

English, advertising and positioning: the impact of English on Chinese people's daily lives

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Situated at the nexus of linguistics, media and identity, this article addresses the impact of English on Chinese people's daily lives by exploring within the framework of positioning how the community of Chinese people in mainland China is imagined and defined through the use of English in Chinese advertising. Based on a corpus of Chinese–English bilingual advertisements, it mainly discusses the mobilisation of English as a stylistic resource in producing a variety of positioning cues that are at work in this discursive process. Five positioning cues are identified in the analysis of lexical items and discursive features of the English language that was utilized in a representative sample of advertisements: proper names of Western places, emotion words, discourses of success, and discourses of Western masculinity and femininity. They are found to have been used in three interrelated processes of locating, refashioning, and assessing Chinese people. The findings are applied as a ground for discussion of the cultural politics of English in China and the question of whether Chinese people's sense of cultural identity is being threatened.

Keywords: advertising; English as a global language; positioning; style; Chinese people; daily lives

1. Introduction

Few would dispute the claim that English wields much power and influence globally. In China, like in other countries and regions, the spread of English in its role as a global language alongside a buoyant wave of global capitalism has had and continues to have a huge impact on the Chinese language and culture. This raises issues about China's national identity, the collective identity of Chinese people, language planning and policy, and so forth. Studies have been conducted to examine crucial questions regarding whether English is a threat to national identity of contemporary China or to the Chinese language and culture (e.g., Li 2012; Pan and Seargeant 2012). But the question of whether English exerts an impact on Chinese people's daily lives remains almost entirely unaddressed in the field of sociolinguistics (Bolton and Graddol 2012).

Perhaps no other topic is more at the intersection of mass media and everyday life than identity. Positioned at the nexus of media, linguistics and identity, this article from a text linguistic perspective addresses this research lacuna in the literature by investigating how the Chinese people of mainland China are discursively influenced through the use of English in Chinese advertising within the framework of positioning (e.g., Harré 1998;

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Davies and Harré 1990; Harré and van Langenhove 1999). The basic assumption is that English, being labelled “global” and associated with “popular culture capital” (Fiske 1992), has become a new brand positioning strategy in Chinese advertising deployed to draft and define Chinese people as the target audience. This study is not a diachronic but a synchronic investigation conducted at a specific point of time with reference to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, an important social, cultural, and political event in China’s history. Data for analysis are printed Chinese–English bilingual advertisements collected from some newspapers and magazines published in mainland China during 2007.

In its focus on the impact of English on Chinese people’s daily lives, the article concerns itself with the analysis of the particular use of English in Chinese advertising that is crucial to the production or facilitation of such an impact. Sociolinguists nowadays increasingly share the perception of heterogeneous practices of English across the world (e.g., Crystal 1997; Kachru 1982; Pennycook 2007, 2010). When used in Chinese advertising, English is likely to have particular linguistic features that could be perceived as “part of social communicative styles, and thereby serve to positioning the speaker [here the target audience] in space” (Auer 2007, 15). In this study, style as defined in modern sociolinguistic theory is a concept, which mediates between linguistic variability and practices of social categorization of self or other; linguistic variability is seen as a resource for constructing socially interpretable and interpreted styles (Eckert 2004, 43). Following Irvine (2001), this article takes the sociocultural distinctiveness of English usage in Chinese advertising as one of the key features of style applied as a way to position oneself or others in social space. Because the process of positioning is more or less indirectly marked or cued by the specific use of English that aptly represents an instance of style, we may take the particular use of English as an analytical platform for the exploration of how Chinese people’s daily lives are affected to various degrees. Findings could be used as a foundation for a discussion of the local politics of English in China and the question of whether Chinese people’s sense of cultural identity is being threatened or undermined. In the following, I develop why the use of English as a pair language in Chinese advertising could be treated as the focus of analysis for studying this research topic.

2. English, advertising and positioning

Advertisements as a site of identity formation are “part of a variety of social struggle” through which target audiences are defined or wish to be defined (Matheson 2005, 55; Dyer 1982). Other than actualizing existing “codes” of meaning, advertisements create an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983) of target audiences by acting as a culture created against or upon national and cultural “Others” (McQuail 2000). In the imagined community, the members of target audiences may not know each other but all share an idea of belonging to a collective identity, that is, “in the minds of each lives the image of their communication” (Anderson 1983, 15). The notion of imagined community is useful in that it allows us to transcend a concentration on the immediate environment of target audiences and to reach the wider communities in which these imagined identities may have a significant impact on their immediate sense of self and on their daily lives.

Linguistic resources play a pivotal role in the creation of both imagined communities and possibilities for shared identities to be imagined (e.g., Queen 1997; Spitulnik 1997; Wong and Zhang 2001). Advertisements are prime examples for demonstrating the importance of strategic language use not only in the formation of an imagined community but also in the creation of a discursive space for people to find the feeling of belonging to

this shared but anonymous community. This is normally fulfilled through ideological processes that highlight the transferability of symbolic meanings created for the product to the individual who identify with the target audience of the product (e.g., Danesi 2006; Wernick 1991; Williamson 1978). By this, it implicitly assumes active engagements of target audiences with advertising, along with the social circulation of ads, in the construction of an imagined community (Spitulnik 1997).

The transcultural flow of English as a global language has developed itself into “a language of imagined communities” bringing a “refashioning of identity” (Pennycook 2007, 6). It is certainly true that English is not infrequently deployed in non-English-speaking countries as an alternative linguistic or discursive resource for imagining a community and defining the members of this community to stand in contrast to the sanitized image offered by hegemonic institutions. A case in point is the use of English in non-English advertising that provides greater possibilities for people of a locality to interact with new others, generating new, often hybrid, selves (e.g., Lee 2006; Martin 2006). Crucially, the provision of alternatives in the one-way mediated communication of advertising is unidirectional. The implicit assumption is that, as soon as ads are distributed, they are simultaneously participated in and almost automatically produce a feeling of a shared collectivity because of the use of English. Thus, it makes sense to expect English to be mobilised in advertising for moulding and defining people of non-English-speaking countries.

This study, as noted earlier, takes the concept of “positioning” (e.g., Harré 1998; Davies and Harré 1990; Harré and van Langenhove 1999) as a point of entry into the ways in which the community of Chinese people is imagined and defined through the use of English in Chinese advertising. Positioning theory has been applied in the examination of the ways in which people position themselves through alignments to elements including, for example, religion, place, gender, and stylistic choices (e.g., Georgakopoulou 2007; Modan 2007). Having originated in social psychology, positioning as used by Harré, Davies, and others refers to

the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines. There can be interactive positioning in what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself. (Davies and Harré 1990, 48)

The clear implication is that this approach to identity construction and formation emphasizes the negotiable nature of self and other positioning. While being sensitive to dynamic qualities of the process of positioning, positioning theory, however, is not focused on the self as the agentic or original source of meaning production. Differently stated, being positioned in a relatively deterministic way, the other does not act as an active agent in the selection, resistance, or revisiting of positions in the self-positioning process. As Davies and Harré (1990, 46) aptly put, “the constitutive force of each discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions” (in the Foucaultian tradition) that are made available for the other to take up, whereby the other is said to have been positioned. Since the referential and representational aspects of advertisements could also be put to interactional uses, we may examine the impact of English on target audiences by focusing on the self-positioning of them in light of the assignment of English-related cultural values and attributes to the product being advertised that to target audiences are nationally or culturally others.

The self-positioning, it should be added, is more often than not reflexive. This process involves polyphonic events inside the person (e.g., dialogues with imagined others), within which self-positioning presumably takes place. Situated in advertising communication where there is a privileging of a one-way directionality from an ad to the masses, who supposedly receive it and consume it, “the initiative now lies with somebody else rather than the person involved” (Harré and van Langenhove 1991, 402), however, dialogism is suppressed and the ways in which target audiences reflexively position themselves actually are always intentionally forced rather than deliberate. By laying claims to English-related cultural values and attributes assigned to the product, the members of target audiences who are self-positioned indeed are discursively positioned through the strategic use of English.

The asymmetry of the ways in which one claims authority to the self-positioning of the other through discursive practice is particularly useful for explaining why target audiences can be positioned by advertisers with the aid of the English language. However, the constitutive force of English lies not simply in its provision of subject positions available for target audiences to take up, but goes beyond to assign, to shape or probably even to alter their identities. Positioning theory, therefore, provides a useful framework for establishing links between English, positions and power, suggesting its applicability to the examination of influence of English on daily lives of target audiences.

Here, it is necessary to point out that positioning in particular is integrally associated with local normative systems through cultural ideals, which act as guides for persons in a given culture as they position themselves, or culturally available subject positions that are postulated a priori of specific interactions. The emphasis now is on the prerequisite of the self-positioning of target audiences that is shaped by and invoked in the use of English. The potential applicability of positioning theory to examine the impact of English on Chinese people’s daily lives is enhanced by social particularities of the English language and consumption practices in China, as well as by the fact that advertisements rely on the cultural knowledge and background of target audiences. More specifically, the use of English in Chinese advertising is largely motivated by the common perception of English among Chinese people as the symbol of cosmopolitanism, high technology, modernity, fashion, internationalism, and sophistication (e.g., Gao 2005; Yan 1994). Chinese consumers, whether old or young, with little or no knowledge of English, normally are ready to pay more for a product bearing the cultural values and attributes of English.

3. Data and methodology

This synchronic study is based on data of 357 printed consumer commercials mixed with English, which were collected from eight Chinese magazines (*Fashion Lady*, *Rayli Fashion Beauty*, *Cosmopolitan Beauty*, *Rayli Fashion Lady*, *World Fashion*, *Auto Fan*, *Micro Computer*, and *Computer Fan*) and four Chinese newspapers (*Beijing Evening News*, *Guangzhou Daily*, *Ningbo Evening News*, and *Southeast Business News*) circulated in mainland China during 2007. This was a period of time leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and at that time, the popularity of English in China seemed to have reached a new peak. Therefore, the Chinese–English bilingual advertisements could be an excellent site for the exploration not only of the impact of English on Chinese people’s daily lives, but also of the local politics of English.

A preliminary quantitative survey of the data revealed the uneven occurrence of English across 11 product categories. Listed at the top is technology with approximately 37% of the total, followed by those of real estate and beauty, standing contrast to the other

Table 1. English used in different product types, their percentage, and representative examples.

Product type	Number of ads	Percentage	Representative examples
Beauty	46	12.9	Cosmetics, perfume, skin care products, eye and lip cream
Drink and food	9	2.6	Alcohol, cake, ice cream, and wine
Education	3	0.8	Education exhibition and English training
Fashion	22	6.2	Bag, bra, shoes, skirt, T-shirt, and suit
Household	8	2.2	Furniture, kitchen, and toilet equipment
Jewellery	14	3.9	Bracelet, diamond, necklace, and ring
Real estate	94	26.4	Apartment, office building, villa, shopping mall, and decoration service
Shopping	5	1.4	Mall opening and promotion
Sports and leisure	11	3.0	Bar, sports clothes, sports shoes and equipment
Technology	132	37.0	Auto, digital camera, cellular phone, computer and its accessories, home appliance electronics
Travelling	13	3.6	Airline, credit card, and hotel
Total	357	100	

categories, which has a frequency rate of far below 10% (see Table 1). Thanks to the rapid growth of commercial housing in China, the majority of the real estate advertisements were for residential property. Aside from being used as brand name, English was found appearing within and across five structural domains (see Table 2). Headline is the domain where English appears most frequently, followed in order by slogan, body copy, tag,¹ and contact details. A frequency count was conducted to discover structural features of the mix between Chinese and English and their distribution across the headlines and slogans of the technological, real estate, and beauty advertisements. As presented in Table 3, there are four types of structural patterns, among which English-only and bilingual parallel are overwhelmingly more in number than the two others, intersentential and intrasentential (Poplack 1980). Interestingly, this quantitative finding is observed the same as in the study of Gao (2005). English only refers to cases of English usage where a headline or a slogan is entirely in English, while in the case of bilingual parallel both Chinese and its English translation, or vice versa, are entirely or partially copresent. Given the closer connection of the technological, real estate and beauty advertisements to people's daily lives together

Table 2. The overall distribution of English occurrence in the four domains.

	Headline	Slogan	Body copy	Tag	Contact details	Total
Total	221	118	63	32	24	458
Percentage	48.3	25.8	13.7	7	5.2	100

Table 3. Structural features of English mixing and their frequency in headline and slogan.

	English-only	Parallel	Intersentential	Intrasentential	Total
Headline	97	44	18	15	174
Slogan	57	19	1	1	78

with the quantitative findings, this study focuses on the English-only and Chinese–English bilingual headlines and slogans, together with the English brand names, of these advertisements for examining the impact of English on Chinese people’s daily lives.

As noted earlier, in Chinese advertising, the particular use of English can be hypothesized to comprise more or less implicit ways in the positioning of Chinese people and, simultaneously, in the stylization of their identities (cf. Coupland 2001). Thus, the positioning of Chinese people in advertising becomes part of certain style of affecting Chinese people within the particular use of English. Being linguistically marked or cued, the discursive process of positioning, as pointed out above, could be examined by focusing on the linguistic features of English used. For studying social identities in terms of style, Auer (2007, 12) proposes looking at lexical items, lexical features, structural patterns, rhetorical practices, and so forth. The present study follows this methodological approach to explore the residence of discursive positions with a particular focus on the lexical items and discursive features of English used.

4. Findings: positioning cues and positionings of Chinese people

Analysis of the lexical items and discursive features of English utilized in the headlines, slogans and brand names of the technological, real estate and beauty advertisements revealed five remarkably salient positioning cues that are frequently deployed in positioning Chinese people: proper names of Western places, emotion words, success discourses, and discourses of Western masculinity and femininity. The following analysis will show how these positioning cues are at work in positioning Chinese people by discussing three interrelated processes of locating, refashioning, and assessing Chinese people. It is locating in that English is used for specific effect to discursively set the geographical places in the West as the living place of Chinese people. It is refashioning in the sense not only is English used to enrich but also reinterpret or redefine traditional collective identities of Chinese people. It is assessing in the sense that some features or standards conforming to traditional Chinese ideals are explicitly or implicitly re-evaluated through the process of a comparison. In the discussion that follows each of these tactics will be considered in turn. Examples are selected to illustrate the positioning cues best representing these processes. Among the examples of bilingual headlines, expressions in the official Chinese orthography (i.e., Chinese in character) and Pinyin (i.e., the Chinese phonetic system) are followed by the literal translations which were produced by the researcher. The brand names of products are indicated in brackets and within parentheses contain the literal translation of the original Chinese.

4.1. Locating Chinese people

One of the conspicuous functions of positioning observed in the corpus at hand is how through the use of English–Chinese people are discursively located in the West, that is, they are situated in Western places, thus “conferring spatial ... specificity on them” (Butler 1997, 29). A sizable portion of apartment blocks and villas in the real estate advertisements, despite all of them being exclusively local, are marketed with a specific name or description of geographical locations that have transcended their origins in Western countries. The attachment of proper names of Western places in English as a positioning cue to residential housing makes the local property products seem as internationally recognizable as if they were located in New York, Paris, London, California and so on, in the way the following brand names and/or headlines suggest:

Bourton-on-the-water, 英伦水岸 *yinglun shui'an* (lit. Bourton-on-the-water)
 保利Cambridge (lit. Baoli Cambridge)
 Notting Shire, 诺丁郡 *Nuoting jun* (lit. Nottingham shire)
 长岛御岸 *changdao yu'an* (lit. Long Island Royal Bank) Long Island Royal Bank
 <Long Island Royal Bank>
 Chanson bay Spain union house <Youngor Chanson bay>
 国际菁英, 欧洲理想生活城邦 *guoji jingying, ou'zhou lixiang shenghuo shengbang* (lit.
 international elite, Europe ideal life city-state) International elite, ideal life of
 Europe city-state <Nadan Castle>
 体验风情南加州, 品鉴国际新生活 *tiyan fengqing nanjiazhou pinjian guoji*
xinshenghuo (lit. experience the flavor of South California and enjoy
 international new life) Experience of the South California flavor, enjoy
 international new life <Mayland>

Bourton-on-the-Water is the name of a village located in England known as a tourist honeypot. Cambridge normally reminds us of the prestigious university in the UK. Notting Shire might be a spelling variation on Nottinghamshire, the county of England in the East Midlands. Long Island, of course, refers to the place located in Southeast New York. And so on. Coincidentally or not, a similarity in the name is usually accompanied by a similarity in the design through visual reference to architectural codes detachable from place and identity. By being assigned with a brand name and/or a headline that are/is able to invoke the feeling of being located in Western countries, the local property products are specified, determined, identified, and shaped by non-local entities.² But more significantly, the process of geographical imagining triggered through intertextual reference to the geographical places in Western countries either through English or Chinese, or both metaphorically conceptualizes the local real estate properties as being those which are located not in China but in the West.

Having the ability to provide a sense of belonging, places are actively employed to construct, negotiate, and deconstruct social identities that are conveyed to others as well as to position selves (e.g., Leap 1996; Modan 2007; Johnstone 1990). The imaginary placement of a house into transnational spatial planes gives rise to one important aspect of spatial identity that can be discussed in terms of the role of place in moulding cultural identity, because it calls into question the conventional thinking of Chinese people both about their ideas of living space and their sense of belonging. As Bachelard (1994, 47) proclaims, “A house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space. . . . When the image is new, the world is new”. This method of transcendental geography takes us beyond the simple appearance of the house and into a world of imagination in which is revealed the real meaning of a house. Through the social construction of home (understood as points of origin and belonging) that is bound up with specific geographical places in Western countries, Chinese people as potential consumers of the local property products are provided with an opportunity to share spatial identity with Westerners who are authentically living in the geographical territory of Western countries. In other words, Chinese people are positioned as if they were living and working in the West, so that a special community is built up and a collective identity of Chinese people is ascribed to it.

Of particular note is the fact that the process of naming or describing the local property products in this way is heavily intertwined with the social ideologies of the advertisers and their interactional goals. Metaphorical expressions where a local entity is described in terms of a Western entity are not grounded in actually embodied experience but, specifically, in “the cultural model of modernity” where local entities find validation to the extent that they can be considered versions of Western ones (Wee 2006, 116–117).

Embedded in the local evaluations of British-American entities in particular and of the West generally, they serve as a symbol of the values of such a community. When recontextualized in the Chinese context, the proper names of geographical places in the West without being translated into Chinese or bilingually paralleled are laden with the local attitudes and values that China has towards them. Thus, this way of marketing the local property products not only acts as a confirmation of Chinese people's moral perception of the West; it equally recalls those values and socializes Chinese people as community members into identity alignment shared with the Western places, highlighting the link between places, morality, and the choice of particular English words.

4.2. *Refashioning Chinese people*

To be sure, the above discussed process of positioning Chinese people as if they were living in the West is a simultaneous process of refashioning their collective identity. Another way of refashioning Chinese people's collective identity in the corpus is to appeal to the Anglophone discourse of emotion. Emotional appeals have long been used in advertising to enhance attitude change in audience and audience receptivity. For Berezin (2001, 84), the significance of emotions lies not only in "mak[ing] the difficult and unnatural appear easy and natural" but as well in their "capacity to create new identities". In this process, emotion words do the job of orienting target audiences towards particular positionings, which are typically characterized by such terms within social encounters. In taking the work of Lutz (1982, 1988) on the emotionology of the Ifaluk as an example, Harré and Gillett (1994) have documented how emotion words function to fashion, so to speak, emotional acts. In the way articulated by the concept of "emotion work" (Hochschild 1983), the nature of emotions as a tool for positioning is that we are not only positioning ourselves in an emotion but also are positioned by emotions.

Here, it is crucial to stress that emotions are not purely internal processes, but parts in a highly dynamic social and societal process of positioning. Although most emotions are universally available to peoples across the world, emotions are culturally defined and shaped, expressed in, and reflected by, languages; differences in emotion vocabularies, beliefs, and norms may lead to differences in both experienced and expressed discourses of emotion across societies (e.g., Kövecses 1988; Pavlenko 2005; Wierzbicka 1999). English emotion words that are originated, defined, applied, and comprehended against the Anglophone culture tend to be highly culture-specific. The English word "anger", for instance, tells us about the Anglophone way of thinking about and experiencing anger as hot fluid in a container (boiling, steaming, bursting, etc.), which has a significant behavioural implication (Lakoff and Kövecses 1987). Emotion concepts encoded in English words and with cultural values of English-speaking countries could be employed to socialise non-natives into the world of Anglophone emotions and the Anglophone way of understanding and interpreting them.

English emotion words as one type of positioning cue are observed to be frequently mobilised in the conceptualization of promoted products either as the cause or the source of various emotions. The following headlines and slogans taken from the advertisements for technological products are illustrative of how some English words are chosen to generate, and conceptualize, a diversity of emotions in an explicit manner:

Amusement <Delux>

Big Pleasure <Mitsubishi Motors>

Delighting you always, 感动常在佳能 *gandong chang zai Jianeng* (lit. always being moved at Canon) <Canon>
 Excitement Guaranteed <Mini Cooper>
 Happiness from Accent <Hyundai>
 Happy New Year, 纵容自己的时刻到了! *zongrong ziji de shike dao le!* (lit. It is time to indulge yourself!) <Chevrolet>
 I love my view <View Sonic>
 激情·为奥运而动 *jiqing wei ao'yun er dong* (lit. passion for the Olympics) Passion for movement <Audi>
 Romantic Moment, 买表送礼表心意 *maibiao songli biao xinyi* (lit. buy watch to express love) <Ernest Borel>
 Sheer Driving Pleasure <BMW>
 The Power to Surprise <Kia>

Among the headlines and slogans listed above, the English emotion words appearing in various forms, such as “amusement”, “delighting”, “excitement”, “love”, “romantic”, “high”, and “surprise”, provide Chinese people with a new vocabulary for emotions, emotional scenarios, and emotional norms. They are examples of positions that “force” Chinese people to reinterpret the semantic and conceptual structure of these universal emotions almost to the point where they are thought about and experienced as they are in the countries of Anglophone culture. In other words, the use of Anglophone emotional concepts places Chinese people in the position of native speakers of English who think about and experience universal emotions in their own way.

Some aspects of Chinese masculinity and femininity are likewise redefined through the mobilisation of discursive positions that are closely related to Anglophone counterparts. In many technological advertisements, it can be easily observed that competitiveness, power, toughness, or vigour is set as the core meaning of their headlines:

Blood of race <Eneos>
 Full-blooded <Oris>
 The power of dreams <Honda>
 The Power to Surprise <Kia>
 Toughness beyond all limits <Casio>

According to Herek (1987), an adventuresome spirit and a proclivity to violence normally constitute important components of a Western male's self-image, but not of a Chinese man's. As a matter of fact, masculinity in China traditionally comprises the two complementary poles of *wen* (lit. literary attainment, cultural knowledge the mental) and *wu* (lit. materials valour, martial arts, the physical), and the *wen* polarity has always been prioritized over *wu* in the conventional Chinese mindset (Louie 2002). Traditional masculinity in China in this way is overtly refashioned through the masculine identification made with the product. Of equal interesting, all but one models of masculinity employed for these advertisements are Occidental. The invisibility or absence of the Chinese male and the displaying of an Occidental one to signify masculinity are certainly motivated by and grounded in the stereotype of Chinese masculinity mentioned above. Related to the topic under discussion, the remarkable extent of the predominance of Western masculinity featured with words carrying the meaning of competitiveness, violence, power, toughness or vigour implies that the masculinity of Chinese men might have been resexualized. This has had a significant impact on the discourse of Chinese masculinity that is mainly concerned with the two archetypes of Chinese masculinity mentioned above. Through this, the cultural credentials and physical skills of *wen* and *wu* which have historically

stood for Chinese masculinity are implicitly assessed, and this constitutes a simultaneous or parallel process invariably involved in refashioning Chinese men in respect of masculinity.³

Having described some of the features of masculinity, the following headlines taken from the beauty advertisements will now be used to illustrate how positions from Western beauty norms can be linked to the use of particular English words:

Age miracle, life miracle 七天, 惊现肌肤的青春奇迹 *qitian, jinxian jifu de qing chun qiji* (lit. seven days, surprisingly notice youth miracle of skin) (Guerlain)
 BOTANICAL FOR HEALTH. Accelerate skin cell renewing, enhance elastin complex (SiCiLi)
 Exceptional complete care—eye and lip cream (Guerlain)
 Everyday new face (Laneige)
 天生一对 UP UP *tiansheng yidui* UP UP (lit. inborn a couple UP UP), A cup ↗ B
 ↗ C ↗ D cup (Shaydeng)
 My daily skincare ally (Mininurse)
 迎接美肌新生, 重焕光彩 *yingjie meiji xinsheng, zhonghuan guangcai* (lit. welcome the rebirth of beautiful skin · rediscover brilliance) Uncover new skin,
 rediscover skin's perfection (Shiseido)
 Slim and shape (Marie France)

As suggested by the headlines above, the themes of beauty norms can be seen to include having light skin colour, big breasts, and a slender body, and to be governed by gendered notions of beauty conforming to traditional Eurocentric ideals (Frith and Mueller 2003). In addition, these beauty norms are often visually enhanced through the choice of a white woman as the model – mostly blond and usually tall and thin – set alongside the beauty product, which is being promoted. By contrast, the Chinese ideals of female beauty place an emphasis on the relationship between inner and outer beauty, and the latter is thought to represent virtuousness, talent, and other positive characteristics (Kit Wah Man 2000). While the Eurocentric ideals of beauty represented in Chinese advertising normally are the consequence of global capitalism and modernity, we should be aware that transnational femininity mainly concerned with beauty criteria evaluating female's physical appearance is so recontextualized as to intentionally or unintentionally “force” Chinese women to follow. More than this, however, there is an implicit assessment of a standard of beauty that conforms to the conventional Chinese ideals.

4.3. Assessing Chinese people

I pointed out above that the refashioning of Chinese people inevitably involves an element of implicit assessment: masculine features and feminine beauty are scrutinized, and, on this basis, new masculinity and beauty criteria are directed. As discussed, it is through a joint process of piecing together contrasting variants and comparisons that Chinese people decide on the kinds of masculinity a man must show and the physical features a woman should possess. Similarly, the process of orienting towards the positioning of native speakers who are characterized by English emotion words involves an implicit assessment of emotion concepts that are conventionally accepted and experienced by Chinese people. Implicit assessment is also discernible in the locating of Chinese people, which is fulfilled through the process of making a comparison between the local and the West.

Assessments in the corpus, however, are more often than not relatively palpable and explicit. Through the choice of particular English words that are able to evoke a feeling of being successful, Chinese people are frequently assessed in an explicit manner. Examples

can effortlessly be found in the headlines and slogans that plainly set English words like “succeed”, “victory”, or “win” as the core of their presentation:

Victory In Pajero, 成功源于帕杰罗 *chenggong yuanyu Pajielu* (lit. Success comes from Pajero) <Mitsubishi Motors>
 灵动·欲达则达 *lingdong · yuda zeda* (lit. Lingdong can go to anyplace at any time),
 Dynamic storm, Win whenever you want <Mitsubishi Motors>
 To make others succeed is to excel! <Top East>

In most cases, the discursive positioning of success offered for ascribing and claiming, though, is made through the association of a product with the situation of “accomplishments”, “achievements”, or instantaneous “changes” of a state with an outcome of a new state (Vendler 1967; Smith 1991) afforded by the use of particular English words. The following headlines and slogans must be indicative of the link of particular English words to the discursive positioning of success:

Access your Dreams <Toshiba>
 Exceed your vision <Epson>
 Dreams made real <Agilent Technologies>
 Fascination Accelerates <Honda>
 Get a new view <Honda>
 Go beyond <Land Rover>
 Go extra miles, 更进一步 *geng jinyibu* (lit. further) <Shell>
 Go find your wonders <Cannon>
 Located the core to grasp the wealth <Lishi>
 SHIFT_convention <Nissan>
 左右时间 *zuoyou shijian* (lit. control time) TIME YOUR TIME <LG Xcanvas>

Used in the headlines and slogans above, the verbs like “access”, “accelerate”, “make”, “exceed”, “grasp”, “find”, “shift”, and “time”; the adjectives “new” and “extra”; and the adverb “beyond” cannot simply be interpreted as just predicating a feature of a single element. Quite the opposite, in light of semantics, these English words carrying the inherent semantic distinctions, which exemplify the situation of accomplishment, achievement, and the production of a new state. According to cognitive linguist Seana Coulson (2000), these English words tell us something more important about the web of connections in a network involving a counterfactual scenario. To take just a few examples, the use of *access* indicates the counterfactual scenario of *denial*; the choice of *exceed* implies the counterfactual scenario of *fall behind*; the use of *accelerate* suggests the counterfactual scenario of *decrease* or *lessen*; and so forth. It is through a striking contrast to a counterfactual scenario activated by such words that the discursive positioning of success is finally presented. In this context, it seems important to point out that this discursive positioning of individualistic achievement, which has become a common theme challenging the dominant traditional Chinese value of collectivism, is associated intimately with the predominantly individualistic culture of America.

Another way that is also frequently used for assessing Chinese people is concerned with the recontextualization of discourses of high-ranking elites. Through the act of assigning royal attributes to the product, Chinese people who are repeatedly positioned to be inheritors of the cultural capital of a royal class have bestowed upon them the promise of a royal life historically once led by the aristocracy.

Caste of surpassing quality, 巅峰身份 *dianfeng shenfen* (lit. summit identity)

<Star River>
 King Manor Palace <Jiangshan Dijing>
 My Royal Life, My Gold Way <Gubei>
 The great hills and lakes for the king <Lake Valley>
 Princely life by Forbidden City <Naga>
 中国大宅 万乘之尊 *zhongguo dazhai wanchengzhun* (lit. Chinese big house, the
 emperor with ten thousand chariots at his command), Chinese villa, the
 nobility's class <Beijing Bay>

The English words, such as “caste”, “king”, “royal”, “princely”, and “nobility” in the headlines above taken from the real state advertisements produce an allusion to imperial Britain, overtly assigning to the products this status symbol. Through this means of intertextual practice, a discursive positioning of success is yielded, which is not contradictory to the normative link in China between concrete substance of success and culturally related things, such as privilege, status, or prestige. Thus realized, it is apt to claim that, in the assessment of Chinese people being successful, the lexical choices of English that are essential for triggering an allusion to the historic royal life in Britain are not simply used to form an intertextual reference to social status and privilege, but perhaps equally to recall a sense of the Chineseness of being successful that is traditionally also connected with social status and privilege.

5. Discussion

Analysis of the lexical items and discursive features of the English language that was utilized in a representative sample of Chinese advertisements has revealed a variety of positioning cues that are at work in the process of positioning Chinese people. The processes of locating as well as refashioning Chinese people often simultaneously involve an assessment of them. As has been illustrated, the particularities of English use in Chinese advertising produce at least three implications of importance for the cultural politics of English in China that can also be deployed in the interpretation of the former. First of all, the practice of naming or describing the local properties in English rather than Chinese may serve as a vehicle for global affiliation, allowing China and its people to venture outside of their own national boundaries to seek a related sense of global belonging. This also seems to hold true for the affiliation of Chinese masculinity and beauty criteria for women to their Western counterparts. Secondly, the connection made between the qualities of residential properties and the privileged classes of Britain or notions of royalty through intertextual allusion suggests the attempt of elites in China today to legitimize their newfound status and social standing. This may also be extended to the whole nation, and thus be linked to China's growing power and its political aspirations on the global stage. Therefore, despite being a foreign language standing for different cultures and values to China and most of its people, English is exploited to build up the national identity of contemporary China as well. Following this, it makes sense to argue that English is utilized in Chinese advertising not for identification but for communication, i.e., a useful instrument for making the nation-state and its people understood in international contexts. Finally, as can be further developed from the two preceding implications, the use of English in Chinese advertising is associated with the context of China's desire for modernity, and its historical and contemporary relations with the West.

Following Sonntag's (2003, 114) proposition on the correlation between global integration and the local politics of English, we can also extrapolate that the vastly politicized global English in China might be an indicator of the higher degree of

China's agency and global integration in linguistic globalization with English as one of its defining characteristics. Being highly globally integrated, China has become an actor increasingly politicizing global English in its own context and probably even beyond. As suggested by some sociolinguistic studies of English in China (e.g., S. Li 2015; W. Li 2014), China is not a passive victim of linguistic globalization, but, instead, an active participant resisting the way in which English is utilized to position it and its people by choosing and appropriating English as a counter discourse in the negotiation of local and global identities.

The perception of China in linguistic globalization as a highly globally integrated nation-state suggests further that Chinese people who are confronted with the choices of leading their lives through either Chinese or English are likely to align themselves with different parallel conceptions of being Chinese. This might have produced an implication that China and its people are moving towards being a non-community, raising significant issues as to the threat of English to Chinese cultural identity. Despite the widely accepted recognition of identities being negotiable and transformable; however, the possibility to align with different parallel conceptions of being Chinese does not mean there is a need to subscribe to the point of view that identities of Chinese origin are deemed disposable in this globalizing world. In the case of China, all evidence seems to be to the contrary. Although the massive impact of English in China is certainly felt, the integrity and prosperity of the Chinese language and culture still remain an important issue of language policy (Pan 2011). Therefore, while the findings reported, for instance, on English emotion words and the Western discourses of masculinity and femininity in advertising, seem to indicate that Chinese people are being positioned as Westerners, the use of English in Chinese advertising, and by extension perhaps in all the media of China, seems to bring little threat to the Chinese language and culture. Instead, in an attempt to enter a world system dominated by the Anglophone culture, China, far from weakening its commitment to cultural identity, is becoming more aware of the particularity of its civilization and still remains as "a nation which prides itself on its distinct cultural identity and avowed antagonism towards imperialism" (Adamson 1998, 142). Bhabha (1994) maintains that the demand of non-national culture is a demand not necessary for equality but often for recognition of difference; a demand that opens up a difference within dominant culture itself. There is no threat coming from the semiotic practices of transnational space, architecture or others in Chinese advertising with English mixing, but the fact that they have come to be interpreted as an assimilation of foreign elements by Chinese culture, and not the other way round, strongly suggests that China continues to maintain its self-identity regardless of Western influence. When turning the local medium of advertising with English mixing into their institutional voice, advertisers in China legitimize community norms and, meanwhile, exploit the public celebration of a multi-faceted, non-unitary Chinese people as a strategy of local audience retention (Mahootian 2005). For example, one of the ways to assess Chinese people through the intertextual allusion to notions of royalty by the particular use of English actually recalls Chinese meanings of success in association with status and privilege. In this sense, this empirical study to some extent is supportive of Giddens (1991) argument that linguistic reflexivity in late modernity is not necessarily transformative or detraditionalizing but can be at the same time a means of rediscovering a sense of rootedness, thus shapely throwing into question the overemphasis on possibilities for a self-conscious fashioning of identity through English. Since reflexivity is embedded, embodied and contradictory, it is naive to envisage reflexivity as "either some kind of internalized meta-reflection or simplistic liberatory potential against a backdrop of retreating social structure" (Adams 2006, 521).

A point that readily follows is that a simple perception of linguistic reflexivity and linguistic globalization amounts to very little if it is detached from its immediate embeddedness in a particular social, cultural, and political context.

6. Conclusion

The pervasiveness of English in China provides a good opportunity for documenting the domains of the spread of English and the local practice of English there, but it is also important to conduct a study of the impact English has on the daily life of local Chinese people. Positioned at the nexus of English, media and identity, this article has addressed from a text linguistic perspective the impact of English on Chinese people's daily lives, a topic remaining relatively unexplored in the literature, by answering the question of how Chinese people are positioned through the use of English to mould and define their collective identities. Lexical items of English and its discursive features were set as the sources for the identification of positioning cues, which are drawn upon for the assignment of English-related cultural values and attributes to the products being promoted: values and attributes that Chinese people lay claim to and ascribe to. Analysis of the lexical items and discursive features of the English language that was utilized has revealed the power English wields over moulding and defining the collective identity of Chinese people.

The premise behind this study was the asymmetry of power between advertisers and target audiences. However, this is not meant to declare that positions made available cannot be subject to any negotiation, contestation, revision, or other forms of resistance. Rather than mere viewers, target audiences are usually recognized as active producers of meaning. In order to make the observations and interpretations, which have been made here verifiable, it is advisable for future research to incorporate advertising production and the different levels of reception in terms of age, gender, education, class, and locale into the textual analysis by working directly with advertisers and Chinese people.

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Notes

1. Tag refers to certain information in small print and typically non-salient missed in the body copy.
2. In these examples, the Chinese translation of the brand names or headlines in English indeed seems to have the same function as the brand names or headlines in English.
3. I am aware that masculinities in China are a multidimensional and pluralistic construct (Song and Hird 2013; Zhang 2011).

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