

Principled Polycentrism and Resourceful Speakers

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A central goal of language education is the development of resourceful speakers, people who have both good access to a range of linguistic resources and are good at shifting between styles, discourses, registers and genres. Communication becomes possible not because we adhere to global or even regional norms, but because language users are able to bring their communication into alignment with each other. Drawing on a series of studies of both online and face-to-face interaction in different cities in Asia, this paper suggests that to understand communication in contexts of diversity, we need to focus less on a supposed shared code and more on the interactions among language resources, activities and space. This in turn suggests that in order to pursue intelligibility in multilingual contexts we need a model of principled polycentrism, not the polycentrism of a World Englishes focus, with its established norms of regional varieties of English, nor the reduced communicative domain of the English as a lingua franca framework, but a more fluid yet principled approach to the diversity of contemporary contexts of communication.

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Speaking the Same

If we all spoke an identical centralised form of English, an international variety we could all recognize and learn, so some would argue, this might make communication in English around the globe easier. Although this has long been the goal of some sectors of the ELT industry, and a model to which many have

aspired, there are several problems with this idealistic goal: Most obviously, it is impossible to achieve – we will never be able to get everyone to speak the same way, even if everyone wanted to in the first place. Of course, the fact that it's not achievable does not mean we should reject it as an ambition since it is still possible that approximating the same target might still be worthwhile. Here, however, another consideration intervenes. Once we accept that it is impossible for everyone to speak the same way, and that ways of speaking English will inevitably be influenced by other languages and cultures, then we need to consider that different ways of speaking English are understood differently from different speaker positions: people who speak related first languages often find the English spoken by those speakers easier to understand than the English spoken by speakers of other languages: German and Dutch, French and Italian, Japanese and Korean, Malayalam and Tamil speakers may find each others' English more readily comprehensible than, say, Vietnamese and Spanish, or Greek and Chinese speakers.

This also brings us to a more general point that once English is spoken with features such as syllable timing, it often appears to be more readily understood than stress-timed varieties. As Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006, p. 406) note in their study of ASEAN speakers, “the avoidance of reduced vowels in unstressed syllables and also the clear bisyllabic enunciation of triphthongs, actually enhance understanding.” Indeed, giving fuller value to vowels rather than using the schwa /ə/ (common in stress-timed varieties of English) appears to render English more readily comprehensible not only among other speakers of syllable-timed varieties of English but also more broadly. Syllable-timed English tends to make vowel sounds more salient and may also appear more like written language, which is frequently the medium through which English is learned: All three vowels of ‘elephant’ or ‘computer,’ rather than just the stressed ‘el’ or ‘pu’, are made visible. More broadly, when we look at questions of intelligibility, it is also clear that there is much more at stake than questions only of phonological or lexical comprehension, since we are often engaged in much wider processes of communication and accommodation.

Choosing which version of English might be used for international

communication is also of course politically contentious. While it might have seemed possible in a previous era to opt for British or American English, shifting global politics make the choice of a global norm more difficult. This is one thing that the world Englishes framework has given us: many Englishes. The recent interest in China English (importantly not necessarily English as affected by Chinese languages but rather English with Chinese characteristics) (He & Zhang, 2010), for example, is part of the new nationalist flexing of Chinese power: We want our own English. Yet one of the shortcomings of the world Englishes framework is that while it has argued against central language norms and posited instead a variety of different Englishes, it has tended to view questions of power and difference only along the polarity between ‘inner circle’ norms (British, American, Australian, etc.) and the rest.

Even after so many years’ work on English varieties, therefore, the focus remains on the differences between the supposed inner circle varieties and their outer and expanding circle variants. Yet all varieties of English are in complex relations of power with other varieties. As Martin (2014) observes, for example, the sociolinguistics of English in the Philippines is far more complex than merely placing it in the ‘outer circle’ as if that explained the many Englishes used there. There are circles within circles in the Philippines, amid questions of access, education, style, disparity and difference (Tupas, 2010). The issue, therefore, is not centrally about how Philippine English differs from American English but how English resources are spread and used and made available or inaccessible to people of different classes and ethnicities across these islands. So any claim to a variety of English, while at one level a defiance of inner circle norms, is also always a political claim in relation to other varieties, and a claim amid competing social, economic and political values.

When we start to consider further what kind of English students might need, we also have to reflect on contemporary multilingual and multimodal contexts of language use. One approach to understanding the complexity of multilingual urban communication is to assume that there must be a lingua franca in order for communication to occur. If a world Englishes framework is unhelpful here since it operates with problematic nation-based frameworks of English

(Philippine or Malaysian or Myanmar English) (Bruthiaux, 2003), a more fruitful way forward may be the English as a lingua franca (ELF) approach (Jenkins, 2006, 2009; Mackenzie, 2014) based on current understandings of general tendencies towards comprehensibility: syllable timing, the use or not of /ð/, the pluralization of nouns not normally pluralized in other varieties (furnitures, kins, researches, staffs), and so on. The idea of *lingua francas*, however, needs some further discussion. The original lingua franca developed among crusaders and traders of different language backgrounds (using vocabulary from Arabic, French, Greek, Italian, Spanish and Turkish) for trading purposes across the Mediterranean region in the Middle Ages. The term *lingua franca* (Italian for “Frankish tongue”) is based on the Arabic use of the term for “Franks” to refer to all Europeans (and thus foreigners: *faranji/farengi*) (Ostler, 2010). The original *lingua franca*, or *Sabir*, suggests, Walter (1988) “served its purpose perfectly in commercial exchanges because of its particular quality that each user thought that it was the other’s language” (p. 216, my translation).

Referring to the current use of English as a lingua franca, Phillipson (2009) suggests a certain historical irony here that the language of the medieval crusaders has now become the term affixed to “English as the language of the crusade of global corporatization, marketed as ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’” (p. 167). Clearly, however, in these current approaches to English as a lingua franca – as a language learned outside the home (Ostler, 2010) or a common language between people who do not share a mother tongue (Kirkpatrick, 2011) – something very different is implied. Indeed, Kachru (2005) has rejected this idea of English as a lingua franca on the grounds that the term is inaccurately used to refer to the use of a language, English, for international communication, whereas the original term referred to an emergent contact language. While there is little to be gained from an insistence on the original meaning of lingua franca, there is nonetheless an important linguistic ideological distinction to be made here (Pennycook, 2012b): If we view lingua francas through the lens of modernist language ideology, where a lingua franca becomes a *learned object*, we have put language as an entity before the process

of communication. If, however, we view a lingua franca as an emergent mix that is always in flux, that indeed should not be predefined as ‘English’ or any other pre-given language, then we can place the processes of interaction before an assumption about the medium.

From Elf to *Bahasa Rojak*

This brings us to several further considerations. Looking back at emergent trade languages reminds us that there is nothing new here. As any history of port cities tells us, this mixing has been going on a long time. According to Tomé Pires, a Portuguese apothecary from Lisbon who, following the Portuguese seizure of Malacca in 1511, spent three years there (from 1512 to 1515)¹, the port was extraordinarily diverse, including “Moors from Cairo, Mecca, Aden,” Abyssinians, people from Kilwa, Malindi, Ormuz, “Parsis, Rumi, Turks, Turkomans, Christian Armenians, Gujaratis” and on through a vast list of people including “merchants from Orissa, Ceylon, Bengal, Arakan, Pegu,” Siamese, Malays, people from Penang, Patani, Cambodia, Champa, China, Brunei, Luzon, and “the Moluccas, Banda, Bima, Timor, Madura, Java, Sunda, Palembang, Jambi, Tongkal, Indragiri, Kappatta, Menangkabau, Siak, Arcat, Aru, Bata, from the country of the Tomjano, Pase, Pedir, from the Maldives” (as cited in Gunn, 2011, p. 168). Malacca in the 16th century was a port that drew traders from across the region, and this diversity, it should be noted, was viewed in more complex terms than it would be following the emergence of the nation state. In her stories of Peranakan (Baba Nyonya) Chinese in the region, Lee (2010, 2014) also testifies to this mixture: “The Baba Nyonya culture is a rare and beautiful blend of many cultures – Chinese and Malay, mixed with elements from Javanese, Sumatran, Thai, Burmese, Balinese, Indian, Portuguese, Dutch and English cultures” (2010, p. 12).

When we ask how communication could have happened in such contexts, the answer is not so much in terms of a pre-existing lingua franca but rather in

¹ My thanks to James McLellan for bringing this to my attention

terms of complex chains of communication and emergent commonalities (of course, the fact that money and goods were involved helped too). Clearly, for the many traders at the time, one had to be resourceful. And whatever language resources were used to buy and sell, barter and trade, it was a *bahasa rojak* or *bahasa gado-gado*². This is why Canagarajah (2007) opts for the idea of Lingua Franca English (LFE) rather than English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), since from this position LFE is emergent from its contexts of use: speakers “activate a mutually recognized set of attitudes, forms, and conventions that ensure successful communication in LFE when they find themselves interacting with each other” (p. 925). LFE is “intersubjectively constructed in each specific context of interaction. The form of this English is negotiated by each set of speakers for their purposes” and thus “it is difficult to describe this language a priori” (Canagarajah, 2007, p. 925). This “translingual perspective” takes “diversity as the norm” and “challenges the assumption of other models of global Englishes that sharedness and uniformity of norms at different levels of generality are required for communicative success” (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 75).

This suggests the need for a much more flexible model for learning English: Far removed from the notion that intelligibility might be guaranteed by everyone speaking the same variety of English, a more relativist or polycentric model appears better suited to intelligibility. Indeed the idea of a model itself becomes quite problematic from this perspective since the moment we turn this into a model, we overlook the question of positionality – it depends on who is talking to whom – and produce a potentially limiting or reduced version of the language. This has been a consistent point of critique against ELF approaches that propose a version of English stripped of various elements, from phonological features to idioms. A polycentric approach, by contrast, suggests that rather than seeking a model of English that assumes that we can accommodate the diversity of English into one framework, we need to turn our

² A mixed language (*Rojak* is a Malay dish of mixed vegetables). *Gado-Gado* (a different Indonesian dish) is similarly used. *Bahasa rojak* is often used with negative overtones but here I want to inflect it with a more positive sense.

focus on how people manage to communicate in contexts of diversity. This is not so much a model, therefore, but a form of *principled polycentrism*, more akin to Canagarajah's LFE than ELF.

At the same time that many questions have emerged about how we conceive of English in the contemporary world, so too have there been many changes to how we conceive of language more generally, and particularly in the field of bi- and multilingualism. A number of researchers have been exploring new terminology beyond bilingualism, multilingualism, code-mixing and the like since these appear to suggest a rigidity of languages, a set of fixed codes that people choose between. García and Li (2014) explain *translanguaging* as "an approach to the use of language, bilingualism and the education of bilinguals that considers the language practices of bilinguals not as two autonomous language systems as has been traditionally the case, but as one linguistic repertoire with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages" (p. 2). Canagarajah (2013) has argued along similar lines for a need to look at *translingual practices* where communication transcends both "individual languages" and words, thus involving "diverse semiotic resources and ecological affordances" (p. 6).

In their studies of mixed language use in Danish schools, Jørgensen (2008) and his colleagues asked similar questions concerning the use of descriptions such as bi/multilingual. "What if the participants do not orient to the juxtaposition of languages in terms of switching?" Møller (2008) asks. "What if they instead orient to a linguistic norm where all available linguistic resources can be used to reach the goals of the speaker?" If this is the case, Møller argues, "it is not adequate to categorise this conversation as bilingual or multilingual, or even as language mixing, because all these terms depend on the separability of linguistic categories. I therefore suggest the term polylingual instead" (p. 218). In a similar vein, studies of urban interaction have led to a focus on *metrolingualism* rather than multilingualism (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010), where diversity is taken as the norm (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2014) and the significant relationship is seen as being between linguistic resources and the urban environment. These different strands of work have all started to question

our assumptions about pre-existing, nameable things called languages. “What would language education look like,” asks García (2007, p. xiii), “if we no longer posited the existence of separate languages?”

Bahasa Rojak and Metrolingualism

In a series of linguistic ethnographic and netnographic studies in different regions of Asia – Ulaanbaatar, Dhaka, Tokyo and Sydney (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014 a, b; Sultana, Dovchin & Pennycook, 2013, 2014)³ – we have been exploring the *bahasa rojak* of everyday communication, or what we have elsewhere called *metrolingualism* (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015) and *transglossia* (Sultana, Dovchin, & Pennycook, 2014). These studies have explored the ways people draw on a range of linguistic resources as they communicate online or go about their daily work. When we look at the many online and media contexts through which people interact, it becomes clear that the potential resources available to people may be extraordinarily diverse. Cultural flows in many regions of Asia frequently involve a complex and diverse array of cultural and linguistic forms and practices that are discussed, watched, taken up and redeployed in daily lives.

When a young Mongolian adult updates her Facebook page with a comment “Ai syopping @ Louis Vitton... güzel çanta” using a Korean English phrase “eye shopping” (window shopping) and a remark in Turkish that they were “nice bags” (güzel çanta), we can of course turn to her own background to explain some of this: Although she grew up in the poor *ger* district of the capital, Altai won a scholarship to a Turkish school (Turkish high schools were established in Mongolia from the mid 90’s and were widely respected for their high quality Turkish and English medium subjects) and later, when studying as an exchange student in Ankara, she sought to overcome her loneliness by

³ In this meta-analysis of these studies I have not provided further details on research methodologies, contexts, conventions and so on. These can be found in the cited papers discussed in this section.

watching Korean TV dramas. Clearly, too, this use of English and Turkish with a largely Mongolian circle of friends on Facebook is largely dependent on their shared background of education in Turkish-medium high schools.

The Facebook posting of another Mongolian participant adds further dimensions to this, however. When Selenge writes “Zaa unuudriin gol zorilgo bol ‘Oppa ajaa ni Gym-yum style’ Guriineee kkkkk” (OK, today’s main aim is ‘Your lady is in the mode of Gym-yum style’. Keep on doing it! Hahaha”), there is more going on (Sultana, Dovchin & Pennycook, 2014). There is the playful reworking of the Korean 오빠 강남 스타일 (Oppan Gangnam style), with its intertextual reference to Gangnam style (modified with ‘gym’ and ‘yum’) and use of Korean ‘Oppa’ (older male/brother) and Mongolian ‘ajaa’(older sister), the onomatopoeic giggling, ‘kkkkk’, popular among Korean and Mongolian online users, and the use of contemporary Mongolian youth slang (‘Guriinee’ - ‘Go on!’; ‘Keep on doing it!’). She is thus drawing on, and playing with, a wide range of linguistic and cultural resources. Of equal importance are the *selfie* of herself at the gym uploaded at the same time, the intertextual references to popular culture, the use of online resources such as ‘kkkkk’ (which also suggests that some claims to a new universality in online symbols may be overstated) and the online community (loosely understood) with which she is interacting here.

Analysis of these online interactions indicates that this heteroglossic language use is by no means limited to mixing identifiably different language resources, such as Bangla, English, Hindi, Mongolian, Turkish, Korean and so on. These young participants take up varied *voices* borrowed from different genres of popular culture. Thus when Ria in Dhaka starts a Facebook posting with: “ouffffffffffff arrey jala jala jala ei ontore arrey jala jala...” she is doing a number of things: she uses particular textual means to emphasize her impatience (ouffffffffffff), uses another written sound (arrey) to show she agrees with an earlier comment and then switches into Bangla song mode (fire, fire, fire, this heart is on fire) with an intertextual reference to a well-known Bangladeshi film and song title (Dovchin, Sultana and Pennycook, in press). This is then taken up by Aditi: “hai hai, pran jaye, pran jaye jaye pran jaye! : P

LMAO! :P” with another written expression of sound (hai hai, expressing surprise or joy), a further takeup of Bangladeshi filmic song (my heart is falling deep in love) followed by a common emoticon (:P) and expression LMAO (laughing my ass off).

While the mixed linguistic resources form one part of this online interaction, equally important are the use of sounds, emotive expressions and references to forms of popular culture, as well as different genres (here love songs). In this example the reference is to Bangladeshi film songs, but elsewhere these young adults draw on Hindi film scripts, Korean dramas, popular music such as Gangnam Style, Sumo wrestling, Pepsi commercials, hip hop and much more (Sultana, Dovchin & Pennycook, 2013). As Dovchin (2011, p. 331) suggests in the context of the takeup of popular music in Mongolia, “new forms of identities are performed through playful interactions and chaotic linguistic practices of urban youth consumers of popular culture.” These online environments help us see how the resources at their disposal are both a product of the interactions between people and part of the larger virtual space in which these interactions occur. Online environments put a range of resources at our disposal (Google Translate being just one) and, unlike face-to-face interaction, can allow time for the gathering of resources while also supplementing the pared down online environment with sounds, songs and expressions.

Such online environments suggest that people may use a pool of semiotic resources that are not necessarily what we would normally consider part of their personal competence. Rather than viewing this virtual space as the exception, I want to argue instead that this sheds light on language use more generally. If we move away from these virtual environments to focus instead on interactions in kitchens, restaurants and markets, we find a further set of dynamics that need to be considered. While the kitchen at the *Patris Pizza* restaurant (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014a) is hard to define in terms of a speech community or a community of practice (neither social bonds nor practices seem consistent enough), this space of interaction nevertheless becomes a site of diverse linguistic and other resources. These are in part a product of the backgrounds of the cooks: two brothers of Polish background and Nischal,

from Nepal, who speaks Nepalese, Bangla, ‘a bit of Gujarati, Punjabi... definitely a lot of Indian’ as well as ‘a bit of Czech and Slovak’ and who claims that the language of the kitchen is Polish rather than English (as the brothers, Krzysztof and Aleksy, claim).

But into this space come other resources: Jaidev, an Indian floor staff drops by to ask for a cigarette from Nischal, an exchange that happens in Hindi and English; Italian words such as *mozzarella* and *formaggio* turn up, not unexpectedly, in the conversations between the cooks; when Aleksy’s Columbian girlfriend calls him on his mobile, a few Spanish words suddenly enter the space to be taken up again by Nischal – *Hola, como estas?* (Hi, how are you?) – as he jokes with Aleksy later. In this busy workplace - criss-crossed by trajectories of people (cooks, floor staff, phone calls), artefacts (knives, sieves, plates) and food (ingredients, cooking, finished items) – a range of linguistic resources becomes available, sometimes unexpectedly, sometimes less so. As we observe the ways in which the activities they are engaged in, the linguistic resources they use, and the space of the kitchen interact, we see constantly shifting configurations of language use that are best understood not in terms of counted language resources but rather in terms of the interactions between tasks, resources and space.

When we look at the interactions that Nabil, the owner of a small bistro in Tokyo, engages in, we find not only that he draws on a wide range of linguistic resources but also that he is engaged in a diverse set of tasks (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014a). Within a short period of time, Nabil moves around the small restaurant floor, negotiating with the chef about the dish, passing between tables and managing customers in English and Japanese (“sorry, gomen nasai” [sorry]), serving food (“hotate no carpaccio” [scallop carpaccio]) while also using the linguistic and culinary capital of French with customers (“voilà, bon appétit” [here it is; enjoy your meal]), before passing on orders for bread (“pain”) and another plate (“encore une assiette”), either side of a direction to another (French-speaking) member of the floor staff to attend to two new customers who have just arrived (“two people, and two people onegaishimasu” [please]).

As he moves between tables, takes orders, delivers meals, directs staff, and manages the restaurant more generally, Nabil is engaged in a range of tasks which cannot be mapped onto the linguistic resources in any discrete, functional fashion. These local linguistic practices cannot be fully accounted for without consideration of the broader picture of how and why particular resources are available in this place, at this time, in relation to these objects. Of importance here, then, are the interrelationships between restaurant multitasking, linguistic resources, and the intricate patterning of movement, activity, and semiotic supplies. Nabil's own personal trajectory and linguistic repertoire (from Algeria to Paris to Tokyo) of course plays a role here, as do the particular customers and staff, the material artefacts and activities involved (the bringing of scallops and bread, and request for another plate), the movement through the crowded restaurant (the layout of the restaurant and the small gaps between the tables), and the other available resources in this space, from menus to food orders, music to wine bottles.

Turning to the context of two busy markets in Sydney (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014b), we also find this complex interplay of language, activity and artefact. As the two brothers Talib and Muhibb negotiate zucchini prices with a customer using English and Lebanese Arabic ("Tell him *arba wa ashreen* (twenty four). I told him. He wants to try and get it for cheaper *Arba wa ashreen* (twenty four)"), the fact that the zucchini they are trying to sell have turned yellow ("*Hadol misfareen. Misfareen hadol*" (These are yellowing. They've gone yellow) requires a renegotiation, especially when the customer of Maltese background recognizes the word for yellow (*Isfar*...we understand *isfar* in Lebanese). As in the Tokyo bistro we can see the importance of activities and objects in relation to the linguistic interactions. It matters that this exchange is happening early in the morning (it's still dark outside) in a section of a huge open market area where many of the workers are of Lebanese background (though not all – their seven employees are of Turkish, Pakistani, Moroccan, Sudanese-Egyptian, Somalian and Philippino backgrounds). Important too are the activities surrounding the buying and selling, loading and shifting of a range of fruit and vegetables. It matters too that the zucchini are turning yellow. And it is also significant that the customer can summon up

some common terms from a shared crossover between Maltese and Arabic.

What starts to become evident, then, is that linguistic resources, everyday tasks and social space are intertwined. The question that starts to emerge in such contexts is how the diverse linguistic resources that are constantly at play, this reservoir of resources in Bernstein's (2000) terms, can be drawn on for varied types of communication in relation to objects, activities and spaces. When a woman selling mangoes at her stall in a different, smaller market insists in Cantonese to her customer 呢呢呢呢...係呀, 係呀.呢個色好食. (Look, look, look... yeah, yeah. This colour tastes good), the mangoes themselves, their colour, taste and smell, become part of the action. And when a young man, who by his account speaks Hokkien, Indonesian, Hakka, Cantonese, Mandarin and English, tells us as he husks corn over a large green bin that 乜都有, 撈埋一齊 (all sorts of languages are mixed together), we are pushed to consider that the repertoires of linguistic resources that people bring from their historical trajectories intersect with the spatial organization of other repertoires, while the practices of buying and selling, bartering and negotiating, husking corn and stacking boxes, bring a range of other semiotic practices into play: yellowing zucchini (down goes the price) and yellowing mangoes (up goes the price), the noise and urgency of market selling, all play crucial roles in how various resources will be used and taken up, and therefore what constitute at any place and time the repertoires from which communication can draw.

Resourceful Speakers

So this brings us back to the way I want to start to think about *bahasa rojak*, *principled polycentrism* and *resourceful speakers*. A range of recent studies of language use in Asia, as well as studies in Europe and North America, have started to question the ways we talk about languages, bilingualism, multilingualism and code switching, thinking instead of language diversity as singular rather than plural (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2014). Language and communication have come to be seen as part of a wider mobilization of

semiotic resources: We use a range of things to communicate and do not therefore need to assume that communication is reliant on people speaking the ‘same’ language (Harris, 2009). Languages start to be seen not so much in terms of systems as in terms of practices, as something we do, not as an object in the curriculum but as an activity. We need therefore to ask ourselves what language myths we perpetuate through the language ideologies we reproduce in our language classes, with our bounded entities, such as French, German, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, Italian, and so on. These language labels are very different from the ways in which languages work. We need to ask ourselves what we mean when we say we’re trying to teach this or that language, between 3 o’clock and 4 o’clock on Wednesday afternoon, and we’ll be getting back to it the following week again because it’s a thing you learn on that afternoon in that way: What myths are we perpetuating about languages?

We do not actually ‘speak languages,’ we are not in fact ‘native speakers’ of things called ‘languages’. Rather, we engage in language practices (Pennycook, 2010), we draw on linguistic repertoires, we take up styles, we partake in discourse, we do genres. Indeed languages can be seen not as pregiven entities but as sets of possibilities that emerge from practices, registers, discourses and genres. From this point of view, we can start to view language education in terms of multimodal semiotics, principled polycentrism and the need to develop resourceful speakers.

This *principled polycentrism* points to the relativity of locality. This is not the polycentrism of a World Englishes focus, with its established norms of regional varieties of English, but a more fluid concept, based on the idea that peoples’ linguistic repertoires “reflect the polycentricity of the learning environments in which the speaker dwells” (Blommaert & Backus, 2013, p.20). It does not mean ‘anything goes’: a *principled* polycentrism suggests we should acknowledge commonalities and shared resources.

When we talk of being intelligible, we have to ask for whom? As (Rajagopalan, 2010) notes, much of the discussion of intelligibility in the context of the global spread of English still posits some undisclosed central norm as the hidden standard by which we judge intelligibility. We have to ask,

instead, for whom is something intelligible? The spectre of mutual unintelligibility that is raised when confronted by divergent ways of speaking needs to take into account for whom such unintelligibility is presupposed. The intelligibility of a Thai businesswoman speaking in English to a Vietnamese small business owner will be different from the intelligibility of a Japanese designer talking to a Colombian clothes manufacturer. The effectiveness of their communication will depend less on their adherence to an international model of English and more on their capacity to use a range of linguistic and nonlinguistic resources and to accommodate to each other.

Developing *resourceful speakers* is surely what we are aiming at in language education. By this I mean both having available language resources and being good at shifting between styles, discourses, registers and genres. This brings Blommaert's emphasis on a "sociolinguistics of *speech* and of *resources*, of the real bits and chunks of language that make up a repertoire, and of real ways of using this repertoire in communication" (2010, p. 173) into conversation with the need to learn how to negotiate and accommodate, rather than to be proficient in one variety of English. Communication may be possible, as Canagarajah (2007) puts it, because people bring their "own strategies to negotiate" between different cultural and linguistic conventions; they "'do their own thing,' but still communicate with each other. Not uniformity, but alignment is more important for such communication. Each participant brings his or her own language resources to find a strategic fit with the participants and purpose of a context" (p. 927). What is important here is the focus on resources and positioning: it is not so much that we need a shared code to communicate but rather that we are able to bring our different resources into sufficient alignment. So an emerging goal of education may be less towards proficient native-speaker-like speakers (which has always been a confused and misguided goal), and to think instead in polycentric terms of *resourceful speakers* (Pennycook, 2012a) who can draw on multiple linguistic and semiotic resources, and accommodate, negotiate and be light on their feet and loose with their tongues, who might have been able to get by in the port cities of old and can still get by in the cities of today.

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