

Mixed Code as a ‘Complex Machine’

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In this paper, we make the innovative move of applying the complicated socio-psychoanalytic model of *Anti-Oedipus* of Deleuze and Guattari (1972) to a multilingual social situation by considering social relations as species of *machine* relations.

In particular, ‘code changing’ (mixing/ switching), the hallmark of a multilingual social situation, viewed from the perspective of “machinic” production, is shown to be an instance of an interruption of the flow in one language machine by another; mixed code is thus shown to be a complex machine. In addition, the paper asserts that code changing is a case of switching between various subject positions, and that this is congruous to switching of identity that leads to a multiplicity of subject positions. Since a plurality of subject positions (code changing) implies multiple identities, a willingness to mix/ change codes, we ascertain, shows a willingness to participate in pluralistic antagonisms.

The case study used in this paper to demonstrate the machinic view is that of the multilingual situation in the north-east Indian state of Tripura. Our study looks at not just the largest tribal group of the state (Tripuri), but also the second largest, and largely unheard of, group of indigenous tribal population, namely, the Reang. In particular, our study is geared towards finding the attitude of each of the tribe, namely Tripuri and the Reang, toward (i) a mixed form of the language *Kok Borok*, and, (ii) the various government aided/ independent programmes of development and women’s issues.

The results indicate that both the groups are willing to sacrifice their group identity somewhat (tolerance towards a mixed form of the language for the Tripuris and sacrificing self-identity, in terms of low self-esteem, for the Reangs) though not in the same domain. In particular, the study throws up a revealing principle at work in Identity issues. The Reang as a group, though more willing to participate in a plural/ multiple form of struggle, is nonetheless quite unwilling to accept/ tolerate a mixed form of language (multiple subject positions, as per the reading adopted here). In other words, although a way of conceiving commonality that leaves space for differences is emerging, for a minority group, language identity acquires a hegemonic status that sustains the group identity.