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Creating a ‘new space’: code-switching among British-born Greek-Cypriots in London

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This paper, located in the traditions of Interactional Sociolinguistics (Gumperz 1982) and Social Constructionism (Berger and Luckmann 1966), explores code-switching and identity practices amongst British-born Greek-Cypriots. The speakers, members of a Greek-Cypriot youth organization, are fluent in English and (with varying levels of fluency) speak the Greek-Cypriot Dialect. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of recordings of natural speech during youth community meetings and a social event show how a new ‘third space’ becomes reified through code-switching practices. By skilfully manipulating languages and styles, speakers draw on Greek-Cypriot cultural resources to accomplish two inter-related things. First, by displaying knowledge of familiar Greek-Cypriot cultural frames, they establish themselves as different from mainstream British society and establish solidarity as an in-group. Secondly, by using these frames in non-serious contexts, and at times mocking cultural attitudes and stereotypes, they challenge and re-appropriate their inherited Greek-Cypriot identity, thereby constructing the identity of British-born Greek-Cypriot youth.

Keywords: ‘code-switching’, ‘identity’, ‘third space’, ‘Greek-Cypriot’, ‘reify/reification’ and ‘teasing’

1. Introduction: discourse constructionism and identity

This study contributes to the special issue by exploring space in discoursal terms. Located in the traditions of Interactional Sociolinguistics (Gumperz 1982) and Social Constructionism (Berger and Luckmann 1966), this article examines how linguistic practices are used in the interactions of British-born Greek-Cypriots to construct socio-cultural identity. The dominant language of these individuals is English; they also speak, with varying levels of fluency, their version of a Greek dialect spoken in Cyprus – the Greek-Cypriot Dialect (henceforth GCD). This chapter will explore how these speakers, through the practice of code-switching

(henceforth CS) between English and GCD, bring a new, third space (Bhabha 1994) into existence.

The study takes the social constructionist view that identity is not a fixed personal possession which exists autonomously outside the realm of language (De Fina 2007), but a discursively constructed entity which becomes reified through language itself (Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou 2003; Antaki and Widdicombe 1998; Weatherall 2002).¹ Identity is not what the speaker essentially *is* but what the speaker *does* (Weatherall 2002; Crawford 1995; Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 2005). In this vein, it is important to look *at* language itself, rather than look *through* language (Cameron and Kulick 2003).

The data for this study primarily consisted of: (1) recordings of natural speech of members of a Greek-Cypriot youth organization (during meetings and one socialization event); and (2) recordings of interviews with members of the wider Greek-Cypriot community. Extracts from both sets of recordings were analyzed qualitatively in order to demonstrate discursive constructions of third space.

Recordings of eight meetings were carried out, each roughly two hours long. These recordings are part of Finnis (2009) and were carried out between January 2001 and December 2001. While most of the recordings were carried out at the community centre, one of them was recorded at a subject's home. In addition, the group was recorded during a dinner that took place in an Italian restaurant after one of the meetings. There were nine recordings in total.

Fourteen interviews, each lasting between half an hour and an hour and a half, were carried out with youths and members of the older generations. Nine females and five males were interviewed between January 2001 and December 2002. The interviews took place in coffee shops, Greek-Cypriot community centres, a pub and in Greek schools during breaks. The interviews were based on a questionnaire study carried out by Gardner-Chloros, McEntee-Atalianis and Finnis (2005),² which involved an in-depth exploration of attitudes to language and language use in London's Greek-Cypriot community.

2. London's Greek-Cypriot community and youth organization

¹ The term 'reification' is taken from Wenger (1998). The idea of identity emerging via discourse, and that of the subjective self, are topics dealt with by Western philosophers such as Michel Foucault, who argues that the social is created within discourse (Foucault 1971).

² See also Finnis et al (2005).

Migration from Cyprus to the UK began early in the twentieth century, flourishing between the 1950s and the 1970s due to social and political turbulence on the island. This turbulence was the result of the struggle for independence from British rule in the 1950s, and Turkey's invasion of Cyprus in 1974. Britain was chosen as a host country because of work opportunities and the 'colonial connection' (Josephides 1987: 43). Estimates of the Greek-Cypriot population of London vary, ranging from 180,000–200,000 (Christodoulou-Pipis 1991) to 250,000–300,000 (Papapavlou and Pavlou 2001).

For many members of the older generation, knowledge of English was never seen as a necessity, as their lives revolved, and continue to revolve, around community activities and services. Mainstream schools and exposure to British society resulted in the younger generations becoming dominant in English.

Like all other immigrant communities in the UK,³ the Greek-Cypriot community is changing as time progresses. Anthias (1992) suggests that individuals who complete higher levels of education may detach themselves from Cypriot identity and social life, unlike others of lower social and educational status who are financially dependent upon the community and its autonomous informal economy. As Greek-Cypriot families in London become more affluent, they make education for their children a priority (Christodoulou-Pipis 1991). Members of the younger generation are no longer expected to take over the families' businesses, but can secure higher-status jobs instead. In addition, British-born Greek-Cypriots have developed contacts outside the community, as many of them are employed in non-community sectors, such as international banks.

Despite these changes, many British-born Greek-Cypriots feel very strongly about maintaining aspects of their Greek-Cypriot cultural identity, and have become core members of a Greek-Cypriot youth organization in North London. This organization is part of a global Greek-Cypriot youth organization, and represents the UK at conferences on global Greek-Cypriot youth. The youth group consists of a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and the thirteen members of the executive committee. These positions are the result of elections, and can only be occupied by Greek-Cypriots between the ages of eighteen and thirty. While Menelaos, the president, is the main speaker, the meetings are relatively informal, consisting of interplay between formal meeting discourse and more informal teasing and chatting. The ages of the participants were between 21 and 29. They were nearly

³ See Milroy and Li Wei (1995) for a discussion of the Chinese community, and Rex and Josephides (1987) for a discussion of the Asian community.

all university graduates and most of them worked in banks/accounting, a common profession in the community for the younger members. The core aims of the youth group are to bring together the younger generation of the community, to educate them about the political situation in Cyprus, and to preserve and maintain cultural and ethnic roots and identity. The committee uses a variety of media to transmit information, such as web pages, an official newsletter, fliers announcing events sent to each member of the organization, and the London Greek Radio station (LGR).

Politics constitutes a profoundly important element within the community. One of the tasks of the youth committee is to notify its members of any political demonstrations taking place in London, encouraging them to participate in order to sustain awareness of past and present political developments in Cyprus.⁴ Another important objective for the youth group is to put together social events in London for the younger members of the community, including parties and football tournaments.

The youths visit Cyprus fairly often, on average once a year, as most of them have family and/or land there. Despite the fact that overall they do not socialize frequently other than during the meetings, their closeness to each other is clear: a lot of ritual teasing and humorous exchanges take place. Newcomers are treated as if they have been members for years and are made to feel very comfortable, even at their very first meeting. Some have been involved with the Federation for many years and thus regard themselves as being very well acquainted. In addition, some of the male participants are friends through sporting activities such as football, sometimes organized by the youth society itself.

3. Space and code-switching

3.1. On space

There has been an increase of interest in the concept of space, especially since it became theorized in areas such as geography and cultural studies (Massey 2005). This surge of interest has been part of a trend to revise static perceptions of ‘social domains’ and ‘identities’, which are now seen to constitute dynamic and transient processes, rather than fixed homogenous entities existing prior to interaction (Georgakopoulou and Finnis 2009). In this vein, a number of studies have also problematized and contested traditional

⁴ Such as the annual marches protesting against the Turkish-occupied northern part of the island being declared the ‘Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus’.

understandings of ‘fluency’ and ‘competence’, viewing them as context-dependent occurrences rather than stable possessions which are ‘brought along’ to sites of interaction (Bloomaert et al 2005). This more dynamic understanding of competence challenges the earlier suggestion that in-group (ethnic) membership is indexed simply by the use of, and fluency in, the ethnic variety.⁵

The concept of ‘third’ space, associated with Bhabha (1994), has been used to describe the language practices of speakers in multilingual settings, and the outcomes of these practices. These studies celebrate multilingual language-use by suggesting that code-switching can be a valuable and productive device in some settings, such as the classroom. For example, Gutierrez et al (1999) looked at the language practices of an English- and Spanish-speaking teacher and pupils during an after (primary-) school computer club. In the classroom, the alternate use of different codes – such as Spanish, English, different registers, humorous side talk and also gestures – constructs a third space which, in turn, enhances the teaching and learning process. As Gutierrez et al suggest, ‘[i]nstead of focusing on the children’s language designation or fluency in either Spanish or English, the practices of this community facilitated movement across languages and registers toward particular learning goals’ (1999:301). Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz also discuss the advantages of bilingual practices in classrooms, suggesting that code-switching can construct an ‘interactional space’, which they characterize as ‘safe’ (2005: 21). In this space, pupils can use both languages in class to collaborate as a group in order to deal with the tasks at hand.

The concept of a ‘third space’ can be fruitfully applied to the analysis of language use and identity among young British-born Greek-Cypriots. This is because these speakers are ‘neither here nor there’: they have a different socio-cultural and linguistic experience from the older members of the Greek-Cypriot community, and at the same time in many ways they are culturally different to mainstream British society (see also Georgakopoulou and Finnis 2009). As a result, they cannot be wholly defined in terms of either of the two cultural groups. In addition, neither of the linguistic varieties associated with each group can index the socio-cultural identity of the younger speakers. Close readings of actual interactions of the youths reveals that switching between English and GCD, rather than being used as a way

⁵ Indeed, as Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz suggest, it is the trend to place language at the focal point of theoretical interest that has led to the ideological stance that bilinguals are fluent in two grammatical systems (Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz 2005).

of indexing a dual hybrid identity based on the amalgamation of two distinct socio-cultural identities, is used as a tool to re-appropriate inherited identities – for example through critiquing and mocking certain aspects of the community – and to reposition the speakers vis-à-vis both the British and Greek-Cypriot communities in London.

3.2. *On code-switching*

Code-switching has been defined as “[t]he juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to different grammatical systems” (Gumperz 1982: 59). More recently, however, the notion of ‘code’ has been extended to include varieties within a language, such as dialects and styles (Gardner-Chloros 2009).⁶ A range of studies have discussed the importance of switching between linguistic varieties (or styles) in the construction and expression of social meaning and identity (some more recent ones include Blackledge and Pavlenko 2001; De Fina 2007; Finnis 2009; Georgakopoulou 2001; Georgakopoulou and Finnis 2009; Giampapa 2001; Pichler 2006).

Early studies looking at language choice and identity distinguished one-to-one associations between languages and social meanings, pointing to the existence of a fixed and stable relationship between use of the community variety on the one hand, and in-group identity on the other (Blom and Gumperz 1972; Gal 1979; Milory 1987). Gumperz (1982) introduced the concept of ‘we’ and ‘they’ codes, whereby the community variety – the variety learnt at home and spoken mainly in the family domain – represents a ‘we’ code and is established as the ‘in-group’ variety, and the language of the wider society represents a ‘they’ code and is recognized as the ‘out-group’ variety. Use of the ethnic variety creates a sense of closeness and solidarity, making the interactants feel more involved. Many base this sense of involvement on feelings of shared ethnic experience, heritage and distinctiveness. In many cases, the ethnic variety is used in humorous contexts to reinforce solidarity, as it is perceived to be ‘inherently’ associated with in-groupness.

In interaction, speakers can strategically exploit this distinction. For example, they can use the community variety to personalize statements or mitigate requests, owing to its status as ‘in-group’ variety. Alternatively, they may choose to use the out-group variety to aggravate a statement and convey authority (when a parent scolds a child, for example). Lee (1991)

⁶ Defining code-switching is not straightforward. There is a lot of debate regarding the difference between ‘mixing’ and ‘switching’. However, this is beyond the scope of this paper. For a more detailed discussion of the concept of code-switching, the reader is referred to Gardner-Chloros (2009).

looked at television advertisements in Switzerland, and found that High German incorporates “connotations of authority and prestige into the message” while the Swiss German discourses “carry more intimate associations, oriented to the facilitation of consumer acceptance” (1991: 315). In these cases, the direction of the switch is important: each variety ‘brings along’ to the interaction set values and meanings.

In more recent times, researchers have increasingly argued that correspondences between linguistic varieties and communicative values are not fixed, suggesting that it is the juxtaposition created by the switch, rather than the direction of the switch, which is of paramount importance (Alfonzetti 1998; Auer 2000; 2004; Li Wei 1994; Milroy and Li Wei 1995; Sebba and Wootton 1998; Jorgensen 1998). For example, speakers may sometimes exploit the incongruous fusion of frames achieved by a switch in languages (Finnis 2009; Georgakopoulou 2001). Woolard (1988) talks about the use of code-switching (Catalan and Castilian) as a structural device in the narration of jokes. CS can be used as a strategy to indicate a new frame, for example a play frame (Goffman 1974), thus differentiating non-serious talk from serious talk. In these cases, CS has a local function in the creation of humorous discourses which transcends given associations between varieties and values.

In the context of the British-born Greek Cypriots, GCD is spoken in the home and constitutes a first language for most of them. One could suggest that there is a perceived association between the ethnic variety and a sense of in-groupness due to the use of the variety in the home and among family members. It would be problematic to suggest, however, that this association is invariable and unremitting, as the British-born Greek-Cypriots have different socio-cultural experiences from those of the older generations. The younger generation is closer to British culture and society, whereas many members of the older generation do not have substantial contact with the English language or the British social and cultural setting, since much of their lives revolves around the Greek-Cypriot community. Therefore the role of GCD in the expression of in-group identity and solidarity cannot be the same for all community members, as each generation is shaped by very different socio-cultural experiences. At the same time, however, one cannot deny the importance of the ethnic variety in the lives, and identities, of the younger speakers. In order to understand the role and use of GCD in the construction and expression of identity among British-born Greek-Cypriots, it is important to explore language use at the micro-discursive level in actual interaction.

4. Analysis. British-born Greek-Cypriots: neither here nor there

4.1. *Introduction*

This section will begin with a discussion of (mainly) interview data which contains overt responses to questions about identity and culture. The responses reveal the importance of Greek-Cypriot culture in the lives of the subjects, but also reveal feelings of not belonging wholly to either Greek-Cypriot and British culture. The section will proceed by looking at discursive constructions of identity as identified in recordings of actual interactions (meetings and dinner), and explore how switching to the community variety, rather than indexing in-groupness in itself, can be used instead to carve out a new space, a third space, and reify a new identity – that of the British-born Greek-Cypriot.

4.2. *‘Saying being’*

4.2.1. The importance of being Greek-Cypriot. Greek-Cypriot culture plays an important role in the lives of the British-born speakers. During the interviews, the speakers produced a number of GCD lexical items which constitute ‘in-group markers’, markers which represent ethnic identity: an identity based on a sense of belonging to a distinctive group of individuals who feel united by a common heritage which includes history, religion, cultural values and language. References to Greek/Greek-Cypriot food are a prominent example of such markers (for a similar example see De Fina 2007: 383). The following interview extract contains direct references to the importance of food in the creation and expression of ethnic identity. The interviewee is in his late twenties and is a radio presenter at London Greek Radio, hosting a programme called “Regeneration” which targets youths in particular:

- (1) ..it’s a way through which young Greek Cypriots identify with their background...I mean the very you have to look for cultural markers, particular ties which make someone feel that they’re Greek...one very good one is the **σούβλα** ok?...er...Greek Cypriot...young Greek Cypriots identify with their
[*meat on the spit*]
ethnic background through food, **σούβλα, κουπέπια, κιοφτέδες, ρεφταλιές,**
[*meat on the spit, stuffed onions, meat balls*]
παστουρμάς, λουκάνικα, χούμους, ταραμάς.....these are all..em yes what we
[*ham, sausages, hummus, taramosalata*]

eat at home, and **φασόλια, λουδί**, some things that we love to eat that we get
[beans, cheese]
so fond xxx To eat....it's ways to identify.

Other markers of ethnic identity in speech include references to specifically Greek locations and contexts. The following extracts are taken from an interview with Menelaos, the president of the youth group, and show how the 'English' can at times be overtly presented as the 'other'.

- (2) If I went to **μπουζούκια**, I think the atmosphere will be a lot better if the place
[Greek dancing/singing venue]
was packed out with Greeks, er, as opposed to English people. But I don't have a
problem with English people **απλούστατα ας πούμεν βραδιά πρέπει**
[it's just that, let's say, the evening has
νά'χειν κέφιν και αν xxx γεμάτο έγγλέζους, δέ θά'χει κέφι.
to be fun and if xxx it is full of English people, it won't be fun]

Josephides (1987) suggests that "although young Cypriots reject what they see as the illiberal and authoritarian style of older Cypriots who are pushing Cypriot culture and identity on them, in the face of British attitudes they reaffirm this identity and culture" (1987: 57). While the members of the younger generation feel 'different' from the older generation, they also feel that their lives are very different from mainstream British life. This attitude is expressed in the following extract from a discussion that took place in the home of one of the respondents.

- (3)
- Thanos: When I'm at work and I'm with loads of English people, then I kind of like play down my Greekness and only have it as a bit of a..
- Menelaos: Yeah I think but I think you have to do that
- Thanos: I play I play it down, but then they're still aware that I'm Greek basically I mean, they ask me every weekend what do you do and I'm like, family, Sunday we had a big family meal, and everything's family oriented, everything's very Greek in terms of...

- Menelaos: You ask them [and they reply] “pub orientated”!
- Thanos: Yeah “I got drunk on Saturday and I went...I was hung over yesterday, I’m hung over today” but whereas, the things I do the life I lead is a lot more...its very obviously different to theirs...em...twenty-three year old guy, looking at mortgages and they think I’m mad, do you know what I mean...because, we have different priorities, we have different upbringing whatever, and xxx when I’m say with a load of Cypriots then we play up our Greekness, don’t we? And we do eventually feel more at ease I mean, there’s a couple of other Greek guys at my work xxx one mainly which I’ve known before, I helped him get a job, and we go out for a drink with all the guys and we all have a joke, you know, the guys at my work, but then after me and my Greek mate we leave and then we go off and we sit down in a restaurant and we eat and we (eat) sort of like, real food and we just feel as though we couldn’t really feel this comfortable with them...
- Menelaos: No, that’s true

4.2.2. *The importance of being British.* While GCD is established as an important element in their lives, the British-born speakers do at times overtly critique the practices and customs of the older generations. The younger speakers feel that they have a different way of thinking due to their socio-cultural background. More specifically, while many youths are actively involved in issues pertaining to the community, such as politics, they are more concerned with elements which reflect the fact that they are *British-born* Cypriots, and do not wish politics to intervene in and interfere with their lives in England. One prominent example was a discussion which ensued when the members of the youth organization chose to name a Greek party they were in the process of organizing *sismos* (earthquake). The highly politicized older generation did not agree with this choice, as in the past this term was used in a political context: it was part of the rallying cry of the right-wing party against the dominant left wing.⁷

Members of the younger generation feel that the older generation should be more sensitive to the fact that British-born Greek-Cypriots feel close to the English culture and language. Younger members of the community advocate a balance between English and Greek in speech so that they – at least those not fluent in GCD – do not feel linguistically isolated. It is

⁷ The members of the right-wing party tended to be in favour of the unification of Cyprus with Greece.

generally accepted – more so, as we shall see, among the younger generation – that in order for community information to be passed on to those who are not fluent in the dialect, English should be used in various domains, such as on programmes broadcast on the Greek Cypriot radio station. The same applies to Greek publications, such as newspapers. This view is manifest in the following interview extract (the speaker is the radio presenter from example (1) above):

(4)

Interviewer:

Do is [*sic*] the younger people that get annoyed or mostly older people..when you speak English..

Interviewee:

[...] I've met in occasion younger people I say "do you listen to LGR?" just out of interest to see their opinions, and some of them say oh they talk too fast on the radio, I don't understand what they're saying, some of them feel alienated even by listening to LGR because they don't understand... and they like, they like that healthy mix of Greek and English for example...it may alienated the older ones, but their mentality is very different from some brought up here...it doesn't mean they feel less Greek, or feel less involved or wanna go to Greek functions, so I think there has to be an appreciation of that...context...[...]... I know the audience is both old, and young...[...]...I think a lot of them appreciate the context that here this is Britain and em we're going and in order for people to understand what I'm saying...that I tend to mingle in both...

Such evidence tends to suggest that the younger speakers need more 'space' within the Greek-Cypriot community. Indeed, the language and cultural practices of the Greek-Cypriot community are important in their lives. However, their identities and needs transcend the given social, linguistic and cultural spaces they have inherited and, as a result, they need to create a new space. The sections below will show how this space is constructed discursively in their interactions with one another.

4.3. *Discursive constructions: ‘doing being’*

The examples discussed above contain overt references to feelings of affiliation and disaffiliation with both the Greek-Cypriot and the British communities in London. This section focuses on discursive constructions of identity: how code-switching is used by the younger speakers to reify a third space, a space which reflects their linguistic and identity needs as British-born Greek-Cypriots.

4.3.1. *Constructing ‘self’ and ‘other’ through reproach.* In many cases, this new dimension of ‘being’ was achieved by importing Greek-Cypriot cultural images into the interaction as a means of critiquing and expressing reproach. In the following example, Claudia is mocking the tradition of arranged marriages (*proxenia*) by modifying it with the adjective “global”. Her utterance is met with laughter, which indicates that it is taken humorously. One of the ways she achieves this is to speak in an exaggerated and enthusiastic way, stressing the incongruous items “global” and *proxenia*: the former having connotations of the ‘worldly’ and the ‘international’, and the latter being associated with tradition, community and the ‘local’. By placing this cultural practice in a rather ridiculous context, the speakers are again re-appropriating their own stance to it and establishing themselves as a different kind of Greek-Cypriot: a British-born Greek-Cypriot, different from other generations within the community. At the same time, the speakers are bonding as a group through the acknowledgment of a familiar cultural practice – arranged marriages:

(5)

Claudia: I know what, why don’t we do a global **προξένεια** xx people from
[arranged marriage]
England xx people from Australia?! [all laugh] .

The community variety is frequently used to construct the identity of the older generation, an identity associated with ‘peasant-ness’ and connected to Cyprus. The switch to a different language in these cases could arguably be metaphorical, representing distance between the older generation and the younger speakers. In the following utterance, Themis switches to GCD to comment on the origin of members of the older Greek-Cypriot generations, who are frequently criticized during the meetings for not understanding the needs of the younger community members in the UK:

(6)

Themis: at the end of the day they come from **χωρκά**

[villages]

The community variety is being used to construct a negative ‘they’ identity for the older generation, who are associated with ‘village-ness’. While the above reference implies a literal association (as many members of the older generation were actually born and/or lived in villages in Cyprus), in the following example the idea of ‘village-ness’ and ‘peasant-ness’ is used metaphorically to refer to certain ideas of members of the older generation which the youths consider to be obtuse:

(7)

Menelaos: **Εν θέλω ν’ακούσω, εν θέλω ν’ακούσω χωρκάτικην κουβένταν του
Λεωνίδου ή του Γιώργου του Παλλιιάτου.**

[I don’t want to hear village talk from Leonidou or from George Palliato]

In all the examples presented above, the speakers are switching to GCD to critique (directly or indirectly) Greek-Cypriot cultural practices or individuals. These code-switching practices enable the younger speakers to construct their own identity as different from other groups in the London Greek-Cypriot community, allowing for their own identity to emerge “in talk” (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998). Cameron (1999) suggests that speakers can reinforce bonds within a group by “denigrating people outside it” (1999: 449). This study takes this further by suggesting that these practices are used by the speakers, not merely to reinforce a bond, but to enable them to ‘perform difference’, a process which in turn enables them to create and inhabit their own unique space.

4.3.2. Constructing ‘self’ and ‘other’ through stylizations. One very noteworthy use of GCD was when speakers would use stylized language (Rampton 2002), in other words adopt typically Greek/Greek-Cypriot personas by using exaggerated language and non-verbal features which frame the utterance as humorous. Indeed, at times the incongruity of the use of this stylized language in the middle of serious meeting talk would contribute to its framing as

humorous discourse. All speakers present were familiar with these personas due to their knowledge of Greek/Greek-Cypriot culture and language.

In the following utterances the speaker, predominantly Vaggelis (a member of the youth organization), uses exaggerated body language and a slower and deeper voice to emphasize certain very typically Greek/Greek-Cypriot stylizations. In extract (8) below, taken from the recording of a social event, he is humorously defending himself from any indirect accusation that he is not being fair in terms of splitting the bill for the dinner:

(8)

Menelaos: No, I was just saying that some of us may have had three courses and other people had just one!

Vaggelis: **Εν'τσε είπα τίποτε ρε φίλε μου!**
[*I didn't mean anything by it, mate!*]

More interestingly, speakers would produce English utterances with an exaggerated Greek accent. This practice does not constitute code-switching in the strict sense of the term, as it does not involve a switch between languages. However, it does constitute a variation of 'code-alternation', if one adopts a broader understanding of the term 'code'. In these cases, the speakers are assuming English-speaking Greek-Cypriot personas which once again are familiar to the other participants. In extract (9) below, Menelaos is putting on a Greek accent to jokingly impersonate Lila – who, however, does not have a Greek/Greek-Cypriot accent when speaking English – focusing on her apparent lack of awareness of the effort that the group needs to make in order to organize one of their events – a conference – and get people to attend (all grammatical errors are intentional):

(9)

Menelaos: What are you going to do for a conference briefing? You gonna say: "Hello my name is Lila, we go to nice food and get drank"
[deliberately uttered in a Greek accent]

Unknown: Can't we get Niko to do xxx?

Menelaos: No, cos how many people are gonna turn up? You don't know.

Once again the speaker is using particular connotations which are brought into the interaction through the use of a Greek-Cypriot-accented ungrammatical utterance. These connotations

derive from more traditional aspects of Greek-Cypriot life in a village, for example, simplicity, naïvety and lack of sophistication. Menelaos is constructing and emphasizing Lila's identity as different from mainstream British society by presenting her as having a Greek accent when speaking English. At the same time, he is mocking her Greek-Cypriotness, as he is also presenting her as being very traditional and naïve. However, by appealing to familiar cultural frames, and by constructing her as a type of person which she is obviously not – she does not speak English with a Greek accent – he is in effect placing her neither here nor there. Through these practices, he is constructing her identity as different from both British and Greek-Cypriot communities, whilst at the same time invoking humour and establishing solidarity. In Bucholtz's terms, Menelaos is using practices which distance the participants from an identity which they do not want to associate with. These practices "define what their users are NOT" (Bucholtz 1999: 211).

In example (10) below, Lila is mocking Menelaos's apparent ignorance of the existence of air-conditioning systems. She adopts a Greek-Cypriot accent to convey the commonsensical solution to dealing with the heat and thus ridicules Menelaos's unfounded concerns.

(10)

Menelaos: You are actually going over there to a conference, and the problem with Cyprus is that at lunchtime it gets bloody hot. Now this is very incompatible with the social part of the conference...

Lila: Yeah but ...air conditioning. [purposefully uttered in a Greek accent]

In this example, Lila is using connotations similar to those used by Menelaos above. Both speakers are mocking aspects of Greek-Cypriotness and hence rejecting it. By mocking traditional Greek-Cypriot identities/personas in a humorous context, the speakers are actually exhibiting their own knowledge of the culture and language, inviting others to respond to it: they are indirectly confirming their own 'Greek-Cypriotness', albeit a different kind of 'Greek-Cypriotness'.

Rampton (2002) discusses the use of stylized German by school children who are learning German in a structured and rigid teaching environment, which he argues leads to a form of 'repression'. Rampton suggests that the children in his study would subvert this imposed authority by using stylized German taken from the classroom, outside the context of the classroom. In a similar fashion, the speakers in this study seem to be subverting imposed socio-cultural structures and expectations by mocking them. By producing stylized Greek-

Cypriot in a mocking fashion at humorous points in the interaction, the speakers construct themselves as ‘different’ from traditional Greek-Cypriot identities while at the same time confirming their own membership of the wider community (Hall 1996).

5. Participating in a new space

This chapter focused on a group of speakers who are neither here nor there. On the one hand, the speakers are living a different socio-cultural experience from the older members of the community, and on the other, they lead a life which incorporates a culture and language other than English. This study suggested that these young individuals do not construct meaning and identity simply through the reproduction of inherited socio-cultural structures. The explanation that the ethnic variety is used in humorous (or argumentative) interactions as a means of reinforcing or indexing solidarity, simply owing to its status as the ‘in-group’ variety, is inadequate for this particular cohort of speakers.

The British-born Greek-Cypriot speakers recreate identity and re-appropriate given knowledge and structures through their interactions. By coming together every month, they are re-learning and reproducing what it means to come from a Greek-Cypriot background and live in London. During their teasing sequences and their disagreements, among themselves and between themselves and members of the older generation, they are (re)constructing their position vis-à-vis the older Greek-Cypriot generation and British society at large. The practices presented above enable speakers to both establish themselves as members of the Greek-Cypriot community (by exhibiting familiarity with knowledge of Greek cultural associations and images), and also to distance themselves from other groups within the community, by critiquing them through the use of GCD. The fact that the speakers would sometimes use exaggerated Greek-Cypriot accents (or more interestingly, adopt Greek-Cypriot accented English), suggests that the language practices of the speakers are blurring the boundaries between ‘English’ and ‘Greek-Cypriot’. During their interactions, the speakers carry out a process of reification (Wenger 1998; Barton and Hamilton 2005), whereby they give form to their identity, making it tangible and unique.

Using the concept of a ‘third space’ in the analysis of language use in this cohort of speakers is ideal for a number of reasons. First of all, it is a concept which does not dismiss the importance of the ethnic variety in processes of identity construction. In particular, while this study does indeed question the notion of one-to-one correspondences between varieties (e.g. GCD) and values (e.g. in-groupness), at the same time the potential use and value of larger socio-cultural elements in interaction is not discarded. The study attempts to identify

the ways macro-social aspects of the Greek-Cypriot culture are used ‘on-line’ for the production and reproduction of the particular identity of British-born youths. In addition, the concept of a ‘third space’ acknowledges the speakers as agents in the construction of identity, rather than passive recipients of inherited social structures. To a large extent, identity is a process rather than a product. It is organic, and being constantly (re)moulded. Finally, the notion of a ‘third space’ also caters for the idea that it is not fluency in the ethnic variety that enables in-group membership and participation in the community. What is important is the ability to participate in code-switching sequences, and to acknowledge and appreciate familiar cultural frames.

Most studies focusing on minority groups have looked at sociological aspects of the relevant communities (e.g. Christodoulou-Pipis 1991; Anthias 1992; Josephides 1987) or have focused on patterns of language use and attitudes between groups within a single community. In these cases, social groups within communities have been treated as homogenous entities (Gardner-Chloros 1992; Gardner-Chloros et al 2005). This study highlights the importance of focusing on variation within a single group, and also the importance of incorporating a detailed micro-level analysis of socio-pragmatic functions of CS in actual interaction. Such a focus and analysis makes it possible to capture important aspects of language use and identity creation which would otherwise be lost.

In conclusion, like Alvarez Veinguer’s study in this issue, this study focuses on the process of achieving “a new relocation” (this issue, p. 000). The social meaning of language is being negotiated and redefined as we witness a process of “revival, repossession and reclamation” (this issue, p. 000). This study captures this location and the process of reclamation by looking at how identity is discursively constructed, and how inherited social and cultural structures are re-appropriated to suit the unique socio-cultural experience of this specific group of young British-born speakers. There is indeed space for these British-born Greek-Cypriot speakers, a third space which is neither here nor there. These speakers should not be denied this space, even if it is not based on fluency in the ethnic variety. It is a space in which, to a greater or lesser extent, they can all participate.

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