Code-Meshing:
Pedagogical Affordances and Challenges in First-Year College Writing Classrooms

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Code-Switching: between INDONESIAN, ENGLISH, AND FRENCH

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- **code-meshing**
  - **blends languages or local varieties with a dominant language**
  - **tends to be a purposeful, rhetorical strategy**

Code-Meshing: blending SIGN LANGUAGE AND WRITTEN ENGLISH

Hearing Hands

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- Code-meshing is a deliberate, rhetorical move

- Code-meshing is highly relevent to writing and writing pedagogy

Why code-mesh?

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- To take risks with using particular linguistic features - challenge initial assumptions about 'good' and 'bad' writing

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- The social, political, and cultural features of spoken and written language (Safer, 2007)

- Their perceptions of race and power and how these are connected to linguistic choices (Baugh, 2000)

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- **We teach elements of Standard English through code-meshing examples because in order to mesh English and another language, students must know the rules for both languages.**

Teaching Standard English through Code-Meshing Examples

"She is a friend of mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order. It's good, you know, when you got a woman who is a friend of your mind."

Toni Morrison

"Of course everyone thought I was the worst daughter ever. My tia and our neighbors kept saying, Hija, she's your mother, she's dying, but I wouldn't listen. When I caught her hand a door opened. And I wasn't about to turn my back on it.

But God, how we fought! Sick or not, dying or not, my mother wasn't going to go down easily. She wasn't una pendeja...."

Junot Díaz

Teaching Standard English through Code-Meshing Examples

Yale Grammatical Diversity Project

1) I ain't never been drunk.
   'I've never been drunk.'
   (Alabama English; Feagin 1979)

2) Nobody ain't doin' nothing' wrong.
   'Nobody is doing anything wrong.'
   (West Texas English; Foreman 1999)

3) I don't never have no problems.
   'I don't ever have any problems.'
   (African American English; Green 2002)
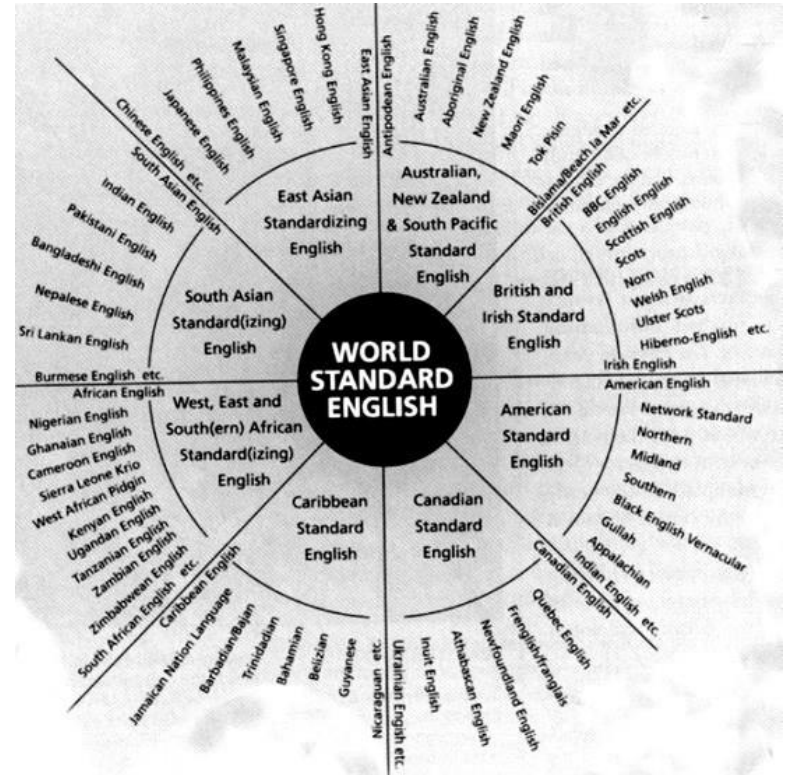
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- **We use real examples of code-meshing to explore issues related to biases and assumptions about individuals and groups of people who speak a particular language or dialect in a certain context.**

Key & Peele: Phone Call

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- **We support students interested in code-meshing opportunities, especially in understanding their advantages, risks, and challenges.**

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- **Code-meshing in 1-on-1 tutoring contexts**

Whitney's class: **Language as a Window into the Mind**

language as "object of study" and as "playground"

- explore connections between language & thought and language & culture
- "play" with mixing different registers, genres, etc.
- think deeply about impact of particular linguistic choices

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my focus: language/grammar as "tools for creating and shaping meaning"

- **audience, purpose, genre:** different tools for different jobs
- **choices:** every choice matters, influences the final "job" the writing can do

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Example Assignment: "Untranslatables"
(what makes a text hard to translate?)

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More about developing formal writing assignments on issues relating to linguistic choices and code-switching in my group session!

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A focus on culture

- Different values
- Different needs
- Different approaches to teaching and learning

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Student assumptions
- Values - 'Good' versus 'bad' writing
- Need - purpose of writing assignments and audience
- Approach – skills needed for a particular writing assignment

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Code-meshing for audience and purpose

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- **"Writing for Different Audiences" - addresses context and situation, audience, communicative goals, and the benefits and disadvantages of linguistic choices**

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- "Considering Audience" - addresses the significance of audience, purpose, authorial voice, grammar, and overall 'effective' communication.
- "Writing for Different Audiences" - addresses context and situation, audience, communicative goals, and the benefits and disadvantages of linguistic choices
- **Peer Review - Is the writer's purpose clear? Has the writer made appropriate linguistic choices?**

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- "Writing for Different Audiences" - addresses context and situation, audience, communicative goals, and the benefits and disadvantages of linguistic choices
- Peer Review - Is the writer's purpose clear? Has the writer made appropriate linguistic choices?
- **Code-meshing as a choice, not a requirement**

Stella: **The Code-Meshing Multimodal Project in the Research Writing Unit**

- An integral part of the final Research Project

- Deliberate, mixed use of the writer's linguistic resources as well as text, visuals, and sound to engage the targeted audience cognitively and emotionally

- Heightened awareness of the audience and code-meshing for communication and argument

Stella: **The Code-Meshing Multimodal Project in the Research Writing Unit**

The Siri Project

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- **Tutors should be trained in code-meshing and code-meshing strategies**
  - Sensitivity to writer's identity
  - Awareness of different forms of code-meshing
    Multilingualism; *dialect*; *register* ; *disciplinary conventions*

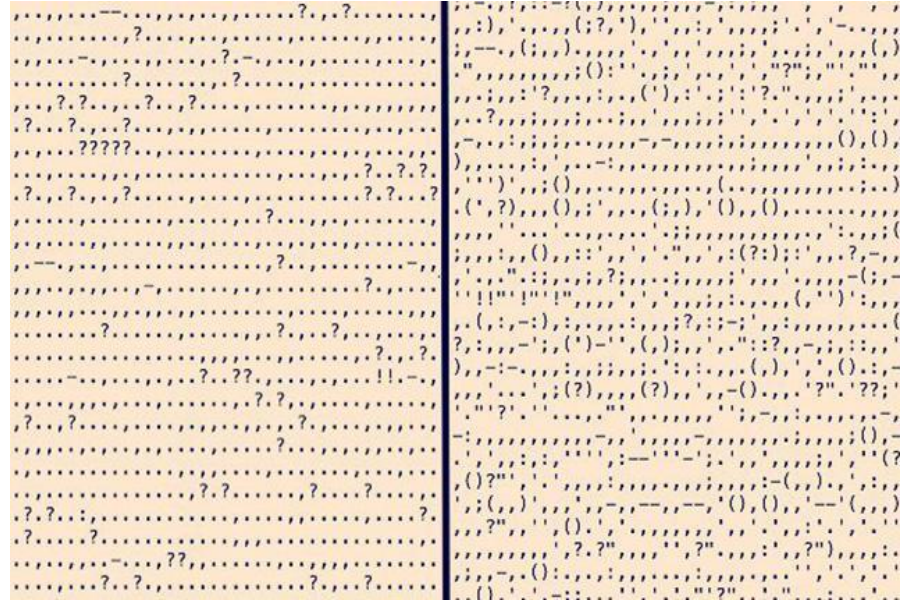# Sarah: **Guiding Code-Meshing in Tutoring and 1-on-1 Support**

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- **Anyone can code-mesh!**

... a brief aside: Meshing Register and Voice

Palacas (1989): Parentheticals and Personal Voice

"...one clear source of voice is appositive and parenthetical structures...[which are] inserted into a sentence, interrupting its normal flow..."

visualization of punctuation in Blood Meridian by Cormac McCarthy (left) and in Absalom, Absalom! by William Faulkner (right), Calhoun 2016

Sarah: **Guiding Code-Meshing in Tutoring and 1-on-1 Support**

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Sarah: **Guiding Code-Meshing in Tutoring and 1-on-1 Support**

- **Some students may be familiar with code-meshing... many will not be.**

- **Introduce code-meshing to students looking for help with:**
  - addressing a specific audience
  - strengthening argument
  - developing voice or style

Sarah: **Strategies for Tutoring Code-Meshing**

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- **asking questions**
  - what is your identity as the writer of this paper?
  - how can you make it clear how you relate to this topic?
  - who are your audiences? what are the expected ways of using language for writing to those audiences?

Sarah: **Strategies for Tutoring Code-Meshing**

- **role-playing and free writing**
  - student embodies their identity as the writer
  - tutor takes the role of the intended audience
  - tutor prompts student to explain an argument or passage:
    - *say this to me like you're talking to someone from your hometown*
    - *how would you explain this to an academic in your field?*
    - *what if you were addressing a specific language community?*

Sarah: **Strategies for Tutoring Code-Meshing**

- **identifying places in the paper for code-meshing**

  climatic moments
  - coming to a conclusion or making a point
  - passages that are especially important for the audience to understand

  reinterpretation
  - technical/complex/jargony passages that can be made clearer
  - already prominent in academic writing

Sarah: **Strategies for Tutoring Code-Meshing**

- **identifying places for effective code-meshing**

  Reinterpretation in Academic Writing

  *… homophobia arises from the need from males to rationalize their close attraction to other men. In this scheme men can only bond socially when homophobic attitudes and language accompany closeness, intimacy, and attraction in their social relationships with other men (**think**: Monday Night Football). **In other words**, cultural norms require that males profess an absolute repulsion for same-sex desire or attraction and to vocalize this disgust openly and repeatedly.*

  Risner 2014

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  reinterpretation
    - technical/complex/jargony passages that can be made clearer
    - already prominent in academic writing

  shout outs and inside jokes
    - allow writer to identify with specific audience or linguistic population
    - establish rapport or solidarity with the audience

References and Code-Meshing Resources

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NPR Code Switch blog: http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/01/29/382437460/challenging-the-whiteness-of-public-radio

Yale Grammatical Diversity Project, English in North America: http://microsyntax.sites.yale.edu/

Facilitated Group Activities!

- **Sarah and Stella: analyzing code-meshed academic papers**

- **Suzanne: in-class activities**

- **Whitney: formal assignments/argumentative papers**

Code-Meshing Workshop

1. **Please give us feedback on the overall effectiveness of this workshop. If you thought it was ineffective/not useful, please explain why.**

2. **How well did this workshop help you to understand the usefulness of code-meshing as a pedagogical tool?**

3. **How well did this workshop help you to think about how you might incorporate code-meshing into your writing classes?**

4. **Is there anything we didn't cover that you wish we had? Suggestions?**