Shifting frames: Turkish immigrant children's rescaling practices in two school settings in Arizona

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ABSTRACT

This study uses the framework of space and scale to examine how bilingual Turkish heritage children in Arizona respond to conflicting scalar language hierarchies (Blommaert et al., 2005; Blommaert, 2007) they are exposed to in the bilingual worlds and spaces which they navigate. At their US elementary school, where monolingual English language practices are advocated and heritage languages such as their own Turkish language are downscaled, they use Turkish at the margins to create private spaces and footings (Shankar, 2008; Goffman, 1981) where they can help and interact with Turkish peers and express personal stances, rescaling Turkish language practices. In their Turkish Saturday school, where monolingual Turkish practices and "speaking Turkish beautifully" are advocated by teachers, child peers embrace English language practices and Turkish—English code-switching as their preferred media of peer talk away from teachers and as media to explore home and personal meanings (e.g., religious meanings). Children's patterns of code-choice and language use rescale language resources in the two school settings, and allow them to forge alignments with peers. They also provide a resource for stance-taking and commenting on boundaries between languages drawn by adults in the bilingual worlds they navigate (Bailey, 2007; Jaffe, 2009; Kyratzis and de León this issue).

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1. Introduction

This study examines how bilingual Turkish heritage children in Arizona respond to conflicting scalar language hierarchies (Blommaert et al., 2005; Blommaert, 2007) they are exposed to in the bilingual worlds they navigate. Researchers have focused on how children gain communicative competence in multilingual societies (Auer and Dirim, 2003; Backus, 2004, 2013; Backus et al., 2010; Evaldsson and Cekaite, 2010; Demirçay and Backus, 2014; Extra and Yagmur, 2010; García-Sánchez, 2010; Hinnenkamp, 2003; Kyratzis, 2010; Papalexakis et al., 2014; Sevinç, 2014) and explored children's bilingual language practices attending to macro-level features, that is, how the code-switching is used to mark speakers' identities and the position of their social group as a minority living within a majority culture (Gumperz, 1982) and micro-level features, while analyzing the meaning of code-switching practices that emerge out of the interactions within context (Auer, 1998; Wei, 1998, 2002).

This study is framed within the recent approach which introduces the notion of scales- (Blommaert, 2007) operationalized as a hierarchy of language value- that focuses on how different scalar hierarchies intersect (and are available to be drawn upon

by participants) in specific spaces and interactive settings (see Kyratzis and de Leon, this issue). This framework is helpful for understanding Turkish—American children's language practices in Arizona because what the children do is heavily influenced by the spaces they navigate in their bilingual worlds, their elementary school, and their Turkish Saturday school. However, before describing the affordances of using the model of space and scale, I first describe what is known about the circumstances and language learning of Turkish immigrant children in other settings, mostly European, and what is known about how children can play with and re-order the sociocultural meanings indexed by the various languages in contact in their communities from, another prevalent perspective on children's language learning, the language socialization perspective (Ochs and Schieffelin, 2012; Paugh, 2005, this issue).

1.1. Turkish children's language use and learning in other (European) contexts of migration

This study examines how bilingual Turkish heritage children aged 7–12 years and growing up in Arizona respond to conflicting scalar language hierarchies (Blommaert et al., 2005; Blommaert, 2007) they are exposed to in the bilingual worlds which they navigate. Not much is known about how Turkish immigrant children's language use in the United states, but there have been several studies of how Turkish children gain communicative competence in multilingual Western European societies (Auer and Dirim, 2003; Backus, 2004, 2013; Backus et al., 2010; Demirçay and Backus, 2014; Eversteijn, 2010; Extra and Yagmur, 2010; Hinnenkamp, 2003; Papalexakis et al., 2014; Sevinç, 2014; Yağmur, 2009). In their review, Backus et al. (2010) conclude that studies up to the 1990s reported that first generation Turkish immigrants tended to be Turkish-dominant while the second generation, exposed to Turkish at home but to a majority Western European language in school (e.g., German, Danish, etc.) tended to have quite bilingual repertoires. Backus (2013) also concludes: 'in both families, the children were "pushing" the use of Dutch, whereas the parents were "pushing" the use of Turkish' (Huls and Van de Mond, 1992, cited in Backus, 2013: 774), also see Eversteijn (2010) and Yağmur (2009: 226). However, more recent studies find that "the younger generations, make use of a wide range of linguistic resources, needed to function in a great variety of recurrent social situations" (Backus et al., 2010: 483), including using English language resources as well Western European language resources from a diverse varieties and registers (e.g., Keim, 2008). Turkish heritage children and youth do not keep to one language or one language variety but use multilingual practices. Ethnographic fieldwork has also identified variation within the Turkish community, both individual and by setting or situation. These findings suggest the need for close analysis of children's use of Turkish and majority language resources in a variety of social settings.

This study addresses a gap by following children of first generation Turkish immigrants growing up in the United States rather than the significantly more extensively studied context of Western Europe, specifically, children growing up in a city in Arizona. Arizona is an interesting setting from the standpoint of language ideologies. Not only is it one of the U.S. states that abolished bilingual education in favor of "English-only" education, but it is a state with strong conservative policies and anti-immigrant leanings. The scalar approach put forward by Blommaert and his colleagues (Blommaert et al., 2005) provides a particularly apt framework for understanding how children and youth create and navigate spaces and contexts of language use in a setting such as Arizona. However, before turning to that perspective, I first review what is known about how children can play with and re-order the sociocultural meanings indexed by the various languages in contact in their communities from, another prevalent perspective on children's language learning, the language socialization perspective (Ochs and Schieffelin, 2012; Paugh, 2005, this issue).

1.2. Children's language use and learning in contexts of migration from a language socialization perspective

I will now review language socialization studies showing how children can play with and re-order the sociocultural meanings indexed by various languages in contact in their communities. Studies taking a language socialization perspective conducted in bilingual settings (Garrett, 2005; Paugh, 2005; Kyratzis, 2010; see also Schieffelin, 2003) illustrated that children can take an active role in their own socialization while drawing on language ideologies within their community. These studies illustrate how children's language preferences or their code-choices both draw on and affect the community's associations for the languages and "thus has implications for larger processes of sociocultural and linguistic reproduction and change" (Paugh, 2005: 79; see also Schieffelin, 2003). Paugh (2005), examining children's language choices in spontaneous imaginary play with peers when away from adults in Dominica found that children generally used English for negotiating the play frame. However, Patwa usages were seen in children's spontaneous imaginary play and these were used for issuing directives in enacting powerful authoritative adult roles (e.g., farmer; bus driver). Paugh (2005) concludes that "a focus on children's play in multilingual settings demonstrates their understanding, explorations and transformations of the linguistic practices and language ideologies they experience in their daily lives" (p. 79).

In another study, García-Sánchez (2010), drawing on Bakhtin's (1986) notions of hetereglossia and hybridity, analyzed the meanings of code-switching and other linguistic practices of a Moroccan immigrant girls' peer group during an extended pretend-play interaction. Her analysis illustrated how the group of Moroccan immigrant girls deploy and organized pretend-play activities with an orientation to the cultural and linguistic practices of both their communities of origin, as well as of the larger Spanish community. Particularly, the girls code-switched into Moroccan Arabic to make metacommentaries about their own behaviors or the others' behaviors for the interactional management of their conflicting affective stances towards their Spanish gendered identifications (García-Sánchez, 2010:544). The children made domain associations and the separation of the codes-Spanish use for clandestine explorations of imagined transgressional possibilities and Moroccan Arabic use for