‘language’ is in opposition to the multiple, individual and manifold practices that the informant regards as being ‘Kriol’ (the intonation pattern, with stress on this sentence-final word ‘one’, actually makes this latter interpretation more likely). Another interesting observation is the informant’s explication of the material character of Kriol: Kriol is ‘just a sound’, it is ‘very phonetic’. While, of course, this is one reason for the more flexible and elusive nature of Kriol, it is also important to consider the oppositions that are brought to the fore here, where the ‘proper’ language is materialized in writing and Kriol is described not primarily as a different grammatical system, but as a cultural practice that is of a different material nature. These language ideologies that co-construct Kriol show the potential of Kriol to index a cultural space that is linked to ‘creativity’ and, presumably, to resistance to Western, modernist, colonial ideals of standardization, logocentrism and linearity. Cultural contact within the Caribbean, particularly through music, played a role in linking exonormative non-prestigious (Creole) to (in popular culture) the prestigious language Jamaican Creole.

To sum up, we have seen that Kriol has several indexical ties to different social discourses that range from local belonging, racial ties, lack of access to education, national identity and the construction of a national albeit diverse space. Kriol has succeeded in indexing a kind of national belonging, even though it is used neither in overly formal realms nor by a small upper class. On grounds of these national indexicalities, attempts are made to render Kriol a standard language according to European models. However, this is contested because of Kriol’s role in indexing a creative space, free from the restrictions of standardized language that may be specific to Western and colonial language ideologies. In addition, the attempt to make Kriol ‘a real language’ is problematic, as, like any other verbal practice, Kriol is part of a stratified transnational value system in which, at least locally, ‘proper English’ ranks highest.

The presence of several parallel indexical meanings does not mean a postmodern kind of ‘anything goes’ but demonstrates that people have access to different indexical orders (Blommaert 2010) at the same time. This implies different simultaneous indexical meanings

of Kriol within local scales, which are complexly interlinked with global and local socio-political histories. In the final section, I draw some more general conclusions about language, indexicality and constructions of belonging on the basis of these observations.

IV. Enregisterment and teleology: on the formation of hegemonic indexical meanings of language

As we have seen, the creation of a hegemonic single meaning of Kriol – as in 'Kriol is the language of Belizeans' – has not been entirely successful, despite Kriol's indexical meaning of 'Belizean-ness'. The colonial condition of Belize and its diverse make-up are central reasons in the multiplexity of Kriol's indexical functions. Presumably, the national community that is 'Belize' has never been imagined as entirely isolated or homogenous. We may assume that such an imagination has had more force elsewhere, for example, in Europe, where economic structures and political structures tended to coincide for a while and where, therefore, unified and hegemonic concepts of culture and language were discursively dominant and could reach the status of 'truth' (on the discursive construction of truth, see e.g. Foucault 1978). In the Belizean case, the impossibility of creating a discourse of a 'focused' (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985) social category that is linked to a specific linguistic category leads to the lack of a hegemonic indexical meaning for the 'Belizean language' Kriol. The process of what Agha (2007) calls 'enregisterment' has not resulted in the construction of one dominant meaning. As Silverstein observes, processes of enregisterment are related to the power of institutions to make indexical meanings 'true' (speech at LIB conference, 08.04.2016). Yet discursive forces from outside Belize have always been powerful.

Due to the particular nation state-building process in Belize – involving multiple ethnic practices, the continuing prestige of a coloniser's language and culture, and strong economic and social ties to the surrounding countries and to the US – institutions in Belize have not developed a one-dimensional position with regard to the question of what is considered culturally desirable, and whether or not local traits, among them Kriol, are ascribed formal prestige. One may refer to this as an 'incomplete' kind of enregisterment, but maybe we should rather describe it as a form of parallel enregisterment, where diversity – now a buzzword in contemporary Western societies – has always been constitutional. The signifier 'Kriol' indexes Belizeaness, but due to its embeddedness in transnational structures, its meaning of 'national belonging' and its being an index for an 'authentic' national community are enregistered in parallel with the meanings of 'working class', 'incorrect' and

'undeveloped', linked to stigmatised histories of racial subordination and slavery. Faced with English being used in formal and elite practices, and because of the status of English worldwide, these latter indexicalities are difficult to overcome.

Kriol is simultaneously linked to spaces of creativity, appropriation and resistance, as well as to transnational networks of black popular culture, the 'Black Atlantic' (Gilroy 1993), music styles and a general notion of postcolonial resistance (see also Salmon 2015). A refusal to engage in coherent and standardized verbal practices and use Kriol instead to a certain extent expresses postcolonial resistance. These meanings are actually endangered by the endeavour to align Kriol with modernist, Western, ideologies of standardization.

Thus, due to the continuing contact between different discourses, which tie in with different social, ideological and geographical spaces, Kriol has multiple meanings simultaneously. The co-existence of various indexical meanings for the same linguistic form reminds one of Silverstein's concept of 'indexical orders'" (Silverstein 2003). Snell describes Silverstein's line of argument as follows:

> The ideological process begins when a particular linguistic form or '*n*-th order indexical' becomes associated with social values (e.g. through correlation between the linguistic form and some social characteristic of the users or contexts of use of that form) so that they acquire indexical meaning. The association between form and meaning is not stable, however; the process occurs within a fluid ideological space in which the *n*-th order indexical form is always available for reinterpretation, for an additional *n* + 1st order indexical meaning: '*N* + 1st order indexicality is thus always already immanent as a competing structure of values potentially indexed in-and-by a communicative form of the *n*-th order' (Silverstein 2003: 194). (Snell 2010: 632)

We can use this interpretation of the development of indexical meanings to scrutinize the case of Belizean Kriol, where we also first have to assume a historical correlation of form with social characteristics – Kriol as the verbal practices of slaves and their offspring. These practices were then subject to different reinterpretations, as being one of the codes of the national middle class that emerged as the descendants of slave-masters and slaves. Members of the national elite, however, often regard themselves as speakers of English, and most of them have been educated in the US. Together with English being used in written form, this has had an effect on Kriol as continuing to mean 'orality' and 'informality', to which the meaning of 'resistance' is added, which at the same time is linked to a transnational scape (Appadurai 1996) of Creole language speakers and also to African American vernacular

English (as my informants also stated). All in all, it is difficult to conceptualize these enregisterments and reinterpretations as a linear process, as they seem rather to be a dialectical development whose elements are mutually dependent. I would therefore hesitate to use the "n-th order" and "n+1st order" scheme to analyse these simultaneous and partly paradoxical developments, as the scheme may evoke the image of a linear development, even though this is not its target.

If we were to look for multiplex and paradoxical indexical orders in the contexts of other languages, we would probably easily find them – in any sociolinguistic context, there are contested and multiple discourses that impact on paths of enregisterment (see Agha 2007: 74). We should therefore not make the mistake of assuming that processes of enregisterment are of a teleological nature that necessarily result in a hegemonic language with naturalized ties to people and territory – what some call 'indigenization' in the case of localized 'World Englishes' (e.g. Schneider 2011, for a critical view, see Saraceni 2015;). The discursive production of a dominant language with ties to a particular territory is often constructed as a 'natural' development in 'modern' nation states, while, more recently, processes of cultural globalization have made it apparent that such ties may be untangled (see e.g. Heller 2007) or, as in the case described here, never fully develop.

V. Conclusion

In this article, I have described the multiple indexical ties of the Belizean language Kriol as indicated in data from ethnographic observation, questionnaires on language use across domains and qualitative interviews. We have seen, first, that communal linguistic diversity is an effect of the histories of political structures and economic practices. Secondly, we have seen that a language – in this case Kriol – may display multiple indexical ties. Due to different and partly opposing social discourses, there are parallel processes of enregisterment with regard to the language Kriol. This, thirdly, demonstrates that languages, as categories, are an effect of social practices that bring into being social belonging, where we can assume that linguistic and social categories emerge in a dialectal fashion. However, where social categories are not clear-cut but overlap and are tied to different geographical scales and social discourses at the same time, indexical meanings of languages and practices of creating belonging may be unstable and multiplied in a deliberately fluid ideological strategy.

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