

Linguistic Landscapes on Postcards: Tourist Mediation and the Sociolinguistic Communities of Contact

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Abstract

Alongside 'iconic' sights such as buildings, monuments, artworks, modes of transport, and so on, linguistic landscape is a prime semiotic resources for the tourist consumption of place. Apart from their referential function (naming or indexing places, buildings, institutions, products, etc.), some written signs work as symbolic resources to create a 'sense of place' and as performative displays of identity for their producers and consumers. This paper examines the representation and production of linguistic landscapes on the seemingly banal yet one of the most ubiquitous and powerful of tourist genres – the postcard. I consider five types of interpretive frames for understanding the presence (or absence) of language as part of the postcard image: *caption; greeting; spectacle; language learning and teaching; tourist script*. I conclude with some observations on the sociolinguistic reflexes of mediated tourist–host contact under globalisation.

Keywords

postcards, writing, text–image relation, tourism, globalisation, communities of contact

Studying the tourist postcard

Despite its relatively humble status as a mass-produced, cheap and disposable artefact, the postcard has been an important and influential genre shaping the collective social and cultural imagery of the world since the beginning of the twentieth century. The first Post Cards went on sale and entered circulation in the UK on 1 October 1870. Although in Germany postcards with images of tourist sites appeared much earlier, in the USA it was not until 1893 that images were allowed to be added to the cards, and the UK followed suit a year later, although at that time they had to share space with the messages written by the senders. Finally, in 1902 in the UK and in 1907 in the USA, the restriction on message writing on the 'back' of the card, up until then reserved for the recipient's address, was lifted freeing the entire surface on the 'front' of the card for pictorial use (Phillips, 2000).

The fast rise of the postcard was quite astounding with over 880 million cards posted in Britain in 1914 (Evans and Richards, 1980, cited in Pritchard and Morgan, 2005). With up to five deliveries per day, postcards were used largely to 'keep in touch' and make quick social arrangements with one's family and friends living in close

vicinity. As Phillips (2000: 13) observes, ‘it is not uncommon to find messages written at lunchtime to say the writer will be late home for tea’.

With the telephone gradually taking over this social function, and due to the ever-growing democratisation of mobility, postcards came to be predominantly associated with mass travel. For Lury (1997), postcards, alongside other mass-produced, ‘found’ and ‘incidental’ items such as tourist photographs, souvenirs, mementos, shells and pebbles from the beach, tickets, matchboxes, and so on, belong to what she calls *tripper-objects*: ‘objects whose travelling is teleologically determined by their final resting place, as something to be brought home’ (: 79). These are objects whose meaning is intimately linked to their trajectories and ‘displacement’, in contrast to *traveller-objects*, whose meaning as indexes of specific locations and places is immanent, or at least it is meant to be immanent. Such items, for example artworks, handicrafts, and other objects of national, historical, or cultural significance do not usually travel, and if they do, they may be subject to prolonged legal disputes (Lury’s example is the Elgin Marbles). Normally, traveller-objects stay still and we travel to them, although their images frequently move (e.g. as reproductions on postcards).¹

Postcards, together with a myriad of other tourist texts, such as tourist brochures, guidebooks, newspaper travelogues, TV holiday shows, etc. are part of the global semioscape (Thurlow and Aiello, 2007); they not only entice travel but also allow tourists to ‘iconise’ or ‘sacralize’ (cf. MacCannell, 1999 [1976]) and ‘pre-visualise’ their destinations before they set off on their journeys (cf. Löfgren, 1986; Urry, 2002 [1990]; de Botton, 2002; Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010). The relative power of postcards (and other, however ‘trivial’ or ephemeral tourist texts) to shape collective ways of imagining people and places, to create a ‘sense of place’ (Rose, 1995), or to construct ‘the viewer’s cultural discourse’ of place (Edwards, 1996: 200) has given rise to numerous studies of postcard imagery (e.g. Löfgren, 1986; Schor, 1992; Whittaker, 2000; Markwick, 2001), especially in relation to the representations of the local ‘Other’ (e.g. Albers and James, 1983; Edwards, 1996; Moors, 2003; Pritchard and Morgan, 2005; Thurlow et al., 2005). The preponderance of studies of ‘ethnic’ postcards, over those depicting landscapes, seascapes (the ubiquitous beach), cityscapes, different modes of transport, wildlife, and so on, is probably driven by the uniquely political sensitivity of ‘people’ postcards, and the objectifying, disempowering, appropriating or ridiculing (as in the case of ‘comic’ postcards) gaze of the tourist that they afford in the act of mediation and commodification of national, ethnic or cultural identities.

This paper examines another, relatively understudied aspect of postcard imagery – inscriptions accompanying postcard images. While postcard messages written by tourists have received considerable attention (e.g. Kennedy, 1995, 2005; Östman, 2004; Rogan, 2005; Gillen and Hall, 2010a, b; Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010, Chapter 3), relatively little attention has been given to the written text appearing as part of the original design of the card’s image, although Pritchard and Morgan (2005) do provide interesting examples of the use of (mock) Welsh and Welsh English in captions, dialogues and Welsh place-names in Edwardian comic postcards ridiculing and deriding the linguistic codes and their speakers (see also Hall and Gillen, 2007). However, given their truly multimodal (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001) character, postcards deserve to be studied not ‘simply’ as visual but also linguistic items. For example, Pavlenko (2010) includes inscriptions on postcards from Kyiv/Kiev as one of the data sources for her historical sketch of the

changing linguistic landscape of the city. Thus, this paper considers the text–image relation on postcards as a means of creating multilingual tourist landscapes – ways of seeing tourist destinations shaped in part by their *linguascape* (Jaworski et al. 2003), the sounds and visual representations of special or unique language codes and varieties (accents, dialects) often used for symbolic purposes, or in ways that Coupland and Garrett (2010) refer to as *the reflexive cultural frame* and *the heritage frame* for linguistic landscapes.

Unless otherwise noted, I am primarily concerned here with photography-based postcards. I specifically exclude ‘comic’ postcards (although the tenor of some of my examples is humorous or light-hearted), and greeting cards (cf. Jaffe, 1999). In the course of my analysis, I will orient to a few other features of the graphic design on postcards, such as framing lines, national emblems and symbols, e.g. maps, flags, coats of arms, plants, animals, and so on.

Text and image

I organise my analysis in terms of five principal functions of writing on postcards and its relation to the accompanying image, or six *interpretive frames* (Goffman, 1974; see Jaworski and Yeung, 2010 for discussion of interpretive frames in linguistic landscape research): *caption*; *greeting*; *spectacle*; *language learning and teaching*; *tourist script*. These categories are not meant as exhaustive and they overlap significantly as writing on the postcard ‘front’ may simultaneously perform several different functions, or function within different ‘interpretive frames’. Its ‘meaning’ depends on the links drawn between the text and other depicted images or graphics, and it can be further ‘annotated’ by the tourist sending the postcard ‘home’.

However, I start by acknowledging a vast number of postcards which do not include any linguistic text on their fronts. These are images typically depicting immediately recognisable, ‘iconic’ sites such as the Eiffel Tower or the New York skyline, the beach (or *a beach*), as well as less iconic landscapes, cityscapes, images of wildlife and people typical to specific locales. Most such postcards, whether depicting well- or little-known locations (the latter also known as ‘boring postcards, cf. Parr 1999, 2000), have captions printed on the side reserved for the ‘tourist message’, alongside contact details of the production company, the photographer, space for address, and so on. The content and design of the postcards’ ‘backs’ may be quite complex, although due to limitations of space, they will be considered here only marginally. For the time being, suffice it to say that information in captions printed on the reverse side is often crucial for indexing and disambiguating the images and adding ‘connotative’ meaning to the locations, people or objects represented on postcards (cf. Thurlow et al., 2005).

1. Caption

Caption is probably the most typical function of writing on postcards. In Figure 1, a postcard from London consists of a collage of 13 separate images, one large in the middle surrounded by the remaining twelve, each a quarter of the central image in size. The postcard’s caption ‘WONDERFUL LONDON’ appears in block, yellow and red letters, superimposed at the bottom of the central image. The grid-like pattern in which all the photographs are arranged provides space for their individual captions: ‘Royal Coach &

Pair In The Mall', 'Harrods – Knightsbridge', 'Sir Winston Churchill Statue', 'Sphinx – London Eye', 'Royal Albert Hall', 'Carnaby Street', 'Antique Market', 'Chinatown', 'Millenium Bridge – Tate Modern', 'Bush House BBC World Service', 'Piccadilly Circus', 'Royal Mail Street Collection', 'Sea Containers – OXO Tower'. In this case, the role of the text in relation to each of the images is what Roland Barthes (1977) called 'anchorage' – the text explains or disambiguates the image. In this sense, anchorage (as in the captions for individual photographs in Figure 1) appears to be denotative, or referential, with the captions fulfilling what Halliday (1978) refers to as the ideational function. However, the caption for the entire postcard seems to combine the denotative function ('LONDON') with what Barthes refers to as 'ideological anchorage' found, for example, in advertising, whereby the reader/viewer is guided towards arriving at a specific meaning (or what Stuart Hall, 1980 calls 'preferred reading'). In this example, the modifier 'WONDERFUL' pre-determines the 'meaning' of London as a desirable, even unsurpassed tourist destination, and the yellow-red colour scheme of the letters suggests the city's vibrancy, excitement and possibly even a suggestion of warm, sunny weather (none of the photos seem to have been taken on a particularly cloudy or rainy day; four images, all placed in the corners of the card are night images).

 Please, insert Figures 1 and 2 about here

Some postcard captions display astonishing linguistic and multimodal complexity; they may be multilingual and multimodal. For example, the dominant image in the postcard in Figure 2, the massive wall and summit of Jungfrau (meaning 'maiden' or 'virgin') in the Bernese Alps fills up the red-white contours of the map of Switzerland, whose top part delineates the irregular edge of the postcard. An inset with a cursive (suggesting handwritten) caption 'JUNGFRAU' (with a small Swiss flag placed next to it) anchors, or disambiguates the identity of the mountain from among the other peaks in the area. An image of a young, naked woman, her torso tilted to the right, right arm raised and the hand seductively touching her long blond hair, with her lower body disappearing into a photo-shopped cloud, provides an additional, visual caption, whose ideological anchorage eroticises Switzerland as a tourist destination for the heteronormative, male gaze (Piller, 2010) – a trope found time and again in a variety of 'ethnic' postcards and tourist industry imagery more generally (cf. Pritchard and Morgan, 2000; Thurlow et al., 2003). The model's 'demand' image – gazing straight into the viewer's eyes (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996) – establishes emotional involvement between the viewer and herself, or the viewer and the location that she personifies (a manifestation of Halliday's interpersonal function).

At the bottom of the card, outside the map/photo frame, interspersed with the images of a Swiss cow bell, a flowering garden bush, a Toblerone chocolate triangle, and three marigolds, appears the name of the country in German, French and Italian (three of the four official languages of Switzerland), and English: 'Schweiz', 'Switzerland', 'Suisse', and 'Svizzera'. All of these visual and linguistic elements, together with the contours of the map of Switzerland and the Swiss flag act as a multilingual and multimodal caption locating Jungfrau: 'This is Switzerland'.

The elaborate captions of the postcard in Figure 2 do not only fulfil the ideational (indexical) and interpersonal functions, but the textual function of achieving overall cohesion of the postcard: the top part of the map of Switzerland serves as the edge of the card giving it its ‘novelty’ character, the jagged font of the four multilingual words for ‘Switzerland’ not only ‘fit in’ underneath the contours of the southern border but also rhyme visually with the rugged peaks of the Bernese Alps. The summit of Jungfrau is echoed by the tip of the Toblerone triangle and, if one were to push the argument even further, by the naked woman’s nipples.

All in all, the captions do more than merely identify or anchor space. Font shapes and colours do much to connote the idea of places as ‘fun’ (Figure 1) or as ‘friendly and informal’ (‘handwritten’ font in Figure 2), or as ‘international’ (multilingual text in Figure 2), etc. These captions are used as part of mediational means to establish a sense of place or to brand the destination. Apart from performing the ideational function of indexing place, these captions ‘do’ interpersonal work of establishing a particular link and identity position between place and the implied tourist.

2. Greeting

When German postcards started to feature images of resorts and other scenic tourist sites at the end of the nineteenth century, they almost invariably included the formulaic expression ‘Gruss aus...’ (‘Greetings from...’) (Phillips, 2000: 15). The same practice of printing greetings on postcards was soon to be adopted by the British and American publishers and remains common till the present day around the world with the phrase ‘Greetings from...’ appearing in many languages, often in multilingual sets reflecting the plurality of languages that may be used locally or symbolically acknowledging passing tourists as ‘internationals’ (see, for example, Figure 4).

Greetings printed on postcards fulfil principally the interpersonal function by establishing a dialogic relationship between the destination (or its people) and the tourist, or between the tourist sending the postcard back home and the postcard’s recipients. As successful greetings normally require an adjacency pair structure, the dialogicity of the postcard greetings is of course only implied, imagined or severely delayed, but they do make explicit the postcards’ appellative (Althusser, 1971) character, calling out to the tourist, hailing him/her as a welcome visitor, or calling out to the folks ‘back home’, hailing them as treasured and not forgotten relatives and friends (cf. Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010). In any case, in terms of the participation framework (Goffman, 1981), the production format of these ‘greetings’ is unclear and susceptible to change alongside the postcard’s trajectory.

 Please, insert Figure 3 about here

For example, in Figure 3, the phrase ‘G’day from Australia’ accompanies the photo of a koala. Through the choice of the stereotyped Australian greeting form and the use of the place-name (‘Australia’), the tagline functions as a caption anchoring the image as part of *Australian* scenery and linguascape. But the anthropomorphized koala may be meant to ‘address’ the tourist with a typical Australian greeting on behalf of the

people of Australia (or the Australian Tourist Board). Clearly, as in other instances of commodified language use (e.g. Heller, 2003, 2010; Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010), the implied ‘principal’ of the greeting (the people of Australia) can only very weakly be linked to this utterance. Besides, if the card is read by a tourist in Australia, the preposition ‘from’ is problematic, the phrase ‘Welcome to Australia’ probably being more appropriate. Therefore, the shape of the linguistic formula may be anticipating the postcard’s future trajectory once the tourist sends the card home. In this case, while the ‘animator’ of the greeting continues to be the Koala in the picture, the role of the ‘principal’ may now be assumed by the tourist who, having bought the card, bought also the ‘rights’ to using the phrase ‘G’day from Australia’ as her own. She now has a resource to claim (however playfully) ‘Australian’ identity, temporarily disguised as a koala on the card. While these linguistic and visual resources may appear rather superficial, their ubiquity and uptake (the postcard in Figure 3 was actually sent by a young British backpacker to his friends in the UK) symbolise the tourist idea of ‘going native’ (cf. Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010). With this postcard’s image, the tourist is hailing or interpellating his friends both visually and verbally as an ‘Australian’: ‘Look, here I am! This is me up the eucalyptus tree!’ (cf. Jaworski and Thurlow, 2009a on tourists’ embodied positioning of Self in tourist destinations). Thus, as the greeting ‘flows’ on the postcard from the designer’s desktop to the printing press, and later through the souvenir shop to the tourist’s hotel room and finally onto his or her friend’s fridge door, the *shape* of the greeting stays the same, but its meaning, value and production format change several times (cf. Blommaert, 2005).

 Please, insert Figure 4 about here

Another example combining captions and greetings appears in Figure 4, where the vertically positioned monolingual caption ‘Venezia’ intersects the horizontal, multilingual greetings: ‘Ciao – Hello’ and ‘Salut – Hola’. Here, the questions of interpellation appear even more ambiguous and complex as the people of Venice may be thought of as the principal (metonymically referred to by the city’s name) behind the multilingual greetings hailing international tourists, or the city may be positioned as the recipient of the greetings from the tourists. Further ambiguity in the production format and recipient roles may be anticipated when this card gets sent home by the tourist. A source of temporary confusion about the interpretation of the text in Figure 4 may come from the layout and punctuation of the multilingual greetings, as the dashes between the individual words (Italian/English and French/Spanish) turn them visually into code-switched utterances. At a first glance, the dashes may then be considered a rather superfluous design feature (are they meant to connect or separate the printed words?) making the greetings somewhat ‘odd’, or downright ‘wrong’. However, they are also a reminder of numerous tourist encounters, whereby the tourist and host may exchange greetings in different languages, or one of the speakers may use greetings in two (or more) different languages in close succession (cf. Jaworski, 2009) due to their uncertainty of which of the languages may be the addressee’s preferred code, or as an instance of code-crossing (Rampton, 2005) – a symbolic and courteous if playful gesture

of linguistic accommodation. For that reason, the code-mixed inscription on the postcard in Figure 4 is not an unusual, if only skeletal display of multilingualism, or what Helen Kelly-Holmes (2005) refers to as ‘fake multilingualism’, to be commonly found in numerous other tourist genres, such as welcome and information signs, tourist markets, travel guides, and travelogues, among many others.

3. *Spectacle*

Photographic images on postcards (especially cityscapes) frequently include instances of signs, inscriptions and other linguistic texts in the represented places, or ‘discourses in place’ (cf. Scollon and Wong Scollon, 2003). For example, apart from its thirteen captions described above, the postcard in Figure 1 contains much more linguistic text embedded within some of its photographs: signs and inscriptions on buildings, statues, vehicles, etc. Looking at the photographs clockwise from the top left-most image, despite their small size², one can see the lit-up sign ‘Harrods’ on the Harrods department store, the inscription ‘Churchill’ on the Churchill statue, an arch over Carnaby Street with the text ‘Welcome to Carnaby Street’, the street sign for Portobello Road, and the Royal Mail logo on the Royal Mail van. For the most part, these are commercial, commemorative or municipal signs functioning as indexes of specific institutions, monuments, or locations. ‘Welcome to Carnaby Street’ is a typical tourist sign, ‘expressive’ rather than indexical, performative rather than phatic (cf. Jaworski, 2009). The ‘cult’ status of Carnaby Street as a 1960s mecca of style and fashion is transformed here by the sign re-framing it as a heritage or nostalgia destination, its current commercial appeal notwithstanding.

As the ‘Welcome to Carnaby Street’ and the other inscriptions are recontextualized (Bauman and Briggs, 1990; Silverstein and Urban, 1996) on the postcard, or ‘encased’ by it (Goffman, 1974: 261), their indexical value of identifying specific businesses, streets, statues or vehicles is eroded by giving way to their symbolic value as ‘iconic’ signifiers of ‘Wonderful London’. These signs become then visual representations of places as imagined by and for tourists. They take part in the mediation and consumption of place through the tourist gaze (Urry, 2002), managing and directing tourists’ attention to specific objects of the ‘gaze’ and creating dominant ‘scopic regimes’ (Jay, 1998) to be followed on the tourist trail. They construct and reinforce the tourist landscape, a ‘way of seeing the external world’ (Cosgrove, 1985: 46, after Berger, 1982) and its ‘visual ideology’ (ibid.: 47). Their promotion through and commodification on postcards gives them a ceremonial, celebratory status removed from the way these signs are experienced and ‘lived’ by the ‘locals’ (Debord 1995 [1967]). It is these types of representations of language on postcards that I refer to as ‘spectacle’.

 Please, insert Figure 5 about here

Another example of linguistic spectacle as part of a postcard image is reproduced in Figure 5. Captioned ‘?????? – GREECE – GRECE – GREICHELAND [sic] – GRECIA’ on the ‘back’, the postcard depicts a fragment of a commercial street in a small Greek town or village, with a donkey standing in front of a large whiteboard menu for

‘Restaurant. Barbeque Garden <Dionisos>’. The menu is hand-written in black letters, a mixture of upper and lower case, a typical example of ‘grassroots literacy’ (Blommaert 2005, 2008). Although perfectly legible and executed with much care, the menu carries a number of linguistic and design features which make it partly a code-switched and partly a ‘merged’ Greek/English text. While some names of the dishes written in Greek may be familiar to most international tourists, e.g. ‘Moussaka’, ‘Souvlaki’, some may be harder to understand, e.g. ‘Taskembae’ (sic; ‘taskebab’ intended?). Whether code-switched or monolingual, some English names of the dishes exhibit relatively non-standard orthography, syntax and phraseology, e.g. ‘Octapus’, ‘Kokoretsi spesial’, ‘Chicken roasted’, ‘Souvlaki (pork) on a plate’. The Romanized font bears some traces of the Greek alphabet, for example in the angular appearance of the *ss*, probably influenced by the shape of *S*. In Greek restaurants catering for foreign tourists such menus with English (and possibly other languages) visually and structurally inflected by Greek are not uncommon. As the generic though multilingual caption on the back of the card suggests, the postcard photographer probably aimed here to represent a typical rather than a unique restaurant text in Greece.

 Please, insert Figure 6 about here

In a postcard from Cardiff, Wales (Figure 6), apart from the anchoring linguistic and visual caption in the lower part of the postcard: ‘The Millennium Centre Wales’ (indexing a cultural complex) and a red dragon (indexing the Welsh nation), the viewer/reader can also see part of a large inscription over the front entrance to the building which doubles as large windows in the foyer and bars of the main theatre. The inscription consists of two short poems, Welsh on the left (‘Creu Gwir fel Gwydr o Ffwrnais Awen’, ‘Creating truth like glass from inspiration’s furnace’), and English on the right (‘In These Stones Horizons Sing’) (cf. <http://www.gwynethlewis.com/millenniumcentre.shtml>, accessed 27 September, 2009). In Barthes’ terms, the function of the inscription in relation to the image (while also being part of it) is that of ‘relay’: text and image complementing each other. With its unique font and text specially commissioned for the building, the inscription helps establish the building’s intended ‘iconic’ status, and through its bilinguality (Hamers and Blanc, 2000), it also acts as an index of Welsh ethnic identity. Together, through its grand scale, emplacement at the heart of the multimillion urban regeneration project (Cardiff Bay), close proximity to the Welsh Assembly, and its high profile as the national hub for performing arts, the building and its monumental bilingual inscription create a new and alternative Welsh ‘heartland’. This is in contrast to the traditional heartlands in the Welsh speaking rural enclaves in west and north Wales, although the shift of the epicentre of Welsh national and linguistic identity may not only be symbolic – census demographics from 2001 show that Welsh is becoming increasingly urban southern and youthful, N. Coupland, personal communication. However, not forgetting that this paper’s focus, it is the *recontextualisation* of the building and its inscription on numerous postcards (and other texts) that mediates and reinforces its position and ‘iconic’ status; it *sacralises* the site through repeated mechanical reproduction (MacCannell, 1999 [1976]).

 Please, insert Figure 7 about here

The significance of the inscription on the Millennium Centre building in Figure 6 is relatively underplayed (long shot, oblique angle) but it is brought to full prominence on the postcard in Figure 7. Here the decontextualised inscription shown in close-up and at frontal angle constitutes the sole focus of the image. It is not my intention to engage in a detailed geosemiotic analysis of the inscription, its emplacement, materiality, shape and contents (cf. Scollon and Wong Scollon, 2003). Rather, I am more interested in its symbolic or celebratory display of Welsh-English bilingualism (cf. Coupland, 2010; Coupland, et al., 2006 a, b; Bishop et al., 2005). From a number of anecdotal incidents, it appears that most people looking at the text for the first time are slightly confused as to how to read the inscription, with Welsh and English blending into a single visual or typographical unit. Then, most non-Welsh speakers ‘need’ also to work out whether the Welsh and English texts mean the ‘same’ (as has been already stated, they do not). And because they do not, they tend to find out what the Welsh text *actually* says.³

Nevertheless, lack of translation or explanation of semantic meaning here is no obstacle to the consuming of the Welsh part of the inscription as a symbolic display and an index of Welshness. As has been hinted above, gazing at (rather than reading) local linguistic codes or variants is a common means of accessing ‘difference’ in tourist destinations. The bilingualism of the poetry in the architecture of the Millennium Centre, especially when recontextualized and commodified as an inexpensive tripper-object, is not so much lived as represented and displayed (Debord 1995 [1967]), creating a spectacle of Welshness, symbolizing a detached and aestheticized ethnic identity rather than a usable script for focal participation in it.

Any emplaced text may become an object of the tourist gaze and consumption, especially if it is associated with the display of local authenticity or cultural difference and foreignness. This point is evocatively captured by Alan de Botton in his ‘reading’ of a simple information sign at Schiphol Airport:

On disembarking at Amsterdam’s Schiphol Airport, only a few steps inside the terminal, I am struck by a sign hanging from the ceiling that announces the ways to the arrivals hall, the exit and the transfer desks. It is a bright yellow sign, one metre high and two across, simple in design, a plastic fascia in an illuminated aluminium box suspended on steel struts from a ceiling webbed with cables and air-conditioning ducts. Despite its simplicity, even mundanity, the sign delights me, a delight for which the adjective ‘exotic’, though unusual, seems apt. The exoticism is located in particular areas: in the double *a* of *Aankomst*, in the neighbourliness of a *u* and *i* in *Uitgang*, in the use of English subtitles, in the word for desks, *balies*, and in the choice of practical modernist fonts, Frutiger or Univers.

If the sign provokes this pleasure, it is in part because it offers the first conclusive evidence of having arrived elsewhere. It is a symbol of abroad. Though it may not seem distinctive to the casual eye, such a sign would never

exist in precisely this form in my own country. There it would be less yellow, the typeface would be softer and more nostalgic, there would – out of greater indifference to the confusion of foreigners – probably be no subtitles and the language would contain no double *as* – a repetition in which I sensed, confusedly, the presence of another history and mindset. (de Botton, 2002: 69)

This exoticising potential of language is constantly exploited by the tourist industry, including publishers of postcards, one of the obvious and popular sources shaping the (linguistic) landscape of tourism being place-names. Some are meant to conjure up a sense of prestige and glamour (e.g. the famous ‘Hollywood’ sign in Los Angeles), or slight disorientation and bemusement. The latter is often invoked by particularly long place-names in lesser-spoken languages, e.g. the Maori ‘Whakarewarewa-tanga-o-te-ope-taua-a-Wahiao, Rotorua’, New Zealand (cf. Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010; see also below). Such names lend themselves well to the tourist industry’s drive for attaching the value of distinction to linguistic commodities (Heller, 1999) and construction of advert-like ‘discourses of the superlative’ (cf. Thurlow and Jaworski, 2006; Jaworski and Thurlow, 2009b).

Please, insert Figure 8 about here

Figure 8 reproduces a postcard depicting ‘The railway station with the longest name in Great Britain’ on the Isle of Anglesey, North Wales: ‘Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch’. (This name was apparently fabricated in the nineteenth century precisely to draw attention to the village – an act of pure ‘tourism reflexivity’ in itself, cf. Urry, 2002). The Welsh place name on the station’s sign is clearly framed as a unique tourist attraction by appearing in white block letters on the red background (rather unusual for other railway signs in Britain). A guide to the name’s ‘pronunciation’ appears underneath, and a separate sign on the left provides the ‘translation’ of its constituent parts. The iconising of the place-name is complete by the act of recontextualizing it on the postcard.

The composition of the postcard with visual repetition and rhyme emphasises the use of the place-name as spectacle. The four key linguistic elements seen on the postcard: the place name itself, its ‘pronunciation’, the English translation, and the English gloss at the bottom of the card, are roughly equal in length and can be seen as four verses in a stanza aspiring to the status of a poetic text rather than simply an image of a sign enplaced at a railway station. Thus a host language becomes an impenetrable code and cipher of the local community, the dwelling place is reduced to its place-name, and the place-name in turn becomes a tongue-twister for the wonderment and amusement of the tourists.

4. *Language learning and teaching*

Figure 9 is just one example of many Welsh postcards bearing the caption ‘The Language of Wales’. Here, the spectacle of language is disguised as a Welsh–English mini-glossary focusing on the semantic field Dwr/Water, e.g. ‘Aber.....River Mouth’,

‘Afon.....River’, ‘Dwr.....Water’, ‘Gwern.....Swamp’, ‘Llyn.....Lake’, and so on. The list, is superimposed against an appropriately themed image of a Welsh mountain brook (or as the tourist may learn – ‘nant’). Other cards in the series are similarly organised around the themes and images of buildings or landscapes. The words written in stylized Celtic fonts in red, green and white (the colours of the Welsh flag), with an occasional red dragon complete the display of Welshness through the combination of iconic Welsh views, the Welsh language, national colours and symbols.

 Please, insert Figure 9 about here

Just as we have argued elsewhere with reference to guidebook glossaries (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010, Chapter 6), such linguistic resources are more likely to commodify and exoticise local linguacultures rather than serve any practical purpose as learning tools. Having said that, a tourist may actually learn, say, the Welsh word ‘gwern’ from a postcard and read it on a sign or say it pointing at a swamp, but this act of speaking Welsh (or any other local language unknown to the tourist) needs to be seen as a symbolic performance of linguistic localness, a playful enactment of Welsh identity through the act of code-crossing (Rampton, 1995) and symbolic indexing of place (Johnstone, 2010) one is passing through as a visitor. Thus the didactic function of glossaries on postcards is also subservient to the conjuring up a linguistic spectacle.

5. Tourist script

My final category of linguistic display on postcard is exemplified in Figures 10a and 10b. This postcard from New Zealand features the following printed text (in black block capitals on a white background): ‘All-purpose New Zealand postcard. I’m here and you’re not! Put a dot in the appropriate place (or in several places, if you are unsure.) Then turn over and fill in the questionnaire.’ To the right of the text, a green outline map of New Zealand occupies the centre of the card, with a colour photograph of a sheep on the right.

 Please, insert Figures 10a and 10b about here

On the ‘back’ of the card (Figure 10b), the long caption under the space for the address reads: ‘Generic postcard. Munching their way around the pastures and hillsides of the country, the enthusiast will find countless sheep (50 million at a recent estimate) willing to stand in front of mountains and pose for photographs. Here, an intelligent specimen surveys the cameraman.’ On the left hand side, in the ‘message’ space, the questionnaire mentioned on the front of the card is printed. It starts with the following preamble: ‘Why bother thinking and writing when we can do all this for you? Just put a tick in the appropriate box’. Ten items with tick boxes follow, of which only the first two are quoted here: ‘*I’ve found New Zealand to be – ? Full of New Zealanders ? Full of Tourists ? Full of Sheep ? Full of problems ? Very nice ? All of the above; The Country is*

– ‘*Small, green and wet ? Underneath the World ? Underneath Australia ? Sunny! ? Most of the above.*’ Language play found in this postcard may be subverting some of the conventions of the genre of postcard messages (Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010), but our knowing interpretation of the irony is based precisely on the familiarity with these conventions and reiterative enactment of the small semiotic acts of choosing, writing and sending or receiving postcards. The ‘messages’ printed on the postcard, and the handwritten (personalising) additions of the sender conflate into a heteroglossic text (in the sense of Bakhtin, 1981), voicing and re-voicing the stereotyped ways of ‘doing being’ a tourist and consuming New Zealand, while the objectifying gaze of the tourist is turned back on him-/herself by the ‘knowing’ locals (card producers) de-mythologising tourism as invariably enriching, enlightening or individualising. In contrast to the koala in Figure 3, the sheep on the New Zealand postcard does not offer the tourist playful role-reversal. Rather, with its eyes buried under the thick wool covering its face, the ‘intelligent’ sheep appears to personify bemused locals, watching unaware tourists from a safe distance (‘scrutinising the photographer’), while they are ticking boxes on their postcards and travel itineraries.

Text and image form a ‘relay’ here, a complementary partnership mediating the consumption of the tourist destination (New Zealand) through a number of visual metonyms – rural scenery, sheep, logoised map of the country (Anderson, 1983) – and a playful list of tourist activities and stances. The spontaneous, handwritten annotations by the sender (bolded), e.g. ‘I’m glad the place is *Small – not really ? Cheap – I wish!*’, are indicative of another layer of multivoiced, creative play afforded by postcards and taken up by some of the tourists merging and subverting the tourist script on offer here.⁴

Conclusion

The variety and relative abundance of language-themed postcards attests to the significant role of linguascaping in the process of the pre-visualisation and (mediated) consumption of tourist destinations. Not unlike many other iconic sites/sights (The Eiffel Tower, The Empire State Building, The London Eye, etc.), language used in postcard images functions as a metonym of place. To paraphrase the title of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s (1988) well-known book, language is a tourist destination.

Most examples of the linguistic texts discussed above appear to conform to the playful moments typical of the performance of contact between hosts and tourists. The postcards demonstrate how language and other semiotic material is entextualized and recontextualized for touristic purposes. Like Lury’s tripper-objects, postcards and their linguistic inscriptions change their value and meaning following their complex trajectories, although they do retain an element of their generic significance, a degree of familiarity and recognition as indexes and metonyms of visited destinations. It is certainly true that not *all* tourists orient to and consume postcards (and other tourist texts and places) in the same way. Whether we notice and engage with any of the types of postcards and their texts discussed above is a matter of the cognitive and social frameworks guiding and attracting our attention to specific semiotic objects in space, what Jones (2005, 2010), after Lanham (1993) refers to as ‘attention structures’. However, in the moments of uptake, these texts (alongside many others) are also inherently normative, structuring, determining, or imagining acts of consumption or acts of resistance.

As in face-to-face encounters between tourists and hosts, the ‘linguistic postcards’ discussed here, bear a number of sociolinguistic processes and reflexes which collectively appear to be characteristic of, though not exclusive to, fleeting relations fostered by global tourism (see also Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010):

- commodification of language (all examples);
- pervasive use of formulaic expressions (especially greetings) (Figures 3, 4);
- performance of contact relying on the recontextualisation and transformation of frequently banal linguistic forms, signs, place-names and inscriptions lifting them to the status of spectacular, poetic, multimodal displays (all examples);
- code-mixing resulting in often new, unpredictable forms (Figures 4, 5, 7)
- unclear, changing participation frameworks as texts ‘flow’ from place to place (Figures 3, 4)
- risqué humour and eroticism (Figure 2)
- teasing and mocking of tourists by hosts (Figures 10a, 10b);
- explicit translation of ‘local’ languages or gazing at unknown languages (Figures 7, 9)
- code-crossing, code-mixing (Figures 2–8) and playful language learning/teaching (Figure 9)

Taking the sociolinguistic characteristics of these mediated interpellations and (imagined) interactions (e.g. mixing of languages, formulaicity, playful key, symbolic language *display*, and the apparent primacy of exchange-value over use-value of tourist discourse), suggests an increasing need to theorize tourist encounters under globalisation in terms of spatially heterogeneous, transcultural contact zones between people with distinctive, often conflicting social, geo graphic, historical and economic trajectories (Pratt, 1992). These are Rampton’s (2009) ‘communities of contact’, also reminiscent of Silverstein’s (1988) ‘local linguistic communities’ operating in re-scaled, richly connected and multilayered spaces, where languages come into contact and become intermixed and syncretised. Recontextualized words move across different orders of indexicality and acquire symbolic values in addition to their denotational meanings, transforming identities and becoming emblematic of spatial stratification in the political and economic order of the ever-globalising world.

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Notes

1. Certainly, the definition of *traveller-objects* as ‘immovable’ needs this qualification. Aneta Pavlenko comments in a personal note: ‘[T]he history of art plunder is as old

as the world itself, with ancient Romans being famous plunderers of others' historic monuments, and Napoleon's forces not far behind, not to mention Western archeologists of the 19th and turn of the 20th century. So art, handicrafts, and other objects, and even Egyptian obelisks, do travel (otherwise we would not have museums) and it is very rare, almost exceptional, for this to be a subject of legal dispute. In fact this is an end of the 20th century phenomenon, to question the legality of such acquisitions. By now Cleopatra's needle has become a feature of the London landscape and Egyptian sphinxes an inalienable fixture of St. Petersburg's bridges.' So, *traveller-objects*, the ones that are normally meant to be travelled *to* also do travel, although as Lury states, their movement is associated with legal battles and as Pavlenko labels it, it is 'plunder'. Certainly, no one would ever consider a postcard sent from a holiday as 'plunder'.

2. The quality of the reproduced images here makes these inscriptions illegible. However, many of these individual, small photographs are also published as standard size, 'stand-alone' postcards.
3. It is obviously unlikely that any Welsh-speaking onlooker will not be able to read the English part of the inscription.
4. As with most other frames identified here, *the tourist script frame* demonstrates significant variation and overlap with other frames. For example, one 'message' printed on the 'front' of a postcard from London, amidst multiple, thumbnail size images of the city states: 'Good girls go to HEAVEN' written at the top of the card in white, regular cursive font, and 'BAD GIRLS GO TO LONDON', written at the bottom of the card in large, bold, red letters with yellow 'electric flashing light' effect around them. The text here acts as a humorous *caption* for the destination (London), with the 'ideological anchorage' of London as a fun and 'corrupt' (or corrupting) city, and a potential ready-made message from the tourist enjoying or maybe just fantasising about having a 'wild time' during her holidays.

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Figure Captions

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Figure 8: Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch John Hinde (UK) Ltd. Photo © C. Underhill.

Figure 9: The Language of Wales Published by Judges of Hastings.

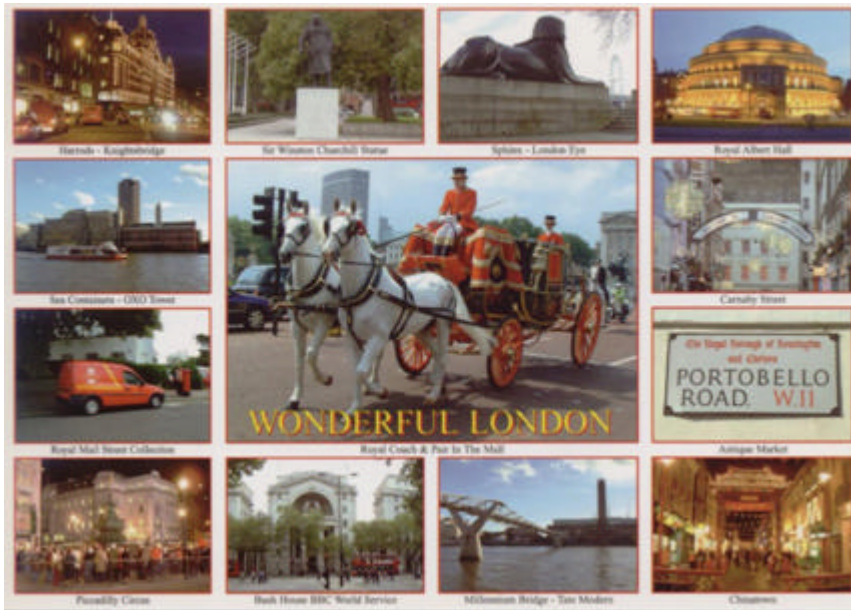


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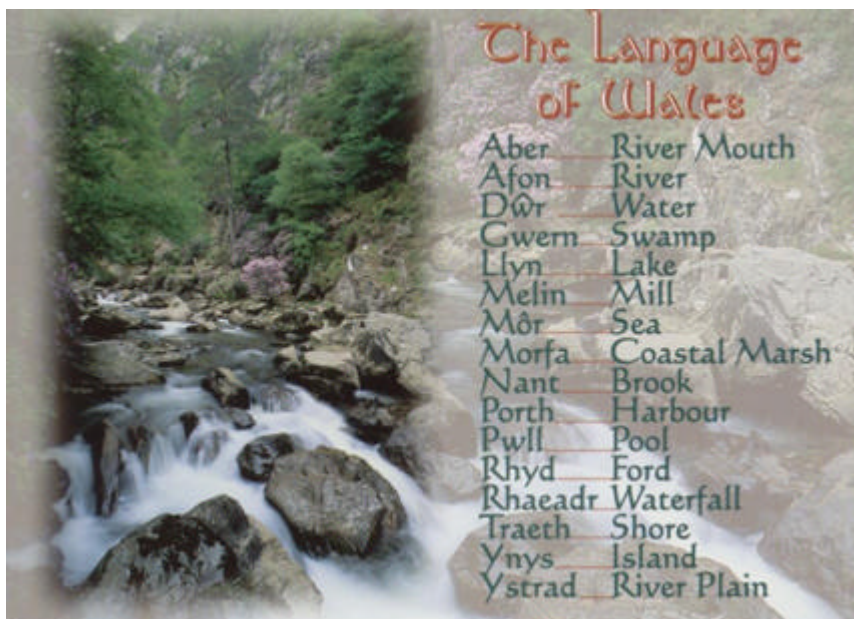


Figure 9: The Language of Wales. Published by Judges of Hastings.



Figure 10a: All-purpose New Zealand Postcard ('front'). © New Zealand Cards.

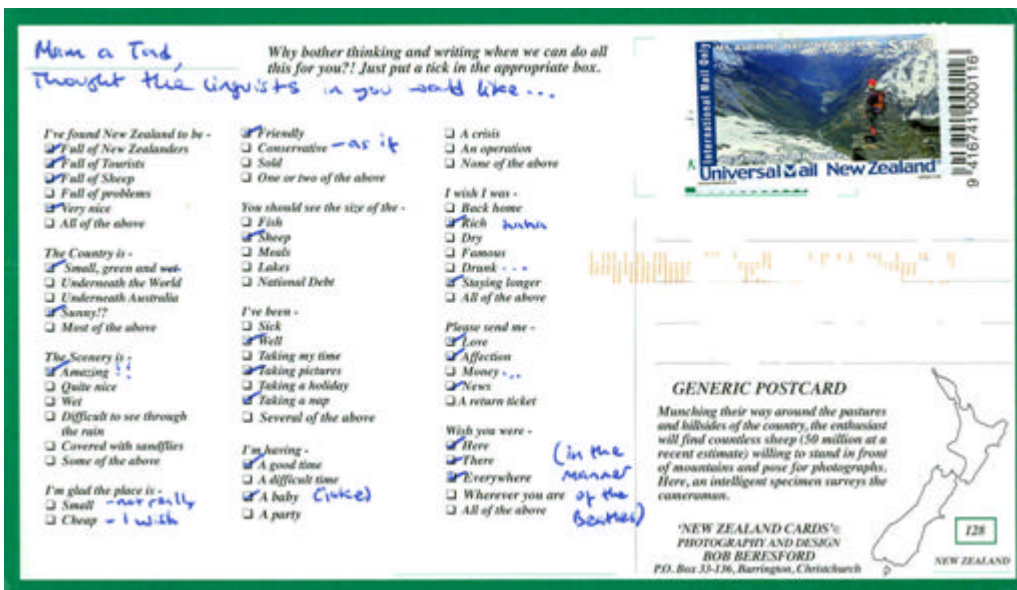


Figure 10b: All-purpose New Zealand Postcard ('back'). © New Zealand Cards.