

Call for Articles

Special issue of *Forum for Modern Language Studies*

Code-Switching as a Narrative Tool

A growing interest in code-switching – defined as “the alternative use by bilinguals of two or more languages in the same conversation” (Milroy and Muysken 1995) – has emerged over the last decades, showing the potential and the complexity of this multilingual practice. However, fewer studies (Callahan 2004; Sebba 2012; Gardner-Chloros and Weston 2015) have focused on written code-switching, and more specifically on literary code-switching (as opposed to oral code-switching) despite this practice being present in numerous texts since Ancient times. This absence is particularly glaring given that code-switching can play a pivotal role in the construction of textual narratives. As editors of this special issue we indeed argue that code-switching can be understood as a fictional/narratological tool which can be employed in order to build a narrative plot (Baldo 2019). This means that code-switching often contributes to the depiction of narrative characters and to the clarification of the plot (Delabastita and Grutman 2005; Alfonzetti 2013; Baldo 2019). Code switching often mirrors changes in focalisation and voice, in other words changes in the perspective from which the story plot is constructed. Code-switching can thus be used to stress important episodes anchored to the ideological construction of the plot, to anticipate events or create suspense, and finally to shift the order of events in a story.

Despite often being dominated by the parameter of monoculturalism and monolingualism (Yildiz 2012; Gramling 2016), linguistic plurality is the rule rather than the exception in Modernist fiction (Taylor-Batty 2013). In fact, the increasing mobility of people and waves of migration, as well as cosmopolitanism and territorial redefinitions, have led to different forms of multilingualism, which have been exploited by writers in different ways. Examples include borderland or minority writers, who take advantage of the potential of languages being in contact and include code-switching in their prose, such as Alsatian or Triestine writers, or as authors belonging to Finno-Ugric Minority Literatures. Other examples include migrant writers (first/second/third/fourth generation), such as Italian-Canadian, Italian-American, German-Canadian, Asian-American, African-American, Chicano writers, Francophone, Germanophone, Anglophone, Italophone migrant writers and so on, who write in the language of the country from which they (or their parents or ancestors) emigrated and use code-switching into their mother tongue or their heritage language. Among these we also find writers such as Vladimir Nabokov and James Joyce who also wrote or used code-switching with the language of the country into which they immigrated in adult life, along with their native language/s. Finally, we have those writers who do not write from the borders or a minority nor have immigrated or are descendants of migrants but still use a variety of languages and dialects in their prose, such as Italian detective writer Andrea Camilleri.

The aim of this special issue is therefore to explore how code-switching is used to shape and structure the narrative in contemporary fiction. Our goals are twofold. On the one hand we want to map the various phenomena of code-switching in order to deconstruct the paradigm of national literature and expand the idea of the literary canon in a transnational perspective, in a way that depicts single language and literary landscapes as spaces with indistinct margins (Sinopoli 2013; Jay 2010; Vandebosch and D’haen 2018). On the other

hand, we want to explore how code-switching plays a specific role in the narrative construction, and thus not only to implement studies of written code-switching by shedding light on a scarcely theorised connection between code-switching and plot construction, but also to enrich narratological studies, which have paid scarce attention to the linguistic and translational aspect of this construction. Translation, finally, enters this scenario because often the code-switched nouns and sentences not only invoke translation, in a metaphorical sense, but are also accompanied by translation as a strategy for comprehension (Torres 2007).

We thus invite submissions for a special issue of *Forum for Modern Language Studies* that focuses on modern/contemporary cases of fictional writing which employs code-switching as a narratological tool. Topics include, but are not limited to:

- How code-switching might be used in narrative prefaces and in narrative commentaries (Alfonzetti 2013) to build a narrative plot;
- How code-switching might be used to underline the climax of a narrative;
- How code-switching might be linked to characterisation, which points towards the element of the plot to which we need to pay attention as readers;
- How code-switching is related to the contrast/conflict of focalisations and voices in the narrative, and how this conflict motivates the narrative action;
- What ideological elements contributing to the construction of the plot is code-switching related to?;
- What is the function of translation in the use of code-switching in relation to plot construction?;
- How does code-switching contribute to the construction of narrative plots that challenge monocultural and monolingual narrative parameters?

Please send a 300-400 word abstract in English and a bio to Michela Baldo michibao2016@gmail.com and Marianna Deganutti mariannadeganutti5@gmail.com as soon as possible. The article should be submitted by February 2023.

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