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The Discursive Construction of the Identity of Beijing as Olympic City

Ever since Beijing’s successful bidding in 2001, China has been carrying on an enormous nation-wide Olympic project in order to build up a new cultural identity for Beijing and also the whole nation, in which Beijing-based English popularization and cross-cultural education are two top priorities. Based on a 3-month ethnographic fieldwork in Beijing before, during and after the Olympic Games, the presentation aims to illustrate how the ideologies of English language learning and teaching underpin the discursive construction of the identity of Beijing as Olympic city, and how Beijing’s cultural identity is negotiated through the mediation between Orientalism and “Olympism”. My data include interviews with Olympic volunteers, English teachers as well as administrative staff who are involved in the Olympics-driven English training. The Olympics-related official teaching materials of English language and Intercultural Communication, as well as the media discourses of official Olympic publicity will also be studied. Drawing on the Critical Discourse Analysis, the research aims to provide an insight into the political economy of English as a global language, and how English is legitimized as the symbol of internationalization in the world’s grandest sports and intercultural events. Preliminary findings will be provided in the presentation.