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Axel Bohmann

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“Nobody Canna Cross it”:
Entextualization, Ideology, and the Construction of Mock Registers in the
Jamaican Speech Community

APPROVED BY

SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor: _____

Ian Hancock

Lars Hinrichs

**“Nobody Canna Cross it”:
Entextualization, Ideology, and the Construction of Mock
Registers in the Jamaican Speech Community**

by

Axel Bohmann, B.A.

Report

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In all of this one sees again that a strip of activity is merely a starting point; all sorts of perspectives and uses can be brought to it, all sorts of “motivational relevancies” can be found in it.

(Goffman 1974: 64)

“Nobody Canna Cross it”:

Entextualization, Ideology, and the Construction of Mock Registers in the

Jamaican Speech Community

by

Axel Bohmann, MA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

SUPERVISOR: Ian Hancock

In this report, I discuss the re-contextualization of a working-class Jamaican speaker’s discourse in the media and the new meanings his speech acquires in the process. The series of re-contextualizations starts out with an interview on Jamaican television, which is in turn remixed into an electronic dance song and accompanying music video. The song entextualizes individual stretches of the speaker’s original discourse into readily identifiable quotes that turn into Jamaican slang items. In the process, linguistic disorderliness is foregrounded in the utterances in question while their propositional content is virtually erased. In a further instance of re-contextualization, the speaker encounters his by now entextualized utterances in an interview on Jamaican breakfast television and struggles to re-establish his originally intended framing of it. His success in the specific interaction is very limited, but viewers’ comments reveal that the interview does effect a change in the meta-linguistic discourse surrounding the incident.

I analyze the data as a case in point of ‘speaky spoky,’ a Jamaican label for unsuccessful attempts to emulate foreign prestige accents, resulting in linguistic disorderliness. By considering aspects of performance, entextualization and the keying of different frames, I demonstrate the interactional work that goes into the construction of speaky spoky as a label, as well as the ideological work that label is put to in turn and its political effects. Based on these observations, I argue that speaky spoky is best understood as a multivalent construct resource for sustaining and influencing language ideologies. Its interactional versatility renders its relationship to authenticity in the Jamaican speech community complicated and potentially ambiguous.

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1. Introduction and Background

1.1. Outline

In this paper, I discuss a phenomenon of popular culture in Jamaica in which a working-class speaker's discourse is re-contextualized and re-mixed into the lyrics to a dance song. In the process, those aspects of the man's speech that render it disorderly are foregrounded, thus encouraging an interpretation of it as 'speaky spoky,' a Jamaican term for unsuccessful attempts at emulating a prestige variety. I am interested in what these instances of re-contextualization, and the meta-linguistic discourse generated by them, can tell sociolinguists about the status and role of speaky spoky in the Jamaican speech community, as well as the broader implications for the relationship between language and cultural authenticity. Additionally, I address the increasing mobility of texts in the 21st century, the challenges presented by this fact, and some of the methodological tools best suited to handle those challenges.

In chapter 1.2., I give a brief sketch of the linguistic history of Jamaica, followed by a discussion of the relation between Jamaican Creole and English in everyday speech and its linguistics implications (1.3.) as well as a summary of some of the locally-held beliefs and norms about language use (1.4.). In chapter 1.5., I then turn to the label speaky spoky that is of central importance to this paper. I summarize the literature on the topic so far and address points that require further clarification. From this point, I move on (1.6.) to describe the cultural phenomenon of "Nobody canna cross it," which provides the data for analysis. Finally, I outline some necessary theoretical background in chapter 1.7., drawing from language ideologies, enregisterment, stylization, performance, entextualization, and frame analysis.

I begin my analysis in chapter 2.1., with an examination of the text that started “Nobody canna cross it” and provided the linguistic material for later re-contextualizations. This is an interview with a working-class, rural Jamaican which aired on the national channel TVJ and in which the speaker violates expectations as to his language use by attempting to emulate a perceived standard variety of English. Next (2.2.), I discuss the re-contextualization of stretches of speech from that interview as lyrics to a dance song titled *Nobody canna cross it*. In this process, disorder in the young man’s speech is highlighted and serious aspects of his discourse are erased. Chapter 2.3. finds the original author of the re-contextualized words put back into contact with his discourse, now transformed into a recognizable cultural text with very different meanings from those initially intended. In an interview on Jamaican morning television he struggles to validate his framing of his speech as serious talk but is ultimately denied that possibility by the two hosts. The final part of my analysis (2.4.) is concerned with viewer comments on this last interview and the positions on language, society, and appropriate humor they contain.

The paper ends with a discussion of some of the issues that arise from the data discussed in chapter 2. First and foremost, in chapter 3.1., I try to develop a better understanding of the status of speaky spoky, arguing that it is best viewed not as a linguistic register but as a resource in the construction and maintenance of language ideologies. I also argue that its meaning is not monolithic, but that the interactive versatility of the label makes it adaptable for very different purposes. I then discuss the role of humor and the ideologies that govern it as they surface in the data and draw parallels to the role of mock registers in the United States (3.2). Chapter 3.3 addresses the question how speaky spoky relates to linguistic and cultural authenticity. I argue that it is not merely a de-authenticating discourse, but – used in certain ways and contexts – can provide speakers with the opportunity to reflexively re-examine their own relationship to their language behavior and norms. The development of such norms as

a local process and its relationship to entextualization are the focus of chapter 3.4., where I make some comments about the role of awareness in meta-pragmatic discourse. Lastly (3.5.), I draw attention to the increased mobility of texts in the 21st century and the question of uptake in contexts very different from that of original production. I argue that the theoretical tools presented in chapter 1.7. and applied throughout the analyses in chapter 2 give sociolinguists valuable resources to apply to situations in which texts travel beyond the confines of their original context of utterance.

1.2. Jamaica: Sketch of a linguistic history

Jamaica is part of the Greater Antilles, together with Cuba, Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), and Puerto Rico. The island was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1494 and consequently claimed as Spanish territory. Under Spanish rule, the native population of Arawaks and Tainos was reduced to virtual extinction. Despite the fact that the British did not take over the island until 1655 (Patrick 1999: 23), comparatively little linguistic influence from Spanish remains. Its most visible presence today is in fossilized town names such as Ocho Rios (a town on the north coast). During the early days of British rule, while there were African slaves on the island, the European settlers comprised the majority of the population. However, due to changes in the plantation economy and the increased need for manual labor that the introduction of sugar farming entailed, the ratio rapidly shifted in favor of black slaves from around the 1670s onwards. While in 1658 there had been 4,500 whites compared to only 1,400 blacks, the African-descended population was in the majority by the mid-1670s, when 9,500 slaves were matched up with 7,700 white settlers

(Holm 1989: 470). In terms of linguistic development, the short period during which the Europeans were in the majority was just long enough to establish English as the lexifier language for the pidgin that necessarily developed for the purposes of communication between settlers and slaves (as well as among slaves, who came from different territories and linguistic backgrounds and were often purposely separated from speakers of the same language to minimize the risk of rebellions, see Cassidy & LePage 1967). The subsequent rapid influx of new slaves played a decisive role in the creolization stage of the pidgin language, removing it structurally from English through substrate influence from various African languages.

The result of this process is a language whose vocabulary bears a striking surface-resemblance to English, but whose grammatical system (and semantics) is very different in many key regards. The tense-mode-aspect (TMA) system of Jamaican Creole, for instance, diverges from the English one but is very similar to that of many other creole languages, including features such as zero past marking, a progressive particle (“a”) before the verb, and “neva” as negative past marker. With regard to phonology, the vowel system of Jamaican Creole conserves many aspects of its Early Modern English lexifier, such as the diphthongs /uo/ and /ie/. Its consonants and suprasegmental features display characteristics common to creole languages, such as final consonant cluster reduction (/respekt/ → [respek]), /t/-substitution through /k/ preceding /l/ (“little” → [likl]) or the sporadic conservation of lexical tones.

This basic picture has not been complicated by additional influence from other ethnic and linguistic groups to the extent that has been the case in other Caribbean societies. Whereas Trinidad, for instance, has seen a great influx of both South Asian as well as Chinese indentured laborers following the abolition of slavery, this development has been much more subdued in Jamaica and has had very little impact on the linguistic situation. The result is a more focused creole than in some other islands, where various pidgin and creole forms sometimes co-exist.

According to Holm, Jamaica is “the economic heart of the British West Indies [and] remains the cultural center of the anglophone Western Caribbean and beyond” (1989: 269). Among the Atlantic creole languages, Jamaican Creole (JC)¹ bears the distinction of being the most early and most thoroughly documented one, starting with Russell (1868) and continuing through Cassidy and Le Page’s *Dictionary of Jamaican English* (1967) to such important recent projects as Peter Patrick’s analysis of variation in the urban mesolect (1999, see below) or the Jamaican sub-corpus of the International Corpus of English (see Mair 1992, Deuber 2011). Extensive out-migration to Great Britain in the 1950s and to other places more recently (e.g. Toronto, Hinrichs forthcoming), as well as the spread of Jamaican music across the globe have transplanted the language into new contexts which have potentiated additional rich areas of linguistic analysis (e.g. Sebba 1993, Sebba & Dray 2011, Sutcliffe 1982 on Creole in the British Isles; Hinrichs 2006 on Creole in computer-mediated communication).

1.3. Jamaican Creole and its relation to English

As outlined above, the creole that developed on plantations in Jamaica in the 17th century is structurally quite different from English. However, long-lasting contact with English (initially through the white minority of settlers, later through such channels as the British-model school system and the media) and, more recently, increased social mobility and the availability of new technologies has resulted in a situation where the

¹ I use the label Jamaican Creole (JC) to refer to the variety in this paper. Other terms have been proposed, such as “Patwa,” which Peter Patrick appropriates from local usage. However, when I use JC in this paper I refer to an idealized linguistic system, not actual local language performance, which is predominantly of a mixed nature. Therefore I find it helpful not to adopt local concepts referring to language use in interaction.

two languages are in constant interaction in everyday communication. The prestige status of English over Creole has caused speakers in many situations to consciously select “more English” features for their discourse in order to achieve upwards social mobility. On the large, historical scale, this has occasioned an erosion of the “pure” Jamaican Creole, a process that has been termed decreolization (Whinnom 1971, for a critique see Mufwene 1994), but can more accurately be described as metropolitanization. The former label implies a historically regressive development towards some pre-creolized state, whereas the latter more accurately captures the orientation towards a metropolitan standard (although see Sand 1999 on the formation of an endo-normative standard).

Today, most Jamaicans do not speak either Creole or English, nor do they code-switch between the two languages as strictly separable entities. Rather, each speaker commands a certain range on a linguistic continuum, what is known as the (post-) Creole continuum (DeCamp 1971), between language that is most Creole-like (the basilect) and language that approaches Jamaican Standard English (the acrolect). These are idealized poles, and the vast bulk of social interaction takes place in the area between them, the mesolect. Individuals may span different ranges of the continuum and they agentively move up and down these ranges as the situation demands it.

Modeling a continuum between two languages with different underlying grammatical systems such as JC and English presents interesting challenges to linguistic theory. The central question is what happens in the mesolect, where these two systems mix? When different underlying constraints compete, which ones are selected? Do intermediate rules develop that present a compromise between English and JamC? One influential attempt to give structure to the Jamaican mesolect is the idea of implicational scaling (DeCamp 1971, elaborated by Rickford 1987). This model ranks different linguistic features (phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical)

in terms of their English- or Creole-ness, such that the use of one feature entails the use of another further down the hierarchy. Table 1 gives an example of implicational scaling. There is a clear progression from speaker 4, with exclusive use of Creole features to Speaker 5, who uses only English. At every step in between, speakers can be unambiguously categorized by their position on the implicational scale as the use of one variant entails the employment of others further down the scale. For instance, every speaker who realizes past tense negation as “no ben” necessarily also uses the lexical item “pikni” and the phonetic features of /θ/- and /ð/-stopping.

Table 1: *Example of an implicational scale (addapted from Patrick 1999: 7)*

Creole “C”	/d/	/t/	pikni	no ben	nana	nyam
Speaker 4	C	C	C	C	C	C
Speaker 3	C	C	C	C	C	e
Speaker 7	C	C	C	C	e	e
Speaker 2	C	C	C	e	e	e
Speaker 6	C	C	e	e	e	e
Speaker 1	C	e	e	e	e	e
Speaker 5	e	e	e	e	e	e
English “e”	/ð/	/θ/	child	didn’t	granny	eat

Influential as the idea of implicational scaling is, in its normative rigidity it will hardly hold up against micro-variation in naturally occurring speech data. Speakers hardly ever realize any of these variables categorically one way or the other, and are sensitive to situational and social factors in their selection. A more sophisticated attempt to investigate the structure of the mesolect was made by Peter Patrick (1999). Using the statistical tool of regression modeling, Patrick demonstrates that, for a number of surface-segmentable features, different underlying rules of application ap-

ply for different speakers *from the same speech community*. His conclusion is that the mesolect is a system of its own, rather than a representation of the whole continuum from basilect to acrolect (Patrick 1999: 292). This reading allows for structural ordering but does not shy away from including social and situational factors in this ordering. It is thus better equipped to handle real-time, face-to-face interaction than strict adherence to implicational scales.

A final important approach to modeling language variation in creole-speaking societies comes from Robert LePage and Andrée Tabouret-Keller's (1985) "Acts of Identity" framework. In their analysis of children's speech production data from Belize, St. Lucia and the Jamaican community in Britain, they find a good deal of variation, not all of which can be accounted for by recourse to ethno-linguistic group identities. The authors instead emphasize the social-constructivist dimension of language use in which

the individual creates for himself the patterns of his linguistic behaviour so as to resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified, or so as to be unlike those from whom he wishes to be distinguished. (LePage & Tabouret-Keller 1985: 181)

The ability to do so is restricted by four constraints: a) the extent to which groups are identifiable to speakers who wish to emulate their speech behavior, b) speakers' access to these groups and their ways of speaking, c) speakers' motivations to sound like a certain group ("by far the most important of the constraints," p. 84), and d) speakers' ability to modify their behavior accordingly. Depending on the social make-up of a society and the degree of interaction between groups, LePage and Tabouret-Keller categorize language situations on a cline between more "focused", where motivations and the resulting speech behavior largely converge, and more "diffuse," where there are several potential group norms to orientate towards and speakers' limited access may prevent them from fully acquiring these norms.

Such an approach corrects the linguistic reductionism of implicational scaling by drawing attention to the agentive and flexible role of language in the construction of identity. However, as Patrick (2003) argues, it overshoots this goal to a good extent by its concentration on the speech of children in atypically diffuse situations. The outcome is a portrayal of language use as much more malleable and less constrained than is typically the case. Long-standing structural properties of languages as well as their historical drift are factors individuals learn and do not easily overcome. Nonetheless, many of the general premises of the “acts of identity” framework have been influential in shaping later approaches to sociolinguistics. The approaches I outline in chapter 1.7. all draw from the agentive perspective on language proposed by LePage and Tabouret-Keller.

1.4. Language use, norms, attitudes and ideologies in Jamaica

From the above description it becomes obvious that “pure” Jamaican Creole and “pure” Jamaican Standard English are hardly ever to be encountered in situations of everyday face-to-face interaction in Jamaica. Rather, these varieties are best understood as idealized poles on a continuum. But this is not the way local actors conceptualize their linguistic reality. According to Hinrichs “Jamaicans see their resources as binary, i.e. at any given point during language production they are using either JamC or JamE according to their own classification” (2006: 11) and “this division into codes is also meaningful in interaction” (12). It is from this local perspective that I now attempt to outline the changing relationship of JC and English today.

The traditional functional distinction between JC and English is a clearly de-

lineated one, ingrained through centuries of colonial domination. English, the language of the metropolitan rulers, has functioned as the communicative medium of the education system, the administration and jurisdiction as well as the church (Sand 1999: 70; Akers 1981: 9). In this regard, it assumes the typical H position in a diglossia model of societal multilingualism (Ferguson 1959). Creole, on the other hand, is the language of everyday communication, comedy and dancehall music and a marker of Jamaican identity. It can thus be associated with the “local-team” values (Blom and Gumperz 1972) typical of the L variety in a diglossic setting.

Upon closer inspection, however, this idealized dichotomy falls short of accurately describing sociolinguistic reality for a majority of interactional contexts. The linguistic reality of the mesolect has already been outlined. Furthermore, the relation between English and JC is not a static one, but has witnessed several changes in recent history. While Holm asserts that “Independence in 1962 did little to change the relationship between English and Creole in Jamaica” (2000: 94), Jamaican linguist Kathryn Shields-Brodber paints quite a different picture, speaking of the “functional dethronement [of English] as the exclusive language of public-formal domains” (1997: 64). She locates the origin of this development with the achievement of political independence and subsequent focus on national identity that helped Patwa gain acceptance in an increasing number of domains. Shields-Brodber’s position is supported by empirical studies of language attitudes (Wassink 1999) as well as domain-specific language use (e.g. Westphal 2009), which suggest that Patwa is on the way to losing some of the stigma associated with it and gaining in the number of contexts in which it is considered appropriate. At the same time the role of (standard) English has not remained static either. Sand (1999) and Mair & Sand (1998) trace a process of local norm-development in the Caribbean. Sand speaks of educated Jamaican English as “caught halfway between an exocentric British model and an endocentric norm” (1999: 175). This picture is further complicated through the influence of two forms of

exocentric Standard English: a British variety, which is associated with colonial oppression, but increasingly also North American standards, whose connections to popular culture endow it with covert as well as overt prestige (Hinrichs 2006: 13).

In such a dynamic situation, divergent ideologies about the ‘proper place’ of the different codes are likely to be held. Debates about these issue tend to feature a variety of positions on a continuum with rather radical poles (Mair & Sand 1998). The school system serves as a case in point. While English is still the official medium of instruction, this administrative postulate is matched with a reality where local speech is gaining more and more foothold in Jamaican classrooms. Activist linguists like Hubert Devonish (1986: 119-121) urge for the recognition of JC as the official language of education in Jamaica. On the other hand, “[w]orking-class and poor Jamaicans (Rastafarians excepted) legitimize an ideology of education with colonial roots - [...] a system that denies even the existence of their native creole language.” (Patrick 1999: 61). In my own field interviews, I experienced a similar range of responses from outright ridicule to mildly favorable statements about JC in the classroom.

1.5. Conflict talk: Speaky spoky

Given the erosion of clear functional distinctions and the emergence of new forms and norms of talk in Jamaica, language use is likely to become the locus of potential confusion as well as contestation even in quotidian interactional settings. I now turn to the phenomenon (for lack of a more precise term at present) of speaky spoky talk, which draws attention to both confusion and contestation in Jamaican speech. Peter Patrick provides a succinct definition: “speaky spoky is a negatively-valued label for

a style of JC speech which typically manipulates a few prestigious, highly salient sociolinguistics variables, rather than an entire grammatical system” (1999: 277, see also Patrick 1997, Patrick & McElhinny 1993).² The main features in question are the rounding and sometimes raising of low back vowels and the insertion of [h] in front of syllable-initial vowels, even in contexts where Standard English lacks these sounds. According to this pattern, the word /rɑ:ftɪŋ/ will be pronounced [rɔ:ftɪŋ] or [rɔ:ftɪŋ], and even unmarked prepositions such as “in” receive a glottal fricative before the vowel. /ɔ:/ is a phoneme that is entirely absent from JC, whereas word-initial, pre-vocalic [h] is an optional resource for stress. Additional elements include malapropisms when speakers attempt to use “big words” but fail to do so correctly as well as certain elements of voice quality (see Patrick & McElhinny 1993: 288).

Yet it is insufficient to describe speaky spoky according to objective linguistic criteria alone. Details of speech production, Patrick goes on to explain, are

neither necessary nor sufficient to establish that it has occurred. The speaker’s social identity and competence in the standard, plus the context of use, are also crucial elements. What is required is that the intention to speak ‘proper English’ be made salient, and that the success of the effort be open to question. (1999: 277)

There is consequently a strong ideological dimension to the label, incorporating not only knowledge of grammatical rules, but a host of ideas about what constitutes ‘proper English,’ who is authorized to speak (or attempt to speak) it, and what sanctions should be involved for speakers who refuse to stay in their linguistic place. Patrick acknowledges speaky spoky’s association with conflict, but from this point moves on to surprising conclusions. Since he cannot identify readily discernible social groups *between* which the conflict is cast, but sees speaky spoky often being applied by members of the working class against others of the same class, he discards

² The term “twang” is increasingly used synonymously with speaky spoky, describing an “attempt to speak with a foreign accent” (Shaw 2011). But since speaky spoky is the established term in the literature and still in use in Jamaica today, I will use that label throughout the present paper.

the idea that it is an indicator of conflict on the level of the speech community (cf. Rickford 1979, 1986). Since *speaky spoky* simultaneously acts as a guardian of standard as well as in-group norms (Patrick 1999: 278), Patrick construes it as a “common framework and set of symbolic resources” (278) shared by the entire speech community.

Patrick’s description is heavily influenced by the larger claim he is making about the nature of the Jamaican speech community and the possibility of describing the mesolect according to one overarching set of rules. From this perspective the move from linguistic description to social meaning to a unified semiotic framework makes sense. From the perspective of interaction analysis and language ideological research, however, Patrick’s statements leave open a set of questions it is worth pursuing in detail.

One may, for instance, ask at what point exactly an instance of “talking *speaky spoky*” can be said to occur. The temporal relation in Patrick’s formulation above, “to establish that it has occurred,” is telling in this regard. It points to the necessity to retrospectively define someone’s speech as *speaky spoky* in order to ascertain its incidence in the first place. Being called out is an essential part of the concept, and while linguistic facts feature prominently in this process, it is the locally held beliefs about these linguistic facts and their indexical (Silverstein 1985, Ochs 1992, see below) relation to social reality which ultimately determine it. As such, *speaky spoky* can be said to arise from and perpetuate a language ideology, a “cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests” (Irvine 1989). There is today a growing number of studies demonstrating the rewards of analyzing such linguistic ideologies and questioning their role in the politics of language (see papers in Schieffelin, Woolard & Kroskrity 1998, Kroskrity 2000).

Next, one cannot help but notice some terminological confusion in Patrick's description. He variously defines *speaky spoky* as "a mode of talk" (Patrick & McElhinny 1993), "a creole style" (Patrick 1997: 44) and "a negatively-valued label" (Patrick 1999: 277). The author oscillates between providing an objectified linguistic description and an ideological rationalization from the perspective of those who call others out for their *speaky spoky* talk, i. e. "to brand them a social climber, opportunist, lame or traitor" (1999: 278). This results in a certain vagueness as to the status of *speaky spoky* through a meddling of objective (etic) and ethnographic (emic) perspectives. A more systematic attempt to differentiate between these two levels of description would be desirable.

Moreover, when he adopts the interpretive frame of local actors, Patrick does not acknowledge the perspective of those accused of "speaking an spoking." He never engages in speculations about the pressures that motivate people to 'talk up,'³ thus implicitly silencing their perspective and aligning with that of those who call them out. However, in a country where the vernacular of the majority is still devalued in many contexts and a strong pressure for 'proper English' exists, it is not hard to imagine other reasons than sheer social opportunism to aim at a target outside one's own linguistic competence. Social pressures may be overwhelming in certain contexts and sanctions to be expected for not conforming to an externally defined linguistic standard (see Lippi-Green 2012: 55-65). My point is not that this will always be the case, but that a thorough analysis of the phenomenon ought to take all local perspectives into account. Close attention to the contextualized application of *speaky spoky* in specific interactional settings is needed to shed further light on these questions.

Finally, one might question the uniform agreement about the "set of symbolic resources" that constitute *speaky spoky*. While as an abstract concept it seems indeed to be universally recognized in the Jamaican speech community, it appears likewise

³ Although he does so elsewhere, see Patrick (1999: 275).

clear that there is less agreement about the specific details in a given interactional situation. Considering the clearly negative association of the term, speakers obviously do not actively try to engage in speaky spoky (instances of ‘other-voicing’ aside, see Rampton 1995, 1997; Bakhtin 1981). Rather, they produce language that in their perception is grammatical, perhaps with the awareness that they are aiming for a higher register, but certainly not the direct intention to produce speaky spoky as such. From a micro-interactional perspective, then, speaky spoky is defined not by agreement but by opposing interpretations: that of the speaker and that of whoever calls him or her out for ‘talking up.’ Just the fact that the conflict implicated in this constellation is often not one between identifiable social classes does not render it less real or worthy of study. Patrick’s dismissive position on this last point seems to be founded on his assumption that “[t]he social categories that influence linguistic behavior exist independently of it” (1999: 285). Hence, if observations about language do not relate to pre-conceived social categories, they must be socially irrelevant. A number of scholars have recently critiqued such beliefs and argued for a more bottom-up, constructivist approach to social reality (see following section), in which language has not only a reflexive but a constitutive role. These arguments may certainly be applied to the Jamaican context, where social mobility has been increasing over the last decades and long-held beliefs about language are being reconsidered (see section 1.4.). In such a situation, speaky spoky may be understood as one of the resources available to individuals to re-define and re-negotiate social reality rather than merely supporting the values of established groups. This agentic dimension also suggests that the meanings created by evoking the concept may differ from situation to situation. I argue that this is indeed the case in the data discussed below, where different ways of constructing speaky spoky discourse index different ways of relating to language and create differing uptake by audiences.

1.6. Nobody canna cross it: The Clifton Brown phenomenon

With the above statements in mind, I turn to one specific instance of speaky spoky discourse that has recently received a good deal of attention in Jamaica and on the World Wide Web. It is the story of Clifton Brown, a local resident of Roberts Field in the Parish of St. Thomas, and his encounter with mass media, language ideologies and the unexpected afterlife of discourse in a digital world. In June 2011, heavy rains had flooded a road at Mavis Banks, effectively cutting off Roberts Field from the rest of the island. Brown was one of the people interviewed by local television station TVJ in a news report on the situation. In the interview he is seen wearing a white hard hat with the flooded road in the background. He explains that the current is very dangerous to cross and that he and other locals are on the spot to help people get safely from one side to the other. He also urges officials to commission the building of a new bridge across the river. What caught the audience's attention about this interview, however, was not its political message or human drama, but the way Clifton Brown spoke. Cues on various levels of linguistic description (see below) suggested that this was a speaker attempting to speak "proper English" for the camera while at the same time clearly lacking the linguistic competence to do so.

This incident alone, however, would not have left a lasting impression in the public consciousness. Brown's real, though involuntary, claim to fame was established when Jamaican DJ and music producer Kevin Hamilton ("DJ Powa") took the original interview, cut it up, and mixed it over an electronic beat. The resulting music video (kevy2c 2011) went viral on youtube (3.373.422 clicks as of April 29 2012) and sparked a wave of interviews, parodies and commentaries. The title of the song - "Nobody canna cross it" - has become emblematic of this entire phenomenon. Initially Clifton Brown's role in the process was that of a passive individual whose speech

was expropriated and put on display and met with a “stream of mocking public discourse” (Hinrichs forthcoming) – much to his dismay, as an early interview suggests (RaverEntertainmentTv 2011). As his newly acquired stardom secured him advertising contracts with LIME, performance opportunities as a dancehall artist, and, crucially, economic profit, his attitudes may have changed. In interviews at this later stage Brown, or CliffTwang as he has come to be known by his stage name, is often seen wearing fashionable shades and an obviously stylized and polished version of his work suit, including hard hat and rubber boots (cvmsunrisers 2011).

In this paper, I focus on the early stages of “the phenomenon that is ‘Nobody Canna Cross It’” (Miller 2011). I trace the path of Brown’s words, from the initial interview to their re-keying as musical performance to their uptake and meta-linguistic commentary on them. The prevailing attitudes are mockery and criticism, though sometimes leveled from very different ideological vantage points. I focus on the linguistic material not primarily as an object of study for its own sake, but rather to determine which parts of it hold significance from a local perspective and can be drawn upon to construct Brown’s discourse as “speaky spoky.” I also pay attention to which voices are privileged and which are muted in this process. Unlike Patrick, I do not see speaky spoky as merely informative for an understanding of the structural status of the mesolect, but as a political and interactional tool to achieve voice (Blommaert 2005: 4) on the conversational micro-level and to create and reflexively re-work relationships between language and perceived social structure.

1.7. Language and the negotiation of social reality

Creole studies have for a long time been primarily concerned with language historical questions and with the formal linguistic description and typological classification of the varieties under study. Despite the fact that pioneering work in the area of sociolinguistics (see LePage & Tabouret-Keller 1985, chapter 1.3. above) has emerged from creole settings, the major applications of these frameworks has been in the contexts of linguistic study elsewhere. Hinrichs (2006:11) laments the “shortage of qualitative studies addressing the interactional dynamics of language use in Jamaica” specifically and asks scholars to “turn to the ontological realm of studying the role of varieties and variables in the creation of locally relevant meanings in interaction” (12).

Such a position, which is the one I am adopting in this paper, is premised on a notion of language and its relation to the social and empirical world that is quite different from the classic formalist signifier-signified distinction, and even different from traditional variationist understandings of the interplay between the social and the linguistic. While the latter perspective goes beyond purely formal, self-contained descriptions of language structure and demonstrates the social importance of linguistic features, it still views language as something secondary, reflexive of pre-existing social structure (although see Labov 1963). Recent empirical work by Eckert (2008, 2000), Mendoza-Denton (2008), Bucholtz (2011) and others has demonstrated, however, that language is also constitutive of social reality. It is one of the key resources through which individuals create meaningful distinctions between groups and as such can be manipulated to influence social reality either temporarily for situational effects (e.g. Rampton 1995) or with longer-lasting impact (e.g. Silverstein 1985).

In conjunction with this change in the perception of language, scholars have developed an increasing interest in locally held views about the nature, meaning, and

status of linguistic material. Studies along these lines are typically summed up under the label of language ideologies research. Of the many definitions of the term “language ideology” (e.g. Silverstein 1998, Lippi-Green 2012, Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 2006, Errington 2001), Judith Irvine’s is the one best suited to the goals of the present paper. According to her, a language ideology is “the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests” (1989). Framing it thus emphasizes the personal and political stakes involved in language ideological questions. This emphasis resonates with the strong connections of creole linguistics with political issues, language planning and applied linguistics (Patrick 1997: 41).

At the center of language ideologies is the indexical meaning of linguistic forms (Silverstein 1985, Ochs 1992). In addition to formal, decontextualized semantic properties, much of the situated meaning of utterances is dependent on the indexical potential they carry. Indexicality arises through the habitual connection of a certain perceived phenomenon in the real world (e.g. gender, ethnicity) etc. and a certain linguistic form (e.g. the stopping of interdental fricatives). Through continuous co-occurrence, these connections are naturalized into facts of life, such that a way of speaking is identified as an immediate symptom of a certain group membership, character trait or stance (on the relation between these levels, see Eckert 2008). Based on this primary link, further levels of rationalization are often added, frequently with strong ideological impetus. A long-standing and sad case in point is the debate in the United States about “Ebonics” and its alleged linguistic deficiency.

Due to the agentive and creative nature of speech production, individuals are able to use (or attempt to use) the indexical potential of language in their favor. In the US, for instance, appropriation of forms typically understood as “belonging” to Black English (Cutler 2010, Reyes 2005, Bucholtz 2004) is a well-documented strategy members of other non-dominant ethnicities employ to create a voice for themselves.

The outcome and local interpretation is not merely “sounding black,” but often a new way of talking with its own associations (e.g. the “ghetto” Asian, see Reyes 2005). Thus new levels of indexicality get superimposed on existing ones. The result of this pervasive and continuous process is the development of “indexical fields” (Eckert 2008), webs of connections between the potential indexical meanings a form can take on in any given interactional context.

As explained above, Jamaicans regard their linguistic resources as belonging to two distinct varieties, “English” and “Patwa,” despite the fact that a structural description hardly supports such a view. Discourses like that surrounding *Nobody canna cross it* provide opportunities for investigating how such beliefs about language come into being, are sustained and negotiated. In addition to the well-established processes of codification and prescriptivism associated with the establishment of standard languages, one may also look at processes of “vernacular norm-formation” (Johnstone & Baumgardt 2004). Since the latter are less rigidly institutionalized, they are often more in flux and open to re-interpretations. While a certain degree of stability and norm-convergence is guaranteed through “widely shared ideas about how places, dialects, and people’s identities are connected” (123), norming “always arises in a particular discursive situation, for a particular set of social and rhetorical reasons” (141) and hence is a discourse that can be creatively manipulated by participants to a certain extent to serve their own interests.

What is clear in projects such as vernacular norm-formation is a fact that Coupland (2001a) regards as typical of and pervasive in late-modernity, the fact that “dialects are increasingly experienced in reflexive and mediated environments” (345). Speakers in the late-modern world experience language not as a mere means to communicative ends, but they are presented with images and representations of their language that explicitly ask them to consider its relationship to cultural authenticity, identity and place. Such discourses include the stylized use of language in the media

and in comedic performances, the commodification of language, but increasingly also bottom-up discursive formations such as discussions about language varieties in on-line forums (Johnstone & Baumgardt 2004). In these situations in particular, individuals do not only pick up predetermined ideas about dialects and registers, but they engage themselves in the project of defining them both linguistically and socially. And they do so not as linguists, attempting to describe language varieties by their structure as a whole, but as social actors selecting from a pool of semiotic resources to create social meaning. Often, in the public understanding, a handful of salient linguistic features becomes representative of a variety, or enregistered (Agha 2005, Johnstone et al. 2006). Following Patrick's description, this is clearly what happens in the case of speaky spoky in Jamaica, where rounding of the low back vowel and h-insertion before syllable-initial vowels carry almost the entire burden of linguistic differentiation.

Much of the way locally held beliefs about language surface as objects of study is through participants' metalinguistic commentaries, either overtly articulated or manifested in artful performance. Traditionally, sociolinguists have been concerned with finding "authentic speakers" (Eckert 2003) and interviewing them in as "natural" a setting as possible, this typically being equated with least attention paid by participants to their own speech production. In recent years, other perspectives on linguistic performance have, however, gained momentum in sociolinguistics. Refusing to see artful performance as merely parasitic on "ordinary" language use, these authors have potently demonstrated the utility in attending to speech play and verbal art (Sherzer 2002), performance (Bauman & Briggs 1990), stylization (Coupland 2001a, 2001b, 2007), and other creative and reflexive uses of linguistic material. As Bauman and Briggs write, "performances move the use of heterogeneous stylistic resources, context-sensitive meanings, and conflicting ideologies into a reflexive arena where they can be examined critically" (1990: 60). They thus form the crucibles in which the workings of and struggles between language ideologies can most readily be exam-

ined. Clifton Brown's interview and its various re-contextualizations certainly fall within the definition of performance, "put[ting] the act of speaking on display – objectif[ying] it, lift[ing] it to a degree from its interactional setting and open[ing] it to scrutiny by an audience" (Bauman & Briggs 1990: 73). Consequently, while the data presented below is certainly not the ideal hunting ground for "true Jamaican speech," it can reveal very much about true Jamaicans' attitudes towards ways of speaking.

Performance-oriented perspectives dismiss the search for authentic speech as an abstractly definable entity or system, but the concept of authenticity by no means loses its importance. However, its status shifts to that of a locally emergent construct, actively manipulated in acts of language performance. Such an approach "opens up questions of how and in what regard speakers OWN their speech and commit to its content and pragmatic/semiotic implications" (Coupland 2001a: 347). Conversely, speakers can be dis-owned, denied the right to certain ways of speaking or ways of framing their discourse (see Blommaert 2005). This fact renders linguistic performance a potentially highly politically charged issue with immediate implications for relations of power, as I will demonstrate in my analysis of *Nobody canna cross it*.

As an objectified text, performance is particularly susceptible to expropriation, re-contextualization and adaption into new frameworks of meaning. In fact, this process, is central to the questions of power and ownership that are implicated in performance:

The decontextualization and recontextualization of performed discourse bear upon the political economy of texts, texts and power. Performance is a mode of social production; specific products include texts, decentered discourse. To decontextualize and recontextualize a text is thus an act of control, and in regard to the differential exercise of such control the issue of social power arises. (Baumann & Briggs 1990: 76)

This is precisely the story of *Nobody canna cross it*. An interview is being presented on national television (the first step of re-contextualization with regard to the original

interaction), the material is remixed by a third party into a dance song (adding a layer of further re-contextualization), and from this point on at the latest, the host of responses, quotes, allusions, etc. branch out into a chaotic web of meta-linguistic commentaries and re-appropriations of the texts in question.

Since the goal of the present paper is at least to chart part of this web, a set of tools is required to conceptualize processes of de- and re-contextualization. In addition to the work of Bauman and Briggs (1990) I turn to Erving Goffman's (1974) frame analytical approach. For reasons of time and space I cannot outline frame analysis in its entirety here, but will only provide a brief sketch of those of its elements most immediately relevant to the analysis below. In principle, every "strip of activity" (64) in the world is subject to interpretative acts of re-framing or "rekeying" (79). For instance, the drawing of a gun in "real life" can be rekeyed as part of the carnivalesque frame of a costume party if it accords with the persona the guest assumes, such as a cowboy or a police officer. And if the cocktail party is part of a stage play, the theatrical frame adds an additional keying, so that the activity is now twice removed from what is thought to be its meaning "untransformed" activity (43-44). The result is a layering or "lamination" (82) of frames, applied to an activity, in which usually the outermost layer provides the frame under which the activity is to be understood, whereas the innermost frame is thought of as defining the activity itself. Such frames play a decisive role in governing our understanding of what it is that is happening in any given social situation. For instance, while we would likely break out in panic if someone were to draw a gun and point it at someone else in an untransformed, "real-life" frame of activity, we are perfectly fine watching this happen as part of performance in a theatrical frame.⁴ The transitions into and out of certain

4 The fact that we will be dealing with two different kinds of guns, one an actual weapon equipped to kill and the other merely a theatrical device, poses no objection to this understanding. On the contrary, the reason why we assume – and usually rightly so – that the two are different from each other is not because we have independent knowledge of these objects, but because the respective frames support different interpretations of these objects' nature.

frames can be subtle and elusive, but are often achieved through explicit “bracketing” (252). The arrangement of hall lights going off, stage lights on, and often curtains opening, for instance, clearly brackets the ensuing activity off from that preceding it and keys it into a theatrical frame.

Tracing the lamination of a stretch of discourse through different levels of keying can often teach us a good deal about its evolution as a text. As new frames are applied to it, new ways of interpreting its meaning and its relation to the contexts around it emerge. In this process, aspects that were marginal to the original stretch of discourse may be foregrounded and transformed to become central elements of the newly created text. Likewise, important features of the initial activity may be neglected and even erased.

Another feature of re-keyings, and one that applies more directly to language, is that the different agencies behind the production of an utterance may be separated from each other. Goffman’s (1981) distinction between author, animator and principal is helpful to illustrate the processes at work here. The author is the original source of an utterance, the one who first uttered the words in question. These words are produced, in any given context of utterance, by the animator, the person who currently performs the utterance in interaction. That these two agencies do not always coincide can be seen in the example of reported speech, where the current animator claims to merely recount words originally spoken by someone else. Mary Bucholtz (1999) gives a lucid example of how issues of racial politics and inequality can be implicated in reported speech. The separation of author and animator is also important for the study of speaky spoky discourse, if we accept that the label is something that is retrospectively applied by someone else than the original author of that discourse. Finally, the principal is the agency that lends force to the statements formulated and commits to their propositional content.

To sum up, speakers are becoming increasingly reflexive of language varieties and their meaning and they articulate their own understandings in meta-linguistic commentary and performance. The way they articulate them is often through entextualization of strips of discourse containing enregistered linguistic features. These entextualizations are keyed to evoke certain frames that regulate their relationship to authenticity, ownership and other aspects of social life. To speak with Nikolas Coupland,

the creative entextualization of cultural content and forms does not itself guarantee faithful cultural reproduction. Whether reproduction happens, and what new glosses are added to cultural meanings when they are entextualized, depends crucially on the framing and keying of particular performances. (2001a: 370)

With this theoretical background now established I examine a few of the entextualizations Clifton Brown's interview on TVJ inspired and their respective keyings. In doing so, I attempt to answer the following questions: How can the status of *speaky spoky* best be described? Which features are enregistered to evoke it? Is it monolithic or interactionally versatile, i.e. able to express different stances towards language ideology and language use depending on the frames into which it is keyed? What can be learned from this example about the way Jamaicans relate to their own norms and use of language? I moreover make a methodological point about the importance of performance, entextualization and framing in studying language in the media-saturated, late-modern world. Finally, I address the theoretical question of how to model the relationship between language, authenticity, and social reality dynamically, taking participants' perspectives into account.

2. Analysis

2.1. Heavy rains: The original interview

In this section, I introduce the original interview with Clifton Brown in its context of the news story about the road flooding in rural St. Andrews Parish. I examine the linguistic material of Brown's utterances as well as their sequential positioning vis-a-vis the other parts of the report and the implications of this arrangement for the the frame in which the interview is keyed.

My transcription of the data follows the orthographic system proposed by the Jamaican Language Unit (2009), with the addition of phonetic symbols for sounds not included in their convention, which is designed to represent basilectal JC. Short pauses are represented as a full stop in parentheses; any pause longer than 0.5 seconds is transcribed as its length in seconds in parentheses. A question mark at the end of an utterance indicates rising intonation, not necessarily question syntax. In addition to line numbers, I provide the time stamp for each utterance in the youtube video (kjbeasty 2011). In order to add some additional information about the reception of the video, I include laughter (represented as “@@@”) that occurs in another youtube video of people watching the original airing (tazdkc 2011). These instances are aligned with the points in the original video that trigger them, and are not given a separate time code. They are enclosed in curly brackets to indicate that they are not part of the original interview situation, but reactions to it. Editing decisions such as cuts are indicated as commentary in parentheses. Likewise, unclear utterances are coded as the transcribers best guess, followed by a question mark and enclosed in parentheses. Underlined are features that are of particular interest for the discussion

below.

After a brief announcement by the news studio announcers in a standard variety of Jamaican English that very closely approximates RP, the floor is given to the on-site reporter, Dara Smith. Her speech can also be characterized as acrolectal, although it has a decisively more Jamaican ring, most notably in rhythm, pitch movement, and vowel realization. She introduces the situation at Mavis Bank, mentioning the fact that several hundred people have been left marooned by the floods, and listing three roads that have been rendered impassable. Following this is a cut to an interview with a female local resident who expresses her concern with the situation in fairly basilectal JC. Next, in three brief sentences Dara Smith redirects the report to the road flooding at Mavis Bank before there is a cut to the first part of the interview with Clifton Brown. What is notable here is that she produces two instances of “(a)cross,” both realized with the low back rounded vowel [ɒ:]. Example (1) is a transcript of the first part of Clifton Brown’s interview:

(1) TVJ Interview: Part 1

- 1 2:10 Rait nou (.) is onli uu (0.8) kyan manij di w[ɒ:]ta
2 2:13 (arai if?) wii aroun to help dem
3 2:15 lif dem houva (1.0)
4 2:17 is onli so dem kyan get (.) fi kom houva
(CUT)
5 2:19 noobodi kyana kr[ɒ:]s it= {@@@?}
6 2:20 is onli uu andasten it (.)

- 7 2:22 laik a fishameen (.) an a fishahumeen (0.5) {@@@}
- 8 2:24 uu kyan swim
- 9 2:26 ka if yu kyanat swim (.)
- 10 2:27 chos me (.) yu g[ɔ:]n to sen tomas pan

After this, Dara Smith again takes the floor and recounts how a truck has stalled in the middle of the flooded road. She then moves on to give a local perspective on the situation, expressing many residents' anger at not having received any government support in their predicament. After explicitly stating "they are appealing for help" (2:52), there is another cut to Clifton Brown:

(2) TVJ Interview Part 2

- 11 2:54 yestedei (.) de bos was kaming fram taun
- 12 2:57 wi=almous luus (.) a bosloud a piiprol
- 13 2:58 jos de m[ɜ]rsi af gaad
- 14 3:00 wai de bos doun gou houva
- (CUT)
- 15 3:01 wi niid som asistaan=wi niid a brij (0.5)
- 16 3:03 rait hiir in rob[ɜ]rts fiil (0.8)
- 17 3:05 biko(s) natim de kidz dem kyan get=m (.) go to skuul
- 18 3:07 de l[ɔ:]st taim orikien av ded op (.) to beri op de tap {@@@}

- 19 3:11 an nou (.) noting kud appen (0.5)
20 3:13 so laik (.) wi lak awei in de wildanes? {@@@}

The report then comes to a close with a brief concluding statement by Dara Smith and another short interview with the female resident mentioned above. Clearly, this is not the naturally occurring, unmonitored speech data typically sought after for linguistic analysis. The interviewee is obviously aware of the camera and microphone in front of him, as well as the fact that this interview is going to air on national television. He can therefore be expected to rigidly monitor his speech in order to produce what he perceives as institutionally appropriate language. Furthermore, decisions as to which parts of the interview are included have been made during post-production in the TVJ studios (for instance the interviewer's questions have been omitted completely), so that what is available for analysis is not a stretch of connected talk, but a pastiche of utterances consciously selected by a third party with its own interests in mind. This would be poor data indeed if one wanted to study "the way people really speak." But the present approach regards authenticity not as an etic fact of life, but an emic concept with particular local meanings. These subjective notions about authenticity will become increasingly important as I analyze the uptake of the interview. Nonetheless, I must first start with as objective a description of the linguistic material as possible, which will form the background against which participants' re-contextualizations and uptake will be analyzed.

In terms of individual features, most of Clifton Brown's speech can be classified as mesolectal. It includes creole forms such as the absence of the copula ("wii aroun tu help dem," line 2), purposive "fi" ("fi kom houva," line 4), zero past marking ("wi=almous luus a bosloud a piiprol," line 12), final consonant cluster reduction (e.g. "almous," line 12, or "asistan," line 15), and zero passive marking ("wi lak awei

in de wildanes,” line 20). But there are also forms more closely aligned with acrolectal speech such as overt marking of past progressive in “de bos was kaming from taun” (line 11) or the realization of the vowel in “ m[ɜ]rsi” (line 13) and “ rob[ɜ]rts” (line 16) as open-mid front unrounded vowel. Additionally, there are several intermediate forms that share elements of both lower as well as upper mesolectal speech. The expression “kyanat swim” (line 9) features palatalization of “a” after a velar stop, which is a non-acrolectal, though wide-spread feature of JC. On the other hand, negation is explicitly marked with “nat” instead of nasalization of the vowel (“kyahn”), which would be the default JC strategy. Likewise, “de kidz dem” in line 17 uses the basilectal plural marker “dem” after the noun, but the noun itself is a metropolitan form that contrasts with JC “pikni.” The plural is also redundantly marked with the standard English plural morpheme. Finally, a feature that could not be well represented in the transcript is the rhythm of Clifton Brown’s utterances. He rapidly produces stretches of two to ten syllables with typically short, but audible pauses in between them. The result is a certain “burstiness” (Schnoebelen 2010).

Thus far, Clifton Brown’s speech seems a typical instance of mesolectal rural Jamaican speech. However, there are several features which indicate that the speaker is aiming for a position up on the acrolectal end of the continuum (“proper English” in local terms) that is out of his natural range. Both features mentioned by Patrick (1999: 277) are present in the excerpt: insertion of [h] in front of vowel-initial words (“houva,” lines 3, 4, and 14; “fishahumeen,” line 7) and rounded realization of low back vowels (“w[ɔ:]ta,” line 1; “kr[ɔ:]s,” line 5; “g[ɔ:]n,” line 10; and “l[ɔ:]st,” line 18). Additionally, there is a feature which Patrick does not mention, but which also seems to fall into this category: fronting and raising of the low back vowel (“fishameen” and “fishahumeen” in line 7 and “sen tomas” in line 10), resulting in a pronunciation that approaches [ɛ]. These variants are not “traditional” features of speaky spoky, but may reflect a re-orientation towards North American varieties as

carriers of prestige. Particularly the word “man” is a very salient lexical item which has a raised and fronted vowel in most North American varieties of English. How the two processes of hypercorrection affecting the low back vowel – rounding to imitate a perceived RP target and fronting and raising to emulate a North American one – are distributed cannot be ascertained with certainty for this limited data set. Yet at least in this transcript the latter variant seems to be reserved for pre-nasal contexts.

Linguistically, then, Clifton Brown fulfills all the criteria given by Patrick to stamp someone as talking *speaky spoky*. Yet a closer look at the social context of speech production opens up some tensions with the author’s description. Recall that Patrick sees *speaky spoky* working as carrying out “not conflict between social groups so much as among comparable members of the same group” and it is used “to brand [someone] a social climber, opportunist, lame or traitor” (1999: 278). While it may be argued that Brown benefits from the situation at Mavis Bank in that it gives him media attention, it is hard to interpret this as his main motivation during the interview. For one, he is apparently present at the site to help people cross the river prior to the arrival of the news team, which is the reason he is selected as an informant in the first place. And while he does frame himself as perhaps a somewhat heroic figure in the interview, he does not claim this status all to himself, but consistently speaks in the second person plural (lines 2, 12, 15, 20), emphasizing community solidarity. Likewise, the bottom line of the interview is not self-praise, but a call for the construction of a bridge, concern for the children in the community, and frustration with government neglect. It is therefore unlikely that “comparable members of the same group” should accuse Brown of betraying the local team, and indeed we shall see that this is not the case. What I wish to emphasize is that *speaky spoky* is not as easily reducible to a shared set of norms as Patrick’s theoretical focus – and perhaps his data from an urban setting – suggests. Questions such as who gets to define a stretch of discourse as *speaky spoky*, who gets to laugh at what precise aspects of said dis-

course, and what happens to the originally intended meanings of it are non-trivial and can be politically important. I will turn to these questions as I trace the entextualization and keying of parts of Brown's original interview through various contexts.

First, however, some more attention to the original is warranted. Here I speculate, with the support of additional evidence (the laughter from the youtube video of people watching the original interview), about what made Brown's speech so humorous to many Jamaicans in the first place by examining which parts of it viewers explicitly react to. My data for doing so is another youtube video, showing a re-screening of Clifton Brown's interview on a television screen and recording audience laughter (transcribed as “@@@” above) in the background. It is not easy to always identify at which points during the video viewers burst out into laughter. There are three clear cases where the female holding the camera is heard chuckling, but it is obvious from the context that others are present and at least at one point (at 2:20 in the original video) it appears that someone else is laughing, although the camera microphone barely picks the up the sound. This latter is in fact the first instance of laughter that can be heard on the video. It follows the statement “noobodi kyana kr[ɔ:]s it” (line 5). Two lines down, the person holding the camera bursts out into giggles following the utterance “laik a fishameen (.) an a fishahumeen” (line 7). These two brief snippets neatly contain the three elements of speaky spoky identified above: rounded realization of a low back vowel (“kr[ɔ:]s”), pre-vocalic h-insertion (“fishahumeen”), and raising and fronting of the low back vowel (“meen”, “fishahumeen”). The next clearly audible instance of laughter again follows an intonation unit (in line 18) which contains one of these features (“de l[ɔ:]st taim”). This suggests that listeners are keenly attuned to Brown's manipulation of linguistic variables beyond the reach of his mesolectal range of competence. A final burst of laughter follows the last line of the interview. This one, I suggest, does not react to any specific feature of the preceding discourse, but rather serves as a device for “bracketing” (Goffman 1974: 252).

The viewers are watching a video-taped version of the news story, and their comments suggest they are not watching it for the first time. So the person holding the camera here anticipates the end of Clifton Brown's interview and marks the end of "the funny part" here with laughter that is not triggered by any specific utterance, but is a retrospective summary of the humorous key of the entire preceding discourse, which at the same time marks a transition out of that key.

The linguistic elements which listeners cue into, then, seem obvious enough. But recall that the first item the viewers above react to is the form "kr[D:]s," and that the same word is produced with virtually the exact same pronunciation by news anchor Dara Smith just before the Brown interview. She seems to get away with it without inspiring any commentary whatsoever. I do not deny that a good deal of this can be explained on purely linguistic grounds. In general, Smith displays a much firmer command of standard-like English, in which the above realization of the word "cross" is a perfectly normal occurrence. Brown's speech, on the other hand, in the four lines leading up to his first production of "kr[D:]s," contains several more basilectal forms as well as hypercorrect h-insertion, marking him as a clearly non-standard speaker. Still, there are other elements at play here that correlate with the purely linguistic dimension and that are worth examining to show the underlying ideologies about language use.

The framing of individual voices in the news story follows an established pattern which assigns clearly defined participant roles to the different speakers. Viewers are introduced to the story by a very properly dressed female announcer in the TVJ studio whose speech register is that of the written standard and approaches RP-like pronunciation. Next, there is a cut to the on-site reporter who is framed by the camera standing in front of the flooded road, in the thick of the action. Her speech is completely standard in terms of grammar, but has a decidedly more "local" flavor in terms of pronunciation. The persona Dara Smith embodies serves the double function

of maintaining the serious, high-register frame of news reporting but at the same time vouching for local authenticity via her physical presence on site as well as, I argue, her language being “closer to the people.” Alternating with Smith’s report is the voice of a local female resident who speaks a rather basilectal variety. She is filmed standing in front of thick greenery and bamboo as she gives her account of the situation, evoking the impression of being out in the wilderness. Hence there is a clear progression: from a) the TVJ studio, a place of editorial authority where people dress properly and standard English reigns to b) the voice of the on-site reporter, who has to perform the double function of representing the network and “educated” viewers in her dress and speech while at the same time evoking credibility, involvement, and proximity to locals and finally c) the voices of locals themselves, relied upon for immediate, unmitigated, and authentic experience of the rural working class, an identity they are expected to reflect in their speech. Incidentally, this progression coincides with the skin color of the speakers: the further the story moves into the realm of the “untransformed” rural experience, the more heavily pigmented speakers become. Iconic connections (Irvine & Gal 2000: 37) are thus drawn between appearance (dress, skin color), location (urban vs. rural), social class and language production. The binary distinction between the sets [urban, educated, upper-class, light skin, “proper English”] and [rural, uneducated, working-class, dark skin, “Patwa”] is recursively applied to the way each pair of juxtaposed speakers (news announcer – Dara Smith, Dara Smith – local resident) contrast with each other.

Into this framing and the expectations created through it, enter Clifton Brown, whose appearance reinforces a perception of him as a rural, working class individual. He is seen wearing a white hard hat and a sort of harness or back strap, obviously work attire for manual labor. But Brown’s language performance does not conform with the expectations set up by all of this. Rather than performing the “authentic” rural speaker, he makes his best attempt at “proper English” to convey what is an im-

portant message to him. This fails to conform to the language ideological backdrop the entire news story has been constructed to set up and thus needs to be accounted for locally. The label *speaky spoky* provides a readily available resource to do this while still leaving the basic ideologies intact. My point here is that it is not exclusively Brown's linguistic material that renders his discourse as *speaky spoky*, but at least in part that discourse's embedding in a context that very rigidly relies on and constructs specific ideologies of language use and authentic speech.

Finally, before I move on to trace the re-contextualization of the interview data, a quick note is in place about their entextualization, their being understandable as a text to be quoted, re-used, etc. in this original setting. A lot of work is done in this regard by the post-production work of TVJ already. There is no telling what precisely the original conversation between Brown and Smith looked like, what parts of it were omitted, what the sequential ordering was, etc. The material the news story presents is already cut, condensed, cleaned of interviewer questions and framed as a specific text that is part of the larger report. It is furthermore widely available on television and via youtube in digitized form on the Internet for users to re-watch at their leisure. The interview data, then, is already a fully entextualized and recontextualized stretch of discourse. It therefore invites and facilitates the recontextualizations I now turn to.

2.2. Going viral: DJ Powa's *Nobody canna cross it*

Clifton Brown really became a mass cultural phenomenon when Jamaican DJ Kevin Hamilton ("DJ Powa") chopped and looped samples from the interview and laid them over a self-produced electronic beat. The resulting youtube video (kevy2c 2011) re-

verberated well beyond Jamaica and has currently collected well over three million clicks. Apart from the beat, both the linguistic as well as the visual material of the video are made up of parts of the original news story. Much of the appeal of *Nobody canna cross it*, then, relies on the artful juxtaposition and rhythmic patterning of this material. Here, I focus on how this creation highlights certain aspects of Brown's speech, erases others, and, finally, creates new texts that were not part of the original data, but have moved on to be readily identifiable in Jamaican popular culture.

A full transcript of the video is given in Appendix I. The transcription conventions are the same as above, except that places where there have been cuts to the original material are marked by a double slash. Curly brackets contain material by other speakers (Dara Smith; the female resident) as well as parts of Clifton Brown's speech that have been manipulated as to their pitch. In example (3) I give the chorus, which is repeated five times throughout the song.

(3) Nobody canna cross it: Chorus

- 6 0:14 noobodi kyana kr[D:]s it
7 0:15 is onli uu= // kyan // andastan it= // kr[D:]s it //
8 0:17 noobodi kyana kr[D:]s it
9 0:18 is onli= // fishameen (.) an a fisha (.) // humeen= // chos me //
10 0:20 noobodi kyana kr[D:]s it
11 0:21 is onli uu (.) // kyan manij di w[D:]ta //
12 0:24 is onli so (d)em (.) // kom houva //
13 0:25 arai if wii aroun to hel= // hel= // help dem

Two aspects are immediately striking about this excerpt. First, in only eight lines (eight bars of the song), there are 14 cuts made to the original material. This process builds on and enhances the impression of burstiness in Brown’s speech in the process of aligning it with the rhythm, which DJ Powa later claimed to have composed specifically to match the prosody of Brown’s interview (mryardvybz 2011). Second, the chorus displays a particular density of the three linguistic elements characteristic of speaky spoky: rounding of the low back vowel in certain contexts, h-insertion, and raising and fronting of the low back vowel in other contexts. The entire song contains the following numbers of these features:

Table 2: *Feature frequencies in Nobody canna cross it and in the TVJ interview*

Feature	Counts in Nobody canna cross it	Relative frequency in Nobody canna cross it	Relative frequency in original
[ɔ:]	33	0.078	0.030
[h]	12	0.028	0.030
[ɛ]	12	0.028	0.023

The last column of the table gives the relative frequency of each item in Brown’s TVJ interview for comparison. Especially the rates of occurrence for [ɔ:] are significantly higher than in the original interview. The other two features remain fairly stable as to their relative frequency, but the fact that they cluster particularly densely in the chorus lines likewise foregrounds them as aspects of Brown’s speech that are put on display and objectified in the song. Thus, consciously or not, DJ Powa highlights all the “non-normal” parts of Brown’s discourse, his rhythm and his speaky spoky phonetics, in particular the vowel [ɔ:]. Especially the chorus lines further contextualize the phrases containing these forms and make them units of their own that

can easily be extracted, quoted, and recognized.

At the same time, there are aspects of the original interview that DJ Powa's remix downplays or erases completely. Erasure is a central semiotic process that sustains linguistic ideologies. It simply "renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible" that are "inconsistent with the ideological scheme" (Irvine & Gal 2000: 38). As musical originality, play with sound, and "non-normal" language use take center stage, the actual situation that caused the interview to be conducted in the first place is lost from sight. What remains of the original story are samples of Dara Smith's voice-over that bracket the beginning and the end of the song. The phrase "natim de kidz dem kyan go to skool" (56) is the only line of the song that retains traces of Brown's political message. Crucially, his call "wi niid som asistaan=wi niid a brij" (line 15 in the original interview) is entirely omitted from DJ Powa's remix. This may be done purely out of rhythmic considerations, but it is equally plausible that the inclusion of issues with real political stakes would interfere with the keying of a humorous performance frame. The outcome, in any case, is a text that is purely performative and comic and virtually emptied of any propositional content.

What happens in the case of *Nobody canna cross it* is not unlike reported speech (see e.g. Bucholtz 1999): the author (Goffman 1981) is credited with providing linguistic material but loses control over its re-appropriation and animation in new contexts. Insofar as DJ Powa is at liberty to cut, mix, clip, and distort the original utterances at his will, he can be described as the animator, although he never actually utters words in the strict articulatory sense. This gives him the freedom to re-contextualize and re-key Brown's speech at will. Finally, identifying the principal behind *Nobody canna cross it* is not an easy task. On the surface level, the video shows the face of Clifton Brown virulently accompanying his words. In this regard, it would seem adequate to identify him as the authority committed to the song's words.

However, despite the individual words being the same as in the original interview, their propositional content gets virtually lost in the act of remixing. The question arises, then, what exactly is being committed to in *Nobody canna cross it*. There is simply no clearly identifiable message beyond the meaning of individual lines. One interpretation would be that the song effectively erases the principal as an agency in this specific instance of speech production. But it might also be said that the keying of the entire video into a humorous frame is the main “content” *Nobody canna cross it* conveys. Hence, DJ Powa also assumes the role of principal. In any case, Clifton Brown is denied the opportunity of backing his intended message up with moral authority.

But not only do elements of the original text get highlighted or erased in DJ Powa’s remix, new forms also emerge. Playing on and intensifying some of the awkward collocations (from a perspective of standard English) Clifton Brown uses, *Nobody canna cross it* forges together constituents of the original interview in a way that creates new utterances. The most prominent one is “de bos kyan swim”, which is found six times altogether (3 times in line 39, once in lines 40 and 44) in the song. This sentence was never produced by Brown in the first place, but is a blending of “de bos was kaming fram taun” (line 11 in example (2)) and “uu kyan swim” (line 8 in example (1)). The construction of this phrase alludes to another feature typically associated with speaky spoky described above, the use of malapropisms in an attempt to use “big words.” Much as reported speech has the ability of framing a person as the author of utterances they never in fact uttered, so DJ Powa is able to put combinations of words into Clifton Brown’s mouth. It is, I believe, not coincidental that the resulting collocation sounds awkward and thus further frames its author as maximally distant from standard-like speech. Nor is this a minor change in the presentation of speech performance. The fact that “de bos kyan swim” came to be the most frequently quoted line of the song alongside its title attests to its salience.

This frequent quoting of individual lines demonstrates the entextualizing work the song does, the work “of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit – a text – that can be lifted out of its interactional setting” (Bauman & Briggs 1990: 73). This is most often understood as loosening an utterance’s ties to the specific context of utterance. Yet I suggest *Nobody canna cross it* goes a step further, by not only mitigating *contextual* embedding, but effectively stripping away any content associated with the original discourse. The result is a nearly purely objectified language object that is maximally self-sufficient and contained as a unit of text and hence freely re-contextualizable. Referential meaning gets virtually entirely replaced by the indexicalities of language form (c. Blommaert 2005), inviting reflexive attention to these forms themselves.

What *Nobody canna cross it* embodies, then, is pure language stylization, a process that “dislocate[s] speakers from their most immediate socio-cultural meanings of their own speech styles” (Coupland 2001a: 347). From what has been argued above, this appears quite clearly as a mechanism of symbolic violence and “de-voicing” in the present case. However, Coupland cautions that “[a]lthough stylization is a form of strategic deauthentication, its ultimate relationship with authenticity is complex” (2001a: 345). Its effects are not laughter AT the stylized speech, but rather laughter WITH it, with the understanding that both performer and audience at least potentially belong to the group of speakers being stylized (371). It is hard to say with certainty whether this is the case with *Nobody canna cross it*. While the song empties Clifton Brown’s speech of its propositional content, it does not give any explicit contextualizing cues (Gumperz 1992) that create a distance between the speaker and the audience or establish an antagonistic relationship of ridicule. The fact that his speech is re-framed as musical performance and that much contemporary music in Jamaica is strongly associated with lower-mesolectal JC allows for interpretations of Brown’s status as something akin to a dancehall performer, with an element of ironic but

perhaps not malevolent distance. The stress on the unusual and inauthentic mentioned above, however, also leaves open the possibility of more hostile interpretations. The video is bivalent (Woolard 1999) in this regard. It leaves open various shades of identification and distancing. What is the crucial difference to Coupland's data, however, is that the author and animator do not coincide. The original producer of the language put on display no longer has control over the stylization process and hence cannot influence claims made about ownership and commitment (Coupland 2001a: 347).

2.3. Resurfacing of the author: Clifton Brown on Smile JA

Were the story of *Nobody canna cross it* to end here, little more could be said about it beyond the speculations engaged in above. However, I now turn to a set of data that brings the author of the original discourse back into contact with his by that time heavily entextualized words. Shortly after the song went viral on youtube, both Clifton Brown as well as Kevin Hamilton were invited to an interview on Smile JA, a morning show on TVJ hosted at the time by Neville Bell and Simon Crosskill. As the interview unfolds, different perspectives on the importance of the texts in question arise and are in competition with each other. I analyze several stretches from the 12 minutes long interview, which is also available on youtube (mryardvybz 2011).

The transcription conventions used below extend the above ones in order to deal with the sometimes messy flow of real-time conversational data. In addition to line numbers and time code in the video, a column for speaker is added. NB is show host Neville Bell, SC is his co-moderator Simon Crosskill, CB is Clifton Brown and

DJP is Kevin Hamilton, aka DJ Powa. Overlapping turns are aligned vertically below each other and marked with opening square brackets at the point where the overlap begins. Three dots in parentheses mark stretches of discourse that are not clearly audible and whose exact wording is questionable. Lexical stress is indicated through capitalization of all letters of a word or syllable. A particular problem lies in representing the different varieties of the speakers orthographically. For Clifton Brown, who speaks lower-mesolectal JC throughout, I continue to use the orthography proposed by the JLU. Neville Bell and his colleague, however, speak fairly standard-like English for most parts of the interview. I decided to represent their speech with standard orthography and only diverge from this in cases where their speech markedly diverges from standard pronunciation or grammar.

Before the interview begins, two studio news announcers introduce it as the “bite of the week” on Smile JA. After a brief mention of the original news story, there is a cut to the part of that report where Clifton Brown first speaks. Following this, another cut is made and we are in Neville Bell’s studio:

(4) Smile Jamaica interview: Intro

1	0:44	NB	@@@
2		SC	@@@ (continues through entire sequence)
3	0:47	NB	alright (0.8)
4	0:49		here is (0.5)
5	0:51		first of all (.) de de de man who who uttered those (.) NOW (.) immortal words (0.5)

- 6 0:57 Clifton Brown (.)
- 7 0:59 an then (.) de gentleman who helped to take those words (.) and
send it right around the globe (.) with music attached (.) DJ
Powa

In the first few lines of the studio interaction, not much is said, but a lot happens. Immediately after the cut into the studio, NB and his colleague are shown shaking with laughter and with tears in their eyes. It takes them seconds to control themselves and even then, NB appears to need all his restraint not to burst out into laughter again, as the many short pauses in his opening remarks indicate. SC is not so restrained and simply continues laughing and giggling through the entire sequence. This is quite an unusual way to open an interview and it breaches the conventional rules of doing so. Even in a relaxed atmosphere like breakfast television, while it may be acceptable to start an interview on a jocular note, the audience expects to be introduced to what exactly there is to laugh about instead of merely being confronted with the laughter of the moderators. Beginning the interview in this way is a powerful bracketing mechanism that leaves little doubt as to the keying of the ensuing interaction. What is to follow, it implies, is not only light-hearted humor that leaves everyone smiling, but sheer hilarity, the power of which is demonstrated by the moderators' inability to conform to genre conventions they can be assumed to be well aware of, but are unable to maintain under such strong emotional excess.

Thus, even before Clifton Brown is addressed, even before the camera pans in on him for the first time, a frame is already established that normatively guides interpretations of the interaction that is to ensue. Being keyed in such a way, there is little hope for Brown to engage in a serious conversation on equal footing. Yet engage in a conversation he must. At 0:58 there is a cut to Clifton Brown's face, just as he is

introduced by Bell. He is smiling along with the moderators, but the expression on his face suggests that he is not entirely sure what exactly is so funny. The answer to this question is made perfectly obvious to the audience early on, as Bell engages Brown in conversation:

(5) Smile Jamaica interview: Prompting

- 1 1:15 NB di second thing I was trying to identify is why Clifton Brown
was standing op in di people river telling that [(.) noobodi
kyana kr[ɔ:]s it
- 2 1:20 SC [@@@
- 3 Clifton [@@@ wa appen
- 4 1:22 NB [so (.) ey let's hey (0.5) let's start let's start with you
(pointing at CB) (.) why were you why were you there?
- 5 1:30 CB oukei is de kamiunitii weer hai liv
- 6 1:31 NB mhmm
- 7 1:32 CB (.) ai hav tu kom kr[ɔ:]s (.) dat [brij
- 8 1:34 NB [@@@
- 9 1:34 SC [@@@
- 10 1:35 CB tu gou w[ɜ]k.
- 11 1:36 NB so you couldn't kr[ɔ:]s it either?
- 12 1:38 CB (.) ya laik mii (.) we liiv a de kamiunitii
- 13 1:40 NB yea

14	1:40	CB	kyan kr[ɔ:]s it an: laik (0.5) fiu mar piiprol (0.8)
15	1:44		bot laik di piipl dem (.) outsaid di ka[miunitii de outa dem (...) dem kyana kr[ɔ:]s it
16	1:47	NB	[they kyana kr[ɔ:]s it
17	1:48		@@@
18	1:48	SC	[@@@
19	1:48	CB	so wen a sei noobodi kyana kr[ɔ:]s it (.) a simplii miin laik
20	1:53	NB	only yuu an a fiu ada=
21	1:54	CB	=ya uu kyan manij di w[ɔ:]ta
22	1:56	SC	@@@
23	1:56	CB	biikaa if yu kyana manij di w[ɔ:]ta
24	1:57	NB	yu kyana kr[ɔ:]s it
25	1:58	CB	di w[ɔ:]ta will teik yu awei
26	1:59	SC	Clifton
27	2:00	CB	[ye sa
28	2:00	SC	[we we di aksent kom from?
29	2:02	CB	(0.4) wel ai get the apsent fram b[ɜ]r [fram mai [maami yu nuo
30	2:04	NB	[@@@
31	2:04	SC	[@@@

This entire sequence is quite obviously engaged in by NB and SC with the sole purpose of prompting Clifton Brown to produce as many instances of the words

“(noobodi kyana) kr[ɔ:]s it” as possible, which at this stage have clearly become a text of its own, quite independent of its original context of utterance. Neville Bell’s reference to it as “these now immortal words” in line 3 of example (4) further support this fact. Even before addressing Brown directly, Bell introduces this theme by double-voicing his interlocutor in line 1 of example (5), performing the text “noobodi kyana kr[ɔ:]s it.” This is met with spontaneous laughter by his co-moderator. When NB gives over the floor to Brown, it is ostensibly with a straight-forward question about the situation at Mavis Banks at the time of the flooding and Brown’s involvement in it (line 4). But as the latter starts to explain, it becomes painfully clear from NB and SC’s reactions that what they really are interested in is getting Brown himself to animate the text “noobodi kyana kr[ɔ:]s it.” The patterning of laughter is telling here. All of NB and SC’s outbursts until line 30, which usually occur in conjunction, follow instances of CB producing variants of the text in question (lines 7, 16), with the exception of is saying “ya uu kyan manij di w[ɔ:]ta” (line 21). This last instance contains at least the vowel in question, making it clear that this is the feature that listeners cue into throughout the exchange.

What is going on here can be described as a form of verbal play which extends the original humorous act of watching DJ Powa’s video and quoting from it. Now, it is no longer sufficient to produce the funny text that is at the center of the game, but the new challenge arises with getting somebody else to produce this text. This somebody else is the original author of the words and making him re-produce these words as a text to be laughed at is a game of power. In this sequence from the beginning of the interview NB and SC are quite successful in this endeavor. The resources available to NB and SC to ensure success are their positions in control of the interview, their more extended competence in acrolectal Jamaican speech and the set of ideologies that privilege their social identities over that of CB. The latter seems oblivious to the status his utterance has acquired and its changed indexicality and

produces instances of it apparently in complete ignorance of these facts. At the end of (5), SC even points him to his accent being the comic feature in this interaction by asking about where it comes from (line 28), but Brown still answers in a straightforward, serious manner. Stating that this is his normal, vernacular way of speaking (line 29), he refuses to acknowledge the recontextualization of his previous statements as comic texts that are read as iconic of speaky spoky.

This pattern continues for most part of the interview, whenever Brown is selected by the moderators as their interlocutor. As they push the game further and further, Brown is getting visibly irritated. However, powerful institutional inequalities leave him very little room to control the flow of the conversation and to lead it in a direction more aligned with his purposes. Example (6) is a sequence that occurs near the end of the interview.

(6) Smile Jamaica interview: The bridge needs attention

- | | | | |
|---|-------|----|--|
| 1 | 08:39 | CB | sa di brid niid soo=sam atenshan yu noo |
| 2 | 08:41 | SC | mhm= |
| 3 | 08:42 | CB | ka wi yuus tu hav a haiya won yu noo (0.5) |
| 4 | 08:44 | | ya bot andastan laik (.) yu knoo wen di brij get les kliir an i=it
raten an den a harikien kom (.) it blou awee |
| 5 | 08:50 | NB | [mhm |
| 6 | 08:51 | CB | [an so (.) de=d=de freem a di brij dem stil is der (.) de haiya brij |
| 7 | 08:56 | | so det wan wa em put ina riva bed laik is a temporal? |
| 8 | 08:59 | | bot op til nou noobodi peyin atenshan tu di temporal brij? |

9 09:02 so i=it hav pon jenereishan opon jenereishan ontill mii: (.) is
sombodi huol mi han an (tijmen?) tu kr[ɔ:]s dat brij

10 09:09 kaa somtaim wi=yu hafi weit til di w[ɔ:]ta wi doun kr[ɔ:]s di
brij we de it [riili

11 09:12 NB [no

12 09:13 SC no

13 09:13 CB wi dat volKEEanaa (.) presha

14 09:15 [wi=weit til i=wi kyan kom chu

15 09:15 SC [hehehe [@@@

16 09:17 CB [ka wen ai kr[ɔ:]sing det w[ɔ:]ta (.) wen ai kr[ɔ:]sing
det w[ɔ:]ta

17 09:20 NB (to SC) [shhhh.

18 09:20 CB ai f[ɜ]:rst (.) ai f[ɜ]:rst hafi (0.5) amm (.) yuus laik ma bodi weit

19 09:26 an riilaiz dat ai kyan go chuu (.) an yuus laik a stik

20 09:29 NB tu test [hou fas it floin?

21 09:30 CB [yea

22 09:31 no tu fiil out if der is a di huol

23 09:33 NB [ah

24 09:33 CB [laik if a jop ina (...) (.) yu goin f[ɔ:]sen

25 09:36 SC @[@@

26 09:37 CB [bikaa wi hav tu aalweis [kliin dii (.) kliin di brij

27 09:38 NB [@@@

28 09:39 CB so wen dei test it laik dis? laik a blain maan?

29 09:42 NB [ye

30 09:42 SC [@@@

31 09:43 CB we de fain se (.) yu kyan jop tuu?

32 09:46 ye des de taim [wee (.) we=w=wi jaiv akr[ɔ:]s

33 09:47 SC [@@@

34 09:49 NB [@@@

35 09:49 CB so wi na jaivin chuu long (.) y=hafi (.) [fost

36 09:51 NB [make sure noobodi
kyan a kr[ɔ:]s

37 09:54 SC [@@@

38 09:54 CB [ya (0.5) it after y=yu riili du da f[ɔ:]stenin (.) [yu kyan go chu

39 09:58 SC [@@@

40 09:59 NB I think yu get anada lain fi=[fi di tiuun yu noo

41 10:01 SC [@@@

42 10:02 NB noobodi kyana f[ɔ:]sen @@@

Many aspects of the sequential pattern of the previous sequence are still intact here. NB and SC's laughter still tends to co-occur and is repeatedly triggered by Brown's production of the form "kr[ɔ:]s" (lines 32, 36). But several things have changed compared to the beginning of the interview. In this passage, it is Brown who initiates the topic of attention to the bridge. Unlike earlier on, he manages to hold the floor the first ten lines, interrupted only by brief backchannel cues from NB and SC

(lines 2, 5, 11, 12). It is only his production of the words “volKEEEnaa presha” in line 13 that elicits a chuckle from SC. Here, however, NB quickly steps in and directs SC explicitly to suppress his laughter (“shhhh,” line 17). At this point in the conversation it is not entirely clear why NB does so. Given the emotional and personal content of CB’s talk (seen for instance by his heightened stress in “volKEEEnaa”), a plausible explanation would be that NB acknowledges that this is not a laughing matter and attempts to move the interaction out of the comical frame it has thus far taken place in. But as the following conversation unfolds it is obvious that this is not the case. A couple of lines down from NB’s silencing SC, both moderators again display the established pattern of laughter effected by the features outlined above.

What is happening, then, rather than an accommodation to CB’s interactional position, is a form of “fabrication [...] the intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that a party of one or more others will be induced to have a false belief about what it is that is going on” (Goffman 1974: 83). It is an attempt on the part of the two moderators not to leave the comic frame, but to make CB believe the comic frame has been left while in reality it is still intact. The reason for this strategy may perhaps be seen in CB’s speech up to this point. For several intonation units he does not produce any of the entextualized features that have been established as the carriers of humor and triggers for laughter in this interaction. Perhaps NB suspects that CB has become aware of their ridicule and is now consciously monitoring his speech. This results in a shift in strategy, requiring a professed move away from the game frame and towards that of straight talk.

The success of this strategy is attested by the following exchange (lines 16-38), in which CB produces a quite dense cluster of instances of [ɔ:]. Moreover, NB is rewarded for his manipulation of the situation by CB producing yet a new expression containing the vowel sound in question: “f[ɔ:]sen” (line 24). This is met with spontaneous laughter by both CB and SC, and sparks an on-the-spot entextualization and re-

contextualization as “anada lain fi=fi di tiuun” (line 40). With this explicit recontextualization, at the latest, the professed frame of straight talk is given up and it is made clear that CB has been contained to animate text for the amusement of the moderators.

It is quite surprising that, given the clearly marked frame of mockery that extends over almost the entire 12 minutes of the interview, Brown never confronts the moderators directly. During their bursts of laughter, when the camera is on him, an uncomfortable and annoyed look can be seen on his face, but he never verbalizes these feelings explicitly. This fact may be read as evidence for the strongly felt imbalance of institutional power between the moderators and the studio guest. The former speak acrolectal Jamaican English (except for deliberate code-switches), represent the urban upper class, and clearly have a better command of the interactive domain of television talk. In the face of this situation, it is not hard to imagine Brown’s linguistic and social insecurity heightening to the extent of preventing him from speaking his mind. Yet, neither does he give up on the framing he initially expected, serious talk about the necessity for a bridge in Roberts Field. As seen above, he sticks to this topic and continuously attempts to redirect the flow of conversation into its direction. While this provides NB and SC with countless opportunities to elicit instances of “kr[ɔ:]s it” and other enregistered features of speaky spoky from Brown, it also keeps the political question on the agenda and requires more and more effort from the moderators in their attempts to maintain the comic frame:

(7) Smile Jamaica interview: Pouring cold water

- 1 11:08 SC [ai hope
2 11:08 NB [(...)]

3 11:09 SC in a serious way dat dey=dey really look after di bridge though

4 11:11 dat's I mean [some

5 11:13 NB [ohh stop pouring cold water on it who cares about
de bridge?

6 11:16 SC (pointing at CB) yu (.) yu don't care about di bridge?

7 11:18 CB wal de houl k[ɔ:]miunitii [kyers it

8 11:20 SC [@@[@

9 11:20 NB [@@[@

10 11:21 CB [yea de houl k[ɔ:]miunitii
bikaa de long an shot of it

11 11:23 SC @[@@@

12 11:24 CB [laik (.) yu no som taam wen di rein faal an de de kidz dem
goan tu skuul?

13 11:27 NB aha

14 11:27 CB sombadi haf tu bii DIER

15 11:29 NB fi help dem kr[ɔ:]s

16 11:30 CB fi TEIK bak di kidz dem HOUVA (1.0)

17 11:33 NB yea=

18 11:33 SC =yea

19 11:34 CB ai noo situweishan weer (0.8) piipl bin WASHD af di brij an wi
hafu yuus roop an

20 11:40 NB [kyatch dem bak?

- 21 11:40 CB [chrou it tu di man kyatch im bak yu no
- 22 11:42 so ai=ai y=yu so as yu hiir mi taak (.) is somting insaid a mi
GROU wid it ya anastan
- 23 11:46 NB pashan
- 24 11:47 CB ya dat pashan it GROU wid it
- 25 11:49 SC ya right Clifton good to meet you
- 26 11:51 (turning from CB to DJP) Kevin ah DJ Powa Hamilton

This sequence, which occurs at the very end of the interview and is the last interaction between NB, SC, and CB, starts with SC explicitly acknowledging the problem of the bridge in Roberts Field. His interjection “in a serious way” (line 3) sets this statement off from the preceding action, which has been keyed in a comic frame. In this way, it can also be read as an explicit bracketing attempt, marking a transition out of that frame. Bell is quick to interrupt SC in an attempt to prevent this bracketing. He directly and bluntly trivializes the importance of the political question at stake, stating “ohh stop pouring cold water on it who cares about de bridge?” (line 5). SC, perhaps unsure how to continue after having his key shift explicitly rejected, turns to Brown and asks him “yu (.) yu don’t care about di bridge?” (line 6). This question allows him not to fully commit to either the comic or the serious frame; it can be interpreted as an honest question or as a continuation of the prompting that has occurred throughout much of the rest of the interview. The ambiguity is resolved after Brown’s immediate response, when he produces yet another instance of the rounded low back vowel in “wal de houl k[ɒ:]miunitii kyers it” (line 7). Both NB and SC yet again break up into laughter, eliminating the possibility of this stretch of activity being framed in a serious way.

Clifton Brown, however, stays committed to the significance of his message. He does not simply give up the floor, but continues his explanation of the situation. Starting in line 14 and continuing into his last turn in line 24, he frequently adds lexical stress to underline the importance of what he is saying, in the words “DIER” (line 14), “TEIK” and “HOUVA” (line 16), “WASHD” (line 19), and “GROU” (lines 22, 24). This is the closest he comes in the entire interview to a direct confrontation with the moderators, who do not remain unaffected by it. After Brown’s first line containing heightened stress, Bell once again attempts to re-direct the discourse towards a previously entextualized form, stating “fi help dem kr[ɔ:]s” (line 15). But this interjection is neither met with laughter on the part of SC, nor does Brown walk into the trap of producing the text in question. Instead he continues his sentence, speaking with heightened intensity. The pause of a second that follows in line 16 and NB and SC’s straight-faced back-channels (lines 17, 18) indicate that at least momentarily Brown has successfully broken free of the comic frame. He holds the floor for the next couple of turns and when he comes to a finish in line 24, more than ten turns have taken place without any indication of ridicule from anybody.

This temporary maintenance of a serious frame may be read as a small success on the part of Brown. Ultimately, however, NB and SC have the upper hand in controlling and directing the flow of interaction. In the present sequence, they let Brown finish before SC simply brings the exchange to a close. His turn “ya right Clifton good to meet you” (line 25) signals the end of CB’s speaking time. Despite a surface-level acknowledgment of his interlocutor, SC effectively silences him rather abruptly and furthermore refuses to react to or engage with the very personal statements with which Brown finished. The floor is then immediately taken from Brown and DJ Powa is addressed for the closing sequence. Ultimately, then, CB emerges as the loser of the interaction, the butt of NB and SC’s jokes, unable to lend force to his framing of the interaction and his message. This is true in the immediate context of the exchange,

but like the TVJ news report, the Smile JA interview sparked repercussions beyond this narrowly defined situation.

2.4. Public backlash: Viewer reactions to the Smile JA interview

Taking just the interview in its direct interactional context, it appears obvious that Neville Brown and his colleague succeeded in containing Brown in a comic frame and eliciting the entextualized form “noobodi kyana kr[ɔ:]s it” as well as new sources for further entextualization from him (“noobodi kyana f[ɔ:]sen”). On the other hand, all that Brown seems to have achieved is ridicule and perhaps an even more pronounced sense of social and linguistic insecurity. But just as the original interview in the context of a news story developed an afterlife with the help of late modern information and communication technology, so did the Smile JA “bite of the week.” Many viewers commented on the moderators’ behavior, both in comments on youtube as well as independent blog posts, and the overwhelming majority were very aggravated with the two and sympathetic towards Brown. There is not the space in this report to analyze these comments in their entirety, but I briefly discuss two relevant examples. While most contributions simply express viewers’ disgust with the moderators (and a minority are apologetic about their behavior by appealing to a sense of humor), several posters volunteer more elaborated versions of their interpretations.

The first comment I discuss is from sataluis. It centers on the appropriateness of humour in the face of real political issues:

(8) Drugged clowns: Post by sataluis

They could just keep a balance between the funny part of the video and the real situation, boost the problem's solution by selling the video, one thing helping the other but they just kept laughing with no sense as a couple of idiots!!! they are supposed to make people laugh not to laugh themselves like two drugged clowns

This comment does not contain any linguistic features that would mark it as coming from a particular region. The geographic background of sataluis can therefore not be determined. The user concedes that a humorous key is appropriate, talking about “the funny part of the video” and admitting that it is the moderators’ job “to make people laugh.” Yet the poster takes issue with the comic frame eradicating the actual situation and ignoring the important issue. Instead, sataluis proposes that humor could be employed in support of the Roberts Field community to “boost the problem’s solution by selling the video.” His observation that NB and SC “just kept laughing with no sense [...] like two drugged clowns” perhaps suggests that this user is not a member of the Jamaican speech community and not as keenly attuned to the linguistic features that elicit laughter as others would be.

What is interesting about this comment is that it raises the question of legitimate mockery (Chun 2004), the ideologies that govern who is entitled to make fun of whom, in what ways, and under which circumstances. Even if sataluis does not represent a voice from Jamaica, his post addresses an issue that is important in the Jamaican context. His admission that humor is fun and acceptable up to a certain point begs the question how exactly that point is determined. The same question arises when one compares the uptake of DJ Powa’s *Nobody canna cross it* and the Smile JA interview. The overwhelming majority of comments on the former praise it as hilarious and find little to criticize about it, compared to the backlash inspired by the latter. This fact supports the point made earlier, that the music video at least leaves

open the possibility of partial identification, a laughing WITH rather than AT the speaker portrayed. NB and SC's behavior in the Smile JA interview, on the other hand, do not allow for any other reading than explicit and rather malevolent ridicule at the cost of a partner in the interaction. The talk show hosts furthermore represent a social group that is obviously privileged over working-class Jamaicans like Clifton Brown. Similar ideologies as in the case of the United States (Chun 2004) seem to be in place here, which prohibit the overt use of humor leveled from a position of power over less-dominant groups.

The second post I discuss is from jame5613, who writes the following commentary:

(9) Illiteracy in world matters: Post by jame5613

Its no wonder Jamaica is still classes as 3rd world, the guys doing the interview show there illiteracy in world matters, I dont think they even know that the internet exist, the total lack of respect for the interviewee is shear ignorance on their part. Morons

The non-standard use of the copula in the first sentence and the lack of 3rd person inflection on "exist" suggest that this is a user from Jamaica, a fact that cannot be established for all contributors as the previous example has shown. Jame5613 explicitly links the interview to larger political issues, namely Jamaica's status as a third world country. The poster identifies the commonly evoked evils of "ignorance" and "illiteracy" as prime causes of this situation. But while these terms are usually associated with the poor working classes, jame5613 explicitly connects them to the upper-class hosts of Smile JA. His assertion that they don't "even know that the internet exist" refers to their inability to foresee a public backlash against their behavior, facilitated through the ready availability of the interview on video hosting sites such

as youtube. His surprise, then, is not so much directed at the moderators' behavior per se but at their ignorance of the ways in which global telecommunication is changing society.

The issue raised by jame5613 is a real one, as Neville Bell had to experience not long after the airing of the interview in question here. First, the show host was forced to deliver a public apology to Clifton Brown on TVJ (tilibokartel 2011), as his and Simon Croskill's behavior had, as he states, offended viewers and brought the channel in disrepute. Shortly after, Bell resigned from his position as the host of Smile JA, though officially denying a connection to the interview with Clifton Brown. Many Jamaicans, however, strongly suspect the public backlash after the incident to be in fact the motivation behind this move. What can be seen from this, and from jame5613's post, is that there is indeed a sense that media and communication technology has an impact on social life in Jamaica. All the examples in the present paper have been interested in mapping out some of the effects of this changing communicative terrain. As has been shown, these effects may fall on the side of perpetuating linguistic and social inequality (see examples (4) through (7)), they may be more democratic in nature (the public backlash against the Smile JA interview), or the results may be multivalent and ambiguous, as I argue is the case with *Nobody canna cross it*. Statements about the Internet as either the harbinger of social decay or the great liberating and democratizing force are clearly out of place. What does become increasingly clear, however, is that increased media-saturation can lead to quite new ways of texts emerging and traveling through different contexts. It will be a necessary and rewarding project for sociolinguists to develop tools and frameworks to deal with these new situations and processes.

3. Discussion

3.1. Speaky spoky as a construct resource

What can be learned from the preceding analysis about the status of speaky spoky in the Jamaican speech community? First, it has become clear that a definition of speaky spoky according to strictly linguistic terms is inadequate. The label does not have etic status as a variety of language, but is an emic term for a perceived relationship of a speaker to his or her language use that relies on several aspects of local knowledge, both linguistic and social. Moreover, I hope to have shown that speaky spoky is constructed in the uptake of talk as much, if not more so, than in its production. This is true of discourse in general (Blommaert 2005: 45), but becomes particularly obvious in the case of speaky spoky, where the attempt to determine the label's status directs our attention to the re-contextualization of utterances. While Clifton Brown's interview on TVJ contains important linguistic cues, several layers of transformation went into the construction of his discourse as a speaky spoky text, most importantly the interview's framing in a way that creates certain expectations of his speech and, in DJ Powa's remix, the foregrounding of certain elements and the erasure of others, including virtually all of the propositional content.

In this process, more is constructed than just an instance of speaky spoky. The label's strong negative associations are ultimately related to character traits of the speaker, ranging from ignorance to opportunism and unwarranted arrogance. Thus the label does not only require a social dimension for its definition, it can in turn be applied to manipulate social distinctions and erect barriers of language use which certain speakers are denied the right to trespass. It is perhaps fortuitous that the main text

that resulted from the entire Clifton Brown phenomenon was “nobody canna cross it.” Further de-contextualizing this phrase for the purposes of the present paper, we can say that what cannot be crossed is a linguistic and social boundary created through the evocation of speaky spoky. It is a divide between locally salient binary oppositions such as ‘Patwa’ vs. ‘proper English,’ ‘ignorant’ vs. ‘educated,’ etc that are recursively applied in a given interaction. These are not bare facts of life, but local ways of making sense of the world. In this sense, speaky spoky indeed functions as a “strategic resource for conflict talk” (Patrick 1999: 278). However, it is best to regard the groups involved in the conflict as not completely defined prior to an instance of labeling a stretch of discourse speaky spoky, but as partly emerging from that labeling in situ. The resulting positionings do not have to coincide with preconceived categories such as social class or gender and are not as persistent, but can be rather ephemeral alliances. Yet, as research in the communities of practice paradigm (Eckert 2000, Mendoza-Denton 2008) has shown, these momentary allegiances have the potential to develop into locally meaningful group distinctions over time, distinctions that often prove more informative than labels such as ethnicity or social class. In a society like Jamaica, marked by increased social mobility and rapidly changing norms of language use, it is essential to consider the agentive dimension of speaky spoky labeling in the negotiation of social reality.

While there is general agreement on the association of acrolectal speech with prestige and basilectal speech with identity and in-group membership (Patrick 1997, 1999; Patrick & McElhinny 1993), then, there is less convergence on the precise delineation of rights to use certain forms in an “authentic” way. Here, both the question of who is identified as talking speaky spoky as well as that of who is allowed to call them out and make fun of them are of importance. The above analysis has shown that labeling Clifton Brown “a social climber, opportunist, lame or traitor” (Patrick 1999: 278) is not an obvious move, but relies on the erasure of aspects of his discourse that

run counter to this understanding. Hence, speaky spoky is most accurately described not as a “style” (Patrick 1997) or “a mode of talk” (Patrick & McElhinny 1993), as these terms imply that it is reducible to objective linguistic facts. Patrick’s (1999: 277) categorization as a “negatively-valued label” comes closer to representing the importance of locally held and emerging meaning in the term’s delineation. To further highlight its value as a resource in doing interactional “work” (Erickson 2004) and its dependence on language ideologies, it appears most advantageous to understand speaky spoky as a *construct resource*, “an ideological set of postulates about language that emerge historically and circulate in society” (Fabricius & Mortensen 2011).

3.2. Ideologies of legitimate mockery

The question of who is entitled to make fun of Clifton Brown and in what ways helps to shed light on speaky spoky’s relation to Jamaicans’ understanding of cultural identity. Hill’s (1998, 2008) work on Mock Spanish demonstrates how using cultural others’ linguistic material for humorous purposes effectively denigrates these groups by portraying their language as disorderly, ungrammatical, and appropriate only for restricted and negatively-connoted domains such as cursing, macho talk, etc. At the same time, the disorder inherent in the dominant group’s language use is rendered invisibly normal. Chun (2004; on the use of humor by non-dominant groups see also Zentella 2003) complicates this work by focusing on the humor of non-dominant groups and the ideologies which govern its contextual legitimacy. Her work demonstrates that, in the USA, there is an ideological latitude for non-dominant groups to ridicule the dominant one, and to a certain extent each other as well. What is not permissible is the dominant group’s use of their privileged position in order to ridicule

others.⁵ Chun further argues that much of non-dominant groups' humor relies on re-contextualizing dominant discourses. The results of these re-contextualizations are rarely straightforward and often allow multiple and contradictory interpretations. The widely differing responses to DJ Powa's *Nobody canna cross it* and Neville Bell's interview with Clifton Brown indicate that a closer look at the locally salient ideologies of legitimate mockery in the Jamaican speech community is warranted.

The processes Hill refers to are present in both examples. Disorder in Clifton Brown's speech is brought to the fore both in the song as well as the interview. Any serious aspects of his discourse are erased, and the indexical links of speaky spoky to the negative attributes mentioned above reinforce an understanding of the speaker as merely an object of ridicule. From the perspective of the individual speaker, then, the effects of both re-framings of his original interview are detrimental and amount to a silencing of his voice. Yet there are differences between the two which help to account for the diverging audience reactions. As mentioned above, the song can be interpreted as allowing listeners to laugh WITH and not necessarily AT the entextualized language objects it presents. The cutting, looping and overlaying of Brown's language samples over an electronic beat de-contextualizes them largely from their original interactional embedding. Brown's message, and to a certain extent the speaker himself, consequently become marginal features of the video. While this framing runs counter to the speaker's original intentions, it does not single him out as an object of ridicule. Rather, by removing Brown from the picture as far as possible, his disembodied language itself becomes the humorous element, relatively independent of its animator and principal.

Furthermore, qualitative hypercorrection of the kind that enables one's dis-

5 This refers to the general ideology held in public discourse and should not be confused with a fact of social reality. The dominant group very often finds ways of circumnavigating the restrictions on their right to mock others, as the example of Mock Spanish illustrates. However, additional work has to be done in order to ideologically legitimize such mockery.

course to be framed as speaky spoky is wide-spread in mesolectal Jamaican speech (see for instance the data in Patrick 1999: 291). Therefore, Jamaicans enjoying *Nobody canna cross it* do not perhaps laugh at an identifiable social other so much as at an externalization of their own potential linguistic insecurity. To be sure, this fact does not render the humor at work here unproblematic. It is strong evidence of the hegemony of standard language ideologies (Lippi-Green 2012), inducing in many speakers an uneasy relationship to their own speech. On the other hand, it is also not as easy to understand the conflict underlying it as a struggle between clearly identifiable groups as in the case of Mock Spanish. This is what Patrick refers to when he describes speaky spoky as “associated with conflict, but not conflict between social groups so much as among comparable members of the same group” (1999: 278). Apart from merely perpetuating standard language ideologies, speaky spoky may also be used as a resource that helps speakers gain a reflexive distance from their own occasional linguistic insecurity and newly define their relationship to language.

Yet, as the Smile JA interview attests, it is not always lower mesolectal speakers who engage in evoking the label. It can be an effective tool for members of the upper classes, who tend to be acrolectal speakers, to affirm their ideologies of their own linguistic and intellectual superiority over those on the more basilectal end of the continuum. This certainly seems to be the case in examples (4) through (7). Not content with finding enjoyment in the language objects entextualized by DJ Powa, the moderators engage in the project of putting these objects back in the mouth of an identifiable person, who in the process is contained, ridiculed and made to feel visibly uncomfortable. Hence, in comparison with *Nobody canna cross it*, NB and SC attempt to bring back the specific speaker and his social position back into the picture and make these the prime objects of ridicule. Here, little uncertainty remains that the result is laughing AT Brown and by no means WITH him, or with a certain kind of linguistic practice.

When humor is used in this way, different cultural rules of appropriateness apply than in the case of DJ Powa. As Chun (2004) suggests, humor enjoyed by members of dominant groups at the expense of non-dominant groups is ideologically prohibited in the United States. The user comments and the fact of Neville Brown's resignation from hosting Smile JA discussed above indicate that the same seems to be the case in Jamaica, although it may be a more recent development. Social divisions were very clearly marked in the country for most of its history, first institutionalized through the system of plantation slavery and then through the recursive application of the metropolitan-colonial divide to all levels of society. For the longest time, these institutions guaranteed the dominant classes a perceived entitlement to ridicule their social others. However, jame5316's comment above suggests that increasing media and technological saturation has the potential of changing the public discourse. The present study shows how attention to re-contextualization of linguistic material in newly available communications channels can help document these changes.

3.3. Authentication and de-authentication

The diverging uptake of speaky spoky humor in different contexts suggests that the concept's relationship to cultural identity is more complicated than its description as "a negatively-valued label" (Patrick 1999: 277) implies. Elements of de-authentication are certainly at play and the light the term casts on a speaker accused of engaging in it is generally negative. Yet the success of DJ Powa's remix indicates that Jamaicans enjoy speaky spoky without necessarily focusing on denigrating a specific speaker. In this regard, it is important to observe that actual, untransformed and unmediated face-to-face interaction is not the only, and perhaps not even the most com-

mon, context in which the label is evoked. Examples in Patrick (1997) point to its pervasive use as a resource for comedic performances of various sorts. Here, “conflict” is not the most accurate description of the type of activity speaky spoky is evoked for. Rather, once more, the audience is asked to critically examine the linguistic material they are presented with and its relationship to authenticity. Language use in a performance frame is objectified and made directly available to viewers for reflexive meditation and meta-linguistic commentary (Bauman & Briggs 1990). Apart from mere de-authentication, then, the performance of speaky spoky offers Jamaicans an opportunity to investigate their local language practices and language ideologies. The performance frame potentially “gives the audience license to enjoying the parading of themselves, and even to find it confirmatory, credentializing, and solidary” (Coupland 2001a: 371).

Another example of the playful use of speaky spoky is the practice some Jamaicans apparently engage in around the campus of the University of the West Indies in Mona and in downtown Kingston. Michael Westphal (personal communication) reports frequently being addressed with phrases like “Hey man, what’s up?” in an accent fashioned to resemble American English during his field work in 2012, a practice locally referred to as “twanging.” In these cases speakers do not necessarily attempt to sustain an air of authenticity in their linguistic performance. Instead, what seems to be at work is a conscious element of play, of putting on this accent for an audience, and perhaps an element of benign mockery in parroting a foreigner’s voice. Language use in these cases seems to be akin to the crossing behavior described by Rampton (1995, 1997), if perhaps not as interactionally salient to all participants.

All this is not to say that the effects of speaky spoky stylization are always positive and essentially democratic. In the case of Clifton Brown’s interview on Smile JA, it is clear that the framing of him as author and animator of speaky spoky text works to heighten linguistic insecurity and social pressure. In this case in particular,

Brown is caught up in between two prominent ideological positions which both deny his talk the status of authentic speech. The power of the standard language ideology, as shown above, ridicules the speaker and erases any aspect of his talk that might be taken seriously. But there is another ideology, that of linguistic liberation from the standard, which likewise finds fault in Brown's speech. Famous Jamaican poet and cultural activist Mutabaruka conducted an interview with Brown (mekeino 2011) in which he criticized him for not speaking in front of the TV camera the way he would normally speak. Thus, pressure for linguistic conformity is exerted both by the norms of the standard as well as those of the local team (Blom & Gumperz 1972). The result in this case is most likely not a reflexive distance that enables the formation of new relations to language use, but an increased sense of personal linguistic inadequacy and anxiety. This may sound contradictory with respect to what has been argued above, but it is only so if *speaky spoky* is considered a style of its own, rather than a potentially multi-valent ideological resource for enforcing, evaluating and potentially transforming local norms of language use. The precise context of its application, its framing, and (re-)contextualization matter.

3.4. Entextualization and enregisterment

While its variety status from a structural-linguistic perspective thus has to be questioned, *speaky spoky* nonetheless is perceived as a register locally. The above analysis provides a case in point for how this perceived way of speaking is constructed around a relatively small set of features, which become representative of it or enregistered (Agha 2003, Johnstone et al. 2006). These are primarily the phonetic variables [ɒ:], syllable-initial [h], and [ɛ], discussed above. But other dimensions of semiosis play a

role as well, such as Clifton Brown's hard hat as an index of working class identity. The way these features are highlighted and connected to each other, in the present example, is not through explicit meta-linguistic commentary (such as in Johnstone & Baumgardt 2004) but through their embedding in entextualized stretches of discourse. It is clear from DJ Powa's remix that what is entextualized is not an individual phonetic variable, but entire phrases like "noobodi kyana kr[ɒ:]s it" and "a fishameen an a fishahumeen." However, the selection of these phrases as texts relies on the phonetic material embedded in them and it is precisely this phonetic material that listeners cue into. In lines 40 – 42 of example (6) Neville Bell's on-the-spot entextualization of a new element ("noobodi kyana f[ɒ:]sen") provides evidence for the salience and productivity of the vowel sound in question. In the material discussed above, then, entextualization and enregisterment are intricately tied to one another.

A workable tool to model the relationship between the two is provided by Michael Silverstein's (2001) writing on the "limits of awareness." According to Silverstein, there are three criteria that delineate how readily accessible different kinds of linguistic material are to speakers for conscious reflection and meta-pragmatic commentary. These are referentiality (a clear mapping of the linguistic form to a referent in the empirical world), segmentability (the identification of the form as a meaningful unit of its own) and presupposition (the way a form depends on specific aspects of the situational context for its meaning to be interpretable). Phonetic variables rank relatively low on all of these dimensions. Therefore, while they are often socially meaningful, they are very rarely the object of speakers' reflexive attention. More directly referential and segmentable features, such as words or entire phrases, have to stand in as participants' way of engaging in commentary about their language, even if the salient material they contain is individual phonetic variables as in the case of "noobodi kyana kr[ɒ:]s it" and "fishameen an a fishahumeen."

Unlike ‘Pittsburghese’ (Johnstone et al. 2006, Johnstone & Baumgardt 2004), speaky spoky is relatively long-established as a perceived register, going back to at least the 1950s (Patrick 1997: 45). Yet despite this fact, it is not a static construct. The analysis above demonstrates the enregisterment of a new feature in addition to [h]-insertion and rounding of the low back vowel. In certain contexts, such as “fishameen” and “fushahumeen,” there is a fronting and raising of the high back vowel that appears to be at least as salient as hyper-correct prevocalic [h]. Rather than implying that Patrick missed a feature in his description, what can be seen here is a change in the conceptualization of speaky spoky. The motor behind this change is the gradual emancipation from British metropolitan norms and re-orientation towards North American ones. Since in this process new dynamics are created of how different registers relate to each other (Hinrichs 2006: 13), the social meanings of speaky spoky may also be shifting.

3.5. Traveling texts

In the late-modern, globalized world of the 21st century, both the reflexive examination of everyday speech as well as the de- and re-contextualization of stretches of discourse become increasingly common processes (Coupland 2001a: 369). The wide availability of electronic media and software resources make pastiche creations such as DJ Powa’s *Nobody canna cross it* ever easier and cheaper to produce. Information technology and the Word Wide Web both facilitate access to linguistic material for re-contextualization as well as providing a platform to broadcast the resulting creations to a wide audience. The videos discussed above are not exceptional in this regard, but represent a range of similar phenomena that continue to occur in online culture. The

parallels to the story of Antoine Dodson and the “Bed Intruder Song” (for a description see Nichols-Pethick 2011) in the United States, for instance, are striking. The theoretical tools provided by performance and entextualization studies, frame analysis, and language ideologies are crucial to analyze the norms and beliefs about language and social structure that such cases rely on as well as perpetuate and potentially refashion.

I have tried to limit the scope of the analysis above to Jamaica as far as possible. But the story does not end here. Another aspect of the late-modern, globalized world is that texts increasingly travel beyond the confines of their original locales of production. While this is far from eliminating the importance of the state as institutions of power (Blommaert 2005: 218-219), national borders become increasingly permeable with regard to linguistic material. Many comments left on the youtube page of *Nobody canna cross it* indicate that the posters are not from Jamaica. In such contexts, different interpretive frames and “orders of indexicality” (Blommaert 2005: 73) apply. As can be seen from sataluis’ comments above, the “funny part” of the video in such cases becomes detached from the specific phonological features of speaky spoky. In their place, I argue, the general perceived exoticism of Jamaican speech stands in to provide the humorous content that is required by the framing of the video. The way I first encountered *Nobody canna cross it* was through a German friend who sent me the link to the video. He extremely enjoyed the remix and obviously cued into its humorous key, despite not being able to identify the concrete linguistic features of speaky spoky it highlights.

Finally, material such as this can furnish symbolic resources for Jamaicans in the diaspora to maintain identification with their home land. Hinrichs (forthcoming) describes such a case, where Jamaicans in Toronto encounter Clifton Brown’s interview and DJ Powa’s video. Another example is xMrAndre3Kx’s comment left on the youtube page of the Smile JA interview:

(10) Fukk up some teet: Post by xMrAndre3Kx

my dad is african and my mom is jamaican and i know this guy has an afro caribbean accent i can tell. but when i grow up and i speak like that anyone talk to me like dat me fukk up some teet

While the poster aligns himself with Jamaican culture, he is clearly not aware what specific linguistic features the moderators are making fun of, speaking instead of a general “afro-caribbean accent.” Hence, xMrAndre3Kx in all likelihood is not a fully competent member of the Jamaican speech community. Nonetheless, Jamaican forms are part of his discourse, as his closing statement “me fukk up some teet” shows. The status of these forms in his discourse, however, is not that of a language but rather a code, or perhaps even a mere symbol (Mair 2003). These instances of displaced uptake go beyond the scope of the present paper. Yet the tools and methods of analysis used here appear fit to incorporate such cases into the discussion and relate re-contextualizations at different levels to each other.

As the processes usually subsumed under the label ‘globalization,’ increased mobility of people, goods, ideas, and texts, continuing technological development and media saturation, webs of personal relationships transcending national borders, etc., continue to affect societies the world over, instances like those under discussion in the present paper will become more and more common. In order to adequately understand these phenomena, it will be increasingly necessary to relate different layers of re-contextualization, or laminations, to each other. Likewise, uptake – and its flip side: erasure – are mechanisms in the creation of meaning of traveling texts which call for more detailed attention than has thus far been paid to them. The theoretical tools utilized in the present study, entextualization, performance, frame analysis, and language ideologies, can help sociolinguists address these issues with increased methodological precision.

Appendix I: Nobody canna cross it (transcript)

- 1 0:00 {three miles down the road is the yallahs river}
2 0:03 {residents were forced to pay between 250 and 500 dollars to cross}
3 0:08 {as transportation was limited to either}
4 0:10 {a heavy duty vehicles or being lifted across}
5 0:13 rait (.) nou
6 0:14 noobodi kyana kr[ɒ:]s it
7 0:15 is onli uu= // kyan // andastan it= // kr[ɒ:]s it //
8 0:17 noobodi kyana kr[ɒ:]s it
9 0:18 is onli= // fishameen (.) an a fisha (.) // humeen= // chos me //
10 0:20 noobodi kyana kr[ɒ:]s it
11 0:21 is onli uu (.) // kyan manij di w[ɒ:]ta //
12 0:24 is onli so dem (.) // kom houva //
13 0:25 arai if wii aroun to hel= // hel= // help dem //
14: 0:28 noobodi // kyan swim (.) //
15 0:28 ka if yuu kyanat swim //
16 0:30 yu kyana = // kyana kr[ɒ:]s it //
17 0:31 noobodi kyana kr[ɒ:]s it //
18 0:32 if wii aroun to // lif dem // houva //
19 0:34 fishameen // kyan kr[ɒ:]s it //
20 0:35 an a fisha(.)humeen // kr= // kr[ɒ:]s it= // kr[ɒ:]s it //
21: 0:37 kyanat swim (.) // chos me
22 0:39 {y-yu g[ɒ:]n to sen tomas} pan= // p= // p= // pan= // pan //
23 0:14 noobodi kyana kr[ɒ:]s it
24 0:15 is onli uu= // kyan // andastan it= // kr[ɒ:]s it //
25 0:17 noobodi kyana kr[ɒ:]s it

26 0:18 is onli= // fishameen (.) an a fisha (.) // humeen= // chos me //
 27 0:20 noobodi kyana kr[D:]s it
 28 0:21 is onli uu (.) // kyan manij di w[D:]ta //
 29 0:24 is onli so dem (.) // kom houva //
 30 0:25 arai if wii aroun to help dem //
 31 0:54 {not all de vehicle} // kyan kr[D:]s it //
 32 0:56 {dis vehicle} // kyana kr[D:]s it //
 33 0:58 wi lak awei in de wildanes
 34 1:00 noo (.) // bodi (.) // kr[D:]s it= // {kr[D:]s} //
 35 1:01 yestedei (.) de bos // was // kaming fram taun //
 36 1:04 (0.5) a bos loud a piiprol
 37 1:05 jos de m[ɜ]rsi af gaad
 38 1:06 wai de bos doun gou houva //
 39 1:07 de bos kyan swim // {de bos kyan swim // de bos kyan swim} //
 40 1:10 {believe it or not} // de bos kyan swim //
 41 1:12 yestedei (.) de bos // was // kaming fram taun //
 42: 1:14 d= // d= // d= // d= // de bos kyan kr[D:]s it //
 43 1:15 de l[D:]st taim (.) orikien= // orikien // ded op= // ded op to beri op de
 tap //
 44 1:18 {nobodi no fuu waak} // de bos // kyan swim //
 45 1:20 {nobodi no fuu waak // de bos // kyan kr[D:]s it //
 46 0:14 noobodi kyana kr[D:]s it
 47 0:15 is onli uu= // kyan // andastan it= // kr[D:]s it //
 48 0:17 noobodi kyana kr[D:]s it
 49 0:18 is onli= // fishameen (.) an a fisha (.) // humeen= // chos me //
 50 0:20 noobodi kyana kr[D:]s it
 51 0:21 is onli uu (.) // kyan manij di w[D:]ta //

52 0:24 is onli so dem (.) // kom houva //
53 0:25 arai if wii aroun to help dem //
54 1:36 {I'm very concerned= // very concerned}
55 1:38 biko // noobodi kyana kr[ɔ:]s it //
56 1:39 natim de kidz dem kyan // go to skuul // chos me //
57 1:41 biko // noobodi kyana kr[ɔ:]s it //
58 1:42 fishameen (.) an a fisha(.) // humeen // kyan kr[ɔ:]s it //
59 1:44 laik // dem= // andastan it= // an it //
60 1:46 kyanat swim chos me
61 1:47 yu g[ɔ:]n to (.) // d= // d= // d= // ded op= // ded op //
62 0:14 noobodi kyana kr[ɔ:]s it
63 0:15 is onli uu= // kyan // andastan it= // kr[ɔ:]s it //
64 0:17 noobodi kyana kr[ɔ:]s it
65 0:18 is onli= // fishameen (.) an a fisha (.) // humeen= // chos me //
66 0:20 noobodi kyana kr[ɔ:]s it
67 0:21 is onli uu (.) // kyan manij di w[ɔ:]ta //
68 0:24 is onli so dem (.) // kom houva //
69 0:25 arai if wii aroun to help dem //
70 2:03 noo (.) // bodi kyana kr[ɔ:]s it //
71 2:04 noo (.) // bodi kr[ɔ:]=kr[ɔ:]s it //
72 2:06 is onli uu // kyan swim // kr[ɔ:]s it //
73 2:08 kr[ɔ:]= // kr[ɔ:]= // kr[ɔ:]s it // {kr[ɔ:]s} //
74 2:10 noo (.) // noo (.) // noo // noo (.) // noo //
75 2:12 noo (.) // bodi (.) // kr[ɔ:]s it //
76 2:14 (17.0) //
77 2:31 {Dara Smith, TVJ news}

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