

“PLAZA ‘GÓÓ AND BEFORE HE CAN RESPOND...’: LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY, BILINGUAL NAVAJO, AND NAVAJO POETRY¹

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Abstract

This article suggests that much of the use of the Navajo language in contemporary Navajo written poetry, especially English dominant poetry, serves as an icon of proper Navajo usage. It is a purist view of the Navajo language. Navajo poetry is implicated, even if tacitly, in a discourse of linguistic purism that is tied to an oppositional linguistic ideology that sees Navajo and English as discrete and distinct “objects.” Navajo poetry erases the contemporary sociolinguistic diversity - including bilingual Navajo - on the Navajo Nation. And in so doing, it closes off parts of Navajo sociolinguistic realities and in its stead creates an imagined Navajo language community.

Keywords: Navajo; Bilingual Navajo; Poetry; Linguistic ideology; Erasure.

Language - like the living concrete environment in which consciousness of the verbal artist lives - is never unitary. *M.M. Bakhtin.*

1. Introduction.

In this article I want to suggest that much of the use of the Navajo language in contemporary Navajo written published poetry serves as an icon of proper Navajo usage. It presents a “purist” view of the Navajo language and largely obscures communicative practices of younger Navajos. This is especially true in the ways that it

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excludes, almost completely, what Charlotte Schaengold (2003, 2006) has termed “bilingual Navajo” and what some of my Navajo consultants termed *Navglish*. The use of Navajo in Navajo written published poetry (that is poetry written by Navajos) aids in producing a purist linguistic ideology (see Hill 1985; Kroskrity 1992a, 1992b; see also Silverstein 2003). This ideology emphasizes the separation between “Navajo” and “English.” That is, the use of the Navajo language in these poems tends to replicate “standard” Navajo as a language minimally influenced by outside languages (see Young 1989).

In what follows, I present a discussion concerning linguistic ideology and language purism that grounds the topics that I develop throughout. I then describe, briefly, the emergence of written Navajo poetry, noting the utter paucity of uses of bilingual Navajo throughout that history. I then turn to a discussion of the use of Navajo in Navajo written poetry that replicates a certain view of Navajo as both incommensurate with English and as unconnected to English. I follow this with a discussion of bilingual Navajo in a number of settings on the Navajo Nation. Here I provide relevant examples to show that bilingual Navajo is used in both spoken and written discourse and that it dates at least to the 1970s. I then present all the examples of the highly restricted use of bilingual Navajo in Navajo poetry that I have been able to document, suggesting something of the pragmatic work such uses may accomplish. I conclude by arguing that the use of bilingual Navajo challenges a dominant linguistic ideology that sees Navajo as uninfluenced by outside languages. The use of bilingual Navajo in poetry would put English and Navajo in dialogue (see Bakhtin 1981). As Mikhail Bakhtin (1981: 294) notes, “certain dialects may be legitimized in literature and thus to a certain extent be appropriated by literary language.” What the use of bilingual Navajo does is challenge such received views of the language to language relationship between Navajo and English. However, in the vast majority of representations of Navajo in Navajo poetry, this is not what is occurring. Instead, a “standard” Navajo is being legitimized as “the Navajo language,” entangled with this is the construction of an imaginary Navajo language community.

Before beginning, let me place this work in context. The discussion that follows is based on ethnographic fieldwork on the Navajo Nation from 06/2000-08/2001 as well as more recent fieldwork in the summer of 2007 (and periodic visits before and after). My fieldwork has specifically looked at the emergence and circulation of contemporary Navajo poetry; both as it is written and as it is performed orally (see Webster 2004, 2006a, 2008a). I have supplemented my fieldwork with a survey of the major outlets for published Navajo poetry over the last half-century. I have focused on published Navajo poetry because this poetry circulates widely, both among Navajos and non-Navajos (I also looked at the unpublished poetry that I collected during fieldwork and I have found no examples of bilingual Navajo in them). The use of Navajo in contemporary Navajo poetry presents a publicly accessible image of Navajo and its relationship to English. That image is informed by an oppositional linguistic ideology that sees English and Navajo as wholly distinct codes. An ideology, I might add, that has been fostered by linguists who largely ignored linguistic diversity on the Navajo Nation.

Schaengold’s (2003) discussion of bilingual Navajo had not been published until after I had returned from fieldwork in 2001 (though I was familiar with Canfield’s 1980 discussion of Navajo/English code-mixing). After reading her article, I was struck by the fact that examples of bilingual Navajo were almost completely absent in the poetry that I had documented during fieldwork. In fact, it was an example of bilingual Navajo

by Esther Belin (which serves as the title of this paper) published after my initial fieldwork (in 2002), that inspired me to go back to the published Navajo poetry and make a more systematic survey. Finding examples was nearly impossible (I was only able to find four more examples).

That was surprising because during both my initial fieldwork and more recent fieldwork, I commonly heard bilingual Navajo on the Navajo Nation, where Navajo clitics and affixes were often attached to English language nouns, and examples of bilingual Navajo on billboards and signs was also common. I heard bilingual Navajo at Navajo fairs, in conversations at restaurants, at the mutton stands on the side of the road, at the trading post in Lukachukai, AZ, at the tire shop in Chinle, AZ, in schools in Tohatchi, NM, as well as on long drives listening to KTNN. Because it involved both Navajo and English, it was some of the first “Navajo” that I was able to comprehend. I have not attempted a detailed sociolinguistic survey of the uses of bilingual Navajo on the Navajo Nation (the Navajo Nation is roughly the size of West Virginia). It is, however, from my experiences and field notes, impressionistic as they may be, as well as the data cited by Schaengold (2003, 2004, 2006), Canfield (1980), and McLaughlin (1992) and others, a relatively common communicative practice. For a fuller accounting of bilingual Navajo see Schaengold (2004). Certainly, when I asked Navajos about it in 2007 they easily recognized the practice and were able to provide examples. In fact, my Navajo consultants offered the metalinguistic term *Navglish* to describe the code-mixed style (some consultants use *Navlish* as well).

2. Language ideology and linguistic purism

Robert Moore (1988) has discussed the ways that the Wasco language has come to be thought of as a set of “words.” Here words then become objects of display, objects that can be “brought out” (Moore 1988: 467). A language becomes an object, or object-like. Such an analysis links with the work of Michael Silverstein (1979, 2003) concerning language ideologies (see also Rumsey 1990; and Kroskrity 2004). “Language ideologies,” as Paul Kroskrity (2004: 498) writes, “are beliefs, or feelings, about languages in their social world.” Silverstein’s (2003: 542) discussion concerning the Worora presented by Rev. Mr. Love, for example, shows the ways that, “outright bad morphology and syntax in the translated texts were taken to be the authoritative Christian Word in Worora.” Here a particular form of Worora, based on the historical contingencies of Rev. Mr. Love’s linguistic abilities and translation practices, has become valorized as an exemplar of “high register-value” Worora (Silverstein 2003: 542). Again linguistic practices become an object of contemplation and discussion, and thus a “language” is created through discursive practices. “Languages” are then an imaginable set of metasemiotic stereotypes (see Silverstein 1998; Agha 1998). They are nameable objects: “Worora” as against “Wasco” as against “Navajo” as against “English”. By metasemiotic stereotypes, I follow Asif Agha (1998) and understand them as stereotypes of the uses, forms, and functions - including notions of the discreteness and abstractness of “languages” - of semiotic practices. Semiotic practices become indexes and icons of and for metasemiotic stereotypes of “languages,” “dialects,” “styles” and the like. As Silverstein (2000: 121) writes, “standardization, in turn, is the imagination and explicit, institutionalized maintenance of a “standard” register - a way of employing words and expressions for reference and predication

based on institutionalized prescriptions and proscriptions of various sorts - such that purportedly the best speakers and writers in the population index their adherence to all of them.”

Such nameable languages, then, are often “objectified” at the expense of, or in opposition to internal sociolinguistic diversity (see Gal and Irvine 1995). One such metasemiotic stereotype, influenced by our linguistic awareness (see Silverstein 1981; Hill 1985), concerns language or linguistic purism. Jane Hill (1985) insightfully showed how the rhetoric of linguistic purism can be deployed as an assertion of power in spite of any command of a “pure” code. Discussing Mexicano-speaking people’s sociolinguistic practices in the Malinche Volcano region of Mexico, she shows the ways that Mexicano and Spanish have been mixed in the speech of many Mexicanos. Such mixing concerns the lexicon, morphology, syntax, and phonology. However, as Hill notes, the linguistic consciousness of such forms differ. The purist discourse focuses on the saliency of the town name *San Miguel Canoa*, while less salient features of morphology and phonology are ignored. Lexical items become a focus for purists’ discourse. And such purist discourses are ways for Mexicanos to assert a degree of authority over other Mexicanos, regardless of one’s linguistic abilities.

Consider also the recent discussions of “syncretic Rapa Nui” and “purist Rapa Nui” on Easter Island, as described by Miki Makihara (2007). There “syncretic Rapa Nui,” which combines both Spanish and Rapa Nui, is widely used and there are “positive attitudes toward linguistic syncretism” (Makihara 2007: 62). As Makihara (2007: 62) goes on to state, “the use of purist Rapa Nui registers has largely remained restricted to interethnic and public settings where the association between linguistic codes and ethnic identity remains highly salient.” According to Makihara (2007: 63), this positive valuation of syncretic Rapa Nui is due in no small part to a linguistic ideology that promotes “syncretism.” This contrasts with a Navajo linguistic ideology that does not value “linguistic syncretism.”

Kroskrity (1992a, 1992b) has described the linguistic ideology among the Arizona Tewa. According to Kroskrity (1992a, 1992b) there are four inter-related notions about Arizona Tewa language. These “pervasive principles” (Kroskrity 1992a: 113) are: 1) “regulation by convention” (a tendency to use fixed forms in such genres as song and prayer); 2) “strict compartmentalization” (the use of language within specific contexts); 3) “linguistic indexing of the speaking self” (the use of language choice to index social personas); and 4) “linguistic purism” (a disinclination to mix languages or styles or registers). Thus, within the *kiva* (a ritually important place) foreign words are not to be used and outside the *kiva* code mixing is condemned (Kroskrity 1992a: 113). However, within narratives the use of English, Tewa, or Hopi can be used to index social identities (Kroskrity 1992a: 114).

There is much within Kroskrity’s description of Arizona Tewa that resonates with Navajo linguistic ideology. There is a thorough-going literature that describes a general Navajo principle of regulation by convention (see Reichard 1944; Witherspoon 1977). This is most clearly manifest in the ideal that Navajo chantways should be verbatim replications - given the contingencies of the world (see Faris 1994) - of previous chantways (Reichard 1944; Kluckhohn 1960; Witherspoon 1977). It can also be found in the formulaic introductions of clan relations that Navajo poets often give at the beginning of public performances (see Webster 2008a). Likewise, strict compartmentalization - the use of Navajo in certain contexts - can also be found. Among some Navajos that I have spoken with about such matters, for example, Navajo

is still the preferred language of curing ways and ceremonials (both for the practitioner and for those in attendance). Indeed, this aspect of Navajo linguistic ideology has found expression in Navajo poetry (as I will discuss below). It is also still the case that many Navajos see the ability to speak Navajo as essentially linked to being Navajo (see House 2002; Webster 2006a). The speaking of Navajo indexes Navajoness; but is also iconic of being Navajo. Language - or discursive choices of semiotically salient forms - become an icon of being Navajo (see Gal and Irvine 1995). That is, speaking Navajo becomes naturalized as “what Navajos do.” Such a belief, however, is now in tension with the linguistic practices of a number of younger Navajos who do not speak Navajo or who speak bilingual Navajo (see Schaengold 2003; House 2002; Webster 2006a). This tension can be seen in contemporary Navajo poetry as well (see Webster 2006a, 2006b, 2008a).

From Edward Sapir (1921: 196), through the work of Harry Hoijer (1939) and Nicholas Mirkowich (1941), to more recent work by Robert Young (1989), it has long been noted that Athabaskan languages and the Navajo language in particular are “highly resistant” to linguistic borrowing. As Young (1989: 304) notes, “Spanish and English loanwords integrated into the language [Navajo] historically aggregate little more than fifty terms, all of them nouns.” Navajo linguist Alyse Neundorf (1982) provides a brief primer on the ways to develop new words in Navajo, based on Navajo noun morphology. Many Navajos that I have spoken with are aware of the lack of lexical borrowing from English or Spanish into Navajo and consider this a point of linguistic pride. As it was explained to me on numerous occasions, Navajos can make their own words and such Navajo words will be more “descriptive” than, in most cases now, English. More recently, however, one Navajo performer I know has begun to incorporate a comedic skit into his performances highlighting “all the Spanish words” in Navajo. He singles out, for example, *alóós* Sp. *arroz* ‘rice,’ *siláo* Sp. *soldado* ‘policeman,’ and *bééso* Sp. *peso* ‘money’. He does not, however, include a discussion of the possible influence of English on the emergence of the grammaticization of tense in Navajo using the temporal adverb *ńt’éeé* ‘then’ (see Chee et al 2004). Lexical items are salient markers of language influence; grammaticization of tense to more align with English tense is less salient.

However, it is still the case that Navajos often valorize the Navajo language for its lack of lexical borrowing. This is also the case when some Navajos have explained to me that clan names, kinship terms, and place names cannot be translated into English (see Webster 2006b). This, I might add, fits a trend on the Navajo Nation where Navajo Chapters (regional political units) are changing their names from English names to “traditional” Navajo names. For example, the Chapter formerly named “Hogback” has legally changed their name to the Navajo place-name Tse’ Daa’ Kaan (*Tsétaak’á* ‘rock that slants into the water’). There is, then, a strong principle of linguistic purism among Navajos. This purism is often replicated in Navajo poetry as well.

3. A brief history of Navajo poetry

In 1933 a short eight-line poem was published in *Indians at Work*, a United States government publication (Hirschfelder and Singer 1992). The poem was composed by a collection of Navajo students at Tohatchi School, New Mexico. This poem, ‘If I Were a Pony,’ is one of the first published poems by Navajos. It was written in English, with no

use of bilingual Navajo. Other poetry in English would follow. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Blackhorse Mitchell (1968, 1969, 1972a, b, c), among others, would publish a number of poems in English about things Navajo, about the future, about the past, about grandparents, and about herding sheep. None of this poetry would use bilingual Navajo. Also in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Navajos serving in Viet Nam sent poetry written in English back to the Navajo Nation to be published in *The Navajo Times*. There were no examples of bilingual Navajo in any of those poems. During the 1970s more and more Navajos would begin to write poetry. In 1977, Nia Francisco would publish a poem in Navajo in the journal *College English*. Again, there would be no use of bilingual Navajo in that poem. In the 1980s and 1990s even more poetry would be published by Navajos, the poetry would appear in major literary journals as well as in university presses. By the mid-1980s individually authored books of Navajo poetry were appearing (see Appendix A for a comprehensive list of published books by Navajo poets of Navajo poetry). Poetry would be published in Navajo and English and combinations of the two as distinct codes. However, poetry that intermix Navajo grammatical forms with English forms, that is code-mixed forms, would be almost nonexistent (from twenty-six books listed in the Appendix there are only three examples of bilingual Navajo).

As the 1933 example suggests, much of the early Navajo poetry was supported by the U.S. government. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) would promote the teaching of creative writing and poetry at BIA schools in the late 1960s and early 1970s (see the discussion of *The Arrow* below). A crucial feature in the poetry of Navajo poets in the 1960s and 1970s was their ability to display a command of English. Later this would change. Navajo poets would write in Navajo to display a command of Navajo (see Webster 2006a). A suggestion of the importance of the use of poetry as a display of English language proficiency can be found in a brief editor's note in *The Navajo Times*. The note comes from a short-lived feature in *The Navajo Times* during 1962 titled "Poet's Corner." Here is the note:

The following short poems were written by Eugene Claw, a Navajo Junior at Manuelito Hall and display a fine grasp of the English language as well as imagination and good poetic syntax. (*The Navajo Times*: May 16th 1962: 14)

As an example of "a fine grasp" of English, there were no examples of bilingual Navajo in Claw's poetry. Other examples could be cited from government publications, but this example should suffice to give a sense of the importance of poetry as an exemplar of English language command. More recently, Diné College has published collections of poetry written in Navajo by students in the Navajo creative writing courses at Diné College (Casaus 1996; Begay 1998). Likewise, during the short-lived run of the "Navajo Page" in *The Navajo Times* a number of poems were published in Navajo to highlight Navajo language literacy. In both cases, however, poetry was seen as an exemplar of language command (notably reckoned in terms of literacy). In both cases as well, there was very limited use of bilingual Navajo. There are only two examples of bilingual Navajo during the run of the "Navajo Page" in *The Navajo Times*. These examples also comprise the entire number of bilingual Navajo forms used in Navajo poetry from *The Navajo Times* since the first poems, by Eugene Claw, were published in 1962. As exemplars of language command Navajo poetry has largely presented English and Navajo as distinct, non-mixed codes.

4. Navajo language in Navajo poetry

There has been recent scholarly work on the use of Navajo in Navajo poetry that is written predominately in English (see Brill 1997; Webster 2006a, 2006b; Fast 2007). Susan Brill (1997: 135), for example, argues that, “the Navajo language is used in many of their stories to move their reader-listeners into the Navajo worlds of those stories, even when those stories are predominantly in English. The use of the Navajo language firmly roots the stories within a Navajo world - be that world of the mythic, the everyday, or, in many cases, both.” Further on, Brill (1997: 138) argues, concerning the use of Navajo in the poetry of Navajo poet Luci Tapahonso, “when Luci Tapahonso shifts to the Navajo language in her writing, she does so as a means of inviting her listener-readers into the worlds of her stories and poems.” Robin Riley Fast (2007: 190), in critiquing Brill’s view, argues, instead, that “Tapahonso’s use of the language functions in part to remind non-Navajos that there are limits to our access and our welcome.”

Given a number of conversations with a variety of Navajo poets and non-poets alike, I would argue that Fast’s perspective is more in alignment with a view espoused by Navajos that Navajo and English are at certain crucial and feelingful ways incommensurate (see Webster 2006a, 2006b). A part of what the switch from Navajo to English suggests then, is the relative incommensurability between Navajo and English. This is made explicit in the following example from Luci Tapahonso’s ‘They are Silent and Quick,’ which presents a portrait of constructed dialogue between older mother and middle-aged daughter :

- (1.) “What is it? She asks. “What’s wrong?”
There are no English words to describe this feeling.
“T’áá ‘iighisí biniina shil hóyéé,” I say.
Because of it, I am overshadowed by aching
It is heaviness that surrounds me completely.
“Áko ayóó shil hóyéé.” We are silent.
(Tapahonso 1993: 14)

The poem is meant as a slice of life of contemporary Navajo life (they are speaking on the phone), the use of Navajo here suggests intimacy between mother and daughter. But note that it also comments directly on the relationship between English and Navajo. Here Tapahonso explicitly posits (a form of metasemantic commentary) that English is deficient in respect to the expression of emotions. The Navajo term *hóyéé* which we can gloss as ‘terrible, tragic’ is not “translated” by Tapahonso. The English glossings are, by implication, incomplete renditions of the Navajo expression.

In discussions with Navajos about the nature of translation between Navajo and English, Navajos have explained to me that Navajo place-names cannot be translated into English because the Navajo forms are the original forms and are connected to the ancestors (see also Basso 1996). As Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lawrence Morgan stated, “Most of those are names [English place names] given by the early settlers, and then they moved away...The Navajo names have always been there (Whitehurst 2007).” In replicating and reinforcing this linguistic ideology we find that a number of Navajo poets do not translate Navajo place names into English dominant language poems. Here

is an example from Laura Tohe's 'In Dinétah'. Note that the title also contains the Navajo term for the traditional Navajo homeland.

- (2.) Sis naajini rising to the east,
 Tsoodzil rising to the south,
 Dook'o'oshíid rising to the west,
 Dibé Nítsaa rising to the north
 (Tohe 2002: 100)

The representation of sacred mountains in an East to North trajectory also reproduces ideals of proper speech and is a recurrent feature in much Navajo poetry (see Webster 2006a). The use of Navajo place names in English language poetry is also a recurrent feature of Navajo poetry (see Webster 2006a, 2006b). It aids in a metasemiotic stereotype articulated most explicitly by Laura Tohe when she told an audience in Illinois that, "we'll always use our own names for the places on our homeland" (see Webster n.d.). It also matches with the account of Navajo linguistic practices given by Nicholas Mirkowich (1941). There, Mirkowich describes how Navajos will use Navajo place names - such as *Kin Láni* - in place of English town names - such as Flagstaff - that Navajos consider to be within traditional Navajo territory. However, in everyday practice and in Navajo poetry, Navajos do use English language place names for places within traditional Navajo homeland (see Webster 2006a: 244, 249, Webster n.d.).

The above examples can be seen as expressions of a linguistic ideology of linguistic incommensurability; this incommensurability is predicated on a belief that Navajo is in some measure more "feelingfully iconic" (Webster 2006b). Thus the Navajo form has a "rightness" of fit that the English form lacks (what I have elsewhere termed felt pragmatic iconicity [Webster n.d.]). The Navajo language is "constitutive" in the sense of Charles Taylor (2006). This "rightness" of fit is based on the felt attachments that accrue to linguistic forms over time and through use (what Sapir [1921: 39-41] called "feeling tones" of words), and this is part of what Navajo poets who create an idealized Navajo are attempting to help fashion; a particular feelingful attachment to Navajo linguistic forms.

A number of Navajo poets use some version of the phrase '*alk'idáá' jini* 'long ago, they say' in the openings of their poetry (see Brill 1997; Webster 2006a). This form is a genre framing device that indexes that a certain kind of *hane* 'narrative' is about to take place. *Hane*, I should add, is the most common way that Navajos I worked with referred to poetry in Navajo (see Webster 2004). In discussing '*alk'idáá' jini*', Jennifer Nez Denetdale (2007: 43) notes, "this way of beginning a story gives an indication of how old the story is, for it has passed through many generations since time immemorial. The phrase reflects an important measure of responsibility that the listener takes on to see that the story continues to be relayed." Here are two examples, one from 'In Dinétah' by Laura Tohe (2002: 100) which recounts a Navajo-centric history of the Navajo and one from 'The Dark World' by Hershman John (2007: 47) which recounts certain events from the origin of the Navajos:

- (3.) Alkidáá' adajini nit'ee'
 They say long ago in time immemorial:
 the stories say we emerged...
 (Tohe 2002: 100)
- (4.) Alk'idídaá' jini

Listen and remember...
(John 2007: 47)

When I asked Hershman John about the use of the Navajo form, he told me it was “necessary.” It was necessary in the sense that this is how Navajo stories of long ago need to begin. It was also how his grandmother always began such stories. Such uses indexically link the Navajo poem with Navajo narrative traditions and here with a specific narrator, creating an intertextual linkage between poetry and oral genres. They also reinforce ideas about proper ways of speaking, creating a metapragmatic example of the proper way to begin stories of long ago: Navajo stories of long ago begin with *‘alk’idaá’ jini*. For example, here is the opening of a narrative in Edward Sapir and Harry Hoijer (1942: 18). In this example, the significant character - *yé’iitso* ‘giant’ - is also included in the opening. All glossing and translation have been italicized in the following examples.

- (5.) *‘alk’idaá’ yé’iitso jini*
long ago giant they say
Long ago, a giant, they say

Contemporary conversations in Navajo, also use *‘alk’idaá’* to index traditional genres of “long ago” (see Field 2007: 641-642).

Another example of the use of poetry to articulate a metapragmatic ideal can be found in Norla Chee’s (2001: 24-25) ‘A Navajo Sing.’ Here is the relevant passage:

- (6.) Hataalii sings over the patient
Someone whispers, in English

“Diné bizaad bee yádaalti”

This is an EnemyWay.
(Chee 2001: 25)

Chee (2001: 25) provides a glossing for the Navajo phrase in a footnote as “speak Navajo.” The admonition expressed in this poem is reminiscent of Kroskrity’s (1992a, 1992b) discussion of the principle of strict compartmentalization. During an EnemyWay ceremony one is to use Navajo and not English. This poem thus presents a metapragmatic ideal, which aides in reinforcing a metasemiotic stereotype.

Rather than see the use of Navajo as an invitation into a Navajo world (a la Brill 1997), I have elsewhere argued that such uses aid in reinforcing a linguistic ideology that many Navajos expressed to me in one form or another as the inherent incommensurability between English and Navajo (Webster 2006b). Poems by Luci Tapahonso, Laura Tohe and other Navajo poets are not just read by outsiders, they are also performed by the poets on the Navajo Nation before largely Navajo audiences (see Webster 2008a on these dynamics). In such performances, then, attitudes about the form, function, and use of the Navajo language are circulated by Navajo poets to Navajo audiences. Encoded within many of these poems then are ideas about the importance of place names in Navajo, the inability of English to express certain ideas and emotions, and metapragmatic commentary on the contexts in which Navajo is not just appropriate

but required. Such performances are often displays of proper ways of speaking (see Webster 2008, n.d.).

Navajo poetry and the Navajo linguistic forms used, then, become both forms of “traditionalization” (Bauman 2004) and an “affective register” (Irvine 1990). Through the use of genre signaling devices such as *‘alk’idqa’*, they connect with a larger “traditional” stock of knowledge (see Webster 2006a). Likewise, through displays of the feelingful evocation of linguistic forms such as *hóyéé*, Navajo can act as an affective register, linking the use of Navajo with emotionally salient expressivity (for a fuller discussion of the pragmatic work that code-switching into Navajo can do see Webster 2006b; for a fuller discussion of the poetic devices and their links to the oral tradition see Webster 2006a). This is the positive valorization of an image of the Navajo language, a language that indexically links with tradition and with feelingfulness. For a language, like Navajo, that is endangered (see Benally and Viri 2005), this is a potentially empowering use of Navajo.

There is more, however: Navajo poets’ use of Navajo language also creates specific views of the Navajo language from a particular vantage point. It creates an “imagined” Navajo language. As Bakhtin (1981: 295) noted:

The actively literary linguistic consciousness at all times and everywhere (that is, in all epochs of literature historically available to us) comes upon “language,” and not language. Consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity of *having to choose a language*. With each literary-verbal performance, consciousness must actively orient itself amidst heteroglossia, it must move in and occupy a position for itself within it, it chooses, in other words, a “language.” [emphasis in original]

That is, Navajo poets, through their use of certain kinds of Navajo, aid in circulating a certain presentation of “the Navajo language.” Far from being, merely, the use of Navajo in English language dominate poetry, such forms are implicated in the sociolinguistic dynamics of Navajo linguistic practices. Rather than merely connecting to some “Navajo framework”, Navajo poets’ use of Navajo also replicates a metasemiotic stereotype of “the Navajo language.” This image of “the Navajo language” is often contrasted with “the English language.” As one Navajo once explained to me, “to say one word like in English language has a word for everything, but in Diné bizaad [Navajo language], that is why it’s been said that Navajo language is very descriptive.” The Navajo consultant was trying to explain to me the difference between English (which has a word for everything) and Navajo (which uses descriptive phrases that are often created on the spot to describe things). Or, in a more extended example by Laura Tohe, from a poetry performance in Illinois, of the process of writing poetry and the differences between English and Navajo, we find:

- (7.) the Navajo language is very poetic
 when I first started writing
 I used to think about poems in Navajo
 and then write
 turn them into English
 and I guess maybe in some ways I still do that
 because like I said the language is very poetic
 the way it looks at the world
 the world in terms of dualities

and even that
there's this line in that poem about female rain
about how the luminescence is all around
it took a long time to try
to find an equivalent in English
because the word itself a=h

there's that one word
I love that word in Navajo
nihik'inizdidláád which
it's an action
you know in Navajo it's verb based
and so nihik'inizdidláád means you know
this light
just
poured over us
or among us
and there's this relationship you have with the light
but in the English it seems a little flat
when you say luminescence all around
it's just like a reporting about what happened
and there's none of that
personal connection
to light

(Tohe, 9 October 2006)

According to Tohe's metapoetic commentary, Navajo is the more poetic language and it clearly contrasts with English. Here we have Navajo on the one side and English on the other (I have discussed this example in more detail in Webster n.d.). As with place-names, Navajo poetic forms begin in Navajo and then must be translated into English. In that translation they lose something. Notice also that Tohe frames the poetic nature of Navajo as a general condition of the Navajo language. The sociolinguistic situation, however, is more complicated than the image of the Navajo language often presented by Navajo poets. It is to that sociolinguistic complexity that I now turn.

5. Linguistic diversity and bilingual Navajo

Gladys Reichard (1945) wrote a short piece a number of years ago discussing some of the internal, dialectal divisions in Navajo. Muriel Saville-Troike (1974) also wrote of some of the phonological distinctions within and across Southern Athabaskan languages (of which Navajo is a member). However, there has been an over-arching trend in Navajo language research away from discussions of dialect diversity or sociolinguistic dynamics. Discussions of the relationship between Navajo and English or the diversity within Navajo have not been major focuses of Navajo language research. This is what Judith Irvine and Susan Gal (2000: 38) describe as erasure, which they define as, "the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible." For example, according to Saville-Troike (1974: 74), while it is often assumed that there is a general /t/->/k/ shift from Western Southern Athabaskan languages to Eastern Southern Athabaskan

language, there is evidence for an internal dialectal /t/-/k/ variation in Navajo (thus *táá* and *káá* ‘three’). As Saville-Troike (1974: 82) concludes, “one definite statement which *can* be made at this time is that no homogenous Navajo speech community has ever existed in the Southwestern United States [emphasis in original].”

It is not my purpose here to rehearse the whole of Navajo-English code-mixing. Rather, here I wish to only suggest something of the uses of Navajo-English code-mixing as well as some of the forms of that code-mixing (see Schaengold 2004 for a fuller accounting). A number of years ago, Kip Canfield (1980) noted examples of what he called, “Navajo-English code-mixing.” No less than Robert Young and William Morgan (1987: 7) have this to say about the use of “mixing” Navajo and English:

Bilingualism has grown as never before, and there is a distinct trend on the part of bilingual speakers to mix the languages. The Tribal Council has generally insisted upon linguistic purity, sometimes stopping speakers in the middle of their discourse to insist that they only speak one language at a time, but children and Navajo radio announcers, as well as bilingual speakers generally tend to insert words and phrases from English into their Navajo language discourse.

I want to point out that Young and Morgan, the foremost Navajo lexicographers, echo the discussion concerning linguistic purity discussed above and they suggest something of the contexts in which this “mixing” of languages occurs. They, however, do not provide examples (it is also unclear if they are referring to “code-switching” or “code-mixing” or both). Susan Foster et al (1989) describe examples of bilingual Navajo (code-mixing) used in spoken discourse among Navajo schoolchildren (they term it “lexically extended Navajo”). Foster et al (1989: 15) go on to argue that, concerning bilingual Navajo, they have, “significant evidence of its use by fluent bilingual speakers to convince us that this is a productive bilingual register.” Here are examples from Canfield (1980: 219). Code-mixed forms have been bolded throughout. All glossing and translation are, again, in italics. Unfortunately, Canfield provides little contextual information.

- (8.) **na’iish-crash** lá
1:pass out EMPH
I’m about to pass out!
- (9.) shil **naweasy**
1:with 3:sick
I feel sick
- (10.) Swimming asht’i’
1:do/be
I’m swimming.

Example 11 was documented by Margaret Field (2001: 256) in a family setting. This example is part of a larger triadic directive routine - a traditional Navajo way of making a directive - where a mother is attempting to get her son (Ronald) to pick up toys. It is after the use of bilingual Navajo towards Ronald (the rest of the transcript is in English), that the mother engages a triadic directive for her daughter (Noreen) to aid Ronald (for a fuller discussion see Field 2001: 256). The bilingual Navajo seems the last stop before the triadic directive (done in English).

- (11.) box bii'naanijááh
put them back in the box

Here is an example (ex. 12) that I recorded at a poetry performance during field work in 2000-2001 (Webster 2006a: 235). Let me add, that that poet then performed poetry that code-switched from English into Navajo, but that there were no examples of bilingual Navajo in the actual poems performed. It is not the case that Navajo poets are unaware of bilingual Navajo (see also below), it is instead the case that the language they choose to use in their poetry is not bilingual Navajo.

- (12.) I learned this from **my-náíí**
-paternal grandparent

This is a well-known example (ex. 13) from Navajo humorist Vincent Craig (such examples can be heard routinely on KTNN [see Klain and Peterson 2001: 126]) and it comes from a long ballad titled “Old Chi’zee” that was “recorded live at San Juan College,” Farmington, NM (Craig 1998). The lines below come after Old Chi’zee (a Navajo rapsallion) makes his entrance at the rodeo and has impressed “the ladies” (the transcription is mine):

- (13.) And he tipped his hat
 he winked his eyes
 and the ladies said
 “o:h **shi:ha:t**” [laughter]
1stPOSS heart
my heart

In looking at the linguistic features of these examples, we see that in example 8, the English lexical item ‘crash’ has been integrated into Navajo by the use of Navajo 1st person prefix and the emphatic particle *lá*. In example 9, the English form ‘queasy’ has had the 3rd person prefix affixed to it and it has been integrated into the clause. In both cases the English form has been inserted in place of a Navajo verb stem. In example 10, “an English verb is used in conjunction with a Navajo ‘helping’ verb (Canfield 1980: 219).” Example 11 finds the English noun being used in a Navajo clause and in example 12, the Navajo noun *-náíí* takes the English possessive ‘my’ (in Navajo, kinship terms are part of a small set of nouns that are inalienable and thus require a constant possessor). In 13, the Navajo possessive prefix is attached to the English noun. Again, this example is quite well-known, Craig has performed his comedy routines on the Navajo Nation since at least the 1970s and *shiheart* is a signature line for him. When Craig (as well as other Navajos, see image 1 below) uses *shiheart* it often takes on the non-literal meaning of ‘my love.’ There is an intimacy, a playfulness, and a localizing quality to the uses of *shiheart* by Craig. Certainly the audience laughed after the use of *shiheart*. I used it as a prompt when discussing bilingual Navajo with Navajo consultants.

Schaengold (2003, 2006) has described some of the linguistic features of bilingual Navajo, of which ex. 8-13 can be considered examples. In all, Schaengold (2004: 176-180) provides sixty examples of bilingual Navajo. Bilingual Navajo is based on the grammatical structures of Navajo, and the content forms of Navajo English (a distinct dialect spoken by many Navajos; see Bartelt 1981; Leap 1993) and English. It is

a mixed code according to Schaengold (2003: 250). Though, I should add that example 12 above has a Navajo content word and an English possessive and may fall outside Schaengold's definition of bilingual Navajo. For purposes here, then, I want to define bilingual Navajo as a code-mixed language that combines the morphology of Navajo and English with content words in either code as well (though I exclude examples such as *hogans* 'Navajo houses' which are part of the vocabulary of Euro-Americans in the Southwest [see Mathews 1994: 55]). Let me add, that some of my consultants have spoken of bilingual Navajo as *Navglish*. An older consultant who self-identifies as a bilingual speaker did use the term 'talk bilingual' to describe what he does and would not use *Navglish* to describe what he does. *Navglish* seems to have more currency among younger Navajos. The term *Navglish*, of course, is a productive pun based on *Spanglish* and echoed in *Apaglish*, an Apache English code-mixing style found in San Carlos and Bylas, Arizona (see Samuels 2001: 290). For comparative purposes, here is an example of Apache English code-mixing from Apache linguist Britton Goode (b.1911- d.1981) concerning place-names and presented by David Samuels (the bilingual form is bolded and translations are italicized; *-gee* is a locative enclitic and this example is similar to examples of bilingual Navajo below):

- (14.) Née aldó', **San Carlosgee** Apache ndliiníí aldó' dát'éhé nohwi ni' lék'eh ni'.
We also the Apaches at San Carlos also had land all over at one time.
 (Samuels 2001: 286)

The example from Samuels suggests that the use of Southern Athabaskan morphology (here a clitic) on English content words is not restricted to Navajos.

Schaengold (2003, 2004) provides a number of examples of bilingual Navajo, showing the uses of both nouns and verbs in bilingual Navajo. Here are two examples that will be relevant to the next section. Schaengold presents these examples, however, as largely decontextualized from their discursive contexts.

- (15.) **Town-góó** déyá
town-towards 1st.sing.go
I'm going to town.
 (Schaengold 2003: 244)
- (16.) **Bi-dlasses** ni-zhóní
3rd.poss.-glasses 3rd.sing. is pretty
Her glasses are pretty.
 (Schaengold 2003: 244)

In example 15, the enclitic *-góó* is attached to the English noun 'town' giving it the sense of 'to town' or 'towards town.' In example 16, the third person possessive prefix *bi-* is attached to the English noun 'glasses' (modified to conform with Navajo phonotactics).

Schaengold (2003: 248) also presents examples culled from Daniel McLaughlin's (1992) ethnography of Navajo literacy practices. These examples suggest that Navajos use bilingual Navajo in written utterances as well as in oral utterances. Here are the two examples that Schaengold cites from McLaughlin (1992: 143, 27). I have bolded the relevant forms again. All translations are again italicized. The first example is from a personal note and the second example is from a Chapter announcement.

- (17.) Néinídzáago índida, hazhó'ó ni hodeeshniih. lady-to-lady **talkgo**. T'á'ash áko.
I'll tell you all the details, lady-to-lady, when you get back, OK?
 (Schaengold 2003: 248)
- (18.) Public Meeting deiil'aah k'ad **Thursdaygo**, naadiin táá'góó yoolkáál góne'...
We'll have a public meeting this coming Thursday the twenty-third at five o'clock...
 (Schaengold 2003: 248)

In both examples, the subordinating enclitic *-go* has been added to the English noun phrase. While there is not a great deal of contextual information here, the use of bilingual Navajo in ex. 17, seems to suggest a sense of intimacy.

Literate uses of bilingual Navajo are not uncommon (see also Image 1 below). Walking through Diné College (Tsaile Campus) in the fall of 2007, I noticed several announcements and flyers with bilingual Navajo being used. For example, one flyer had *Learning Centerdi* (Learning Center-di 'at') written on it. Here we see a locative postpositional enclitic (*-di*) attached to 'Learning Center.' Note that *-di* 'at' contrasts with another locative enclitic *-gi* 'at'. The *-di* form indicates that the Learning Center is physically more distant than it would be if it had been marked with *-gi*. Indeed, the Learning Center was housed in a different building than where the flyer was posted (one also suspects that since the flyer could go anywhere the distal locative enclitic was more appropriate).

During the fall of 2000, politically active Navajos had been posting signs along the roads of the Navajo Nation concerning the impending vote in Arizona on Proposition 203, 'English for the Children.' Such phrases as "Dooda prop 203" 'no prop 203' or "Save Diné bizaad" 'Save the Navajo language' appeared on a number of hand-made signs. One sign had what I now take to be an example of bilingual Navajo, written on it: "Doo Prop 203 Da". In Navajo, negation can be done by circumfixing the affixes *doo-* and *-da* to the form that is to be negated. This sign was placed near the Tsaile Trading Post, AZ, which abuts Diné College. In its use, it highlights a feature of Navajo - negation through circumfixing - that is not readily available in English. Contrary to the other signs, this sign suggested the combining of English and Navajo, disrupting, however minimally, their discreteness.

Below is an example from a Navajo Christian hymn titled *Jesusgo Shí Doo* 'I'd rather have Jesus'. I have bolded the bilingual Navajo examples. Note that the bilingual Navajo form (Jesus-go 'with Jesus') is in the title of the hymn. The translation is mine.

- (19.) **Jesusgo** éi shí doo, óola dooda,
Jesusgo éi shí doo, yódí biláahgo,
Jesusgo éi shí doo, kéyah dooda
 (Diglot Favorites n.d.: 18)
- I'd rather be **with Jesus**, than gold*
*I'd rather be **with Jesus**, than an excess of wealth*
*I'd rather be **with Jesus**, than land*

The hymnal and the attendant tape with the hymns on it were purchased by me at the Gallup Flea Market (Gallup, NM), in March of 2001, from a Navajo man who had a stand with a number of Navajo/English Christian hymnals and tapes for sale. David Samuels (2006) has noted for certain Christian denominations among the Western

Apache (a related Southern Athabaskan language), a reluctance to “translate” some of the names of Biblical figures (including Jesus) into Apache. That seems to be the case here as well. Here Jesus has not been translated into Navajo, but rather a code-mixed form is used in this hymn. This pattern, of using the word Jesus, is used throughout the hymnal. There is a Navajo term for Jesus that I am familiar with *Doodaatsaahii* ‘the one who does not die,’ which was not used in the hymnal. As an aside, at the Chinle, AZ, Kingdom Hall (in the middle of the Navajo Nation), the Jehovah’s Witnesses have a sign on their hall that phonologically incorporates Jehovah into Navajo as *Jiihóvah*, but uses a bilingual Navajo form for possession on bi-Kingdom Hall (their Kingdom Hall); *Jiihóvah Yádahalne’í bi Kingdom Hall* (Jehovah Witness their Kingdom Hall). On their website they also have examples of bilingual Navajo: *Jiihóvah Yádahalne’í Bibeé Bóhólníihii biWeb Site* (bi- ‘3rd person Possessive’ + Web Site ‘their website’; Jehovah Witness their duty [trust], their Web Site) (Watch Tower Website 2006). In this case, the Navajo form attaches to “new” technology. The dynamics of Christianity on Navajo linguistic forms is well outside the scope of this paper. Here I merely note that bilingual Navajo is used in Navajo Christian hymns and on websites (the use of bilingual Navajo on the internet is an interesting topic as well; also beyond the scope of this paper).

In the summer and fall of 2007, I elicited examples of bilingual Navajo from three Navajo poets, when discussing the topic of this paper with them. I asked them if they knew of examples of bilingual Navajo, and suggested *shiheart* as an example. My use of “bilingual Navajo” was corrected to *Navglish* by these poets. One male Navajo poet immediately offered *shigirl* ‘my girl’. Later when I discussed bilingual Navajo with two female poets, one offered *ship^hant* ‘my pants’ and then the other poet, with a nice poetic sense, added, *shihat* ‘my hat.’ The second form, *shihat*, echoes with the aspirated first form [p^h] and the word final voiceless alveolar stop /t/ while the vowel quality (nasal) is held constant. For these poets, knowledge of *Navglish* was readily accessible and potentially productive for punning (see Samuels 2001 on punning). Yet it was not something that typically found its way into their poetry.

In the above examples we see the ways that Navajo and English can be intermingled morphologically and as a code-mixed Navajo/English or, as Schaengold terms it, bilingual Navajo or, as some of my consultants called it, *Navglish*. Schaengold (2003) then goes on to describe some of the social contexts in which bilingual Navajo is used. She notes, for example, that younger Navajos may be fluent in Navajo, Navajo English, and bilingual Navajo. Younger Navajos tend not to use bilingual Navajo with older speakers, “for fear of being publicly corrected and shamed (Schaengold 2003: 249).” As Schaengold (2003: 249-250) further argues:

In the Navajo community speaking this non-standard Navajo language is aptly called “talking bilingual,” as understanding and speaking implies access to at least some English and some Navajo. Although there is probably a continuum of codes available in the mixed language, the speakers categorize them into a standard usage and a non-standard usage or vernacular code, and switch from Standard Navajo to Bilingual Navajo according to interlocutor and setting.

I should add that elder Navajos will also critique the “standard” Navajo of younger speakers as well. Again, my consultants were less apt to call this style “talking bilingual,” than to term it *Navglish*. Finally, Schaengold (2006) argues against a strict purist view of language that would exclude recognition of the linguistic resources currently being used by young Navajos.

It is clear from the examples presented by Canfield that bilingual Navajo dates at least to the 1970s (which roughly coincides with the emergence of written poetry in Navajo). It seems likely, based on the examples presented by McLaughlin and the examples I encountered around the Navajo Nation, that bilingual Navajo is both an oral and a written practice. One can also hear bilingual Navajo quite regularly on KTNN (which broadcasts in both English and Navajo), the Navajo Nation radio station (see Klain and Peterson 2000). KTNN is the only radio station that has a signal strong enough to be heard throughout the Navajo Nation, and for many Navajos without access to television or the internet it provides crucial information concerning current events on the Navajo Nation (as I write this in April of 2008 the FCC has severed satellite internet connections on the Navajo Nation). The use of bilingual Navajo on KTNN suggests the wide circulation that bilingual Navajo has; almost all Navajos that I have met listen to KTNN periodically throughout the day. Indeed, Navajos that I know who no longer live on the Navajo Nation listen to KTNN via the internet. One can also, then, find examples of bilingual Navajo on the internet as well.

It also seems clear from Schaengold's discussion of the social contexts of the use of bilingual Navajo that it is a devalued expressive option (see Schaengold 2003: 251; see also Klain and Peterson 2000 on how this plays out concerning KTNN). I have also heard older Navajos critique the bilingual speech of younger Navajos and I have also heard stories about such criticisms from those who were criticized (see also T. Lee 2007). Yet in my experiences on the Navajo Nation, bilingual Navajo appears relatively common both among younger Navajos and Navajos closer to their mid to late thirties. This tension may be behind the comments an older Navajo consultant made concerning the fact that Navajo was now very much influenced by both English and, as he said, *Naakaii* 'Mexican', especially as it was spoken by younger people. This is in stark contrast to the situation on Easter Island as described by Makihara (2007). There the syncretic Rapa Nui is valued, and the purist Rapa Nui is restricted. Among Navajos, it is bilingual Navajo that is not highly valued, though like syncretic Rapa Nui, it is widely used in communicative practices (outside contemporary poetry). We can concur with Foster et al (1989: 15) that bilingual Navajo is a "productive bilingual register" among Navajos; it is just not a highly valued register.

6. Bilingual Navajo in Navajo poetry.

Given that bilingual Navajo is a part of the sociolinguistic scene on the Navajo Nation, and given its relative persistence and its use in writing, can we find examples of bilingual Navajo in the poetry of Navajo poets? The answer to this question raises interesting issues about the kind of language that Navajo poets are presenting through their poetry, the ways they legitimize certain linguistic forms and obscure other forms. The use of bilingual Navajo in written published Navajo poetry is practically nonexistent. For purposes here, I have focused on four venues of Navajo poetry. I have chosen them because they are public displays of Navajo language use and most of the books are well-known and readily available. I have looked at all the books of poetry authored by Navajos that I can locate.

- 1) *Arrow*, which was a creative writing journal produced by the Bureau of Indian Affairs from 1969-1974 and edited by Terry Allen. This journal featured Native

American creative writing, including Navajos. There are a few examples of Navajo lexical items found in this journal (see Webster 2006b for an example). Bilingual Navajo appears to be completely absent in the BIA publication *Arrow*.

2) *The Navajo Times*. Bilingual Navajo was also little used in the poetry published in the Navajo Language page in *The Navajo Times* in the mid-1990s. In fact, in a survey I did of Navajo poetry published in *The Navajo Times* from 1962 until 2005, it was only in the Navajo language page that two examples of bilingual Navajo were found. Both examples consisted of the use of the subordinating enclitic *-go* 'at' (see ex. 18). I looked at *The Navajo Times* because it circulates widely on the Navajo Nation, and is, for many Navajos, the paper of record. Besides the Navajo language page, it also periodically publishes poems in the Letters section, the Education section, or the Entertainment section.

3) Books of poetry. I looked at twenty-six books of Navajo poetry published by well-known university presses and the like, as well as from small scale publications and self-published books of poetry (see Appendix A for a list of the authors and the books surveyed). Twenty-two were either authored by or edited by a Navajo poet or poets. Here I have sought comprehensiveness. Three volumes (Allen, Evers, and Milton) were edited by non-Navajos but include poetry by Navajos in their collections. Terry Allen was an important figure in the *Arrow* series and taught creative writing to early and influential Navajo poet Blackhorse Mitchell (his poetry is in both the Allen and Milton collections). The Larry Evers collection is an important document in the emergence and recognition of Native American literature in the Southwest and includes work by Nia Francisco. Anna Lee Walters is Native American, but is not Navajo, however she is married to a Navajo and lives on the Navajo Nation. Her edited volume also contains the work of Navajo poets. The edited volumes provide a degree of time depth. Let me be clear here, in a survey of twenty-six books of Navajo poetry, by both established and less-established Navajo poets, there were only three examples of bilingual Navajo found in a total of three poems. Two of those poems were published in presses located outside the Navajo Nation (UCLA and Minnesota Historical Society), while the third was published by Cool Runnings (a music store and music production company on the Navajo Nation; Ashley was a long time employee at Cool Runnings).

4) *TerraIncognita: An Alternative Dine' Zine*, a short-lived creative zine published by Rick Abasta in Window Rock, AZ, during 2005, that featured poetry, short-fiction, and art work (in a number of vernacular orthographies the apostrophe after the vowel indicates high tone; see also ex. 24). There were no examples of bilingual Navajo in the zine. This was a locally controlled zine, and I had hoped it would yield examples of bilingual Navajo. It did not. Given the ability of bilingual Navajo to index intimacy, I had suspected that more locally controlled venues might have more examples. I was wrong.

To put this in perspective, let me discuss briefly a specific poet. Luci Tapahonso, the single most well-known Navajo poet on the Navajo Nation (see Webster 2008), does not use a single example of bilingual Navajo in any of her published poetry that I have been able to locate. On the other hand, the three books of poetry published by Tapahonso listed in the Appendix all have multiple examples of code-switching from English dominant poetry into Navajo (her code-switching is also the topic of Brill 1997 and Fast 2007). Code-switching into Navajo from English language poetry is quite common. Almost any book of Navajo poetry will include multiple examples. Navajos that I have interviewed recognize such code-switching as a part of Navajo poetry style. The same cannot be said for bilingual Navajo. Its lack of use stands in stark contrast to the much more common use of code-switching into Navajo from an English dominant

poem. In ex. 1-4 & 6, there are ten lines that include some use of Navajo (which is a trifle of the total number of lines with Navajo in English language dominant poetry). That doubles all the bilingual Navajo examples.

Or consider Rutherford (Ford) Ashley, who provides one of the three examples of bilingual Navajo in books of poetry authored by Navajos. Ashley has not taken formal classes in writing Navajo (see Webster 2006b). In his book, *Heart Vision 2000* (Ashley 2001), which came out while I was doing fieldwork, there are twenty-five examples of code-switching into Navajo. Including, in his vernacular orthography, such quintessential Navajo phrases as *Sa'aghnaghai bi'ke'hozhogho* 'long life and happiness' (Ashley 2001: 291; on the importance of this phrase in Navajo philosophy see Witherspoon 1977). There is one example of bilingual Navajo (see ex. 24). It was only, I should add, in 2001 that books of poetry written by Navajos included bilingual Navajo in their poetry (Ashley 2001; Chee 2001). Of the single authored books of Navajo poetry published since 2001 (there are five), there are no examples of bilingual Navajo in any of those books. The Esther Belin (2002: 8) example comes from an edited volume. One of the editors, Laura Tohe, is also a Navajo poet, and does not use bilingual Navajo in any of her poems, though she does code-switch into Navajo and she writes poems in Navajo (see Tohe 1999, 2005). In Belin's (1999) earlier book there are no examples of bilingual Navajo, though one could argue that the poem titled 'On Telly Biliizh' (Belin 1999: 61) is also an example. However, this is a well-known pun on the English word 'television' (Wilson 1970: 44). According to the joke, older Navajos misheard 'television' as *télii alizhgo* 'donkey is urinating'. In the poem, Belin is suggesting that perhaps the older Navajos were not wrong to think of 'television' as a urinating donkey.

It is not just the raw numbers, where there are five poems that use bilingual Navajo, and dozens of poems that code-switch into "standard" Navajo (and dozens more written in Navajo), but the sheer density of use. In each example presented below, there is one use of bilingual Navajo per poem. In most poems that switch from English to "standard" Navajo, there are multiple lines within the poem that switch as well (see ex. 1, 2, 6, 22, and 25).

Here I present all the examples, one is from the work of Esther Belin (who has taken classes in writing Navajo), herself a non-fluent Navajo speaker, another example is from Navajo poet Norla Chee, and a final example is from Ford Ashley. Again, the three examples presented here comprise the entire data set from the books of poetry listed in Appendix A (all the books of poetry by Navajo authors that I have been able to locate). The first two examples are the ones from *The Navajo Times*.

- (20.) shí éí **Thanksgiving-go** shił nizhóni
 (Holiday 1994: A-7)
my that at Thanksgiving with-me it is good
- (21.) **Veterans Day-go**
 (Woody 1994: A-7)
at Veterans Day
- (22.) With big teeth and smile Coyote asks, háágóóshą'?'
Plaza'góó and before he can respond First Woman adds,
 Shí k'ad dooleel, hágóónee'
 (Belin 2002: 8)
- (23.) Star Gazing
 on a private night

in the anasazi desert

shí buddy and me beneath a juniper

Raven
sitting over There
waiting for the right time to fly into the story
(Chee 2001: 6)

- (24.) Oh, *shi'* love, *mi amor*, *suave*, *suave*
Yes, my words are the lotion
the body lotion I rub between your toes
and along the underfoot

(Ashley 2001: 350)

In example 20, by Marvin Holiday and published in *The Navajo Times*, we find a similar use of the subordinating enclitic *-go* attached to the English noun 'Thanksgiving' that we find in the examples presented by McLaughlin (ex. 17-18). This example comes from the "Navajo Language page" that was published sporadically in the mid-1990s and was often based on the creative writing of Navajo school children. Another poem (ex. 21), in the same December 1994 edition of *The Navajo Times*, includes a poem that uses the code-mixed form '*Veterans Day-go*'. That poem is by Everrick Woody. The poems, given the month, were largely about recent and upcoming holidays (there is much writing about *tazhii* 'turkey'). The example by Holiday is of interest because Navajo does have a term for Thanksgiving, that form is *Késhmish yázhí* 'little Christmas', where Christmas has been phonologically incorporated into Navajo as *Késhmish*. Instead of using this form, Holiday uses the code-mixed form *Thanksgiving-go*. Other Navajo poets in the same edition of *The Navajo Times* used the non-code-mixed form *Késhmish yázhigo*. Holiday is highlighting the English origin of the holiday. The Navajo Language page meant to showcase the use of Navajo literacy in schools, one key example of Navajo language literacy command has been poetry written in Navajo (and this has been primarily a purist Navajo). Examples of bilingual Navajo are practically nonexistent on the Navajo Language page (save for the two examples discussed). It is suggestive, however, that Navajo students were being taught or at least allowed to use bilingual Navajo within school settings. Indeed, bilingual Navajo forms do turn-up on flyers at Diné College where many Navajo language educators were educated. *The Navajo Times* examples are switches from predominantly Navajo language poems into bilingual Navajo. In both cases, the bilingual Navajo highlights the holidays as being incorporated into Navajo, like the English nouns being incorporated into Navajo morphology, so too Euro-American holidays have been incorporated by degrees into Navajo society.

The next three examples (ex. 22-24) are switches from English dominant poetry into bilingual Navajo. Example 22, Belin presents the English noun 'plaza' with the Navajo enclitic *-góó* (much like we saw in ex. 15). The Navajo and bilingual Navajo forms appear to be the quoted dialogue of Coyote and First Woman. Coyote, an important trickster figure in Navajo narrative tradition, asks First Woman where she is going. It is intriguing that First Woman - important in Navajo sacred narratives - uses the bilingual code-mixed Navajo form in her response (towards the plaza). However, nowhere in this poem does Belin gloss the Navajo forms, nor does she provide footnotes concerning the Navajo forms. There is no attempt to explain the Navajo forms in English. Either one understands the Navajo forms or one does not. In fact, in talking

with Belin about this poem she was unsure how many non-Navajos would even recognize that *plaza'góó* was a code-mixed form. Belin's use of bilingual Navajo puts Navajo and English into dialogue, through the code mixed form. Belin, as I have noted elsewhere (Webster 2004: 80), also uses Navajo English rhetorical forms in her poetry. The use of the bilingual Navajo form *plaza'góó* presents an image of the Navajo language and the English language not as exclusive to each other, but rather as potentially intertwined. One reviewer of an earlier version of this piece suggested that the more purist Navajo may be associated with mythic events and traditional life and that bilingual Navajo may be associated with everyday events. It is certainly true that purist Navajo is often associated with traditional life (what one Navajo remarked about such poetry as, "1930s Navajo") and mythic events (see Webster 2004, 2006a, and 2006b). However, Belin here merges the mythic (Coyote and First Woman) with the contemporary, in a manner evocative of the merging of Navajo and English with her use of bilingual Navajo. For Belin, the character of Coyote has been a useful way to interrogate contemporary life (see Webster 2004).

Note, also, that "purist" Navajo in contemporary written poetry can be associated with boarding schools, with the secrets that young girls tell to each other, and when told before audiences at Tsaile, with humor (see Webster 2006b: 542). Here is an example from a written poem performed by Laura Tohe at the Native American Music Festival in Tsaile, AZ at Diné College in June of 2001 to a largely Navajo audience. The poem is titled "Sometimes those Pueblo Men can sure be Coyotes." The poem describes the narrator - a teenage girl - and her friend - also a teenage girl - being driven home by a handsome Pueblo man. The girls make a number of comments concerning the man in Navajo, assuming the man does not know Navajo.

- (25). we had just pulled onto Central
 when one of us said
Éí hastiin ayóo baa dzólní' this man is very handsome
Éí laa' I agree

(Tohe 1999: 16)

The interesting thing - but not terribly surprising - is that the audience - made up mostly of Navajo - began laughing prior to the translations. The use of English was clearly secondary for many Navajo and their enjoyment came - in part - from the use of Navajo. The largest laugh comes when Tohe concludes the poem with the Pueblo man responding in Navajo:

- (26.) *A'héhee' at'ééke* he said thank you, girls
 (Tohe 1999: 17)

In this example, the Navajo is used to create a connection, unintended, but a connection nonetheless between the young girls and the Pueblo man. The laughter, I would argue, came from the audience anticipation of the revelation that the Pueblo man spoke Navajo. The laughter was also connected to the way audience members (especially women) imagined themselves as the young girls. The use of "purist" Navajo is an affective register here.

In example 23, Chee merges the mythic and the everyday in her poem. Chee's poem, titled 'Shí Buddy' as well (the only poem with a bilingual Navajo title), is a complex set of images of the mythic (Raven), drinking "bootleg" under the stars, the

“Ghost Roads” of “america” (Chee 1999: 7), and ultimately the ideophony of Raven’s laugh, “Caw, Caw, Caw,” and then it “flies out of the Night growing colder/ a night for myths fallen on roadsides” (Chee 1999: 7) (on ideophony in Navajo poetry see Webster 2008b). Chee presents the Navajo 1st person possessive pronoun in conjunction with the English noun ‘buddy’, expressing something akin to ‘my buddy’ (the reference here may be to the Earth itself). In example 24, Ashley uses *shi’ love* ‘my love’ along with *mi amor* ‘my love’, linking the two forms with a sense of intimacy. Ashley’s poem is a love poem. Ashley’s example, like Belin’s above, appears to be quoted speech. This is common in the use of the more idealized Navajo as well (see ex. 1, 6, 25, and 26). Likewise, in both the Ashley and Chee examples, the use of the bilingual Navajo form seems to index a sense of intimacy between interlocutors. The use of *shi-* ‘my’ on an English noun (buddy and love) aids in both the localizing of these lines of poetry and in their affective expressivity. Ashley and Chee’s examples also resonate with Navajo humorist Vincent Craig’s use of *shiheart* ‘my heart’, but also with signs such as the one shown below, with the phrase *shóó shí heart* ‘watch out my heart/love’ printed on it. The picture in image 1 was taken in 2007 just north of Gallup, New Mexico, heading towards the Navajo Nation. The sign, and the use of bilingual Navajo here, intertextually linking to Craig and a common phrase on the Navajo Nation, has an informal quality to it.



Image 1: Sign north of Gallup, NM heading towards the Navajo Nation.

Such examples of bilingual Navajo are relatively well-known both in the speech practices of many younger Navajos and in literacy practices such as advertisements that litter the Navajo Nation and surrounding area. Bilingual Navajo is not, however, commonly represented in Navajo poetry. Instead, a specific “standardized” or “pure” linguistic form is presented, where Navajo and English mingle as discrete languages, but do not intermingle in the ways that bilingual Navajo does. To rephrase Brill’s earlier discussion, given what we have seen of the uses of bilingual Navajo in poetry (or its almost complete lack of use): The use of an idealized Navajo language, which obscures sociolinguistic diversity, indexically grounds and iconically replicates these stories within an idealized and unitary Navajo linguistic world.

Linguistic purism - the expelling through erasure of certain untidy linguistic forms - can also be seen to be replicated in other scholarly literature. For example, in a recent insightful and thoughtful discussion of the history of the trope of Navajos as “borrowers” Erika Bsumek (2004) concludes with a discussion of the difference

between the trope of Navajos as “cultural borrowers” and the lack of linguistic borrowing. Bsumek (2004: 345) writes:

Linguists claim that the Navajo language actively resists the integration of ‘loanwords’. In fact, assertions of the Navajo disinclination to accept linguistic borrowings are scattered throughout literature even though no single author has explored the seeming incongruity between cultural borrowing and the lack of language borrowing.

While I agree with Bsumek’s larger point about the overuse and misuse of the “Navajo as borrower” trope (see Webster 2004), Bsumek here replicates a linguistic ideology of language as unitary “object.” In general, there has been little research on sociolinguistic variations in Navajo (but see Reichard 1945; Saville-Troike 1974), instead variation has been largely erased as a unitary imaginary Navajo language has been constructed (see Gal and Irvine 1995 on this process; see also Silverstein 2000 and Irvine and Gal 2000). Such discourses assume that Navajo is somehow a bounded object and we are then focused on looking at lexical items “borrowed” in to a language, instead of at the ways that languages and codes may intermix in speech practices. It is, of course, true that there is a tendency to *koine* new terms in Navajo instead of adopting outside terms. But as example 20 suggests concerning the bilingual Navajo *Thanksgiving-go* and *Késhmish yázhígo*, we should rather see these as options, or potentials and not as absolutes.

7. Conclusions

To paraphrase Edward Sapir (1921), all languages leak. They are not self-contained units that show no influence from other languages. While it is generally true that Navajos (people, not the language) have not borrowed lexical items into their language, it is not true that Navajo and English have not intermingled (both languages and people). Bilingual Navajo, a mixed code, is a clear contemporary example of the intermingling of Navajo and English. Bilingual Navajo can be found in everyday conversations, in schools, on KTNN, on the internet, on billboards on and around the Navajo Nation, and on notes left for one another. It is not, however, generally used in contemporary written Navajo poetry. Contemporary written Navajo poetry is primarily a purist discourse. This may be a result of a historical association of the use of poetry as an exemplar first of English language command and later of Navajo (i.e. purist Navajo) language command. In doing so, however, it obscures and elides the contemporary sociolinguistic dynamics of bilingual Navajo, a code that is often devalued by Navajo speakers (Schaengold 2003, 2006). Navajo poets use of Navajo in English language dominant poems tends to pragmatically reproduce an image of a “unitary” Navajo language (with the exception of orthography, see Webster 2006b).

In contemporary written Navajo poetry there are a paucity of examples of code mixing between Navajo and English (bilingual Navajo). Navajo written poetry then, tacitly at minimum, presents a purist view of both Navajo and English. In contemporary written Navajo poetry both Navajo and English are imagined as discrete codes. While there is a large amount of Navajo language use in English language dominant poetry, many of the uses of Navajo replicate metasemiotic stereotypes of Navajo as incommensurate with English and as compartmentalized within specific contexts. These uses of Navajo in contemporary poetry then feed into an idealized view of the

Navajo language. This is an idealized view that connects the Navajo language with place names, kinship terms, clan names, ceremonial contexts, and stories of long ago. Both bilingual Navajo and “purist” Navajo can be used to create an affective register, however, bilingual Navajo does not intertextually link to forms of “traditionalization” (see Bauman 2004). The uses of “purist” Navajo, then, act as a form of “traditionalization” within these poems. That is, they pragmatically and intertextually link with aspects of the oral tradition and traditional practices (see Webster 2004). The Navajo used in these poems then comes to be “recognized” as exemplars of an ideal Navajo language community (see Blommaert 2007). Icons of what are important cultural tropes among older Navajos. Here they serve a positive educational function. They also challenge the predominant homogenizing monolingual linguistic ideology in the United States (see Sherzer 2002: 100; see also Silverstein 1996).

We should not expect Navajo poets to “accurately” document the complex dynamics of Navajo sociolinguistics. Rather, we should - as researchers interested in linguistic practices - be concerned with the ways that Navajos represent the Navajo language and the English language and the relations between such codes (see also Meek and Messing 2007). As Bakhtin (1981) noted years ago, the representations of languages are never neutral or value free, they are, instead, fully implicated in the beliefs and values - the linguistic ideologies - about dialects, registers, codes, and styles, the very social pragmatics in which language use is always embedded. “Standard Navajo” becomes legitimized through the uses of Navajo in much contemporary written Navajo poetry, while bilingual Navajo or *Navglish* is largely erased (see Gal and Irvine 1995). While Susan Gal and Judith Irvine (1995) discuss colonial linguists in Africa and Macedonia who erased linguistic diversity through maps and other metasemiotic regimenting practices (see also Irvine and Gal 2000), the example I have been discussing here concerns Navajo poetry as a way to erase the contemporary sociolinguistic diversity on the Navajo Nation. The semiotic work done here then, is to, following Silverstein (2000: 121), create an “imagined (language) community.” This, as Silverstein (2000) notes, reviewing Benedict Anderson (1991), is a part of the nationalist project of “imagined communities.” This imagined language community then is a part of the larger process of Navajo nationalism (see Lee 2007; see also Denetdale 2006). Thus contemporary Navajo written poetry is linked with Navajo nationalism. One central feature of that Navajo nationalism, as Navajo scholar Lloyd Lee (2007: 66) argues, is “the Diné language.” Lee does not discuss what he means by “the Diné language.” Is it a Diné language that will include bilingual Navajo?

The quite infrequent examples of bilingual Navajo in contemporary Navajo poetry can challenge the imagined language community view of Navajo and English as discrete codes. Bilingual Navajo challenges the imagined homogeneous language community, speaking discrete codes, indexing discrete identities. It suggests ways that Navajo and English can and are mixed (often with an English noun and either a Navajo enclitic or a Navajo possessive prefix). The uses of bilingual Navajo, limited as they are, then challenge the erasure in poetry of the sociolinguistic dynamics that can be found on the Navajo Nation. They are a counter discourse to the more naturalized literary and unitary presentation of Navajo (see Briggs 1992). They index, not to an idealized Navajo language community, but rather to the sociolinguistic complexities that exist today on the Navajo Nation. The potential for indexing intimacy through bilingual Navajo suggested by Chee and Ashley seems an empowering option as well. We need a more nuanced perspective on the uses of Navajo in contemporary Navajo

poetry, recognizing both the ways that it highlights the importance of the Navajo language and in the ways it creates a particular image of the Navajo language. We also need to develop a more nuanced perspective on the uses of bilingual Navajo in contemporary Navajo society more generally. This paper is a first step.

Many scholars have approached the use of Navajo in contemporary written Navajo poetry as an unproblematic reflection of Navajo linguistic practice, as an invitation into an unproblematic Navajo world. In contrast, I have suggested that we need to understand the uses of Navajo as part of a discourse of linguistic purism that is tied to an oppositional linguistic ideology that sees Navajo and English as discrete and distinct “objects.” Part of what Navajo poets are doing with their uses of the Navajo language and their non-use of bilingual Navajo in their poetry is creating an object that can be understood as an index and an icon of the Navajo language. This is a Navajo that is relatively untouched by other languages. Navajo uses of the Navajo language in poetry aid, even tacitly, in the naturalization of this idealized Navajo language. It aids in the creation and circulation of metasemiotic stereotypes about both the appropriate uses of Navajo, but also the form of that code. This vision of the Navajo language shows little influence from English and thus replicates - through practices - a language ideology that posits Navajo and English as wholly distinct. While it valorizes an ideal vision of a “pure” Navajo language, it concomitantly obscures or erases other socially marginal linguistic codes. And in so doing, it closes off parts of Navajo sociolinguistic realities and in its stead creates an imagined Navajo language community.

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Appendix A

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