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Language and Superdiversities

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Language and Superdiversity

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Abstract

This paper explores the scope for research on language and superdiversity.[1] Following a protracted process of paradigm shift, sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology are well placed to engage with the contemporary social changes associated with superdiversity. After a brief introductory discussion of what superdiversity entails, the paper outlines key theoretical and methodological developments in language study: named languages have now been denaturalized, the linguistic is treated as just one semiotic among many, inequality and innovation are positioned together in a dynamics of pervasive normativity, and the contexts in which people orient their interactions reach far beyond the communicative event itself. From here, this paper moves to a research agenda on superdiversity and language that is strongly embedded in ethnography. The combination of linguistics and ethnography produces an exceptionally powerful and differentiated view of both activity and ideology. After a characterization of what linguistic ethnography offers social science in general, this paper sketches some priorities for research on language and communication in particular, emphasizing the need for cumulative comparison, both as an objective in theory and description and as a resource for practical intervention.

1. Superdiversity

There is a growing awareness that over the past two decades, globalization has altered the face of social, cultural and linguistic diversity in societies all over the world. Due to the diffuse nature of migration since the early 1990s, the multiculturalism of an earlier era (captured, mostly, in an 'ethnic minorities' paradigm) has been gradually replaced by what Vertovec (2007) calls 'super-diversity'. Super-diversity is characterized by a tremendous increase in the categories of migrants, not only in terms of nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion, but also in terms of motives, patterns and itineraries of migration, processes of insertion into the labour and housing markets of the host societies, and so on (cf. Vertovec 2010). The predictability of the category of 'migrant' and of his/her sociocultural features has disappeared. An example can start to show some of the communicative effects.

This small piece of text was found in the main street of an inner-city area of Antwerp, Belgium (see Blommaert & Huang 2010 for details). It is handwritten in 'Chinese' (though this will need to be qualified). In English translation, the text reads "apartment for rent, first class finishing, water and electricity included, 350 Yuan per month", followed by a mobile phone number. The text is mundane, and unless one has a particular interest in it (as sociolinguists do), it is easy to overlook. But when we pay closer attention, we discover a very complex object, and here are some of the issues: (1) The text is

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[1] Blommaert & Rampton drafted this text, but it is the outcome of substantial discussion and revision involving Karel Arnaut, Adrian Blackledge, Jens Normann Jørgensen, Sirpa Leppänen, Roxy Harris, Max Spotti, Lian Madsen, Martha Karrebaek, Janus Møller, David Parkin, Kasper Juffermans, Steve Vertovec, Ad Backus and Angela Creese.

Figure 1: A notice in an Antwerp shop window
Source: Jan Blommaert © Jan Blommaert

written in *two forms* of 'Chinese': a mixture of the simplified script which is the norm in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the traditional script widespread in Hong Kong, Taiwan and earlier generations of the Chinese diaspora. (2) The text articulates two different styles or voices, that of the producer and that of the addressee(s), and the mixed script suggests that their styles are not identical. In all likelihood, the producer is someone used to writing traditional script, while the addressee is probably from the PRC. (3) The latter point is corroborated by the use of 'Yuan' rather than 'Euro' as the currency, and (4) the mixed character of the text suggests a process of transition. More specifically, it suggests that the producer (probably an 'older' diaspora Chinese person) is learning the script of the PRC, the unfinished learning process leading to the mixing of the scripts. Thus (5) this text points towards two very large-scale phenomena: (a) a gradual change in the Chinese diaspora, in which the balance of demographic, political and material predominance gradually shifts away from the

traditional diaspora groups towards new émigrés from the PRC; (b) the fact that such a transition is articulated in 'small' and peripheral places in the Chinese diaspora, such as the inner city of Antwerp, not only in larger and more conspicuous 'Chinatowns' such as London (Huang 2010).

So this text bears the traces of worldwide migration flows and their specific demographic, social and cultural dynamics. Migration makes communicative resources like language varieties and scripts globally mobile, and this affects neighbourhoods in very different corners of the world. In this Antwerp neighbourhood, Chinese people are not a very visible group, and in fact, this handwritten notice was the very first piece of vernacular Chinese writing observed here (the two Chinese restaurants in the area have professionally manufactured shop signs in Cantonese, written in traditional calligraphic script). Still, the notice shows that the neighbourhood probably includes a non-uniform and perhaps small community of Chinese émigrés, and the marks of historical struggles over real and symbolic power are

being transplanted into the Antwerp inner city. Plainly, there are distinctive communicative processes and outcomes involved in migration, and this paper argues that the detailed study of these can make a substantial contribution to debates about the nature and structure of super-diversification.

In fact, these demographic and social changes are complicated by the emergence of new media and technologies of communication and information circulation – and here an orientation to communication necessarily introduces further uncharted dimensions to the idea of superdiversity. Historically, migration movements from the 1990s onwards have coincided with the development of the Internet and mobile phones, and these have affected the cultural life of diaspora communities of all kinds (old and new, black and white, imperial, trade, labour etc [cf. Cohen 1997]). While emigration used to mean real separation between the emigré and his/her home society, involving the loss or dramatic reduction of social, cultural and political roles and impact there, emigrants and dispersed communities now have the potential to retain an active connection by means of an elaborate set of long-distance communication technologies.[2] These technologies impact on sedentary 'host' communities as well, with people getting involved in transnational networks that offer potentially altered forms of identity, community formation and cooperation (Baron 2008). In the first instance, these developments are changes in the material world – new technologies of communication and knowledge as well as new demographies – but for large numbers of people across the world, they are also lived experiences and sociocultural modes of life that may be changing in ways and degrees that we have yet to understand.

If we are to grasp the insight into social transformation that communicative phenomena can offer us, it is essential to approach them with an adequate toolkit, recognizing that the traditional

vocabulary of linguistic analysis is no longer sufficient. In fact, the study of language in society has itself participated in the major intellectual shifts in the humanities and social sciences loosely identified with 'post-structuralism' and 'post-modernism' (see e.g. Bauman 1992). It is worth now turning to this refurbished apparatus, periodically aligning it with questions that the notion of superdiversity raises.

2. Paradigm shifts in the study of language in society

Over a period of several decades – and often emerging in response to issues predating superdiversity – there has been ongoing revision of fundamental ideas (a) about languages, (b) about language groups and speakers, and (c) about communication. Rather than working with homogeneity, stability and boundedness as the starting assumptions, mobility, mixing, political dynamics and historical embedding are now central concerns in the study of languages, language groups and communication. These shifts have been influenced by the pioneering work of linguistic anthropologists like John Gumperz, Dell Hymes and Michael Silverstein, the foundational rethinking of social and cultural theorists like Bakhtin, Bourdieu, Foucault, Goffman, Hall and Williams, as well, no doubt, as substantial changes in the linguascape in many parts of the world. In fact with this kind of pedigree, 'robust and well-established orthodoxy' might seem more apt as a characterization of these ideas than 'paradigm shift' or 'developments'. Nevertheless, superdiversity intensifies the relevance of these ideas, and if the exposition below sometimes sounds a little gratuitously alternative or oppositional, this is because the notions they seek to displace continue with such hegemonic force in public discourse, in bureaucratic and educational policy and practice, and in everyday commonsense, as well as in some other areas of language study.

2.1 Languages
There is now a substantial body of work on **ideologies of language** that denaturalizes the idea that there are distinct languages, and that a

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[2] Thus, while a dissident political activist used to forfeit much of his/her involvement by emigrating, such activists can today remain influential and effective in their dissident movements back home (cf. Appadurai 2006 on 'cellular activism').

proper language is bounded, pure and composed of structured sounds, grammar and vocabulary designed for referring to things (Joseph & Taylor 1990; Woolard, Schieffelin & Kroskrity 1998). Named languages – 'English', 'German', 'Bengali' – are ideological constructions historically tied to the emergence of the nation-state in the 19th Century, when the idea of autonomous languages free from agency and individual intervention meshed with the differentiation of peoples in terms of spiritual essences (Gal and Irvine 1995; Taylor 1990). In differentiating, codifying and linking 'a language' with 'a people', linguistic scholarship itself played a major role in the development of the European nation-state as well as in the expansion and organization of empires (Said 1978; Robins 1979:Chs 6 & 7; Hymes 1980a; Anderson 1983; Pratt 1987; Gal and Irvine 1995; Collins 1998:5, 60; Blommaert 1999; Makoni & Pennycook 2007; Errington 2008), and the factuality of named languages continues to be taken for granted in a great deal of contemporary institutional policy and practice. Indeed, even in sociolinguistic work that sets out to challenge nation-state monolingualism, languages are sometimes still conceptualized as bounded systems linked with bounded communities (Urla 1995; Heller 2007:11; Moore *et al.* 2010).

The traditional idea of 'a language', then, is an ideological artifact with very considerable power – it operates as a major ingredient in the apparatus of modern governmentality; it is played out in a wide variety of domains (education, immigration, education, high and popular culture etc), and it can serve as an object of passionate personal attachment. But as sociolinguists have long maintained, it is far more productive *analytically* to focus on the very variable ways in which individual linguistic features with identifiable social and cultural associations get clustered together whenever people communicate (e.g. Hudson 1980; Le Page 1988; Hymes 1996; Silverstein 1998; Blommaert 2003). If we focus on the links and histories of each of the ingredients in any strip of communication, then the ideological homogenization and/or erasure achieved in national language naming becomes obvious, and a host of sub- and/or trans-national styles

and registers come into view, most of which are themselves ideologically marked and active (Agha 2007). Instead, a much more differentiated account of the organization of communicative practice emerges, centring on genres, activities and relationships that are enacted in ways which both official and commonsense accounts often miss. Indeed, this could be seen in Figure 1.

2.2 Language groups and speakers

Deconstruction of the idea of distinct 'languages' has followed the critical analyses of 'nation' and 'a people' in the humanities and social sciences (Said 1978; Anderson 1983), and within sociolinguistics itself, anti-essentialist critique has led to the semi-technical notion of 'speech community' being more or less abandoned (Pratt 1987; Rampton 1998; Silverstein 1998).[3] 'Speech community' has been superseded by a more empirically anchored and differentiating vocabulary which includes 'communities of practice', 'institutions' and 'networks' as the often mobile and flexible sites and links in which representations of group emerge, move and circulate. Historically, a good deal of the model-building in formal, descriptive and applied linguistics has prioritized the 'native speakers of a language', treating early experience of living in families and stable speech communities as crucial to grammatical competence and coherent discourse. But sociolinguists have long contested this idealization, regarding it as impossible to reconcile with the facts of linguistic diversity, mixed language and multilingualism (Ferguson 1982; Leung, Harris & Rampton 1997). Instead they work with the notion of linguistic repertoire. This dispenses with *a priori* assumptions about the links between origins, upbringing, proficiency and types of language, and it refers to individuals' very variable (and often rather fragmentary) grasp of a plurality of differentially shared styles, registers and genres,

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3   For a long time, linguists considered a speech community to be an objective entity that could be empirically identified as a body of people who interacted regularly, who had attitudes and/or rules of language use in common, and it would be the largest social unit that the study of a given language variety could seek to generalize about.

which are picked up (and maybe then partially forgotten) within biographical trajectories that develop in actual histories and topographies (Blommaert & Backus 2011). Indeed, speech itself is no longer treated as the output of a unitary speaker – following Bakhtin's account of 'double-voicing' (1981) and Goffman's 'production formats' (1981), individuals are seen as bringing very different levels of personal commitment to the styles they speak (often 'putting on' different voices in parody, play etc), and of course this also applies with written uses of language (see 2.3.3 below).

So although notions like 'native speaker', 'mother tongue' and 'ethnolinguistic group' have considerable ideological force (and as such should certainly feature as *objects* of analysis), they should have no place in the sociolinguistic toolkit itself. When the reassurance afforded by *a priori* classifications like these is abandoned, research instead has to address the ways in which people take on different linguistic forms as they align and disaffiliate with different groups at different moments and stages. It has to investigate how they (try to) opt in and opt out, how they perform or play with linguistic signs of group belonging, and how they develop particular trajectories of group identification throughout their lives. Even in situations of relative stability, contrast and counter-valorization play an integral part in linguistic socialization, and people develop strong feelings about styles and registers that they can recognize but hardly reproduce (if at all). So as a way of characterizing the relationship between language and person, the linguist's traditional notion of 'competence' is far too positive, narrow and absolute in its assumptions about ability and alignment with a given way of speaking. Habitually using one ideologically distinguishable language, style or register means steering clear and *not* using others (Parkin 1977; Irvine 2001; 3.2.2 below), and notions like 'sensibility' or 'structure of feeling' are potentially much better than 'competence' at capturing this relational positioning amidst a number of identifiable possibilities (Williams 1977; Harris 2006:77-78; Rampton 2011b).

In fact, much of this can be generalized beyond language to other social and cultural features

treated as emblematic of group belonging, and this will become clear if we now turn to 'communication'.

2.3 Communication

Linguistics has traditionally privileged the structure of language, and treated language use as little more than a product/output generated by semantic, grammatical and phonological systems, which are themselves regarded either as mental structures or as sets of social conventions. But this commitment to system-in-language has been challenged by a linguistics of communicative practice, rooted in a linguistic-anthropological tradition running from Sapir through Hymes and Gumperz to Hanks (1996), Verschueren (1999) and Agha (2007). This approach puts situated action first, it sees linguistic conventions/structures as just one (albeit important) semiotic resource among a number available to participants in the process of local language production and interpretation, and it treats meaning as an active process of here-and-now projection and inferencing, ranging across all kinds of percept, sign and knowledge. This view is closely linked to at least five developments.

2.3.1 First, the denotational and propositional meanings of words and sentences lose their pre-eminence in linguistic study, and attention turns to indexicality, the connotational significance of signs. So for example, when someone switches in speaking and/or writing into a different style or register, it is essential to consider more than the literal meaning of what they are saying. The style, register or code they have moved into is itself likely to carry associations that are somehow relevant to the specific activities and social relations in play, and this can "serve as the rallying point for interest group sharing", "act[ing] as [a] powerful instrument… of persuasion in everyday communicative situations for participants who share [the] values [that are thereby indexed]" (Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz 1982: 7, 6). To achieve rhetorical effects like this in the absence of explicit statements about group interests, there has to be at least some overlap in the interpretive frameworks that participants bring

to bear in their construal of a switch. The overlap doesn't come from nowhere – it emerges from social experience and prior exposure to circumambient discourses, and if the interpretations are almost automatic and unquestioned, this may be regarded as an achievement of hegemony (as in e.g. common evaluations of different accents). Indeed, the relationship here between, on the one hand, signs with unstated meanings and on the other, socially shared interpretations, makes indexicality a very rich site for the empirical study of ideology (cf. Hall 1980:133). In fact, this can also extend far beyond language itself.

2.3.2 This is because meaning is multi-modal, communicated in much more than language alone. People apprehend meaning in gestures, postures, faces, bodies, movements, physical arrangements and the material environment, and in different combinations these constitute contexts shaping the way in which utterances are produced and understood (Goffman 1964; Goodwin 2000; Goodwin 2006; Bezemer & Jewitt 2009). This obviously applies to written and technologically mediated communication as well as to speech (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996), and even when they are alone, people are continuously reading multi-modal signs to make sense of their circumstances, as likely as not drawing on interpretive frameworks with social origins of which they are largely unaware (Leppänen *et al.* 2009). In fact, with people communicating more and more in varying combinations of oral, written, pictorial and 'design' modes (going on Facebook, playing online games, using mobile phones etc), multi-modal analysis is an inevitable empirical adjustment to contemporary conditions, and we are compelled to move from 'language' in the strict sense towards *semiosis* as our focus of inquiry, and from 'linguistics' towards a new sociolinguistically informed *semiotics* as our disciplinary space (Scollon & Scollon 2003, 2004; Kress 2009).

2.3.3 Together, indexicality and multimodality help to destabilize other traditional ingredients in language study – assumptions of common ground and the prospects for achieving inter-sub-

jectivity. Instead non-shared knowledge grows in its potential significance for communicative processes. The example of code-switching in 2.3.1 shows indexical signs contributing to rhetorical persuasion, but this is by no means their only effect. Indexical signs are also unintentionally 'given off', with consequences that speakers may have little inkling of (Goffman 1959:14; Brown & Levinson 1978:324-5). When speakers articulate literal propositions in words, they have quite a high level of conscious control over the meaning of what they are saying, and even though there are never any guarantees, their interlocutor's response usually provides material for monitoring the uptake of what they have said (see e.g. Heritage and Atkinson 1984:8). But these words are accompanied by a multi-modal barrage of other semiotic signs (accent, style of speaking, posture, dress etc), and the interlocutor can also interpret any of these other elements in ways that the speaker is unaware of, perhaps noting something privately that they only later disclose to others. So if we look beyond literal and referential meaning and language on its own, we increase our sensitivity to a huge range of non-shared, asymmetrical interpretations, and in fact many of these are quite systematically patterned in relations of power.

Looking beyond multimodality, diversity itself throws up some sharp empirical challenges to traditional ideas about the achievability of mutual understanding and the centrality of shared convention.

First, if it brings people together with very different backgrounds, resources and communicative scripts, diversity is likely to pluralize indexical interpretation, introducing significant limits to negotiability, and this impacts on the idea of 'negotiation', a notion with axiomatic status in some branches of interactional linguistics. In Barth's hard-nosed empirical approach to the concept, "[n]egotiation' suggests a degree of conflict of interests… within a framework of shared understandings[, but…t]he disorder entailed in… religious, social, ethnic, class and cultural pluralism [sometimes…] goes far beyond what can be retrieved as ambiguities of interest, relevance, and identity resolved through nego-

tiation." (1992: 27). In situations where linguistic repertoires can be largely discrepant and non-verbal signs may do little to evoke solidarity, or alternatively in settings where there is a surfeit of technologically mediated texts and imagery, the identification of any initial common ground can itself be a substantial task (Barrett 1997: 188–191; Gee 1999: 15ff). The salience of *non*-shared knowledge increases the significance of "knowing one's own ignorance, knowing that others know something else, knowing whom to believe, developing a notion of the potentially knowable" (Hannerz 1992: 45; Fabian 2001). The management of ignorance itself becomes a substantive issue, and *inequalities* in communicative resources have to be addressed, not just 'intercultural differences'. It would be absurd to insist that there is absolutely no 'negotiation of meaning' in encounters where the communicative resources are only minimally shared. But it is important not to let a philosophical commitment to negotiation (or co-construction) as an axiomatic property of communication prevent us from investigating the limits to negotiability, or appreciating the vulnerability of whatever understanding emerges in the here-and-now to more fluent interpretations formed elsewhere, either before or after (Gumperz 1982; Roberts, Davies & Jupp 1992; Maryns 2006).

A second empirical challenge that diversity presents to presumptions of shared knowledge can be seen as the opposite of the first. Instead of focusing on communicative inequalities in institutional and instrumental settings, there is an emphasis on *creativity* and *linguistic profusion* when sociolinguistic research focuses on non-standard mixed language practices that appear to draw on styles and languages that aren't normally regarded as belonging to the speaker, especially in recreational, artistic and/or oppositional contexts (and often among youth). These appropriative practices are strikingly different from dominant institutional notions of multilingualism as the ordered deployment of different language, and they involve much more than just the alternation between the home vernacular and the national standard language. Instead, they use linguistic features influenced by e.g.

ethnic outgroups, new media and popular culture. The local naming of these practices is itself often indeterminate and contested, both among users and analysts, and scholarly terms referring to (different aspects of) this include 'heteroglossia', 'crossing', 'polylingualism', 'translanguaging', 'metrolingualism' and 'new ethnicities and language' (Bakhtin 1981,1984; Rampton 1995, 2011; Jørgensen 2008a,b; Madsen 2008; Leppänen *in press*; Harris 2006; Creese & Blackledge 2010; Otsuji & Pennycook 2010; for reviews, see Auer 2006, Quist & Jørgensen 2009, and Rampton & Charalambous 2010).

Understanding the relationship between conventionality and innovation in these practices is difficult, and there are a variety of traps that researchers have to navigate (Rampton 2010). It is easy for a practice's novelty to the outside analyst to mislead him/her into thinking that it is a creative innovation for the local participants as well (Sapir 1949:504; Becker 1995:229). And then once it has been established that the practice *is* new or artful in some sense or other, it is often hard to know how much weight to attach to any particular case (and not to make mountains out of molehills. See also 3.2 below.). It can take a good deal of close analysis to identify exactly how and where in an utterance an artful innovation emerges – in which aspects of its formal structure, its timing, its interpersonal direction, its indexical resonance etc, and in which combinations. The ideal may be for researchers to align their sense of what's special and what's routine with their informants', but there is no insulation from the intricacies of human ingenuity, deception and misunderstanding, where people speak in disguise, address themselves to interlocutors with very different degrees of background understanding etc. Still, it is worth looking very closely at these practices for at least two reasons. First, they allow us to observe linguistic norms being manufactured, interrogated or altered, or to see norms that have changed and are new/different in the social networks being studied. We can see, in short, the emergence of structure out of agency. And second, there are likely to be social, cultural and/or political stakes in this, as we know from the principle of indexicality (2.3.1).

So when white youngsters use bits of other-ethnic speech styles in ways that their other-ethnic friends accept, there are grounds for suggesting that they are learning to 'live with difference' (Hewitt 1986; Rampton 1995; Harris 2006), and when people put on exaggerated posh or vernacular accents in mockery or retaliation to authority, it looks as though social class hasn't lost its significance in late modernity (Rampton 2006; Jaspers 2011).

Practices of this kind certainly are not new historically (Hill 1999:544). Linguistic diversity invariably introduces styles, registers and/or languages that people know only from the outside – attaching indexical value to them perhaps, but unable to grasp their 'intentionality', semantics and grammar[4] – and there is a powerful account of the potential for ideological creativity and subversion that this offers in, for example, Bakhtin's work on the Rabelaisian carnivalesque (1968). But there has been exponential growth in scholarly attention to these practices over the last 15 years, and perhaps this reflects their increase in superdiversity (cf. 3.2.1). So when Androutsopolous proposes that "linguistic diversity is gaining an unprecedented visibility in the mediascapes of the late twentieth and early twenty first century" (2007:207), he associates this with different kinds of heteroglossia/polylingualism. For example, non-national language forms are now widely stylized, starting in advertising but extending beyond nation-wide media to niche, commercial and non-profit media for various contemporary youth-cultural communities – "[w]hen media makers devise an advertisement, plan a lifestyle magazine or set up a website, they may select linguistic codes (a second language, a mixed

code) just for specific portions of their product, based on anticipations of their aesthetic value, their indexical or symbolic force, and, ultimately, their effects on the audience" (2007:215). Alternatively, diaspora media often have to reckon with the fact that much of their audience has limited proficiency in the language of the homeland, so producers position "tiny amounts of [the] language… at the margins of text and talk units,… thereby" "exploit[ing] the symbolic, rather than the referential, function", "evok[ing] social identities and relationships associated with the minimally used language" (2007:214). And in addition, "[i]n the era of digital technologies, the sampling and recontextualization of media content is a basic practice in popular media culture: rap artists sample foreign voices in their song; entertainment shows feature snatches of other-language broadcasts for humour; internet users engage in linguistic *bricolage* on their homepages" (2007:208).

2.3.4 When shared knowledge is problematized and creativity and incomprehension are both at issue, people reflect on their own and others' communication, assessing the manner and extent to which this matches established standards and scripts for 'normal' and expected expression. This connects with another major contemporary concern in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology – metapragmatic reflexivity about language and semiotic practice. Even though it is now recognized that reflexivity is actually pervasive in all linguistic practice, this is a substantial departure from sociolinguists' traditional prioritization of tacit, unself-conscious language use, and it now features as a prominent focus in a range of empirical topics. As we saw with ideologically differentiated languages in 2.1, research on public debates about language shows how these are almost invariably connected to (and sometimes stand as a proxies for) non-linguistic interests – legislation on linguistic proficiency as a criterion for citizenship, for example, often serves as a way of restricting access to social benefits and/or rallying indigenous populations (see e.g. Blackledge 2009; Warriner 2007). In enterprise culture and contemporary service industries, meta-prag-

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[4] Bakhtin puts it as follows: "for the speakers of [particular] language[s] themselves, these… languages… are directly intentional – they denote and express directly and fully, and are capable of expressing themselves without mediation; but outside, that is, for those not participating in the given purview, these languages may be treated as objects, as typifications, as local colour. For such outsiders, the intentions permeating these languages become things, limited in their meaning and expression; they attract to, or excise from, such languages a particular word – making it difficult for the word to be utilised in a directly intentional way, without any qualification" (1981:289)

matic theories and technologies of discourse and talk are closely linked to regimes of power in 'communication skills training', 'customer care' and 'quality management' (Cameron 2000). In visual design and the production of multimodal textualities in advertising, website development and other technologically mediated communication, linguistic reflexivity plays a crucial role (whether or not this is polylingual) (Kress & Van Leeuwen 1996). And ordinary speakers are also perceived as evaluating and reflecting on the cultural images of people and activities indexically conjured by particular forms of speech – this can be seen in a very substantial growth of sociolinguistic interest in artful oral performance, where there is heightened evaluative awareness of both the act of expression and the performer, not just on stage or in heteroglossic speech mixing (2.3.3) but also in e.g. spontaneous story-telling (Bauman 1986; Coupland 2007).

2.3.5 In research on stylization, performance and visual design, linguistics extends its horizons beyond habit, regularity and system to distinction and spectacle, and if a spectacular practice or event is actually significant, then there has to be some record of it that gets circulated over time and space. In this way, the focus broadens beyond the workings of language and text *within* specific events to the projection of language and text *across* them, in textual trajectories. With this extension beyond use-value to the exchange-value of language practices, *en*textualization, *trans*position and *re*contextualization become key terms, addressing (a) the (potentially multiple) people and processes involved in the design or selection of textual 'projectiles' which have some hope of travelling into subsequent settings, (b) to the alteration and revaluation of texts in 'transportation', i.e. the ways in which mobility affects texts and interpretive work, and (c) to their embedding in new contexts (Hall 1980; Bauman and Briggs 1990; Silverstein and Urban 1996; Agha & Wortham 2005).

So meaning-making and interpretation are seen as stages in the mobility of texts and utterances, and as themselves actively oriented – backwards and forwards – to the paths through

which texts and utterances travel (Briggs 2005).[5] As well as encouraging a multi-sited description of communications beyond, before and after specific events, the analysis of transposition can also be factored into interaction face-to-face. In situations where participants inevitably find themselves immersed in a plethora of contingent particularities, where there are no guarantees of intersubjectivity and indexical signs can communicate independent of the speakers' intentions, analysis of what actually gets entextualized and what subsequently succeeds in carrying forward – or even translating into a higher scale processes – can be central to political conceptions of 'hearability' and 'voice' (Hymes 1996; Mehan 1996; Briggs 1997; Blommaert 2005).

This perspective is clearly relevant to the circulation of ideological messages, to technologically mediated communication and to global and transnational 'flows' more generally. It also invites comparative analysis of the scale – the spatial scope, temporal durability, social reach – of the networks and processes in which texts and representations travel (Scollon & Scollon 2004; Pennycook 2007, 2010; Blommaert 2008, 2010a; Androutsopoulos 2009). In other words, it encourages a layered and multi-scalar conceptualization of context (Cicourel 1992; Blommaert 2010a). The contexts in which people communicate are partly local and emergent, continuously readjusted to the contingencies of action unfolding from one moment to the next, but they are also infused with information, resources, expectations and experiences that originate in, circulate through, and/or are destined for networks and processes that can be very different in their reach and duration (as well as in their capacity to bestow privilege, power or stigma).

In cultural forms like Hip Hop, for example, resources from immediate, local and global scale-levels are all called into play. As well as shaping each line to build on the last and lead to the next, rappers anchor their messages in local experiences/realities and articulate them in the

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5   This is obviously complicates notions of 'authorship' and it is directly relevant to discussions of 'authenticity' and the 'originality' of texts (as in 'the original version of X').

global stylistic template of Hip Hop, accessing a global scale-level of potential circulation, recognition and uptake in spite of (and complementary to) the restricted accessibility typically associated with the strictly local (Pennycook 2007; Wang 2010). Similarly, the multi-scalar dimensions of diasporic life in superdiversity account for the complex forms of new urban multilingualism encountered in recent work in linguistic landscaping (Scollon & Scollon 2003; Pan Lin 2009). The local emplacement of, say, a Turkish shop in Amsterdam prompts messages in Dutch; the local emplacement of the regional diasporic ethnic community and its transnational network prompts Turkish; and other local, regional and transnational factors can prompt the presence of English, Polish, Russian, Arabic, Tamil and others.

In a multi-scalar view of context, features that used to be treated separately as macro – social class, ethnicity, gender, generation etc – can now be seen operating at the most micro-level of interactional process, as resources that participants can draw upon when making sense of what's going on in a communicative event (see the example of style shifting in 2.3.1). Most of the extrinsic resources flowing into the nexus of communication may be taken for granted, tacitly structuring the actions that participants opt for, but metapragmatic reflexivity (2.3.4) means that participants also often orient to the 'multi-scalar', 'transpositional' implications of what's happening. After all, messages, texts, genres, styles and languages vary conspicuously in their potential for circulation – itself a major source of stratification – and sometimes this can itself become the focus of attention and dispute, as people differ in their normative sense of what should carry where,. In this way, here-and-now interaction is also often actively 'scale-sensitive', mindful of the transnational, national or local provenance or potential of a text or practice, overtly committed to e.g. blocking or reformatting it so that it does or doesn't translate up or down this or that social or organizational hierarchy (Arnaut 2005).

2.3.6 **Methodologically**, virtually all of the work reported here holds to two axioms:

a. the contexts for communication should be investigated rather than assumed. Meaning takes shape within specific places, activities, social relations, interactional histories, textual trajectories, institutional regimes and cultural ideologies, produced and construed by embodied agents with expectations and repertoires that have to be grasped ethnographically; and

b. analysis of the internal organisation of semiotic data is essential to understanding its significance and position in the world. Meaning is far more than just the 'expression of ideas', and biography, identifications, stance and nuance are extensively signalled in the linguistic and textual fine-grain.

If traditional classificatory frameworks no longer work and ethnic categorisation is especially problematic in superdiversity, then this combination seems very apt. One of ethnography's key characteristics is its commitment to taking a long hard look at empirical processes that make no sense within established frameworks. And if critiques of essentialism underline the relevance of Moerman's reformulation of the issue in research on the 'Lue' – "The question is not, 'Who are the Lue?' but rather when and how and why the identification of 'Lue' is preferred" (1974:62; also e.g. Barth 1969) – then it is worth turning to language and discourse to understand how categories and identities get circulated, taken up and reproduced in textual representations and communicative encounters.

Admittedly, the methodological profile of linguistics has not always made it seem particularly well-suited to this terrain. During the heyday of structuralism, linguistics was often held up as a model for the scientific study of culture as an integrated system, making the rest of the humanities and social sciences worry that they were 'pre-scientific' (Hymes 1983:196). Indeed, in Levinson's words, "linguists are the snobs of social science: you don't get into the club unless you are willing to don the most outlandish presuppositions" (1988:161). But in this section we have tried to show that these 'outlandish pre-

suppositions' no longer hold with the force they used to. Instead we would insist on bringing an ethnographer's sensibility to the apparatus of linguistics and discourse analysis, treating it as a set of 'sensitising' concepts "suggest[ing] directions along which to look" rather than 'definitive' constructs "provid[ing] prescriptions of what to see" (Blumer 1969:148), and this should be applied with reflexive understanding of the researcher's own participation in the circulation of power/knowledge (Cameron *et al.* 1992). But once the apparatus is epistemologically repositioned like this – repositioned as just the extension of ethnography into intricate zones of culture and society that might otherwise be missed – then linguistics offers a very rich and empirically robust collection of frameworks and procedures for exploring the details of social life, also providing a very full range of highly suggestive – but not binding! – proposals about how they pattern together.

Among other effects produced by this combination of linguistics and ethnography, a distinctive view of ideology emerges. Rather than being treated only as sets of explicitly articulated statements (as in much policy and interview discourse analysis), ideologies are viewed as complexes that operate in different shapes and with different modes of articulation at a variety of levels on a range of objects. Explicit statements are of course included, but so too are implicit behavioural reflexes operating in discourse practices (turning these into ideologically saturated praxis). Intense scrutiny of textual and discursive detail discloses the ways in which widely distributed societal ideologies penetrate the microscopic world of talk and text, how ideologies have palpable mundane reality.[6] Indeed, this layered, multi-scalar and empirically grounded understanding of ideology is perhaps one of the most sophisticated ones in current social science.

Such, then, is the refurbished toolkit that currently constitutes linguistic ethnography (linguistic anthropology/ethnographic sociolinguistics). It is now worth reflecting on some of the questions and issues that it could be used to address.

6　See also the discussion of 'normativity' in 3.2.1

3.　An agenda for research

There are at least two broad tracks for the study of language in superdiversity, one which adds linguistic ethnography as a supplementary perspective to other kinds of study, and another which takes language and communication as central topics. As the perspective outlined in Section 2 is itself inevitably interdisciplinary, the difference between these tracks is mainly a matter of degree, and the dividing line becomes even thinner when, for example, Vertovec asks in a discussion of superdiversity and 'civil integration' what "meaningful [communicative] interchanges look like, how they are formed, maintained or broken, and how the state or other agencies might promote them" (2007:27; see also e.g. Gilroy 2006 on low-key 'conviviality' and Boyd 2006 on 'civility'). Still, there are differences in the extent to which research questions and foci can be pre-specified in each of these tracks.

3.1　Adding linguistic ethnography as a supplementary lens

Wherever empirical research is broadly aligned with social constructionism (e.g. Berger & Luckmann 1966; Giddens 1976, 1984), there is scope for introducing the kinds of lens outlined in Section 2. If the social world is produced in ordinary activity, and if social realities get produced, ratified, resisted and reworked in everyday interaction, then the tools of linguistic, semiotic and discourse analysis can help us understand about a great deal more than communication alone. So if one rejects an essentialist group description such as 'the Roma in Hungary', and instead seeks to understand how 'Roma' circulates as a representation in Hungarian discourse, how it settles on particular humans, how it comes to channel and constrain their position and activity, then it is vital to take a close look at language and discourse (cf. Tremlett 2007; also Moerman 1974 cited above).

There is no retreat from larger generalizations about ethnicity, history or superdiversity in this linguistic focus, but it is driven by a view that in the process of abstracting and simplifying, it is vital to continuously refer back to what's 'lived' and expressed in the everyday (itself understood

as layered and multi-scalar) (cf. Harris & Rampton 2010). Without that anchoring, discussion is often left vulnerable to the high octane dramatizations of public discourse, panicked and unable to imagine how anyone copes. Talk of 'multiple, fluid, intersecting and ambiguous identities' provides little recovery from this, assuming as it often does that the identities mentioned all count, and that it is really hard working out how they link together. Indeed 'fluidism' of this kind can be rather hard to reconcile with everyday communicative practices. A close look at these can show that people often do manage to bring quite a high degree of intelligible order to their circumstances, that they aren't as fractured or troubled by particular identifications as initially supposed, and that they can be actually rather adept at navigating 'superdiversity' or 'ethnicities without guarantees', inflecting them in ways that are extremely hard to anticipate in the absence of close observation and analysis.

This kind of analytical movement – holding influential discourses to account with descriptions of the everyday – is of course a defining feature of ethnography *per se*, and the perspective outlined here could be described as ethnography *tout court* (2.3.6). But it is an ethnography enriched with some highly developed heuristic frameworks and procedures for discovering otherwise un(der)-analyzed intricacies in social relations (cf. Sapir 1949:166; Hymes 1996:8). In a field like sociolinguistics, scholars certainly can spend careers elaborating this apparatus, but as the cross-disciplinary training programme in *Ethnography, Language & Communication*[7] has amply demonstrated, it doesn't take long for the sensitive ethnographer with a non-linguistics background to be able to start using these tools to generate unanticipated insights.

3.2 Language and communication as focal topics

A full consideration of issues for research focused on language and communication in superdiversity would take far more space than is available here, but before pointing to two broad areas, it is

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worth emphasizing three general principles that should be borne in mind throughout.

3.2.1 Guiding principles

First, even though there is sure to be variation in the prioritization of its elements, it is essential to remain cognisant of what Silverstein calls '**the total linguistic fact**': "[t]he total linguistic fact, the datum for a science of language is irreducibly dialectic in nature. It is an unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms, contextualized to situations of interested human use and mediated by the fact of cultural ideology" (1985:220). And of course this in turn is grounded in a basic commitment to ethnographic description of the who, what, where, when, how and why of semiotic practice.

Second, it is vital to remember just how far **normativity** (or 'ought-ness') reaches into semiosis and communication. For much of the time, most of the resources materialized in any communicative action are unnoticed and taken for granted, but it only takes a slight deviation from habitual and expected practice to send recipients into interpretive over-drive, wondering what's going on when a sound, a word, a grammatical pattern, a discourse move or bodily movement doesn't quite fit. There is considerable scope for variation in the norms that individuals orient to, which affects the kinds of thing they notice as discrepant, and there can also be huge variety in the situated indexical interpretations that they bring to bear ('good' or 'bad', 'right' or 'wrong', 'art' or 'error', 'call it out' or 'let it pass', 'indicative or typical of this or that'). These normative expectations and explanatory accounts circulate through social networks that range very considerably in scale, from intimate relationships and friendship groups to national education systems and global media, and of course there are major differences in how far they are committed to policing or receptive to change. All this necessarily complicates any claims we might want to make about the play of structure and agency. It alerts us to the ways in which innovation on one dimension may be framed by stability at others, and it means that when we do speak of a change, it is essential to assess its penetration and con-

sequentiality elsewhere. But at least we have an idea of what we have to look for, and this may help us past the risk of hasty over- or under-interpretation (either pessimistic or romanticizing).

Third, in view of the volume of past and present research on diversity, we have reached the stage where individual and clusters of projects can and should now seek **cumulative comparative generalization**. 'Superdiversity' speaks of rapid change and mobility, and to interrogate this, it is important wherever possible to incorporate the comparison of new and old datasets and studies, as well as to address the perspectives of different generations of informants. Multi-sited comparison across scales, mediating channels/agencies and institutional settings is likely to be indispensible in any account concerned with ideology, language and everyday life. But there is also now an opportunity for comparison across nation-states and different parts of the world. Among other things, this should help to clarify the extent to which the orderly and partially autonomous aspects of language and interaction reduce superdiversity's potentially pluralizing impact on communication, resulting in cross-setting similarities in spite of major difference in the macro-structural conditions (Goffman 1983; Erickson 2001).

3.2.2 Two broad areas for language and communication research

The general commitments in 3.2.1 themselves imply a number of specific questions for investigation. So for example, the call for comparison invites examination of just how varied the interactional relations enacted in heteroglossic practices actually are (2.3.4), while longitudinal research should illuminate their historicity and biographical durability across the life-span (cf. Rampton 2011a). Similarly, longitudinal work allows us to consider whether, how and how far the development of digital communications are changing face-to-face encounters, pluralizing or refocusing participation structures, re- or de-centring the communicative resources in play. Interaction has always hosted split foci of attention – making asides to bystanders, chatting with the TV on, taking a landline call in the kitchen during

dinner, dipping in and out of some reading – but are there situations where the acceleration of digital innovation has now produced a quantum shift in the arrangements for talk and the dynamics of co-presence? Exactly which, how, why, with what and among whom? And where, what, how etc not or not much? (See Leppänen & Piirainen-Marsh 2009; Eisenlohr 2006, 2009)

The investigation of particular sites and practices will often need to reckon with wider patterns of sociolinguistic stratification in societies at large, as well as with the linguistic socialization of individuals. Super-diversity has potential implications for these as well, so it is worth dwelling on each a little longer.

Writing about the USA during the 20th century, Hymes (1980, 1996) used the phrase 'speech economy' to refer to the organization of communicative resources and practices in different (but connected) groups, networks and institutions. In doing so, he was making at least three points: (i) some forms of communication are highly valued & rewarded while others get stigmatized or ignored; (ii) expertise and access to influential and prestigious styles, genres and media is unevenly distributed across any population; and in this way (iii) language and discourse play a central role in the production and legitimation of inequality and stratification. This account of a **sociolinguistic economy** is broadly congruent with Irvine's Bourdieurian description of registers and styles forming "part of a *system of distinction,* in which a style contrasts with other possible styles, and the social meaning signified by the style contrasts with other possible styles" (2001:22).[8] And Parkin extends this view of the

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[8] "[S]tyles in speaking involve the ways speakers, as agents in social (and sociolinguistic) space, negotiate their positions and goals within a system of distinctions and possibilities. Their acts of speaking are ideologically mediated, since those acts necessarily involve the speaker's understandings of salient social groups, activities, and practices, including forms of talk. Such understandings incorporate evaluations and are weighted by the speaker's social position and interest. They are also affected by differences in speakers' access to relevant practices. Social acts, including acts of speaking, are informed by an ideologised system of representations, and no matter how instrumental they may be to some particular social goal, they also

relational significance of styles, languages and media when he uses research on newly formed poly-ethnic urban spaces in 1970s Kenya to suggest that the relationship between languages and styles can provide "a framework for [the] expression of [both emergent and established] ideological differences,… a kind of template along the lines of which social groups may later become distinguished… Within… polyethnic communities, diversity of speech… provides… the most readily available 'raw' classificatory data for the differentiation of new social groups and the redefinition of old ones" (1977:205,187, 208). Set next to the discussion of superdiversity, this raises two closely related questions.

First, following Parkin, how far does the sociolinguistic economy in any given nation-state itself serve as a template bringing intelligible order to superdiversity? How far does it operate as an orientational map or as a collection of distributional processes that draws people with highly diffuse origins into a more limited set of sociolinguistic strata, so that they form new 'super-groupings' (in Arnaut's formulation; and see Arnaut [2008]) and their ethnic plurality is absorbed within traditional class hierarchies (Rampton 2011a)? Alternatively, how far are national sociolinguistic economies being destabilized, their formerly hegemonic power dissipated by people's diasporic affiliations and highly active (and digitally mediated) links with sociolinguistic economies elsewhere? Blending these questions, should we look for a multiplicity of sociolinguistic economies in superdiversity, a kind of 'scaled polycentricity' made up of communicative markets that vary in their reach, value and (partial) relations of sub- and super-ordination? Looking back to the mixed speech practices increasingly identified in European cities (2.3.3), should we view these non-standard heteroglossias as an outcome of this interplay between processes of diffusion and refocusing, as the expression of emergent multi-ethnic vernacular sensibilities formed in opposition to higher classes? Are these higher classes themselves now drawn towards elite cos-

mopolitanism and multilingualism in standard languages? And as a non-standard vernacular emblem with global currency, where does Hip Hop figure in this dynamic? Mapping the central reference points in these sociolinguistic economies will inevitably draw us more towards a bird's eye overview, but it still requires close ethnographic observation to understand how the elements are related and sustained, and we will need to focus, for example, on the kinds of conflict or compromise that emerge in institutions of standardization like schools when heteroglot urban populations encounter the models for language learning, teaching and assessment propounded in e.g. official documents such as the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (cf. Jaspers 2005, 2011; Lytra 2007).[9]

Following on from this, second, the **language and literacy socialization** of individuals in superdiversity also requires a lot more research, both in- and outside formal education (see Duranti, Ochs & Schieffelin 2011:Chs 21-27). Accounts of socialization in community complementary schools are now increasing in number (Creese & Blackledge 2010; Li Wei 2006), as are analyses of peer socialization in multilingual youth networks (Hewitt 1986; Rampton & Charalambous 2010). But there is very little work on inter-generational language socialization within families, and this is likely to vary in degrees of formalization as well as in the directions of influence, depending on whether it covers old or new languages, styles, technologies and approaches to interculturality, and whether it occurs in domestic, recreational, community, and religious settings, locally, virtually or in the countries where people have family ties (cf. Zhu Hua 2008). With words like 'freshie' and 'FOB' (Fresh off the boat) gaining currency in and around settled minority communities, the sociolinguistic and cultural positioning of co-

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participate in the 'work of representation' [Bourdieu 1984]" (Irvine 2001:24)

9 The CEFR assumes bounded languages that can be divided clearly identifiable levels of acquisition and proficiency, and it is a good illustration of what we argued earlier, that traditional modernist ideological constructs of language are prominent and hugely influential material realities. For a critique, see the essays in Hogan-Brun *et al.* (2010).

ethnic adult and adolescent newcomers merits particular attention (Talmy 2008, 2009; Reyes & Lo 2009; Sarroub 2005; Pyke & Tang 2003), and there is a great deal of new work to be done on the Internet, mobile phones and practices like gaming, chatting and texting as sites of language learning (Leppänen 2009; Blommaert 2010a). In all of this, it is important to avoid the *a priori* separation of 'first' and 'second language' speakers – among other things, linguistic norms and targets change (Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouck 2005:201; Rampton 2011c) – and it will also need careful clarification of potential links and necessary incompatibilities in the idioms commonly used to analyse heteroglossia on the one hand ('double-voicing', 'stylization', 'ideological becoming' etc) and standard second language learning on the other (e.g. 'transfer', 'noticing', 'interlanguage development').

3.3 Impacts

Linguistics has its very origins in the practical encounter with diversity and difference (e.g. Bolinger 1975:506ff), and as well as contributing to the formation of nation-states (cf. 2.1), there is a very large and long tradition of interventionist work in the field of applied linguistics, focusing on a very full range of issues in institutional language policy and practice. Here too there has been ongoing argument and change in the guiding models of communication (Widdowson 1984:7-36; Trappes-Lomax 2000; Seidlhofer 2003), and in general, there has been a lot less susceptibility to 'outlandish presuppositions' here than in formal, non-applied linguistics. Poststructuralist ideas have also been working their way through applied linguistics, and there is now growing discussion of whether and how contemporary developments in language, ethnicity and culture require new forms of intervention (Pennycook 2001, 2010; Leung, Harris & Rampton 1997; Rampton 2000). So when the programme of perspectives, methods and topics sketched in this paper is called to justify itself in terms of relevance and impact beyond the academy – as is increasingly common for university research – there is a substantial body of work to connect with.

Even so, in a socio-political context often characterized by deep and vigorous disagreements about policy and practice for language and literacy in education, politics, commerce etc, the models of language and communication critiqued in Section 2 are still very influential. In addition, non-experimental, non-quantitative methods of the kind that we have emphasized are often criticized as 'unscientific' and then excluded from the reckoning in evidence-based policy-making. So strategies and issues around impact and application require extensive consideration in their own right.

But perhaps Hymes provides the fundamental orientation for this environment (1980; also Blommaert 2010b). In a discussion of 'ethnographic monitoring', in which ethnographic researchers study events and outcomes during the implementation of intervention programmes in education, health, workplaces etc, Hymes describes ethnography's practical relevance in a way that now resonates quite widely with experience in linguistic ethnography:[10]

> "...of all forms of scientific knowledge, ethnography is the most open,... the least likely to produce a world in which experts control knowledge at the expense of those who are studied. The skills of ethnography consist of the enhancement of skills all normal persons employ in everyday life; its discoveries can usually be conveyed in forms of language that non-specialists can read...." (Hymes 1980b:105)

He then goes further:

> "Ethnography, as we know, is... an interface between specific inquiry and comparative generalization. It will serve us well, I think, to make prominent the term 'ethnology', that explicitly invokes comparative generalization... An emphasis on the ethnological dimension takes one away from immediate problems and from attempt to offer immediate remedies, but it serves constructive change better in the long run. Emphasis on the ethnological dimension links... ethnography with social history, through the ways in which larger forces for socialization, institutionalization, reproduction of an existing order, are expressed and interpreted in spe-

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[10] In the UK at least, linguistic ethnography has close family links with applied linguistics (Rampton 2007:586-90)

cific settings. The longer view seems a surer footing" (Hymes 1980c:121, 1996:19).

It is this surer footing that we should now target in a coordinated programme of research language and superdiversity.

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Polylanguaging in Superdiversity

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Abstract

Humankind is a *languaging* species. This means that as human beings we use language to achieve our goals. Every time we use language, we change the world a little bit. We do so by using language with other human beings, language is in other words social. In this paper we challenge one of the most widely held views of language as a social, human phenomenon, namely that "language" can be separated into different "languages", such as "Russian", "Latin", and "Greenlandic". Our paper is based on a recently developed sociolinguistic understanding that this view of language can not be upheld on the basis of linguistic criteria. "Languages" are abstractions, they are sociocultural or ideological constructions which match real-life use of language poorly. This means that sociolinguistics – the study of language as a social phenomenon - must work at another level of analysis with real-life language use. The first part of our paper presents such analyses of observed language use among adolescents in superdiverse societies. We show that the level of a linguistic feature is better suited as the basis for analysis of language use than the level of "a language". In the second part of the paper we present our concept of polylanguaging which denotes the way in which speakers use features associated with different "languages" – even when they know very little of these "languages". We use the level of (linguistic) features as the basis for understanding language use, and we claim that features are socioculturally associated with "languages". Both features individually and languages are socioculturally associated with values, meanings, speakers, etc. This means that we can deal with the connection between features and languages, and in the analyses in the first part we do exactly that.

Introduction

Humankind is a languaging species. Human beings use language to achieve their goals, and with a few exceptions by using language to other human beings. It is a widely held view that language as a human phenomenon can be separated into different "languages", such as "Russian", "Latin", and "Greenlandic". This paper is based on the recently developed sociolinguistic understanding that this view of language can not be upheld on the basis of linguistic criteria. "Languages" are sociocultural abstractions which match real-life use of language poorly. This means that sociolinguistics must apply another level of analysis with observed language use. The first part of our pa-per is based on analyses of observed language use among young languagers in superdiverse societies. We show that the level of feature is better suited as the basis for analysis of language use than the level of language. In the second part of the paper we present our concept of languaging, in particular polylanguaging. We use the level of (linguistic) features as the basis for understanding language use, and we claim that features are socioculturally associated with "languages". Both features individually and languages are socioculturally associated with values, meanings, speakers, etc. This means that we can deal with the connection between features and languages. In the paper we do so.

Real-life Language Use

In this section we present examples of observed language use among youth in a superdiverse environment. To demonstrate the advantages of using linguistic features (and not languages) as the analytical level we describe the linguistic behaviors of young speakers in metropolitan Copenhagen. We show how concepts of languages or "ways of speaking" become meaningful to them, and we show how a feature-based approach to the analysis of behaviors contributes to our understanding of social processes happening in the interaction involving the young speakers.

Example 1, Facebook-conversation between three Danish girls (in the translation we have marked the associations of the features with "languages" as follows: *English in italics*, standard Danish in recte, <u>youth Danish underlined,</u> **other language in bold**):

Maimuna 13:45: har købt the equipment, skal bare finde tid til at lave en spektakulær én kun tje dig morok, den skal være speciel med ekstra spice :P, sorry tar mig sammen denne weekend! insAllah

translation: have bought *the equipment,* must just find the time to make a spectacular one just <u>for</u> you **morok**, it must be special with extra *spice* :P, *sorry* <u>pull</u> myself together this (weekend)! **insAllah**

Ayhan 15:20: gracias muchas gracias!! jeg wenter shpæændt gardash ;-)) love youuu...

translation: **gracias muchas gracias**! I <u>am waiting excitedly</u> **gardash** ;-)) *love youuu...*

İlknur 23:37: Ohhh Maimuna, Du havde også lovet mig en skitse... Og du sagde, at det ville været efter eksamener, men??? Still waiting like Ayhan, and a promise is a promise :D :D:D

translation: *Ohhh* (Maimuna), You had also promised me a sketch... And you said, that it would be after exams,

but??? *Still waiting like* Ayhan, *and a promise is a promise* .D :D:D

In example 1 three girls (all successful university students) discuss a promise which Maimuna, who is quite a bit of an artist, has made to Ayhan and İlknur. She has promised to provide drawings for the other girls. In the immediately preceding context they have begun to criticize her (in a very low key way) for not providing the drawings. The first line in example 1 is Maimuna's reaction to this. Maimuna uses several words which are English (i.e. which are conventionally associated with the sociocultural construction labelled English), and there are several words which are Danish. Some of these words are standard Danish, but other words appear in forms which are not standard Danish. For instance, the spelling "tje" corresponds to a pronunciation (of the word usually spelled "til") which has developed among young Copenhagen speakers in recent years. Besides indexing youth Danish the feature may index stylized Turkish accent in Danish. Among Danish second language scholars the feature has traditionally been considered typical of Turkish-accented pronunciation of Danish words beginning with a "t-". On the other hand the feature has also been documented as spreading among young Copenhageners regardless of ethnicity (Maegaard 2007). When we asked the girls about the feature in this context, whether it was one or the other, their answer was that it was both.

In addition Maimuna uses the word "morok" which historically is an old Armenian word "moruk" ("old man, father") which has been integrated ("borrowed") into Turkish (Türk Dil Kurumu 1988) meaning the same. The feature is here further "borrowed" by Maimuna, who does not speak Turkish, to address a close friend, roughly as in "you old geezer". She closes her line with the Arabic "insAllah".

In her answer Ayhan first uses words associated with Spanish, and then continues with words spelled in a way that reflects young Copenhagen speech. Next she uses the word "gardash", an adapted version of the Turkish word "kardeş" which means "sibling". Among young urban speakers in Denmark it means "friend". The last

line, İlknur's contribution, is partly associated with Danish, partly with English, both in vocabulary and in grammar.

It makes little sense to classify this exchange as belonging to one or the other language. It makes no more sense to try to count the number of "languages" involved. There is a gradual shift in association and meaning from Armenian "moruk" to young Copenhagen "morok", and there are several overlaps, for instance between standard Danish and young Copenhagen Danish, such as the words "skal være" ("must be"), and "gardash" can not very easily be classified anywhere.

If we attempted to analyze this short exchange at the level of "languages" we would run into a number of difficulties. Firstly, we could not without quite substantial preparations determine what languages to account for. Would "youth Danish" be one language, separate from "Danish with an accent" and "standard Danish"? We would have to distinguish somehow. Otherwise we would miss some of the crucial meanings of the exchange. Secondly, we would have a hard time determining how many languages are represented. Thirdly, some features would be difficult to categorize in any given language. This exchange can not be analyzed at the level of "languages" or "varieties" without important loss of its content. On the other hand, we can not and should not either discard the level of "languages" as irrelevant. The analysis of features must involve if and how the features are associated with one or more "languages".

That features are not always categorizable in one or more given "languages" can be seen in example 2.

Example 2, Grade 8 group conversation from the Køge Project (Jørgensen 2010), (Danish in recte, **other language in bold**):

Michael:	hvor er der noget lim hernede et eller andet sted.
translation:	where is there some glue somewhere here?
Esen:	**eine limesteife** [pronounced as li:mestajfe]
translation:	**a gluestick**

In the exchange in example 2, Michael asks for glue or paste. Esen answers with the construction "eine limesteife". The word "eine" is associated with German, and this is quite straightforward. However, the word "limesteife" is not associated with any language or variety (that we know of). The element "lim" pronounced with a long high front vowel ([i:]) equals the Danish-associated word for "glue", and the middle -e- may also be associated to Danish as many compounds associated with Danish have an -e attached to the first element as a compound marker. This is not the case of the word "lim", however. In addition, the element "steife" is not associated with Danish, and neither with German in any sense that would give an immediately accessible meaning here. It may sound like a German word to the Danish ear, but not to the German ear. This feature does not lend itself to being categorized in any "language". The word "limesteife" indexes "German" to a Danish person. It would be a possible member of the set of features which a Dane could construct as "German". However, it is highly unlikely to be designated as a member of a set of features constructed by a German as "the German language". It is nonetheless possible to analyze it, to find a meaning in the context precisely because we analyze at the level of features.

These examples could mislead to the idea that speakers do whatever comes to their minds without any inhibitions. This is not the case (as Rampton 1995 shows). Even the young, creative speakers with access to a wide range of resources will carefully observe and monitor norms, and uphold them with each other. In the Amager Project (Madsen et al. 2010) we have collected written descriptions by the young informants, about their relations to language. This material has revealed a vast range of attitudes, insights, descriptions of practices – and norms. A strong norm is expressed by a 15-year old boy in example 3.

Example 3, Grade 8 written assignment from the Amager Project by a minority boy [the word *perker* is a controversial term for a minority member, particularly Moslem]:

Efter perkersprog skal kun "perker" snakke som de snakker

På grund af det vil være mærkeligt hvis nogle dansker med dansk baggrund hvis du forstår hvad jeg mener, talte perkersprog, men (danskere) som er født i en bolig blok med (perkere) må sådan set godt tale det sprog

Translation:
After perker language only "perker" should speak as they do.
Because it would be awkward if some Danes with a Danish background if you understand what I mean, spoke perker language, but (Danes) who are born in a housing block with (perkers) are in fact allowed to speak that language

This statement assigns the right of use of *perker language* to two specific groups, one the *perkers* themselves, the other one "Danes" who happen to live in areas which are stereotypically seen to house a relatively high share of minority members. Others are not accepted as users of *perker language.* We know from the Amager Project (Madsen et al. 2010: 92-97) that this is an enregistered concept which is seen as an opposite to *integrated speech*. Integrated speech represents an academically oriented, upscale culture, and also politeness and adult speech. The opposite, alternatingly labelled as *perker language*, *ghetto language*, and other terms represents streetwiseness, minority membership, and youth. The students give many examples of features which they associate with each of these two ways of speaking. Some of the features associated with *perker language* are typically described as loans from minority languages such as Arabic, Urdu, and Turkish. In example 4 we observe a majority member using precisely such a feature.

Example 4, Facebook exchange involving grade 9 students from the Amager Project. Original comments on the left hand side, translations on the right hand side of the page.

Example 4

Har barberet mig	Have shaved myself
22. november 2009 kl. 18:48 • Synes godt om •	
HAHAHAHAHAHA... Så har du ikke mere shaaarkkk tilbage ;D	HAHAHAHAHAHA... then you have no more shaarkkk left ;D
22. november 2009 kl. 18:50 • Synes godt om	
hehehe	hehehe
22. november 2009 kl. 18:50 • Synes godt om	
Så skal du lære det :D	Then you just need to teach it to [name]
22. november 2009 kl. 18:51 • Synes godt om	
:OO DET VAR DIIIIS :P	:OO that was diiiis :P
22. november 2009 kl. 18:51 • Synes godt om	
Hahahahahaha lol flækker.. :)	Hahahahahaha lol cracking.. :)
22. november 2009 kl. 18:55 • Synes godt om	
Oh ham det Prøver være Perker Hahaahhaha Flækker ;D	Oh him [name] Tries to be a Perker Hahaahhaha Cracking ;D
22. november 2009 kl. 18:57 • Synes godt om	
Ja jeg er ordig syg gangster, host host ;D	Yeah I'm a really cool gangster, cough, cough ;D
22. november 2009 kl. 20:15 • Synes godt om	
din hund dræber dig	[name] your dog kill you
23. november 2009 kl. 16:46 • Synes godt om	

Source: Amager Project

In the first line a minority boy announces that he has shaved himself (a contentious issue among teenage boys). A majority boy reacts with a comment which signals loud laughter, and adds "then you have no more shaarkkk left" followed by an emoticon. The use of the word *shark* (English 'hair') is found elsewhere in the Amager material, and it is cited as an example of *perker language*, being a loan from Arabic. The fact that this feature is used by a majority boy does not go unnoticed by the participants. Another minority member adds a few lines later that "[the name of the majority boy] tries to be a perker" followed by laughter and the comment "cracking [up]". The relatively gentle reaction leads the majority boy to a self-ironic remark: "yeah, I'm a really cool gangster" followed by "cough, cough", a reference to a cliché way of expressing doubt or scepticism.

In example 4 we see references to the norm that was overtly formulated in example 3. The sanction following the majority boy's use of language to which he is not entitled, is mild compared to other kinds of sanctions. But both interlocutors show that they are aware of the norm and react accordingly. Polylanguaging (the use of resources associated with different "languages" even when the speaker knows very little of these, see below) is frequent among these informants, but it is not a free-for-all.

Language and Languages

In this section we suggest that the concepts of different "languages" are sociocultural constructs, and we suggest a different understanding of the human activity of using language, based on features.

Over the past decades sociolinguists have increasingly questioned the traditional, structural concept of languages. The idea of separate languages as bounded systems of specific linguistic features belonging together and excluding other linguistic features is found to be insufficient to capture the reality of language use, at least in late modern superdiverse societies, and perhaps altogether. Instead the concepts of languages as separable entities are seen as sociocultural constructions which certainly are important, but rarely represent real-life language use.

A critical understanding of the delineability of separate languages is not new. It has long been realized that it is not possible, on the basis of linguistic criteria, to draw clear borders between languages such as German and Dutch (see, e.g., Romaine 1994: 136), or for that matter, between what is thought of as separate dialects of the same language (e.g., Andersen 1969: 22). Hudson (1996: 24) concludes that "it may be extremely hard to identify varieties corresponding even roughly to traditional notions".

The recent critical discussion of the concept of languages as separate and separable sets of features takes this insight further and sees the idea of individual languages as based on linguistic normativity, or ideology, rather than real-life language use. According to Makoni & Pennycook (2006: 2) "languages do not exist as real entities in the world and neither do they emerge from or represent real environments; they are, by contrast, the inventions of social, cultural and political movements". These sociocultural movements are generally taken to coincide with the nationalist ideologies which developed in Europe in the 1700's (Heller 2007: 1). Makoni & Pennycook find that the concept of "a language" is a European invention, and one that Europeans have imposed on colonized peoples in other parts of the world. They observe that many names for languages have been invented by Europeans, not by those to whom the languages were ascribed.

> While it is interesting at one level to observe simply that the names for these new entities were invented, the point of greater significance is that these were not just new names for extant objects (languages pre-existed the naming), but rather the invention and naming of new objects (Makoni & Pennycook 2006: 10).

Heller (2007: 1) explicitly argues "against the notion that languages are objectively speaking whole, bounded, systems", and she prefers to understand language use as the phenomenon that speakers "draw on linguistic resources which are organized in ways that make sense

under specific social circumstances". Blommaert (2010: 102) similarly refers to "resources" as the level of analysis. He observes that "[s]hifting our focus from 'languages' (primarily an ideological and institutional construct) to resources (the actual and observable ways of using language) has important implications for notions such as 'competence'". There are indeed a range of consequences to be drawn from that shift, for concepts such as "speech community", "native speaker", and "bilingualism", to mention a few key concepts in sociolinguistics. We return to that below.

The insight of current sociolinguistics is then that "languages" as neat packages of features that are closely connected and exclude other features, are sociocultural constructions that do not represent language use in the real world very well. This insight must of course be extended to *any* set package of features, regardless of the term used for such a package. Rather than being natural objects, comprising readily identifiable sets of features, "dialects", "sociolects", "registers", "varieties", etc. are sociocultural constructions exactly as "languages" are.

We realize that it makes sense to talk about "language", but not necessarily about "a language", at least if we want to base our distinctions on linguistic features. This does not mean that sociolinguistics can not work with the concept of separate "languages". There are good reasons to account for the ways in which "languages" are constructed, and what the consequences of the constructions are. A view of human language which allows categorization of "different languages" considers language as a range of phenomena which can be separated and counted. This is reflected in the terminology used to describe individual language users. Without much consideration words such as "monolingual", "bilingual", and "multilingual" are used to characterize individuals with respect to their relationship to "languages". This terminology is based on the assumption that "languages" can be counted: one, two, three, etc. Bailey (2007) comments on this in his "heteroglossic" approach to language.

approaching monolingualism and bilingualism as socially constructed does not change their social force at the level of lived experience, but it does show that this social force is not a function of formal, or inherent linguistic differences among what counts as languages (Bailey 2007: 271)

Languages are socioculturally, or ideologically, defined, not defined by any objective or observable criteria, in particular not by criteria based on the way language is used, neither by critera based on who are the users of "the language". The idea of "a language" therefore may be important as a social construct, but it is not suited as an analytical level of language practices. This means that whatever term we use for a concept of a set of features, such a concept can not function as an analytical level with respect to the languaging (Jørgensen 2010) of real people, at least not in superdiversity. If we attempt to analyze language production at the level of separate languages, we will reach conclusions such as "this utterance is in language X", or "this stretch of speech code-switches between language X and language Y (and perhaps more)". Firstly this will prevent us from dealing with language production which can not be ascribed to any individual "language". Secondly, we will inevitably simplify the range of resources employed by speakers, as shown in the analyses of the examples above.

This insight also means that people are unlike to use "pure" language. There are many relevant criteria on which a choice of linguistic features is made by a given speaker under given circumstances. These criteria do not only include with what "language" the features are associated. The features' associations with values, speakers, places are just as important - and they are involved in complex indexicality (see below) just like the association between feature and "language".

Linguistic Features

In the concept of language we use here the central notion is not that of *a* language, but language as such. We suggest that the level of linguistic features, and not the level of "language", is better suited for the analysis of languaging in superdiverse societies (if not everywhere). Speakers

use features and not languages. Features may be associated with specific languages (or specific categories which are called languages). Such an association may be an important quality of any given feature, and one which speakers may know and use as they speak. Gumperz' (1982: 66) concepts of "we-code" and "they-code" point to that relationship. Minority speakers' use of features associated with their minority language as a "we-code", i.e. the code which is in opposition to majority language, signifies values such as solidarity and closeness. The features associated with the minority language *index* these values. Indexing values is one important type of indexicality.

The notions of "varieties", "sociolects", "dialects", "registers", etc. may appear to be useful categories for linguists. They may indeed be strategic, ideological constructs for power holders, educators, and other gatekeepers (Jørgensen 2010, Heller 2007). However, what speakers actually use are linguistic features as semiotic resources, not languages, varieties, or lects (Jørgensen 2004, 2008, Møller 2009). It is problematic if sociolinguistics habitually treats these constructs as unquestioned facts. Blommaert & Backus (2011) have proposed the term "repertoires" for the set of resources which the individual commands or "knows". Although they still refer to "languages" in the traditional sense (for "didactic" reasons, Blommaert & Backus 2011: 2), they also work analytically at the level of features, in their terminology: resources.

> Whether or not a particular word, combination or pattern actually exists as a unit in the linguistic knowledge of an individual speaker is dependent on its degree of *entrenchment*. 'Having' a unit in your inventory means it is entrenched in your mind (Blommaert & Backus 2011: 6)

A consequence of the attention paid to the ideological character of the construction of "languages" would be giving up the focus on identifying varieties in observed language use and the insistence on naming observed behaviors among real-life languagers, for instance as it has happened in the discussions about names for the developing youth styles in European cities (see Madsen 2008, a similar criticism is offered by Jaspers 2007, see also Androutsopoulos 2010).

Instead, sociolinguistic descriptions of language use could fruitfully include a focus on the use of linguistic resources and how they come to be associated with particular social values and meanings. Blommaert (2008, 2010) points out that such values are not easy to transport, for instance in connection with migration. Value associations do not travel well. For instance, values associated with "English", "Turkish", and "Danish" by the local majorities in London, Lefcosia, Ankara, and Copenhagen, are probably very different. In addition the value associations may not last very well. Values (and meanings) are susceptible to challenges, re-valuation or even opposition. In other words they are highly negotiable.

The linguistic aspect of the ideological understanding of "separate languages" is a multitude of separate sets of linguistic features. "German" is thought of as all the features, i.e. words, regularities, etc. which are assumed to comprise "the German language", and so forth, with up to 5,000 or more "languages". The features belonging to each set are seen as particularly closely related, for instance as a set of words in the vocabulary of "a language". This vocabulary excludes words belonging to other sets of features (with the possible exception of loan words from "other languages"). The idea of "learning a language" means that speakers acquire a range of these features (both words and grammar). However, human beings do not learn "languages" in this sense. People primarily learn and use linguistic features. While they learn these features they mostly also learn how they are associated with specific sociocultural constructions called "languages". Schools all over the world offer classes with the label "English". What students learn in these classes is by political or sociocultural definition "English". This term turns out to be at best fuzzy if we try to define it as a set of linguistic features or resources (Pennycook 2007), but it makes sense to both students and teachers. These associations between "languages" and features which are gradually becoming "entrenched" in the minds of the students mean that the features are also becoming entrenched *as* features of "English".

Features and Associations

In this section and the next we take up some of the ways in which features are associated with languages on the one hand, and meanings and values on the other hand. Features are associated directly, as features, with values, but they are also indirectly associated with values by being associated with "languages". This is because the "languages" are themselves associated with values. It is a crucial point that these associations are fluid and negotiable. There are many other associations with language, for instance with places and times, but we do not go into detail with them.

Learning "a language" is then, with the statements we have made this far, of course impossible in a purely linguistic understanding. One can learn a number of features associated with a specific sociocultural construction, for instance "Spanish". Since there is no linguistic way to determine precisely what is "Spanish", schools can not devise a criterion by which their students can be classified as "having learnt Spanish" or having failed to "learn Spanish". To overcome this obstacle, decision makers in education usually select a number of features which they associate with "Spanish". The students are tested whether they have entrenched these features the same way as certain official documents require. If so, they are constructed by the authorities as "having learnt Spanish". If not, they are classified as having failed to. Blommaert & Backus (2011: 4) present a scathing criticism of these practices: "Such practices and methods have met debilitating and crippling criticism from within the profession [...]; yet they remain unaffected and attract more and more support among national and supranational authorities". There is an important sociolinguistic task in studying how and what features become elevated this way, and what features are relegated, from for example "Spanish" in schools.

The passing of tests in "Spanish" provides the students with a claim to be in a position with respect to Spanish which allows them to say "I speak Spanish". Such a position is greatly valued in some places, and it is therefore potentially socially translatable into power and positions (see more below about the positioning of individuals in relation to "languages").

The value associated with "learning Spanish" is usually not the same as the value associated with "learning Greenlandic". As pointed out, values do not travel well, and they are negotiable. It is safe to assume, however, that in most parts of the world more value would be associated with "having learnt Spanish" than with "having learnt Greenlandic". The Arctic is of course a notable exception, and so are specific other contexts and special places such as the North Atlantic culture house and its human environment in Copenhagen, or perhaps certain academic circles. Our point here is that under any given circumstances "languages" are associated with values, and the use of features associated with a language may index the associated value - as Gumperz describes it. But not only "languages" are associated with values. Individual features are also (see also Hudson 1996: 22).

Linguistic features appear in the shape of units and regularities (Blommaert & Backus' "word, combination or pattern"). Units are words, expressions, sounds, even phonetic characteristics such as rounding. Regularities are traditionally called "rules", but they are not rules in the legal sense, or even the normative sense. They are regularities of how units are combined into larger units in processes through which the larger units become associated with meanings.

A consequence of this view of linguistic regularities is that there is no such thing as inherently correct language. Correctness is social convention about the characteristics of specific linguistic features. Correctness has nothing to do with the linguistic characteristics of features - correctness is ascribed to the features by (some) speakers. The notion of "correct language" may index specific features in (at least) two different ways. A feature may be "correct" in the sense that it is used in the way that it is used by speakers who are considered "native" speakers of the given language (more about native speakers below). If a feature is used which "native" speakers would not use, or in a way that "native" speakers would not use it, the feature is by this social convention "incorrect", and it indexes non-belonging.

The other widely assumed meaning of "incorrect" is that it denotes a use of a feature which violates "the rules of the language" (which people who think of themselves and each others as "native" speakers of a given language do again and again with the very language they think of as their "mother tongue", but that is beside the point here). The assumption is based on the notion of languages as packages of features which comprise certain features and exclude all others. When it comes to concrete features, the features which are specifically associated with speakers of low education or low socioeconomic status (or with speakers who are categorized as non-native) are typically considered "incorrect".

Speakers and Associations

In this section we describe how "languages" are associated with specific speakers, or groups of speakers, and conversely how individuals can position themselves vis-à-vis "languages". It follows from this and the previous section that features can similarly become associated with individuals.

Speakers ascribe different values to features, some features are "vulgar" or "ugly", whereas others are "posh" or "poetic". Some features are "primitive", others "sophisticated". Speakers also associate "languages", "dialects", etc. with specific other people. A given feature associated with a "variety" will then index these speakers, and possibly a number of values. An addental s-pronunciation is stereotypically associated with superficial teenage girls, or with male homosexuality. This is not, of course, a given association. Maegaard (2007) has demonstrated how the use of addental s-pronunciation may also index oppositional, streetwise, minority masculinity. The values associated with the features - and the "varieties" - are negotiable and context-dependent.

The values ascribed to sets of features may easily develop into stereotypical characters, such as the (Hollywood-propelled) stereotypes of German as rough and rude and Russian representing jovial peasantry. The use of (Hollywood) German may therefore be used precisely to index roughness, to stylize (Coupland 2007) someone

as rough and rude. Such ascriptions are also context-dependent. In the tradition among Danes Norwegian stereotypically indexes happy-go-lucky naivety, and this is indeed possible under many circumstances. However, Norwegian may also index Scandinavian brotherhood. The association in a given context is determined by that context (in a wider sense).

Speakers also position each other in relation to "languages". Terms such as "Greenlandic mother tongue speaker" and "English learner" are such associations of people with "languages". Social categorizations of speakers involve stereotypes about their relationship to specific "languages". In some cases this relationship is (comparatively stable and) described with the term "native speaker". In this way (and in other ways) concepts and terms of individual "languages" make sense as having relationships with individuals. The notion of "native speaker" denotes such a relation. A "native speaker" can claim a number of rights with respect to the "language" of which she or he is a "native speaker". The "native speaker" of "a language" can claim to have "access" to that language, to have "ownership" of the language. He or she can claim legitimacy in the use of the language and can claim that the language "belongs" to her or him.

In varying degrees, *non-native* speakers can claim "access", "ownership", "legitimacy", etc., depending on the acceptance by others of their "having learnt" the language. Such accept may be authoritative as happens through language proficiency exams, but the acceptance may also be negotiable and depend on the context.

This underlines the fact that such associations are socioculturally constructed. The "native speakers" of Danish is a group of people who by convention see themselves as native speakers of Danish - and exclude others from the category. In principle there is nothing in nature or the world that prevents, for instance, members of the Danish minority in Southern Schleswig to think of themselves as "native speakers" of Danish, and the members of the German minority in Northern Schleswig to think of themselves as "native speakers" of German. Some of them do in fact, and the minority schools on both sides of the

border treat their children as such. However, in the sociolinguistic literature the two groups are prime examples of minorities whose "mother tongues" are precisely *not* the "languages" associated with their cultural allegiance. The legitimacy of the claim of such groups is negotiable.

The legitimacy of categorizing other people as "native speakers" of Danish may also be negotiable. The then vice president of the Danish Social Democrats in an address to a party congress on September 13, 2000, claimed that: "If one is born and raised in Denmark and intends to stay here, then one's mother tongue is Danish." Such a statement's face value is highly negotiable.

Leung et al. (1997: 555-556) suggest that the traditional concept of "native speaker" has been used with three relevant, but different perspectives (see also Rampton 1990: 100 and Rampton 1995: 339-344), and that these perspectives substitute both the concept and the term. They suggest a perspective "language expertise", i.e. people's "ability in each of the posited languages". Leung et al. are aware of the difficulties with this. In addition they suggest the perspective of "language affiliation", i.e. people's "sense of affiliation to any of the languages allegedly within their repertoire". Finally Leung et al. suggest "language inheritance", and they ask "Does membership in an ethnic group mean an automatic language inheritance?", and they characterize such an assumption as "unsafe". However, as Harris (2006) shows, speakers may indeed "inherit" a language in the sense that they think of the language as "their" language - and at the same time they may regret they "do not know their language". So, regardless of what perspective we choose, we find that the relationship between an individual and a language is a sociocultural construction. It is negotiable, and it may become the object of political power struggles (for a discussion of "native speaker", see Jørgensen 2010).

Features and Use

Below we emphasize that speakers may use whatever features are at their disposal without regard to norms of linguistic purity. "Purity" is a notion that may involve both an idea of language use which only includes features associated with one and the same language and an idea of language use which avoids certain features which are considered "impure" or "improper" or "incorrect" in and by themselves. This means that one can violate the purity ideal both by using "foreign" stuff and by using "dirty" stuff. Speakers know the widespread mainstream ideals of "pure" language, but do not live up to them, as demonstrated in the examples above.

In particular, there is nothing in the nature of language that prevents speakers from combining in the same stretch of speech features which are associated with Greenlandic, Tagalog, and Cree. It is entirely possible, and speakers constantly produce speech of such kind (although not often with this combination). However, there are other reasons why speakers refrain from using forms they have access to and may even have "entrenched". Just as speakers are thought to have "rights" to specific "languages" or "varieties", there are also people who are thought not to have these rights - all depending on context. This means that speakers may meet and store ("entrench") features which are in most, if not all, contexts believed to "belong" to others. The "access" may not be restricted, but the usability is. Teachers generally have access to youth language in this sense, but they can only use it as stylization - and preferably flagged. Rampton (1995) describes in detail such a set of rights and options in a group of adolescents.

"The term 'language crossing' (or 'code-crossing') refers to the use of a language which isn't generally thought to 'belong' to the speaker. Language crossing involves a sense of movement across quite sharply felt social or ethnic boundaries, and it raises issues of legitimacy that participants need to reckon with in the course of their encounter" (Rampton 1998: 291)

O'Rourke & Aisling (2007) describe how Irish university students of Irish Gaelic who consider themselves "native speakers" develop a problematic relationship with fellow students of Irish Gaelic who are not accepted as "native speakers". Conflicts sometimes lead the "native speakers" to refuse the use of Irish Gaelic to the other group.

"There's an image that native speakers project, that they have better Irish than you and they speak English back to you. They know that you learned Irish" (O'Rourke & Aisling 2007: 7).

To take stock: Individual linguistic features are taken to be representatives of sets of features. Speakers refer to these socio-culturally constructed sets of features as "languages" (or "dialects", etc.). Educational systems similarly refer to the teaching of language as "teaching of languages". It is by now a trivial observation that this does not represent the reality of language use. Nevertheless, language behavioral norms which are firmly enforced by school systems, media gatekeepers, and other powerful forces emphasize linguistic purity, or so-called "monolingual" behavior at all times: Individuals may be so-called "multilinguals", but their behavior at any given time should be "monolingual".

Norms of Language Behavior

In this section we describe the different norms of behavior with respect to "different languages" which are oriented to by speakers. We characterize most norms as ideologically based and unable to account for language use as observed in the examples above. We suggest the term polylanguaging, i.e. the use of features associated with different "languages" even when speakers know only few features associated with (some of) these "languages" as a term for the practices in the examples.

Until the rise of sociolinguistics in the 1960's code-switching was generally considered deviant linguistic behavior, and bilingual individuals were thought of, and described as imperfect language users. The corresponding characterization of a bilingual person often applied in educational discussions is that of a "double semi-lingual", i.e. a person who is described as not knowing any language "fully", but having only two "half" languages (Hansegaard 1968).

This leads us to the norms of bilingual behavior, as we can observe them in society, including schools. In public debates, and definitely in the schools' teaching, one meets a strong norm of bilingual behavior, the so-called double monolingualism norm. This norm is the basic norma-

tive idea about bilingual individuals, i.e. double monolinguals. It is impossible to disentangle this view from the ideologically constructed view of "a language" as a unique and separate set of features. Only with this concept is it possible to maintain the double (or multiple) monolingualism norm.

The (double or multiple) monolingualism norm: "Persons who command two (or more) languages should at any given time use one and only one language, and they should use each of their languages in a way that does not in principle differ from the way in which monolinguals use that same language."

According to the double monolingualism norm, any language should be spoken "purely", i.e. without being mixed with another language. This is obviously a notion which can be met not only among the general public, but also among some linguists. To give just one example: Davidsen-Nielsen & Herslund 1999, two language professors whose first sentence runs (in my translation): "The Danish language suffers from the English Disease", a pun on the popular term for rachitis, i.e., "engelsk syge", and the paper goes on to lament the use of English loans in Danish, especially among the youth.

In many real life situations we can observe how speakers follow a completely different norm of bilingual behavior. They may code-switch between utterances, in the middle of utterances, sometimes in the middle of a single word, and they may switch back again. It is of course possible to talk about "code-switching" even with our critical view of the traditional concept of "code" - a code-switch is the juxtaposition of features associated with different codes when both producer and recipient of the resulting complex sign are in a position to understand this juxtaposition as such (cf. Auer 1995: 116). Speakers use features belonging to the different languages they "know" (i.e. which are ideologically constructed and normatively considered to be different languages or possibly dialects) without paying attention to any of the monolingualism norms (even though they may at other times carefully follow a monolingualism norm). Such behavior has led to a differently based norm of

language choice behaviors, the multilingualism norm.

The bilingualism (or multilingualism) norm: "Persons who command two (or more) languages will employ their full linguistic competence at any given time adjusted to the needs and the possibilities of the conversation, including the linguistic skills of the interlocutors."

In this understanding bilingualism (or multilingualism) becomes a resource which involves more than the skills of using one language in some situations, and other languages in other situations. Bilingualism is more than the sum of competence in one language plus competence in one more language. It also involves competence in switching between the languages. Multilingualism is similarly considered integrated when speakers in their linguistic behavior uses the codes which they somehow "know".

The systematic introduction of features from languages which the speakers do *not* "know" was first described in detail by Rampton (1995). With this we move one step further away from a *Reinheitsgebot* and on to even closer combination of linguistic features.

The Australian speaker who uses a Scots English accent for his refusal to lend a friend money stylizes herself or himself and thus contributes to shape the interlocutor's understanding of the situation and the message. The use of features from languages one does not "know" is not restricted to urban late modern youth, although the examples we have analyzed here involve only such individuals, and most current sociolinguistic studies of such behaviors do in fact focus on urban youth. In this case we assume that the Australian speaker is not very competent in Scots English. At least the exchange is possible without very much Scottish competence on either side. We can all refer to stereotypes by adding just a bit of dialect, sociolect, style, etc. to any utterance. We can also invoke values ascribed to languages, such as the widely associated value of Latin as the language of the learned.

Such behavior follows the *polylanguaging* norm which is different from the multilingualism norm we described above. The multilingualism norm takes it for granted that the speakers have

a minimum of command of the involved languages. With the multilingualism norm follows the concept of "a language" which assumes that languages can be separated also in use, and in this view it is also possible to determine whether an individual "knows" a language or "has" a language. The term multilingual covers the (more or less "full") command of several languages, whereas the term polylanguaging also allows for the combination with features ascribed to other languages, such as described by Rampton.

The polylingualism norm: "Language users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal to achieve their communicative aims as best they can, regardless of how well they know the involved languages; this entails that the language users may know - and use - the fact that some of the features are perceived by some speakers as not belonging together."

In other words, the behaviors we documented in the analyses of examples 1 through 4 above can be characterized as polylanguaging. The different types of associations contribute to the formation of language norms, i.e. the social expectations with respect to language use that speakers administer to each other, and the rights of language use which people assign to each other. The balance of rights and norms contributes to the uneven access to resources which is also characteristic of late modern superdiverse society. This balance regulates the behaviors of speakers much more than traditional norms of "pure" language, which are routinely violated by speakers who use features they have access to without regard to monolingualism norms, but with a very acute sense of rights and values associations. All of this means that polylanguaging is not a free-for-all. Firstly, certain ways of speaking are not available to some speakers. The uneven distribution of linguistic features among different population groups is frequently accompanied by an uneven distribution of other resources, and the resources accessible to the few tend to become highly valued by educational systems, gate keepers, and otherwise in power centers. Secondly, resources which are available to speakers in the sense that the features are used around them every day may not be at the

service of all of them. If features are associated with a specific group of speakers, this group is also typically seen to have the right to deny others the active use of the given features. In other words, normativity influences linguistic practices in more than one dimension.

Conclusions

Now let us return to our analyses of the examples 1-4 above. These analyses of language practices make sense, in other words, because they are based at the level of features. Such analysis includes how features are associated with languages, and how these languages are associated with values in the given context. The analysis accounts for any ascription of values to the individual features when such ascription is independent of the ascription of value to the given language. Furthermore, the analysis accounts for the ways in which features and the languages they are associated with, are positioned with respect to (groups of) speakers, and the analysis accounts for the ways in which speakers involved in the given interaction are positioned by themselves and each other with respect to the languages which are being relevant in the interaction (by being used or avoided). All of these lines of analysis take into account that the described associations are dynamic and negotiable. We would be hard pressed to obtain similar insights if we insist on analyzing at the level of "languages" (or "dialects", "varieties", "registers", etc.)

This being said, there is no doubt that the concept of "national languages" is very strong. It is a political fact. The European educational systems would break down overnight, if they were forced to teach language the way people really use language. (This is not only true for language choice patterns: another important linguistic phenomenon is swearing which has rarely, if ever, been taught in schools, but which is nevertheless frequent among real life language users, and which develops and changes just like other patterns of language use). The concept of national languages also has political implications. Some nations (Denmark is an example) prescribe language testing of applicants for citizenship, and interestingly enough such testing can be car-

ried out by amateurs whose only skill is that they "know" the language (for instance, police employees without the slightest trace of training in language assessment, see Fogtmann 2007). It seems to be considered self-evident that if you "know" a language, then you can also judge whether other people "know" it. This amounts to a sweeping categorization of large groups of people with respect to specific "languages".

The concept of "languages" as separate and bounded packages also pervades everyday life. The way we, including sociolinguists in everyday conversations, speak about language, language learning, and language behavior is heavily influenced by the concept. If we want to describe language and go beyond this concept, we are sometimes forced into cumbersome expressions, of which we have used a few here (such as "a word, which is generally taken to be English" and not "an English word"). In other cases we have just taken it for granted that the reader would understand our point. For instance, we have said about Maimuna that "she does not speak Turkish". It should now be clear that by this we mean that she "does not (know or) use (very many) features which are generally associated with Turkish (and particularly not grammatical ones)". The traditional way of understanding what "languages" are, is not on its way out. But it gives us problems, precisely because it is unclear how it relates to the behavior of real people in the real world. One thing is socially constructed norms, another is individual behavior.

It follows from our observations that language is both individual and social. Language is individual in the sense that - as far as we know - no two people share precisely the same features, because they have met and now remember exactly the same words and meanings, the same pronunciations, associate the same meaning with everything, etc. For all we know about language, it is individual. On the other hand, language is also social - in the sense that every feature we do "know" or "possess", we share with somebody else. We can not imagine a linguistic feature which is unique to one person (with the possible exception of an innovation which has still not been used by the innovator in interaction

with others), the very basis of language is that it enables us to share experience, images, etc. Our relations to the socioculturally constructed phenomena called "languages", etc, are thus social categorizations, not naturally given relations, and certainly not a consequence of the nature of language.

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Ideologies of Success for Superdiverse Citizens: the Dutch Testing Regime for Integration and the Online Private Sector[1]

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Abstract

This article deals with the testing regime of integration in the Netherlands. More specifically, it shows how a monoglottal and monocultural ideology inhabits the political discourses issued and authored by agencies within the Dutch government when dealing with testing for both admission (toelating) and civic integration (inburgering) of (newly arrived) migrants. Further, it shows how a vigorous private online sector in Dutch language courses has grown up, and has utilized semiotic resources that present Dutch language as the vehicle through which migrants can deliver a positive contribution to social cohesion in mainstream society. The article concludes by advancing some reflections on two issues. First, on what it means to know a language. Second, on the construction of the migrant as an economic actor whose chances for social upscaling are based on the amount and level of certifications one can afford to purchase.

1. A new form of diversity: superdiversity

Prior to the fall of the Berlin wall and the breaking off of the iron curtain, migrant groups were conventionally characterized by large, fairly well-organized ethnic communities initially made of guest workers whose temporary residence had found support in the welcoming labour policies of many northern European countries. As such, the belief of the existence of transparent and definable ethnic communities was also supported by a research tradition that goes under the label of 'migration research'. This tradition primarily dealt with immigrants own acculturation strategies, the (often underachieving) educational trajectories of their members, the language diversity that typified their presence across various sectors of social life, their (often disadvantaged) position on the labour market and, last but not least, their civic and political participation (or lack thereof) in receiving mainstream societies (cf. Extra and

Yağmur 2004; Phalet and Swyngedouw 2002; Hermans 1995; Verlot and Sierens 1997).

From then on, the face of migration in Europe has changed quite dramatically. The aftermath of the political events that have taken place from 1989 onwards, e.g., the Schengen agreement as well as Europe's several enlargements, have testified the emergence of a new pattern of migration that gives rise to new, highly fragmented, less organized, legally differentiated immigrant groups. This more recent migratory pattern differs from the previous one in two ways. First, the motives and forms of migration have changed. Immigrants today do not enter Europe mainly as unskilled labour forces alone. Rather, they enter as refugees, short-term or transitory migrants, highly-educated "knowledge workers", foreign students (to name only a few possibilities). Second, migration to western European countries is no longer supported by (ostensibly) 'welcoming' policies facilitating the entry of large groups of manual labourers (gästarbeiter) like those that characterized migration into northern Europe during the 1960s and the early 1970s and south-

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[1] I am indebted to Dr. Jeanne Kurvers at the Dept. of Culture Studies, Tilburg University for her time in discussing the previous version of this piece and for her extensive knowledge of the field.

ern Europe during the early 1990s. It follows that the blending of 'old' and 'new' forms of migration has produced a diversification of the previously existing diversity, for which the term 'superdiversity' has been coined (Vertovec 2006). This diversity is of a more complex kind in that the ethnic origin of people, their motives for migration, their careers as migrants (e.g., sedentary versus short-term and transitory) and their socio-cultural and sociolinguistic biographies cannot be presupposed (see Blommaert and Rampton this volume).

This new migratory pattern is superposed upon an earlier pattern diversity wrought by migration before 1991, and it confronts the popular conceptions of 'the immigrant' with the challenge of grasping who an immigrant actually is as well as grasping his/her administrative position. Consequently, new forms of immigration also raise critical questions about the rationale and future of nation-states in westernized Europe, about the dynamics of their dense and fast-moving urban spaces, and about the embedded but yet omnipresent supremacy of majority perspectives within those institutions that regulate the entrance of migrants. In the process, questions have been raised about the capacity of nation-state bureaucracies to manage migration in a way that preserves something now seen as being under threat: the national order. As a response, politicians—regardless of their political affiliations (see Milani 2007 for the case of Sweden)—have come under increased pressure to propose and enforce measures that restrict access to the nation-state territory. In this process, the official/national language of the host country plays a critical role, as will be shown below. Across Western Europe receiving societies are all, to a greater or lesser extent, engaging with a political and public discourse that requires each individual would-be migrant to demonstrate, via testing, (a) a set level of proficiency in the official standard language, and (b) knowledge of 'mainstream' cultural norms of the host society (cf. Bauman and Briggs 2003; Extra, Spotti and Van Avermaet 2009; Mar-Molinero, Stevenson and Hogan-Brun 2009).

It is against this background that the present article deals with the testing regime for the integration of (newly arrived) migrants in the Netherlands. It shows how a monoglot language ideology is embedded in the political and public discourses surrounding the testing for both admission (toelating) and civic integration (inburgering). Further, it shows how a vigorous private online sector in language courses has grown up, and utilizes semiotic resources that present Dutch language as the vehicle through which migrants can deliver a positive contribution to social cohesion in mainstream society. The article concludes by advancing some reflections on how the governmental side of the Dutch testing regime and the private online sector work together to construct the immigrant as an economic actor whose chances of social upscaling are based on the amount and level of language-proficiency certifications the individual can afford to purchase.

2. The integration machinery of the nation-state

It is hard to miss the degree to which the new public and political discourse of European nation-states channels indigenous inhabitants' attention to concepts of nation, national language and national loyalty. In these discourses, it is also difficult to miss the extent to which the concept of 'the nation' is being presented to its indigenous inhabitants through ideologies of homogeneity and uniformity on the basis of monoglot language ideologies that overlay the societal diversity present on the ground (Blackledge 2009; McNamara & Shohamy 2008). The nation is therefore imagined as a homogeneous entity, with one language that covers the role of official/national language and with one of its varieties – a standardized register – presented as a neutral medium of communication between and among fellow-citizens (Anderson 1991). The (official) national language triggers images of group belonging, and each citizen's mastery of the national Standard in use is seen as pivotal to the well-being of the society—even when the number of people of actually speak it is quite small, as in the case of RP in England (see Agha 2003).

Ideologies embedded in language testing are thus a very powerful force, insofar as they pres-

ent the acquisition of the national language by immigrants—would-be migrants, newly-arrived ones, and legally recognized long-term residents alike—as commonsensical and as the main tangible proof of the immigrant's progress on a continuum that goes from 'being a foreigner' to 'being an integrated citizen'. In the Netherlands, language test results not only determine who is included and who is excluded from being given the chance to become a new citizen, but also help to shape the terms in which their contribution—or lack thereof—to 'mainstream Dutch society' is understood.

Another important element to be taken up here is what the testing industry understands by the term 'language'. Often, if not always, language is regarded as a gamut of skills that someone possesses precisely because they were born, raised and schooled in a specific nation. It follows that immigrants who enter a nation, and for the case of the Netherlands also a specific slice of those immigrants who are already legally-recognized long-term residents, have to be put in state of learning these skills. The 'good' mastering of these skills triggers positive consequences. For instance, the immigrant who masters cultural norms and values well – say, an Imam who shakes hands with a female Minister of Integration – is credited as being a 'good' citizen insofar as he can be seen to be following the 'mainstream' cultural practices of the receiving society. In the same way, the immigrant who masters the majority language well is often praised by native inhabitants for being a good language user through (informal) accreditations like: 'well, you speak good Dutch for a foreigner'.

The testing industry takes this understanding of language a step further by adding a subtle yet remarkable twist. By seeing language as a stable denotational entity, language becomes something that can be not only measured but also marketed, sold and bought according to the necessities and the means that the language learner/citizen to be as at his/her disposal. As a consequence of lack of (financial) means a failure may follow. The consequences of failure are drastic. A failure on a component of a test,

in fact, stands as a tangible demonstration that the citizen is either unable or (worse) unwilling to contribute to mainstream society. Severe sanctions—e.g., the denial or curtailment of state benefits and the negation of a long-term residence permit—are presented as justifiable measures on this basis.

3. The enregisterment of minorities

Contemporary Dutch immigration policy discourse is anchored in a set of descriptive terms that are applied to immigrant minority group members qua individuals. First, the term allochtoon, 'immigrant minority group member' (literally, 'foreign-born') was officially introduced by the Scientific Council for government policies (WRR 1989); this term (opposed to autochtoon, 'native-born') refers to a person born abroad and/or who has at least one parent born abroad. The explicit rationale given by the WRR in introducing the term allochtoon was the need to abandon an ethnicity-based approach to immigrant minority groups, and to focus instead on migrants as individuals. More recently the term allochtoon (plural allochtonen) has been subdivided into westerse allochtonen (western immigrant minorities) and niet-westerse allochtonen (non-western immigrant minorities)—thus effecting a re-ethnicization of this allegedly de-ethnicized term. The former refers to EU citizens as well as immigrants coming from most English-speaking countries—though it also includes Indonesians and Japanese. In the political discourse, members of this category are hardly mentioned as jeopardy for social cohesion, although within the whole group Polish, Bulgarian and Romanians are often singled out as detrimental for the native manual labour workforce. The latter, instead, includes mostly members of the Turkish, Moroccan and Somali communities as well as new arrivals from other countries (Van den Tillart et al. 2000) who are presented as people in need of societal and linguistic integration. All of the above are ascription terms currently used in political and public discourse by Dutch-native people to contrast with the self-reference terms such as autochtonen (indigenous group members) and Nederlanders (Dutch people).

Any dwelling upon this ascription jargon of minorities pales when compared with the armor of terms brought by the Dutch testing regime in its most recent developments. First, we find the term toelatingstest (admission test) a test that takes place in the immigrant's own country of origin and it serves the purpose of making him eligible to be considered for admission to the Netherlands. Second, there is the term inburgering (civic integration) (De Heer, 2004). This term, that has appeared for the first time in the Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers (Law on the Integration of Newcomers) (WIN, 1998), deals with the need for societal and linguistic integration of nieuwkomers (newcomers), i.e., newly arrived immigrants on Dutch soil who are not qualified as refugees or asylum seekers. It also regards oudkomers (oldcomers), generally low-educated immigrants who are either long-term residents in the Netherlands and who, as it happens in the vast majority of cases, already hold a permanent residence permit.

In the following session the reader is introduced to a snapshot of the discourse contained in the laws and regulations for integration in the Netherlands from 1998 till nowadays. As much reference will be made to the measuring of language proficiency in Dutch following the terms spelled out by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the chapter deals now with the structure of the CEFR, its original purpose as well as with the use that the Dutch government has made of this instrument within the framework of testing for integration.

The Common European Framework of Reference
In many nation-states across Europe, one of the key features of integration policy is the official national language. As for the Netherlands, knowledge of Dutch language is key to admission, integration and leads to the applicant being awarded a permanent residence permit or naturalization. In order to give body and implement this policy of linguistic homogenization the CEFR has been used in order to mark the level of language knowledge and proficiency that immigrants have to achieve. The CEFR, that has therefore become a structural pillar of the integration regime,

defines levels of language knowledge and proficiency that allow measuring the advancements of immigrants during their integration trajectory. The CEFR major aim is to offer a frame of reference, a meta-language. It wants to promote and facilitate co-operation among educational institutions in different countries. It aims to provide a transnational basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications. A further aim is to assist learners, teachers, course designers, examining bodies and educational administrators to situate and co-ordinate their efforts. And a final aim is to create transparency in helping partners in language teaching and learning to describe the levels of proficiency required by existing standards and examinations in order to facilitate comparisons between different qualifications' systems. It is important to emphasize that the CEFR is not a prescriptive model or a fixed set or book of language aims. Rather, it has a quantitative and a qualitative dimension. The first cater for learning development in domains (school, home, work), functions (ask, command, inquire), notions (south, table, father), situations (meeting, telephone), locations (school, market), topics (study, holidays, work), and roles (listener in audience, participant in a discussion). The qualitative dimension, instead, expresses the degree of effectiveness (precision) and efficiency (leading to communication) of language learning. A set of 6 levels and sublevels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) have been distinguished for use as common standards that should help course providers to relate their products such as course books, teaching courses, and assessment instruments to a common reference system.

As mentioned before, the cornerstone of integration policies in most European countries is the official national language. As for the Netherlands, knowledge of both Dutch language and Dutch society are the most important pre-conditions for those who aspire to be admitted to the Netherlands in the first place and for those who wish to achieve a residence permit and later on citizenship. In order to give body to this monolingual approach to language policy, the agencies involved in the making of the admission, integration and citizenship test – although as we will

see, the latter has been embodied in the integration test after June 2006 – have used the CEFR as reference point. The use of the CEFR reveals though quite problematic for two reasons. First, the CEFR is used for the admission and integration examination even when a vast majority of the people being asked to undertake these tests has low literacy levels or is illiterate (Kurvers and Stockmann, 2009). Second, the level descriptors of the CEFR are mainly aimed at the measuring of the language knowledge of highly educated people. Lower- and semi-skilled people that have no higher education background or do not study at a higher level do not belong to the target group, and from there the idiosyncratic making authored by national authorities of new CEFR levels like (A1-) employed for the admission test. The role played by the CEFR in the Dutch testing machinery becomes even more problematic when one looks at the consequences of not matching the minimum level required. On the basis of being unsuccessful, people are refused citizenship, residence or even admission. Interesting though is that the criteria employed for the descriptors of the proficiency levels were not initially thought out as measurements for the language testing of immigrants.

4. The Dutch integration regime: an overview of its development

The legislative pillars of the Dutch testing regime for newly arrived migrants are built from 1998 onwards (WIN 1998). Before that, there is but one governmental document (RRIN, 1996) that pointed to the obligation of newcomers to learn Dutch. The law approved in 1998 provided that newcomers - from the moment of their arrival in the Netherlands - were obliged to attend courses of Dutch as a second language and understanding of Dutch society with a particular focus on work situations. Further, they were also advised to take final examinations that had mostly the purpose to control whether the attendance to these Dutch as a second language courses actually happened. Although these courses were in place, there was no prescription for the level of language proficiency to be achieved. The law proposed only a level – more specifically level

3 that is comparable with level B1 of the CEFR – to which one should have strived to. The situation, instead, changed dramatically in 2003 in the General Governmental Accord (Hoofdlijnenaccoord 2003) and later even more in 2004 with the introduction of the governmental resolution on the Revision of Civic Integration Regulations (Contourennota Herziening Inburgeringstelse 2004). In comparison with the law approved in 1998, there are a series of changes that show the new line of thought embraced by the Dutch government in terms of integration of newly arrived migrants. These changes are:

- the use of admission test that has to be taken before being allowed to enter the Netherlands;
- both newcomers and oldcomers are obliged by the law to undergo civic integration in Dutch society;
- this obligation is on the shoulder of the migrant both in financial and content terms. This also implies the freedom of choice in selecting which package will help the applicant in fulfilling his/her civic integration obligations;
- the obligation to civic integration is fulfilled only when all the examination components have been passed.

From the revision brought forward in 2004, newcomers to the Netherlands come across as the main cause of concern. New though is the fact that another group considered to be worthy of integration were oldcomers that were considered not to master sufficiently the Dutch language and who were receiving unemployment benefits (refer to Pluymen 2004 for a critique of the link made in these regulations between permanent residence status and social benefits). Next to that, oldcomers who had already been given a permanent residence permit or a Dutch passport were also invited – though not compelled – to participate in the integration trajectory. The following rules count for this group of approximately 85.000 allochtonous citizens (to be): compulsory intake at the immigration office of the municipality of residence, own financing of the civic integration trajectory, choice given from existing civic integration programmes and

providers where these programmes have to be approved by the government and allow the applicant to become integrated within three and a half years for newcomers and five years for oldcomers. These changes therefore have led to the introduction of the admission test abroad and the revision of the civic integration exam once arrived in the Netherlands. Concerning the norms that make up for these two exams the government has appointed in 2004 a committee that was asked to give advice on how to implement these changes. The committee, most widely known as Commissie Franssen has given its first advisory opinion in 2004. On the basis of criteria such as functionality, possibility of achievement, selection of previous educational trajectories and motivation, the committee came to the conclusion that proficiency in written Dutch language skills should not be examined while the proficiency for oral skills should be fixed below the lowest level of the CEFR. This level has then taken the classification A1- (see Franssen 2004). The committee also advised not to test Knowledge of Dutch Society because of the low level of knowledge of the Dutch language and to substitute this testing with introduction classes to life in the Netherlands. This final recommendation was not taken into consideration and it is for this reason that the admission test has a component on knowledge of Dutch society (IND 2005).

The Law for Integration Abroad (Wet Inburgering Buitenland) is introduced in March 2006. Immigrants who want to enter the Netherlands out of their own will ought to undergo an exam for spoken Dutch and an exam for knowledge of Dutch society before that they can enter the Netherlands. It is in June 2006, with the purpose to be enforced from January 1st 2007, that the then Minister of Integration Rita Verdonk proposes the last changes to the Law for Civic Integration (Wet Inburgering Nederland) These changes though have encountered strong resentment from a majority of the members of the parliament who remained against the unequal treatment of 'native' and 'naturalized' Dutch nationals. Verdonk's appeal to the parliament for 'political courage' did not succeed, not even with her own

party members in parliament, and led to a halving of the original target group numbers. Moreover, many amendments made the proposed law even more detailed and complex, and therefore even more difficult to handle in practice. In order to cope with the difficulties encountered, Verdonk in accordance with the wishes of a majority in parliament decided to introduce the new law in 2007 only partially, i.e. for newcomers without Dutch citizenship. In June 2006, the Dutch cabinet fell after its refusal, in spite of a favorable yet narrow majority, to approve a general pardon for those asylum seekers without a legal residence status who had entered the Netherlands before April 2001. The centre-left government that followed in November 2006 approved this pardon as one of its first measures. On November 13 2007, Ella Vogelaar – then Minister of Integration, Housing and Communities – released a press statement that can be taken as tangible proof of a discourse shift to a more egalitarian climate within the Dutch political discourse. Her declaration reads as follows:

"The cabinet wants to stop the increasing polarization in the Netherlands. [...] Integration can only succeed when both non-native and native accepting Dutch society as their society. They have to support the liberties, rights and duties connected with the Dutch civic state. [...] The cabinet appeals to all citizens to participate actively in society on the basis of mutual acceptance and equivalence." (Vogelaar, 2007 [Translation MS])

Although it announces a change in the tone of the integration debate, the consequence of the two most recent laws on civic integration are remarkable. The applicant who does not manage to pass the admission exam is not allowed to be admitted to enter the Netherlands. The applicant who does not pass the civic integration exam in the Netherlands, instead, does not get any permanent resident permit (in the case of newcomers) or cannot apply for citizenship (in the case of an oldcomer). After 2007 though, other complementary measures have followed in particular those measures that deal with the actual implementation and the costs/financing of the civic integration trajectory and its shift from being partly subsidized through a loan from

the municipality to being solely a responsibility of the immigrant. In the most recent governmental resolution, we read:

> "It can be expected, from anyone that comes to reside in the Netherlands, that he or she abides by the rules that are applied here and that he or she actively participates in society through the mastering of the Dutch language, attending education and work. Qualifications are the key to successful participation and integration." [Translation MS]

Further within the government pact signed by the parties making up for the majority of the parliament, the following measures have been spelled out:

> "Immigrant and asylum seekers are solely responsible for their own integration in our country. For those that for these purposes, do not dispose of enough means, the cabinet gives the possibility to loan money, which implies that the money loaned will have to be paid back. Ultimately, the resolution adopted by the cabinet is that the failing of the integration exam, with the exclusion of exceptional circumstances, brings to the confiscation of the temporary residence permit. The cabinet further proposes to accept the bilateral agreement between EU and Turkey making the due changes on the regulation that inhabitants of Turkey fall within integration regulations." (Gedoog Akkord, 30 september 2010 [Translation MS]).

The coalition agreement entitled Freedom and Democracy (Vrijheid en Democratie) stresses once more that immigrants who want to reside in the Netherlands have to follow the rules spelled out for civic integration and participate actively in the fields of education and work. In relation to the civic integration exams, the agreement states that:

> "The examination requirements are made sharper [...] there is the planned use of a test through which it can be determined whether the loyalty to the Netherlands is deeper than the loyalty to any other country" (Vrijheid en Democratie 2010: 23 [Translation MS]).

In April 2011, the changes brought to the Law for Integration Abroad were put into practice. From this date on, the norms for oral exam abroad have been moved from level A1- to level A1 and immigrants have to take a test for Literacy and Reading Comprehension scoring at least level A1-. On June 17, 2011 the cabinet approves another series of amendments, such as: civic integration applicants pay for their own costs with the possibility to loan for those who have insufficient means for payment; the examination must be passed within three years. The language proficiency level that the applicant has to reach stays at least at CEFR level A2 for newcomers. Also the level for knowledge of Dutch society remains untouched though the exam consists of a central part and of an ancillary part. In the meantime, the level that has been proposed for naturalization is CEFR level B1 (the level implied by the State Exam Dutch, Programme 1). The Netherlands has been the first country to introduce an examination for Dutch language in the country of origin of the applicant and on approving entry on the basis of a computerized test via the phone. The admission test puts the applicant under a strong financial strain in that not all places have a Dutch embassy ready available where the test can be taken, it further require some technology skills in being able to operate a DVD and a computer. But above all this, the exam Knowledge of Dutch society – a language test sold as a civic knowledge test – asks the potential migrant to make his or her own the norms and values of mainstream Dutch society. It is clear that these tests therefore do not tend to enhance the integration of the applicant in a shorter period of time, rather these two tests underscore the gap that there can be among applicants in terms of literacy, language skills, computer skills and socio-economic background. So doors appear open for those applicants that fall within the category of literate, financially self-supportive, technologically skilled, who can prepare for the exam and who have a high employability rate once they have entered the Netherlands. The exam for civic integration in foreign countries constructs therefore an implicit hierarchization in the immigrant population that is considered suitable to enter the Netherlands. Table 1 reports a schematic overview of the historical developments that have taken place in the civic integration regulations from 1998 till 2011:

Year	Which resolution	For who	Requirements	Consequences
1998	WIN (Law for Intergration of Newcomers)	Newcomers	To attend a course for Dutch as a second language To take an exam Obligation of participation, but no obligation to pass	none
2003/ 2004	Hoofdlijnenakkoord/ Contourennota Approval Outline/Countours Note			
2006	WIB (Law for Integration Abroad)	Newcomers	To test for TGN (Spoken Dutch) To test for KNS (Knowledge of Dutch Society) Obligation to pass	MVV (provisional permission to stay)
2007	WI (Law for Civic Integration)	Newcomers and a specific group of oldcomers	Main part of the test: Test Spoken Dutch Digital Practice Exam Exam Knowledge of Dutch Society Part of the test centred on real life situations: Portfolio and/or assessments Newcomers to fulfill this part within 3 and a half years, oldcomers within 5 years	Residence Permit with possibility to naturalization
2011	Changes brought to the WIB	Newcomers	To set higher pass norms for Test Spoken Dutch To add GBL test (Literacy and Reading Comprehension)	
Adopted Resolution	Changes to the Integration Benchmarking Proposals for changes tothe Integration Benchmarking and its examination	Newcomers and oldcomers	Pass within 3 years sanctions have been made heavier	
Proposal	Changes to the Naturalization Benchmarking		Pass level brought from A2 to B1	

Table 1: overview of civic integration regulation from 1998 - 2011

Source: Author's original table

Also worth pointing out though is that from 1 April 2011 the civic integration exam has also seen a new assessment component being included, that is the Literacy and Reading Comprehension Exam. In order to pass this part of the integration exam, the examinee has to be able to read in Dutch (through the use of the Latin alphabet) at CEFR level A1. This exam has five different tasks that are: 1) reading words out loud; 2) reading sentences out loud, 3) reading parts of texts out loud, 4) fill in sentences that have been given incomplete 5) answering questions related to a short text. As for the other two parts of the examination the answers are spoken into a phone receiver. These answers are then analyzed by a speech recognition programme that assigns a score to the answer. The whole civic integration exam costs 350 Euros. An applicant can take the test as many times as he wishes within the time given for reaching a pass level in all of the components. Each time though s/he will have to pay 350 Euros in order to take the test. Only when the applicant has passed all three parts of the integration exam will s/he be given permission to apply for a visa to enter the Netherlands and with that, a temporary residence permit.

5. The online private sector market in test-preparation materials

On the side of the integration regime industry, the online private sector holds a strong preparatory role for the migrant. This sector, in fact, does not offer preparatory courses for learning the Dutch language alone, it also advertises specific support courses that promise to help aspiring newcomers to pass the admission test and admitted newcomers to fulfill the requirements spelled out in the integration test.

Consider now Figure 1 and Figure 2 below. These are taken from the website of a regional educational centre (normally addressed in Dutch under the acronym of ROC) – a semi-governmental institution that has shifted from being directly linked to municipalities immigrants quota to having to compete with other integration trajectory providers – offering Dutch language courses for integration to (newly arrived) migrants:

Figure 1: Coming to Holland

Source: **http://www.davinci.nl/site/index.php/educatie/inburgering/cursus_inburgeringsdiploma** (accessed on March 1, 2011)

Figure 2: Coming to Holland

Source: **http://www.davinci.nl/site/index.php/educatie/inburgering/cursus_inburgeringsdiploma** (accessed on March 1, 2011)

The title that was set on the website on top of this image in bolded caps is: Coming to Holland, echoing the title of the book that students have to use to prepare to the admission test. The two characters portrayed are migrants who might have passed the admission test to and who are now entering the integration trajectory that leads to a permanent residence permit. Both images provide norms of what an immigrant should do when wanting to achieve societal success (see also Blommaert et al. 2009 for the analysis of the only market sector around English accents). In both images, the clothing they wear points towards a 'westernized' appearance. The lady in Figure 1 wears a tunic and a headscarf, two ethnic markers that suggest a Muslim identity. These are combined with modern black trousers and high-heeled shoes indicating a white-collar work environment. The gentleman in Figure 2 instead wears a blue, long-sleeved collared shirt. Both are images of people who are literate: the male figure holds a pile of books, holding one out toward the viewer; the female figure holds a laptop. Both of them are migrants who either already had or are currently developing (computer) literacy skills before arriving in the Netherlands and who embrace education and learning the Dutch language.

Consider now Example 1 below, which reports the text used by the website of a private sector provider offering a Dutch language course in preparation to the integration exam. The text reads as follows:

Example 1
Effectief en begrijpelijk communiceren
[Communicate in an effective and understandable manner]

Goede kennis van de Nederlandse taal is onmisbaar op de werkvloer en in uw privéleven. Als u effectief en begrijpelijk met anderen wilt communiceren, zowel mondeling als schriftelijk, is het belangrijk dat u het Nederlands goed beheerst. Wilt u hogerop komen maar denkt u dat dit niet lukt door onvoldoende kennis van het Nederlands? Wilt u uw schrijfvaardigheid verbeteren of graag serieus genomen worden als gesprekspart-

ner? NUOVIA biedt u voor elke leerwens een passende cursus Nederlands.

[A good knowledge of the Dutch language is unmissable at work and in your private life. If you want to communicate with others effectively and in an understandable manner, both orally as well as in writing, it is important that you master Dutch well. Do you want to stand out but you think that it does not work out because of an insufficient knowledge of Dutch? Do you want to improve your writing skills or would you really like to be taken seriously when engaged in conversation? Nuovia offers you a suitable Dutch course for each learning wish.]

The opening line stating that '[a] good knowledge of the Dutch language is unmissable at work and in your private life' uses, in the original Dutch text, the possessive adjective [uw] that has an honorofic function that could easily be used in a highly professional store when a client is about to purchase something. This insight is further supported by the hypothetical phrase "als u effectief en begrijpelijk met anderen wilt communiceren [...]" where the personal pronoun [u] also has an honorific function. Dutch language is therefore sold to the hypothetical distinguished client not solely as a primary need for its settlement in the host country. Further, the course that is being advertised stresses the development of both spoken and written skills as a way to allow the possible client to achieve a position in his social network, that is both at work as well as at home. What is being sold here is language, though not just the Dutch language as a definite code with a system of rules that must be followed for correctness of one's expression. What is also being sold to the purchaser here is a specific representation of what is valued in Dutch society and the expectations that people at work in this society may hold, i.e. that one is able to speak and write a specific register of the national language – the Standard one – that grants someone the possibility of being understood and taken seriously at home and at work. Following Silverstein (2006:485) what the private sector advertises here therefore is not Dutch language alone. Rather, it is Dutch

language together with the 'semiotic consubstantiality' that the migrant, now purchaser of a good, is and becomes what he speaks and writes. In example 2 below, instead, we read:

Example 2
Schrijf je brieven en rapportages maar voel je je af en toe onzeker over de spelling of over de formulering van een zin? Als je daar iets aan wilt doen, kun je aan de slag met één van onze online cursussen met personal coach. Je kunt er ook voor kiezen om zelfstandig te oefenen zonder online coach.

[Do you write letters and reports but you feel that now and then you are uncertain about the spelling or the way you should formulate something? If you want to do something about it, you can start working with one of our online courses with a personal coach. You can also choose to work on your own without an online coach.]

Example 2 employs first Dutch in its general description, possibly to market the product to someone who has already achieved a certain level of proficiency in Dutch. The example then switches to English when it comes to publicize the course packages and their prices. There are three courses being sold: Dutch for CITO; Dutch with no mistakes and Dutch for foreigners. Two things come to the eye. First – and without giving any explanation on the website – the provider draws a distinction between Dutch with no mistakes and Dutch for foreigners, possibly on the basis of the assumption that foreign learners of Dutch as a second language make other mistakes than indigenous, low educated learners of Dutch. Second, it is the selling of the course Dutch for CITO, where CITO is the examination taken by primary school pupils at the end of their primary schooling career that is intriguing. The economic urgency of achieving success through Dutch language starts as early as primary schooling. It was unspecified though whether this course was designed for autochtonous, allochtnous or newly arrived pupils. The packages and price was followed by a testimonial from a student that has rounded a Dutch language course through this provider. The testimonial states as follows:

Online courses with a personal coach

a) Dutch for cito	eur 189	more information
b) Dutch with no mistakes	eur 249	more information
c) Dutch for foreigners	eur 249	more information

Dankzij mijn cursus Nederlands ben ik nu receptioniste! Ik denk nu zelfs over een vervolgopleiding bij het hbo!

[Thank to my Dutch course I am now a receptionist! I am now thinking of a follow up course of studies at a higher vocational education institution!]

The better and the sooner someone masters Dutch well, the sooner s/he can become an active member of the workforce, as in the case of the testimonial stating that thanks to her Dutch course she is now covering the post of receptionist. The online private sector for Dutch language learning for integration abounds with offers like these. Example 1, Example 2 and the testimonial have all a metonymic function. The migrant is a language user and language use is a purchasable good that allows the well articulated/ easy to understand/ literate migrant to achieve a better social positioning through finding a job, at work as well as at home.

6 Testing regimes and the (new) citizen as economic actor

Migration itineraries have become increasingly diverse and complex. These changing dynamics have caused an unparalleled diversification of diversity in all societies hosting migrants, and have exposed the difficulties that nation-states face in dealing with migrants, their societal insertion and the determination of their legal status *(see for instance Blommaert & Marijns 2008 for the asylum-seeking procedures)*. The nation-state reacts to this incipient diversification of diversity through language, and it sets up, at least in the Dutch case, a language testing regime that starts from the application of the migrant to enter the country and that is supported by a public and a private sector. Within this industry, language becomes a means, if not the means, through which nations respond to supranational socio-economic processes of globalization. As retrieved from the glimpse we have had at the online private sector for preparation to the integration exam, it is through one language alone that the (newly arrived) migrant can be 'taken seriously', 'improve his social position' both at work as well in his daily life. Although (newly arrived) migrants bring along linguistic resources that are perfectly valuable ipso facto, these resources are disqualified because they do not fit in the herderian equation of nation, language and territory. Not only is the disqualification put on the immigrant's own linguistic resources fairly heavy. Also, as showed, the economic demands

for having access and preparing for these tests as well as the sanctions that may follow from an eventual failure are deep.

The above urges to draw two considerations. The first touches upon what it is to know a language in order to be ascribed to the category of 'integrated citizen'. The second deals with the construction of the immigrant as an economic actor whose chances of social upscaling are based on the amount and level of language-proficiency certifications that he can afford to purchase. Sociolinguistics has started to rediscover the notion that no language user is equally competent in the whole of a language (see Blommaert & Backus (2011) for a more recent re-appreciation of the concept of sociolinguistic repertoires. If we turn this insight to the testing regime for integration, we can advance the claim that no indigenous inhabitant of the Netherlands neither knows nor uses all of the Dutch language equally well. Rather s/he uses registers, very specific bits of language that allow him/her to function in different situations that imply a linguistic exchange. This is the reason why, when confronted with a bit of Dutch language that has to do with the law, whether a fine for speeding or a redundancy letter from the local employment office, the 'indigenous' (autochthoon) inhabitant too may be dependent on the language knowledge of others, e.g., anyone competent in the register at hand. This somewhat trivial insight invites us to ponder the language a newly arrived migrant is asked to learn, to know and to use so as to be declared an integrated citizen. In order to tackle this point we should go back to the classical conceptualization of citizenship. The possibility that the State had to provide a citizen with means that would allow him to participate actively in society was what defined the citizen as citizen. Now instead we see that within the testing regimes industry but also more generally within a neo-liberal conceptualization of citizenship, this model of citizenship does not apply anymore. Although the ascertaining of citizenship is anchored on high modernist elements such as learning the language of the host country and learning it as fast as possible, the citizen (to be) becomes an economic actor. That is,

someone who is asked to show his potential social value through his investment in the language learning trajectory. Following this neoliberal understanding of citizenship, the citizen has become an economic being largely based on a mechanism of market consumption. Further, his loyalty to the host nation is measured on the basis of his capacity to purchase which

becomes individual drive to participate in mainstream society. If this is so, then we are left with the question of whether language knowledge is the essential factor that gains the immigrant the way to integration or whether it is the possibility to purchase a service, i.e., an online course in support to the integration exam, that renders the him able to become integrated.

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Magic Marketing: Performing Grassroots Literacy[1]

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Abstract

This article shows how socially stigmatized *ways of writing* may be commodified by the scribers themselves in order to reap symbolic and/or economic benefits. I illustrate this point by examining African marabouts' advertisements in France and the way they are read by the French. These cards promote marabouts' spiritual powers with promises to bring back unfaithful spouses and, among other things, success in business. I argue that what French readers interpret as grassroots literacy should instead be analyzed as *astroturf literacy*, i.e. literacy that imitates or fakes popular grassroots ways of writing. I submit that display of seemingly poor literacy is an essential part of marabouts' *doing being African*: By performing 'non-standard' literacy they become 'authentic' Africans, and therefore legitimate clairvoyants, according to the set of fantasized sociocultural stereotypes. Yet, by recycling socio-cultural stereotypes, the marabouts participate in the re-production of the social and moral orders that enable the possibilities of French readers' meaning-making.

1. Introduction

Work on national and transnational migrations has amply shown that geographic mobility often entails the restructuring of social and linguistic practices of both those who move and those in the host population who come in contact with them (Vigouroux 2008.) Blommaert (2006) has convincingly argued that texts, be they oral or written, may not travel as well as people because of the usual discrepancy between the ecology of signs in which a text is produced and that in which it is received, read, and therefore interpreted.[2]

As "circulating entities" (Latour 1993, quoted by Ury 2007:46), textual artifacts establish rela-

tionality between people who would otherwise not be in contact with each other. Semiotic artifacts create social continuity between otherwise discontinuous geographic spaces. Yet, relationality experienced in the here-and-now may have been shaped by previous long-term processes of broader timed-spaced encounters, real and/or imagined, experienced first-hand or entextualized through fictional narratives. Because language is inherently indexical, the activity of making sense of a text is often inseparable from that of categorizing the scriber. In other words, *ways of writing* become iconic of (projected) *ways of being*. The indexical work performed in the activity of reading may be retrospective (e.g. s/he is poorly educated because s/he has "poor" literacy skills) or prospective (e.g. s/he is expected to have "poor" literacy skills because s/he is poorly educated). Work done on social literacy has shown that the activity of reading is shaped by, among other things, overlapping ideologies of what counts as text, as good or bad writing, and as an educated or uneducated scriber (e.g.

[2] Yet, this needs to be nuanced, on account of drastic migration policies in Europe and elsewhere that constrain the mobility of targeted people, who often happen to be the same ones whose literacy skills are contested.

Barton 2007, Baynham 1995, Gee 1996, Street 1995). Sociolinguistic work has shown how these multilayered ideologies control people's access to services, jobs, education or asylum (Blommaert 2001). Less attention has been given to the ways scribers may frame the readers' indexical work by conforming to the latter's socio-cultural expectations. My contribution here aims at analyzing how socially stigmatized *ways of writing* may be commodified by the scribers themselves in order to reap symbolic and/or financial benefits.

I illustrate this point by examining African marabouts' advertisements in France and how they are read by the French.[3] Marabouts circulate cards that promote their spiritual powers, promising to bring back unfaithful spouses, restore virility, help pass driver's license tests, and succeed in business, among many other things. Metadiscursive comments on marabouts' flyers can be found on the Internet, where websurfers comment on and display their personal collections, which they typically mock and parody with spelling mistakes and exaggerated poor literacy skills. I argue that what French readers interpret as grassroots literacy (as defined by Blommaert 2008) with instances of hetero-graphy, and vernacular language varieties, should rather be analyzed as *astroturf literacy*, which I define as literacy that imitates or fakes popular grassroots ways of writing.

Astroturf literacy implies that second indexical order — i.e. ways of indexing a particular social group, social class, geographic location, or ethnicity — operates both in the production of text and in its reception by readers. The act of writing is therefore intrinsically shaped by the act of reading, more precisely by the *expected* act of interpreting. In *astroturf literacy* the production of text is not framed as an individual act but as part of a collective activity of producers; therefore each individual voice is subsumed by an identifiable collective voice. In other words, each

individual voice draws its existence from a collective one.

Marabouts' advertisements are one of the visible and visual aspects of African migrations to France and epitomize a peculiar South-to-North direction of interaction taking place in the North. Yet, as I argue below, we should not hastily subscribe to an approach where these advertisements are unilaterally analyzed as an illustration of vernacular literacy, with the marabouts stigmatized because of their 'peripheral' variety of French. A diachronic analysis of data doesn't lead to such conclusions. Nor should we, well-intentioned analysts, stop at legitimizing socially stigmatized ways of writing with fine-grained discursive analyses demonstrating how linguistically and semiotically powerful and elaborate they are nonetheless. I don't intend to question the usefulness of such studies: They have drawn the attention of analysts and readers alike (often highly literate Westerners) to the different literacy regimes in which inscriptions emerge and circulate and how the latter are stratified in the global system of communication. I argue that, although at first glance it appears to be emancipatory, such a framework of analysis may uncritically subscribe to, and moreover participate in, what de Negroni (1992) calls *Afrique fantasme* (phantasm Africa), viz., a set of reified and long-lasting images and discourse on Africa and Africans which social sciences and the humanities have partly helped construct. I submit that, on the contrary, these advertisements illustrate the commodification by some Africans of cultural and linguistic stereotypes Westerners associate with them, in order to assert their supernatural power and promote their status as authentic African marabouts to their French readers and hopefully to succeed socio-economically.

I start the discussion below with a presentation of the set of data on which my analysis is based. I then turn to a brief history of marabouts in France where I analyze the emergence of an African 'economy of the occult' (Comaroff & Comaroff 1993) in relation to the following: 1) the long tradition of clairvoyance and occult sciences in France since the 16th century, with the advent of spiritism and theosophy; 2) Europeans'

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[3] *Marabout* is the emic term commonly used to designate African soothsayers in France. Yet, as illustrated below, the self-categorization *marabout* used in early advertisements is shifting towards other identifications such as *astrologist* or *medium*.

long-lasting 'sub-Saharan fantasies' (Negroni 1992:128) about Africans' occult powers; and 3) the proletarization of African migrants coming to France after Independence (1960's).

The French's reading of the flyers in section 3 illustrates how multiscalar processes of *erasure* (Gal and Irvine 1995) shape the readers' frames of interpretation. I analyze the metapragmatic discourse constructed by these reading acts as part of a linguistic and "social order of what makes [them] happen" (Heller 2010:102).

The fourth section is a comparison between paper- and web-advertisements. I show that, unlike the 'struggling' literacy displayed on flyers, that of websites is rather unmarked and there-fore does not index any particular socio-cultural or socio-economic group. The question I address is why there is such a striking difference between the two modes of advertising when there are no obvious reasons to believe that paper- and cyber marabouts represent two distinct groups of people.

I conclude that marabouts' advertisements shed new light on the topic of language com-modification by showing that marketability does not necessarily equate with 'authorized language' (Bourdieu 1982). Non-standard literacy skills may become marketable commodities, although the practice recycles offensive sociocultural ste-reotypes from the host population, part of which is also targeted as potential clientele.

2. Data

This study rests on three sets of data: 1) a corpus of 200 Marabouts' paper advertisements that I collected in Paris, in the 18th and 20th *arrondisse-ments* ('neighbourhoods') between 2000 and 2005, and on the Internet in collectors' personal and collective websites. These advertisements come as flyers slightly bigger than business cards and printed on colorful paper and hand-distri-buted in streets or at subway station exits, in pre-dominantly migrant neighbourhoods, usually not very far from the marabouts' homes, based on the street addresses given in the advertisements.

These cards have been in circulation in Paris since the late 1970's, along with newspaper advertisements in free Parisian newspapers, in

Figure 1: Marabout's flyer

Source: Author

African women magazines such as *Amina*, and in astrology magazines; 2) 36 Cyber advertisements ranging from marabouts' personal websites to pre-designed advertisements found in clairvoy-ance websites. (Since the late 1990's African marabouts' advertisements have increasingly been present on the Internet.) 3) Metadiscursive e-comments written by French readers in blogs, discussion lists, and websites. They range from short metapragmatic comments such as below to very caustic diatribes and generalizing com-ments on the obligation for migrants to com-mand the "language of the Republic," a *sine qua non* condition to embrace its values (i.e. liberty, equality, and fraternity) and to be "integrated" to the French nation:

> "Vous avez certainement tous déjà reçu l'un de ces tout [sic] petits flyers de prétendus guérisseurs-marabouts africains. Ces petits papiers vous prom-ettent de réparer tous vos problèmes de couple, d'érection, d'argent et j'en passe dans un français maculé de fautes d'**orthographe** les plus inatten-dues…"[4]

You all certainly have already received one of these very small flyers of these professed African healers-soothsayers. These small papers prom-ise you to repair all your couple, erection, money problems and so on in a French smudged with the most unexpected **spelling** mistakes…

In order to better understand the ways in which the French make sense of these advertisements, for example, through parodistic entextualization, I start with an analysis of the sociocultural fac-

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[4] **http://www.docstoc.com/docs/38666225/EN-QUETE-SUR-LES-MARABOUTS-DE-PAP**

tors that triggered the emergence of marabouts' flyers in French society. It will become apparent that, among other things, African occultism advertisements must be analyzed within the long tradition of 'exotic publicity' which marabouts' advertisements are a continuation of, though under new forms.

3. A short historiography of marabouts' advertisement cards

The first African clairvoyants' advertisement in France dates back from the late 1960's and appeared in the astrology magazine *Horoscope*. The number of advertisements increased steadily until the mid-1970's, after which it multiplied. Although the first advertisements coincide with the arrival of the first marabouts in France — estimated around the 1960's (Kuscynsky 1992:47) — the choice of self-advertisement did not apply uniformly to the heterogeneous population of marabouts. This heterogeneity is encapsulated by Kuscynsky's expression *multiform invisibility* (idem: 58), with *invisibility* capturing the haziness of the French administration toward the marabouts regarding their immigration status and taxation. Those who were occasional or full-time marabouts before their migration to France would rather resort to their local network among the migrant population, benefiting largely from the reputation they had built in their home country rather than on self-advertisement. Many of them were providing their services in immigrants' residence halls called 'foyers', performing religious ceremonies, solving matrimonial, social and political conflicts, or helping fellow country-men obtain residence cards or find jobs, thanks to their prayers, amulets and social networks (Samuel 1978). Yet, with the increasing pauperization of the African working class in France, it became difficult for marabouts to rely only on their traditional clientele, who could no longer afford to pay for the services they received (Globet & Guillon 1983). Thus, the circle of potential customers needed to be expanded, but word of mouth was no longer sufficient to reach a population not acquainted with West African maraboutic practices. Self-advertisement also became an option for "self-made-marabouts",

who saw clairvoyance as a possible way to overcome economic hardship in the host society and help provide financial assistance to family members who had stayed "at home" (Diallo 1984; and Kuczynski 1992: Chap.2).

The emergence of marabouts and therefore their publicity should also be understood within the broader context of occult economy in France since the 16th century. Its best-known representative is undoubtedly *Nostradamus*, a former apothecary who became famous for his publishing collections of prophecies. The attraction for occultism pervades both urban and rural environments (see Favret-Saada 1977 on witchcraft beliefs and experiences in the Bocage of western France), including all socioeconomic strata of French society, even intellectuals and artists. For example, surrealists such as André Breton were known for their engagement in occultism. In his *Lettre aux voyantes* ('Letter to clairvoyants') published in 1925, he acknowledges clairvoyants' "great powers" and asks for their help to "chase away infamous priests" (*idem*: 22).[5]

The close connection between African occultism and French-based clairvoyance has been evident in the marabouts' self-categorization since the very beginning: categories such as *voyant* 'clairvoyant' and *medium* are commonly used together, as in *Cheikh Kalipha Grand voyant Médium* ('Cheikh Kalipha Great clairvoyant Medium')*.* More recent flyers display the category *guérisseur* 'healer' or *astrologue* 'astrologist' alone or with a string of those already mentioned, for instance: *grand medium − voyant − astrologue*. Clearly, the marabouts have inserted themselves in an already existing economy of beliefs and have adopted categories of self-presentation already in currency and familiar to the French. Entering a new economy of written signs, marabouts' advertisements get to compete with other divinatory practices such as that of astrologists and clairvoyant, more familiar to the French, even though they publicly don't hold high currency in many segments of the population.

Incidentally, it is worth noting that on the advertisement pages of magazines or free Pari-

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5 For a study on the relation between surrealism and occultism see Lepetit 2008 and Edelman 2006.

Figure 2: Fakir Fhakya Khan, *Le Petit Journal Illustré* 1925.
Source: **http://gallica.bnf.fr/**

sian newspapers marabouts are categorized under the heading *esotericism* whereas clairvoyant and astrologists are classified under the label *clairvoyance* (voyance). Whereas the category *clairvoyance* is rather unmarked in French, that of *esotericism* conjures up images of occult, magical, and slightly threatening power foreign to Cartesian logic. Using categories known to French readers, the marabouts not only show their knowledge of the French local belief system but also display a clear understanding of advertising strategies, trying to attract a wide range of customers. One can assume that clairvoyants' customers are potentially more disposed to marabouts' practices than those skeptical toward non-rational practices.

In a country already very receptive to occult practices, publicity helped clairvoyance gain increasing visibility and possibly legitimacy. In 1925, L*e Petit Journal Illustré* launched the first advertisement, thus inaugurating clairvoyance with 'sensational' predictions by Fakir Fhakya Khan, a real or imagined Indian astrologist living in Paris. For a few weeks the Fakhir briefly responded to readers' questions until he was urgently recalled by his religious community and departed from France: he was believed to have committed a serious mistake in making revelations to the French (Eldelman 2006: 161). Below is how Fakir Fhakya-Khan appeared for the first time to his French readers:

The semiotics displayed on the image is rather complex, conveying several intertwined layers of explicit and implicit meanings. Indianness is exhibited by the character's turban and iconized in the Indian-like script and oriental-sounding name *Fakir* on the left side of the page. Oriental spirituality, more specifically Hinduism, is framed through the category Fakir, the bodily inscription of the swastika on the character's forehead and to a certain extent his beard. Yet, Indianness is tempered with his western-style suit. With his body posture (his crossed hands on his right lap) and staring look, he is represented as self-confident and serious-minded (he wears glasses, which may be interpreted as a sign of sophistication). Attraction for the mysterious and exotic Orient had been common in French advertisement since the 19th century and echoed, on a broader scale, France's expansionist fervor to "match British imperial achievements" (Said 1978: 218).

In the 1960's, when the first marabouts' advertisements appeared in France, the exotic Other was no longer Oriental. Since the 19th century colonization of the African continent, French imagination had been filled with images, stereotypes of and fantasies about Africa and Africans constructed and circulated in political discourse, scientific literature, colonial literary work, and advertising. (For the representation of African colonized in French advertisement see Blanchard

& Boncel 1998.) Conversely, European colonization had constructed Africans' representations of France and the French. As I am about to illustrate, marabouts' advertisements can be read as iconizing the encounter of these cross-representations.

While entering a French market already open and predisposed to occultism, marabouts also had to display distinctiveness in order to find their niches and become competitive. Yet, for singularity to become an asset, it must conform to existing frames of reference as illustrated by the use of the generalizing category 'African' exhibited since the beginning of marabouts' advertising (e.g. *le très célèbre voyant africain* 'the very famous African clairvoyant').[6] 'African' does not locate marabouts in a well-defined socio-cultural space but rather refers to a fantasized semiotic space filled with images and discourse on Africanness, entertained by Europeans and Africans alike, be they writers (e.g. Léopold Sédar Senghor, André Gide, Graham Greene among many others), anthropologists (e.g. Marcel Griaule), or lay people. With the category AFRICAN, what seems to be exhibited are images of *authenticity* and *naturalness*, with the African "living traditionally out of his land and with his land, in and through the cosmos" ("il vit traditionnellement de la terre et avec la terre, dans et par le cosmos", Senghor 1945, quoted by De Negroni 1992:67) in a culture where "spirituality prevails over materiality" (Griaule 1958, quoted by De Negroni 1992:67). The discourse of authenticity, naturalness, and power of divination associated with Africans has prevailed in Europe since the 15th century (Lowe 2005), from explorers' travelogues to acclaimed literary works such as those of Senghor's just mentioned. As noted above,

authenticity is sometimes framed in temporal terms such as in Monsieur Ali's flyer: *Heureusement que je viens d'arriver d'Afrique* ('fortunately I just arrived from Africa').

Although African marabouts' advertisements can be read in light of the long tradition of exotic publicity explained above, it is different in some ways. The *mise en scene* of the exotic Other is here performed by the exoticized himself, i.e. the marabouts, unlike in the 'Orientalism' displayed in French publicity where iconography and discourses are imagined and circulated by the French. I suggest that marabouts' advertisements should be interpreted as an expression of POST-ORIENTALISM, where stereotypes, phantasms, and projections onto the exotic Other —in this case, Africans— have been appropriated, reworked and re-circulated by African marabouts themselves, for their own benefit. Distinctive ways of writing, as I will suggest, are an essential part of marabouts' *doing being African.* But, before turning to this point, let's first make a detour to the way French readers make sense, if not fun, of them.

4. Entextualization of marabouts' advertisements

Research conducted on marabouts' clientele in France shows a vast socioeconomic and socio-cultural diversity of customers ranging from affluent to working class Hexagonal French, Portuguese, French West Indians, and Africans (Borghino 1995, Kuczynski 1992). The socio-cultural diversity of the potential addressees of advertisement cards is revealed in the marabouts' presentations of self. Alignment with French social codes is illustrated by the use of first or last names preceded by *Monsieur* as a self-reference term: e.g. *Monsieur Sakho, Mr Sidikhi, Monsieur M'Bemba.* Sometimes, honorification applies as with the title *professeur*, most commonly used after that of *Monsieur.*[7] *Professeur*, alternating with *Pr.*,

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[6] To be sure, there are a few advertisements that refer to specific geographic location such as in the following example: *l'un des plus grands marabouts de la Casamance Senegal* ('one of the most famous marabouts from Casamance, Senegal'). Interestingly, the line following this self-presentation states: *Vient d'arrivé [sic] à Paris* ('just arrived in Paris'). Clearly, the mention of a well-identified African location, Casamance, helps construct a sense of authenticity, for both those who are and those who are not familiar with maraboutic practices. Casamance is indeed an important place regarding marabouts and maraboutic practices.

[7] On a collector's website specialized in marabouts flyers, statistics can be found on the use of terms for self-presentation. 51% of the 1443 flyers collected mainly in France (with a few from other parts of Europe) use the term or its variants Monsieur and 40% Professeur and its variants (**http://www.megabambou.com/galerie/stats/**).

Prof, and *Le Professeur*, can be interpreted as both an attempt to assert symbolic and cultural capital according to the French value system and as a reference to marabouts' traditional major activities, i.e. teaching the Qur'an, in the West African system.

Relocation to a new geographic ecology triggers new socio-cultural practices that enable the "relocators" to insert themselves into new socialization networks and to conform with the host country's frames of cultural and linguistic expectations.[8] Yet, by conforming with new local frames of production and reception, the producers of those messages also run the risk of being misunderstood by their targeted audiences: on the one hand, the French population that is not familiar with African maraboutic practices and, on the other, West-Africans who are more familiar with marabouts' practices and are most likely to believe them but are otherwise not accustomed to this particular advertising style. For the marabouts, change of geographic space triggers a major shift from an oral mode of "promotion of Other" based on lineages and word-of-mouth in their countries of origin to a written practice of self-advertisement in the host country. Self-advertising ones' own powers is usually considered as a transgression of marabout's code of conduct because it transforms their powers into commodities while they have traditionally been considered as God's gifts. That is, power should speak for itself without any need for self-promotion. Many stories in Senegal recount how marabouts' self-advertisements provoked other marabouts' anger and brought a *mauvaise langue* 'a curse' (literally, 'bad tongue') to those who dared indulge in them. Kuczynski (1992) suggests that marabouts in France need to find strategies to accommodate both the pressure from the French market system and that from other marabouts' competition, while trying to comply with their home tradition, in order to secure their business without drawing malefic attacks from other marabouts. This boils down to asserting one's visibi-

lity while preserving one's anonymity. For some marabouts, this tension is resolved by adopting several names while at the same time forging one single identity with the same picture, or with the same street address and telephone numbers. In my own collection, for example, *Charles* alternates with three other identities: *Professeur Moro*, *Professeur Bengali*, and *Pr. Mohammed Aly*. His four advertisements are almost identical, with two of them displaying the same picture. Yet, because readers have other frames of reference where a name is understood to apply to one single identity, such variation and latitude in the presentation of self tend to be associated with fraudulent practice by the French. Although such practices may not be completely ruled out, the display of multiple identities need not be simplistically reduced to fraud.

As amply shown in sociolinguistics, social legitimacy is often tied to speakers' linguistic performance. Failure to speak or write according to the norms or expectations associated with a given space is thought to index a shortcoming if not social backwardness. Marabouts' flyers are no exception. Their linguistic features become emblematic of illiterate African migrants seeking opportunities in the West, conforming to a scheme of representations in the broader time-space frame of North to South relationships, where Africans are often associated with poor education. On the Internet, French readers abundantly comment on the flyers' supposedly nonstandard literacy by pointing out spelling and syntactic mistakes. For example, commenting on a "generator" of marabouts' cards available on the Internet, a web user regrets the lack of mistakes in the automatically generated cards: e.g. *c genial mais il manque les fautes dans le texte* ;-) ('it's great but mistakes are lacking in the text ;-')).[9]

Discourse on spelling or syntactic mistakes often conjures up images of marabouts as dubious characters taking advantage of fragile and naïve souls, as in the following example:

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[8] Kuczynski (2008: 242) writes that the marabouts accommodate the French and adapt their practices to the new socio-cultural environment instead of reworking them symbolically.

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[9] **http://www.megabambou.com/encyclopedie/temoignages/questions**.

2. Analyse de l'orthographe

Pour un dégrossissage rapide, il vaut mieux éviter tous les marabouts dont les prospectus contiennent des fautes d'orthographe. Idem pour ceux qui ne contiennent que des superlatifs tel celui du " Professeur BANORO ", censé être "très célèbre" (une simple recherche sur internet montre bien qu'il n'est pas si connu que ça : "Aucun résultat trouvé").

2. Analysis of spelling

To get a quick idea, one should rather avoid all the marabouts whose flyers have spelling mistakes. Likewise for those who have superlatives such as "Professor BANORO," supposedly "very famous" (an elementary search on the internet shows that he is not as well-known as he claims: "no result found").

This excerpt is part of a group of students' final paper (12 pages, only 7 of which are text) on marabouts' practices in France and the legitimacy of their advertised gifts, posted on the Internet. The students' criteria to distinguish between real vs. fake or good vs. bad marabouts are clearly based on a homology between social and linguistic order. Interestingly, among the five advertisements they reproduce in their study, only one could possibly qualify as non-standard literacy:

(…) *problème financière familiaux et sexuell*e
(…) ' financial, family and sexual problem'

In French, adjectives agree in gender and number with the head noun. This syntactic rule is correctly applied on the two adjectives *financière* and *sexuelle* if we consider, as the author of the advertisement did, that *problème* is feminine and singular. According to the scriber's use, his only 'mistake' would be on *familiaux,* because of its masculine and plural form. This is by far less than the 53 'mistakes' I identified in the students' seven written pages with among them 13 head noun-adjective disagreements, 14 non-standard spellings, 8 idiosyncratic syntactic 'niceties', and so forth. Could such instances of heterography qualify as *grassroots literacy* although the scribers belong to the highly educated stratum of

French society? Or are they just characteristic of the 'ordinary writing' (Fabre 1993) of a significant proportion of native French scribers making them rather unmarked?[10] Clearly, contrary to Blommaert (2004), WRITING is not THE problem here, READING is. It is not *who* writes *what* nor *who* reads *what* but rather *who* reads *whom*. The students' comments acutely illustrate how their social construction of African marabouts is shaped independently of or prior to their reading of the latter's advertisements and how 'poor' linguistic performance is pointed out as post-facto ratification of this pre-construction.

Students' comments are both a production and an entextualized reproduction of stereotypical discourse on marabouts that circulate on the Internet in different forms. For example, performance of marabouts and their practices are sometimes staged in amateurish videos reminiscent of minstrelsy, where marabouts are impersonated by white characters wearing Afro wigs, harboring painted black faces, and speaking with parodic 'African' pronunciation and highly rudimentary French reminiscent of *le Français tirailleur*.[11] By their parody these videos participate in the interpretive framing of marabouts as uneducated and dubious characters and as 'racial Others'. Stereotypical representations also circulate through entextualization in official advertising campaigns such as that of French national lottery where maraboutic practices are turned into derision.[12] This video stages an African wearing a 'traditional' West African tunic and a skullcap, who is seen performing magic by reciting unintelligible incantations, reading cowries and spraying Air Wick on the lotto bulletin in order to discover the combination of winning numbers. The motto at the end of the advertising reads as follows:

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10 I wish to introduce a distinction between *grassroots* and *ordinary* literacy. I suggest to reserve *grassroots* for a way of READING texts that display non-standard literacy and *ordinary* for the actual WRITING of a text that would be considered as 'non-standard' in reference to an ideology of spelling- and syntactic-mistake free literacy.

11 *Français tirailleur* is a non-native variety used in the French colonial army by West African recruits before and during the First World War.

12 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PESGI9K36iU

AUGMENTEZ PLUTÔT VOS CHANCES
EN JOUANT À JOKER+

INCREASE YOUR LUCK INSTEAD
BY PLAYING JOKER+

This advertisement opposes two belief systems discursively articulated by the adverb *plutôt* ('instead'): a shady and irrational African system resting on mysterious and unintelligible oral practices, and a westernized and tangible one iconicized by the materiality of the lotto bulletin. This opposition frames games of chance as rational ones by playing on European internalized representations of African occult practices. Yet, if we pursue a historiography of the marabouts' association with gambling, we notice that they are the ones who drew it upon themselves by advertising their power to improve luck in gambling. The parodic discourse of the French lottery advertisement then typically illustrates how new meanings emerge from the re-inscription into a new context of a text being lifted up from its 'original' context of production. New meanings are always selected out of a variety of potential others. In order to make sense to the intended audience they need to conform to existent frames of interpretation, thereby participating in both their construction and circulation. Thus, this applies to both marabouts' discourse on gambling and that of the national lottery on marabouts.

Although derogatory, such entextualizations illustrate how the marabouts have penetrated the French semiotic landscape. In a way they also assert that *it is the French who creates the marabout*, to paraphrase Fanon's words (1972).[13] Yet, as I remarked above, the French interpretative framing of marabouts and their practices has been partly shaped by the marabouts themselves, especially through displaying seemingly grassroots literacy.[14] In doing so, they conform to linguistic and social schemes of representations in currency in France. Approaching marabouts' display of literacy as a business strategy, as I do below, gives agency to scribers often deprived of it in our sociolinguistic analysis and helps reframe seemingly 'poor written' competence into an economically empowering experience, although this is based on the reworking of socio-cultural stereotypes.

5. Doing being African by commodifying 'non-literacy skills'

In her extensive ethnographic study on African marabouts in Paris, Kuczynski (1992) observes that the early comers, who had been trained as marabouts before migrating to France, were often illiterate in French, having been educated in Koranic schools. Thus, the flyers are allegedly often written by one of the marabouts' family members, friends, or faithful customers. Consequently, the flyers are hardly designed by or for one individual marabout, but produced from templates used by/for others. Over the past 40 years only a few templates have been used, creating the impression of a style of writing and a distinctive genre.[15] Intertextuality is made obvious by the replication of the entire text, or of short or large strips thereof, from one flyer to another. Variation emerges from the color or design of the cards, or from the reordering of the borrowed strips. When reinserted into a new discursive space, the borrowed strips create thematic and discursive heterogeneity as utterances or words follow each other with no apparent systematic discourse structure: e.g. *amour, commerce, cheveux, poils, amaigrissement, sexuel, fécondité, chance*[16] ('love, business, hair, slimming, sexual, fertility, luck'). Instances of rewording from one advertisement to the other are also common currency:

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[13] Fanon's exact words are: *C'est le blanc qui crée le nègre* ('it is the white who creates the negroe', my translation) (1972 :29).

[14] The same idea is expressed by Fanon (1972:29) when he states: *Mais c'est le nègre qui crèe la négritude* ('But it is the negroe who creates negritude', my translation)

[15] This genre is found in different parts of the world including Asia, Europe, and Latin and North America. The emergence and spread of a marabouts' transnational written genre is worth investigating but extends the editorial limits of this article.

[16] **http://www.megabambou.com/encyclopedie/style/enumeration.html**

a) *Réussit la ou les autres ont échoués* 'succeeds the or others have failed'[17]
b) Réussite là ou les autres ont échoué 'success there or others have failed'

The verb *Réussit* ('succeeds') in (a) becomes the noun *Réussite* ('success') in (b), or the other way around. Grammatical 'mistakes' may be multiplied, such as with *ou* 'or' instead of *où* 'where'; or they may be corrected: from *la* to *là* or from *les autres ont échoué***s** to *les autres ont échou*é. In French, the past participle (e.g. échoué) does not agree with the subject noun if preceded by the auxiliary *avoir* ('have').

Marabouts' advertisements share not only common themes (love, professional success, achievements in different domains such as sports, luck games, increase of sexual prowess, fertility, healing of sickness etc.) but also linguistic features that can be summarized as follows: spelling mistakes, typos, lack of agreement, misuse of prepositions, cross-register transfers, misuse of diacritics, misuse of written conventions.

1. Spelling 'mistakes'
Quite common are artificial word boundaries and word boundaries 'transgressions' such as *tou tou* (toutou 'pooch'), *sur tout* (surtout 'especially'). Others like RÉUSSITDANSTOUSLESDOMAINES instead of RÉUSSIT DANS TOUS LES DOMAINES 'succeeds in all domains') appear to be dictated by editorial constraints with the scriber trying to fit a whole sentence in one line. While some orthographic 'mistakes' show good knowledge of word pronunciation, e.g. CHU**TT**E DE CHEVEUX (CHU**T**E 'hair loss'); *effica***s***ité* (*effica***c***ité* 'efficiency'), others display phonetic non-discrimination that often indexes non-nativeness in French, eg. *ab***o***ndon* (*ab***a***ndon*). Spelling mistakes on homonyms such as **quelque** *soit votre problème* (**quel que** *soit* 'whatever your problem is') are very frequent among native French speakers and marks a confusion between *quelque* [determiner] and *quel que*, a phrase consisting of an indefinite article quel and the complementizer que.

2. Typos
Some marabouts' flyers display a great number of typos, which can be distracting for the reader but hardly impede understanding: e.g. *Guérit l'i***mu***issance* instead of *Guérit l'im***p***uissance* 'heal impotence', *mari***g***e* instead of *mari***a***ge* 'marriage', *mal***"***fique* instead of *mal***é***fique* 'malevolent'.

3. Lack of agreement
Adjective-head noun disagreements are found both for gender, as in *entente parfai***t*** instead of *entente parfait***e*** 'perfect harmony', and for number, e.g. *l'homme et la femme deviennent inseparabl***e*** instead of *deviennent inseparable***s*** 'become inseparable'.

4. Misuse of prepositions
Although in some cases misuse of prepositions may not alter meaning such as in *Les méthodes **de** résoudre vos problèmes* instead of *Les méthodes **pour** résoudre* 'methods for solving your problems, or *les problèmes **au** lieu de travail* instead of *… **sur le** lieu de travail* 'at the workplace', in others it may say the contrary of the intended meaning: *il créera **contre** vous, une entente parfait* 'he will create a perfect harmony *against* you' instead of ***entre** vous* 'between you'.

5. Cross-register transfers
These show up mostly in the concurrent display of elements usually associated with written (formal) and oral (informal) registers such as the use of 1) T/V to which we will return below, 2) adverbs' reduplication for marking emphasis (*Guérisseur **très très** compétent* 'very very competent healer'), and frozen expressions: *il courra derriere vous comme le chien derriere son maitre* ('he will run after you like the dog behind his master') sometimes written with some variants as in *Il ou elle sera pour toujours comme un toutou* ('he or she will be forever like a pooch'). The canine reference is so commonly used in marabouts' advertisements that, over the years, it has tended to epitomize marabouts' flyers.

6. Misuse of diacritics
In French, misplaced or misused accents tend to not impede meaning (e.g. ÂPRES for APRÈS 'after', *vous **à** quitté* for vous **a** quitté 'left you'), but in some cases it may hamper understanding such as in the following two examples:

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[17] I chose a literal English translation to help the reader grasp the vernacular variety used.

(1) *Envoute – ensorcelle la malchance vous pour-suit.*

Here the absence of acute accents transformed the expected participles *Envouté – ensorcellé* into third person presents with the sense of [the marabout] 'captivates and bewitches misfortune follows you' instead of ([you] 'captivated and bewitched').

(2) *votre rival repousse à jamais,*

In this example the lack of accent on the past participle *repoussé* radically transforms the intended meaning **'pushed away** for ever' into 'your rival **pushes back** again forever'.

7. Misuse of written conventions

This mistake results typically from inconsistent punctuation and seemingly erratic usage of capital letters. Whereas no clear patterned use of punctuation emerges from the analysis of marabouts' flyers, usage of capital letters appears to be dictated by meaning rather than writing conventions. In the example *n'hésitez pas à me **Con**tacter* ('don't hesitate to Contact me'), capitalization of the verb is used specifically to emphasize the importance of the requested action as in (...) *pour des **R**ésultats bénéfiques garantis* ('for guaranteed beneficial Results') where the positive outcome of the advertised work is stressed. As illustrated by the following enumeration *Amour, Chance, Sentiments, Problèmes familiaux, Situations commerciales...* ('Love, Luck, Feelings, family Problems, commercial Situations'), use of capital letters appears to be far from random; it only applies to head nouns and not to adjectives.

The typology presented above should not make us forget variation between marabouts' advertisements, with some displaying a high degree of non-standard literacy while others conform to written standards. Readers generally overlook this diversity, blowing out of proportion the number of mistakes, and emphasizing the most stereotypical and often the least common ones.

Evoking marabouts' lack of or poor literacy in French to account for their advertisements' non-standard variety, as Kuczynski suggests (see above), does not explain why the same spelling or syntactic mistakes have been replicated for the past 40 years. Firstly, it is hard to imagine

that nobody close to the marabouts, be they a loyal customer, a cousin or brother who has been schooled in France, has ever called their attention to these 'mistakes' or suggested corrections to them. In addition, Kuczynski (1982:357), who conducted work with the Parisian printers of flyers, points out that the marabouts allow very little divergence from the circulating norm of writing, valorizing the reproduction of a consistent style of advertisement. Lastly, a fine-grained analysis of the 'mistakes' that supposedly index the scribers' poor literacy skills shows indeed a patterned use of linguistic features such as usage of capital letters (discussed above) and confusion of T/V pronouns, to which we now turn.

According to Coveney (2010:127) 'The choice between *vouvoiement* and *tutoiement* (henceforth, 'T/V') is possibly the most salient of all sociolinguistic phenomena in French'. The T/V distinction has been analyzed as highly indexical, signaling the level of formality of the relevant setting, the types of discourse and channels (online vs. on-site settings), the degree of deference and intimacy between interactants, and the reproduction of the broader social order (Brown and Gilman 1972, Brown and Levinson 1987, and Morford 1997, Warren 2006, Williams and van Compernolle 2007, 2009, among many others). At first glance, the marabouts' misuse of pronouns of address tends to corroborate studies arguing that T/V misapplication generally indexes speakers' non-nativeness in French (Dewaele 2004 and Dewaele & Planchenault 2006). Two 'misuse' features can be noted: 1) the concurrent display of T and V to address readership; and 2) the use of T in public writing. Although, the latter emerged in the 1980's in French advertising, it still remains uncommon to date (Pires 2009). Every use of T is therefore marked, all the more so when concurrently used with V. Yet, the analysis of data shows a patterned use of T/V by the marabouts:

3) Pour que personne ne te prend ton bien-aimé tout ce qui te tourmente dans la vie et vous saurez le soir que vous aurez votre résultat ce qui ne sera pas tard. L'homme ou la femme parti(E) tu

viens ici – tu vas le(la) voir! Vous qui voulez des **RÉSULTATS IMMÉDIATS**, passez sans tarder !

In order for nobody to take away your (T) beloved one everything that torments you (T) in life and you (V) will know in the evening when you (V) will have your (V) result which will not be late. The man or woman gone you (T) come here – you (T) will see him(her)! You (V) who want **IMMEDIATE RESULTS,** come (V) with no delay!

4) Si ton mari ou ta femme t'a quitté(e), tu viens ici et il (ou elle) courra derrière toi (…) Grossir ou maigrir, si vous vous sentez mal aimé(e), ou si vous vivez seul(e), réussite dans tous les domaines

If your (T) husband or your (T) wife left you (T), you (T) come here and he (or she) will run after you (T) (…) Getting fat or becoming skinny, if you (V) feel unloved, or if you (V) live alone, success in all areas

My findings corroborate those of Pires (2009), who argues that, in flyers where both T/V are displayed, T is generally used when referring to love matters (e.g. a breakup or a spouse's unfaithfulness), whereas V is left for other problems such as weight issues, as in example 4. In the first example, T aims at establishing closeness with the potential distressed reader by framing the marabout-customer interaction as a helper-helped relationship, whereas V is used when describing services provided by the marabout establishing a business-type relationship with his customer (*vous saurez le soir que vous aurez votre résultat* 'you (V) will know (in) the evening when you (V) will have your (V) result').

Of course, because V in French can be both a singular formal term of address or a non-marked plural one, scribers may play with its semantic fuzziness such as below:

5) (..) même si tu as été déçu par un autre medium. VENEZ ME CONSULTER, LA CHANCE VOUS SOURIRA.

(…) even if you (T) have been disappointed by another medium. COME (V) AND CONSULT ME, LUCK WILL SMILE AT YOU (V)

Here, the shift from singular to plural addressee(s) is iconicized by a font change from lower to upper case.

The marabouts' seemingly deliberate choice of non-standard literacy appears at first glance counter-intuitive both linguistically and economically. First, France epitomizes what Silverstein (1996) calls the *culture of monoglot standardization,* where the standard variety is *de facto* the yardstick against which deviations in language practices are measured. Thus, the marabouts' way of writing can be expected to trigger acerbic and derogatory comments and therefore may handicap their business. Second, the lack of striking distinctions between flyers appears to be counter-productive in a highly competitive market where the implicit business rule is to display distinctiveness, if not originality, in order to appeal to potential customers. As noted above, it is precisely because they present linguistic peculiarities and they all seem to look alike, that the marabouts' flyers have become collectors' items for many French people. Unsurprisingly, their seeming linguistic singularity has favored their world-wide circulation outside the specific ecology, the urban settings, they were designed for. Although the flyers' world-wide circulation makes the marabouts and their practices known, it does not necessarily entail economic success.

I submit that marabouts' apparent decision to conform to the same vernacular style of advertisement is part of their attempt to seek legitimacy on the French market of occultism. In a society generally suspicious of foreign occult practices, it is safer to project a collective discourse rather than to display conflicting individual voices. Although the marabouts compete with each other on the same business market, their survival as practitioners also depends on their 'recognizability' as a group, notwithstanding their expertise and authenticity. Therefore, the interdiscursivity found in their flyers can be interpreted as indexing in-group membership. Second, by performing vernacular literacy

they conform to deeply entrenched French stereotypes of Africans as incompetent speakers of French. By performing deviant literacy, they become 'authentic' Africans, and therefore legitimate clairvoyants, through meeting the socio-cultural fantasies and stereotypes of their host country.

This re-appropriation of the linguistic stereotypes and the ensuing social categorizations are very similar to Hall's (1995) description of female fantasy lines. According to her, sex-workers have learned to manipulate female conversation stereotypes, for example, when they use powerlessness forms of women's language, in order to be empowered economically. However, I don't share Hall's conclusion that such practices are both socially and economically empowering for women and bring them money without forcing them 'to participate in a patriarchal business structure' (1995: 208). By recycling socio-cultural stereotypes through their use of linguistic features, both Hall's sex-workers and the marabouts participate in the re-production of the social and moral orders. It is this process that enables French readers to construct the meanings that are found on the Internet. If any actual economic benefits are drawn from their endeavor, they are to the detriment of timeless symbolic benefits, i.e. the end of underlying power dynamics that help shape women's and Africans' socio-economic subordination.

Nonetheless, the example of the marabouts' flyers extends linguists' current reflection on commodification, showing a disjuncture between 'legitimate' and commodifiable language. The marabouts' performed 'non-literacy skills' are turned into a marketable commodity, becoming an "added value for niche markets" (Heller 2010:103). Astroturf literacy, as I call it, is the commodification of grassroots literacy through: 1) a process of erasure of marabouts' diversity and that of their literacy skills; 2) an acknowledgment of the local economy of linguistic resources in which values are allocated to ways of speaking and writing, and thus where linguistic stratification is performed; 3) an awareness of the non-referential indexical ordering in currency in the local ecology (e.g.

Africans migrants are poor speakers of French); and 4) scribers' fitting of readers' linguistic and social expectations. The analysis of language commodification in local economies draws our attention, once again, to the crucial importance of studying language resources in light of the communicative economy in which they are used and from and within which they are made sense of.

The best illustration is found in marabouts' web-advertisements.[18] The striking difference between 'non-standard literacy' performed in paper-advertisements and the unmarked one in on-line publicity tends to corroborate my hypothesis about language commodification in the marabouts' paper-advertising. Although I haven't yet found marabouts who advertise on both flyers and the web, there is no obvious reason to believe that paper- and cyber-advertising marabouts represent two distinct groups of people with the 'traditional' ones on one side and the technology-savvy ones on the other. In addition, hypothesizing that, because the creation of a blog requires technical expertise, the marabouts may have received help and therefore have had their French 'polished' in the process would rest on the idea that one cannot be a marabout and computer-savvy at the same time. Finally, it would equate being computer-literate with being French-literate. Some of us know from experience that this assumption is far from being true.

I suggest that the differential display of literacy competence in the two advertising modes has partly to do with the ecology of signs in which both texts are inserted. Unlike the streets where flyers are distributed, the web is a discursive space where the marabouts are challenged,

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[18] Marabout's web-advertising emerged in France in the mid-1990's. With the development of the Internet in major African cities, it has also spread to countries such as Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. However, because advertisements are written in French, one may wonder to what extent the audience targeted by Africa-based marabouts' is just local. Some cyber-marabouts advertise their services on ready-made astrology websites while others create more or less elaborate personal websites. See for example: http://www.marabouts-voyants-africains.com/

criticized and highly stigmatized. Although maraboutic practices attract a wide spectrum of French customers, the French are generally reluctant to admit consulting or considering approaching marabouts. The mediated communicative platform provided by the Internet is then used by web-users to inquire about maraboutic practices, share good or bad experiences, ask for advice, warn against some untrustworthy marabouts, etc. Reports also abound on marabouts' alleged fraudulent practices, and disparaging remarks are regularly posted on them and their customers, with the latter being ridiculed as naïve and stupid for being lured by such 'crooks' (*escrocs*).

Whereas sameness is sought for in paper-advertisements, distinctiveness seems to be the rule on websites. The less constraining format of the web-page, combined with the use of multimodal semiotic resources (e.g. images, colors, sounds), explains in part the performed singularity of cyber-marabouts. Their individual voice on the Internet is in sharp contrast with the collective one projected in flyers, which is subject to intense criticisms. The display of standard literacy helps disconnect web-advertisements from paper ones, as if to rehabilitate the stigmatized image of marabouts and reframe the French' interpretation of maraboutic practices. Standard literacy appears to be used as a counter-discourse to the readers' widespread derogatory comments on

paper-advertisements. Web-advertising does not compete with that on paper: it is complementary in that both fit expectations regarding public, formal writing (with un-marked literacy for the first one: for instance none of the 36 websites I consulted displays the T form.) and vernacular, grass-roots writing. The latter meets the stereotypes the average French has of African migrants considered unprepared to integrate the host social conventions.

Distinctive claims of legitimacy are also another important feature of the two modes of advertising. They vary from the marabouts asserting their expertise on the flyers to their asserting the power and validity of maraboutic practices on the web. The variation is apparent in the use of interdiscursivity in web-advertising, where, unlike that in the flyers, intertextuality here is realized through links to texts ratified as legitimate source of knowledge. For example, on the opening page of 'the network of marabouts medium clairvoyant' (**http://www.marabouts-voyants-africains.com/**) two links direct web-users to a history of Senegalese maraboutic brotherhoods and that of Muridism, the most influential of them. The links as a reliable source of information are indexed by the author's well-identified French academic institution shown in the document's excerpt below, not mentioning her French-sounding name:

<div style="border:1px solid">

le réseau des marabouts médiums voyants

Le mouridisme
Sophie Bava
Laboratoire Méditerranéen de Sociologie,
MMSH Aix-en-Provence.
copyright : Sophie Bava, REMI
http://remi.revues.org
lames.mmsh.univ-aix.fr/bava%202002%20VEI.doc

</div>

Source: **http://www.marabouts-voyants-africains.com/le-mouridisme.html**

Links have two interrelated functions: 1) discursive: redirecting readers' attention from the image of the marabout to maraboutic practices, a feature found on many of the marabouts' personal websites; 2) social: 'rehabilitating' the marabouts as knowledgeable, pious and morally honest. No data are available yet to evaluate the ways web-users read cyber-advertisements. The rare comments I found only take notice of marabouts becoming computer-savvy without any mention of their literacy skills, regardless of whether or not they are rated positively, as in the following example:

Les Marabouts de l'an 2000
Ce n'est pas parce qu'on est Marabout qu'on ne sait pas se servir d'**Internet** !!

The marabouts of 2000
It is not because one is a Marabout that one doesn't know how to use the **Internet**!!

This lack of derogatory comments may illustrate that marabouts, once again, manage to meet their French readers' frame of interpretation, this time by conforming to expected standard literacy in public writing rather than the expectation of grassroots literacy associated with them from their paper-advertising.

6. Conclusions

Stereotypes of African marabouts pervade the French semiotic landscape as is evident from the numerous comments on and entextualizations of their advertisements one finds on the Internet. I have advocated reading these advertisements in light of the economy of writing and reading in which they are inserted. This economy is characterized as highly normative due to France's "culture of monoglot standardization" (Silverstein 1996) since the 17th century, and as 'monochromic', with a predominantly white/European public space. Through a process of erasure of France's cultural diversity, France and Frenchness are typically, if not exclusively, imagined and projected as white and European. These are among the sociolinguistic assumptions that underlie French readers' entextualizations of marabouts' flyers. Both the marabouts' productions of flyers and the readers' comments give us access to 'linguistic ideology in action', with the marabouts displaying a strong metalinguistic awareness by their very act of writing.

Indeed, a fine-grained analysis and comparison of both paper- and cyber-advertisements show that grassroots literacy is *performed* rather than *endured.* Interestingly, it is by NOT conforming to the French written norms of literacy, for instance through displaying 'poor' literacy skills, that they conform to the latter's widespread social stereotypes about Africans and Africa. Through the display of non-standard literacy emerges a standardized way of *doing being* marabout, at least in the flyers. In other words, highly devalued ways of writing become an asset in projecting oneself as trustworthy clairvoyants.

In *astroturf literacy* as I call it, non-literacy skills become a commodity that helps reap symbolic and/or economic benefits. On the other hand, in recycling socio-cultural stereotypes through their use of specific linguistic features, the marabouts participate in the re-production of the social and moral orders that sustain the French readers' meaning-making. Thus what may be economically empowering at an individual level is symbolically detrimental at a collective level. Socially, it is a no-win situation.

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Superdiversity on the Internet: A Case from China

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Abstract

The Internet is the superdiverse space *par excellence* – a space of seemingly endless possibilities for self-expression and community formation. Yet, online environments are not characterized only by happy heterogeneity: rather, we are able to see multiple layers of normativity in the form of self-, peer- and state-imposed norms. That is, though allowing for the continuous diversification of diversity, the Internet is also a space where diversity is controlled, ordered and curtailed. This paper illustrates these dynamics through an examination of a Beijing-based rapper and his online activities. What emerges from this investigation is a superdiverse as well as normative space where diversity is constrained by a complex of normative struggles, as new forms of meaning-making are accompanied with new systems of normativity. The driving force in such increasingly online normative processes is, instead of locality or localization, the quest for authenticity.

1. Introduction: The superdiverse Internet

The Internet can be seen as a major mechanism in globalization processes and in the creation of superdiversity (Vertovec 2006, 2010).[1] The World Wide Web opens up entirely new channels of communication, generating new linguistic and cultural forms, new ways of forming and maintaining contacts, networks and groups, and new opportunities for identity-making (e.g. Sundén 2003; Baron 2008; boyd[2] 2009). Technology has made it increasingly easy to transgress one's immediate life-world, extend it to and beyond the screen, and engage in local as well as translocal activities through previously unavailable means. All of this cannot be ignored in explaining the world today, and discussions on super-

diversity should take into account the significance of the Internet in complexifying the nature of human communication and engagement with others, of transnational movements and migration, and of social and cultural life in general. However, we should also be wary of too much optimism in this respect. The so-called 'Internet revolution' witnessed in the past three decades or so entices many with the promise of a superdiverse space *par excellence* – a space of seemingly endless possibilities for self-expression, individual life projects and community formation. Prevailing Internet ideologies often present us with an image of an online world saturated with opportunities and aspirations where one is able to indulge in infinite creativity in imagining and constructing both self and other.

While it may be a truism that life on the Internet is overwhelmingly innovative and diverse, it is necessary to recognize that this happy heterogeneity is only part of the scene. Much like in the 'real' world offline, rules and norms are also to be complied with in virtual spaces. As we

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[1] This paper has been written in the context of the research project *Transformations of the Public Sphere* (TRAPS) at the Department of Culture Studies, University of Tilburg.

[2] danah boyd does not use capitals in writing her name and we adopt this preference when referring to her.

have demonstrated elsewhere (Varis, Wang & Du 2011), constraints do not only exist online, but are as important as the opportunities offered by the Internet: they have determining effects on the way Internet users are able to deploy and develop identity repertoires, engage with others and form communities. While enabling continuous 'diversification of diversity' (Vertovec 2006: 1), the Internet is also a space where diversity is controlled, ordered and curtailed. This control involves both explicit forms of normativity – e.g. policies for Internet use as observable in different geopolitical contexts such as China – and more implicit ones that emerge and are negotiated and monitored in online micro practices. Normativity online is no less important or complex than normativity offline; on the contrary, life online is also overlaid by the overwhelming speed and scope of communication as well as unprecedented heteroglossia, all of which further complicates the picture. As both a result and consequence of this heterogeneity and polycentricity, engaging in new superdiverse online environments often requires orientating in specific ways towards much more nuanced and more mixed, scaled forms of normativity than before, as a broad range of scales of orientation influences actions online. That is, in order to successfully communicate and engage in (sub)cultural action, it may be necessary to observe several different layers of normativity through which superdiversity (online) is controlled and shaped by multiscalar forces.

Attending to these dynamics between freedom, creativity and normativity is crucial for obtaining a detailed and nuanced understanding of superdiversity on the Internet; yet the way in which such dynamics work, and, more fundamentally, what forms of normativity are at play and to what extent they organize online practices, still needs to be further interrogated. Attention to the work of order, coercion and power in cyberspace is needed to meet the current agenda for enriched theorization of concepts such as 'superdiversity' and 'globalization' in social sciences (see Blommaert & Rampton in this issue; Blommaert 2010; Blommaert & Varis 2011).

This paper is committed to the tasks outlined above, and we illustrate the exercises of norma-

tivity and creativity on the Internet by examining a case from China[3] – a Beijing-based rapper and his online engagement with the global flows of hip-hop cultures. There are compelling reasons for this focus, the most elementary one being that it offers a rich instance of semiotization (i.e. meaning-creation using various semiotic resources) in online communication and identity-making in the context of globalization. Its use of multi-modal (texts, pictures and acoustics) and multilingual (Chinese, English and Korean) resources and its metapragmatic narrative on cultural practices (how to do hip-hop online), as we shall see soon, are all sites for the production of creativity as well as normativity. Secondly, as 'Internet hip-hop' – both created in online spaces and published online – it brings together two typical forms of superdiversity in the context of cultural globalization. Hip-hop is "the most profound and the most perplexing cultural, musical and linguistic movement of the late 20th/early 21st century" (Alim 2009: 3) with highly heteroglossic, innovative language and other cultural practices (e.g. Alim et al. 2009; Pennycook 2003, 2007a, 2007b), and its emergence online as an Internet subculture hugely expands its potential for superdiversity while at the same time appears shaped by normative forces.

As will surface later, the involvement of the two vehicles of superdiversity in our case (i.e. the semiotization of Chinese hip-hop) does not necessarily lead to doubled freedom and creativity in discursive behaviours. Rather, each opportunity for creativity goes hand in hand with normativity that is multiply layered and operates on different scale levels. Further, our case study assumes an empirical, 'bottom-up' ethnographic approach (e.g. Blommaert 2005; Cora Garcia et al. 2009;

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[3] The case discussed here is based on (Internet) fieldwork by Xuan Wang between autumn 2010 and spring 2011 as part of her Ph.D. research. The fieldwork involved an initial four-month period of online observation of hip-hop related activities surrounding MC Liangliang and his crew (musical performances, blogging, online discussions with fans and 'enemies'). After some online interaction and interviews with MC Liangliang by the researcher from outside China, a focused interview with him was conducted in Beijing in early 2011. This was followed by further ongoing contacts and observations via the Internet.

Hymes 1996; Kozinets 2010; Juffermans 2010; Rampton 2007). This allows us to develop more detailed and sophisticated understandings of this new communicative environment and how it works through the fine-grains of language use by the Internet users, as argued for in the position paper of this issue. Finally, we engage critically with China which, though at times projected as being in the periphery from the globalization centres such as the nation-states in Western Europe, provides an interesting case of engagement with both superdiversity and normativity in the virtual space. China's Internet development is impressive, but is also known for stringent control and censorship, this being a clear example of 'language policing' (Blommaert et al. 2010) from the state level. As our case suggests, however, there is more to it than this: normativity can also be imposed from below – by oneself or one's peers – and this introduces further, intricate local and translocal systems of normativity – the micropolitics of language and/or cultural policing that can be found in all interactions in different social spaces and contexts.

In what follows, we first situate our case through a discussion on the emerging super-diversity on the Internet in China, and hip-hop in China. We will then move on to discuss our Chinese case to illustrate how what could be termed a *global super-vernacular* (i.e. the global hip-hop culture) is creatively employed by a Chinese rapper online, and how this super-vernacular is spoken with an original 'local Chinese accent' – all the while strictly adhering to a certain complex of norms. The complex of creativity and norms will ultimately lead us to the notion of *authenticity* which, essentially, is about discursive orientations towards a specific configuration of norms in order to 'pass as' someone or something (see Blommaert & Varis 2011). Instead of locality or localization, it is authenticity that is the driving force in the superdiverse effort examined here.

2. Internet cultures in China

China became a more active participant in globalization processes two decades ago, and soon became considered a rising member of the global 'network society' (Castells 1996/2000, 2004) via

rapid, large-scale adoption of new technologies, such as the Internet, to facilitate and advance its economic modernization. Today China is home to the largest number of Internet users, or 'netizens', in the world, reaching 457 million by 2010[4], more than the entire population of the United States. Its Internet penetration rate has reached over 34%, topping the world average. All these developments have taken place within the short span of just over a decade. The speed, volume and intensity of these developments are astonishing, even if rather uneven in terms of geographical and social distribution and accessibility (see Lu et al. 2002 for an overview of the Internet development in China).

The impact of 'the spirit of Chinese informationalism' (Qiu 2004: 99) is not, however, exclusively economic. Like in other parts of the world, in China the Internet is playing an ever more prominent role in the transformation of the public sphere and civil society, fostering the formation of an emerging network society and virtual communities, offering new space and resources for transnational and translocal engagements, and giving rise to enhanced social mobility and various empowering political, cultural and personal maneouvres and contestations (see e.g. Leibold 2010; Li 2010; Lo 2009; Yang 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). The scope of opportunities, creativity and freedom introduced and sustained by the Internet is tremendous, even though China also implements explicit regulations on Internet use through heavy censorship (MacKinnon 2008; Qiu 1999/2000). The new opportunities are perhaps most notable in relation to political movements addressing questions such as freedom of speech, citizen activism and democracy in Chinese society (e.g. MacKinnon 2009; Qiu 2004; Schroeder 2005; Yang 2009), not to mention the fast expansion of e-business and consequently booming economic and social infrastructures based on telecommunications (e.g. Liang 2010). The emergence of Internet subcultures is another remarkable signification of globalization and its superdiverse face in Chinese society, es-

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[4] See, for example, a news report (Li 2011) in People's Daily, China's largest broadsheet, on March 30, 2011.

pecially in mediating the global flows of different forms of popular culture, such as movies, fashion and music.

Hip-hop today is a linguistically and culturally superdiverse phenomenon, with local interpretations of the global flourishing, also – and perhaps particularly so – on the Internet. 'Internet hip-hop' is also a good example of an Internet subculture – or, using different terminology, a 'super-group' in Arnaut's terms (see Blommaert & Rampton in this issue) – that brings together great numbers of individuals who via the Internet engage with, circulate, appropriate and modify global hip-hop flows otherwise less visible and accessible for them. This is particularly prominent and relevant in China, as 'Internet hip-hop', known as *wangluo xiha*, occupies much of the hip-hop scene there. While still negotiating its way into the highly normative cultural and social mainstream, the globally available format of hip-hop is spreading rapidly and, primarily, via the Internet among the grassroots Chinese. Even if the visibility of the translocal practices of hip-hop is largely restricted to the online space, the degree of diversification in their uptake in China is extraordinary. Complex translocal, transnational networks are developed, and large numbers of locally appropriated versions of hip-hop begin to emerge on the Internet, varying greatly in terms of language features, cultural styles and political motivations. MC Liangliang (the focus of this study), whose online engagement with hip-hop has gained him considerable credibility among hip-hop and youth communities in China, and connected him to the wider part of global hip-hop flows, is one example of these processes. The translocal flows, thanks to the Internet, also reach marginalized individuals in remote locations, as in the case of a dialect rapper from Enshi – the periphery of globalization in China – that we have recorded elsewhere (see Varis, Wang & Du 2011, Wang 2010). This mobility offered by hip-hop globalization online is also observable in other parts of the world, for instance, in the case of Amoc, the Sami rapper in Lapland of northern Finland (e.g. Ridanpää & Pasanen 2009 and Pietikäinen 2010; Leppänen & Pietikäinen 2010). The opportunities in such

cases are as much about having access to and being able to participate in the global as they are about the appropriation and (re)invention of the local. What is at stake in the mixture of global and local is authenticity – the defining feature of global hip-hop ideology (e.g. Pennycook 2007a).

To 'keep it real', i.e. to be authentic in hip-hop terms, involves the creative blending of local and translocal resources while also orienting towards different normative scales that are brought together at the moment of creation. To 'keep it real' is indeed to speak a 'resistance vernacular' (Potter 1995) that demonstrates rebelliousness and deviation, or creativity by rendering what is global with local features. But creativity is always tied to normativity (how to be authentic and 'keep it real'), and such dynamics are also relevant on the Internet – if not particularly so, because of the reduced prominence of locality in online spaces. Further, even though the Internet has hugely expanded our potential for creativity, normative systems do impinge upon online meaning-making. This, in the case of our rapper in China, also includes the state-imposed control of 'unacceptable' online behaviour by means of content and/or even website removal; that is, the products of one's creativity can even be completely removed should they fail to adhere to the prevailing norms established for online behaviour. The dynamics between normativity, especially in relation to the production of hip-hop authenticity, and creativity will be of central concern in our examination of a 26-year-old Beijing-based rapper and his online hip-hop – i.e. the products of his (sub)cultural activity that he posts online.

3. 'Real hip-hop': A case from China
3.1 Creativity and normativity online
Before entering the world of online Chinese hip-hop it should be observed that posting music and lyrics online is of course not specific to Chinese hip-hop or even hip-hop in general – all kinds of artists all over the world publish their products on the Internet. This has fundamentally changed the economy and distribution of music as such: the world of music has become notably smaller and more accessible in many respects (consider

only the effect of MySpace in the global diversification of the music scene), and it is perhaps realistic to say that music producers independent of big industries can much more easily gain visibility for themselves and speak to audiences otherwise out of their reach. This also means that, despite the control (and homogenizing, de-diversifying influence) of huge industries in the business, the availability of different kinds of cultural products is, thanks to the Internet, more widespread than ever before. That is, the Internet allows for the emergence and visibility of cultural forms otherwise relatively, if not entirely, invisible to audiences and thus facilitates the diversification of culture and forms of cultural production in circulation.

The Chinese case investigated here – MC 良良, or MC Liangliang[5] – is a case in point: we are looking at a rapper now based in Beijing (where he migrated a couple of years ago) who without the Internet would probably have much less visibility, and be able to reach far fewer people[6]. The Internet allows him to post his music and lyrics online and also to embrace a certain kind of identity – to engage in the global hip-hop semiotics in an unprecedented manner. Online environments offer us these possibilities, simply provided that there is access to a computer and an Internet connection. It would be an exaggeration to suggest that without the Internet none of this would happen, or that this rapper in Beijing would not have the global semiotics and cultural flows at his disposal – it is rather that the Internet facilitates all this, and allows for forms of engagement and participation that would not exist without it.

The Internet, of course, is not only a space for unlimited and unrestrained flows. The rules of engagement have (at least in many cases) not been established a priori, i.e. norms are

emergent, and this goes for all kinds of norms – those of communication, (sub)culturalization and identity-making. The fact that in many cases the norms have not been pre-established does not, therefore, mean that there are no norms, but that they are often (re)worked in the process of engagement on online fora. It should also be borne in mind that the global cultural flows within our reach thanks to the Internet are not only liberating and allowing for more diversity, but also provide templates and blueprints for (sub)cultural action, and therefore also constrain online creativity.

Global cultures, codes and flows, however, do not work according to a deterministic logic: they are not swallowed without chewing, so to speak. In this process of 'chewing' the global semiotic resources, potentially very interesting things happen, as 'global' and 'local' resources become creatively blended. As a result, global codes with a local accent appear. Global codes or templates are what we can call *super-vernaculars* – global ways of fashioning identities, forms of communication, genres, etc. recognizable for members of emergent super-groups. These super-vernaculars become recognized *as* certain things because they share certain recognizable features, and through the re-enactment and re-circulation of these, *super-communities* are created and subsequently sustained. To put it otherwise, certain shared indexical orders[7] are acknowledged and recognized as belonging to a certain super-vernacular – for instance, in the case discussed here, that of 'hip-hopness'. These global orders offer different affordances – resources and opportunities for meaning-making – for those appropriating these large-scale scripts and blending them with local orders, and one such affordance is de-globalization. As a result of such appropriations, *dialects of the super-vernacular* appear. This is

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[5] All translations from Chinese to English in this paper are ours.

[6] It is important to note that although we describe Beijing as MC Liangliang's 'base' in the sense of physical location, we regard his hip-hop activities as *translocal* rather than bound to locality (i.e. Beijing) as these activities are essentially Internet-based. The specific relevance of the locality of Beijing is beyond the scope and outside the focus of the present paper, and is addressed elsewhere (Wang 2011).

[7] 'Indexical orders' captures the idea that the meanings attached to semiotic signs (be they forms of language use, pieces of clothing, etc.) are not random, but systematic, stratified and context-specific: we attribute meaning to signs according to conventionalized, normative patterns. For an accessible account, see Blommaert (2005).

what we shall now illustrate through the case of MC Liangliang and his posse.

3.2 MC Liangliang

Let us start with the rapper himself, MC Liangliang, or Liangliang as many of his fans refer to him. This name, as is common for both online and hip-hop names, is of course a pseudonym although, interestingly, 'Liang' is taken from his real name. His name also mixes the global hip-hop English 'MC' with the Chinese 'Liangliang', marking him as a member of the global hip-hop community, and, simultaneously, as a member of a narrower hip-hop niche, i.e. the Chinese hip-hop community. However, what is equally intriguing is that according to Liangliang, he is not an 'MC' in its globally recognized meaning (Master of Ceremony). Instead, he claims that his full hip-hop name is 'Month Catamenia Liang Liang (*yuejing Liang Liang*)'[8]. One way of interpreting this is that the global symbol of 'MC', as part of the hip-hop package, is localized and reinvented by Liangliang for his own purposes, while this shift towards local also involves items that are atypically local (in English) and incomplete (his use of 'month' instead of 'monthly'). This appropriation is about creativity as well as rebelliousness by taking the liberty to reject the global norm and to create something new. The outcome of the new invention, 'Month Catamenia' is also about rebelliousness as the phrase in Chinese (which is also explicitly used by Liangliang in the Chinese version of his hip-hop name) is a culturally sensitive word often replaced with a euphemism. The transgression apparent in the selection of the term iconicizes both the cultural and the counter-cultural sides of hip-hop. Here we already begin to see alignments toward – and resistance against – different sets of indexicalities and markers of identity and identification, and observing MC Liangliang's online presence will take us a step further in seeing how the global becomes enmeshed with the local.

MC Liangliang appears actively on several Internet platforms, primarily the website www.yyfc.com for publishing his songs, and the *Baidu* message board and Sina microblog for chats and blogs related to his artistic work, and other more general topics – that is, to engage with his audiences. He raps both independently and as part of a crew called 乱感觉 ('MessFeel'). Several of the members of this group live in his hometown region in North-Eastern China; so, apart from himself, none of the group members is currently based in Beijing. The collaborative work of composing and performing is therefore done *virtually*, i.e. entirely online, and the group uses QQ (a Chinese programme used for instant messaging, blogging, gaming, etc.) to exchange ideas and inspiration, to relay bits of work or simply to socialize with one another. Their artistic production is, then, essentially a virtual and translocal enterprise.

Such a virtual and translocal enterprise of course implies a number of liberties and gains that can be achieved only through such methods of artistic production. Thanks to the Internet, MC Liangliang and his partners are able to produce and circulate their own music online, without the limitations of time and space and the 'editorial' restrictions (by e.g. record companies) present in 'offline' artistic work. The group is able to collaborate 'off-the-scene', and to create, organize and engage with their peer groups and communities of practice that are either non-existent or invisible in their immediate corporeal world – whether these are people from back home, or elsewhere outside Beijing. The Internet also allows for going with the global flows of hip-hop; in online environments it is easier than ever before to participate in and take influences from the transnational hip-hop scene. MC Liangliang's online pursuits, however, are not only about liberty and chances for participation in global activities, but also about the pursuit of authenticity as a rapper. In this sense, the scene is also one that functions according to certain regularities and normativities.

3.3 The semiotization of authenticity

We shall now move on to examine the first stanza of a song published online by MC Liangliang and his crew to illustrate the points made

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[8] See an online interview with MC Liangliang at http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_5074792a01008o9f.html (last viewed September 9, 2011).

Image 1

Source: **www.yyfc.com**

© www.yyfc.com

Image 2

Source: **www.yyfc.com**

© www.yyfc.com

above, but first a few words about the hip-hop semiotics by which the song is framed. Online, MC Liangliang does not only produce music or lyrics, but also performs the essential identity act of 'being hip-hop'. We can see that his choice of profile pictures on **www.yyfc.com** and *Baidu* message board point to familiar ways of fashioning hip-hop identities. Image 1[9] features a young Afro male, suggesting an alignment with 'hip-hop authority' embodied in 'blackness' – being and doing 'black'. Image 2[10] is different: there we see, in a way, a more 'authentic' image of Liangliang in the sense that this is an actual picture of him. The features of his face are obscured, but the emblematic signifiers indexing 'real hip-hop' are there: he wears a baseball cap and a sport top, both iconic of the globalized hip-hop fashion; the raised middle finger and the cigarette in his mouth point to a particular hip-hop attitude – a certain coolness, rebelliousness and subversiveness – the kind of 'badness' familiar from urban hip-hop scenes. It is also worth noting that the image features his hip-hop name in a particular way, with the English letters 'MC' printed much larger than the Chinese characters '良良': in this way, the appropriation of the global semiotics becomes highlighted. In a way these two images are very different, yet both point to a certain

'hip-hopness', the creation of which is afforded by the different semiotic resources offered by the Internet (creating a profile; using different multimodal means to do this; being creative in doing this, etc.), and based on what MC Liangliang believes hip-hop is about.

Let us now move on to the actual product of MC Liangliang's group, i.e. one of the songs he posted online. The song by MC Liangliang that we use here to illustrate our point is called 中国 HIPHOP – Chinese HIPHOP. This already suggests to us something about the content of the song, as well as the kinds of orders of indexicality evoked in this cultural artifact. Dissecting the title into its constituent parts is quite simple – it consists of two parts, 'Chinese' and 'hip-hop'. However simple this may seem at first glance, these two point to different sets of indexicals, and different layers therein: that of the global phenomenon of – or, the super-vernacular of – hip-hop, as well as its Chinese 'accent'. We shall further delve into these different layers next.

The vocals for the song here are split into two parts, as in the lyrics posted online in written form the first part of them is not included. However, the song can also be listened to online, and in the audio version we can see that the written lyrics provided online do not include everything. Here is the missing part, assisting us in orienting towards the kinds of indexicalities at play here:

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[9] **http://yyfc.iq123.com/1024930** (Last viewed on April 7, 2011).

[10] **http://tieba.baidu.com/i/98805018?st_mod=pb&fr=tb0_forum&st_type=uface** (Last viewed on April 7, 2011).

[chorus] *The real hiphop, the real hiphop*

[Liangliang] *Yea, the real hiphop, Chinese hiphop*

[chorus] *The real hiphop, the real hiphop*

[Liangliang] *Yea, yea, hum*

The first thing to note here is that this is *English* – a resource that can without doubt be recognized as belonging to the global hip-hop vernacular, whether or not we subscribe to the view that the Afro-American format is *the* global format. With the starting lines, we see a move from 'real hiphop' to 'the real hiphop, Chinese hiphop', suggesting that Chinese hip-hop is, in fact, *the real* hip-hop. It might be suggested that there is an interesting contradiction here, as the implication that Chinese hip-hop is the real hip-hop is made by the means of *English* (although here we could also make the assumption that the English part is left out from the written lyrics posted in order to make the song appear more 'Chinese'). However, from the point of view of authenticity there is no contradiction here, as the language of authentic hip-hop is, indeed, English – the super-vernacular that becomes appropriated and 'chewed' here to serve certain purposes.

As for the *written* lyrics themselves, posted online on **www.yyfc.com**[11], we can already make one observation without even reading them, i.e. by simply *looking* at them. Let us have a look.

The observation to be made is that, in the lyrics – which are mainly in Chinese – there are English elements embedded into it. Or, vice versa, it would be equally, if indeed not more, justified to say that the Chinese is embedded into the English, as the global super-vernacular provides a template for the Chinese to appear. In any case, the English elements here are very conspicuous due to the use of capitalized Roman script for writing them. The lyrics are, then, an interesting linguistic mix of different scripts and of Chinese and English, the latter appearing to give the lyrics

中国 HIPHOP
MC 良良

拉开窗帘又看到人群喧嚣的大街
有很多 HIPHOP 泛儿的孩子穿着白色 T恤
都挂着 BLING BLING 一闪一闪亮晶晶
NY 的帽子 白色球鞋 还有雷鬼式的头型

可是 你懂 HIPHOP 吗？BABAY
中国的 RAP 很假 听多了会变傻
大都是四四拍的唱得 好像数来宝
没完没了的双押韵 压得~人想睡觉

喏~~~请把音响关掉 BABY
中国那所谓的 HIPHOP MUSIC 让人听不下
张嘴就吹** 有 AK-47
从上海到北京都运着他们的 KING

**地 中国 HIPHOP 前辈都是害人精
**地 玩儿饶舌的嘴巴没实力
**地 YO 中国 HIPHOP 前辈都是害人精
**地 看到这群伪 HIPHOP 我就想听戏

Chinese HIPHOP
MC Liangliang

open the curtains I see again the crowded noisy street
many HIPHOP styled kids in white T-shirts
wearing BLINGBLING, twinkling and shining
in caps with NY, white sneakers and reggae-fashioned hair

but do you understand HIPHOP? BABAY
China's RAP is fake, you'll become stupid if you listen too much
most of it is 4-4 beat, like shulaibao
endlessly double rhyming beats you to sleep

shhh… please turn off the speakers BABY
China's so-called HIPHOP MUSIC is unbearable to listen to
bragging *** as their mouths open, that they have AK-47
from Shanghai to Beijing, transporting their KING

***, Chinese HIPHOP predecessors are perilous
***, these rappers' mouths have no strengths
***, YO Chinese HIPHOP predecessors are perilous
***, seeing the bunch of bogus HIPHOP I wanna listen to opera

a (Western) hip-hop flavour. Linguistically, English is not the only 'non-Chinese' resource present in the lyrics, though: listening to the song, later on we also hear Korean, rapped by Joonjoon, a Korean-speaking member of MC Liangliang's group. In the written lyrics, however, Korean is not visible, due to the absence of Korean within the repertoire of the person who produced the lyrics in the written form and posted them online, i.e. MC Liangliang. Thus, what is linguistically actually more complex and diverse than this version suggests, and is of course there in the audio version, is reduced in this written online version into a mix of only certain (linguistic) resources due to factors constraining the presentation. It is clear, however, that there is an orientation here towards what hip-hop globally 'really' is about.

We shall return to this issue – i.e. the mix of Chinese, Korean and English – in more detail below, but let us first consider another feature in the lyrics that we can spot simply by *looking* at them: the small asterisks used to mask the 'inappropriate' word 'fuck'. Here we encounter perhaps the most explicit level of normativity shaping the lyrics. Even a less perceptive reader will notice the asterisks that disrupt the otherwise 'normal-looking' hip-hop lyrics – 'normal' in the sense of meeting the expectation we have when we see them, and how they are organized. The little stars, however, are there for the precise function of making the lyrics 'normal', but on another scale: 'normal' in the sense of sanitizing them to be acceptable for the online environment in which they appear.

What the little stars suggest is intervention by the state, mediated by Internet providers – often seen in the case of blogging in China, for instance, as bloggers may find individual (inappropriate) characters censored from their posts within minutes after their publication online, or even automatically censored at the moment of writing due to automatized censoring systems (as was the case with MC Liangliang here). Similar phenomena can of course be observed elsewhere as well (e.g. on YouTube, and also when 'Western' lyrics including what are considered profanities are posted online on certain sites). This is, however, a typically Chinese intervention in the sense that

the realization of norm-imposing (i.e. judgment on what is unacceptable, undesirable) is consistently marked with the little stars and, more importantly, is implemented by *the state*. This clearly illustrates that even in a supposedly free, global online environment, interventions from strictly local powers (in this case the state) do take place. However, we might even suggest that in this online space, the stars even function as adding a further layer of 'hip-hop authenticity' to the lyrics – what the stars cover is the very stuff that makes it recognizable as certain kind of hip-hop, namely, the kind inspired by rebellion and deviation for the purpose of creativity, and consequently authentic as such.

We have seen the imposition of two different normativities already: those of the state, and those of the global hip-hop culture. The appropriation of 'dirty' words (such as 'fuck' which is replaced by asterisks) in the lyrics is of course a feature of the global super-vernacular of hip-hop, and here, in what can be labelled as a local dialect of that super-vernacular, this feature is appropriated and produces an effect of authenticity. Interestingly, although the words cannot be seen here – they can only be heard when listening to the song – and they are replaced by the little stars, it can be argued that not being able to see them online further contributes to the 'hiphop-ness' of the lyrics, i.e. their authenticity: the stars mark something that is outside the established norms, transgressive and deviant, and therefore pointing to the core of what (certain kinds of) hip-hop are about. Two indexical scales (both 'good' and 'bad') and, consequently, two different normativities, are evoked with the same signs.

To return to the mix of Chinese, Korean and English, a number of observations can be made. Both English and Korean hip-hop are, although on different scales and of different value, *transnational global flows*. Both English and Korean also have purchase in the local Chinese scene, and it can be suggested that their value here is purely indexical: they get their value within the local Chinese economy of signs. Korean might seem to have less hip-hop prestige for Western audiences, but not so in China, where Korean hip-hop

is upmarket hip-hop (see e.g. Shim 2006 for a discussion on the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia). The role of English is something more familiar for larger, global audiences: it is the super-vernacular template that is essential in creating hip-hop authenticity. It is also worth noting here that the use of English is by no means random: it is not *any* English that we find in the lyrics, but rather the recognizable hip-hop English – the global elements that are iconic of hip-hop culture. Hence the expressions *hiphop*, *blingbling*, *baby*, *rap*, *NY*: they are part and parcel of what constitutes a core vocabulary of hip-hop.

Hip-hop authenticity is not, however, only about what is there: as Potter (1995: 71, emphasis original) observes, "hip-hop's authenticity, like that of jazz, is continually posed *against* that which it is not". This is something we already pointed to, as the global resources employed ('wrong, bad language') meet a different set of norms (one that disapproves of such language). Another way in which this is visible is the juxtaposition of Chinese hip-hop with more traditional Chinese cultural forms: Chinese opera, and *shulaibao* (a northern Chinese folk theatrical form consisting of recitation accompanied by clapperboard rhythm). Here, the authenticity of hip-hop is contrasted with specific spatial understandings of authenticity: the authenticity of the rapper's region of origin (shulaibao) and of his country of origin (Chinese opera). Thus, in making this Chinese hip-hop song about Chinese hip-hop there are a number of normative levels to attend to: it is acceptable to be 'local' by using Chinese, but authenticity cannot be tied down to local or regional emblematic cultural forms. For authenticity effects, MC Liangliang distances himself from traditional Chinese culture on two levels: the specifically local (shulaibao) and the national (Chinese opera). These cultural forms index tradition, i.e. reproduction of what is already there, and this does not mix well with the new, transgressive, innovative and hybridized hip-hop Chineseness. MC Liangliang's act of distancing himself from both shulaibao and opera in general illustrates the complexity and polycentricity of the scales of orientation here: being an authentic Chinese rapper requires

rejecting both the specifically local shulaibao and the national tradition – that is, tradition on two scale levels – and instead orienting towards the global super-vernacular of hip-hop.

A further normative level we can observe in the lyrics is indeed the metadiscursive level on *what authentic hip-hop is all about*. MC Liangliang makes a clear difference between 'inauthentic' Chinese hip-hop and Chinese rappers who do perform the right moves, so to speak, but are nevertheless not attentive enough to normativity: they dress and talk 'hip-hop', but they are not 'real hip-hop'. The white T-shirts, the bling-bling, the NY caps and the references to AK-47 are there, but it is ultimately *fake*. What distinguishes MC Liangliang and his crew from other Chinese hip-hoppers is perhaps not entirely clear, as in the end the means with which MC Liangliang creates hip-hop authenticity are ultimately the same as the ones he rebukes – the appropriation of the global hip-hop super-vernacular, i.e. the global template with its recognizable features and indexicalities. What is clear, however, is that this is indeed authentic hip-hop: it turns the strive for authenticity into a competition over who is the *most* authentic one, and this is where the 'correct' use of the global template becomes crucial: its appropriation is by no means random, and creativity not limitless. Creative authenticity, online or offline, has to follow certain norms.

4. Discussion

It is time to draw some tentative conclusions about our case here, going back to the points we raised above. As has become evident here and as pointed out earlier by Pennycook (2007a: 103, emphasis original),

"One of the most fascinating elements of the global/local relations in hip-hop, then, is what we might call *the global spread of authenticity*. Here is a perfect example of a tension between on the one hand the spread of a cultural dictate to adhere to certain principles of what it means to be authentic, and on the other, a process of localization that makes such an expression of staying true to oneself dependent on local contexts, languages, cultures, and understandings of the real."

What Pennycook is describing in his analysis of hip-hop is a process of *localization*. Rather than being specifically about *locality*, we suggest that what we have observed here is a project of *authenticity*, involving several normative scales that need to be attended to in order to make the project successful – in order to 'pass as' something. The multi-modal project of authenticity observed here entails different levels of recognizability: it can be recognized as 'Chinese', as 'hip-hop', and, finally, as 'Chinese hip-hop'. Hence, this is not simply about global hip-hop being localized, or local hip-hop being globalized. Ian Condry (2006: 19) made a similar observation in his examination of 'Japanese' hip-hop: "the opposition between globalizing and localizing turns out to be a false dichotomy", as "hip-hip cannot be seen as straightforward Japanization of a global style, nor as simply Americanization." (ibid.: 11). What is at stake here is being 'Chinese enough', as well as being 'hip-hop enough' – attending to different sets of normativities that are essentially about being *authentic* (see Blommaert & Varis 2011). That is, what we see here is not about "the hip-hop ideology of keepin' it real as a discursively and culturally mediated *mode of representing and producing the local*" (Pennycook 2007a: 112, our emphasis). Essentially, what is produced is *authenticity*, and this is done by orienting towards different multiscalar – and hence polycentric – sets of normativities, embracing others and becoming censored by others.

Authenticity is of course very much part of hip-hop discourse in general, and that is something that has already been established by others before (see e.g. Ghandnoosh 2010). As we have seen here, the global template of hip-hop enables new, creative semiotizations of authenticity – it provides affordances for local actors for doing so. In these creative semiotizations, it is the employment of bits and pieces of the global template – the global super-vernacular – that makes it recognizable as hip-hop, whereas the local elements make it locally significant within a particular economy of signs and meanings. As MC Liangliang has helped us observe, cultural processes and artifacts are often complex linguistic and (sub)cultural mixes, employing global super-vernaculars with a local (here Chinese) edge to them. We might even say that the bits and pieces of the global template are purely *indexical* (in our case, indexing 'hip-hopness'), and, as they become *de-globalized*, they enter a different system of signs and help project images of, for instance, globalness and urbanness.

To return to the issue of superdiversity, and conceptualizing it in order to explain the diversification of diversity we witness – and all of it increasingly in online environments – we suggest that (super-)communities of today are not organized around the indexicals of locality, but rather of *authenticity*, and that authenticity revolves around *blending* multiscalar resources in particular ways. The fact that global resources are localisable expands the scope of 'authenticity', and as global resources – the familiar, recognizable templates that we can either embrace or choose to ignore (although more often than not having to opt for the first choice) – become de-globalized, they can be used to creatively make new meanings, new identities and new communities. As we have emphasized already, however, this creativity is not unlimited. We have used the Internet and a specific Internet subculture, Internet hip-hop, here to illustrate our point, but without a doubt our observations can be extended elsewhere. Rather than only *localizing* global flows, there is much more to the superdiverse cultural processes that we see around us.

This has implications for our research agenda, and the questions we ask of our superdiverse research objects. The making of superdiverse realities – the fashioning of identities, the construction of communities and subcultural meanings, the semiotics we employ in order to belong, to be authentic as someone or something – is a normative process: a procedure that involves orienting towards several centres and orders of indexicality. In observing superdiversity on the ground, normativity will have to be on our agenda.

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