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## Stylisation and the Dynamics of Migration, Ethnicity and Class

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### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Research on stylisation and language crossing often underlines the agency of speakers, but how do these practices fit into larger systems and structures? This chapter focuses on two pairs of contrasting styles—posh and Cockney, and Creole and Asian English—and it connects the ways that British adolescents engaged with these sociolinguistic contrasts to their experience of class, ethnicity and migration. Posh and Cockney were closely tied to class, and the Creole/Asian English binary was linked to ethnicity and migration. But the stylisation of Creole/Asian English was grounded in a shared working-class position and, so, although migration and ethnicity mattered a great deal, the structuring processes associated with class were more fundamental. This has wider implications for our understanding of contemporary multilingualisms.

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In recent years in the study of multilingualism and language style, as in the social sciences generally, there has been a major shift, away from the traditional emphasis on the conditioning of social structure towards an interest in the agency of speakers and recipients (Hill 2004: 193; Heller 2007: 341). Much of my own research has contributed to this emphasis on agency with its account of crossing and stylisation as practices in which people switch away from routine, unself-conscious ways of talking (e.g. Rampton 1999: 422–3). But where do *systems* feature in the crossing and stylisation that I have studied?

## The Systems in Focus

There are, of course, many systems that ethnographic research can attend to, operating in many different macro/meso/micro linguistic, cultural and social processes (Rampton et al. 2014: 7–12). But in what follows, I try to examine the agency of British teenagers within two types of system: semiotic and socio-economic.

The *semiotic* systems I attend to are binary style contrasts of the kind described by Ferguson (1959), Irvine (2001) and many others. In the field-sites I researched, there were a large number of languages, dialects and speech styles. But from within this sociolinguistic diversity, particular varieties were highlighted and placed together in contrastive pairs, and these oppositional pairings were reproduced in public discourse, in the media, in education and in everyday practice. In the two settings that I discuss, posh and Cockney formed one contrastive pair, and Creole and Asian English formed another.

The *socio-economic* system is Britain in the late twentieth century—a stratified class society in which wealth and opportunity are unequally distributed, and where, among other things, post-war employers have relied on a continuing flow of immigrant labour to do low-paid work. This socio-economic system is obviously far more complex than just a style-contrast, involving all sorts of political, economic and institutional processes that I am hardly qualified to discuss. But plainly, semiotic representations play a central part in the ongoing construction

and reproduction of this large-scale social system (e.g. Bourdieu 1991: 234 *et passim*) and, according to Parkin (1977), contrasts in style can themselves play a rather significant role (see also Irvine 2001: 22, 24). Studying urban multilingualism in newly independent Kenya, Parkin described how the values and connotations associated with different local, national and international languages converged in a complex system of symbolic oppositions. This system of contrasting varieties provided ‘a framework for [the] expression of [both emergent and established] ideological differences,... a kind of template along the lines of which social groups [might] later become distinguished’ (1977: 205, 187). Indeed, suggests Parkin, within polyethnic communities, ‘diversity of speech... provides... the most readily available “raw” classificatory data for the differentiation of new social groups and the redefinition of old ones’ (1977: 208).

But, if Parkin points to at least one potential connection between these two kinds of system, where does agency feature? For language users situated in the lower levels of a stratified society, the scope for agentively reshaping the social system as a whole is obviously limited. However, that does not mean that they have no scope at all for agentive engagement with the conditions shaping their lives and, in what follows, I describe adolescents positioning themselves in a multi-ethnic class society through their active involvement with the two binary style contrasts—posh and Cockney, Creole and Asian English.

## The Argument

The chapter draws on two datasets, the first focusing on young people doing exaggerated posh and Cockney in a multi-ethnic secondary school in the 1990s, and the second involving stylised Creole and Indian English in multilingual friendship groups in the 1980s. With these data, I shall argue that:

- The posh/Cockney binary was intimately tied to social class, and it permeated the ordinary urban English habitually spoken by my

British-born informants. But when, agentively, they put on stylised posh and Cockney voices, adolescents *accentuated* and *denaturalised* class stratification.

- The Creole/Asian English binary was related to ethnicity and migration and, in their agentive stylisations of Creole and Asian English, youngsters actively *reworked* the ethno-linguistic imagery circulating in the dominant ideology, *adapting* it in ways that made much better sense of their multi-ethnic lives together.
- These reworkings of the Creole/Asian English binary were actually grounded in a shared working-class position, and the Creole/Asian English binary was also influenced by the high/low dualism central both to posh and Cockney and to social class. So, although migration and ethnicity certainly mattered a great deal, the structuring processes associated with class seemed to be more fundamental.
- In recent years, nation-states have been giving more recognition to minority bilingualism, but they base this on a model of monolingual standard languages. As standard language multilingualism becomes the new cosmopolitan posh, polylingual hybridity is positioned as a core characteristic of the multi-ethnic urban working classes.

In developing a relatively panoramic account like this, there are times when this chapter is unavoidably synoptic, leaving a lot of data, analysis and interpretation ‘black-boxed’, but I shall try to compensate for this by referring back to the two monographs where these datasets are treated in much more detail (Rampton 1995/2005; 2006).

We can start with the style-contrast tuned to traditional British social class stratification.

## The Posh/Cockney Style Binary at Central High

In the 1990s, I studied a multi-ethnic secondary school in London that I called *Central High*.<sup>2</sup> Here, I found that on average about once every 45 minutes, adolescents spontaneously stylised posh and Cockney, and

when they did so, they drew on a high/low, mind/body, reason-and-emotion dualism that is deeply embedded both in British class culture and in the schooling process (Cohen 1988). So, for example, in Extract 1 below involving two girls at the end of a tutor group lesson, Joanne's performance articulates quite a sharp contrast between the stances associated with standard and vernacular speech. Standard language gets linked to sceptical reasoning while Cockney is tied to passionate indignation.

### Extract 1

During the tutor period while Mr Alcott is talking to the class, Joanne (wearing the radio-mic) has been telling Ninnette a bit about her parents and grandparents, and has just been talking about her mum's difficult pregnancy. (For a much fuller discussion, see Rampton 2006: 338–41):

- 
- 1 Joanne: (.)  
 2 ((*quietly*: )) she could have lost me ((*light laugh*))  
 3 (3)  
 4 ((*with a hint of tearfulness in her voice*: ))  
 n you'd all be sitting here today without me ((*laughs*))  
   [sɪtʔɪn hɪə]
- 5 Tanny: ((*eleven pips, followed by the din of chairs moving*))  
 6 Jo: ((*louder, and in literate speech*: ))  
       but you |wouldn't |care  
       [bt jə wud<sup>h</sup>nt<sup>h</sup> kɛə]
- 7       cos you |wouldn't       \ know ((*laughs*))  
       [kəz jə wud<sup>h</sup>nt<sup>h</sup> nœu]
- 8 ?N: ( )  
 9 Jo: nothing I'm just jok- )  
 10 I'm being st-  
 11 ((*high-pitched*))'oooh::  
   [u:: ]  
 12 ((*moving into broad Cockney*:) Ninne::tte

- 13           you've got enough with you today  
 [ju gɒt ɛnʌf wi<sup>θ</sup> ju: tədəɪ]
- 14           and then you go and           \chee:k me::  
 [ænd en jə gəʊ n tʃi:k mi:]
- 15           you little::           bugg aye aye aye aye  
 [ju litʃu::? bʌg aɪ jɑɪ jɑɪ jɑɪ]
- 16           (15) ((the teacher is giving clearing up instructions))
- 17           ((Joanne leaves the classroom and then hums quietly to herself))
- 

When Joanne shifts to careful ‘literate’ speech in lines 6 and 7 (Mugglestone 1995: 208), she uses logic to *undermine* sentiment, whereas in contrast, when she pretends to *intensify* the emotion in her speech in lines 12 to 15—when she abandons the apology she started in lines 9–10, and issues an indignant reprimand—her speech becomes markedly Cockney. Setting this episode next to many others where kids used exaggerated posh and Cockney in greetings, taunts, commands, rebukes, summonses and so on, or referred to physical prowess, social misdemeanours, sexuality and so forth, there was rather a consistent pattern (Rampton 2006: Ch. 9). In one way or another, Cockney evoked solidarity, vigour, passion and bodily laxity, whereas posh conjured social distance, superiority, constraint, physical weakness and sexual inhibition. And youngsters also positioned themselves around this ideological structure in a range of different ways—on some occasions, they put ironic distance between themselves and the image of, for example, an over-sexed low-life or a patronising snob, but on other occasions, they seemed to identify with the indexical possibilities, using Cockney to soften the boundary between sociability and work, or adding piquancy to sexual interest by introducing posh.

From the description so far, posh/Cockney stylisation certainly did seem to fit Hill’s characterisation of agency as a ‘capacity... to recruit [even]... unpromising semiotic materials for the construction of vivid and dynamic identities’ (Hill 2004: 193). But the account becomes more complicated when it is remembered that this high/low contrast stretches back several centuries, and that there is a strong case for example, for seeing binaries like mind/body, reason/emotion and

thought/action materialised in the institution of schooling itself. ‘Mind over body’ can be seen in the tight constraints on physical activity in classrooms; instead of humming, singing and the modalities of popular culture, the curriculum prioritises the production of lexico-grammatical propositions in thematically connected strings—a case, one might say, of reason over emotion; and, of course, high–low ranking is central to the whole organisation of education. Furthermore, when we recognise the high/low binary’s extensive institutionalisation in schooling like this, the purchase offered, for example, by an ‘acts of identity’ idiom decreases (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985). Instead of simply suggesting that these youngsters were ‘projecting’ a particular ideological imagery, it becomes more accurate to describe their stylisation as ‘spotlighting’ or ‘illuminating’ elements of a structure that they already inhabited. And this certainly fits much better with the fact that it was often at particular institutional and interactional moments that kids stylised posh and Cockney—they shifted into stylised posh and Cockney on occasions when they felt humiliated or offended by a teacher, when faced with separation from their pals, and at sharply felt states and changes in the structured flow of social relations. So here, for example, is Hanif’s response to some patronising over-explanation from Mr A:

### Extract 2

A Humanities class, working on how lawyers in an upcoming role-play will introduce their cases. (See Rampton 2006: 284–312 for more detailed discussion and other examples.)

- 
- 1 Mr A: how can y- (.) how can you introduce your speech  
 2 like writing an essay  
 3 you have t-  
 4 Rafiq: I would like to bring up  
 5 Mr A: I would like to::  
 6 Hanif: bring forward  
 7 Masud: bring forw[ard  
 8 Anon: [(ex )

- 9 Mr A: or even (.) | jɪn'te::nd tɔ  
 10 Anon: pro[secute]  
 11 Hanif    [((loudly, in a posh accent, stretched, with  
                 an exaggerated rise-fall: )) o::h  
                                     [ə<sup>ɪ</sup>ʊ]
- 

But even this is not enough. Beyond the specific occasions in which youngsters put on exaggerated posh and Cockney voices, they continuously adjusted themselves to the high–low binary in their tacit speech practices, becoming more standard and less vernacular as the formality of the situation increased. In a small Labovian study of style-shifting among the four core informants (Labov 1972), I compared their use of standard and vernacular speech variants in *formal* and *informal* settings [reading aloud, speaking in front of the class etc., as opposed to arguing with friends or telling them a story (see Rampton 2006: Ch. 7.3)]. Table 5.1 presents the results for these students:

And Extract 3 shows this in action, with Ninnette, a black girl of mixed Caribbean/African descent, recoding her self-presentation in increasingly standard grammatical and phonological forms in an attempt to catch the teacher's attention:

### Extract 3<sup>3</sup>

A drama class, where working in pairs, everyone has been told to prepare and rehearse a short role-play discussion involving one character who is going to have a baby. They will then be expected to perform in front of the rest of the group, but Ninnette and Joanne are fairly emphatic about not wanting to, and they have used their time joking around putting pillows up their jumpers. In the end, they successfully manage to avoid having to perform, but during the final moments allocated to preparation and rehearsal, just prior to their coming together to watch individual performances, Ninnette is recorded as follows (see Rampton 2006: 258–61):



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1	Ninnette:	(( <i>calling out to the teacher, loudly:</i> ))
2		*MISS
3		(.)
4		MISS
5		WE 'AINT 'EVEN 'DONE \ NU IN [ nʌʔɪ̃ː ]
6		(.)
7		(( <i>even louder:</i> ))MISS WE 'AINT 'DONE \ NOTHING [ nʌfɪŋ ]
8		(2)
9		(( <i>not so loud, as if Miss is in closer range:</i> ))
10		miss we 'avent 'done anything [ enɪθɪŋ ]
11		(2)

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**Table 5.1** Percentage (and proportions) of STANDARD variants in four informants' production of 6 variables in formal and informal contexts

	Simon (white Anglo descent)		Hanif (Bangladeshi descent)		Ninnette (African Caribbean)		Joanne (white Anglo)	
	Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal	Formal	Informal
1. Word-medial voiced TH (other)	100% (9/9)	75% (3/4)	100% (6/6)	(1/1)	40% (4/10)	–	40% (2/5)	43% (3/7)
2. Word-initial voiced TH (the)	96% (27/28)	100% (35/35)	97% (32/33)	70% (35/50)	82% (40/49)	79% (34/43)	100% (37/37)	94% (16/17)
3. Word-initial H (not proforms)	(23/26)	(13/15)	100% (16/16)	86% (12/14)	100% (14/14)	79% (15/19)	86% (12/14)	44% (4/9)
4. Pre-consonantal, post-vocalic L (old)	89% (16/19)	50% (6/12)	66% (6/9)	64% (9/14)	42% (11/26)	23% (5/21)	47% (18/38)	66% (8/12)
5. Word-medial intervocalic T (butter)	87% (7/8)	0% (0/4)	66% (2/3)	20% (3/13)	70% (7/10)	0% (0/5)	14% (2/14)	0% (0/11)
6. -ING in participial suffixes (running)	86% (12/14)	40% (4/10)	100% (17/17)	33% (2/6)	66% (6/9)	0% (0/6)	61% (8/13)	22% (2/9)
<b>Overall scores</b>	90% 94/104	76% 61/80	94% (79/84)	63% (62/98)	69% (82/118)	57% (54/94)	65% 79/121	51% 33/65

These data show that my informants had absorbed the high/low posh and Cockney dichotomy into their ordinary, *non*-stylised speech (cf. Bourdieu 1991: Part 1; Stroud 2004: 198–9; Rampton 2006: 253, 258). Indeed, to push the ‘luminescence’ metaphor one step further, here one might say that these youngsters had been *irradiated* by the high/low posh/Cockney binary – it was a fundamental structuring principle in their routine, everyday English speech.

To return to Hill and Heller, yes *we can* see agency in posh and Cockney stylisation (evidenced, for example, in the (more and less) artful stylisations in Extracts 1 and 2). But, agentive stylisation fits into a much more widespread and enduring system of social stratification and, in their routine Labovian style-shifting, these kids tacitly ratified and reproduced the semiotically marked distinctions and hierarchies that configure British social class. So amidst class structuring that was both institutionally entrenched and individually internalised like this, it makes most sense to see agentive posh and Cockney stylisation as practices of denaturalisation, throwing an ideological system into high relief that was otherwise hegemonic, omni-pervasive and taken-for-granted.

Denaturalisation like this certainly is not the only way in which stylisation operates as an agentive response to systemic conditions and, in the next section, I describe a rather different dynamic. But by way of introduction, there is one more point to make about posh, Cockney and social class at Central High. Even though they stylised posh and Cockney more than any other variety, and even though they displayed traditional British patterns of sociolinguistic stratification in their Labovian style-shifting, this was very much a multilingual, multi-ethnic school with a very high migrant and refugee population, and this makes it hard to explain the reproduction of classed speech simply in terms of inter-generational transmission within the family. Three of my four main informants lived in single-parent homes, but Ninnette’s mum came from the French-speaking Caribbean and, when Hanif talked to his mum, he spoke Sylheti. So, instead of seeking an explanation in

cultural inheritance and family reproduction, it is necessary to locate the development of a class sensibility in ongoing activity, in peer-group processes, in popular culture and school experience. In addition, it looks as though there could be a rather complicated relationship between class, migration and ethnicity, and this provides the cue for an overview of my second dataset, involving crossing and stylisation in Creole and Asian English in the 1980s.

## The Creole/Asian English Style Contrast in Ashmead

In the 1980s, I researched multi-ethnic adolescent peer groups in Ashmead, a working-class neighbourhood in the south Midlands of England.<sup>4</sup> I looked at several speech varieties, and discovered that there was rather a sharp symbolic opposition between Creole and Asian English. There is a glimpse of this in Extract 4, which comes from a playback interview:

### Extract 4

*Participants:* Asif (15 yrs old, male, Pakistani descent), Kazim (15, male, Pakistani descent), Alan (15, male, Anglo descent), Ben (the researcher, 30+, male, Anglo descent). *Setting:* An interview, in which Ben is struggling to elicit some retrospective participant commentary on extracts of recorded data, and is on the point of giving up. (See Rampton 2005: 123–4 and Harris and Rampton 2002: 39–44 for much fuller analysis.)

- 
- 1 Ben: right shall I- shall we shall we stop there  
 2 Kazim: no  
 3 Alan: no come [ on carry on  
 4 Asif: [ do another extract  
 5 Ben: le- lets have (.) [ then you have to give me more=  
 6 Alan: [ carry on  
 7 Ben: =attention gents  
 8 Asif ((quieter)): yeh [ alright  
 9 Alan ((quieter)): [ alright  
 10 Asif ((quieter)): [ yeh  
 11 Ben: I need more attention  
 12 Kazim ((in Asian English)): I AM VERY SORRY BEN JAAD  
 [æɪ æm veri sɔːri ben dʒɑ:d]  
 13 Asif ((in Asian English)): ATTENTION BENJAMIN  
 [əthenʃɑ:n bendʒəmin]  
 14 : [ ((laughter))  
 15 Ben: [ right well you can- we cn-  
 16 Alan: [ BENJAADEMIN  
 17 Ben: we can continue but we er must concentrate a bit  
 18 [ more  
 19 Asif: [ yeh  
 20 Alan: alright  
 21 Asif((in Asian English)): [ (go on) then  
 [ concentrating very hard  
 [kɒnsəstreɪn veri ɑːr]  
 22 Ben: okay right  
 23 : ((giggles dying down))

- 24 Kazim((in Asian English)): **what a stupid ( )**  
 [vʌd ə stʊpɪd]
- 25 Ben ((returning the microphone to what he considers to be a better position to catch all the speakers)):  
 concentrate a little bit-
- 26 Alan: alright then
- 27 Kazim ((in Creole)): stop movin **dat ting aroun**  
 [dæʔ tɪŋ əɾʊn]
- 28 Ben: WELL YOU stop moving it around and then I'll won't need to
- 29 ( ) rflight
- 30 Kazim ((in Creole)): [stop moving **dat ting aroun**  
 [dæʔ tɪŋ əɾʊn]
- 31 Ben: right okay [
- 32 Kazim: [ BEN JAAD
- 33 Alan: ((laughs))
- 34 Ben: what are you doing
- 35 Alan: ben jaa[ad
- 36 Ben: [ well leave ( ) alone
- 37 Kazim: IT'S HIM that ben jaad over there
- 38 Ben: right
- ((Ben continues his efforts to reinstitute the listening activity))
-

Things are not going quite as I had planned, and at the point where I threaten to stop the interview, Asif and Kazim switch into exaggerated Indian English in a sequence of mock apologies. Then a moment later in line 27, just as I seem to be signalling 'back-to-business' by repositioning the microphone, the boot moves to the other foot, Kazim switches into Creole and directs a 'prime' at me, this time constructing *my* activity as an impropriety. This difference in the way Asian English and Creole are used fitted with a very general pattern in my data. When adolescents used Asian English, there was nearly always a wide gap between self and voice, evident here in Asif and Kazim's feigned deference. In contrast, switches into Creole tended to lend emphasis to evaluations that synchronised with the identities that speakers maintained in their ordinary speech, and in line with this, Creole was often hard to distinguish from young people's ordinary vernacular English (cf. Rampton 2005: 215–219).

Away from stylised practices like this, Ashmead youngsters encountered many different uses of Asian and Creole English and, inside minority ethnic networks, the forms, functions and associations of Creole and Asian English were obviously much more complex and extensive. But in spite of this, the images evoked in stylisation were quite specific and, across a wide range of instances, there was a sharp polarisation. Creole indexed an excess of demeanour over deference, displaying qualities like assertiveness, verbal resourcefulness and opposition to authority, while Asian English stood for a surfeit of deference and dysfluency, typified in polite and uncomprehending phrases like 'jolly good', 'excuse me please' and 'I no understanding English'.

This contrast certainly was not just autonomously generated within Ashmead. Undoubtedly, there were a lot of local influences, experiences and histories that, in one way or another, could give this contrast a strong and complex emotional resonance, but it also tuned to a much more widely circulating imagery that polarised black and Asian people in threat/clown, 'problem/victim couplet[s]' (Gilroy 1987), echoing 'a common-sense racism that stereotypes Afro-Caribbean youth as violent criminals and all Asian people as the personification of victimage' (Paul and Lawrence 1988: 143). In the UK at the time, Asians were often stereotyped as compliant newcomers, ineptly oriented to bourgeois success,

while Afro-Caribbeans were portrayed as troublemakers, ensconced in the working class and adept only in sports and entertainment (Hewitt 1986: 216). And within the education system itself, there was also some powerful contrastive stereotyping in institutional responses to the ethno-linguistic difference of Caribbean and Asian migrants—with the former seen as deserving pedagogies that responded to non-standard vernacular practices, while the latter needed English as a Second Language (ESL) (cf. Rampton 1988).

In Ashmead, awareness of racist imaging like this meant that, in the wrong mouth at the wrong time, stylised Creole or Asian English could certainly get very negatively sanctioned, and in the cross-ethnic production and reception of these expressive practices, local youngsters generally developed quite a reliable sense of what they could and could not do, where and with whom (Rampton 2005: 301–3 *et passim*). Even so, the public imagery was appropriated, reworked and recirculated at local level, so that crossing and stylisation became significant local currency.

Creole was clearly much more attractive to youngsters of all ethnic backgrounds, and it was often reported as part of the general local linguistic inheritance, particularly among Asian boys, who described it as something ‘we been doing... for a long time’ (Rampton 2005: Ch. 2.2). In the interpretation in my 1995/2005 book, I situated this socio-symbolic polarisation in the larger context of migration (Rampton 2005: 217). On the one hand, I suggested, *Creole* indexed an excitement and an excellence in youth culture that many adolescents aspired to, and it was even described as ‘future language’. On the other, *Asian English* represented distance from the main currents of adolescent life, and it stood for a stage of historical transition that many youngsters felt they were leaving behind. In fact, though, this symbolisation of a large-scale historical trajectory, this ‘weight[ing mediated] by the speaker[s]’ social position and interest’ (Irvine 2001: 24), went deeper. There was also a class dimension to the path indexed in the binary opposition of Creole and Asian English, and this showed up in at least four ways.

First and most notably among boys, crossing and stylisation themselves figured as something of a local class emblem, signifying the difference between Ashmead’s mixed adolescent community and the wider Stoneford population. When my informants described the kinds of people who *would not* do crossing and stylisation, they referred to groups



who were vertically placed at either end of a bipolar hierarchy of wealth and status—a hierarchy that matched the economic and demographic facts quite closely (Rampton 2005: Chs. 1.7 and 2). Up above, there were the ‘posh wimpies’ living in wealthier districts outside Ashmead, and down below, there were Bangladeshis living in the very poorest parts of town. So this, for example, is how Peter referred to youngsters from outside the neighbourhood:

### Extract 5

‘gorra’ – ‘white man’ (*in Panjabi*)... always call the people who didn’t go to [our school] gorras, yet I’m white myself... cos we reckon they’re a bit you know upper class (most of them)... the gorra gang. (Peter, cited in Rampton 2005: 62)

A second reason for linking the Creole/Asian English contrast to social class lies in a significant overlap in the evaluation of Creole and local non-standard working-class English. When Asian and Anglo youngsters of both sexes described the efforts of their mums and dads to get them to speak properly, it was often the intrusion of swearwords, question tags and verb forms in Creole that were targeted (Rampton 2005: Ch. 5.6), and here is Ian (white), explaining how his American cousins were disappointed by his English:

### Extract 6

they think we speak really upper class English in England...they they see on the... they say that Englishmen has got such beautiful voices, and they express themselves so well...(*shifting into an approximation to Creole*:) **‘eh what you talkin’ abaat, wha’ you chattin’ about, you raas klaat’**, and they don’t like it! They thought I was going to be posher

Indeed, beyond the confines of my own research, this broad functional equivalence of Creole and traditional non-standard British speech was widely celebrated (and extensively noted) during the 1980s in a code-switching record called ‘Cockney Translation’ by the black British MC Smiley Culture (see Gilroy 1987: 194–7).

Third, the Creole/Asian English contrast can itself be mapped into the high/low, mind/body, reason-and-emotion oppositions outlined in Section 1. According to Cohen, this dualistic high/low idiom was generated ‘from within certain strategic discourses in British class society’ from the seventeenth century onwards, and ‘from the very outset [it was] applied across a range of sites of domination, both to the indigenous lower orders and ethnic minority settlers as well as to colonial populations overseas’ (Cohen 1988: 63). In the light of the overlapping evaluation of Creole and working-class English identified immediately earlier, it is not difficult to see Creole linked to the low side of the traditional British class semiotic. But just as important, the high side of the class binary was linked to Asian English. English is a prestige variety in the Indian sub-continent, and when my informants compared themselves with relatives there, they saw their own varieties as inferior:

#### Extract 7

in India right, the people that I’ve seen that talk English... talk strict English, you know. Here, this is more of a slangish way... the English that people talk round here you know, they’re not really talkin’ proper English... if you go India right... they say it clear, in the proper words.

#### Extract 8

my cousin come (*over from India*)... he’s got a degree and everything, he speaks good English, but he didn’t used to speak in English with us though, cos they sort of speak perfect English, innit. We sort of speak a bit slang, sort of innit – like we would say ‘innit’ and all that. He was scared we might laugh at this perfect sort of English... the good solid English that they teach ‘em’

At the same time, there was very little evidence in any of these youngsters’ stylised Asian English that this status carried over into Ashmead. Transposed to the UK and re-entextualised in stylisation, Ashmead kids depicted an Indian English orientation to the high, proper and polite as comical, its aspirations hopelessly marred by foreignness.

Lastly, there was little indication of a commitment to education in ethno-linguistic crossing and stylisation in Ashmead. Of course, schools were a vital meeting point for kids from different ethnic backgrounds, and the general pastoral and extracurricular ethos played a very significant part in promoting good interethnic relations. But Creole, which many admired, hardly featured at all on the curriculum and, rather than being tolerant of learners of English as a second language, or respecting them for their progress (as the teaching staff might hope), adolescents generally stigmatised pupils who had not yet been fully socialised into the vernacular ways of ordinary youth. Instead of curriculum learning, the activities and codes of conduct characteristic of playground recreation tended to be central to the cross-ethnic spread of minority languages and, if anything, this was easier if a style was used in opposition to school authority. Certainly, there were complex bodies of knowledge, skill and experience associated with different types of ethnically marked music and performance art, and there were, for example, white girls who were very interested in finding out more about reggae or bhangra. But a lot of this interest was embedded in heterosexual relations, and learning was much more a matter of legitimate peripheral participation than classroom study (cf. Rampton 2005: Part 3).

Putting all this together, there is a case for saying that the Creole/Asian English contrast oriented Ashmead adolescents to *two* major social processes. Not only did crossing and stylisation situate them at an endpoint in the migrant transition from outside into Britain, but then also once inside, the binary lined them up with values much more associated with the lower than the higher classes. Yes, iconically, Creole was first and foremost associated with Caribbeans, Asian English with Asians and local cross-ethnic respect for these ownership rights was evidenced in the way that, in some contexts, 'non-owners' either often avoided the use of these varieties and/or only invoked them in specially licensed interactional moments. But in the problems, pleasures and expectations of working-class adolescent life together, these kids experienced enough common ground to open up ethno-linguistic speech styles, realigning them with the high/low valuations hegemonic in British society, re-specifying their significance in crossing and stylisation practices which recognised and cultivated the shared social space that labour migration had now created.

It is worth now trying to pull the threads of this description together, first by discussing similarities, differences and the relationship between posh/Cockney, Creole and Asian English in England, and then by commenting on late modern multilingualism, ethnicity and social class more generally.

## Comparing and Connecting Posh/Cockney and Creole/Asian English

High/low, mind/body and reason/emotion polarisation are central to English schooling and, at Central High, adolescents broadly ratified the institutional embodiment of this binary in their routine style-shifting. But posh and Cockney *stylisation* interrupted the routine patterning of everyday talk, exaggerating and elaborating evaluative differentiations that were otherwise normally treated as non-problematic in their practical activity. Stylisation made the sociolinguistic structuring of everyday life more conspicuous, and denaturalised a pervasive cultural hierarchy, disrupting its authority as an interpretive frame that might have otherwise been ‘accepted undiscussed, unnamed, admitted without scrutiny’ (Bourdieu 1977: 169–170).

In Ashmead, crossing and stylisation registered ethnicities in the first instance, recognising differences but integrating them in a repertoire of ethnically marked styles that adolescents could now more or less share (in speech reception, if not always in production). Partially reproducing but also appropriating and recasting racist imagery circulating more widely in public culture, peer-group crossing and stylisation figured Asian English as an emblem of ethnic difference rooted outside Britain and/or in older generations, and treated Creole as a powerful model of youth ethnicity grounded now in the UK. In addition, crossing and stylisation were reported as signs of mixed multi-ethnic community, and against a background of political agreement on ethnic groups getting along together, adolescents learnt—and got told—how and when to follow the lead of the owners of an ethnic speech variety in their crossing and stylisation, avoiding derogatory Creole, for example, and confining Asian English to

particular interactional sites (Rampton 2005: Ch. 7.9). In short, Ashmead's active and explicit ideological commitment to multiculturalism produced significant levels of *normative standardisation* in local practices of crossing and stylisation (cf. Agha 2007), attested in rules of cross-ethnic avoidance and license of the kind documented in detail not only in Rampton (1995/2005) but also in Hewitt (1986).

There was nothing comparable to this in the stylisation of posh/Cockney at Central High. Of course, there were plenty of representations of posh twats and vernacular slobs circulating in British public culture generally, but with nothing like anti-racism to challenge them, they were not particularly controversial. Kids did have a class-related sense of futures being potentially better and worse for them as individuals; they could be quite articulate in their images of lives to either aim for or avoid; there was a lot of very animated political debate focused on sexuality, race and ethnicity. But there was little evidence of any explicit, collectively mobilising, specific *class* consciousness among the youngsters at Central High (Rampton 2006: Ch. 7.2), and nothing to compare with the conditions that had produced the normative standardisation of Creole/Asian English stylisation in Ashmead. In Ashmead, you risked offending the putative owners if/when you did exaggerate Creole or Asian English, or were being seen to endorse racist representations. But at Central High, you could stylise posh and Cockney with much more freedom, relatively unconcerned about transgressing core codes of collective solidarity and, consistent with this, the patterns of alignment between self and voice in acts of stylisation were also much more varied (Rampton 2006: 366–7).

So overall, the social problematics that were thematised in these two sets of contrastive crossing and stylisation practices were very different and, in summarising this, we can return to the relationship between stylisation, structure and agency:

- At Central High, posh and Cockney stylisation seemed geared to the *deconstruction of a system of individual differentiation* that was very well established and that adolescents *already inhabited*. This system governed the vertical trajectory of individuals, elevating some and degrading others, and in school contexts, stylised posh and Cockney generally *denaturalised* this.

In rather stark opposition to this,

- In Ashmead, crossing and stylisation in Creole and Asian English oriented to the *collective construction of a shared habitation from group differences* which had only been encountered relatively recently and were represented in problematic ways in public culture generally. Crossing and stylisation ‘domesticated’ these differences—*made them orderly, familiar and acceptable*—by, among other things, articulating a contrast which depicted ethnic styles as different moments in group trajectories with a common destination in the British working class.

Viewed as simple but powerful semiotic systems like this, style polarities like posh/Cockney and Creole/Asian English allow people to plot positions and paths in the territory between, just as Parkin proposed and, in their exploitation of these contrasts, adolescents actively oriented themselves to two absolutely central axes in the organisation of British society—on a *horizontal* ethnic axis, the movement from outside Britain in and, then once inside, on a *vertical* class axis—up/down, high/low. So evidently, when seen as the agentive practice of historical actors engaging with the conditions where they find themselves, stylisation can support different ideological projects and, in Creole/Asian English stylisation, adolescents articulated collective commitments that were quite distinct from the kind of micro-political positionings entailed in stylised posh and Cockney. Whereas one, one might say, reinterpreted the dominant version of ethnicity and replaced it with the kinds of *new ethnicity* described by Stuart Hall (1988; Rampton 2005: Chs. 12.4 and 13.4), the other intimated the partial penetrations of class hegemony of the sort described by Paul Willis (1977; Rampton 2006: Ch. 9.6).

At the same time, these data also suggest that, underpinning the processes I have described, socio-economic class stratification was the most powerful systemic process, configuring the indexical ground from which adolescents spoke (Hanks 1996) and, in *both* of the datasets that have been discussed, it seemed to be an inter-ethnically shared experience of positioning within the British lower classes that gave crossing and stylisation so much of their shape, intelligibility, currency and resonance. Admittedly, my account has nothing to say about the dynamics within

homes and intra-ethnic community settings, and further research could reveal much more about how the aspirations often associated with migration influence young people's sociolinguistic self-positioning within class structure. But in the account so far at least, it is hard to see posh and Cockney stylisation being shaped by ethnicity and migration, whereas in contrast, there was substantial evidence that the style polarisation of Creole and Asian English reflected class sensibilities in England. Of the two binaries that stylisation played on, the high/low contrast was omnipervasive, whereas the sense of collective trajectory from past to future was much more specific to the projection and recognition of ethnic and migrant identities.

With this view of working-class sensibilities influencing the stylisation of Creole and Asian English in Ashmead, as well as the stylisation of posh and Cockney at Central High, it is worth concluding with some general observations about recent developments in the political and institutional recognition of multilingualism.

## **Globalisation and Social Class: Standard Multilingualism and Vernacular Heteroglossia/Polylingualism**

As a number of recent commentators have noted, nation-states are often now significantly more proactive in promoting multilingualism:

[p]olitical economic conditions are changing; the new economy places much greater emphasis on communicative skills in general, and multilingualism in particular, than did the old...; nation-states try to reposition themselves advantageously on the dynamic and increasingly globalised market...; labour migration takes new, mobile and transnational shapes. (Heller 2007: 15)

Influenced also by supra-national bodies and nongovernmental organisations, '[m]inority language education is now becoming the standard policy in the territories inhabited by linguistic groups other than that of the nation-state' (Pujolar 2007: 77). At the same time, however, the promotion

of minority language bilingualism is often based on traditional monolingual models of literacy, schooling and language codification:

the kind of public typically imagined within minority language revitalisation and/or ethnic nationalism movements... are typically bourgeois and universalistic in nature: the nation or linguistic community is imagined in the singular and envisioned primarily as a reading and writing public... [L]anguage politics tend to be oriented towards normalisation, expanding literacy, and gaining legitimacy within the terms of state hegemonic language hierarchies. (Urla 1995: 246)

Jaffe spells out the significance of this:

[M]inority language movements like the Corsican one have often made monolingual minority language competence the centrepiece of their discourses about language and identity... *[This] makes the mixed cultural and linguistic practices and identities that are found in societies that have undergone language contact and shift 'matter out of place'.* (Jaffe 2007: 53, 60 [emphases added])

Influenced by a number of processes associated with globalisation, standard language multilingualism has become more respectable—positioning an expanded range of bilingual repertoires as (cosmopolitan) posh. But this accords little value to the kinds of mixed cultural and linguistic practices described in Ashmead and at Central High. In an emergent counterpart to the new multilingual posh, there is a good case for seeing this type of polylingual, heteroglossic hybridity as a key sociolinguistic dynamic within the globalised urban working classes.

This claim certainly fits with my reanalysis of the data from Ashmead, and there is broad support for it in a growing body of research which describes the hybrid language practices of young people in multi-ethnic working-class locations in European cities (e.g. Auer and Dirim 2003; Jaspers 2005; Madsen 2015). At the same time, if this claim is to be sustained, it needs to be nuanced, because heteroglossic multi-ethnic practices can also circulate beyond their territories of origin (Alim et al. 2009). Poly-lingual switching, mixing, crossing and stylisation may well thrive



in demographic sites where there are migrant and minority populations in poorer housing and disadvantaged schools, but some of these practices get taken up by the popular media, relayed much more widely and subsequently reproduced by people in very different socio-economic locations. Androutsopoulos (2001) documents the process very clearly (cf. also Stroud 2004), and there is a vivid description in Cutler's account of how African American Vernacular English gets adopted by 'Mike', a very wealthy young white New Yorker (Cutler 1999). This kind of appropriation blurs a demographic view of the class distribution of this ethnically marked mixed speech and, with youngsters like Mike using it, maybe we should say that the associations of ethnically marked mixed speech are really just *non-work* rather than *working-class*. Indeed, if instead of economic subordination, it is actually more a matter of simply 'letting your hair down', recreation, informality or 'fun', then perhaps we ought to use a class-neutral label like *youth language* to characterise speech practices such as these.

There can be no doubt that, with global marketisation in late modernity, languages, dialects and styles are undergoing all sorts of complex revaluation. Still, there are two points to make in support of the identification of mixed speech with the working-class sites emerging with international migration.

First, media exposure is not simply a matter of status enhancement. Alongside the (selective) promotion of ethnically marked speech in popular culture, there is often very widespread denigration in, for example, political debates about nation and in-policy debates about education. Public discourses like these play a major role in official legitimation and the production of mainstream value (cf. Stroud 2004) and, indeed, it is often in counterpoint to these pejorative dominant representations that the hybrid language practices in popular culture gain their resonance (Urla 1995).

Closely linked to this, second, we have to retain a sense of the class-marking of hybrid polylingual speech practices when we consider how binary contrasts work in the subjective dynamics of social class. Sherry Ortner describes how class binaries get internalised, how class opposites

affect individuals as an emotionally charged imagery of alternative possibilities and how all of us live with ‘fears, anxieties’ and an insistent sense that people in higher and lower class positions mirror our ‘pasts and possible futures’ (Ortner 1991: 177):

we normally think of class relations as taking place *between* classes, [but] in fact each class contains the other(s) within itself, though in distorted and ambivalent forms... [E]ach class views the others not only... as antagonistic groups but as images of their hopes and fears for their own lives and futures... [M]uch of working class culture can be understood as a set of discourses and practices embodying the ambivalence of upward mobility, [and] much of middle-class culture can be seen as a set of discourses and practices embodying the terror of downward mobility. (Ortner 1991: 172, 175, 176)

Stallybrass and White provide valuable elaboration: this class-based self-other relationship is actually rather unstable and, mixed in with the bourgeois disgust and fear of the lower orders, there is also fascination and desire (Stallybrass and White 1996: 194). So when middle-class majority kids use speech forms historically associated with the urban ethnic lower class, this does not mean that class no longer matters. There is obviously a long tradition of young people temporarily ‘slumming it’, taking time off from the journey to middle-class futures and, with Ortner, Stallybrass and White, there is a stronger case for seeing the ethno-linguistic crossing and stylisation of middle-class teenagers as exactly the kind of exception which proves the rule—the rule being that ethnically marked mixed speech has a working-class base.

To say this is not to deny that the position and prestige of minority ethnicities and languages have improved in a number of places and, alongside minority movements and political campaigns, popular culture has played a very substantial part in this. But the de-stigmatisation of migrant ethnicities does not happen in a vacuum, and the central argument in this chapter is that, in urban centres in the UK, as perhaps in many other places, ethno-linguistic emancipation actually means integration into the stratified sociolinguistics of social class.

## Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was published in *Journal of Pragmatics* 43: 1236–1250.
2. This was part of a 28-month ESRC-funded project *Multilingualism and Heteroglossia In and Out of School* (1997–99), and data collection involved interviews, participant observation, radio-microphone recordings of everyday interaction and participant retrospection on extracts from the audio recordings. Analysis focused on four youngsters (two male, two female) in a tutor group of about 30 14-year-olds, and the account of posh and Cockney stylisation centred on c. 65 episodes identified in 37 hours of radio-mic audio data. At Central High itself, about a third of pupils were from refugee and asylum families, over half of the school's pupils received free school meals and almost a third were registered as having special educational needs.
3. The linguistic changes produced over this sequence of turns can be charted as follows:

Figure for Ben Rampton

Non-standard	←—————→	Standard
<u>Line 5</u>	<u>Line 7</u>	<u>Line 10</u>
ain't	ain't	→ aven't
n't (=not) + nothing	n't + nothing	→ n't + anything
nasalised –ING [ɪ̃]	→ velarised –ING [ɪ]	velarised –ING
glottal TH [ʔ]	labio-dental TH [f]	→ dental TH [θ]

[→ indicates the point where the variable becomes (more) standard]

4. This was an ESRC-funded project entitled *Language Use in the Multiracial Adolescent Peer Group*, and it involved two years of fieldwork with 23 11- to 13-year-olds of Indian, Pakistani, African Caribbean and Anglo descent in 1984, and approximately 64 14- to 16-year olds in 1987. Data-collection focused mainly on a youth club and on lunch and breaktime recreation at school, and included radio-microphone recording (approximately 145 hours), participant observation, interviewing and retrospective participant commentary on extracts of recorded interaction.

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