

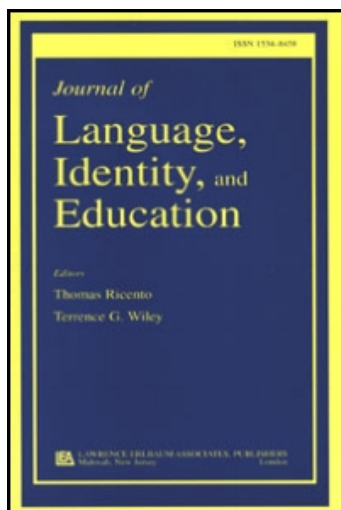
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Language, Localization, and the Real: Hip-Hop and the Global Spread of Authenticity

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This article addresses the relationship between the call for authenticity, its relocation in other contexts, and the use of English. Hip-hop forces us to confront some of the conflictual discourses of authenticity and locality, from those that insist that African American hip-hop is the only real variety and that all other forms are inauthentic deviations, to those that insist that to be authentic one needs to stick to one's "own" cultural and linguistic traditions. The global spread of hip-hop authenticity provides an example of the tension between a cultural dictate to keep it real and the processes that make this dependent on local contexts, languages, cultures, and understandings of the real. Looking at various contexts of localization, this article suggests that the horizons of significance that constitute what counts as locally real open up useful perspectives on the local and global use of languages. The multiple realities of global hip-hop challenge ortholinguistic practices and ideologies, relocating language in new ways that both reflect and produce local language practices.

Key words: hip-hop, multilingual, authenticity, language ideology, identity

INTRODUCTION: HORIZONS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Let us start with two fairly uncontroversial givens: Both English and hip-hop have spread across the world. The first is widely attested, although with equally widely divergent interpretations (Pennycook, 2003a), from Hanson's (1997) review of Crystal's (1997) book on English as a global language, which urges

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English speakers to relax because “English is streets ahead and fast drawing away from the rest of the chasing pack” (p. 22) to Phillipson’s (1999) review of the same book, which warns us that this “celebration of the growth of English” is tied to “an uncritical endorsement of capitalism, its science and technology, a modernization ideology, monolingualism as a norm, ideological globalization and internationalization, transnationalization, the Americanization and homogenization of world culture, linguistic, culture and media imperialism” (p. 274); from a world Englishes perspective on “implications of pluricentricity ... the new and emerging norms of performance, and the bilingual’s creativity as a manifestation of the contextual and formal hybridity of Englishes” (Kachru, 1997, p. 66) to a focus on how a particular community “appropriates English to dynamically negotiate meaning, identity, and status in contextually suitable and socially strategic ways, and in the process modifies the communicative and linguistic rules of English according to local cultural and ideological imperatives” (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 76).

The global spread of hip-hop is also widely attested, and likewise with a range of interpretations, from positions that suggest that hip-hop “is and always will be a culture of the African-American minority ... an international language, a style that connects and defines the self-image of countless teenagers” (Bozza, 2003, p. 130) to Perry’s (2004) contention that “Black American music, as a commercial American product, is exported globally. Its signifying creates a subaltern voice in the midst of the imperialist exportation of culture” (p. 19); from Levy’s (2001) description of hip-hop as “a global, post-industrial signifying practice, giving new parameters of meaning to otherwise locally or nationally diverse identities” (p. 134) to Mitchell’s (2001) argument that “Hip-hop and rap cannot be viewed simply as an expression of African-American culture; it has become a vehicle for global youth affiliations and a tool for reworking local identity all over the world”, (pp 1–2). I will not attempt to unravel these different takes on language, culture and globalization here (for more discussion, see Pennycook, 2007), although I will largely be following the positions of Canagarajah (1999) and Mitchell (2001) to focus not so much on a vision of imperialistic spread as on the ways in which English and hip-hop become intertwined as local cultural and linguistic formations.

Localization inevitably involves complex relations of class, race, ethnicity, and language use. Although a local “Nederhop” movement of Dutch-language rap has emerged in Holland, for example, it features almost exclusively White Dutch youth. While this Nederhop movement can claim greater Dutch linguistic and cultural “authenticity,” it also struggles against a more American/English oriented rap movement by non-White youth (largely of Surinamese origin), who can claim greater global authenticity in terms of the discourses of marginalization and racial identification within hip-hop (see Krims, 2000; Wermuth, 2001).

The hip-hop ideology of authenticity, of “keepin’ it real,” presents a particular challenge for any understanding of global spread. This take on the real is often derided as an obsession with a particular story about violence, drugs, and life in the hood, or with a belief that there is something essentially authentic in the description of brutal lifestyles. The implications of an emphasis on the real, however, need to be taken far more seriously than this. As Morgan (2005) suggests, “the hip-hop mantra ‘keepin’ it real’ represents the quest for the coalescence and interface of ever-shifting art, politics, representation, performance and individual accountability that reflects all aspects of youth experience” (p. 211). Also in the U.S. context, as Perry (2004) argues, keeping it real has many different meanings from “celebrations of the social effects of urban decay and poverty” to “assertions of a paranoid vigilance in protecting one’s dignity,” from an “authenticating device responding to the removal of rap music from the organic relationship with the communities creating it” to “an explicitly ideological stand against selling one’s soul to the devils of capitalism or assimilation” (p. 87).

This emphasis on being true to oneself might nevertheless be seen as the global spread of a particular individualist take on what counts as real. The notion of authenticity, however, can be understood not so much as an individualist obsession with the self but rather as a dialogical engagement with community. As Taylor (1991) argues, authenticity cannot be defined without relation to social contexts and “horizons of significance” (p. 39). Authenticity demands an account of matters beyond the self: “If authenticity is being true to ourselves, is recovering our own ‘sentiment de l’existence’¹ then perhaps we can only achieve it integrally if we recognize that this sentiment connects us to a wider whole” (p. 91). The localization of horizons of significance pulls the ideology of keeping it real back toward local definitions of what matters. Alim’s (2004) discussion of real talk, a hip-hop version of metalinguistic discourse on language and authenticity, captures the ways in which this is both creatively expressive yet discursively aware: “Not only is you expressin yoself freely (as in ‘straight talk’), but you allegedly speakin the truth as you see it, understand it, and know it to be” (p. 86). The question, then, is what is real talk on the global stage?

As Androutsopoulos (2003) suggests, because “hip-hop is a globally dispersed network of everyday cultural practices which are productively appropriated in very different local contexts, it can be seen as paradigmatic of the dialectic of cultural globalization and localization” (p. 11).² 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. This tension opens up some

significant issues for our understanding of language use and localization. Keeping it real in the global context is about defining the local horizons of significance while always understanding the relationship to a wider whole. How does rap undertake “the project of realism” (Krimms, 2000, p. 70), real talk (Alim, 2004) in relation to language choice? Or how is the project of localism enacted? As I argue below, relocalized real talk is about redefining what it means to be local, about opening up new horizons of significance while challenging ortholinguistic practices and ideologies.

THE PROJECT OF LOCALISM: “THEY ARE TRYING TO BE MALAY BOYS DOING RAP”

To use English in popular music is common, suggesting anything from an attempt to enter a wider market, to a belief that English is better suited to carry particular meanings or to perform particular genres. English-language popular music carries both images of modernity and possibilities of economic success. We might therefore be tempted to assume that the use of English is nothing but the creep of global homogenization. When we hear it being used, for example, by the vast majority of singers in the Eurovision song contest—a competition that might, by contrast, emphasize a multilingual and multicultural Europe, with varying styles of music and a range of national or regional languages putting European diversity on display—we may be very tempted to accept the visions of homogenization invoked by Phillipson (2003): “If inaction on language policy in Europe continues, at the national and supranational levels” he warns, “we may be heading for an American-English only Europe” (p. 192). As we shall see, however, the picture is surely more complex than this.

Alternatively, a more liberal interpretation suggests that English is for global communication, financial gain, and international identity, whereas local languages are for local audiences and identities. The vision of complementarity between English and local languages, whereby the former allows communication across boundaries, with the latter maintaining local identities and traditions, supports both the benefits of English as a global means of communication (“international intelligibility”) and the importance of multilingualism (“historical identity”; see Crystal, 1997). As Hogben (1963) once proposed, English can serve people around the world as a universal second language “for informative communication across their own frontiers about issues of common interest to themselves and others” (p. 20), while other languages play a role as “a home tongue for love-making, religion, verse-craft, back chat and inexact topics in general” (p. 20). By relegating vernacular languages to only local expression, however, and by elevating English only to the role of international communication, such a view ignores the many complexities of local and global language use.

To use English lyrics may be to participate in a global subculture that is as opaque to many English users as lyrics in other languages. When Malaysian rappers Too Phat, for example, announce that “Hip hop be connectin’ Kuala Lumpur with LB/Hip hop be rockin’ up towns laced wit’ LV/Ain’t necessary to roll in ice rimmed M3’s and be blingin’/Hip hop be bringin’ together emcees,”³ there are several things going on: On the one hand we have an image of global hip-hop connecting rappers (MCs) across the world, as well as the use of aspects of African American English and references to global fashion items; at the same time this is both a register that is obscure to many English speakers and a rejection of aspects of U.S. “bling” culture. Too Phat may be using a global language, but they are also using a particular register that is local, generational, cultural, and distinctive. They are both participating in and rejecting aspects of the global. This adoption of hip-hop amid rejection of parts of American culture has been widely noted. As Perullo and Fenn (2003) point out, for example, while the take-up of rap by Tanzanians initially involved wholesale adoption of American idioms, from clothes and names, to language and musical style, English-language Tanzanian hip-hop was soon distancing itself from various North American elements because “expression of themes such as violence and vulgar language was frowned upon by Tanzanians and considered disrespectful, while the topic of male/ female relations was more appropriate and found in most Tanzanian music” (Perullo & Fenn, 2003, p. 27).

Senegalese rapper Faada Freddy of Daara J similarly notes that the hip-hop movement in Senegal was at first just imitating U.S. rap, “carry a gun, go down to the streets and try to show that you are someone that you can express yourself with violence.” But eventually they realized that

we should care more about our hunger problems ... we live in a country where we have poverty, power, race ... you know ethnic wars and stuff like that. So we couldn’t afford to go like Americans, talking about “Bling Bling,” calling our pretty women “Hoes” or stuff like that. (Interview, May 3, 2005)

As hip-hop developed in Senegal, they came to realize

that rap music was about the reality and therefore we went back to our background and see that ... OK ... and not only rap music is a music that could help people ... you know ... solve their problems, but this music is ours! It is a part of our culture!” (Interview, May 3, 2005)⁴

Lockard (1998) meanwhile notes a similar set of rejections elsewhere because the “profane bitterness, antisystemic radicalism, and overt sexual warfare” of some forms of rap, particularly from the United States, would be “considered excessive by most Southeast Asians” (p. 263). Singaporean producer and rap artist Shaheed explains, “We don’t want to promote anything that is morally incorrect. That is my principle to me and to them. For me, if I find smoking

and drinking is morally incorrect then I won't include it in my song" (Interview, December 13, 2003). Korean DJ Jun also talks of the move away from American hip-hop themes to deal with "the Korean problem": "It is like, every young Korean man has to join the army, so they are rapping about it" (Interview, November 2, 2003). Similar issues concern Joe Flizzow⁵ of Too Phat:

If suddenly I start rapping about pushing cocaine or rocking bling bling, then ... that wouldn't be keeping it real, but what we rap about is related to stuff that is related to—that we go through. I mean we don't rap about violence. But we talk about issues that are relevant to the Malaysian scene." (Interview, December 12, 2003)

For many hip-hop artists, then, the first move toward localization is a rejection of aspects of rap from the United States and a turn toward overtly local themes. The penalties for not doing so can be, at the very least, mockery by one's peers. Australian rappers Two Up (2002) lay into local hip-hoppers trying to be American in the track "Why do I try so hard?": "Could someone tell me what's up with these try-hard homies?/Their caps are back to front but I think they're phonies." They are lambasted for their clothes and ways of walking: "The triple extra large pants so big they're saggin'/With the pimp limp their leg they be draggin;'" for the places they hang out, the pretence at gangsterhood, and the imitation of all that is American: "The local shopping centre is the place you hang/Chillin' with your bitch and the rest of the gang/Comparing knives, shooting dice and working on your plan/To become an Aussie version of the Wu-Tang Clan;" and above all for being young middle-class kids hanging around stores such as Grace Brothers (a department store in Sydney): "The gangs are gathered round the front of Grace Brothers/Some too young to drive, so they're waiting on their mothers/To come and pick them up and take them home/That's why they've got that flashy new mobile phone." To adhere too closely to an American version of hip-hop can evoke a derisive response.

If one part of localization is the insistence on local themes, it is also common for rap to develop in local languages. Daara J, cited above, are part of the complex Francophone circle of flow (see Pennycook, 2007) and use predominantly French and Wolof. Elsewhere, where the initial take-up may have been in English, this has often been followed by linguistic localization. In Tanzania, "swarap" soon developed: "Swahili became the more powerful language choice within the hip-hop scene because of a desire among youth to build a national hip-hop culture that promoted local rather than foreign values, ideas and language" (Perullo & Fenn, 2003, p. 33). In Tanzania's case, therefore, while hip-hoppers continued to adopt and adapt American styles and lyrics into their music and identity, the meanings of these appropriations changed as they were reembedded in Swarap with different cultural references, social concerns, and musical styles. As Bennett (2000) observes in the German context, "only when local rappers started to write

and perform texts in the German language did their songs begin to work as an authentic form of communication with the audience" (p. 141). Discussing local language use in hip-hop in Zimbabwe, Italy, Greenland, and Aotearoa/New Zealand, Mitchell (2003) comments that "the rhizomic globalization of rap is not a simple instance of the appropriation of a U.S./African-American cultural form; rather, it is a linguistically, socially, and politically dynamic process which results in complex modes of indigenization and syncreticism" (pp. 14–15).

It might be tempting to conclude that the greater the use of English (or other metropolitan languages), the greater the identification with a global, commercial, imported version of rap, whereas the greater the use of local languages, the greater the identification with local politics, music, and culture. Such a formulation, however, misses several layers of complexity that need to be considered. In contexts where English is widely used, it may also already be seen as a local language. Malaysia is an obvious example here, and indeed the language shift in Malaysia appears, at least to some extent, to have been in the direction of English. Despite a ban on radio or television performances, 4U2C and KRU gained reasonably wide support in the 1990s with their Malay-language lyrics attacking pollution, the abandonment of children, alcoholism, and other significant but safe social concerns (Lockard, 1998). Since then, rappers such as Too Phat, using predominantly English, have come to the fore. As Pietro Felix, from their record label Positive Tone, explains,

once KRU did it people started to go "oh OK it can be done in Malay also but look there is an English version. . . . This is cool and it is two Malay guys singing rap—they are not trying to be American, they are not trying to be Black, they are trying to be Malay boys doing rap." So everybody really took to them. (Interview, December 12, 2003)

This does not mean that all rap in Malaysia is moving toward English—local rap artists are using a range of languages, and Poetic Ammo's 1998 CD, *It's a Nice Day To Be Alive*, has tracks not only in English but also in Bahasa Malaysia (the national language), Tamil, and Cantonese—but it does suggest that the use of English or other languages engages a far more complex and dynamic set of concerns than are suggested by a dichotomy between the local and the global.

It is perhaps surprising that the multilingual codemixing so commonly found in Malaysia is not represented in Too Phat's separation of English and Malay. This is, however, more a product of official attitudes to language in Malaysia than of local language use. As reported in the Malaysian newspaper *Star* (2004), following a report that several tracks such as KRU's "Babe," Ruffedge's "Tipah Tertipu," and Too Phat's "Alhamdulillah" were to be taken off the air due to the Ministry of Information's proposed ban on Malay songs containing English words, the Deputy Minister, Datuk Zainuddin Maidin, was quoted as saying,

“The ministry disallows Malay songs that incorporate English lyrics. We are following the guidelines given by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) (the Agency for Language and Literature) which state that songs with inaccurate translations or improper language should be banned.” The use of what is commonly called rojak English or rojak language⁶ (referring to the mixed, salad-like makeup of multicultural Malaysia) has long been a point of contention. As the DBP director-general Datuk Abdul Aziz Deraman said, “Inappropriate usage of Bahasa Malaysia could corrupt the national language. The usage of rojak language could also lower the status of the national language and make the Malaysian race lose its identity and culture” (“In a twist over ban”, 2004). As Pietro Felix of Positive Tone explained, using Malaysian English

would count as slang. . . . Let’s say you say something like—you start off with one verse in English and another verse in Malay, the song will get banned. You cannot have a bilingual song. . . . A lot of Malaysians use the word *lah*: “Come on lah,” “let’s go lah.” When we say something like that, they will ban that song because it is grammatically wrong. (Interview, December 12, 2003)

The use of one language or another therefore depends very much on the local configuration of culture, language, and politics. Although it might be assumed that to choose between Swahili and English in Tanzania, or Chichewa and English in Malawi, for example, is to choose between the local and the global, there is much more at stake here, including the history of language use and colonialism, commercial and aesthetic considerations, and local language ideologies (Perullo & Fenn, 2003). Although Malawi shares some similarities with Tanzania in its colonial past, the linguascape of Malawi is different. A less successfully imposed “national language,” Chichewa struggles for ascendancy over other languages and English. A weaker economy and less-developed infrastructure, meanwhile, make recording in languages other than English more difficult, an important issue in a number of contexts where access to recording industry infrastructure is tied to other forms of linguistic, cultural, and economic capital. Although some Malawian rappers push the use of Chichewa for its greater accessibility to a wider audience, English has tended to dominate. Such questions push us to think beyond notions of “language choice” as if the issue were always one of deciding between discrete languages. As McCann and Ó Laoire (2003) argue, the “simplistic nature of the binary opposition” between Gaelic (personal, lyrical, authentic) and English (practical, plain, inauthentic) popular music in Ireland, constructs both a “reified view of ‘tradition,’ thereby concealing important questions of social context and personal meaning” and “an either/or language choice between distinct alternative entities” (p. 234). Sinfree Makoni and I have argued (Makoni & Pennycook, 2005) that many such notions are based on the metadiscursive regimes that divided languages into separate

and enumerable objects, overlooking the complex ways in which languages are interwoven and used.

Choice of languages also depends on particular identifications with English in relationship to a musical idiom. As Connell and Gibson (2003) observe, English music was popular in the former European Eastern Bloc countries, in part because of the political implications of listening to English/Western music. The use of English by rock groups in the DDR (East Germany), as in Russia and other communist states, was a highly political act (Larkey, 2003; Pennay, 2001). Although, as suggested above, the move from English to German allows for a more local form of expression, the use of English was initially an act of political critique rather than of commercial acquiescence. In a very different context, underground musicians in Indonesia “switched to Indonesian not out of a desire to ‘indigenize’ the music but with the aim of making their music resemble more closely underground music in the West, which they viewed as using everyday language to convey urgent and powerful messages to its listeners” (Wallach, 2003, p. 54).⁷ In this context, then, the use of Indonesian is a form of translocal identification with the use of English elsewhere. If we wish to understand language choice, therefore, we cannot do so without an appreciation of local language ideologies. And as Woolard (2004) notes, “linguistic ideologies are never just about language, but rather also concern such fundamental social notions as community, nation, and humanity itself” (p. 58).

EMBEDDED LANGUAGES “THE MASSES SAID, ‘WE CAN RELATE TO THIS SONG’”

Understanding language use against the background of local cultural and political formations is also a question of taking their local embeddedness into account. The problem for understanding language use and choice has long been what Kroskrity describes as the “surgical removal of language from context” which “produced an amputated ‘language’ that was the preferred object of the language sciences for most of the twentieth century” (2000, p. 5). Music is of course crucial here. As Pietro Felix suggests, “Once Too Phat came out with one song called ‘Anak Ayam’ and . . . there was a layer of traditional music in the background. Everybody knows that song. So immediately the masses said ‘we can relate to this song’” (Interview, December 12, 2003).

As Joe Flizzow of Too Phat explains:

Well I think the way we rap . . . we don’t try to sound American, we just try to sound, well that is just how we sound, you know? But we do like Malaysian traditional instrumentations and elements of Malaysian music, so that is what makes us different, I would say, from other hip-hop. (Interview, December 12, 2003)

Malique explains further:

It's not just the language, it's also the instruments involved . . . We're known for our fusion of traditional elements and we use old folk songs and we add a break beat to it and we rap on top of it . . . Like if you listen to a rap act rapping in a normal beat they would be like "oh, that's another rap act" right. But if you hear a rap like us on "Anak Ayam" you will be like "hey, how come they are rapping in English but the background is, you know, is Malay." So like something they can relate to. Like in Indonesia "Anak Ayam" was pretty big. (Interview, December 12, 2003)

From this perspective, it is not so much a local language, a local variety of English, or references to local contexts that place this track in its particular context, but rather the instantly recognizable melody in the background.

Another Malaysian group, Teh Tarik Crew, rejects the option of local instruments, however, suggesting that what makes their music Malaysian is, as Altimet puts it,

the fact that it is made by us. You see when we were recording our first album a lot of people were telling us . . . we had great pressure to put in traditional elements. Like sounds, whatever. But we don't feel that it is necessary. You don't have to put in traditional sounds to sound Malaysian." (Interview, December 13, 2003)

For them, the use of traditional instruments is to buy into a somewhat stereotypical view of cultural identity. As they point out, if a European or North American band used samples of Asian music, it does not make them Asian. Localization, by contrast, is about talking about local conditions.⁸ This raises some important questions for studies of localization of English. For too long, the focus on world Englishes has looked within languages—syntax, pronunciation, pragmatics—to find aspects of localization: A local English has emerged when it bears significant and regular differences from other varieties. Yet the discussion here raises other issues; language may become local by dint of background music or local themes. Localization may be as much about a language being in the world in particular ways as about changes to that language.

This position forces us to reconsider other ways in which we may think about localization. As Perullo and Fenn (2003) observe in the context of English use in Malawi, it is "radically recontextualised" as terms borrowed from African American English "take on new sets of meanings" based on Malawian interpretations of American inner-city gang life and "contemporary social experiences of Malawian youth" (p. 41). Once the mimetic use of language is seen as *enactment* rather than *copying*, the meanings of language use and choice lie "not in the semantic realm but in a participation-through-doing that is socially meaningful" (p. 45). Issues of language choice and style "constitute aspects of discursive and musical practice in Malawian rap culture that are conjoined via language

ideologies and are not so easily separable in lived experience" (p. 46). It is this participation through doing, this enactment of language in different contexts that may render the apparent mimicry of English language hip-hop a site of difference. If we consider another of Too Phat's tracks, ("If I Die Tonight"),⁹ we find first of all the kind of English localization that is the meat and drink of world Englishes: "If I die tonight, what would I do on my last day/I know I'd wake early in the morn' for crack of dawn's last pray/Then probably go for breakfast like I used to do/Fried kuey teow FAM and roti canai at Ruja's with my boo." Here, with its references to Muslim prayers at dawn and Malaysian Chinese and Indian food, we have a clear localization of English through references to local cultural elements.

Later on, however, as the lyrics move to other things to do on the last day, Malique suggests that he would "line up my shoes one by one/Start with Jordans and end with them Air Force Ones/Put a Post-it on the tongue of each one with the name of each dun/I think I know my homies and who would want which one." Here, with the consumerism, the Jordans, Post-its and homies, we are surely back in the global world of hip-hop fashion. Or are we? Can we in fact judge so easily what is local and global? Although we may be comfortable to say that fried *kuey teow* is a local reference (although even that, when we take into account other diasporas and travel, may not be so clear), can we assume that other references are not local? Or, put another way, when do Malique's Jordans become local? Once we take into account the localization that has already occurred previously, and once we consider enactment and recontextualization as localizing processes, it is far less clear whether we can take this as a global or a local reference, as English as a global language or English as a local language.

If, however, we take onboard the insights of a performative view of language (see Pennycook, 2003b, 2004, 2007), we can start to see such language use in productive rather than reflective terms. Instead of asking whether such a language use is local or not, we can see how it is rendered local in the doing. As Berger (2003) points out,

While language choice in music may reflect prevailing language ideologies, that influence is often a two-way street; that is, rather than merely reproducing existing ideologies, singers, culture workers, and listeners may use music to actively think about, debate, or resist the ideologies at play in the social world around them. (pp. xiv–xv).

This is particularly true of musicians such as rap artists, whose focus on verbal skills performed in the public domain renders their language use a site of constant potential challenge. From a performative point of view, "history, tradition and identity are all performances, all the result of invested actors who position themselves vis-a-vis others in a complex and unfolding reality not of their own making" (Dimitriadis, 2001, p. 11). Rap in Libreville, Gabon, according to

Auzanneau (2002) "is a space for the expression of cultures and identities under construction." Indeed,

It is itself a space creating these identities and cultures, as well as codes and linguistic units that will ultimately be put into circulation beyond the songs. Rap thus reveals and participates in the unifying gregariness of the city's activities, and works with the city on the form, functions, and values of its languages." (p. 120)

From this point of view, what we are seeing here is the production of locality. When we talk of global English use, we are talking of the performance of new identities. Much of hip-hop challenges ortholinguistic practices and ideologies, relocating language in new ways, both reflecting and producing local language practices.

CONCLUSIONS: XENOGLOSSIC BECOMING AND NEW REALITIES

It may be assumed that to use a language such as English is to be immediately engaged in exocentric cultural and ideological practices, whereas local languages are always about tradition and local culture. Once we look at this in the context of cultural practices such as those of hip-hop, it becomes clear that such a formulation is inadequate. Language use in any context is subject to the interpretation of those languages through local language ideologies. At issue, furthermore, is not so much a notion of language choice but rather an understanding of the complex relations between diverse languages and diverse realities. As Jacquemet (2005) puts it, we need to "examine communicative practices based on disorderly recombinations and language mixings occurring simultaneously in local and distant environments. In other words, it is time to conceptualize a linguistics of xenoglossic becoming, transidiomatic mixing, and communicative recombinations" (p. 274). From a performative point of view, language identities are performed in the doing rather than reflecting a prior set of fixed options.

The choices around moves into particular languages may be on pragmatic, aesthetic, or commercial grounds, but they are also political decisions to do with language, identity, and authenticity. Shusterman (2000) suggests that "the realities and truths which hip hop reveals are not the transcendental eternal verities of traditional philosophy, but rather mutable but coercive facts and patterns of the material, sociohistorical world" (p. 73). Hip-hop presents positions on language and reality. Global real talk, which, while easily glossed as keepin' it real, is better understood as a global ideology that is always pulled into local ways of being. By looking at authenticity in this way, we can understand the hip-hop ideology of keepin' it real as a discursively and culturally mediated mode of representing and producing the local. In his discussion of hip-hop in Brazil,

Pardue (2004) suggests that hip-hoppers “view themselves as social agents who force the Brazilian public to be more inclusive about what constitutes knowledge and legitimate perspectives on reality” (p. 412). The language choices hip-hop artists make are similarly about viewing themselves as social agents who force the public to be more inclusive about what constitutes legitimate perspectives on language.

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ENDNOTES

¹The feeling of existence or being. The term is from Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

²My translation from the German.

³Lyrics from “Just a lil’ bit,” featuring Warren G, from *360°* (2002).

⁴Interviews in this article were drawn from the Australian Research Council-funded project Postoccidental Englishes and Rap.

⁵Too Phat are Malique Ibrahim (Mista Malique) and Johan Ishak (Joe Flizzow).

⁶The Malay term *rojak*, meaning mixture or salad—typically a mix of pineapple, cucumber, tofu, and jicama in a *belacan* sauce—is used commonly to refer to the multicultural and multilingual mixture of Malaysian society.

⁷Underground Indonesian rap artists Balcony and Homicide (2003) use both Indonesian and English in their lyrics.

⁸It is interesting to note, however, that Teh Tarik Crew’s name is derived from the popular Malay Teh Tarik (“pulled tea”) served at local tea stalls, while Too Phat use the U.S. term *phat*.

⁹“If I Die Tonight,” featuring Liyana, *360°* (2002). The track is a reference to, and includes a sample from, 2Pac’s “If I Die 2Nite” (1998, rerelease, *Me Against the World*, Jive records).

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