

Bark, smoke and pray: multilingual Rastafarian-herb sellers in a busy subway

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Abstract

This paper is an analysis of how multilingual Rastafarian-herbalists organize multilingual and multimodal interactions in a subway. The rationale has been to understand the practice of multilingual repertoires by multilingual speakers in Cape Town marketplaces. It contributes to literature on language use in marketplaces by highlighting how linguistic and non-linguistic resources are drawn on and co-produced in interaction among Rastafarians who identify as informal herb traders. It also attempts to expand the theoretical apparatus of the sociolinguistics of globalization by introducing the notions of embodied rhythm and extreme locality. By applying these notions to how Rastafarian-herbalists organize multilingual and multimodal interaction in a subway, the analysis illustrates not only the importance of body positioning and bodily behaviour in multimodal communication, but also the emphasis on local languages and speech varieties that feature as important linguistic resources, and the multilingual performance of an extreme locality.

1. Introduction

This paper reports on the multimodal and multilingual interactions of two Rastafarian-Herb sellers in a busy train subway (underpass) in South Africa. These sellers draw on multiple linguistic resources (such as Kaaps, a local variety of Afrikaans, mixed with a local variant of Jamaican Patois and Xhosa/Zulu) and non-linguistic resources (such as body positioning, touching of herbal objects, gaze, the mimicking of bodily behaviour and so on) to co-produce with customers multimodal and multilingual interactions. Here, I also report on how such interactions are organized through the sale of various herbal products and the manipulation of multilingualism, bodily rhythms and locality.

In what is to follow, I contextualize the paper in the scholarship of the sociolinguistics of globalization and suggest the notions embodied rhythms (Erickson 1981, 2004) and extreme locality (Williams and Stroud 2010) to expand that field theoretically. The notion of embodied rhythms allows us to demonstrate how particular cultural stereotypes and cultural models of the body serve as resources in the organization of multimodal and multilingual interactions. The notion of extreme locality focuses on how participants organize interactions in small localities – such as subways (underpasses), corner shops, sales exchanges in alleyways – by drawing on local histories of objects, local knowledge of inter-/cross-cultural communication practices and identities in various localities. An extreme locality is established to create common ground

through multilingual and multi-modal communication practices in localities that have historically been framed and produced as monolingual, but have presently transformed into highly multilingual spaces. To illustrate these notions, I analyse three types of interactions: (1) multilingual and multi-modal interactions between a Rastafarian-herb seller and customers; (2) the sale of “Higher Grade” (a particular type of herb); and (3) a ritualized sales tactic for selling herbal products. I conclude the paper with a discussion of the importance of multilingualism and multilingual repertoires in the margins in an increasingly globalized world where extreme localities matter as much as big, expanding and densely networked spaces.

2. Multimodal and multilingual communication in marketplaces

The study of multilingual and multimodal communication (various modes of meaning making, see Kress and van Leeuwen 2006) in interactions, particularly in markets, helps us demonstrate how communication is shaped by the mobility of people and their languages (see Farfan 2003; Orr 2007). Scholars who conduct research in marketplaces point not only to the rich diversity of languages in use but also the complexity of multilingualism and multilingual repertoires (Choksi 2015). How we approach multilingual communication and the spaces multilingual speakers occupy has significantly changed given the varied meanings such speakers attach to speech practices, spaces and places. Whatever position we take on multilingualism and multimodal communication in local interactions, it seems clear that unique configurations of such interactions still require attention to how resources such as the body, rhythm and topic cohesion in conversations are taken up (see Erickson 1981; Scollon 1981). In Pennycook (2010, 2012) and Pennycook and Otsuji (2015), we find exemplary illustrations of how we as researchers of multilingualism should privilege local multilingualism as a product of the local, as well as understand how multilingual speakers organize their everyday activities – work and leisure – around the mobile linguistic resources they bring with and encounter in local spaces (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015, 4).

Pennycook and Otsuji (2015) argue, convincingly, that if we focus on how multilingual speakers in trading spaces, for example, achieve communication through layers of action and interaction (which includes attention to the body and locality), particularly with the view to understanding how linguistic resources are used to achieve everyday tasks, we could better understand the practice of multilingual and multimodal communication.

Interactions in market places are defined by multilingual and multimodal communication and are co-produced in localities by multilingual speakers in localities. Studies of markets to date have spotlighted how those who sell products (traders) and co-produce interaction with their customers are continuously involved in the negotiation of meaning, bodily rhythms (that is, physical proximities, local culturally driven gestures, body positioning) and culturally shared ideas of locality (see, for example, Lindenfeld 1978; Kapchan 1996; Bauman 2001; Haviland 2009, 2011). In South Africa, few studies have focused on marketplaces with a specific focus on multilingual and multimodal interaction (but see Lund 1998; Deumert and Mabandla 2009, 2013; Gastrow and Amit 2013).

In this paper, I seek to contribute to the cited studies of language and interaction analysing the co-production of multilingual and multimodal interactions through an application of the notions of embodied rhythms (inspired by the studies of Erickson 1981, 2004) and extreme locality (first introduced by Williams and Stroud 2010). A focus on embodied rhythms in such interaction helps us to highlight “rhythmic stress in speech and in body motion (i.e. posture, gesture, and gaze)” (Erickson 2004, 9) and what other non-linguistic resources are brought into “the social organization of attention and action in conversation” (Erickson 2004, 9).

A study of extreme locality will allow us to see (1) how interlocutors in interactions trade linguistic and non-linguistic elements as resources to establish a common idea about the locality they find themselves in; (2) how multilingual and multimodal communication is accomplished in locality through explicit deictic references to the local (often expressed through local languages) and local proxemics (often inter-/cross-culturally defined) (Williams and Stroud 2010, 39); and (3) how multilingual speakers contest and reach consensus about “acceptable linguistic forms and framings (metalinguistic disputes)” (Williams and Stroud 2010, 39), as they insert “transmodal features at the site of the interaction ... (that) are variously referenced multilingually” (Williams and Stroud 2010, 44–45) (here transmodal refers to complex multimodal contextualizations, deductions and interpretations across speech practices, meanings, spaces and places). The difference between locality and extreme locality, as I will try to illustrate later, is that the latter is developed through a shared interest of linguistic and non-linguistic forms and functions borne out of local histories and local travels of objects and people that are framed (in the general sense) as part of multimodal interaction and communication.

3. Multimodal and multilingual interactions in a subway

For this project, I implemented a short ethnographic fieldwork project of participation-observation for three months: I collected video and audio data of multimodal interactions two days a week. I found ethnographic fieldwork a useful approach because it accounts for how to make sense of the global forces emerging and interrupting longstanding social and traditional routines in small multilingual spaces (following Copland, Shaw, and Snell 2015). In other words, I chose ethnography to understand not only flows of people, objects and languages but also what frictions are caused in localities, focusing specifically on Rastafarian-herbalists. I also wanted to highlight the multilingual practices of Rastafarians because sociolinguists in South Africa have yet to refer to or document such practices in any comprehensive way. Before I proceed to describe the ethnographic context, I will discuss briefly Rastafarianism and then clarify what I mean by Rastafarian-herbalists and the herbs they trade.

3.2. Rastafarianism

Rastafarianism in South Africa has its roots in the transnational flows of Ethiopianism, based on the principles and beliefs of the Ethiopian King Haile Selassie, on the one hand, and Garveyism, based on the decolonial principles offered by Marcus Garvey, on the other hand (see Oosthuizen 1990; Bosch 1996). Rastafari is derived from Haile Selassie’s birth name “Ras” (meaning Prince in Ethiopian) and Tafari Makonnen. Rastafarianism, or Rastafari, is a religious and political movement, and like all the liberation movements, fought against the apartheid state. And in its latter day practice, Rastafarians still preach the unification of African people as expressed

in the principles of Garveyism (Chawane 2012, 17) with ethical principles based on the following twin ideologico-religious pillars: Ethiopianism and Garveyism. Both pillars emphasize the enlightenment and freedom of people of African descent from post-colonial hegemonies (Olivier 2010).

As a religious movement, the Rastafari is guided by the following religious ethnical practices (Tolsi 2011): She or he shall at all times read, cite and perform the scripture in the Holy Piby, that is the name given for the Holy Bible (King James Version), and the recitations/teachings of Haile Selassie; the Rastafarian shall workshop in house once on Saturday in a month; she or he shall imbibe in the holy herb (marijuana) at Nyahbinghi Holy gatherings and no Rastafari under the age of 18 shall smoke the herb without parental guidance; every Rastafari shall marry; members shall not be punished for wearing dreadlocks; and no polygamy or fornication is allowed under any circumstance (summarized in Chawane 2012, 181). Furthermore, Reggae music (also known as Jamaican dancehall music) defines the outward cultural and religious practices of the Rastafarian (see the excellent studies by Järvenpää 2015). Jamaican dancehall music has roots as far back as colonialism and it is a genre that comprise of both Western and African influence. It originates from Jamaica and other Caribbean islands and was inserted in the South African popular music scene more than 40 years ago. Like Hip Hop performance events where a deejay and an emcee move the audience, reggae dancehall events are organized around a selector (the deejay) and the audience (Järvenpää 2015).

Rastafarians' use of Rastafarian language (or Dread Talk, see Manget-Johnson 2008) in Cape Town is a mixture of local and heritage languages. The multilingual repertoire of a Cape Town Rastafarian comprises a multi-variable and highly stylistic use of the heritage Jamaican Creole and Khoi languages; language varieties such as Xhosa and Zulu; Kaaps (a variety of Afrikaans); English; and Sabela and Tsotsitaal. Sabela is the prison register of Afrikaans, and Tsotsitaal is an African stylect (Hurst 2008) commonly used by the Number Gangs¹ on the Cape Flats of Cape Town. In my data sets, I have found that my research participants typically use Jamaican Creole words such as “Ihi yahn Ihi” or “InI” (meaning I and I, we, or you and I), “Jah” (God), “Iya” (my brother) and “Amigideon” (a Jamaican patois pronunciation of Armageddon that Rastafarian utter for the name appearing in the book of Revelations in the Bible). The word not only describes the state of the world but the meaning Rastafarians attach to that word), to demonstrate their authenticity of that speech variety. They also use this variety to trade herbal products, as I will soon demonstrate. Those herbal products are herbs that cure ailments and sickness occurring in the body; herbs that you can use to wash your body and hair with – in other words, mainly for medicinal purposes – and herbs that are sold for ritual and recreational purposes (such as marijuana, called “Higher Grade” by the Rastafarians). The Rastafarians who sell herbs view themselves as herbal doctors, in other words, Rastafarian-herbalists.

3.2. The context: into the subway at Bellville railway station

Bellville, the research site I chose to conduct my fieldwork, is an urban space that lends itself well to an analysis of multimodal and multilingual communication and interactions. As a city space

uniquely positioned for global economic trade, Bellville could be defined as a porous place constantly made and remade by migration, mobilities and consumption practices. It is the destination for transnational migrants from North, West and East Africa and the establishment of various formal and informal businesses such as KFC and culturally inspired food stalls (Gastrow and Amit 2013). It is also a vibrant cultural city, host to various multilingual activities and performances.

Bellville railway station, also known as Bellstar Junction, is the second largest train station in the Western Cape, and is a major intermodal transport hub in the region. The station precinct is an important thoroughfare for the local Metrorail train service and the national Shosholoza Meyl train service, and commuters who rely on it also use other forms of transport such as the bus and mini-bus taxis at the bus/taxi terminus.

Commercially, Metrorail and Shosholoza Meyl are key tenants of Bellstar Junction. These two commercial entities provide financial viability of other tenants in the place and are largely dependent on the presence of these two enterprises. Furthermore, the large majority of people who walk through Bellstar Junction are commuters who alight and board the trains serviced by Metrorail. And many informal traders, including my participants, rely on the sale of their products to commuters.

Bellstar Junction became the central focus of my fieldwork. I collected data for three months, from June to August 2012 through participant-observation, on-site interviews, and video and audio recordings. I began fieldwork by first observing how informal traders erected their stalls and positioned their products in the early mornings of winter in June. Then, and working as part of a team of ethnographers interested in the use of language in the market area of Bellville, I followed traders pushing heavy trolleys of goods as they stopped and unpacked their goods and strategically positioned them in such a way that they would attract potential customers. I often observed movement of people in the early morning, and interaction with sellers to buy goods until late in the afternoon.

3.3. Data collection process

I met one of my research participants trading herbs with a fellow Rastafarian-herbalist outside Bellstar Junction. At the time, I approached them and introduced myself as a researcher from the university conducting fieldwork in the marketplace of Bellville. I spoke in Kaaps, the language that both participants spoke and then described at length what my research project was about and afterwards they explained to me the shape, meaning and use of some herbs and. I did not video or audio record their interactions at the time but at a later stage.

After a next encounter, both Rastafarian-herbalists introduced me to an older Rastafarian, who, though he did not trade herbs in Bellstar Junction, traded in snacks, sweets and other types of everyday consumables that commuters would be interested in. His stall is stationed at the top of a staircase leading down to the train station subway. And it is he who introduced me to the Rastafarian-herb sellers who would become the central focus of the study: Jeremy and Jaak.

Jeremy, an older and mature Rastafarian-herbalist, has been trading for a while in Bellstar Junction's subway. His fellow Rastafarians respects him even though he has been imprisoned for petty crimes. He is devout Rastafarian, so much so he has tattooed across his neck the word "Sakman" (Sackcloth). A Sackcloth man is a Rastafarian initiate in the process of converting to Rastafarianism, a member of the Rastafarian culture. He lives a nomadic lifestyle in the woods of Cape Town and is always seen barefoot, dressed in sackcloth. Jeremy was once a Sakman but due to precarious circumstances, he and his family had fallen on hard times. By day he trades herbs in Bellstar Junction's subway and by night he finds a place for him, his wife and daughter to sleep. His wife also trades sweets and other consumables. Jaak is younger than Jeremy and commutes to Bellville on a daily basis. He lives in Bellville South and has been mentored by Jeremy for the last few years. Unlike Jeremy, Jaak does not have a wife but has a child and a permanent residence. He used to trade herbs outside the Bellstar Junction but with the help of Jeremy he found a permanent station on the floor of the subway where he and Jeremy would roll out a mat and pack out their herbal products (this station is also recognized by other traders as their spot).

After I had also introduced my study to them, I was given permission to use a small camera placed in my T-shirt pocket to record interactions between the herbalists and potential customers because initially I encountered great difficulty taking photographs in the subway given the poor lights and the general suspicion by other traders that I may be part of a focused colluding and overhearing (Goffman 1981, 134) often employed by the police regimenting the marketplace (compare the experience of Farfan 2003, 637; compare, French 2001).

In this process of the data collection, I became aware of the fact that while I did not share the Rastafarian-herbalist identity of my participants, we did share a racial identity, Coloured², and spoke Kaaps³ as a first language variety. We also share the fact that our bodies have been historically racialized. I used this marker to initiate not only contact with other Rastafarian-herbalists but also to establish common ground with them.

4. Calling out herbal products in multilingual voices in a subway

Herbal trading is a type of interaction where male Rastafarian-herbalists prodigiously mix and perform genres, information and discourses to attract a potential customer (compare the Mexican street performers, merolicos, in Haviland 2011). Often faced with reluctance and suspicion, Rastafarian-herbalists bark out information of their products in multiple local languages, accents and styles to attract customers. But in order to establish an interaction with customers, they have to do so by adjusting to embodied rhythms of their customers and this is accomplished first through calls.

According to Lindenfeld, "calls" are part of product performances in marketplaces that offer quick but useful information (a feature or recognizable characteristic) about products and draws "people's attention to the sender" (Lindenfeld 1990, 69). They serve as a verbal advertisement, a sound bite, are short, give the price of the product and usually comprise of one or two words or at best a lean phrase. A call also accompanies the use of non-verbal resources such as gestures, pointing and gaze and "multisensory process[es] that combine verbal and visual appeal" (Bauman

2001, 62). For example, one of my research participants would call out the herbs for sale in the following way, and often in quick succession:

Extract 1. (Jaak)

English: Berlin Sans FB; Xhosa: Courier New; Kaaps: Calibri

1. Jaak: Fresh Herbs! 4
2. Jaak: Fresh Herbs!
3. Jaak: Zonka Amayeza! (All the herbs)
5. Jaak: Zonka Amayeza! (All the herbs)
6. Jaak: Higher Grade, Tjommie?! (Marijuana, Friend?!) (looking at a male passer-by)
7. Jaak: Higher Grade?

The above calls illustrate that when an herbal seller cries “Fresh Herbs!” (lines 1 and 2), there is usually repetition of a model two-word combination in English. The same is done in Xhosa (lines 3 and 4), but the translation reveals that whereas the barking of the sale of “Fresh Herbs” is very specific in its meaning, referring to freshly collected herbs, calling out “Zonka Amayeza” is much more general. Certain call pairs or word combinations comprise of more complex forms, as is the case with crying out “Higher Grade” (Marijuana) followed by a referent or an addressee, “Tjommie” (Friend) (pronounced in Kaaps). (Jaak and Jeremy utter the phrase Higher Grade on a daily basis and the mere uttering of that phrase to passers-by or regular Marijuana users signals that Jaak and Jeremy sell the product. Higher Grade is thus a common label for marijuana.) These short calls serve as product verbalization and are open to lengthening as herbalists elaborate on the features and characteristics of herbal products by providing more information about products. Such calls are usually stated as declaratives and are “consensed,” “syntactically lean” and therefore subject to repetition (Bauman 2001). For example:

Extract 2. (Jaak)

English: Berlin Sans FB; Xhosa: Courier New; Kaaps: Calibri

1. Jaak: Zuka gaba (herbs for vomiting), mamma, herbs for the stomach!
2. Jaak: Herbs for the sickness!
3. Jaak: Hierso, zuka gaba (herbs for vomiting), high blood pressure!
4. Jaak: Gesonne kruie, vi' alle kwale (fresh herbs, for all ailments), jonga-jonga (look-look)!

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The multilingual calls given above have a specific structuring purpose for herbal product presentations and the onus rests on herbal traders to successfully present their herbal products

while at the same time using embodied rhythms of their own and customers to organize interaction. Such presentation is accomplished through calls initially but fully realized through multimodal and multilingual communication.

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4.1. Bark: multimodal interaction with multilingual customers

Taking into consideration the above, I observed that Rastafarian-herbalists perform calls because it makes it possible for them to initiate interaction with potential customers and to organize multimodal and multilingual communication while drawing on linguistic and non-linguistic resources during the sale of herbs. For example, when Rastafarian-herbalists gesture towards potential customers they invite them to share in the history of an herbal product that has travelled over many localities: from its first place of conception (where it was planted), the stories constructed around how the herb travelled across various locations, to its current extreme locality in the subway of Bellstar Junction's train station. Let me illustrate this with an analysis of an interaction. One morning, I observed how more than three customers approached Jaak to inquire and buy particular herbs (at the time Jeremy had been imprisoned for a petty crime – he had in his possession marijuana). The first customer was an old lady who approached the mat of herbs slowly. The reason for this was that at the precise moment she came near the mat, the subway filled with passengers running, walking slowly and rushing from one platform to the next. Thus, she came as a surprise to Jaak. But he jumped up and immediately initiated contact, choosing his language and accent carefully and slowing down his body to enunciate at a slower pace information about the herb.

Extract 3. (Jaak; Black Female 1; Coloured Female 2)

English: **Berlin Sans FB**; Xhosa: *Courier New*; Kaaps: *Calibri*

1. Black Female 1: (walks slowly up to Jaak, bows down and makes a request) (Inaudible)
2. Jaak: (Jaak, seated next to me on the floor, stands up to walk over to the other side of the mat to fetch a herb and shows it to the customer. I, the Researcher, also stands up and close to Jaak and the F1 starts to record the interaction)
3. Black Female 1: **How much is this?**
4. Jaak: *Unozi? (Herb?) A piece is ten rand.*
5. (Talking between J and F1 drowned out for a few seconds because of increased pedestrians walking past)
6. Black Female 1: **Huh?** (Watching how Jaak is cutting the herb)
7. Jaak: *Tien rand . Ten rand.*
8. Black Female 1: (Picks up the herb. Points at it). **This is Nonkwe (a local herb)?**
9. Jaak: (Jaak smiles and agrees). **It's this one yes.**
10. (Noise level increases again from passing pedestrians walking from one platform to the next)
11. Black Female 1: **Oh, you cut it. Ok.**
12. Jaak: (Jaak proceeds to pick a brown paper sheet, cuts the herb again, and shows this to the customer)
13. Black Female 1: **Where is your brother that was here?**
14. Jaak: **Jeremy?**
15. Black Female 1: Yes
16. Jaak: **In Jail Rasta.**
17. Jaak: **This one is from Knysna and this one comes from P.E.** (pointing to the herb)
18. Black Female 1: (inaudible)
19. Jaak: **Yes, they have the same purpose**
20. Black Female 1: (inaudible)
21. Jaak: (Wraps up paper sheet and hands it to Black Female, when another customer, Coloured Female 2, walks swiftly into view)

From lines 1 to 11, the black customer asks about the herb, pointing to it, which allows Jaak to briefly mention the name of the herb. She is a returning customer, I later found out. This is evident when she asks Jaak, in line 13, about the whereabouts of the “other Rasta.” Jaak replies “Jeremy” to which the customer replies in the affirmative. As they talk about the herb, the subway is filled with noise from commuters departing and alighting from trains, and distracted for a moment Jaak retakes the floor to enunciate the geographical origins of the specific herb the customer has sought.

The interaction between him and the black female customer is accomplished in English. But as it will become clear below, the arrival of a coloured female customer (F2) requires Jaak to reorganize the interaction by repositioning his body and gaze to keep the attention of both customers now on the conversational floor.

As Jaak finished the sale between black female 1, wrapping the herb in a brown paper sheet (line 21 above), the coloured female customer arrived. She hovers around hoping to get Jaak’s attention,

and then decides to turn around and walk away from the conversational floor. Jaak realizes this, shifts his attention and shouts: “Ha-ah mamma don’t run! Don’t run mamma!.” He secures her attention through this action, she slows down her body and Jaak is then able to fix his gaze with hers. He now has the embodied rhythms of the two customers fully involved in the developing organization of his multilingual and multimodal interaction. As he talks to the new customer, the first customer, black female 1, moves to the edge of the conversational floor and changes her role from potential customer to silent overhearer, a visible eavesdropper. Given this change in interactional organization and management, the second customer then assumes the stance of herb buyer and asks for a herb in Kaaps.

Extract 4. (Jaak; Coloured Female 2)

English: **Berlin Sans FB**; Xhosa: *Courier New*; Kaaps: *Calibri*

1. Jaak: n Garlic? (pointing). n Bossie knoffel?
A Garlic? (pointing). A Bunch of Garlic?
2. Coloured Female 2: Moet ek dit sterk aan maak of vlou?
Do I need to make a strong or flimsy mix?
3. Jaak: Sterk!
Strong!
4. Jaak: (gestures whether he should give a different herb by pointing to the herb)
5. Coloured Female 2: Net afsny van dai (pointing to the herb on brown paper sheet)
Just cut from that
6. Jaak: Bietere om te raspe. Mammie raspe vir hom (pointing) ennie (inaudible) wortel. Helfte van die (pointing to the herb) en maak die annes oek soe.
It’s better to grate it. Mother grate this one (pointing) and the root. Just half of this and also do this to the other one as well.
7. Coloured Female 2: Hoeveel is dai?
How much is that?
8. Jaak: Die is twintig rand.
This is twenty rand.
9. Coloured Female 2: Hoeveel?
How much?
10. Jaak: Twintig.
Twenty.
11. Jaak: (opens brown paper sheet to package of the herbs).
12. Coloured Female 2: Moet ek nou alles dai aanmaak?
Must I boil everything?
13. Jaak: Alles **ma**. (Shaking head up and down to make yes gesture). **Mamma** vi’ alles ingooi. Vi’ hulle twee raspe (pointing to the herbs) en inmeng en vir hom (pointing to herb and making a cutting gesture) in die helfte.
Everything ma. Mamma must boil everything. These two you grate and mix and this one you cut in half.
14. (A third customer, male, arrives and inquires about a specific herb). (Jaak says he doesn’t have such a herb – audio inaudible)

We see in the above extract that the herbalist uses the honorifics “ma” and “mammie” (in Kaaps) and “mamma” (in accented isiXhosa) (both three words meaning mother) in the stretch of interaction. This is a frequent verbal gesture, I found in my data, used not only among herbal

traders but also generally in Bellville's marketplace by other traders to show respect to older women who buy products and other consumables. But in this case, I note, the use of "ma" and "mammie" is reserved for the coloured customer who conducts the sale in Kaaps, and "mamma" is uttered because our herbal trader is aware that the first customer is a mature black female who possibly does not understand Kaaps.

Specifically, from lines 1 to 6 Jaak instructs the coloured female customer how to ready the herbs for usage. Because she is older than him, he does not use the informal referent "dji" (you), but prefers to use "mammie" ("dji" is widely used by Kaaps speakers in informal situations but the choice the herbalist makes here is to use a more respectable referent from his multilingual repertoire). On the one hand, he uses mammie (a term of endearment) in a public place, in attempt to manage the interaction through cultural markers of respect. (Mammie is usually reserved for private use among family members and siblings.) This introduces a sort of linguistic complexity into the multimodal interaction between the herbalist and the customer because the use of mamma and mammie not only indicates a shift in interaction, but also constitutes a series of realignments with the customer to connect on a respectable level. In other words, we see here the herbalist personalize the interaction as a way to demonstrate that he is a respectable seller of herbs.

To summarize, it is clear that Jaak is an acute linguistic observer of inter-/cross-cultural communication in everyday interaction and has mastered how to model and format a culturally sensitive form of multimodal interaction in the subway. He trades in the subway space in such a way that his multilingual and multimodal communication not only focuses in on the deictic references he makes to the flow of his herbal products that are traded in the current small place, and where the customer has found them, but he also employs culturally sensitive and recognizable proxemics in the interactional space. And for him to successfully construct an extreme locality, he reaches a consensus with his customers as to what is the acceptable multilingual form and function to provide information about his herbs. For example, in Extract 3, the customer approached Jaak to request a specific herb. Not knowing how to respond to the request, Jaak asks if the customer is looking for Unozi, a general name for herbs in Xhosa. Jaak moves closer to the customer as she asks "Huh?," seeking some clarity. Not knowing Jaak fully understands Xhosa she instead herself refers to the herbs she wants, Nonkwe (a local herb). At this point, she inserts into the conversational floor her shared understanding of the herbal product (from where it flowed from to its current location) and suggests to Jaak that she furthermore shares the extreme locality that he has established through the sale of herbs that has a history of formation in other small places far from its current location. This is also evident when Jaak states that the Nonkwe herb comes "... from Knysna and this one comes from P.E" (line 17, Extract 3), alluding to the fact that the history of the herb (object), its travels to the current location, contributes to the emergence of an extreme locality. In Extract 4, this locality is further established through the use of honorifics (lines 6 and 13) and language varieties other than English: Kaaps; particularly when Jaak utters phrases such as "Bietere om te raspe" (It's better to grate it, line 6, Extract 4).

The above examples demonstrate that his successful command of Kaaps, English and Xhosa (all linguistic resources used for successful interaction) are indicators of his multilingual repertoire and how he is able to manage the interactional floors with such multilingualism. He relies on those languages to not only successfully execute the sale of herbs, but to establish common ground during multimodal communication, all indicators of an extreme locality.

4.2. Smoke: the sale of Higher Grade

Higher Grade or marijuana is one of the herbal products sold by the Rastafarian-herb sellers. It has a distinct clientele. It is a product, on the one hand, often used recreationally by herb sellers to get them through the day but it is also used particularly when they have very few customers or when too many customers buy their products. On the other hand, Jeremy and Jaak use it for ritual purposes: in other words, before they smoke the marijuana they first say a prayer to Jah (God). For example, one morning I arrived at the subway, Jaak and Jeremy invited me to observe how they smoked marijuana. We walked to the end of subway and once outside they first surveyed the area for any police or security personal, since they would likely be arrested if the police found them in possession of the herb. Thereafter, Jaak and Jeremy kneeled to the ground – I remained standing – filled their pipes with fresh marijuana after which Jeremy said a prayer and then they each proceeded to light up their pipes and smoke the herb.

This opening description to this section puts forward the argument that there is a distinction between the sale of Higher Grade and its use as an herb for prayer rituals by Rastafarians. The sales exchange and interaction of Higher Grade to customers interested in the herb is organized and accomplished differently from the sale of other herbs. This multilingual interaction is also organized through embodied rhythms where the seller and the buyer attempt to hide from view the exchange of money and the herbal product. The process would go as follows: the Rastafarian-herb seller would bark out “Higher Grade!” and an interested customer would come forth to buy; both the seller and the buyer would survey the area for any police personal or security guards; Then they would proceed to exchange the money and the product (see Figure 1 below). Here is an interactional example between a fellow Rastafarian and Jaak:

Extract 5. (Jaak; C: Customer)

English: **Berlin Sans FB**; Xhosa: *Courier New*; Kaaps: *Calibri*

1. C: (Arrives out of camera shot) (inaudible request to Jaak) Hie' by jou? Ek kom baklei met julle twee.
Here by you? I've come to fight with you two.
2. Jaak: Waar oo'?
About what?
3. C: Ganza my broe'. Gie n bietjie Ganza.
Marijuana my brother. Give me some Marijuana.
4. Jaak: Soek die man Ganza?
Are you looking for Marijuana?
5. C: Ja, ek soek n bietjie, ek wil n pil swaai. Ek will net lekker outzoom man. Waar is hy?
Yes, I'm looking for some. I want to roll me a blunt. I want to zoom out. Where is it?
6. Jaak: (Jeremy goes and fetch the Higher Grade, hidden in a Niknaks packet out of his bag. They turn their backs to the camera. Male 1 smells the marijuana).

In this short exchange both interlocutors speak Kaaps to organize the interaction. His fellow Rastafarian arrives informing Jaak he wants to fight him and Jeremy (not present at the time of recording). Jaak asks about what and instead of giving him an answer, his fellow Rastafarian asks for “Ganza,” a local name for marijuana (line 3). Notice that the fellow Rastafarian does not purchase the herb but asks for it because he wants to zoom out (line 5); he assumes that Jaak would give it to him for free since they know each other as Rastafarians. Jaak then reaches for a packet of Niknaks chips packet hidden between the other herbs on his mat, and gives the herb and concludes the interaction.



Figure 1. Rastafarian-herbalists hiding the sale of Higher Grade.

In the next example, two customers approach Jaak to buy some “Swazi,” another local term for marijuana. (This time there is an exchange of money).

Extract 6. (Jaak; C1: Customer 1; P: Pedestrian)

English: Berlin Sans FB; Xhosa: Courier New; Kaaps: Calibri

1. Jaak: Aweh, *what do you say now?*
2. C1: *Swazi?*
3. Jaak: *How much do you have?*
4. C1: *15?*
5. Jaak: Ja, it's *15 serious* (pronouncing serious as “sihriyahs” like a black Xhosa first language speaker who speaks English as a second language)
6. Jaak: (to a pedestrian walking down the subway) *What you say my broe? Alright?*
7. P: *Awe my broe!* (Pedestrian walking past replies)
8. Jaak: *Sharp getuie.* (Good my friend)

In the above exchange, the body position and demeanour of the two customers are apprehensive (see Figures 2 and 3 above). Jaak asks them whether one or the other had decided to buy higher trade, upon which one asks if he has Swazi. This momentary and very short interaction is accomplished entirely in English. And instead of entering a long and winding conversation about the negotiation of the herbal product, characteristic of most exchanges with customers buying other types of herbs, the customers instead bargain the price of the product. They question the

price of the herb and as a result Jaak snaps at C1 (line 4) by confirming the price and pronouncing the word serious like a black first language Xhosa speaker who speaks English as a second language (line 5).

The sale of Higher Grade is a type of sale dependent on the manipulation of multimodal communication that involves the monitoring of embodied rhythms of those (the police, commuters walking past, other informal traders) most likely to monitor the sale of the herb by watching the customer and Rastafarian-herbalists body movement and general interaction. While the sale of the herb is important to the survival of the Rastafarian-herbalist, besides its ritual purpose, its very advertisement to the larger moving public in the marketplace requires alternative multimodal communication strategies. Such strategies involve inattention, avoidance, standing with your back to other interactions likely to influence the interaction of the sale of the herb (all tactics of the manipulation of embodied rhythms): for example, in Figures 1–3, the customers are standing close to Jaak and this researcher; their backs are against other types of interaction in an effort to conceal the sale of the herb; and their gaze are usually fixed to the floor or in other cases they look up to the roof. It is these actions of multimodal interaction and various references customers have for referring to the Higher Grade herb that give meaning to the performing of an extreme locality.

An extreme locality emerges in this case because of the local culturally inspired labels for marijuana that is in use: Ganza and Swazi. In Extract 5, we see that Jaak's fellow Rastafarian request Ganza from him because he wants to zoom out. Here the fellow Rastafarian assumes that Jaak is aware of the meanings behind his request: that he would not pay and that he is borrowing from him some Ganza (line 3). In this small place, the subway, Jaak and his fellow Rastafarian exchange culturally shared information based on the assumption that each one already knows how to interact to sustain the extreme locality under which this type of multilingual and multimodal communication takes place. In Extract 6, the customer's request Swazi from Jaak (line 2), thereby inserting into the locality another history and linguistic variation of the herbal product on sale. But, losing patience with their bargaining of the herb's price (line 34), Jaak also subtly introduces into locality a mock version of Black English when he pronounces serious (as sihriyahs) like a black Xhosa first language speaker who speaks English as a second language. Although the customers give no retort or criticism of that, as the goal is to successfully purchase Swazi, and as is clear from the Figures 2 and 3, they do complete the sale of the herb.

4.3. Praying for herbs

One morning, on our way back from the small coffee shop across the way from Bellrail station, Jeremy and I observed how Jaak had already called closer potential customers: a mature woman and her son. The route we took is different from the one we usually take and as we descended down the stairs, coffee in hand, we noticed Jaak waving Jeremy to come closer and assist him in the sale of herbs. As we entered the interactional space, Jeremy took over the conversational floor.



Figure 2. Two customers approach to buy Higher Grade.

The son, a fellow Rastafarian we soon find out, has brought his mother to the subway to buy some herbs to ward off evil spirits. The herbs, they reckon, will also support them to ritually prepare for an upcoming court appearance that involves the trial of an alleged crime committed by the son. The mother, like the son, is a religious person, a devout Christian, and after some persuasion by her son (we came to learn) has sought alternative counsel from the Rastafarian-herb sellers. After inquiring about the issue, the mother has, and learning she is a believer in God, Jeremy suggests a few herbs that would help ward off evil spirits. He embodies the rhythm of a herbalist: He picks up a number of herbs and informs the customer that they grow in Mosselbay; points to African potatoes from Johannesburg; and then suggests that she could cook red carrots, called David's carrots with some "katdoring" (asparagus fern).



Figure 3. The exchange of money for Higher Grade.

This goes on for a while. After gathering all the herbs together, Jeremy then proceeds to explain what they are and instructs the customer how to use them, and gives her the price:

Extract 7. (Jeremy)

Kaaps: Calibri

1. Jeremy: Tien, tien, tien, tien dan vra ek soema 'n honderd en vyftagrand. Ma sien uh uh uh die roots wek soe. Voor ma dit doen was ma, sit 'n gebed da boe op. Daas kla 'n gebed op ma ma se gebed cause just a prayer away just pray away, because Jesus is dood. Dassie mee 'n Jesus nie. Hy't gese hy kom met 'n nuwe naam (rest inaudible). Lord of Lords. Kings of Kings. Sien moeder nou soe. O's waggie nog vir Jesus om te komie. Hy's kla hie. Hy kom met 'n nuwe naam. Baie mense glo aan Jesus. Os aanbid die siele, God, nie Jesus 'ie. Jesus was mos dood-gemaak gewies en na drie dae opgestaan so as (inaudible). My naam is Jeremia. (starts to pray on the herbs). (*Ten, ten, ten, ten then I'll ask a hundred and fifty rand. Mamma, you see uh uh uh these roots work like this. Before you take it, you wash and you pray on it.*)

I've already put a prayer on it but mamma's prayer is just a prayer away you just pray away because Jesus is dead. There's no Jesus. He said he'll come with another name (rest inaudible). Lord of Lords. Kings of Kings. See mamma, like that. We don't wait for Jesus to come. He's already here. He's coming with a new name. We pray to the same God, not Jesus. Jesus was killed and rose from the dead after three days (inaudible). My name is Jeremia. (starts to pray on herbs.)

In the above extract, Jeremy has organized the multimodal conversational floor by focusing on religious discourse. He links his embodied rhythms to discourses of faith and creed in the interaction, in the following ways. Firstly, he uses his body actively to point to the herbs as he counts up their price. After the customer agrees to which herbs she wants, he proceeds to lay each herb on a brown paper sheet. While all of us have been focused on his body movements, as he separates the herbs, Jeremy informs the customer in Kaaps that she has to wash the herbs first and then pray on them.



Figure 4. Explaining the use of the herbs.



Figure 5. Praying for the herbs.

Jeremy does not necessarily demonstrate to the customer, as yet, how to pray on the herbs, but informs her that there is already a prayer on it.

Secondly, the shift in focus toward prayer provides the impetus for Jeremy to make several claims about Jesus Christ and the Christian faith, and to bring in other types of religious knowledge. Unchallenged by the customer or her son, Jeremy then launches into a subtle argument that Jesus Christ, according to his Rastafarian faith, is “The Lord of Lords” and “Kings of Kings” and that his faith does not rest on the coming of a mortal man because he is already among his people. In the absence of a retort, he realizes that perhaps he is imposing his own Rastafarian beliefs too much and as a result he states that they “pray to the same God, but not Jesus”; and subsequently attempts to reestablish common ground. He thus indicates to his customer that he knows that Jesus died and rose after three days; and that the pronunciation of his name in Afrikaans as Jeremia (alluding to the Prophet Jeremiah) provides further evidence of this.

These assertions in the interaction point to the fact that both the customer and her son are provided access to the religious practices of Rastafarians in the subway. Even though the interaction is conducted mainly in Kaaps, with code-switching to English here and there, towards the end of the interaction, despite the overtures of religious common ground, Jeremy ensures that Rastafarian orthopraxy ultimately defines the interaction, as he prays on the herbs:

Extract 8. (Jeremy; Jeremy; M: Mother; P: Pedestrian)

English: **Berlin Sans FB**; Xhosa: **Courier New**; Kaaps: **Calibri**

1. Jeremy: Die wo'd Als ma, ek dra dit by my
This will become Als mother, I carry it with me.
2. M: (Shaking head approvingly)
3. Jeremy: (Arranges the herbs neatly on the brown paper sheet and starts to pray) Kadoes en Kadas! (places hands over the herbs). Shamaza! (slaps hands together)
4. Jaak and Jeremy: **Rastafarai!**
5. Jeremy: (Counting the herbs): **Garlic** (touches it), **Red carrot** (touches it), (imperceptible), **Potato**, en n Starter. Shebenza, Shebenza everyday (holds clenched fists up in the air). **Jah!**
6. Jaak and Jeremy: **Rastafarai!** (Jeremy looks up to the Researcher)
7. Jeremy: Ek sit soema vi' ma die gebed daa' bo-op.
I've put a prayer on it for mother.
8. M: Baie dankie
Thank you very much.
9. Jeremy: (folds up the brown sheet and gives it to the customer)

In the above extract, before he prays, Jeremy informs the customer that when she mixes the herbs in water it will turn into a drinkable elixir that will taste like Als (or Wilde Als, a shrub that grows in South Africa and often used for internal illnesses). She looks at him and agrees by shaking her head approvingly (see Figure 4 above). Jeremy then proceeds to pack the herbs on the brown paper sheet and begins his prayer. He shouts the words Kadoes en Kadas, places his hands over the herbs and then shouts Shamaza (line 3) as he slaps his hands together. From line 4, he enlists Jaak to help him chant the prayer further as they both shout “Rastafarai!” At this moment, the subway starts to fill with commuters disembarking a train, but unfazed, Jeremy starts to touch each herb, counting and calling them out (line 5): Garlic, Red carrot, potato and a starter. He then code-switches to isiXhosa by shouting “Shebenza, Shebenza (Work, Work) everyday” and then utters the Rastafarian word for God, “Jah.” This is followed by Jaak and Jeremy both shouting “Rastafarai!” (line 6). (To ensure I also believe and share in the interaction, Jeremy looks up to check whether I am paying attention). This prayer ritual is finally broken as Jeremy informs the customer that he has put a prayer on the herbs (Figure 5).

In the interaction in Extract 8 above, Jeremy takes advantage of his customer’s lack of knowledge of the local variety of Jamaican patois that he speaks. But one could also assume that by this stage in the interaction, the customer has a degree of respect for the Rastafarian-herbalist, enough to trust his judgement where it concerns the dissemination of the herbs to her. She also further seems to believe in his ability since he established common ground by pointing out explicitly their religious affiliations: he a Rastafarian and she a Christian. As such, they both share in the making of an extreme locality through the recognition of ritual prayer (line 7) accomplished in Kaaps.

5. Conclusion

This paper has introduced two concepts in order to expand the remit of marketplace multilingual and multimodal interactions. Specifically, it focused on the interactions of Rastafarian-herb sellers by focusing in on how they organize and perform interactions with their customers. An attempt to also contribute to the sociolinguistics of globalization, I tried to anchor the analysis by introducing the notions of embodied rhythms and extreme locality. Both notions highlight different aspects of the multilingual and multimodal interactions of the Rastafarian-herb sellers.

In the analysis, it is clear that my participants were aware of the inter-/cross-cultural dimension of embodied rhythms (physical distance, body positioning) of their customers in the interactions. They drew on cultural stereotypes and cultural models of the body as a way to express their know-how of how embodied interactions should be achieved. In the first set of data, the Barking data, they understood that to successfully organize multimodal and multilingual interaction and remain in control of the conversational floor – not only for the sake of successfully executing the sale of a herb – they had to monitor their own and their customer’s body positioning, movement and demeanour, and so on. They kept eye contact during the entire interaction and tried to perform as best they could the customer’s language or language variety when they talked about the history and use of an herb. This we saw clearly when Jaak interacted with a Black female customer and then a Coloured female customer. We also saw that the Rastafarian-herbalists manipulated embodied rhythms in the sale of Higher Grade and in the last case produced a ritualized performance (a prayer) that fully involved the bodies of the customer, the researcher and herbalists. Perhaps it is the ritualized performance of the prayer that suggests the strongest that embodied rhythms mattered much in the organization of multimodal and multilingual interactions in the subway. This certainly fed into an understanding of a shared idea of locality, what I here call extreme locality.

The notion of extreme locality, I hope, as I introduced it here, sheds light on what happens semiotically and linguistically to a locality when participants agree on interaction in small localities that are redefined by objects that have local histories of travel, when local languages and varieties are used in such a way to establish common ground, and when all participants in the interaction or on the conversational floor draw on local knowledge of inter-/cross-cultural communication practices and identities in that small place (particularly when historically that place has been previously defined as monolingual). In this paper, I tried to demonstrate that interlocutors who participate in the sale of herbs with Rastafarian-herbalists do so in a reciprocal way: they not only want to trade their money for herbal products, but they also do so by trading out their own linguistic and non-linguistic elements in their multilingual repertoires. The moment the herbalist uses any linguistic or non-linguistic element in their repertoire, there is common ground. This is clear in the way the herbalist performs the local word for the herbal product in Xhosa and Kaaps, as we have seen in Extracts 1 to 6.

We have also seen the notion of extreme locality emerge in explicit reference to the local histories of objects: that is the local history and trajectory of herbal products. Though there are no explicit deictic references to the local, there are often explanations given of the original location of objects and the distance they have travelled: such as herbs that come from Knysna and P.E. (Port Elizabeth), or herbs that have synonyms in the local (such as Higher Grade called Ganza and Swazi). These herbs, while retaining their origins, are given new meaning in the trading context of the Rastafarian-herbalist as their sale hinges on the use of acceptable linguistic form and framings (whether it is accomplished in English, Kaaps or Xhosa) and of course, whether the interaction can be accomplished transmodally, instead of just multimodally.

Notes

1. The Number Gangs are a notorious faction of gangs that comprise the 26s, 27s and 28s (see Steinberg 2004).
2. Coloured is a racial category historically defined by the apartheid state of South Africa as a mixed race group, not easily defined as black (African), white or Indian.
3. Kaaps is a historically marginalized variety of Afrikaans (Hendricks 2012), a speech variety that is not, according to Adam Small, “Gammataal” but a first language for many so-called Coloured and Malay people of Cape Town (Hendricks 2012).
4. In this example, the call is uttered by one Rastafarian-herbalist.

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