Language-Crossing: The Sociolinguistic Dynamics of the Language/Discourse of Shamasha (Randok) in Sudan

Dr. Abdelmagid Abdelrahman Awadelkarim
English Department, College of Education, Majmaah University, KSA
Corresponding Author: Dr. Abdelmagid Abdelrahman Awadelkarim, E-mail: abdelmagid777@yahoo.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT

This study seeks to investigate "Language-crossing" (or Code-crossing) (a complex sociolinguistic phenomenon where speakers freely opt to adopt the speech/variety of another group). Sudanese mainstreamers (speakers of Standard Colloquial Sudanese Arabic (SCSA) have been observed to cross to "Randok" ; a variety spoken by an extremely marginalized social group known by their pubic name of (Shamasha). This is a kind of a street language (or anti-language, to borrow Halliday's term) with unique linguistic features. A tiny literature exists whether on "crossing", (coined and pioneered by Rampton), or "Randok" . The phenomenon of mainstreamers crossing to Randok, has, to our knowledge, never before been examined(as a "crossing" act). Drawing on Hewitt (1986), Rampton(1995,1996,1997), Cutler (1999), and others, crossing to Randok, has been closely observed, analysed and interpreted; based on a host of sociolinguistic\discourse approaches: Identity formation/construction/shift/representation, code-switching/mixing/choice, New Ethnicities, Anti-languages, etc. Collected over several years, the data encompasses observation, interviews(Randok speakers and (SCSA) mainstreamers of various backgrounds: street venders, intellectuals, academics, writes, linguists, middle class youths, etc.), focus-discussions, and phenomenological materials such as 'introspections/retrospections". Results confirm the existence of language-crossing among (SCSA) mainstreamers to Randok. However, the interpretation of the phenomenon stops short of arriving at a conclusive argument. Instead, Randok crossing has been shown to be supremely interesting, a complex multi-faceted sociolinguistic behavior with a wide range of implications for sociolinguistics, discourse analysis (power relations), language policy, identity theory, knowledge representations, etc. A final distinctive feature of Randok crossing, is the existence of mediators (venders and football fans/journalists) who spread the behaviour among mainstreamers.

1.0 OVERVIEW

It is nothing new stating that speech/discourse communities often contain a range of variations inside them. However, it is likewise true that, despite the many advances in modern sociolinguistic/discourse research, much of what happens between and across these varieties, remains, to date, an intriguing mystery. One such mystery, is when the speakers of a certain variety choose to freely use another variety which is not usually thought to be theirs. Until recently, there was no term to describe this. However, since Rampton insightfully labeled it "Language-crossing" , the term, which applies to both individuals and groups, has caught up into academic/linguistic discourse.

Although the crossing phenomenon is not uncommon among many speech communities, it is still largely under-researched. This is specially so, when it comes to non-European and non-American contexts. This study attempts to fill this appalling research gap by investigating the phenomenon of language crossing in Sudan. Randok is a speech variety with unique features spoken by the considerably socially-disadvantaged group of Shamasha (vagrants); homeless youngsters who usually live in the streets of Kartoum and other major cities of Sudan. However, the variety of these street youngsters has proved to be so appealingly dynamic, that large segments of the dominant middle class occasionally cross to it; adopting its peculiar words and phrases, and at times, its phonological and stylistic traits. The reasons for this crossing are still largely unknown. The existing

very tiny literature on Randok, such as Manfredi (2008), has so far preeminently concentrated on its internal linguistic features. While many of these characteristics like "re-lexicalisation", "preffixation", and "encrypting the mainstream variety's lexical\grammatical characteristics", may themselves be important in understanding the behaviour of "crossing', no study has, as far as we know, to date, ever probed the issue from the "language-crossing" standpoint.

Set on the context of theories of "code", code-choice/switching/crossing/mixing, language and identity, mainstreamers' crossing to Randok, has been closely explored for a period of time that spans several years. A wide range of data-collection methods have been used (observation\participant observation, interviews, group focus discussions, introspection, etc.). Informants\subjects comprise : 50 randomly-selected Randok speakers, 30 randomly-selected street venders, 25 intellectuals and around 10 academics\linguists).

The following sections outline the different sections of the paper, including, theory(codes, code\language - crossing, code-switching, anti-languages), review of the literature on 'crossing' (Hewitt, Rampton, Cutler, Bernstein), description of Randok, data-collection methods(observation, crossers\mediators, interviews, focus-discussions, retrospection, etc.), findings analysis and interpretation, summary, conclusions and implications.

2.0   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Codes, Code-Choice and Language–Crossing

Speakers of any language usually have access to a wide range of choices. These choices may be : lexical, syntactic, socio-pragmatic, at the discourse level, etc. They may also choose (consciously or sub-consciously) to occasionally shift to a variety (language, dialect, accent, etc.) other than their own. This is what is known as

" Language-Crossing" or (Code-crossing).

Rampton (1997: 1), who was the first to coin the term defines language-crossing" as

" the use of a language which isn't generally thought to 'belong' to the speaker", He further informs that language-crossing "involves a sense of movement across quite sharply felt social or ethnic boundaries and it raises issues of legitimacy that participants

need to reckon with in the course of their encounter" (p. 1).

Crossing has a variety of functions, and Rampton (1997: 7) has outlined seven instances where crossing is more likely to occur:

1. in the vicinity of interactional breaches, delicts and transgressions.

2. in ritual abuse, which works by suspending considerations of truth and falsity.

3. in open states of talk, self-talk and response cries, which constitute time away from the full demands of respectful interpersonal conduct.

4. at the boundaries of interactional enclosure, when the roles and identities for ensuing interaction were still indeterminate.

5. in games, where there was an agreed relaxation of routine interaction's rules and constraints.

6. in the context of performance art.

7. and in cross-sex interaction, which in a setting where everyday recreation was single sex and where many parents discouraged unmonitored contact between adolescent boys and girls, itself seemed special, unusually vested with both risk and promise.

The case of crossing being scrutinized here, is presumably a greatly complex one, and its investigation is likely not only to test these functions, but also to enrich them further. Out of these seven categories, the ones that seem to fit into our crossers are the following:

(2) ritual abuse working best when considerations of truth and falsity are temporarily suspended. Randok crossers are likely to shift into specific Randok words and phrases (yallah shatit yakhi= stop talking and get away from here; ghasal= he's gone\left, etc.) when they are angry, fed-up with their interlocutor(s) or the current situation.

(3) in open states of talk (the term was actually introduced by Goffman), self-talk and response cries. In these situations, interlocutors feel free to deviate from normal ritual\social constraints of conversation; hence allowing for crossing to take place. Categories 4 & 5 would also appear relevant to crossers to Randok, in some ways.

2.2 Code-Crossing and Code-switching

Code-switching is the socio-linguistic phenomenon\behaviour of shifting, during speech or writing, into another code (language, dialect, accent,

style, or any variety). The act of code-switching entails, indicates or interprets a set of socio-linguistic-cultural factors and incorporates a complex sense of identity formation , construction and shift. Additionally, it may also delineate a complex sense of 'otherness' and self-perception. Thus, code-switching is, many respects, closely linked with the phenomenon of code\language-crossing, particularly when it comes to the complexity of the interface between "selfness" and "otherness".

 Code-switching conventionally falls into two major types: Metaphorical Code-switching and Situational Code-switching (Gumperz, 1982; Wardaugh, 1986; Auer, 1988,1992; Rampton, 1997).

Whilst, Gumperz (1982: 59) describes code-switching as "the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems"; Wardaugh (1989: 103) prefers to extend the notion to

 " a conversational strategy used to establish, cross or destroy group boundaries; to create, evoke or change interpersonal relations with their rights and obligations".

Metaphorical code-switching is generally described as shorter, intra-sentential and signaling a sense of identity. On the other hand, situational code-switching is often taken as relatively longer, situation-oriented, " and responsively tied to contexts that are relatively fixed and ' brought along' " (Rampton 1997:9). Consequently, while metaphorical code-switching tends to create 'new contexts', in situational code-switching , switchers are largely inclined to perpetuate and fix the already existing contexts. Jumperz's distinction between metaphorical code-switching and situational code-switching is, in many ways, debatable and has been attacked by many. What is relevant here, however, is Rampton's position which, in line with Wardaugh's definition of code-switching conceives of "metaphorical code-switching", in terms of Bakhtain's "double-voicing" or "polyphony (the complex discourse fact that an utterance\text can demonstrate two or more voices at the same time). Polyphony is, to a large extent, consistent with the practice of code-crossing; particularly when it appears that the "crosser" is, in fact, expressing different voices at the time; hence 'self-representing' in certain ways (see section 4.1).

2.3 Language-crossing and Anti-Languages

The term "Anti-Language" has been coined by Halliday(1976) to describe a sociolinguistic situation where a minority group uses a particular language\code with a view of separating itself from the mainstream speech community, by making their

code unintelligible to the mainstreamers; or what Halliday calls "metaphorical modes of expression". Anti-languages designate a complex sense of the need for a separate identity or (anti-identity for that matter), and as such depicts an active interplay between language, identity, culture and power. In Halliday's terms, an anti-language underscores a mode/attitude of "anti-society" which he describes as "a society that is set up within another society as a conscious alternative to it… a mode of resistance… anti-language is not only parallel to anti-society; it is a fact generated by it" " (p. 570).

The often-cited examples of anti-languages include Cockney Rhyming Style, African American Vernacular English, (AAVE) and "Nadsat". The latter is a fictional language spoken by Burgess's "anti-hero" (Alex) in his 1962 novel " A Clockwork Orange". Nadsat (a Russian suffix for 'teen' indicating numbers from 11-19) is primarily a blend of English, Russian and Cockney Rhyming Style (along with some German words and a set of words from unknown languages).

What , in all probability, is a common characteristic by all these anti-languages, is the sense of "insurgence\resistance" among a specific socio-cultural\ethnic group against the dominant powerful group; hence the need for creating a " virtual" dominating sociolinguistic situation (or counter-ideology), by making the mainstreamers an "outgroup". Randok, does exhibit, in a variety of ways, features of anti-languages (the extent to which this is so will be taken up in sections 2.4 & 2.5.2). Referring to common perspectives of viewing "inequalities"(group or institutional hegemony\prejudices), Rampton has insightfully observed that the emerging postmodern tendencies of looking at these 'inequalities', in terms of a more complex framework involving individual practices of continuing self-representation and self-imaging. It is this framework which might better help redefining\reconsidering "anti-languages".

2.4.0 Landmark Studies in Language-Crossing

 In the following some groundbreaking studies in "language-crossing will be briefly reviewed (Hewitt 1986, Rampton's 1990s' studies, Cutler's 1999 and Bernstein's 1971 studies).

2.4.1 Hewitt and Rampton London Studies

 Hewitt's (1986), and Rampton's (1995, 1996, 1997) studies of language\code-crossing have innovatively laid down the foundations for research in this phenomenon. Hewitt studies the use of Black Creole by White youngsters\adolescents in South London.

The study finds that White adolescent do cross to Black Creole for various reasons.

Rampton's work on crossing (inspired by Hewitt's study) is largely considered to be the first major study on crossing, not only in theoretical terms but also in terms of methodology. Rampton spent several years studying the phenomenon of crossing among adolescents crossing to a set of codes other than their usual one (the adoption of Punjabi, Creole and Indian English by South East London youngsters).

In his landmark study, Rampton employed a variety of methods to collect his data, including effective forms of observation, audio\video-tapes and a range of phenomenological methods(getting subjects to comment on audio-taped materials containing instances of crossing, etc). This study draws significantly on Rampton's innovative ways of using the phenomenological methods. In addition, the present study makes use of expert and intellectuals' focus-group discussion to both collect more data and enrich the analyses and interpretations of the data\results drawn from other methods.

2.4.2 Cutler's New York Study: The Case of Mike

Another pioneering study, inspired by Rampton, was conducted by Cutler (1999). This was a longitudinal study in which she investigated the identification with Black American culture (esp. with "hip-hop" culture) by one white middle class adolescent (Mike). Mike had adopted the speech of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), since early childhood, out of a strong desire to identify with "hip-hop" culture with its (breakdancing, graffiti and rap music). Results suggested that Mike's crossing stemmed out of a need to identify with a more multiethnic, multi-cultural symbol like "hip-hop", and that by the age of 16 he began to be critical of Black adolescents as "hanging together and separating themselves".

Mike's identification attempts via crossing to (AAVE), albeit a one-subject study, could be seen as hugely important in a variety of ways. His interest in "hip-hop" apparently pictures an untraditional form of identification that crosses the boundaries of ethnically-oriented identity; a fact consistent with Hall's (1980 concept of "New Ethnicity" (a form of a functionally-defined rather than a biologically-determined ethnicity).

2.4.3 Bernstein's "Elaborated" and "Restricted" Codes

Much earlier in the 1970s Bernstein's work on the close relationship between speech codes, social classes and social structure sparked a revolution in both sociology and sociolinguistics. Bernstein set an inspiring distinction between "elaborated codes" (characteristic of middle class speech) and "restricted codes" (characteristic of working class and socially under-privileged groups). It is not clear, however, how this distinction would help to explain the complexity of the crossing under investigation here, as what seems to inspire people, in this type of crossing, is the "restricted code" rather than the "elaborated code". However, the complexity of the interplay between this variety (Randok) and what is occasionally called "Youth Language" (special variety spoken largely by middle class adolescents), should not be played down (cf. section 5). It is beyond the scope of this study, however, to scrupulously investigate Sudanese middle class youth language.

2.5.0 Shamasha and their Language Variety (Randok)

Shamasha is a local term in Sudan to describe homeless(vagrants) children /adolescents who chiefly live in the streets of Khartoum and other major cities of the country. Socially, the group is, in fact, immensely disadvantaged and overly marginalised. Ethnically and geographically, they appear to come from different backgrounds. However, the vast majority are most likely to come from the tremendously marginalized areas\ethnicities of Sudan. Educationally, the members of this group are most likely to be illiterate or early school leavers. They have a unique way of talking(speech variety), generally known as "Randok" or (Rendok).

Ranok variety has been described by some scholars as a "secret youth language" with peculiar linguistic features (Manfredi, 2008). Very little literature, however, exists on this socio-linguistic phenomenon, and none, to our knowledge, with regard to its "crossing" nature (most of the studies conducted, so far, have concentrated crucially on describing its "linguistic" features (phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic characteristics). In consequence, a real gap exists as to researching the phenomenon as a real case of "language-crossing".

2.5.1 Linguistic and Socio-pragmatic-cultural Features of Randok

Randok is a unique variety of Colloquial Sudanese Arabic with unique socio- linguistic features. The following is a sketchy survey of some of its key features:

2.5.2 Some Salient Features of Randok

One of the most salient characteristics of Randok, is the use of unique word-formations. An example of these, can be observed in the use of "neologisms" and "linguistic gaps". Neologisms are a kind of words and phrases that may fall into three major categories: newly invented words, new lexemes (inflections) attached to existing words and new meanings assigned to existing words. Randok appears to draw more on newly invented words and to assign new meanings to existing words (masoura= false, fake; kisair talaj= flattery words said for someone of influence\power; farda= close friend; shatit= go away\home either after finishing up a job or faced by a problem that makes it too difficult to carry on with it, etc.).

Other innovative word-formation processes may include back-formations such as: (daraa= taboo-breaker), etc.

Among the morphological features that have been found to be particularly characteristic of Randok, is what Manfredi (2008), has called "encrypting strategies" of Standard Colloquial Sudanese Arabic (SCSA). These strategies include, among other things, the strategy of "backward metathesis" (rearranging phonemes, syllables, words or sentences) (Ahmed= dahma (proper name), masha = ashma (went), jabal= labaj (mountain), etc. Metathesis can work at the phonological, morphological or syntactic levels.

Another encrypting feature noted by Manfredi, is the use of regular 'prefixation' (adding "s" to SCSA words that does not actually change the meaning of these words, but merely makes them unintelligible to the mainstream variety speech/discourse community)

.Other peculiar word-formations of Randok, encompass 'reduplications' such as "aku-raku" (depicting a sense of being aloof, not interested in meeting with others).

The use of number words to indicate certain meanings, is among the various innovations of this variety (arab?a (four)= a novice person who does not know much about a profession ; tis?a= nine (same meaning as four), etc. The use of numbers is also very characteristic of " Nadsat' (cf. section on anti-languages, 2.3).

Phonologically, Randok speech seems to draw on a multitude of sound characteristics that make words\phrases more musical and rhythmical in a particular way. Words tend to be one\two syllable words (hawa (air)= a lie; rasa= planned\arranged course of action; shamar = gossip; maika= gay, etc. In this, Randok appears to be similar to 'Cockney Rhyming Style', and other anti-languages.

Syntactically, Randok sentences tend to be shorter, two-word group\clause , simple sentences, which may also violate some norm conventions. Examples include: (mirakib makana\mirakib shareeha (Adjectival Phrase AP= false, fake, not genuine; kisu fadi= his bag is empty (indicating an idiot\empty-headed person), etc. Syntactic categories may also involve very simple noun phrases (NPs\VPs), such as "zoul hawa"= a dangerous person who should be avoided), "jeeb zait" (bring some oil) or statements put in the form of question type, such as "attfa alour mino"? (who put off the light) (the latter examples seem to be particularly implicative)?etc.

Pragmatically, Randok speech appears to abound in implicatures (both conversational and non-conversational (for the differences between the two see Grice's 1974): kisair talj= flatter someone in power), (aradah)(literally goal post)= impediment), (sawaq (literally driver= liar, (makana)machine= a lie), etc.

At the discourse level, this variety is characterized by using language to resist power (show disapproval of and resisting existing power relations), to signal in-group solidarity and resist outgroup pressure, to re-channel, into linguistic forms, what could otherwise be physical violence, and to maintain a hope for change. Encrypting the (SCSA) may itself uncover an underlying desire to resist the prevailing power structures\relations via an attempt to deconstruct the very language that embodies them. As such, Randok looks consistent with the description of "anti-language"(and its related concepts of "anti-society' and " counter-ideology') discussed within the theoretical framework of this study. However, Randok is not entirely analogous with anti-languages such as Nadsat, in that the Shamasha who speak it, could not be said to a criminal group like Nadsat speakers in Burgess's novel; though also, could be seen as 'ant-society' in a number of ways. It seems important to note, here, the postmodern framework of explaining 'inequalities' referred to by Rampton (see section 2.3).

3.0 METHODS

This section reports the various methods used to collect the data for crossing.

3.1 Data-Collection

3.2 Participant and Non-participant Observations

The phenomenon of mainstream variety speakers crossing to Randok, has been observed for a long time (several years). Both participant and non-participant observations have been utilised to gather

the data for this study. Dairies and field notes were also found be useful in backing the observations.

3.3 Crossers

Crossers are usually mainstream variety speakers of various educational and social backgrounds. These may include: school and university students, street venders, intellectuals, creative writers, (novelists, dramatists and poets), journalists (sport journalists are more likely to cross to Randok than other journalists, as will be explained in section 3.4), university professors, politicians (during rallies and speeches), educated middle class adolescents, etc. Relevant data was collected from reprehensive samples of these crossers.

3.4 Mediators

Data from both observations and interviews suggest that crossing operates in relatively complex ways than might appear at first glance. One of these ways, is the fact that crossing tends to pass up to socially higher\ more advantaged groups through mediators such as football fans\journalists and outgroup youngsters and adolescen**t**s who usually speak mainstream variety (SCSA).

Mediators play a vital role in spreading the crossing behaviour, as is evident from the various observations and from relevant introspective/retrospective data. The reason why sports journalists seem to play the greater mediating role, is largely because they are generally allowed to deviate from norms of standard usage, unlike broadsheet columnists, who are supposed to use more standard language\style.

Street vendors (interviewed within this study), are also possible mediators of crossing (see section on Venders, section 3.6). Relevant data was collected from mediators.

3.5.0   Phenomenological   Methods (Introspective/Retrospective Data)

It has long been noticed in humanities and social science research, that there are more methods for analyzing data than there are, for collecting it. In consequence, a whole range of new phenomenological methods for collecting the data, has recently been devised. This study draws on a panel of introspective/retrospective data collection techniques. These include primarily having subjects to respond to or reflect on data that belongs primarily to them (their variety being crossed to by other speakers, or variety mates crossing to it).

3.5.1 Having Randok Speakers Comment on the Features of their own Variety

A group of around 50 Randok speakers were asked to comment on the unique features of their own variety. Despite the fact that they are of course not professional linguists, they could provide us with invaluably interesting points. They seem to be aware of the attractiveness and innovation of their language variety. In particular, they could identify some key phonological and morphological characteristics.

3.5.2 Having Randok Speakers Comment on Instances of Mainstream\Standard Variety Speakers Crossing to Randok

The same subjects (Randok speakers examined in section 3.5.1) were asked to comment on instances of mainstreamers crossing into their own variety. Responses vary between depicting negative and positive attitudes towards the act of crossing. However, more than 80 percent of the subjects showed positive attitudes along with a range of other vague feelings (this looks consistent with Rampton's insightful observation that one of the defining features of crossing is "anomaly", which is also evident in a range of other acts and feelings within this study).

3.6 Interviewing Vendors about Crossing

A group of around (30) randomly selected street vendors in Khartoum (fruit, vegetable, clothes, women tea-sellers and other street traders) have been interviewed to probe their views, and their role (if any), in spreading the crossing habit into the mainstream variety. They confirmed that many words and phrases of Randok are now commonly used in the market (particularly "masoura (water tap)=false\bad and "asli"= good\true and the particular words for money banknotes). Most of the venders interviewed seem to attribute the phenomenon to the intrinsic features of Randok (e.g. the music and rhythm of Randok speech and its novelty and bizarre nature). Vendors are possible "mediators" of crossing, though some of them agreed to this description (around 40% of those interviewed), further investigation is required to check this.

3.7 Focus-group Discussions: Having Mainstream-variety Speakers comment on both the features of Randok and the Phenomenon of Crossing

Introspective/retrospective feedback on crossing was also used to examine the attitudes of around(25) mainstream variety speakers of various ethnic and social backgrounds. These are significantly high-

educated intellectuals (creative writers, broadsheet newspaper journalists\columnists, thinkers, culture researchers, etc.).The method of focus group discussion was employed via brainstorming them with two questions: What are the particular and unique features of Randok that particularly appeal to you?, and second: Why do mainstreamers appear to occasionally cross to Randok ?

A round three focus group discussions took place at different times during the process of gathering the data. Each group consisted of about 7-10 members and the discussion lasted for around two hours. Most informants agree that the phenomenon is very interesting and thought-provoking. Particularly so, when they reflect on their own crossing. Some other academics (around 10 linguists) and intellectuals were interviewed on individual basis.

Different perspectives surfaced up in attempting to explain the phenomenon of the crossing of mainstreamers to Randok. Whilst some prefer the macro-level and socio-cultural approach, others tend to ground explanation on the micro-level linguistic analysis (e.g. mainstreamers like the music of Randok and its morphological creativity\innovations). Fiction writers seem to prefer the macro-level analysis which locates the act of crossing within the socially complex arena, on the one hand, and the dynamic nature of the 'we-identity' and 'other-identity', on the other (this will be taken up in more detail in a section 4.1). Concomitantly, some other intellectuals and sports fans (themselves mediators), are inclined to adopt a micro-level linguistic interpretation that attributes the crossing behaviour to the phonological and musical appeal of Randok. Contrastingly, linguists appear to take a more comprehensive approach that combines both micro and macro-level perspectives.

4.0 RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

data for this study strongly denotes a complex phenomenon that could validly be called "language-crossing" or " Code-crossing". Though, the data from both the observations, introspectional commentaries and interviews, discloses features similar in some ways to Rampton's crossing case study(and the other cases briefly reviewed in sections 2.4.1 & 2.4.2), the crossing in this study also shows signs of much more complexity. This complexity manifests itself in the kind of "identity" projected from the crossers during the act of crossing (this will be taken up further in following section). The "anomaly" which Rampton cites, as one of the defining features of crossing, is, moreover, plainly evident in this type of crossing..

Part of the mystery of this crossing, may be interpretable in terms of what van Dijk (2003) calls the "interface" between discourse and knowledge. He argues strongly for a theory of knowledge that incorporates the complex cross\multidisciplinary socio-cultural dimensions of discourse.

Future research may attempt to deconstruct this "anomaly" of crossing, in Sudan, in general, and crossing to Randok, in more specific respects.

4.1 Randok Crossing, Identity Construction and Self-representation/Shift

The issue of the close relationship between language and identity is both crucial and controversial. There are various competing theories and approaches which all attempt to define and explain identity and identification patterns/practices. The much more recent perspectives, however, particularly those drawing on discourse studies, tend to view identity as hugely complex, dynamic and multi-layered.

Code-crossing as , Rampton insightfully notes, does picture/delineate a complex sense of identity that draws more on Bakhtain's concept of "polyphony" and "double-voicing". By crossing, a speaker consciously or unconsciously designates a sort of identity formation, self-signaling, self-representation or self-shift. The crosser may portray a sort of a desire to shift from single-sided ethnicity\identity to a much more multi-sided and functionally-oriented one; a concept resonant with the general postmodernity paradigms of socio-cultural interpretation. Kramsch (2003:70) argues that, " By crossing languages, speakers perform cultural acts of identity."

In the case of the crossers to Randok, the picture appears much more complex. Whilst many features of Randok, may show resistance to the prevailing power relations which mainstream variety speakers would normally like to perpetuate, the latter speakers' crossing to Randok, is nevertheless, not easy to explain.

What is more, it is not quite clear if Turner's (1982) concepts of "Liminality" and "Liminoid", and Hall's (1988) concept of "New Ethnicities" would either neatly apply to Randok crossing. The distinction between the two is first drawn in anthropology by Turner. The term "liminal" describes a somewhat vague, fluid, rapidly changing and temporary situation of passing from one stage into another; but while "liminal" is more mandatory, "liminoid", is a little bit more optional, involving, perhaps, some fun). Rampton(1997:20:), summarises the difference as " liminal practices tend to contribute to the smooth functioning of social systems, liminoid, limioid

practices are often creative, containing social critiques and exposing wrongs in mainstream structures and organization". Crossing to Randok, however, would appear more pertaining to "liminoid" (given its features of "social critiques and exposing wrongs in mainstream structures and organization") than to "liminal" which is more smooth and delineates more adherence to social order and dominant cultural practices. Hall's concept of "new ethnicities" which " engages rather than suppresses difference " (cited in Rampton(1997: 20)), constitutes a better angle from which the "bizarre" crossing practices in Sudan might be illuminated. A problem arises, however, as to the difficulty in attempting any neat ethnic categorization of Shamasha.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS SUMMARY

The language variety spoken by the extremely marginalized group in Sudan, known by their public name(Shamash), (Randok) is a greatly interesting and unique variety, in its own right. This uniqueness is largely evident in its both micro-level and macro-level features.

The mainstream variety speakers have been observed to occasionally cross to the variety of this extremely socially disadvantaged group(Shamasha), which makes it all the more an intriguingly appealing phenomenon.

This crossing may share most of the features of crossing studied by others such as Hewitt (1986), Rampton (1990, 1995, 1997) and Cutler (1999), Kramsch (2003), but it also demonstrates signs of being different and more complex in a range of other important ways.

Significantly among these ways are: the complexity of identification that manifests itself in the crossing explored and scrutinised in this study, and the existence of "mediators", who seem to be playing a crucial role in spreading the crossing behaviour among the mainstreamers. In addition, the close interconnections between Randok and another variety spoken by urban middle class adolescents (or its confusion with Randok, for that matter) known as "Youth Language", is, perhaps, yet another important point of difference and the complexity from many of the 'crossings' discussed in the literature. It is however, beyond the scope of this paper to investigate 'youth language' in Sudan.

Little research has, so far, been done on Randok, and, assumably, the bulk of which, has been conducted on its descriptive and linguistic features. This study is most likely to be the first which seeks to examine the

phenomenon as a interesting case of "language-crossing". Thus, it's highly commendable that a project of studying "crossing" in Sudan, be set out (preferably funded by some interested research institution).

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