

The local in the sociolinguistics of globalization

(review essay for SemiotiX special issue “The Sociolinguistics of Space”,
eds. Adam Jaworski and David Machin; final version, June 2013;
published on <http://semioticon.com/semiotix/>)

Kasper Juffermans

University of Luxembourg

kasper.juffermans@uni.lu

Introduction: sociolinguistics and globalisation

Since the turn of the Millennium, globalization has become a major focus in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, investigating themes such as: learning and teaching in diverse urban classrooms (Spotti 2011; Karrebæk 2012); complementary education (Blackledge & Creese 2010); internationalisation in higher education (Piller & Cho 2013); mass media and the internet (Androutsopoulos 2007; Varis & Wang 2011); popular culture and advertising (Jacquemet 2005; Kasanga 2010); hip-hop and graffiti (Pennycook 2007); language vitality (Vigouroux & Mufwene 2008); travel and tourism (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010); migration and asylum seekers (Maryns 2006; Vigouroux 2008; Dong 2011); the new globalised economy (Heller 2003; Block 2012) and long-distance financial fraud (Blommaert & Omoniyi 2006). Papers in Coupland (2003; 2010), and such monographs as Fairclough (2006), Blommaert (2010), and Heller (2011), among others, have attempted general statements outlining a sociolinguistics of globalization.

Such work points at the relativity of language functions, meanings and uses in mobile, shifting and intercultural contexts of interaction. It emphasises change and fluidity rather than stability and fixity of language and communication in globalization, and addresses the inequalities as well as creativities that emerge in such new mobile contexts. It considers how distant locations, communities and individuals are connected through movements and processes of appropriation, borrowing and bricolaging.

This tradition of work includes a critical analysis of the role of English in globalisation (cf. Phillipson 1992; Lo Bianco, Orton & Gao 2009; Saxena & Omoniyi 2010; Piller & Cho 2013). These scholars consider how English has come to take such a dominant position across the globe, alongside or in competition with local multilingualisms, and often point at the (neo)colonial and neoliberal ideologies that have produced this. At the same time, it is acknowledged that English is often used and appropriated in a range of creative and autonomous ways in many contexts of use that were previously served by other languages. Thus, the focus of sociolinguistic work on globalisation is on both the more imperialistic-global (centrifugal) and the more agentive-local (centripetal) forces behind such changes, whereby globalisation is seen as a “cause” of homogenisation of language and culture as well as a source of diversification of linguistic and cultural practices (see Blommaert & Rampton 2011).

We appear to be living in a world in which nothing is local anymore; everything is imported, comes from somewhere else, and is the result of global cultural “flows” (think of the “Made in China” tags in your clothes or the multinational tax-evading brands of almost anything we buy, eat and drink). Yet, nothing is just global, as everything happens somewhere, and is inserted in a local web of social meanings and cultural references, as repeatedly stated in the rich tradition of research on “glocalization” (e.g., Robertson 1995). Eating Japanese *sushi* or “authentic” Brazilian *picanha* in Luxembourg are, as much as they may be seen as the effects of globalisation, also very local eating practices that derive their meaning in distinction from the other options available on the local culinary market, including the more traditional *bouchée a la reine*.

In this short essay I will discuss two books that theorise the local as part of efforts to understand language in/and globalisation. These are: *English as a Local Language* by Christina Higgins (Multilingual Matters, 2009) and *Language as a Local Practice* by Alastair Pennycook (Routledge, 2010). Following a brief review of these books in relation to the local in the sociolinguistics of globalisation, I will illustrate some of their key ideas in relation to my own encounters with English during a recent visit to China’s capital, Beijing.

Review of *English as Local Language* and *Language as a Local Practice*

English as Local Language: Post-colonial Identities and Multilingual Practices is Christina Higgins', now associate professor at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, first monograph, based on her doctoral research at the University of Wisconsin Madison involving sustained linguistic ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Tanzania and Kenya. The book forcefully argues for treating English in postcolonial contexts such as those in East Africa not only as a "foreign" or "imposed" language, as an exclusively imperial and hegemonic force, but as integral and integrated part of the local linguistic ecology. English, Higgins argues, is not foreign but part of local identities and local language practices in East Africa. The local, argues Higgins, is not what has been isolated from or unaffected by the global, but the node in which local and translocal are meaningfully combined in the practice of everyday life.

Higgins' introductory chapters situate her work in dialogue with Bakhtin's work (*multivocality, heteroglossia, polyphony*), postcolonial theory (Spivak, Ashcroft, Canagarajah) and contemporary sociolinguistics (Blommaert, Pennycook). The book's main ambition is to "destabilize the dominant conceptualizations of English as global language by drawing attention to the cultural and linguistic bricolage in which English is often found" (p. 4), to problematize "the association of English with the expression of western and/or global cultural references" (p. 4), as well as to move beyond the dichotomy in the literature "that treats English as either an oppressive force or as creative resource" (p. 5). While the book leans more towards the latter end of this dichotomy, it concludes with the observation that "Kenyans and Tanzanians use English alongside Swahili and hybrid languages to operate in the interstices of globalization and localization, and to double-identify as local and global actors" (p. 148).

For reasons of brevity I limit my discussion of Higgins' four data-based chapters, in which she builds her case for English as a local language, to just one example from each chapter.

One professional group studied by Higgins are journalists on the *Tanzanian Gazette*. Having both Swahili and English forms of address and politeness formulae at their disposal, they appear to favour the English *good morning, sir* to the Swahili *shikamoo* ("I hold your feet"). This, she argues, creates a more egalitarian and harmonious ethos within the workplace avoiding the reproduction of undesired hierarchical relationships associated with the overly respectful Swahili greeting formula.

The following chapter focuses on competing discourses of African (female) beauty that are anchored either in Western/modern or African/traditional morals. Higgins demonstrates how English mediates both access to and success in the “beauty” marketplace, and how winners of Western-oriented pageants (Miss Tanzania, leading to the Miss World contest) are rewarded much more than the winners of local, alternative Afrocentric contests (e.g. Miss Bantu). At the same time, Western beauty ideals – skinny and light-skinned women with straightened hair and high heels, etc. – are fiercely mocked and ridiculed in newspaper columns and cartoons, and humorously juxtaposed with the traditional African ideal of more voluptuous, darker skinned bodies, braided hair and bare feet. Higgins shows that multiple and competing, differently valued ideals of beauty and womanhood – local and global – coexist in modern Tanzania. All of this being local, the female body and mediated discussions over authenticity in aesthetics are shown to be sites of conflict and contestation between the local and the global.

In her chapter on Kenyan hip-hop, Higgins discusses the chorus of the song by the artist Gidi Gidi Maji Maji containing the neologism *unbwogable* (“Who can bwogo me (3x) / I am unbwogable”). This form blends the Luo word *bwogo* (“to be shaken”) with the English affixes *un-* and *-able*. This example is significant, not only because it is representative of current practices in Sheng – the urban vernacular fusing English, Swahili and other Kenyan languages – but also because it was taken up by president Mwai Kibaki in his presidential campaign, and debated over in the Kenyan Parliament between the Speaker and the Vice-President, debating over whether *unbwogable* is “unparliamentary language” or if “the English language is a growing language” (p. 114).

In her discussion of linguistic landscape, Higgins considers whether product names or slogans such as *bomba*, *Chombeza time*, *X-TRA longa* are English, Swahili, or both. She does this, interestingly, not by introspective or “objective” linguistic analysis, but by listening to and reporting the voices of informants she asked to interpret these signs, allowing her to unpack and locally situate the multiple meanings and readings of these hybrid signs. A minor point of critique is Higgins’ repeated concern with identifying influences and sources for street Swahili terms such as *bomba*, suggesting that these may have their origins in African American English. This argument seems to be counter-productive to the arguments of English as a local language, and the “multiple, co-present, global origins” of transcultural flows she

identifies (p.95, citing Pennycook & Mitchell 2009) with respect to hip-hop in the previous chapter.

The final, concluding chapter of *English as a Local Language*, suggests that we are entering a new wor(l)d order, characterised by a simultaneity of reference points – local and global – and double meanings in multilingual practices, and asks how long it will take for language in education to follow suit and open up to these more fluid, heteroglossic, hybrid, multivoiced language practices.

The second book, *Language as a Local Practice*, shows family resemblance with the first. In fact, its author, Alastair Pennycook, Professor at the University of Technology Sydney, is co-editor of the series in which *English as a Local Practice* was published. As has been noted above, among other influences, Higgins locates her work within Pennycook's work on critical applied linguistics, hip-hop and Englishes and Pennycook engages, in agreement, with Higgins' ideas of English as a local language (see pp. 83–84). *Language as a Local Practice* is one of the recent books in the author's massive and influential *oeuvre*; it follows his *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows* (2007) and is followed by his most recent *Language and Mobility: Unexpected Places* (2012). The latter, more self-reflexive book draws on the author's rich personal and professional observations and experiences across the Asia-Pacific region and throughout the world.

The book under review here develops a theory of language as local practice, drawing on a wide range scholars and ideas, most notably, the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus' idea that "everything flows", that one "cannot step into the same river twice"; Thrift's nonrepresentational theory; Schatzki's "practice turn"; geographical theories of place and space (Soja, Massey); Halliday's social semiotics, and; the critical theories of Derrida, Deleuze, de Certeau, Fairclough, Foucault, and Bourdieu. Pennycook combines this rich theoretical anthology of *language, the local and practices* with empirical cases and illustrations from contexts and practices as diverse as the bricolage art of British-Nigerian visual artist Yinka Shonibare MBE; the language of wine tasting and wine critics; debates about graffiti and graffiti tourism in Melbourne; a newspaper clipping of a temple festival in South India involving the worshipping of elephants; and the author's pastime activities of scuba diving (reef conservation in the Philippines) and sailing.

This diversity of contexts and practices and of literature discussed is one of the appeals of the book as it allows us to enter or re-enter into current and older debates about applied linguistics, World Englishes vs. English as a lingua franca, determinism and freedom (or, creativity and repetition), ownership and appropriation of public spaces, the origins of language and cultural practices, language and biology/ecology (including the question whether languages are “species”, and what language “change” and “death” mean). Given this rare scope and depth of themes and arguments laid out in the book, it is hard to do justice to it in only a few paragraphs, so I will restrict myself here to the three central notions of the book *language, the local and practice*.

Pennycook develops his ideas of practice as the “generic social thing” by problematizing the theory/practice divide in applied linguistics which sees theory as either based on or feeding back into practice, and suggests that practice itself has not been theorized sufficiently. He goes on to theorize practice, following Schatzki, Bourdieu and Reckwitz, as repeated, sedimented, regulated or habituated action, as “bundles of activities organised into coherent ways of doing things” (p. 25) and as the bridge between individual behaviour and social structure, i.e. as the organizing principle behind concrete, situated activity.

This groundwork paves the way for an understanding of language (variation and change) in terms of repeated social activity, of creative repetition or repetitive creation, i.e. of saying the same things over and over again, similarly yet differently, differently yet similarly. Like it is impossible to step into the same river twice, it is impossible to say the same word, express the same idea twice, because – echoing Heraclitus – they are and are not the same. Borrowing from Babha and Taussig, Pennycook calls this *fertile mimesis*: “copy that goes slightly wrong ... repetition that is something else ... sameness that is difference” (p. 37). Drawing parallels with the world of art, the organising principle behind contemporary art is, in distinction with the romantic ideal of art “born from the lonely struggles and tortured soul of the isolated artist” (p. 39), the re-assembling, bricolaging of ready-made materials to create something new. Pennycook suggests that in language and art difference is the norm, with sameness needing to justify itself. Here the thin line between erudite intertextuality and plagiarism in academic writing comes to mind, where authors have to work in highly generic, similar, but not identical ways, about similar but not identical topics, questions and problems.

Grammar, Pennycook suggest, “is not a set of norms that we adhere to or break, but rather, the repeated sedimentation of form as a result of ongoing discourse” (p. 41). Because “repetition

always entails difference ... no two events, words can be the same” (p. 43). Allowing ourselves some repetition here, we may be reminded of Pennycook’s repeating Heraclitus that one can never step into the same river twice, for they are and are not the same. I repeat: one can never step into the same river twice.

With respect to the local, the two key ideas Pennycook develops in his book are the notion of relocalisation as a broader and more dynamic concept than recontextualisation, and the idea that globalised language practices (English, hip-hop) have multiple, co-present origins and are “already local”.

Taking a social semiotic rather than linguistic perspective, relocalisation refers to practices recontextualised in language, locally. Pennycook develops a subtle distinction between recontextualisation and relocalisation, replacing the more abstract notion of context in the former with a more concrete notion of locality in the latter. Thus, while recontextualisation is more exclusively concerned with transposing linguistic or cultural items/features from one context into another (“occurrences of the same things in different contexts”, p. 35), relocalisation is more inclusively concerned with the creative (i.e. repetitive but different) adaptations and appropriations of language and cultural practices, and the co-occurrences of similar/different practices in time and space. Relocalisation of language and culture relates to recontextualisation somewhat like “practices” relate to “use”. While the notion of recontextualisation for Pennycook leaves the text across contexts the same, relocalisation draws our attention to what changes in the text when it is, not *used* again, but *practiced* anew.

This view of relocalisation as an alternative to perceptions of creativity as total newness, difference and invention, allows us to appreciate borrowing, recycling and bricolage as potentially creative, original or authentic practices. At the same time, this view of cultural relocalisation allows us to see questions of origins of language and culture as highly suspect. Instead, we may recognise multiple, simultaneous origins of hip-hop, Christianity, global English, etc., and understand Aboriginal hip-hop, Catholicism in the Philippines, English in South India, etc. as already local, as local Aboriginal musical practices relocalised in hip-hop, as local Philippines religious practices relocalised in Catholicism, as South Indian language and culture practices relocalised in English. This understanding of relocalised language and cultural practices allows us, with Higgins, to appreciate English in East Africa as a local language, rather than only as an imported, or international, or global language.

Three encounters with local English in China

I now turn to a series of my own, recent encounters with English in China, and explore the local character of English in these contexts.

In the last week of March 2013, I spent a long weekend in the Chinese capital Beijing. Beijing is a vast city: stretching over 16,800 km² and home to more than 20 million people. As the political, cultural and educational centre of the People's Republic of China, and boasting a 3,000 year history, as routinely mentioned in the tourist guides, Beijing receives a stunning number of more than 200 million visitors per year. Only a fraction of these (5 million) are foreigners, who constitute a minority with special needs against China's domestic tourism market – in absolute numbers the largest in the world (see *China Daily*, 2012-01-16; *Voice of America*, October 27, 2009). While in Beijing, I was visiting a colleague on my way to a conference in Shanghai without much planned activity in advance. I spent most of my time walking around the city and riding on the metro, one of the longest and busiest metro systems in the world.

While doing this, I began to realise that Beijing is one of the places in the world where I qualify as a relative illiterate and zerolingual. On most occasions, none of the language resources in my multilingual repertoire could be drawn upon to make myself understood, or to interact in any meaningful way with my environment. I could barely navigate autonomously in the city, but I managed as long as I held on to the subway map and kept myself from drifting too far away from the subway entrances where I surfaced. For this purpose, I fully relied on the minimal visual and acoustic bilingual signage that was provided for the inarticulate and ignorant visitor like myself. As monolingual as Beijing is, street names and the MTR stations are given in both Chinese characters and pinyin or occasionally with an English equivalent. Thus, I read the small-scripted *Yuanminyuan* instead of the more conspicuous 圆明园; *Beijing Zoo* instead of 北京动物园; and *Wangfujing*, *Tien Anmen East* and *Yonghegong Lama Temple* for 王府井, 天安门东 and 雍和宫站, to name some of the places I visited or transited through. The pinyin or English that was provided in the metro felt like the subtitles on television for the hearing impaired. Severely handicapped and estranged to my environment, I interacted very little with other people. Such interactions in various service encounters or transactions were verbally minimalist, largely restricted to

mutual smiling and other nonverbal signals. I ordered food from menus pointing at pictures and the few stock words I picked up were *mei you*, *xiexie*, *ni hao*, the equivalents of which – “cannot/don’t have”, “thank you”, “hello” – I also heard in English, in addition to a few more words, “no sir”, “welcome”, etc.

Navigating the city, I discovered, requires remarkably little shared language or language *tout court*, enabling illiterates and zerolinguals like myself to function at a very rudimentary level. On this very basic level, the city reveals itself as an inclusive and accommodating space. At various locations in the city, tourist information offices have been set up, precisely for this purpose, and it is these places that provided me with additional clues and material aids to find my way around the city. Most accommodating were those places that were (partially) designed for or actively oriented to the foreign visitor such as my hotel, the School of Foreign Languages on Tsinghua campus, and the key historic sites, now commoditized as tourist attractions (the Forbidden City, the Lama Temple, the Great Wall, etc.), but even here I ended up not talking much.

As such, I interacted mainly with the physical, visual environment and began to pay attention to those elements that I *could* read – beyond the place names in pinyin, the numbers and the colours of the metro lines, and the more universal pictographic signs such as arrows for direction, also those notices that were given bilingually in Chinese and English, such as the fire hydrants as well as warnings of various sorts, exit signs, and the occasional English insertions or captions in advertising products and services I only sometimes recognised (see Kroon, Dong & Blommaert 2011, for discussion of similar signs). Zentz (2013), in her work on English in Indonesia, calls these minimal occurrences of English in public spaces “Englishings”, pointing at the ephemeral, performative and local character of such signs.

The English that I encountered in such places as the Beijing Zoo and the MTR system has a peculiar, local accent. It is English, grammatically and orthographically unflawed mostly, but still recognisably local, i.e. distinctly Chinese, in various respects. Consider the following instances where the city talked to me.



The pandas who are made to speak for themselves on these signs outside their habitat in the Beijing Zoo, refer to themselves as “nimble-limbed ... creatures of bamboo forests” leading “a solitary, mysterious live”. The minor spelling and grammatical flaws notwithstanding (*live* for *life* on the first sign, *being* for *be* on the second), the English on these signs is communicatively adequate and largely conforms the rules of “standard” English spelling and sentence formation. But there is more to language than spelling and grammar. The English, however, struck me as considerably more poetic and elegant than Western or African (non-native) Englishes I had encountered before. The same holds for the bilingual notice at one of the souvenir shops of the Beijing Aquarium (part of the Zoo), which formally addresses me as follows:

Address by the Shopkeeper of the Beijing Souvenirs Aquarium shop

“Beijing Souvenirs Aquarium Shop” is a window that displays marine culture and promotes international exchange in the aquarium industry. It only possesses tourist souvenirs that combine the traditional Chinese handcraft and marine culture but also boasts distinctive souvenirs which come from sister aquariums all over the world. In order to ensure our honorable

*tourists who can purchase souvenirs which embody beauty collection-worthiness, practicability and uniqueness in an integral whole and reflect marine culture as well, the professional team of Beijing aquarium, bearing the concept of designing and developing distinctive souvenirs in mind, continuously introduce new products, provide high-quality products and professional service and add interest and achievement to your tour at Beijing Aquarium. Though small, the products embody a period of history, disseminate some kind of culture or fulfill some glory. The stories among them will be told by us for you.....
Beijing Aquarium, always beyond your imagination!*

Even more than the Panda signs, this text is crafted in impeccable, well-written, good English. It does not share any of the more obvious features associated with “Engrish” or “Chinglish” – the flawed and often funny English mistranslations or language contact phenomena that are found in the linguistic landscape of China and East Asia more generally, and which have received regular attention in the Western and Asian media (see e.g. Radtke 2007, or www.chinglish.de, www.english.com) as well as in academic work (although here, the term “China English” is preferred, see e.g. He & Li 2009; but see Radtke & Yuan 2011). The English we are presented here with, however, does not contain any obvious spelling “mistakes” or grammatical “errors” more commonly associated with Chinglish. Radtke and Yuan (2011), for instance, note that Chinglish is a depreciatory term and that research on the topic needs to go beyond pragmatic correction-oriented statements, but they go on to present a typology of Chinglish comprising nine “mistake categories”, including “Overliteral Translation”, “Gibberish Chinglish”, “Social Register Mistake”, “Typo Chinglish”, “Grammatical Mistakes” and “Irrelevant Wording”. Clearly, the Panda signs and the Souvenir shop notice are not gibberish and also do not contain any typos or obvious grammatical social register mistakes like the often humorous examples Radtke and Yuan cite (e.g. “Deformed men toilet”; “Senyo Anus and Intestine Hospital”; “In here, enjoys under foot. Goes out here, is happy you”; “Be crreful of the steps”). In contrary, the grammar and register of the examples here are good, free of classic first language grammatical interference, and by no means the result of poor mechanic or machine translation. Whoever provided the translation service for these texts will have been a highly competent user, or users, of English. We notice that consistently American rather than British spelling is used, as evident in the words *fulfill* and *honorable*. There is also nothing exotic about punctuation here. Yet these texts still carry a markedly local, Chinese accent. Void of any “mistakes” and “errors”, these

texts are although more than “the wonderful results of an English dictionary meeting Chinese grammar” – Radtke’s definition of Chinglish on *www.chinglish.de* – still, somewhat, the wonderful results of English meets China. It may be fair to say that these texts are Chinglish, but without the stigma of error, mistake, and mockery.

These appear as examples of China English, of a higher-end Chinese variety of English, or connecting back with Higgins and Pennycook, of English as a local language in China, or as Chinese cultural *relocalisation* in English. These texts, accompanying Chinese parallel versions, appear to express Chinese cultural values and aesthetics in discourse, only they happen to do so in English. This is, perhaps, English culturally scripted in Chinese. We may consider the bilingual panda signs and the notice to the customer as texts that have always been local. The English used here is not (only) an international language but (also) a local language conducive to express local Chinese values, politeness and forms of address. In this sense, even if these texts are designed for a foreign audience with special communicative needs, they are still “truly local texts” (compare Kroon et al. 2011). And while it is possible that such relocalisation is unconscious, these texts may also be moments of chosen authenticity, of self-orientalising stylisation, or of creative deviation from standard average European. “Mysterious nimble-limed creatures” and “beauty-collection worthiness” appear to be well-chosen markers of Chineseness in English, by means of which the author or principal – the Zoo – manages to address a foreign public without oneself sounding foreign.

The second type of Englishings I discuss here are encounters with English that are not meant for visitors and that do not accompany a Chinese version. They are moments or instantiations of English that do not convey Chineseness in English, but Englishness in Chinese. The examples below index an “idea of English” in Chinese (Seargeant 2009); their meaning does not (or not primarily) signify the referential meaning of the words in English, but indexes the emblematic meanings of the whole language, as something “on top” of what is communicated in Chinese (cf. Androutsopoulos 2012). The idea of English here is emblematic for the West, for globalisation and the outside world, and constitutes a form of “Occidentalism” – of indexing, and crossing into, the West without necessary vernacular understandings of what is conveyed in English. (See Serwe, Ong & Ghesquière 2013, for examples of French in the linguistic landscape of Singapore fulfilling similar emblematic functions.)

Now consider the following example of two signs I photographed in the underground passages of Wangfujing station.



I photographed these signs as they appealed to me because of their pronunciation cues in IPA. It struck me that *'kə:tisi* reflected something of a local pronunciation with more fronted final vowels than my intuitive acoustic image of *courtesy*. For sure, phonetic transcription is not exact science, as various pronunciations for *courtesy* are given in different sources, including *'kər-tə-sē* and *'kôr-tə-sē* (www.merriam-webster.com); *'kɜrtəsi* (<http://dictionary.reference.com>) and *'kə:tisi* (<http://oxforddictionaries.com>).

I did not, however, understand what these signs were saying, beyond the literal, referential meanings of the English words they contained. It wasn't until I asked my colleague to translate these signs for me that I understood them to be public messages advising passengers on how to use the MTR system (Courtesy: “civility on the bus; polite offering [e.g. of your seat] and mutual help”) and praising them for choosing an ecologically friendly means of transport (Save: “environmental protection; conservation of resources”).

Both of these sets of examples – the “panda” signs and the souvenir shop address on the one hand and the “courtesy” and “save” notices on the other – demonstrate what Higgins, following Bakhtin, calls *transgredience*, i.e. how the self can become saturated with otherness through dialogue (p. 118). In the former, the Self is the foreigner (i.e. me) encountering

Chinese through English, while in the latter the Self refers to the Chinese encountering the foreign through English-in-Chinese.

In the case of the Panda signs and the souvenir shop address, we have global English incorporated for global purposes, but with a local accent (the purpose is addressing non-Sinophone foreign visitors). In the case of the public notices in the underground, we see the global incorporated for local purposes, i.e. local action with a global accent. While the former may be seen as an instance of *localisation*, adapting the English to local Chinese pragmatics, the later may be seen as an act of *globalisation*, indexing the global for very local purposes. Both of these are instances of *glocalisation*: acting globally and locally at the same time, localising the global and globalising the local (cf. Higgins, p.122), or what Pennycook, perhaps more usefully, has termed “relocalisation”, the fertile mimesis of sameness and difference in the bricolage of the local and the global in – *always* and *already* – local language practices.

Finally, I would like to move beyond linguistic landscaping, or put myself into the linguistic landscape, and provide a third example of English I encountered in Beijing, just outside the Forbidden City, on Tiananmen Square.

At the end of my third day of walking through Beijing, the day I had been on my feet since 7 a.m., I met a friendly young couple, Zhong Wei and Wang Ping, who wanted to make a conversation with me, in English. The man opened the conversation asking me where I was from. They were from Shanghai (my next destination) and here for the wedding of his sister who married a man from Beijing. It was their first visit to Beijing and they wanted to visit the Forbidden City. But it was 15.38 on a Monday and they had just discovered that it was too late to enter. They suggested to go for drink and invited me to join them, which I eagerly accepted not having talked to anyone for nearly 72 hours. It was a pleasure to engage in a real conversation again. We went to a local (!) place in one of the *hutongs* near Tiananmen square. Wei and I ordered Qingdao and Ping ordered a pot of tea. They showed me pictures of his sister's and her cousin's wedding on their phones, and I showed them pictures of my family on mine. We did the usual intercultural small talk talking about jobs, cultural habits of drinking and socialising, and so on. Still jetlagged and weary from a long day of walking, I couldn't keep up with Wei, who finished his second beer before I had finished my first. We kept ordering more drinks and snacks arrived on the table.

Despite a few negative experiences, I do like such unexpected encounters while travelling and generally allow myself to go along with them as I find that such unexpected encounters often result in the most memorable and instructive experiences. I felt that this meeting was an excellent closing of my weekend in Beijing which made me reconsider my observations of Beijing as an overly inward-looking and reserved place. Thanks to this encounter I felt human again, more than an ignorable Other that was at best exoticised and gazed at or mysteriously smiled at. Conversing with Wei and Ping, I felt I counted again as a person, and that cultural and language differences could indeed be bridged. That bridge was English, a fairly scarce good in this city. Not culture, I felt, but language separated me from all those others. After three days of solitude, I felt that English was a wonderful means of communication that brought the three of us together in intimate interaction. The centrifugal forces of English and global academia that brought me here met with the centripetal forces of English (and beer) as a local practice, creating a brief, transient moment of mutual recognition. Such moments driven by a mutual interest in the Other, so common in the context of tourist-host encounters and globalised conviviality (cf. Lawson & Jaworski 2007; Jaworski & Thurlow 2010), is what makes travelling worthwhile.

But there is another ending to this story. When we were due to leave, the bill arrived and put things in a different perspective.

The five beers, three glasses of red wine and the two pots of tea were charged at 2980 Yuan, the equivalent of some €400 in my local currency. The ¥100 note I had already put on the table would cover only a fraction of what was required. Wei appeared surprised by the size of the bill as well and asked for the menu again to check how things were added up. The beers, as I had remembered cost ¥30 each, but the glasses of wine – we had first class French wine – cost ¥280 each. And apparently Ping ordered two different types of tea – both of the finest quality, at ¥800 each, and we were also charged a “room fee”, and we were charged for the small dishes of nuts and banana chips that we were served. I argued against such an outrageous bill and that I only consented to pay for the beers, but Wei suggested we should split the bill, he and I paying half, because “girls don't pay”. To cut a long story short, I was scammed by Wei and Ping and the complicit waitress. What appeared to be a pleasant and honest small talk-y encounter, turned out to be a rather unpleasant and dishonest commoditized exchange. My lack of adequate bilingualism in this context (cf. Creese & Blackledge 2013), my naivety and eagerness to enter in a conversation got me in this

awkward, potentially dangerous, and effectively expensive situation. I was trapped in a local (mal)practice involving English and a couple of drinks. Grudgingly, I parted with the remaining yuan notes in my wallet (¥600, equivalent €75), expressed my disappointment with the situation, said my goodbyes, and ran off as fast as I could, disappearing anonymously again in Beijing's MTR.

What more explanation can be offered here than saying that my encounters with English in the Zoo, the metro, and with Zhong and Wang, are effects of the global spread of English to all corners of the world? Can these encounters equally be seen as already local practices? Surely, creative advertising, public notices of good conduct or a formal address to visitors ("honorable tourists") or scams such as the one I fell for, are not inherent to English, but also "belong" to China and Chinese. It seems fair to consider these practices relocalisations in English of what was already – and has always been – local. When Zhong and Wang approached me and made me (in collaboration with the waitress) a victim of their scam, they were not engaging in any form of foreign practices but relocalised the already local, i.e. also Chinese, practice of cheating a naïve foreign visitor. While tourist scams are far from being an exclusively Beijing specialty (or any local culture), they are common in the global touristscape of which Beijing is a part. They are neither inherent to Chinese, nor to English, but rather to the (economic) dynamics of fleeting tourist-host relationships facilitated by global tourism (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010).

The lessons Pennycook and Higgins offer us here is that English in Beijing, despite its foreignness, is also a local language (Higgins), since all language is local practice (Pennycook), but more importantly because local practices are relocalised in English and such Englishings serve local practices, i.e. the locality is shaping English as much as English is shaping the locality. "Nimble-limbed creatures" and "beauty-collection worthiness" have entered my vocabulary of English while also opening up potential and partial understandings of Chinese for foreigners and of English for Chinese. "Courtesy" and "save" accrue new meanings through their use (or practice) in the Beijing underground as much as the underground is shaped by this practice in English. And also: the scam was staged in English as much as English was staged in the scam.

References

- Androutsopoulos, Jannis (2007). Bilingualism in the mass media and on the Internet. In Monica Heller (ed.), *Bilingualism: A Social Approach* 207-230. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Androutsopoulos, Jannis (2012). English 'on top': Filling the space between anglicisms and English-only discourse. *Sociolinguistic Studies* 6, in press.
- Blackledge, Adrian & Creese, Angela (2010). *Multilingualism: A Critical Perspective*. London: Continuum.
- Block, David (2012). Economising globalisation and identity in applied linguistics in neoliberal times. In David Block, John Gray & Marnie Holborrow (eds.), *Neoliberalism and Applied Linguistics* London: Routledge.
- Blommaert, Jan (2010). *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blommaert, Jan & Omoniyi, Tope (2006). Email fraud : language, technology, and the indexicals of globalisation. *Social Semiotics* 16, 573-605.
- Blommaert, Jan & Rampton, Ben (2011). Language and superdiversity. *Diversities* 13, 1-22.
- Coupland, Nikolas (2003). Introduction: Sociolinguistics and globalization. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7, 462-472.
- Coupland, Nikolas (ed.) (2010). *The Handbook of Language and Globalization*. Pages. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Creese, Angela & Blackledge, Adrian (2013). Researching bilingual and multilingual education. In Wayne E. Wright, Sovicheth Boun & Ofelia Garcia (eds.), *The Handbook of Bilingual and Multilingual Education* in press. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.
- Dong, Jie (2011). *Discourse, Identity, and China's Internal Migration: The Long March to the City*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Fairclough, Norman (2006). *Language and Globalization*. London: Routledge.
- He, Deyuan & Li, David C.S. (2009). Language attitudes and linguistic features in the 'China English' debate. *World Englishes* 28, 70-89.
- Heller, Monica (2003). Globalization, the new economy, and the commodification of language and identity. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7, 473-492.
- Heller, Monica (2011). *Paths to Post-nationalism: A Critical Ethnography of Language and Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Higgins, Christina (2009). *English as a Local Language: Post-colonial Identities and Multilingual Practices*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

- Jacquemet, Marco (2005). Transidiomatic practices: Language and power in the age of globalization. *Language & Communication* 25, 257-277.
- Jaworski, Adam & Thurlow, Crispin (2010). Language and the globalizing habitus of tourism: A sociolinguistics of fleeting relationships. In Nikolas Coupland (ed.), *Handbook of Language and Globalisation* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Karrebæk, Martha Sif (2012). “What’s in Your Lunch Box Today?”: Health, Respectability, and Ethnicity in the Primary Classroom. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 22, 1-22.
- Kasanga, Luanga A. (2010). Streetwise English and French advertising in multilingual DR Congo: symbolism, modernity, and cosmopolitan identity. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 206, 181-205.
- Kroon, Sjaak, Dong, Jie & Blommaert, Jan (2011). Truly moving texts. *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies* 3.
- Lawson, Sarah & Jaworski, Adam (2007). Shopping and chatting: Reports of tourist-host interaction in The Gambia. *Multilingua* 26, 67-93.
- Lo Bianco, Joseph, Orton, Jane & Gao, Yihong (eds.) (2009). *China and English: Globalisation and the dilemmas of identity*. Pages. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Maryns, Katrijn (2006). *The Asylum Speaker: Language in the Belgian Asylum Procedure*. Manchester: St Jerome.
- Pennycook, Alastair (2007). *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows*. London: Routledge.
- Pennycook, Alastair (2010). *Language as a Local Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Pennycook, Alastair (2012). *Language and Mobility: Unexpected Places*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Pennycook, Alastair & Mitchell, T. (2009). Hip hop as dusty foot philosophy: Engaging locality. In H.S. Alim, A. Ibrahim & A. Pennycook (eds.), *Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language* 25-42. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Phillipson, Robert (1992). *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Piller, Ingrid & Cho, Jinhyun (2013). Neoliberalism as language policy. *Language in Society* 42, 23-44.
- Radtke, Oliver (2007). *Chinglish: Found in Translation*. Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith.
- Radtke, Oliver & Yuan, Xin (2011). ‘Please don’t climb trees and pick flowers for the sake of life’: Making sense of bilingual tourism signs in China. *Language and Intercultural Communication* 11, 389-407.
- Robertson, Roland (1995). Glocalization: Time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity. In Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash & Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities* 25-44. London: Sage.

- Saxena, Mukul & Omoniyi, Tope (eds.) (2010). *Contending with Globalization in World Englishes*. Pages. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Seargeant, Philip (2009). *The Idea of English in Japan: Ideology and the Evolution of a Global Language*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Serwe, Stefan Karl, Ong, Kenneth Keng Wee & Ghesquière, Jean François (2013). 'Bon appétit, Lion City': The use of French in naming restaurants in Singapore. In Cornelia Gerhardt, Maximiliane Frobenius & Susanne Ley (eds.), *Culinary Linguistics: The Chef's Special* in press. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Spotti, Massimiliano (2011). Modernist language ideologies, indexicalities and identities: Looking at the multilingual classroom through a post-Fishmanian lens. *Applied Linguistics Review* 2, 29-50.
- Varis, Piia & Wang, Xuan (2011). Superdiversity on the Internet: A case from China. *Diversities* 13, 70-83.
- Vigouroux, Cécile B. (2008). From Africa to Africa: Globalization, migration and language vitality. In Cécile B. Vigouroux & Salikoko S. Mufwene (eds.), *Globalization and Language Vitality: Perspectives from Africa* 229-254. London: Continuum.
- Vigouroux, Cécile B. & Mufwene, Salikoko S. (eds.) (2008). *Globalization and Language Vitality: Perspectives from Africa*. Pages. London: Continuum.
- Zentz, Lauren (2013). The porous borders of language and nation: English in Indonesia. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*.