

Translation and Trans-scripting: Languaging Practices in the City of Athens

Tereza Spilioti and Korina Giaxoglou

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Introduction: Translation and/as translanguaging

In contexts of late capitalism, multilingualism has accrued symbolic value as an index of globalized cosmopolitanism (Kelly-Holmes 2005) as much as a strategy for marking and negotiating local languages and cultures. These different—and often contradictory—ways of mobilizing linguistically diverse forms highlight the central place that language has gained in the new economy as work process, but also as a product of work (Heller 2010). The mobilization of multilingualism across different domains—from marketing and advertising, tourism, and call centres to language teaching and translation—relies on a range of strategies, which blur spheres and boundaries, variously described as phenomena of hybridity, multiplicity, complexity, polynomia, metrolingualism, transnationalism, irony or other distancing stance mechanisms, and transgression (Heller 2010: 103). More recently, such phenomena are discussed as part of *languaging* practices, referred to also as *polylinguaging* (Jørgensen et al. 2011) and *translanguaging* (Garcia & Li 2014).

Translanguaging broadly refers to the combined use of different linguistic and semiotic resources, bringing and meshing languages together for a range of meaning-making and communication purposes. Such practices of mobilizing features from multiple linguistic, graphemic and other semiotic repertoires pervade everyday and professional languaging; they (re)produce tensions around uses, norms and ideologies of language and extend struggles over what counts as a legitimate language.

The concept of translanguaging advocates alternative approaches to linguistic systems and cultural communities that ‘focus on practices, speakers, resources, processes, and mobility’, contesting foundational ideas that posit essentialist relationships between languages and cultures (Heller 2010: 104; cf. Li 2018). Such approaches have put forward a view of *translation as practice*, moving away from earlier understandings of translation as a process of crossing linguistic and cultural borders through transitions from language A to language B. Baynham and Lee (2019: 184), in particular, propose a practice theory of translation whereby translation is unpacked ‘into a sequence of translation moments’ that are ‘of the same order of the translanguaging moment[s]’ and that call attention to ‘the repertoire of the translator and the moment-to-moment bricolage through which the translation is assembled’. Translation and translanguaging can be said to represent distinct phenomena in terms of directionality: translation tends to keep languages apart while translanguaging fuses them

together; yet, they can be complementary practices and, at times, mutually embedded in multilingual environments.

In this chapter we are concerned with practices of *translation and/as translanguaging in the city* and the tensions that these raise in the urban landscape of Athens (Greece). We use translation and translanguaging as complementary angles in order to investigate the different ways of mobilizing multilingualism in late capitalism. As we argue in this chapter, recent developments in research on digitally-mediated communication and multilingual practices, as well as linguistic landscape research, are also key in developing a cross-context approach to translanguaging phenomena. We will focus, more specifically, on phenomena of translanguaging that emerge from the mobilization of primarily graphemic resources, also known as *trans-scripting*. In this chapter, we will pay particular attention to the vernacular respelling of English-related forms in (local) scripts, e.g. words typically identified as English that are *not translated* but rather appear *scripted* with non-Roman letters or characters.

Trans-scripting: What's in a term?

The term *trans-scripting*, as script-focused translanguaging, was introduced by Androutsopoulos (2015: 188) and defined as ‘features of one of the available languages [. . .] represented in the spelling or script of another [and . . .] creating linguistic forms that blur and cross boundaries of scripts and orthographies. Since then, the term has been taken up to describe internet languaging practices in multilingual environments where language contact involves the mobilization of different writing systems. Spilioti (2017, 2019), for example, was among the first who adopted the term to refer to the digital practice of representing English-related forms in local scripts (e.g. Greek, Chinese and Arabic). In her work, *trans-scripting* is approached as a process of respelling, emphasizing the creative and performative effects that such languaging practices have in particular moments of commenting on and critiquing language production online (Spilioti 2019: 1, 3). Li & Zhu (2019: 151) also coined the term *transβscripting* in their study of the subversive effect of the languaging practices of Chinese internet users who create new scripts from mixing symbols of different writing systems, as well as other semiotic systems (e.g. emojis).

Similar scripting phenomena, yet referred to as *transliteration* rather than trans-scripting, had of course attracted the attention of earlier studies of digitally-mediated communication. The focus of such earlier research, however, was predominantly on cases of *Romanization* where local scripts (e.g. Greek, Chinese and Arabic) are represented with Roman characters. In the case of Romanized Greek (also known as *greeklish*), previous research has shown that such scripting practices appear in both public and private digital spaces and rely on transliteration schemes, such as phonetic and orthographic or visual (e.g. Androutsopoulos 2009; Tseliga 2007). They have been attested in longer messages and interactions, particularly among teenagers and diasporic Greeks, indexing cosmopolitanism and an international outlook and giving rise to moral panic discourse even in recent years (e.g. Koutsogiannis & Mitsikopoulou 2003).

In comparison to the widely explored Romanization practices, *Hellenization* practices (cf. Androutsopoulos forthcoming), in the form of scripting English-related forms with Greek characters (Greek-Alphabet English or *engreek*, a term coined by internet users), remain still uncharted territory. Based on existing research (Spilioti 2017, 2019; Androutsopoulos forthcoming), Hellenized forms of English are used mainly for play and fun, but also as a way of animating particular voices, such as Greek-accented English, for representing

particular personas (such as in the case of widely circulating online memes re-presenting the ‘words’ of Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of Greece, 2015–2019). In the process of respelling, internet users tend to orient to the acoustic quality of the form represented and engage in the respelling of graphemes, words, sentences that are limited though within individual (rather short) messages. While such practices are quite prevalent among younger users, they are not—at least not yet—definitely associated with a particular social group and any indexicalities of such uses remain largely ambivalent.

The bulk of research on trans-scripting, thus, has so far focused on internet contexts. Yet, limiting the focus on digital communication runs the risk of overplaying the significance of media factors and technological constraints in such languaging practices. For example, early research on Romanization phenomena overemphasized factors related to character input constraints, as well as typing speed and effort considerations. While we acknowledge that the mediational means, such as keyboard and software technologies, play a role in languaging practices online, we seek to broaden the scope of trans-scripting research by turning the focus to the urban linguistic landscape and by investigating the tensions around uses, norms and ideologies of language that this type of mobilization of graphemic and other semiotic resources raises beyond the digital mediascapes.

To do that, we draw from the rich interdisciplinary field of sociolinguistics known as *linguistic landscape research* that is concerned with the communicative and symbolic uses of language in the public space for signalling the presence of an ethnolinguistic community or to invoke communal or shared values and ideas, respectively (Androutsopoulos 2014: 82; Ben-Rafael 2006). We are mainly interested in the emplacement of instances of trans-scripting in particular urban spaces and their indexical potential that contributes to the marking and making of particular identities and positions in the city.

Trans-scripting in the Linguistic Landscape

Linguistic Landscape (henceforth LL) researchers examine ‘top-down’ signs, understood as signs issued by public authorities and ‘bottom-up’ signs, e.g. either less-regulated signs produced by commercial businesses or transgressive signs, such as graffiti. The application of an LL perspective to our study of trans-scripting in the city is based on an understanding of space not as a distinct and autonomous entity but as a social construct that is delineated and structured in relation to particular positions and ideologies (van Dijk 1998, 2014). The LL is constituted through the interaction of space and language, as played out at a particular historical moment. As Seargeant and Giaxoglou (2020) suggest, LL artefacts constitute socially and culturally meaningful signs in the public arena that contribute to, while taking their meaning from, the discourse of the public space. The way various linguistic and other semiotic resources are mobilized in the LL is, therefore, indexical of regulatory, historical and normative discourses about languages and multilingualism in the city as well as discourses that contest or subvert these (see also Blommaert 2013).

To uncover the indexical meanings of signs in the LL, an analysis connecting the micro-level of the texts to the macro-level of the social-ideological positionings that they index is needed. Such an analysis is offered, for example, in Tsiplakou’s (2017) study of the Nicosia LL, which focuses on the micro-level of the local functions of translanguaging mobilized in the signs under study and on the macro-level of how these functions index specific kinds of subjectivities and ideological orientations.

A substantial number of LL work has been concerned with bilingualism or multilingualism and carried out in officially multilingual and multi-ethnic areas (e.g. Ben-Rafael 2006; Cenoz & Gorter 2006). A recurrent finding of these studies has been that English is used as a symbol of modernity and cosmopolitanism, but also for facilitating commercial activity. As Nikolaou notes (2017: 7), less attention has been paid so far to contexts of official monolingualism, which are nonetheless characterized by increased diffusion and visibility of English, as exemplified in the case of Greece. In this chapter we will focus on examples from the LL of the capital of Greece, Athens, to investigate translation and/as translanguaging in the city.

The city of Athens and its linguistic landscape

Earlier studies of the Athenian landscape have noted the strong presence of multilingual signs in the LL of the city, despite the fact that official monolingualism has been a norm in Greece embraced by successive governments and constitutions, which have been largely ignoring the linguistic rights of minorities (Greenberg 2010: 210). As Nikolaou notes (2017: 173) the status of English is very high and this is attested in its pervasiveness ‘in almost every communicative domain of Greek society, thus creating a situation of a de facto bilingualism even in a restricted sense’. More specifically, in Nikolaou’s sample of Athenian shop signs, almost one-third of the signs contained more than one language with at least fifteen identified patterns of language arrangement; the proportion of language hybridity and mixing is higher (almost 1 in 2), when signs containing Romanized Greek are included (2017: 172). It is notable that in studies of multilingual LL, instances of trans-scripting are neglected or only mentioned in passing. With a focus on enumerative approaches that count languages in the LL, there was less attention to the study of hybridity and anti-normative bottom-up creativities as an integral part of multilingualism in the city.

In our work we understand the *city* as a ‘relatively large and permanent settlement endowed with a particular administrative, legal or historical status’ (Ben Rafael et al. 2010: xii). As the capital of Greece with a long history and more than three million inhabitants in its wider urban area, Athens is a big modern city or a metropolis (Maragos 2018). As a modern metropolis, it has a distinct city centre that becomes a pole of attraction ‘for residents of quarters far from the centre who live on the outskirts or in rural areas: old-timers rub shoulders with immigrants and tourists here’ (Ben Rafael et al. 2010: xiii). The diversity of people who live, work and move in and through the urban areas tends to be reflected in the city LL and the multilingual signs that abound in the public space.

The multilingual signs discussed in this chapter appear in two distinct urban spaces of Athens: the Athens International Airport, located twenty kilometres to the east of the city centre, and the neighborhood of Eksarcheia in central Athens. The choice of the two areas is motivated by Stroud & Jegels’s (2014) distinction between *transit spaces* and *lived-in spaces*. Transit spaces are understood as the urban zones that operate as a portal through which one can enter and access particular areas, neighborhoods and cities. The city’s international airport represents one of the key transit zones through which locals and outsiders enter the city of Athens. It is worthy of investigation because, as noted by Stroud & Jegels (2014: 188), such zones ‘function as a facade—an imaginative representation of the community for outsiders’. On the other hand, lived-in spaces refer to areas where people live, work, raise families, eat, go out and get through the day (Stroud & Jegels 2014: 191). The neighborhood of Eksarcheia historically represents one such space: throughout the twentieth century, generations of Athenians were born and brought up in the area and, despite the presence of more transient groups (such as tourists, refugees and anti-establishment groups), the area is

still populated by a large number of people who live, study, work and socialize locally.

While a large part of LL research is concerned with patterns of prominence and language preference, as well as frequencies of such patterns, we have opted for a qualitative approach in our analysis. Taking as our unit of analysis the sign in its specific spatio-temporal location, we employ the following heuristics in order to study phenomena of trans-scripting in the urban LL:

- (i) *where & when*: focus on the textual and spatio-temporal context where trans-scripting is present (or notably absent) in public signs;
- (ii) *what & how*: focus on the specific trans-scripted forms and their respelling orientations (e.g. orientation to phonetic or visual/aesthetic aspects of languaging);
- (iii) *who & to/for whom*: focus on the producers of the signs and the potential audiences addressed or invoked by the design of these signs;
- (iv) *what for*: focus on the symbolic meanings associated with or mobilized by such signs and on the potential indexicalities of wider regulatory, historical or normative discourses and subjectivities invoked.

For the purposes of this chapter, we draw on our ongoing research on trans-scripting in the city, which so far has resulted in a corpus of approximately eighty pictures of public signs. The signs were gathered through a *guerrilla* collection and curation of moments of trans-scripting in the urban landscape of Athens, as and when these became known and visible to us. This method was motivated by the fact that manifestations of trans-scripting and creative respellings of English-related forms are particularly elusive and often marginal. This means that it would have been difficult to capture the fleeting and non-predictable trans-scripting moments if our focus had been set *a priori* on a specific site or a single neighbourhood community. To supplement our own collection of signs, we also used *crowdsourcing* techniques that also allowed us a glimpse into how the people who live and walk the Athenian urban-scape engage with it. The crowdsourcing of signs was based on social media sharing and facilitated through a Facebook group that we created as a hub for group members by inviting people from our own networks and the networks of these people. This approach is consistent with the method of ‘guerilla ethnography, i.e., seizing the opportunity to use whatever methods are possible under the circumstances of each particular context’ (Androutsopoulos 2008: 9). It was through that process that we have decided to zoom in on the two aforementioned urban areas that represent two distinct, yet complementary, types of spaces: the *transit* zone of the international airport of Athens and the *lived-in* space of the Eksarcheia neighbourhood.

The Transit Space of the Athens International Airport

The linguistic landscape of the Athens international airport is populated by a plethora of signs, some of which are issued by public authorities, such as the signs pointing to particular areas within the airport and others that are designed by individuals or businesses less restricted by—yet operating within—the limits of authorized regulations, such as commercial shop signs. As mentioned before, the main linguistic resources dominating public signs are Greek and English represented in their associated writing systems, e.g. Greek and Roman alphabet, respectively. The specific configuration of these resources, though, varies across the signs depending on their functions and their emplacement in the public space of the airport.

The official and, thus, heavily regulated signs, whose aim is to create a wayfinding system for the streams of visitors and travellers passing through, feature a combination of visual signage of wayfinding pictograms to indicate facilities in and around the airport, strengthened by written text in the local language (in this case, Greek) plus an additional language, most often English.¹ These signs are clear instances of *parallel-text bilingualism* (Coupland 2012: 2), where the same content appears in two languages and where each form stands as a *translation* of the word in the ‘other’ language as shown in Example 1 below:

Example 1

[visual wayfinding pictogram] **Πληροφορίες για Ανταποκρίσεις**
Transfer Information

Content in each language occupies a single line, and there is no mixing of resources other than their spatial co-existence with a related pictogram against the often coloured background of the signage, presenting a symmetrical configuration which is also followed in other signs in the airport. This parallel display, though, is not void of socio-ideological meaning as it places languages within a particular nexus of relationships. As argued by Sebba, in such texts,

the symmetrical arrangement is a visual metaphor for equality, the content equivalence is a response to assumed monolingualism or a preference for literacy in one of the languages only, while the absence of mixing is a response to a pervasive ideology of monolingualism and purism and a preference for standard forms.

(Sebba 2013: 109)

Indeed, the heavily regulated official signs at the airport align with the normative frames of standardization and monolingualism that have been dominant language ideologies in Greece throughout the twentieth century, as already mentioned above.

On the other hand, being less restricted by official regulations, commercial shop signs rarely present this pattern of parallel-text bilingualism where all content appears symmetrically in both languages. Instead, language resources are deployed at times separately and other times combined together. An example of such creative blendings is evident in a sign placed in the sitting area of a restaurant/café at the departures hall that reads as: YIASSAS! The phrase in Roman characters is a phonetic respelling of the local greeting formula ‘Γεια σας!’ and translates as ‘Good bye’. This practice of using the Roman script to represent Greek words draws on and alludes to the digital literacy practice of Romanizing local scripts and the aforementioned case of *greeklish*.² The orientation of the phonetic respelling that represents the greeting as one word and introduces a double ‘s’ to instruct a more ‘authentic’ pronunciation (/s/, rather than /z/ if respelt as ‘yiasas’) points towards an orientation to a nonlocal audience, which contributes to the construction of the airport as a nonlocal, transit space.

Against this broader background of the international airport, we will focus on languaging in the airport’s campaign ‘PerhaΨ you’re an Athenian too’, which aimed to promote tourism and Athens as a top city break destination.³ As Thurlow and Jaworski (2011: 287) note, tourism is ‘an intensely social and communicative business’ in addition to being an economic and political business and in many respects ‘the ideal industry for global capitalism because it is highly flexible, constantly reflexive and deeply semiotic’. As such, it is an apt site for languaging as a practice that is potentially mediatized and commoditized.

The campaign 'PerhaΨ you're an Aθenian too'

The campaign in question was run by the Athens International Airport and Marketing Greece in different launch phases from 2014–2016. It was based on a so-called creative marketing approach, which aimed to promote the city across eighteen international airports and reach new audiences and markets. This creative marketing approach involved, more specifically, a multisite campaign that included print posters, (social) media marketing and live events in various locations. It was launched at different temporal points and sought to get people to engage, participate and co-create the experience of being in Athens through sharing travel experiences, joining in immersive, live events and becoming part of a 'community' of the city of Athens. In that respect, the campaign distances itself from the package holiday model of tourism and proposes a touristic experience steeped in the local 'languaculture' (or *linguaculture*; Agar 1994), which is reimagined through a participatory languaging practice.

Having sketched out the main components of the location of the trans-scripting phenomena under focus across digital and physical contexts (e.g. social media and print posters), we now move on to the description of its temporal setting(s), covering the first heuristic of *where and when*. In its first phase in 2014, visitors to the city of Athens were invited to participate in the campaign on the website (www.imanathenian.com) and use the related hashtag (#Iamanathenian) for sharing moments from their life in Athens that entitled them to 'becoming an Athenian, too'. In its second phase in 2015 the campaign focused on transforming the Athenians into digital 'Aθenians' through the launch of an app called: 'Speak Aθenian. Be an Aθenian'. Using this app, visitors were invited to share photos or describe personal moments in the city and 'earn the right to BE AN ATHENIAN' by 'adopting the new vernacular' of 'Aθenian'. This was achieved by sharing moments of, for example, reaching a creative climax with an *Artgasm* or feeling *Ecstasea* on the beach. These new words that make up the vocabulary of this 'new' language are based on blends of Greek and Roman alphabetical characters (e.g. *PerhaΨ*, *Aθens*) and further mixes of forms associated with resources from both languages (e.g. *Philosofa*, *Ecstasea*). The terms featured in posters with glosses at the city's airport and metro stations and across eighteen airports (see Figure 1).



Figure 1 Campaign poster on an airport wall, featuring one of the new *Aθenian* words, *Ecstasea*, a blend of Ecstasy + Sea and glossed as: 'In Athens, you're never more than an hour away from a beautiful coast and exhilarating dip'.

In this phase of the campaign visitors to Athens were invited to take up 'their new citizenship' and 'to embrace, use and play with the new words of the new language' (ImAnAthenian, n.d.). On the campaign's website, speaking 'Athenian' is presented as an 'experience':

Today, a beautiful confluence of ancient and modern, vibrancy and splendor, tradition and cosmopolitanism, will leave you breathless, at a loss for words. For this reason, an exciting, sparkling new vocabulary has arrived on the scene; one to grab your attention and fire your imagination. It reflects the creative new energies on the move in this contemporary European capital. But it also tips its hat to the city's richly layered history as a source of inspiration. It makes sense of wanting to BE AN ATHENIAN.

(ImAnAthenian, n.d.).

In 2016, the campaign was supplemented by live events, inviting participants to immerse themselves in authenticating staged experiences (e.g. food tasting events), which are, however, beyond the scope of this analysis.

Moving on to the consideration of the *what and how* heuristics now, we notice that across this advertising campaign, trans-scripting phenomena are attested in the non-space of the transit zone of the airport as well as the digital spaces that become associated with it (and the campaign). In the first phase, trans-scripting is limited to single graphemes (Θ, Φ, Π, Σ, Λ) in the space of English words, as evident in the campaign's logo (Perhaps you're an AΘenian too) and its variations in the posters' message (An AΘenian keeΠs on making history*; An AΘenian is a Φun enthusiast*; An AΘenian Φinds harmony in nature*; An AΘenian enjoys a bΛue paradise*; An AΘenian enjoys a plethora* of taΣtes; An AΘenian can Σee comedy* in tragedy*; An AΘenian knowΣ about philoxenia*; An AΘenian reinvents claΣΣical myths*). Words in asterisks are glossed for the Greek word they are derived from and their pronunciation; for example, 'history' is glossed as 'Derived from the Greek word: *Ιστορία* (e-sto-réa)'. The individual graphemes are selected from the Greek alphabet on account of their difference from the Roman alphabet and their ecumenical appeal, given that these phonemes are also commonly used as mathematical symbols. Their use foregrounds their 'exotic' appeal and, at the same time, contributes to visually sketching the idea of 'Greekness'. Their visual prominence is further highlighted by changes in font (see, for example, the different fonts used in 'this is aθeNs' in Figure 1) or the use of capitals to mark the Greek-alphabet letters in the main text of the campaign: 'PerhaΨ', 'AΘenian', 'taΣtes'.

It is, however, noteworthy that in the context of promotional phrases used in social media campaigns, all Greek characters are omitted in favour of monoscriptual slogans in order to facilitate wider sharing and dissemination in the digital mediascape. Similarly, in the second phase of the campaign, languaging is mobilized as a participatory resource through blends of Greek and English words into new words written in Latin script, such as *Ecstasea* (see Figure 1) proposed as part of the 'new' Athenian language. The use of Latin alphabet seems to be preferred here to maximize the potential of its sharing on social media in participant visitors' posts or hashtags.

The playful textualizations of the two languages, mobilizing scripts for the visual or sharing potential, are exemplary enactments of banal globalization that Thurlow and Jaworski (2011) describe as the everyday, micro-level ways in which the social meanings and material effects of globalization are realized. Trans-scripting in this context of advertising in the non-place of the airport and metro station foregrounds an orientation to hybrid linguistic forms that project a hybrid cosmopolitan identity for the city and the country. They construct and distribute *commodified authenticities* in and through advertising discourse that are oriented to tourists, visitors but also locals. As Heller (2014: 4) notes: 'Language is one way to produce authenticity (although by no means the only one) [. . .] The trick is to balance authenticity (a tie to the local, to the face-to-face scale of human relations) with marketability, that is, the local product with the, if not global, at least international market'. Here, the production of

‘glocalizing’ authenticities through languaging and trans-scripting, in particular, is an integral part of the city branding strategies as a unique tourist destination that betray an alignment with discourses of global English as an emblem of cosmopolitanism, on the one hand, and with discourses of the Greek alphabet and its associations with Ancient Greece as emblems of ecumenicality, on the other.

The lived-in space of Eksarcheia

Leaving the transit space of the Athenian airport, we are moving west towards the centre of Athens and the neighborhood of Eksarcheia. The area represents a lived-in space: it is developed around a main square and it hosts a buzzing crowd of local residents, shop owners, university and school students who live in the adjacent apartment blocks, frequent the local shops and businesses, and study at the local schools and the National Technical University of Athens (one of the most prestigious engineering schools in Greece). At the same time, though, Eksarcheia can be seen as a liminal space due to the high number of tourists attracted by its central location, and of refugees who find shelter in old and deserted buildings of the area. The national and international discourses about the alternative and anti-establishment groups that are also present in the area further contribute to its construction as a liminal and, potentially, dangerous space. This is particularly evident in the US State Department (2018) travel warning, according to which ‘American citizens should exercise caution in Eksarchia square and its vicinity. [. . .] violent anarchists often gather in [. . .] the Eksarchia and Omonia Squares in Athens, before marching toward the city center’.

Compared to the linguistic landscape of the airport that is to a greater or lesser extent regulated, the area includes not only top-down signs produced by local authorities (e.g. road signs) but also a wider range of bottom-up signs such as posters, local announcements, and various types of graffiti, including political or other slogans, stencils, tags and other mural art. Similar to what was evidenced at the airport, top-down signs, such as road signs, arrange the two languages in the format of parallel-text bilingualism, where the text appears first in Greek and then in English. As mentioned in the previous section, this spatial representation reflects and constitutes an ideological positioning that sees the two languages as separate and orients to an ideal of a functional parallel bilingualism: each language addresses a different audience, e.g. Greek for the assumed monolingual audience of locals vs. English for the nonlocals. Leaving such top-down signs aside, we will shift our focus on bottom-up languaging as manifest in the graffiti of the area.

Figure 2 captures a graffiti on the wall of one of the neighborhood schools, only a block away from the area’s main square. The visuals paint a portrait of the so-called FIREBNB (see bottom area of the graffiti), a play on the name of the site for booking short-term accommodation Airbnb. Similar to the visuals of the popular site, a map of an urban area is drawn with rent prices marked on top of individual buildings but with flames coming out of the flats. The visual parody of the popular platform that sets the neighborhood on fire illustrates the tension that the presence of tourists and similar aspects of commodified mobility have brought to the lived-in space of the city.



Figure 2 Graffiti on the wall of a local high school

In addition to the visuals, the language and graphemic resources are also deployed in ways that make a parody of the parallel-text bilingualism noted in top-down texts that address the locals and nonlocals in the area. Rather than finding the Greek text (*ΤΑΞΙΔΙΩΤΙΚΟΣ ΟΔΗΓΟΣ*), though, in the prominent position, we notice the English translation appearing first. Nevertheless, it is scripted in a way that phonetically approximates the English form but does not conform to the standard orthography (*TURIST GUIDE*). This ungrammaticality at the level of spelling is in stark contrast with the orthographically-oriented Romanization of the area's name at the very top of the graffiti (*EXARCHEIA*; cf. the phonetically-oriented respelling, 'Eksarchia' in the US travel warning above). Such tensions between different orientations of scripting within the same text (e.g. orthographic vs. unorthographic/misspelled) underline the parodic element of the bottom-up languaging. Visual and graphemic resources work together to subvert the top-down practices of parallel bilingualism and the social media app's monetized representation of the area as a tourist attraction. In this context, parody and subversion become resources for critiquing the intense commodification of the area's flats and of the locals' lived-in spaces over the recent years.

While the previous graffiti orients to tourism and top-down discourses that follow the pattern of parallel-text bilingualism and keep languages apart, we will turn to other bottom-up languaging practices in the next section. More particularly, we will focus on graffiti in the area that capture instances of trans-scripting and feature the aforementioned mixing and meshing of language, graphemic and other semiotic resources. By applying the aforementioned heuristics, we will investigate the ways in which trans-scripting is emplaced in such subversive signs, as well as its indexical potential in the specific linguistic landscape.

'Love is in the air' at the Eksarcheia squat

Following the internal mobility of local Athenians from the centre to the suburbs in the 1980s–90s, there are a number of old and deserted buildings in the city centre and particularly in the area of Eksarcheia. Some of them have been turned into squats occupied by homeless locals, anti-establishment groups, and, more recently, refugees. Figure 3 features the wall of such a squat where, next to the window in the centre of the picture, we notice the respelling of English words with Greek letters and read the handwritten slogan: *λαβ ιζ ιν δι εαρ* (love is in the air), followed by the heart sign.



Figure 3 Slogan on the wall of a local squat

Applying our key heuristics for analyzing trans-scripting in the urban linguistic landscape, we focus first on the particular spatio-temporal and textual context of the graffiti. The squat whose wall is depicted in Figure 3 is known as *Βανκούβερ Απαρτμαν* (Vancouver Apartment). Occupied since June 2005 and located one kilometre away from Eksarcheia main square, it is one of the most active squats in the area, hosting a range of collective actions and events, together with its regular squatters (vancouver_apartman, n.d.). Frequented by a range of local anti-establishment and anarchist groups, it has also repeatedly become the target of attacks from local fascist groups. The graffiti is emplaced within a space that is highly subversive and conflictual due to the squat's tension with the establishment and local fascist groups; the two squat symbols, drawn on the two pillars in front of the building (see bottom part of the picture), also textually mark the anti-regulatory character of the specific landscape. At the same time, the picture was taken by one of our informants in May 2011, a month that was marked by violent attacks against immigrants, anti-racist demonstrations and clashes between the police, anarchists and fascist groups in the centre of Athens and the specific area, in particular. Taking into account, thus, the spatio-temporal context, the message of 'love is in the air' is spatially and temporally placed against the backdrop of extreme tension, conflict and open critique of the establishment.

Moving on to what gets transcribed here, we note that the phrase that goes through this process of languaging is the title of a popular song in the 1980s, e.g. 'Love is in the air'. The use of popular culture references that transcend the borders of local and national cultures is far from new in graffiti practice. For example, the protest song of the American hip hop group N.W.A. (Niggaz Wit Attitudes), 'Fuck tha police', has been a staple of anti-establishment graffiti either in its original version or translated in French ('*Nique la police*', popularized through the soundtrack of the French movie '*La haine*'). What is distinct in Figure 3 is the practice of trans-scripting (rather than translating) the original phrase, e.g. respelling each word with Greek alphabetical characters. The respelling orientation is phonetic: the respelt forms are put together in a manner that orients to the acoustic quality of the English-related forms, rather than their visual representation. By doing so, the graffiti producers capitalize on the grapheme-sound associations of the local writing system and, thus, achieve to evoke a local accent of English, activated, for example, by reading out the

text. At the same time, the form *έαρ*, selected for the respelling of ‘air’, also orients to sociolinguistic indexicalities associated with local registers and styles. Based on previous research (Spilioti 2019), phonetic respellings of ‘air’ could have taken any of the following forms *ερ*, *αιρ* and *έαρ*. Out of these variants, the chosen *έαρ* is the only one that is a homonym with a Greek word that means ‘spring’ in certain local high registers. Through the process of trans-scripting, the popular song title has two potential meanings: (i) the original, love is in the air, and (ii) love is in the spring. For the residents of the area who could smell tear gas and smoke in the air of that violent and highly conflictual spring, there is a parodic effect in this act of bottom-up trans-scripting.

In terms of the potential audiences addressed through such public signs, the bottom-up trans-scripting of graffiti in the Athenian landscape has a contrasting effect compared to similar languaging phenomena at the international airport. The respelling of longer sequences, rather than individual graphemes, makes such forms opaque to the nonlocal audiences who may be familiar with the English forms but unable to participate in this type of scripting that cannot be associated with conventional writing. The play orients to the local ‘knowing’ audiences who can engage with and mobilize simultaneously multiple resources that are not only tied to certain languages and associated writing systems but also, more importantly, to multiple registers (e.g. high/low) and translocal cultures (e.g. popular culture).

Finally, the process of trans-scripting, documented in such graffiti, indicates the creation of a subversive discourse that (re)appropriates globally circulated resources and, consequently, combines them with and resignifies them through the mobilization of local resources. Rather than simply aligning with global discourses of resistance through using or translating much quoted slogans, this subversive discourse takes a more ambivalent stance and authenticates local voices of resistance that capitalize on local indexicalities (e.g. high/low registers) and orient to particular voices, such as Greek-accented English. The very act of meshing and mixing resources runs counter with the very strong national ideology of monolingualism and, thus, points to an anti-establishment stance. Yet, the parodic play targets not only the local establishment but also the global forces of late capitalism that make certain forms more mobile than others. Through the respelling of English-related forms, the recognizable global resources become less mobile and, at the same time, potentially opaque to nonlocals. This inside joke reminds us of other cases of crossing through jocular and ungrammatical appropriations of particular language features. Like ‘mock Spanish’, for example, that serves to elevate ‘whiteness’ among Anglo-Americans (Hill 1998), the playful reappropriation of English in Athenian graffiti acts as an identity resource for the construction of an anti-institutional position for local resistance groups (cf. Serafis et al. 2018: 793). The difference with trans-scripting, though, compared to widely researched practices of crossing and (trans)languaging in spoken interaction, is that it makes such identity marking visually and visibly prominent in the linguistic landscape.

Conclusion and future directions

By looking at two distinct spaces in the city of Athens, we have shown how translation and trans-scripting are mobilized in the linguistic landscape. Framing both phenomena as languaging practices, we have demonstrated how they offer a complementary approach to our understanding of multilingual signs in the city. On the one hand, top-down signs draw on translation practice in its traditional sense: they visually separate languages, together with their associated scripts, and the message is represented in both language A (local) and language B (nonlocal/global). On the other hand, bottom-up signs draw on and, at the same

time, take issue with such representations by mixing and fusing linguistic, graphemic and other semiotic resources through trans-scripting.

The contrastive focus on transit and lived-in spaces in the city has also shed light on how formally similar bottom-up linguistic energies, such as the forms of Hellenized English discussed in this chapter, are used as resources for marking different identities depending on their spatio-temporal emplacement, respelling processes, and audiences invoked. In the airport nonplace, for example, Hellenization in the form of individual grapheme respellings becomes a resource for city and national branding by producing and distributing commodified authenticities to tourists and locals alike. In the squat graffiti, on the other, trans-scripting of longer phrases becomes a resource of subversion in the city as it (re)signifies the English-related forms and construes a discourse that draws on local indexicalities and, thus, authenticates a voice of resistance to local, as well as global, hegemonies. In other words, our work underlines the ambivalence that characterizes trans-scripting practices, as they are based on creative play and resignification.

In terms of how translation and trans-scripting can lead to rich cross-fertilizations, we note three important aspects that arise from this chapter. First, translation research benefits from an approach to translation as practice as it opens up to the everyday creativities evident in the mobilization of bottom-up linguistic energies in contemporary cities where languages are used as resources for ma(r)king identity and affect. Second, the study of trans-scripting beyond digital media and in the city broadens the scope of this rapidly developing area. More importantly, it demonstrates how such phenomena are not (only) the result of digital mediation but they orient to and are placed against a wider range of languaging practices, including translation, that draw on the visual and physical arrangement of language and graphemic resources in space (e.g. on the page, on a public sign, etc). Thirdly, the dual focus on translation and trans-scripting fills a noticeable gap in translanguaging research where the mobilization of graphemic resources for languaging and issues of ‘scripting’, in general, have been largely overlooked (Baynham & Lee 2019).

As for further research, our work on these new forms of English that echo and complement previously attested phenomena of ‘weird English’ (Ch’ien 2005) or ‘mock English’ (Pennycook 2007) points to potential links with wider processes of vernacularization and mediatization. For example, intertextual references to popular culture are evident throughout our examples of trans-scripting: in addition to the song reference in the graffiti, the advertising campaign includes the phrase ‘This is Athens’, echoing the now meme phrase ‘This is Sparta’ from the Hollywood film. This realization raises a question about the relevance of trans-scripting and vernacular creativities in writing to the study of language change in late modernity. Last, but not least, trans-scripting illustrates a type of ‘participatory script’, as, particularly in the case of longer phrases, it invokes a knowing audience who needs to decipher the rather opaque text in order to enter the game. Taking this into account, one wonders not only about the indexical potential of such practices but also, more importantly, about the potential subjectivities and affective positions it opens for the engaged and engaging audiences.

Further reading

Mike Baynham and Tong King Lee (2019) *Translation and Translanguaging*, London and New York: Routledge.

An engaging introduction to translation as practice, bringing together translation and

translanguaging research and indicating how they can complement one another.

Jan Blommaert (2013) *Ethnography, Superdiversity and Linguistic Landscapes. Chronicles of Complexity*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

A compelling linguistic ethnographic account of the author's own neighbourhood in Antwerp, Belgium, addressing issues of multilingualism in place from the complementary angles of sociolinguistics, complexity theory and linguistic landscapes.

Tereza Spilioti (2019) From transliteration to trans-scripting: Creativity and multilingual writing on the internet, *Discourse, Context & Media* 29 (Article No. 100294).

A study of trans-scripting as a process of respelling that is both creative and critical in contexts of digital communication, through the lens of translanguaging research.

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Notes

- ¹ For selected examples of signage across different airports, see <https://www.designworkplan.com/read/airport-signage-photo-inspiration>.
- ² The use of the Roman alphabet for Greek names or words in shop signs has in some cases attracted strong reactions, as for example in the case of the city of Volos, where law-suits were filed against shop owners who did not use the Greek alphabet on their shop signs (Moschonas 2004: 189).
- ³ See official trailer of the campaign on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXPcMhu4rAA>