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In this paper the authors analyze the code-switching behavior
of Black teachers. It discusses the use of code-switching as a narrative
device, for allusion and for emphasis and speculates on its connection
to social relationship.

Even though studies of Black speech conducted since the 1960's are numerous, much
of the early work concentrated on the structural aspects of the language while ignoring
the the sociolinguistic ones (Fasold ,1964; Fasold and Wolfram, 1970; Labov, 1968, 1972;
Wolfram, 1969). Subsequent research conducted by more ethnographically oriented
researchers concentrated on the social context and the interaction processes, but this
work, for the most part, dealt with Black language that was the most different from the
standard-- the exotic, male-dominated street language of hustlers and adolescents-- while
ignoring the speech behavior of "drylongso", ordinary Black people. While a few studies
have dealt with child language, they are relatively rare (Heath, 1983; Ward, 1974). The
result is that we know little about language use in the larger Black community in general
and about the language use of Black women in particular.

Even more difficult to unravel are the attitudes of Blacks toward Black English. Taylor's
(1971) finding that a majority of Black parents react negatively to the idea of including
Black English in the curriculum and believe the school should teach standard English, and
the controversy emanating from the Black community over the Ann Arbor Case [2] ,
prompted some to suggest that Blacks opposed the use of Black English in all contexts. Yet,
we know that some Blacks not only consider Black English more appropriate for
interaction among intimates and family, but view those who use Standard English in such

contexts as haughty, aloof and deserving of the perjorative terms sedidy, hincty or "acting white" (Fordham, 1985; Hoover ,1975; Mitchell-Kernan, 1974).

By speaking different codes, people are able to align themselves with different groups. Thus, individuals sometimes code-switch to emphasize solidarity and group identity (Blom & Gumperz, 1972). Although empirical evidence describing code-switching behavior within the Black community is scant, some research indicates that depending on the social situation in which they find themselves, Blacks do alternate between Black English and Standard English (Mitchell-Kernan ,1974).

Participants and Method

This paper analyzes the code-switching behavior of four Black women who are participants in a larger on-going study of Afro-American teachers. This study is collecting information about the careers and practices of these teachers using unstructured interviews to elicit life stories. In interviews lasting two to four hours, informants are questioned about their family and childhood, their elementary, high school, college and teacher-training experiences; in addition their decisions to become teachers, the positions they have held, changes they have observed during their careers and their pedagogies and philosophies of education were discussed. The interviews were taped, transcribed and later analyzed. Representing a group that cuts across all ages, grade levels and geographic areas , the sample of teachers interviewed to date is comprised of ten women and two men whose teaching experience ranges from 15 to 65 years. Four teach in New England, three in the Middle Atlantic, two in the South, one in the Midwest and two on the West Coast. Three of the teachers have been chosen as teachers of the year by their respective states or counties. The teachers in this study were chosen by community nomination. [3] The informants selected for this paper are all women who teach in majority Black schools. A brief sketch of each follows:

Ruth Forman [4] is 83 years old. Although born in Charleston, South Carolina, she has resided in Pawley's Island since 1938, and has spent the entire time teaching in a one-room school house.

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A Boston, Massachusetts public school teacher since 1952, Joelle Vander is fifty-seven years old and has lived in Boston all her life..

Mary Brenda Miller, age 50, resides in Philadelphia, the city where she was born and raised. She has been teaching in the same school since 1961.

The 1978 Missouri Biology teacher of the year, Marcia Gray has been teaching in an urban high school in St. Louis for twenty years. Born sixty-one years ago in Kansas City Missouri, she has resided all but ten years in Missouri.

Because one of the authors was a participant in all of the interviews, it is critical that the reader be aware of her personal characteristics and the steps she took to communicate these to the informants before interviewing them, since these characteristics may have influenced the course of the speech event.   Like the informants, Foster is Black, female and, although younger than them by 8 to 42 years, has for most of her life been employed as a teacher. Eager to secure cooperation and aware that they were strangers, Foster made it a point to communicate these social facts to teachers in the initial letter sent requesting their participation. Whether emphasizing these shared characteristics minimized the social distance and ultimately influenced teachers' decisions to participate is unclear; rarely was an interview refused. At least one teacher, however, was surprised to discover Foster was Black, claiming that she could not tell by the sound of her voice in telephone communication.

What is clear is that during these visits, the informants offered Foster a number of courtesies-- having friends drive her to the airport, preparing or buying her meals in restaurants, or insisting that she spend the night in their homes rather than in a hotel-- that seem unlikely to be extended to individuals they consider strangers. While cognizant that they were being interviewed and taped, the transcripts reveal that the inteviews were more conversational in nature than might be expected between strangers. Changes in topics are numerous, interruptions frequent and laughter common.

Code-switching

The linguistic features of Black English have been well-documented and it is not our intention to review them again here. Although Black English consists of sets of phonologic, prosodic, lexical, syntactic, and performance features, it is important to note that many of the features are not particular to Black English. In addition, in order for an utterance to count as or be responded to as Black English, it need not have all of these features. Another point that must be underscored is that not all features of Black English occur exclusively in Black English. Take the use of *ain't* for instance. *Ain't* is used as the negative form of *is, are, am* as well as *have* and *has* in the casual speech of speakers of all socioeconomic classes. Such use is generally considered a marker of nonstandard speech. However, in addition to being used as the negative form of the verbs noted above, in Black English *ain't* corresponds to *didn't* in Standard English. In Ways with Words, Heath (1983: 277-78) gives an example that illustrates this usage as well as the misunderstanding that can result when speakers share particular grammatical features but interpret their meaning differently. [5]

Because of the regional influences on phonology and lexicon, we have decided to omit them from this analysis. Therefore, what follows concentrates only on the syntactical features of Black English.

All of the informants switch from Standard English to Black English at some point during the interview. Code-switches never occur in the beginning of the interview; in fact, the earliest any code-switch appears is 35 minutes into the inteview. Even though there a number of syntactical variants that characterize Black English, all of the code-switches were instances of multiple negation. There were no instances of the use of the invariant "be" and no nonoccurence of the copula, the third person singular or the possessive. Although anomolous and inconsistent, the use of multiple negation is systematic and sometimes employed as a narrative device. Examples 1, 2 and 3 are illustrative; instances of multiple negation are italicized.

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Ex. 1: JV I find myself addressing character and self image, much more that I did before. Constantly reiterating the fact that you can do it. I must say that fifty times a day or more. You know you can do it. Do it a little faster. Let me see if you can try your next sentence. Try something harder. Try that book. I find myself doing that more and more than ever. I find myself trying to encourage them to do things on their own rather than say, "Have your mother help." I never say have your mother help cause the mother might not be there. "*Miss Vander, I don't have no mother.*" What can you say to that? *"I don't have no...* My father ain't there.

Ex. 2: MBM Oh yes, more times than not. More times than not and then, you have to be even more entertaining, so they don't get discouraged. And you have to tell them that you know they don't know; that it's not their fault. They say, "Miss Miller, I can't read." I say, " I know that. Now come on and try." But, you can't say, "Now what's the matter with you boy?" or any of those things. All that has to go out of your mind. And when they tell you that, you can't say, "There's no such as word as can't." Say, "I know you can't do it, but now we're gonna try some more." Because there is a can't. They're whole lot of reasons you can't do something. But we keep telling children that lie. "*Ain't no such word as can't*". Yes, there is.

Ex. 3: RF And do you know we have only one white teacher that will teach Black History. Only one, only one. She doesn't mind teaching the Black History, but the rest of them say, *"I don't know nothing about it!"* You see, "I don't know enough about it to teach it. I leave that with Miss Ruthie" It isn't that. I think they do not want to acknowledge the achievements that have been done by Black men alone, you understand?

In the examples above, the informants use a Black English variant specifically to report the speech of others. However, the informants do not employ this strategy uniformly. Sometimes they reported their students' using negative concord. At other times, the teachers used the Standard English variant to report students' speech. Of course, it is impossible to know whether the quoted speech is being reported as spoken or whether it is being highlighted merely for emphasis. In example three, for instance, we wonder whether the white teachers whose speech Miss Ruthie is allegedly reporting used multiple negation, or whether she is using the Black English variant as a strategic device. The fact that she immediately rephrases the statement suggests that she is calling attention to the comment by setting it off using the Black English variant.

Highlighting

Code-switching is sometimes used for allusion or emphasis. Our informants used multiple negation more frequently to highlight a particular statement than they did when quoting someone. In fact, there were twice as many instances of the former than the latter.

This type of switch is evident in examples 4, 5 and 6.

4 RF   You see, there were Blacks all over there back in times before. Not owned by all whites. But now it's all white. Understand? All this over here that is developed-- we call it--what do we call it-- Palmetto? I think that's what they call that beach--Palmetto Beach. Dr. Burney's group from Sumter and Columbia. Blacks that own that beach. All right, the whites wanted it. All right, so then they put the taxes so high that their heirs couldn't pay it. So, after they wouldn't sell it to them. They put it on auction. So we had a group of men--doctors and lawyers and undertakers. They all got together. Blacks. And, they said they were gonna save it. So that Monday when I got the paper and the lady who was in New York, Miss Lilly, who was paying the taxes, she *didn't know nothing* about it because they didn't take the paper.

5 MG   No, no, no, no, no. If you make the highest score on the test that's your seat. So, remember, Friday, you've still got to make the highest grade to keep your seat.

  MF   That's what I'm saying. So, you can lose your seat.

  MG   Yeah. Sometimes, *don't nobody sit at the table.*

  MF   Why not? Somebody must have had the highest score?

  MG   You *can't get no fifty* and sit at a table. You've got to make an A or a B.

6 RF   Thurgood Marshall and Perry and all

  MF   Oh, it was Thurgood Marshall

  RF   Oh yeah, they were the ones that handled that case. Perry. And, they say there and when he would just tell them the number of the page and what the law was. And they knew. They knew what they were doing. Hear? They had to pay that girl for time that she was off.

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MF   That they didn't hire her?

RF   And they wanted to reinstate her, but she said, "NO."
She went to New York and got a job in New York.
She wouldn't go back in the school. But, she got
the money !

MF   She got the money.

RF   And they won the case. And from then on, *we didn't
have no more trouble.* But that was, that was a sight
to see.

Discussion

There are a few points aspects of the observed code-switching behavior that we find
intriguing. The first is that irrespective of the reason for code-switching, at most, it
involves a single clause or sentence. Multiple negation is always embedded in longer
stretches of Standard English, which highlights the contrast even more. Our analysis also
indicates that code-switching is used both as a device to set off reported speech and as a
means to highlight a particular statement. Almost without exception, the frequency and
use of code-switching varies according to region.   Joelle Vander and Mary Miller, who
grew up in the North, attended desegregated schools and currently reside there, code-
switched less frequently and almost invariably used this device when quoting someone
else's speech. On the other hand, Ruth Forman and Marica Gray, who grew up in
segregated communities in the South and attended segregated schools, code-switched twice
as often and their switches were almost always used for emphasis. The length of the
interview did not affect the number of switches. Although interesting, we do not know
what to make of these findings.

Conclusion

It is not possible to give a complete account of the reasons why our informants code-
switch. All we have been able to do is present some examples of this behavior and
demonstrate that it is systematically used as a narrative and highlighting device and
influenced by the social relationship between the two interlocutors. The social
relationship is not established immediately. Rather, it is negotiated throughout the

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interview and not until the informants feel comfortable do they code-switch. It is unlikely that our Joelle, Mary Brenda, Miss Ruthie or Marcia would code-switch with outsiders, who would probably misunderstand it. Since this study examines their behavior in only one interview, which represents merely a slice of our informants' daily interactions, our conclusions must be provisional. We wonder whether our infomants code-switch in their verbal interactions with parents and students. Inasmuch as it is restricted to syntactical features, our analysis is incomplete. Some research suggests that although grammatical structures like multiple negation characterize Black English, other equally important features such as vowel elongation, meter, rhythm, cadence and repetition may signal and be understood as a shift to speech that is more Black (Foster, 1989).

The extent to which other characteristics influence the social relationship and govern code-switching is also worth investigating. The interviews between Foster and the male informants are qualitatively different than those between her and the women.. Because the men speak for longer stretches at a time, there are fewer turns.

Some have noted that teachers generally uphold norms of middle class speech, that women adhere to the prestige code more than men and that middle class Blacks' speech is more likely to conform to Standard English norms (Labov ,1966). Our informants belong to all three groups. Yet all of them, even one who criticized it, code-switched to Black English.

Although narrow in scope, our analysis reveals that in even in the relatively formal context of an interview, Black middle class teachers do code-switch. We believe that their code-switching behavior is an expression of solidarity and shared identity and that in the end, the formality of the interview is overidden by common identity.

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2 In 1979, Judge Joiner ordered the Ann Arbor School District to draw up plans to
  help teachers learn about Black English in order to teach Black English-speaking
  pupils to read standard English.

3 Community nomination, a method os sampling and a term coined for this study,
  means that the informants were secured through direct contact with Afro-American
  communities. Black churches, organizations, periodicals and individuals provided
  the names of exemplary teachers.

4 All of the names are pseudonyms.

5 Heath recounts the following dialogue between Lem and his teacher:

    Teacher: Where is Susan? Isn't she here today?
       Lem: She ain't ride de bus.
    Teacher: She *doesn't* ride the bus.
       Lem: She *do* be ridin' de bus.

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