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New Chinglish and the Post-Multilingualism challenge: Translanguaging ELF in China

新中式英语和后多语主义的挑战: 超语行动在中国

Abstract: Building on the extensive ELF research that aims to reconceptualise English as a resource that can be appropriated and exploited without allegiance to its historically native speakers, this article explores the issue of English in China by examining New Chinglish that has been created and shared by a new generation of Chinese speakers of English in China and spread through the new media. This new form of English has distinctive Chinese characteristics and serves a variety of communicative, social and political purposes in response to the Post-Multilingualism challenges in China and beyond. I approach New Chinglish from a Translanguaging perspective, a theoretical perspective that is intended to raise fundamental questions about the validity of conventional views of language and communication and to contribute to the understanding of the Post-Multilingualism challenges that we face in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: New Chinglish, ELF, China, Translanguaging, Post-Multilingualism

摘要: 近年来英语作为共同语的研究将语言当作一种资源看待, 认为英语是可以为非母语者利用, 成为他们拥有的资源。本文在此基础上, 对 "新中式英语" 加以系统分析。"新中式英语" 是中国新一代英语使用者通过新媒体创造、传播和共享的语言变体。这种新的英语形式具有鲜明的中国特色, 并以应对中国以及世界面临的 "后多语挑战" 及多种交际、社会和政治目的。本文从 "超语行动" 概念出发, 对 "新中式英语" 进行分析。作为一种新的理论框架, "超语行动" 对传统的语言和交流的概念, 及我们在21世纪面临的 "后多语挑战", 提出了一系列新的问题。

关键词: 新中式英语, 英语作为共同语, 中国, 英语作为共同语, 后多语主义

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1 Introduction

The global expansion of English as a vehicular language for international and intercultural communication has fundamentally challenged the ideology of native-speakerism. English is no longer owned solely by those of the Anglo-Saxon heritage but shared by bilingual and multilingual language users all over the world in different locations and for different purposes. In the meantime, the notion of *lingua franca* has also changed from being a simplified and substandard learner or contact variety of language to a fluid and dynamic form of linguistic creativity whose meaning is negotiated in real-life social interaction as opposed to being given and stable (e. g., Kirkpatrick 2010; Seidlhofer 2011; Widdowson 2015; Jenkins 2015; and many recent articles in this journal). This need to reconceptualise English as a resource that can be appropriated and exploited without allegiance to its historically native speakers is particularly evident in the new forms of the language that have been created by Chinese speakers of English over recent years. As with ELF, an understanding of this phenomenon raises fundamental questions about the validity of conventional views of language and communication. In this article I will explore the issue of English in China by examining what I call New Chinglish, which has been created and shared by a new generation of Chinese speakers of English in China and spread through the new media. This new form of English has distinctive Chinese characteristics and serves a variety of communicative, social and political purposes in response to the Post-Multilingualism challenges in China and beyond. I will approach New Chinglish from a Translanguaging perspective, a theoretical perspective that has so far been used mainly in investigating multilingual practices in educational contexts (e. g., Li 2011; Garcia and Li 2014).

The article is structured as follows: It begins with an explication of the development of Translanguaging as a research perspective, highlighting some of the recent advances of Translanguaging as a theory of language and what it can contribute to the understanding of the Post-Multilingualism challenges that we face in the twenty-first century. It then gives a brief overview of the history of Chinglish. The empirical part of the article focuses on examples of New Chinglish, analyzed from the perspective of Translanguaging. The socio-political context in which New Chinglish emerges is then discussed. The theoretical and methodological implications of the analysis are considered in the concluding section of the article.

2 Translanguaging: transcending boundaries

The term Translanguaging is in fact Colin Baker's (2001) English translation (initially *translinguifying*) of Cen Williams' (1994) term *trawsieithu*, which he created in Welsh to describe a phenomenon he observed in schools in Wales: a pedagogical practice where one receives information through the medium of one language (e. g., English) and gives information through the medium of a different language (e. g., Welsh). It can be practised by both the student and the teacher. And Williams argued that it helps to maximise the learner's bilingual ability in learning. From the very beginning, Williams made it very clear that Translanguaging is not an object but a practice and a process. It is a linguistic practice that involves different languages and language varieties. But more importantly, it is a process of knowledge construction that makes use of but goes beyond individual languages (1996). It concerns effective communication, function rather than form, cognitive activity, as well as language production (Lewis et al. 2012a, Lewis et al. 2012b).

Over the years, Translanguaging has come to describe purposeful switching of language mode of input and output in a variety of "bilingual" classrooms (Lewis et al. 2012a, Lewis et al. 2012b). It is the maximization of the learner's, and the teacher's, linguistic resources in the process of problem solving that attracts bilingual educators and bilingual education researchers, and has been taken up more recently by others working in Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and even English medium instruction (EMI), especially by those who are critical of the traditional monolingual approaches to CLIL and EMI (e. g., Mazak and Herbas-Donoso 2015; Adamson and Coulson 2015; and papers in Doiz et al. 2013 and Fortanet-Gómez 2013). Garcia (2009), for example, talks about Translanguaging as the process of making meaning, shaping experience, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of multiple languages. In Translanguaging, both languages are used in a dynamic and functionally integrated manner to organize and mediate mental processes in understanding, speaking, reading, writing, and not least learning.

Translanguaging as an effective approach to bilingual and other types of language education has been widely accepted (e. g., Canagarajah 2011; Creese and Blackledge 2010; Hornberger and Link 2012). But equally important in Williams' original conceptualization is the idea that Translanguaging is not simply a process that goes between languages (cf. code switching, crossing), but *beyond* languages, i. e., transcending. So it challenges the conventional understanding of language boundaries between the culturally and politically

labelled languages (e. g., English, Chinese). With its emphasis on meaning making and knowledge construction, it also challenges the boundaries between language and other cognitive systems as separately encapsulated systems or modules (cf. the Modularity of Mind hypothesis; e. g., Fodor 1983). It is these two aspects of the concept of Translanguaging that have been developed further in recent years and it is also these aspects that are particularly relevant to the present discussion of New Chinglish.

Burton-Roberts (2004), who works largely within the paradigm of Generative Linguistics, points out an inherent problem with logic of the Chomskyan approach, namely, if Universal Grammar (UG) is supposed to be about all languages as Chomsky clearly wants it to be, then it cannot be conceptualized as a natural, biological, genetic endowment, because the particular languages, as we know them (e. g., Arabic, Chinese, English, Spanish), are historically evolved social conventions; and if UG is about something entirely natural, biological, or genetic, then it cannot be a theory of actual languages that human beings use in society. But the main problem with the generative paradigm seems to be that it sets the discipline of linguistics against the reality of linguistic diversity, a historical fact that has been further enhanced by the globalization of contemporary society.

In a very recent article, Otheguy et al. (2015) urge linguists to re-focus their attention on "idiolect" – a language user's unique and personal language and a mental grammar that emerges in interaction with other language users and enables the person's use of language. Whilst they recognize the socio-political motivations for named languages such as English, Arabic, Chinese, French, or Spanish, they question their value in building a linguistic theory. For Otheguy et al., a bilingual person's idiolect would consist of lexical and grammatical features from different socially and politically defined languages, just as a monolingual's idiolect would consist of lexical and grammatical features from regionally, social class-wise and stylistically differentiated varieties of the same language. What we call Translanguaging is using one's idiolect, that is, one's linguistic repertoire, without regard for socially and politically defined language labels or boundaries.

As I explained elsewhere (Li 2011), my idea of Translanguaging builds on the psycholinguistic notion of *languaging*, which refers to the process of using language to gain knowledge, to make sense, to articulate one's thought, and to communicate about using language (e. g., Lado 1979; Hall 1996; Smagorinsky 1998; Swain 2006; Maschler 2009). In this process, "language serves as a vehicle through which thinking is articulated and transformed into an artifactual form"(Swain 2006: 97). It is also connected to Becker's attempt to move away from language as a noun or something that has been accomplished to language

as a verb and an ongoing process, or languaging (Becker 1988: 25; see also Becker 1991a, Becker 1991b). This notion of languaging has also been invoked as a central characteristic of the use of English as a lingua franca (e. g., Seidlhofer 2011). It is the problem-solving, knowledge construction and mobilization, and learning dimensions of the concept of languaging that attracted me.

In adopting a *Trans* perspective on *Languaging*, I have three further, specific questions in mind:

1. Is language a separate and discrete module in the human mind in relation to other cognitive systems such as memory, attention, emotion, etc.?
2. If the human mind does not divide different languages or between language and other cognitive systems, should not bilingualism and multilingualism research be focused on how language users use the multiple linguistic and cognitive resources available in combination in social interaction rather than on which and how many languages they know and use?
3. What role do sensory and modality processes play in language learning and language use?

According to the "Modularity of Mind" (MOM) theory (Fodor 1983), the human mind consists of a series of innate neural structures, or modules, which are encapsulated with distinctive information and for distinct functions. Language is but one module of the human mind. Whilst theoretically plausible, there is ample neuro-anatomic evidence to suggest that separating language from the rest of the mind is a futile effort as there is no such thing as a language-only neural network. The brain areas that are involved in processing language information are also involved in other, what has traditionally been called "nonverbal" processes. Furthermore, language processing cannot be wholly *in*dependent of auditory and visual processes, just as cognitive processes such as number processing and colour categorisation cannot be wholly independent of language. In terms of multilingual language learners and users, there is increasing evidence that their language experience and cognitive capacity are closely interconnected and mutually beneficial. Language, then, is a multisensory and multimodal semiotic system interconnected with other *identifiable* but *inseparable* cognitive systems. Translanguaging for me means transcending the traditional divides between language and non-language cognitive and semiotic systems.

In our everyday life in the twenty-first century, even if we were categorised as "monolingual" in the sense that we use only one of the culturally and politically named languages in the world (say, English or Chinese), we can hardly survive a minute without employing multisensory and multimodal resources. We rarely get a text message or even e-mail these days without some sort of emoticon, and the language of Emoji – a translanguaged term

itself – seems to be taking over. Many linguists have argued that interaction – mutual activity which requires the involvement of at least two persons and which causes mutual effect – is the foundation of human sociality (Enfield and Levinson 2006), thus moving our analytic attention from the Language Instinct (Pinker 1994) to Interactional Instinct (Lee et al. 2009; Joaquin and Schumann 2013). In the twenty-first century, much of human social interaction is mediated through multimedia technology. The salience of mediated interaction in everyday life helps to remind us of the multisensory and multimodal process of language learning and language use. It is within this context that the idea of the *Translanguaging Instinct* has been developed (Li 2016; Garcia and Li 2014).

Nicholas and Starks (2014) use the heart image that has become an iconic element in expressions of affection for particular cities, for example, "I (heart sign in red) China," to illustrate the interconnectedness of all signs. It can also be seen as a rudimentary example of the process of Translanguaging, where an image of a heart (traditionally understood as a noun) is used in the place in the linguistic construction that is usually occupied by a verb. Yet when the expression is "read out," most people would say "I love China" rather than "I heart China," so changing the grammatical status of the word to which the image is linked, unless it is deliberately nominalised for some humorous effect. As Nicholas and Starks (2014: 9) argue, "examples such as these reinforce the variation and creativity of speakers as they bring together multiple elements of rich and complex communicative resources." Figure 1 is another example of an apparently simpler sign, but one that involves a much more complex Translanguaging process, precisely because the amount

Figure 1: A Translanguaging sign.

of traditional language script is reduced. One needs to know the Chinese national flag in order to understand the sign.

Research evidence shows that children, even infants, have no problem using their multiple semiotic and modal resources to interpret different forms of symbolic references (Namy and Waxman 1998; Plester et al. 2011). Human beings have a natural Translanguaging Instinct, an innate capacity to draw on as many different cognitive and semiotic resources as are available to them to interpret meaning intentions and to design actions accordingly. This innate capacity drives humans to go beyond narrowly defined linguistic cues and transcend the culturally defined language boundaries to achieve effective communication (see further Li 2016).

In addition to the theoretical justifications that I have just outlined, the Translanguaging perspective is also very useful in raising questions and urging us to think carefully about some of what I have been calling Post-Multilingualism challenges. To give just two examples: One of the key challenges of multilingualism in the twenty-first century is how to protect the identity and integrity of individual languages whilst recognizing and promoting the fluidity of linguistic diversity and contact between languages. This is a particularly tough and sensitive question in the field of language endangerment, where tremendous efforts have been made to protect individual languages whilst the sociolinguistic environment is such that there is no monolingual speaker in the community who has ever had a monolingual experience.

Another example of the Post-Multilingualism challenge is that language learners or users increasingly find themselves having to deal with the question of how to express one's cultural values through a language, or languages, that is/are traditionally associated with the Other or Others. In many parts of the world, foreign language education typically involves teaching and learning languages of the "enemy" or "rivals." Learning a foreign language does not mean accepting the cultural values and ideologies that the language typically carries; on the contrary, it often is aimed at achieving a better understanding of the values, ideologies, and practices, in order to challenge them. The Translanguaging perspective does not necessarily give us all the answers to such questions but urges us to think about them carefully and raises our awareness of the Post-Multilingualism challenges.

It is important to emphasize that the notion of Translanguaging is not some fancy post-modernist term to replace traditional terms such as code-switching or language crossing to refer to specific multilingual behaviour. Translanguaging highlights the interconnectedness between the traditionally and conventionally understood languages and other human communication systems. In my view, human beings' knowledge of language cannot be separated from their knowledge

of human relations and human social interaction, which includes the history, the context of usage, and the emotional and symbolic values of specific socially constructed languages. The *trans* prefix in Translanguaging emphasises:

- the fluid practices that go beyond, i. e., transcend, socially constructed language systems and structures to engage diverse multiple meaning-making systems and subjectivities;
- the transformative capacity of the Translanguaging process not only for language systems, but also for individuals' cognition and social structures;
- the transdisciplinary consequences of re-conceptualising language, language learning, and language use for linguistics, psychology, sociology, and education.

Moreover, Translanguaging enables *creativity* and *criticality* in the language user – "the ability to choose between following and flouting the rules and norms of behaviour, including the use of language, and to push and break boundaries between the old and the new, the conventional and the original, and the acceptable and the challenging" and "the ability to use available evidence appropriately, systematically and insightfully to inform considered views of cultural, social and linguistic phenomena, to question and problematise received wisdom, and to express views adequately through reasoned responses to situations" (Li 2011: 1224). Creativity and criticality are intrinsically linked: one cannot push or break boundaries without being critical; and the best expression of one's criticality is one's creativity.

It is important to point out that the act of Translanguaging is *transformative* in nature; it transforms the form, function, and meaning of the sign, linguistic or otherwise; it also creates a space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience and environment, their attitude, belief and ideology, their cognitive and their physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance, and making language use into a lived experience.

3 From Chinglish to New Chinglish

As China is emerging as a new politico-economic world power, the way Chinese people use English is receiving increased attention from tourists, business people, journalists, and not least academic researchers. Headlines in various media outlets include: "China has more English speakers than the US" (*Politifact*, 19 August 2011), "Chinese free-form adoption of English is

happily leading an alternative lifestyle without us" (*Boing Boing*, 8 July 2008; Bamboo Nation, 31 July 2008) and "English is evolving into a language even native speakers no longer understand" (*Wired*, 23 June 2008). This is clearly worrying as Chinglish is threatening not only the purity of English but the global hegemony of the English language. The worldwide reputation, or notoriety, of Chinglish has been given a major boost by the popular books such as Oliver Radtke's *Chinglish: Found in Translation* (2007) and *More Chinglish: Speaking in Tongues* (2009). The Chinese American playwright David Henry Hwang wrote a play entitled *Chinglish* about an American businessman desperate to launch a new enterprise in China and the communication difficulties caused by language and cultural differences; it opened on Broadway in October 2011 and won a Tony Award. Amongst all the attention Chinglish has received, there seems to be an over-emphasis on the form of this variety of English, especially the deficient, inferior, and peculiar forms compared to Standard English, and the apparent communication difficulties such ill-forms may cause. However, as Henry (2010: 672) points out, "It is no coincidence that Chinglish is circulated for both humorous and prescriptive effect at the very time when Western economic dominance in Asia is ebbing."

It is useful to remind ourselves of the history and varieties of Chinglish (see further Bolton 2003; Xu 2010). To begin with, there is a colonial legacy about Chinglish. The term was originally coined to describe Chinese Pidgin English, a modified, some would say corrupt, form of English developed in the seventeenth century in the port cities of China such as Canton or Guangzhou, for use as a trade language between the British and the Chinese. It consists largely of content words and hugely simplified grammar. Here is an extract of a famous textbook of the 1930s teaching people Chinese Pidgin English. And you need to be a Ningbo dialect speaker to read it out properly.

来是康姆(come)去是谷(go)，廿四洋钿吞的福(twenty-four)。
是叫也司(yes)勿叫诺(no)，如此如此沙咸沙(so and so)。
真崭实货佛立谷(very good)，靴叫蒲脱(boot)鞋叫靴(shoe)。
洋行买办江摆渡(comprador)，小火轮叫司汀巴(steamer)。
翘梯(tea)翘梯请吃茶，雪堂(sit down)雪堂请侬坐。
烘山芋叫扑铁秃(potato)，东洋车子力克靴(rickshaw)。
打屁股叫班蒲曲(bamboo chop)，混账王八蛋风炉(daffy low)。
那摩温(number one)先生是阿大，跑街先生杀老夫(shroff)。
麦克(mark)麦克钞票多，毕的生司(empty cents)当票多。
红头阿三开泼度(keep door)，自家兄弟勃拉茶(brother)。
爷要发茶(father)娘卖茶(mother)，丈人阿伯发音落(father-in-law)。

There is some dispute as to who created Chinglish first. Some suggest that it was in fact the British who simplified their grammar and used English words in a way that they thought the Chinese would understand. And the Chinese tradesmen then picked it up from them. Whatever the origin may be, Chinglish has always been considered as an inferior form of English used by the uncivilized and uneducated, a subject of satire, to be mocked. It was also called "Yellow English." The racist connotation is rather obvious.

A present-day version of this contact variety is found in many of the shopping malls in urban centres that are designated to attract foreign tourists, such as the Silk Street Mall in Beijing, as well as in cities like Yi Wu near Shanghai, where thousands of wholesalers deal with foreign tradesmen for what they call "small commodities" like fashion accessories, electronic devices, and decorative items. If you go to one of these places, you are most likely to be invited to "Come look look", and then offered a "Friend Price". Numerals would be expressed individually, often with the assistance of a calculator, so "a hundred and fifty five"' would be read as "one five five". Nowadays, it is not just trade English one hears in these places but also trade Russian, trade Arabic, trade German, trade French, and trade Spanish. The tradesmen and women are often highly versatile and multilingual. Studies of the language practices in these locations can be found in China's State Language Commissions' annual reports – *Language Situation in China* (Li and Li 2013, 2014, 2015).

Another variety of Chinglish is what some call China English, or Sinicized English – the English typically used by the Xinhua (New China) News Agency, in English-language publications such as the *China Daily*, and on China Central Television's English channels. Examples of this variety of Chinglish include: *The Party line is the beacon shining on our work; Development is the hard truth; China lodges solemn representation over Japanese PM's visit to Yasukuni shrine.* This particular variety was once owned by the Central Compilation and Translation Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party, which was responsible for the standard foreign language translations of Chairman Mao's works and all official documents of the Chinese government. Some commentators, like Victor Mair,[1] celebrate the "lively peculiarities" of this kind of Chinglish as they give ELF particular charm. A more common, present-day version of this kind of China English is the direct translations of certain public signs such as the ones in Figure 2. These signs are centrally produced by local authorities, but not dictated by the Party or the national government.

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1 See his Language Log at http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/ (last accessed 4 January 2016).

Figure 2: Examples of public signage in China English.

A related variety of Chinglish that has received a great deal of popular attention is what I call Commodified Chinglish. This is the kind of Chinglish that Radtke's *Found in Translation* books have helped to popularise. Some of its use has an instrumental value as it is intended to convey certain information to English speakers. But a lot of it is "ornamental," born of the belief that English is the lingua franca of coolness. So meaning aside, any combination of roman letters elevates a commodity – underpants, toilet paper, potato chips – to a higher plane of chic by suggesting that the product is geared towards a global market. Most of the examples are results of rote reliance on translation software or dictionaries. They illustrate the pitfalls of technology. In the pictures in Figure 3, the Chinglish image on the t-shirt was never intended for clothing, but ends up there primarily because it has English letters. Jew's ear is a species of edible Auriculariales fungus. The traditional Chinese favorite dish of twice cooked pork in spicy chili sauce becomes "old mother" (a well-known brand of chili sauce and "returns to a pot" (twice cooked) by machine translation.

Until the founding of the People's Republic of China, English was only taught in education establishments in China run by western missionaries. There was no explicit policy on foreign language education in China until 1982, when English became the main foreign language in schools, largely due to its role as a compulsory subject in the national higher education entrance examinations, or Gaokao. Now China has the world's largest population of English language learners in a single nation. Many of them learn English via new media, with the aid of mobile and digital technologies. It is within this context that a new variety of Chinglish, what I call New Chinglish, is emerging. It is a Translanguaging variety of English that has been reconstituted,

Figure 3: Examples of Chinglish for commodification.

re-appropriated, re-semiotized, and re-inscribed by Chinese speakers of English via new media. While having intrinsic connections with the other, earlier varieties of Chinglish that I have just outlined, New Chinglish has its own distinctive varieties. I want to focus here on three of them, namely,

A. New Chinglish with Chinese regional accents and flavour that are mainly comprehensible to native Chinese speakers;
B. re-appropriated English words and phrases that have been assigned Chinese meanings, again mainly comprehensible to native Chinese speakers only; and
C. Shitizen Chinglish – new inventions of English words and expressions with Chinese characters, usually mediated through new social media.

To be precise, (A) and (B) are not examples of ELF but of a variety of World Englishes designed primarily for intra-national use. (C), however, is an ELF

phenomenon to the extent that it is used in both intra- and international interaction through social media amongst Chinese–English bilinguals and can be understood by speakers of other languages.

The data I am drawing on come from a corpus of mainly online interactions. The majority of the examples I use in this article are freely accessible online.

3.1 New Chinglish with regional flavour

Recall that the original Chinglish, or Chinese Pidgin English, was extremely closely connected with regional dialects of Chinese, especially the Chinese dialects of the east and southeast coastal regions of China. This connection between Chinglish and Chinese regional dialects has been exploited most explicitly and creatively in New Chinglish in a series of videos made and put on the Internet by a young man who became known in China as the English Brother, 英语哥. His real name is Zhang Xu, 张旭. He was born in the port city of Dalian in the northeastern Chinese province of Liaoning. He became an overnight sensation in 2012 because of the video he put online in which he spoke English with ten distinctive regional accents, representing ten different areas of China.[2] He later appeared on national TV and was held as an example of someone with perfect mastery of English, to be able to speak it with different accents. But the accents are Chinese regional accents. The English brother, Zhang Xu, cleverly manipulated the various regional accents in his New Chinglish videos. One has to be familiar with how the various Chinese dialects sound in Chinese in order to appreciate his work in English, or New Chinglish. Through a process of enregisterment (Agha 2003, 2005) and reclamation, he has successfully relocated the ownership of this particular variety of English to China.

3.2 Re-appropriated English

The second variety of New Chinglish that I want to discuss is words and phrases that have been re-appropriated from English with Chinese meaning. For example, NBA in New Chinglish has nothing to do with basketball, but is an exclamation which was originally a taboo or swear word, now meaning *awesome*. It is the abbreviation of the pingyin for 牛逼啊 (*niu-bi-a*, cow+cunt+particle PA). Another example of re-appropriated English manipulates direct translation

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2 The link to the video can be found here: http://v.youku.com/v_show/id_XMzgwNjkyMDI0. html (last accessed 4 January 2016).

from Chinese to English, a feature of bad Chinglish of the earlier variety. So *How are you?* and *How old are you?* become to mean *Why you?* and *Why always you?* as they are word-to-word translations of the Chinese phrases 怎么是你? (how + BE + you), 怎么老是你? (how + old + BE + you).

More examples of this type include:

– *You can you up, no can no BB*, meaning 'If you have the ability then you do it. If you don't have the ability, then say nothing.', which is a translation of 你行你上啊，不行别逼逼。
– *You ask me, me ask who?*, meaning 'Don't look at me. I have no idea.', from a translation of 你问我，我问谁？
– *We two who and who?*, meaning 'We are the best buddies.', from 咱俩谁跟谁？
– *I will give you some colour to see see.*, meaning 'I will teach you a lesson.', from 我要给你点颜色瞧瞧！

The last example caused some controversy during US President Barack Obama's first official visit to China in November 2009. A former engineer, Liu Jieming (刘明杰), designed a series of ObaMao postcards and T-shirts, with Obama's head in a Red Army cap and Mao suit and Chinglish slogans and sold them in his souvenir shop in the Houhai area north of the Forbidden City in Beijing. The local authorities were worried that it could be misinterpreted to be racist, because of the reference to colour, and wanted to confiscate them. But it turned out that the American and the international press that arrived ahead of the visit loved them. They bought them in large quantities and put the images on the Internet. Later on, the First Lady, Michelle, posed for photographs in front of these ObaMao souvenirs. It gave a huge amount of publicity for New Chinglish.

Other examples of this type of New Chinglish include very clever play with language. For example, one often sees 3Q being used in digital communication, meaning 'thank you' – the Chinese numeral 3 is read as *san* plus the English letter Q, making it "san q" which sounds very similar to *thank you*.

For most of these examples, one needs to know Chinese in order to fully understand the meanings of the phrases. This presents a potential challenge to Kachru's (e. g., Kachru 1992) three concentric circles model of World Englishes, because the Chinglish we see here is not intended for international communication and the ownership is firmly in the hands of the Chinese speakers (cf. Widdowson's 1997 critique of Kachru's model). Many of them are going through a double or even triple resemiotization process (Iedema 2003) in new cinema, TV drama, tourism, advertising, etc., in China, enhancing their status in society and in people's awareness. Online reports of attitude surveys seem to show that ordinary people in China hold increasingly positive attitudes towards New Chinglish, not just amongst the young and urban elite, but across a much

wider spectrum of Chinese society. The official Chinese media also carry reports that some of the New Chinglish expressions have been included in Urban Dictionary and other western media, suggesting that it is an indicator of the growing power and influence of China in the world (see Li and Li 2013, 2014, 2015). The fact that the examples I discuss in this article are freely accessible online in China also shows that the Chinese authorities are accepting their existence. This contrasts sharply with the fate of Net Chinese, the subversive use of written homonyms to mock or challenge some of the official discourse, e. g., 河蟹 (*héxiè*, meaning 'river crab') for 和谐 (*héxié*, meaning 'harmony') which are heavily censored (Wozniak 2015).

3.3 Shitizen Chinglish

Perhaps the most creative variety of New Chinglish is Shitizen Chinglish, also known as Net Chinglish – a deliberate, subversive creation of new forms of English to express a range of meanings and intentions, but especially their creator's social dissatisfaction. The Chinese media estimates that there are over 500 million netizens in China and up to 200 million netizens may be simultaneously online at any one time. A significant proportion of them mix English and Chinese in their online social interactions, resulting in a vast and growing number of words and phrases that are highly creative. As mentioned above, unlike the fate of the Net Chinese, Shitizen Chinglish has largely avoided official censorship, as the majority of the "Internet monitors" employed by the various Chinese authorities do not understand English. Most of the Shitizen Chinglish cannot be easily analysed within the confines of individual languages, English or Chinese. And concepts such as "hybridity" and "heteroglossia" do not seem to be able to reveal their multilayered meaning and the creative processes adequately either. They transcend languages. They are examples of Translanguaging!

To begin with, the word "Shitizen" plays on the phonological distinction between *s* and *sh*, which many Chinese speakers find hard. Its Chinese equivalent, 屁民 (shit + people), pronounced as *pi-min*, also plays on sound, as the Chinese translation of citizen would be 平民 *ping-min*. Both words express how ordinary citizens in today's China feel about the lack of rights. The Chinese Communist Party's discourse on "harmony" has been turned by the bilingual netizens into *harmany*, as many people felt that the social policies imposed on them brought harm rather than cohesion. The imposition of government policies is often met with silent resistance, but with a stereotypically Chinese smile on one's face. This is expressed in the New Chinglish word *smilence* 笑而不语.

Restrictions on access to the Internet gave rise to the term *innernet* 中国互联网. There are many many others; some could well be well-formed English words:

- *Freedamn* (freedom + damn)中国特色自由 (The Chinese translation that goes with it says 'freedom with Chinese characteristics'.)
- *Democrazy* (democracy + crazy) 痴心妄想 (This is used to mock the so-called democratic systems of the west and in some parts of Asia where certain legislations such as ownership of firearms can be protected due to political lobbying and, in the case of Taiwan, parliamentarians get into physical fights over disagreement.)
- *Gunvernment* (gun + government) 枪杆子政权 (after Mao's famous saying 'Government comes out of the barrel of the gun'.)
- *Goveruption* (government + corruption) 政府贪污
- *Departyment* (department + party) 有关部门
- *Livelihard* (livelihood + hard) 生活 艰难
- *Gambller* 干部 (deliberate ill transliteration of the Chinese term for government officials, *Banbu*.)
- *Foulsball* (foul + football + foul) 中国足球
- *Propoorty* (property + poor) 房地产
- *Don'train* 动车 (deliberate ill transliteration of the Chinese term for speed train, *Dongche*.)
- *Sexcretary* (sex + secretary) 女秘书
- *Stuck Market* (stuck, instead of stock) 股市
- *Chinsumer* (Chinese + consumer) 在外疯狂购物的中国人
- *Profartssor* (professor + fart) 叫兽 (The Chinese translation uses a homonym, meaning crying animal)
- *Togayther* (together + gay) 终成眷属
- *Emotionormal* (emotional + normal) 情绪稳定
- *Halfyuan* 五毛 (This is often used in the phrase Halfyuan Party, referring to an anonymous group of bloggers who are paid by political spin doctors half a yuan [a Chinese Reminbi unit] for saying positive things online about certain events.)
- *Canclensor* (cancel + censor) 审查
- *Circusee* (circle + see) 围观
- *Yakshit* (yack + shit) 亚克西 (The Chinese translation uses the Chinese transliteration of the Uyghur term *yaxshi* (Uyghur: یاخشی), meaning 'good'. It came out of a musical dance programme called Party's Policies Yaxshi, which was broadcast on China's Central Television station during the 2010 Spring Festival. It has been reappropriated to mock the propaganda machinery of the Chinese Communist Party in producing TV programmes to praise the party policies regarding ethnic minority communities.)

- *Animale* (animal + male) 男人天性
- *Corpspend* (corpse + spend) 捞尸费 (referring to the growing cost families have to incur after a relative's death.)
- *Niubility*, also spelt *Newbility*, meaning ability to boast, or formidability, incredibility, or awesomeness. 牛逼 (*niubi* had originally been a taboo term referring to the cow's genitals and used as a verb to mean 'to boast'. Later on, it was reappropriated as an exclamation to mean 'awesome'.)
- *Geilivable* 给力 (to be able to give power – *geili* is Chinese, meaning 'to give power')
- *Antizen* (ant + citizen) 蚁民
- *Stupig* (stupid + pig) 笨猪 (after a popular Chinese phrase 'as stupid as a pig')

When the former Chinese president Hu Jintao used the phrase 不折腾 (*bu zheteng*, NEG. + verb) in one of his official speeches as a warning, 'Don't make trouble or cause turmoil', the Chinese social media went into a frenzy about how best to translate the verb 折腾 (*zheteng*) into English. And the Chinese netizens cleverly manipulated the sound, the letter shape, and the semantics and came up with *Z-turn*, which sounds similar to the Chinese 折腾 (*zhe teng*).

These examples show a mixture of rebellion against authority, expression of dissatisfaction, fun, entertainment, sociocultural awareness, and sheer creative brilliance.

4 Post-modern and Post-Multilingualism challenges in China

So, why is there this surge of New Chinglish? It is important to understand that New Chinglish emerged in the last ten years against a complex background of (i) intensified nationalism in the context of new geopolitics and world order. China's emergence as a new politico-economic world power has been met with hostilities from both the United States and the neighbouring countries in East and Southeast Asia. The Chinese government has manipulated the tensions and conflicts in international politics and encouraged nationalist sentiments amongst its population. (ii) There is a growing dissatisfaction with the rampant corruption at all levels, the abuse of power, pollution, food safety or lack of it, etc. This is a highly paradoxical situation, not uncommon in post-modern societies, where the private citizens are unhappy with what the state provides for them individually in their everyday life, yet ideologically united in national

pride. In fact, what is happening here is that individuals are fighting a battle against hegemony of all kinds and the imposition of power control by the state, domestic or foreign; local, national, or global. It is interesting to observe at this particular historical juncture the simultaneous rise of the sense of nationalism and national pride and the individual's desire for freedom, power, and rights in China.

With regard to language, China is facing a number of Post-Multilingualism challenges:

1. The Chinese government has invested heavily in the promotion of the Chinese language as soft power across the globe, through institutions such as the Confucius Institutes and Classrooms. The propaganda machines have led people to believe that Chinese is the most wanted language in the world now and many ordinary citizens of Chinese take real pride in the increasing influence of their language.

2. Language is also recognised as a key factor in the so-called cross-strait relations between mainland China and Taiwan, and for relations with several key Southeast Asian countries. The promotion of Chinese as a global language has strong political backing from all these regions, albeit for somewhat different motives.

3. There is also a growing recognition of the value of minority ethnic languages in China for cross-border relations, as well as of the value of regional dialects, because applications for UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage recognition can bring significant commercial benefits.

4. In the meantime, China wants to project a modern, sophisticated image on the global stage. Party leaders have abandoned the tradition of speaking only Chinese on overseas trips and even on trips to Hong Kong and Macau. In fact, both the current President Xi Jinping and the Prime Minister Li Keqiang have delivered formal speeches in English on their trips to Hong Kong and Macau and overseas in the last two years, and the Chinese press uses the expression 秀英语, to show (off) English, to describe the events.

5. Information technology and the Internet have had a huge impact on linguistic diversity in China. Many English words and foreign language abbreviations have entered into the daily lexicon of the ordinary people in China (e. g., WTO, CEO, GDP, ppt, NBA), although this has actually caused major public debates and some of the Representatives of the Chinese National People's Congress threatened to sue the compilers of the latest edition of the Chinese Dictionary for violating the Language Laws of China for allowing "non-Chinese" words to be entered as part of the officially codified Chinese vocabulary. To mix Chinese and English together,

especially in the written form, is seen as a particularly subversive act as in the case of New Chinglish.

We should remind ourselves that China has had a very strong and deep-rooted language ideology. The legacy of the First Emperor, who purportedly standardized the Chinese writing system so that people speaking different regional varieties of Chinese would share the same writing system, is evident everywhere. To the Chinese people, the written characters have very special symbolic significance for the nation. In the overseas Chinese diaspora, hundreds of schools have been set up to teach the younger generations of ethnic Chinese to read and write Chinese characters, and parents have told us in our previous studies that they would not regard their children as "real Chinese" if they didn't know the Chinese characters (Li and Zhu 2010). To mix English with Chinese in writing is seen to be particularly subversive.

The Post-Multilingualism challenges to China and the Chinese people therefore are: (i) how to protect and promote the Chinese national language, whilst recognizing the (commercial) value of dialects and encouraging the learning of new (foreign) languages; and (ii) how can one communicate and express one's cultural values through a language or languages that is/are traditionally associated with the Other or Others, often enemies or rivals (e. g., English, Japanese, Russian). These challenges are of course not unique to China or the Chinese. Indeed, they are strikingly evident in discussions of multilingualism and language policy in the European Union with regard to how to reconcile unity with diversity – the need for a common means of communication to serve the first, the need to retain different national/regional languages to serve the second (e. g., Hülmbauer and Seidlhofer 2013). All of us face similar challenges of Post-Multilingualism. To me, New Chinglish is a response to the challenges of Post-Multilingualism. It simultaneously fulfils a number of functions. It shows:

– increased awareness of the rise of China as a global power, and the pride people take in the Chinese culture;
– modernity and aesthetics of cool – as highlighted in notions such as "metrolingualism" (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015);
– rebellion against authority, Chinese or foreign, and any imposition of rule and standard;
– social conscience and political protest;
– global connectivity and imagination – more and more Chinese people want to be citizens of the world and the Internet and new media have provided opportunities for them to feel connected with the rest of the world;
– entertainment and fun;

– socializing and learning – most of the New Chinglish expressions are created by a community of practice, i. e., the netizens who are learning English through new media technology;
– commodification of multilingualism.

5 Conclusion and implications

Post-Multilingualism is not about the co-existence or co-use of multiple languages. It is about the dilemma of protecting the identity and integrity of individual languages whilst promoting Translanguaging practices. It is also about finding ways of expressing one's cultural values and sociopolitical views through a language or multiple languages that are traditionally associated with the Other or Others. New Chinglish of the types that I have discussed in this article is a response to the Post-Multilingualism challenges in today's China, where a deep-rooted linguistic ideology and a rising nationalism are met with a desire for modernity, and increasing dissatisfaction with the current social situation in China. The language variety that was once condemned as a bad, ugly, and counterfeit language, and possibly the worst English in the world (Harris 1989), has been reclaimed as a creative and critical expression of multiple meanings, which simultaneously challenges the world dominance of English of the Anglo-Saxon root and Chinese linguistic purism. It shows the creators' sociopolitical sense and sensitivities. It is full of satirical and subversive potential, as a running commentary on Chinese society. And it has helped to create a Translanguaging Space (Li 2011) where new identities, new subjectivities, and new ideologies are being constituted and reconstituted. This Translanguaging Space created by New Chinglish defies the traditional confines of languages. Even the notions of "heteroglossia" and "hybridity" seem inadequate in describing its multilayeredness – the cultural-historical, linguistic-cognitive, and politico-ideological complexity and significance. It is a Post-Multilingualism phenomenon that transcends language and languages. It is Translanguaging at its best.

The Translanguaging perspective that this article sets out to promote helps to highlight the creative and critical dimensions of this Post-Multilingualism phenomenon by simultaneously considering the structural and cognitive complexities of linguistic multicompetence and the historical, political, and ideological sensitivities and impacts of Chinglish. It connects well with ELF research which, over the last 15 years or so, has shared precisely these concerns (cf. O'Regan 2014). Translanguaging goes not just between but *beyond* the conventional language systems – the *trans* prefix emphasizes its transcending capacity.

It also transforms its users and their subjectivities, creating new spaces for social relations, social structures, and social cognition.

We live in an era of "superdiversity" (Vertovec 2007), and that includes linguistic diversity. Advocates for multilingualism tend to argue that the more languages and language varieties there are, the better it is for society and for individuals. Moreover, all languages are equal and therefore should be protected. The reality, however, is that societies rarely regard all languages as equal, and individuals acquire different languages for different purposes, to different degrees. Notions of mobile and truncated linguistic repertoires have been proposed to try to capture the realities. There are also new linguistic forms, functions, and meanings emerging all the time, often through a combination of elements from different languages across cultural and geographic boundaries, as we see in the case of New Chinglish. They go through a complex process of reappropriation, disinvention, and reconstitution. Many of these emerging varieties are mediated through digital and mobile technologies, resulting in new multimodal signs. All this is happening in the context of intensified contacts and mobility on a global scale. The traditional approaches to multilingualism where societies are encouraged to protect, and individuals are encouraged to learn, different languages seem less adequate for the Post-Multilingualism challenges. The Tranlanguaging perspective does not aim to count how many different languages an individual or a society owns or how well they manage the different languages, but instead focuses on the dynamic process whereby multilingual language users mediate complex social and cognitive activities through strategic and creative employment of multiple semiotic resources to act, to know, and to be. It therefore seems to be a timely and useful approach.

As a new methodological perspective, Translanguaging aims to challenge the One Language Only or One Language at a Time ideologies of monolingualism and linguistic purism that dominate not only the policies and practices with regards to bilingual and multilingual language users, but also the research design in the context of bilingualism and multilingualism research in linguistics, psychology, and education in particular; and to me that is a real concern (see similar points made by Hülmbauer and Seidlhofer 2013). There is a tendency to consider a bilingual's ability to separate and differentiate their languages either in laboratory conditions or in real-life interaction as the benchmark of linguistic competence. The underlying assumption seems to be that if a bilingual speaker cannot keep the languages separate, as in the case of code switching, they are then assumed to have something wrong with them. Bilinguals are still often compared to monolinguals in performance measures. There is now a growing body of research evidence that shows that multilingual practices such as code-switching are highly creative and complex (Kharkhurin and Li 2015) and that

they contribute to the so-called cognitive reserve, which in turn contributes to the cognitive advantages of being bilingual and multilingual. The Translanguaging perspective, as argued in this article, offers a method to analyse the creative aspects of multilingual practices that bring together the structural, cognitive, and cultural complexities into a coordinated whole.

As a new theoretical model of language, the Translanguaging perspective raises new questions about the genesis of language, about language evolution, about language endangerment and protection, about language and identity, about language learning, and about language policy and planning. These are questions that are raised not only by the use of English in China (and whether, as Kirkpatrick [2015] intriguingly asked, it can be characterized as Chinese English or English Chinese), but also by the international uses of English as a lingua franca, and they concern not only academic linguists, but also educators, professionals, and policy makers who are anxious about language standards. The Translanguaging perspective invites new thinking on such questions and opens new grounds for exploration.

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