

“Whenever we pull the race card, they can be like: “*De quoi vous parlez?*”: Constructing Stance through Code-Switching in Reported Speech

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This research focuses on code-switching in reported speech as a tool to affirm stance. Reported speech is “speech within speech, utterance within utterance, and at the same time also speech about speech, utterance about utterance”(Voloshinov, 1986, p. 115), that is, the practice of a speaker uttering something that was uttered prior to the moment of the speech. Useful for the analysis of reported speech is Goffman’s (1979) decomposition of the role of the speaker as a participant in a discourse into three different roles: animator, author and principal. Whereas the animator refers to the individual physically producing the speech, the author is the one who has selected the words used to express the sentiments associated with the speech, and the principal, the one who is committed to these sentiments. In Goffman’s terms, then, when someone reports another person’s speech, there will generally be a distinction between the animator (the quoting speaker) and the author/principal of the speech (the quoted speaker).

Despite reported speech relying to some extent on historical accuracy (Hodges, 2015), it has been argued this is not always the case, as reported speech can never be recontextualized (i.e., removing fragments of discourse from its original context to insert it in another one) without changing the meaning of it (Tannen, 2007). This results in inevitable intertextual gaps – the discrepancy between the original meaning of a speech event, and the meaning of the reported speech in its new context (Briggs & Bauman, 1992). One potential manifestation of this intertextual gap is double-voicing – when an animator’s stance bleeds into the speech of the quoted speaker (Bakhtin, 1981). And code-switching is among the linguistic cues available to speakers to achieve double voicing. Auer (1995) notes that code-switching i.e., the shift from one language to another within an utterance, can work to construct social meaning and that the original language in which the author uttered a speech event can’t always predict the language used in the reported speech. Frick and Riionheimo (2013), for example, argue that code-switching in reported speech is used by speakers as a contextualization cue to show distance and disagreement with the author of the reported speech. This paper will make a similar argument, namely, that code-switching in reported speech can be conditioned by the speaker’s desire to convey their stance, more specifically to affirm their attitude toward the author/principal of the speech event.

In this paper, I draw upon data drawn from a bilingual podcast episode hosted by two Black women from Montreal who code switch between French and English. The episode of interest to us discusses the latest season of a widely popular dating reality TV show from Québec called *Occupation Double*. Focusing on the journeys of the non-white participants, the hosts’ main argument is that this season was particularly racist (Woke or whateva, 2021). My preliminary examination of the data indicates that historical accuracy doesn’t seem to predict the language of the reported speech; rather, code-switching into French occurs when the speakers maximize distance from the author/principal of the reported speech. By contrast, to show support for the person quoted, there seems to be distinct patterns for the two hosts, as their language of preference differs. The one who prefers English shows support by not code-switching, i.e., by maintaining English when reporting another’s voice, whereas the one mainly using French code-switches into English to show support for another’s voice.

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