

# Multilingual Margins

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# Multilingualism as racialization

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## **Abstract**

**South** African today remains a nation torn by violence and racial inequity. One of major challenges for its people is to create new futures across historically constituted racial divides, by finding ways to engage with each other across difference. In this regard, multilingualism holds out the promise of offering a way of bridging difference and opening spaces for engagement and empathy with Others. Today contemporary constructs of multilingualism, both in policy and everyday practice, continue to reinforce racialized divisions inherited from historical uses of language as a tool of colonialism, and a mechanism of governmentality in apartheid, the system of exploitation and state sanctioned institutional racism. In this paper we seek to demonstrate how multilingualism has always been, and remains today, an 'epistemic' site for managing constructed racialized diversity. In order to do so we trace periods of South Africa's history. By way of conclusion, we suggest that alternative linguistic orders require a decolonial rethinking of the role of language(s) in epistemic, social and political life.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

South African today remains a nation torn by violence and racial inequity. One of major challenges for its people is to create new futures across historically constituted racial divides, by finding ways to engage with each other across difference. In this regard, multilingualism holds out the promise of offering a way of bridging difference and opening spaces for engagement and empathy with Others. However, our point in this paper is that multilingualism has always been, and remains today, an 'epistemic' site for managing constructed racialized diversity. Contemporary constructs of multilingualism, both in

policy and everyday practice, continue to reinforce racialized divisions inherited from historical uses of language as a tool of colonialism, and a mechanism of governmentality in apartheid, the system of exploitation and state sanctioned institutional racism. In order to illustrate this, we trace in section 2 the ways in which constructs of multilingualism are entwined with racialization as a building block of South African imaginary. In section 3, we focus particularly on present day constructs/practices of multilingualism that centre decoloniality, social transformation, equitable education and livelihoods, and that encapsulate a dynamics of a society in transformation. In this

context, we discuss tensions in racialized multilingualism, as well as the limitations inherent in inherited constructs of multilingualism for new modes of co-existence across racialized differences. We suggest that at the present time, there are a few opportunities for scoping a more constructive understanding of multilingualism within the prevailing discourses of liberal enlightenment views of language and race. By way of conclusion, we suggest that alternative linguistic orders require a decolonial rethinking of the role of language(s) in epistemic, social and political life.

## **SENSES OF MULTILINGUALISM**

The current official account of multilingualism in South Africa since the democratic dispensation in 1996 delimits 11 official languages among a population of 56 million. This representation of multilingualism is the democratic state's recognition and repatriation of the indigenous languages that were not accorded official recognition by apartheid, but relegated to Bantustans. However, it is one conceptualization of multilingualism among a multitude, as the South African multilingual landscape has been construed and represented variously at different historical moments, as diverse representations and values of languages and their relationships (Woolard, 1998:3) have emerged out of turbulent moments of social and political change. In particular, it is an attempt to linguistically articulate the image of the 'rainbow nation'. Different multilingualisms reflect the complex socio-politics of colonialism and apartheid, the state sanctioned and institutionalized system of racial segregation, as well as the country's post-apartheid, democratic dispensation since

1994. Above all, multilingualism has been part of the many attempts of the State and its institutions throughout history to manage racialization, a foundational pillar of its design. Marx (1996: 163) remarks on how the State "emerges as a central actor in race-making, as it is the subject of contestation and responds to various challenges from the society in which it is embedded" and that "racial identities [...] do not quickly fade even if the conditions that reinforced them changed" (p. 207). In South Africa, as the nation-state has engaged with the turbulence of 'change', different notions of race have superseded each other. Rasool remarks on the South African people's "long histories of racialization, of enracement, deracement and retracement" (ms.nd: 1). Across all of these conjunctures, reorganizations and turbulent shifts of state and race, multilingualism has served as the epistemic space and semiotic articulation of different racialized normative orders.

We can distinguish 4 distinct periods reflected in ideologies of multilingualism that roughly correspond to major shifts in the politics and economy of the country; (1) colonialism (2) apartheid (3) the negotiated settlement, and (4) the democratic dispensation. We trace underlying structural-ideological similarities across seemingly different constructs of multilingualism, and attempt to identify the subtext of parallel, emerging, ideologies of multilingualism yet to be clearly articulated.

### **Colonialism**

Colonial understandings of languages and their speakers were an integral part of managing the colonial-imperial encounter. In all essentials, European constructs of language and linguistic diversity were mapped onto the linguistic space of colonized Africa. The historian

Patrick Harries notes with respect to missionary linguistic activity with the language Tsonga in the 'Transvaal' province in the North East that many of the linguistic givens and truths believed by the Swiss missionaries to be scientifically incontrovertible were, in fact, social constructs whose roots may be traced to nineteenth-century European codes of thought (1995: p, 162).

One such 'truth' was the mapping of languages onto bounded units of organization such as tribes and clans. These were European pre-feudal notions of social organization that allowed the missionaries to categorize and 'efficiently' manage people on terms they themselves were best acquainted with from their own contexts. Similarly, colonizers used European paradigms/models of historical migration and mixture of peoples and their languages to account for what they understood to be unbridled linguistic hybridity and chaotic diversity of the African linguistic ecology. The missionaries found ready categorizations of the cultural traits and spirit of their tribes by mapping them onto a Franco-German rivalries model where for example Zulu's were likened to Germans as ferocious but industrious (1995: 163). One consequence of this was the production of an imaginary of shared ancestral languages across tribes, made distinct through separation and warfare, but possible to reclaim through tools of historical reconstruction (cf. also Makoni, 1998; Pennycook and Makoni, 2005).

Veronelli (2016) refers to the notion of the coloniality of language as the "coloniality of power in its linguistic form: a process of dehumanization through racialization at the level of communication" (408). Coloniality refers to the patterns of power, control and hegemonic systems of knowledge that

continue to determine forms of control and meaning across social orders, even subsequent to colonialism as a social, military or economic order. The other axis of coloniality is modernity, the specific organization of relationships of domination. The coloniality-modernity nexus that undergirds South African policies and practices of racialized multilingualism from colonialism until today

## **Apartheid**

Building from earlier institutional and structural conditions<sup>2</sup>, racial segregation as an all-encompassing design of South African society was formally introduced with the election of the National Party in 1945. Apartheid was about structural and institutionalised racism through the implementation of judicially upheld racially discriminatory policies, for example, the prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act 1949. From the 60s to the 80s, apartheid was best known in its guise of the Group Areas Act which reserved prime land for whites and forcibly removed other races to peripheral areas.

The apartheid idea of racial purity and national homogeneity found a potent resonance in the politically engineered cultivation of language and multilingualism as racial bordering, a massive investment in distinguishing people and languages following the European nation-state principle of one 'volk', one nation, one language. Because of the aversion of Afrikaners to entertaining a conceptualization of Afrikaans as "the result of a cross between the speech of the early settlers and the prattle of their black slaves" (Barnouw, 1934: 20), language planning of Afrikaans was organized around three principles: (a) diachronic purism, that is, the idea that "Afrikaans is as

white and pure as the race” (Valkoff, 1971); (b) albocentrism, the stance that only the versions of the language spoken by whites could be an object of study; and (c) compartimentage, where different varieties of Afrikaans were studied as distinct phenomena, with then contemporary forms of standard Afrikaans seen as a direct and linear descendant of Dutch and subject to systemic change through internal factors alone (Valkoff, 1971).

The apartheid emphasis on ‘bordering work’- and its embrace of the eighteenth century idea that single languages were constitutive of the nation-state – “justified” the artificial creation of territories for ethnolinguistically defined groups and a “balkanized state” (the so-called homelands or Bantustans) (Heugh, 2016: 236). All previous attempts at so-called harmonization of African languages (Nlipo 1944, 1945; cf. further references in Heugh, 2016), to a few orthographically unified ‘clusters’ as a way to counteract the colonially engineered linguistic divisiveness were quashed by the apartheid formation of separate language committees in 1957.

### **Negotiated settlement**

The negotiated settlement in the twilight years of the apartheid state had as its overriding goal the construction of a non-racial order. The government in waiting, the African National Congress (ANC), embraced non-racialism as a founding principle of the new democracy. In exile, this had translated ideologically into the wide use of English as the language of the liberation movement, and as a perceived neutral language, and a medium for equality, aspiration and national development (Heugh, 2016). Albert Luthuli, one of the founding leaders of the party had always been explicitly

in favour of English as a language of unification, and had earlier vehemently rejected education in African languages (so-called

Bantu education) as a strategic ruse on behalf of the apartheid state to divide and dispossess Africans. In line with this, the National English Language Project (NELP) was formed in 1985 on the initiative of Neville Alexander. The NELP put forward the idea of English as the link language together with a small number of secondary languages as regional languages. Alexander subsequently also suggested harmonization to two language clusters in order to “unify the nation (Heugh 2016).<sup>3</sup>

Given the lacklustre experiences among newly independent colonies that had chosen the languages of the former colonial metropole, it was inevitable that the NELP’s promotion of English would be critically questioned. In 1987, following contributions by Kathleen Heugh in particular, multilingualism in African languages was recognized as an essential condition in the broader struggle for a free, democratic and united South Africa. As a result the NELP was re-conceptualized in 1987 as the, the National Language Project (NLP) (cf. Heugh 2016). In particular, the NLP emphasized the importance of the educational use of African languages for democratic and equitable development and access.

The period prior to the inauguration of a democratic South Africa was one of intense work on sketching the contours of a multilingual language policy for the new State to be. The historical landmark conference under the auspices of the NLP on the cusp of democracy (1991, planned in 1987) entitled *Democratic Approaches to Language Planning and Standardization* introduced an unprecedented range

and complexity of understandings of multilingualism into political debate. Besides reopening discussions around African language harmonization from the 1920s and 40s, the conference put forward notions of multilingualism as “more than the sum of discrete languages and linguistic balkanization”, and as a “complex ecology of language practices [...] ranging over grassroots and fluid practices of languages to a more conventional and hierarchical language construct” (Heugh, and Stroud 2019) – what Heugh (1996) termed functional multilingualism. During the period of 1992-1995, a resource view of language came to complement the initial discourses on language rights (Language Plan Task Group, 1995:111). Perhaps most importantly, although less noted, was the challenge to the exclusivity of the State in language planning, and the emphasis put on the necessary involvement of non-government bodies. Regrettably very few of these many insights were followed through in the concrete roll out of the democratic state.

In retrospect, it is remarkable that little attention was paid to the racial underpinnings of the linguistic order that the language planners inherited. Witz et al (2017) note how “the idea of discrete races and ethnic groups was somehow present in the politics of accommodation and reconciliation that gave birth to post-apartheid South Africa in 1994, with South Africans framed as a ‘rainbow nation’ marked by diversity and many cultures”. Rasool (ms, nd) notes how “as much as race was made through structures and systems of rule, it was also produced through articulations and contests within different sections of the broad liberation movement, notwithstanding their avowed antiracism” (ms, p. 1) The idea of non-racialism defaulted to a liberal enlightenment idea of equal treatment of blacks and whites; of recognition, parity of

treatment and legislative incorporation into State structures and public spaces. It did not mean the dismantling as such of the idea of race. However, recognition of indigenous languages and their speakers did not equate to the recognition of the deeply racialized colonial subjectivities layered into African languages. Neither did it offer strategic interruption of the historical mechanisms of multilingualism in the continued reproduction of these subjectivities. As one more mode of racialization, multilingualism would become apparent in the roll-out of the ‘postracial state’.

### **The democratic dispensation**

Formal transition to democracy came with the general election of the ANC to government in 1994 and the writing of the Constitution 1996. The new language policy became a central part of the structural replacement of the apartheid State. Alexander (1998:1) noted that “unless linguistic human rights and the equal status and usage of African languages were translated into practice, the democratization of South Africa [the country will] remain in the realm of mere rhetoric.” Not surprisingly, the implementation of the language policy came to focus on institutional structures, such as legalization to encourage the promotion and use of African languages in all public spaces. The belief in ‘multilingualism’ as an ‘instrument’ of social and epistemological justice became embedded in national policy, state institutions (education being the most important) and so-called Chapter 9 institutions, such as the Pan South African Language Board (Pansalb), the brief of which was to protect the rights of all languages and their speakers. Through recognition and institutional accommodation of ‘diversity’, a once divided nation would be unified by

“maximizing the democratic potential of social formations within which South Africans lived” (Alexander, 2003:9) .

The tension identified (although not elaborated) in the conference Democratic Approaches to Language Planning and Standardization between a multilingualism of state institutions and a more fluid and bottom-up construct came to a head in conjunction with the implementation of the Language in Education Policy (DOE 1997). The wording of the document is replete with radical wordings such as ‘fluidity’, and the recognition of a spectrum of multilingual practices and engagements with pupils’ repertoires. However, when the proposals were inserted into the practicalities of everyday, institutionalized schooling, what was an expansive, generous and complex construct of multilingualism defaulted to a traditional hierarchical relationship between English/Afrikaans and African languages (Heugh and Stroud, 2019). Even more insidiously, the policy overtime has undergirded an increasing monolingualization as *modus operandi* in the school system, and increasingly so in catchment areas of great diversity. It is beyond the scope of this essay to delve into the concrete details of these developments. Nevertheless, defaulting to monolingual English schooling is likely one part of a much wider ‘capture’ or ‘repopulation’ of State and private structures by elites (black and white) for whom English is a capital investment in increasingly transnational markets of ‘whiteness’ (see Christie and McKinney, 2017). In other words, state institutions have despite the good intentions of their architects defaulted to an increasing monolingual whitening as a motor of elite privilege.

## POST-RACIAL SOUTH AFRICA

The tension identified in the conference between State management of language and bottom-up initiatives has come to characterize developments around multilingualism in South Africa in the last 5 years explicitly. More generally, complex strands of historical debate continue to re-surface in different configurations and with different stakeholders, and contemporary ideological constructs of multilingualism are best seen as kaleidoscopes of inherited fragments of past multilingualisms, and contemporary subtexts or responses to these. As noted above, education has been – and remains – one of the key sites for the production and circulation of ideologies on multilingualism. The school is where the complex interweaving of subjectivities, bodies, and aesthetics with different languages created under colonialism and apartheid are most visible (cf. Veronelli, 2016; Williams and Stroud, 2017). It is a space in the South African context where inter-racial and ‘inter-lingual’ relationships are played out on a daily basis, and where tensions in differently racialized constructs of language and multilingualism, as well as tensions between grassroots and institutions, are increasingly taking centre stage and finding their most explicit articulations. On the one hand, the school is a prototypical force for integration, segregation and disciplining; on the other, it is also an institution rich with potential for change.

School policies and practices reflect the weight given to English in South African society generally and the belief that African languages constitute a hinder for learning it. Colonial and apartheid values of the inferiority of African languages, and the superiority

of metropolitan languages remain strong: The equation of English with intelligence and academic ability, and streaming according to English language ability serve to reinforce the indexical weights and values given to English and African languages and perpetuate a monolingual mind-set (Makoe and McKinney, 2014: 669). The variety of English valued in schools is white South African English and ‘ethnolinguistic’ repertoires of whiteness more generally (Makoe and McKinney, 2016), while township accents or Black Englishes - are delegitimized. Teachers step out of teaching content subjects (such as Maths) to produce disciplinary asides in order to correct learners on, for example, points of English pronunciation. Makoe and McKinney (2014: 669) note how despite their multilingual proficiencies, African language speakers are seen as deficient monolinguals, and schools produce dominant ideologies of “linguistic homogeneity and inequity”.

Former elite (white) schools are taking African languages off the curriculum in accordance with the Basic Education Department’s New Curriculum Policy that only one first additional language should be offered, and less time is given in the curriculum for any other language than English and Afrikaans. In fact, African language parents have also voiced unhappiness with their perception that the variety of the African language taught is debased: Schools teach ‘Kitchen Zulu’ (Ntombele Nkosi (Chief Executive Officer of Pansalb). This then is not just a ‘monolingual’ bias, but a particular white language bias, a situation that reproduces apartheid language hierarchies/regimes (Makoe and McKinney, 2014). Such a predominant ‘white positionality’ on language matters is nicely captured in the words of one member of a prominent

Governing Body Foundation, who publicly stated in 2017 that; Afrikaans is a much easier language to master. There are no clicks, the vocabulary and the structure are part of the same family of languages as English and therefore easier to pick up...

One reaction to the racialization of language – that incidentally also clearly illustrates bodily invasive features of ‘language ideology’ comes from a Cape Town elite girls’ school. The school habitually penalized the children for speaking isiXhosa on the school premises, formally noting the transgression in a special book. The language prohibition was one part of a more extensive ‘black’ disciplinary discourse, formalized in the Code of Conduct, that stipulated that learners must keep their ‘hair tidy’. Students were literally chastised to the very fibres of their black body, and took widely to social media in attempts to change antiquated codes of conduct and propriety modelled on whiteness (see Christie and McKinney, 2017).

Beyond the more institutionalized (non)use of named languages, is the way in which school children use multiple languages to circumvent official racial categories. Kerfoot’s (2016) important study of primary school learners in a low-income neighbourhood in Cape Town showed how students’ strategic use of repertoires in encounters across (racial) difference contributed new identity-building resources. Among other things, they used multiple languages also as a means of shaping new interaction orders - restructuring hierarchies of value and subverting racial indexicalities, and sometimes even resignifying the very meanings of racial categories.

## CONCLUSION

Any singular notion of multilingualism obscures the centuries’ long, shifting



idea of language and conceals the de facto complexity and multiplicity of multilingualism(s) as plural responses to moments of turbulent transition. Throughout South African history, State structures, policies and institutions have engaged with constructs of the nation-state that are deeply racialized, with either the goal of constructing, separating and disempowering 'non- white races' or in order to further social transformation through addressing historically race-based inequalities. In both cases, the default is a celebration of 'whiteness', itself an ever- changing construct (Alcoff, 2015), deeply entangled with transnational, neoliberal marketization. Constructs of multilingualism have been central as epistemological and strategic sites for the play of racialized state dynamics. They have been heavily determined by racial bordering, from the early beginnings of first colonial contact until today. As part of a larger discursive regime, or battery of historical procedures and institutionalized discourses, they have helped either to invisibilize or discipline the black body, or attempted to re-stylize it and its relationships to whiteness. We have touched on how fragments of institutionally racialized ideologies of multilingualism appear in the contemporary thoughts and practices of the everyday, highlighting specifically how speakers deploy and attempt to circumvent (not always successfully) these constructs of language in their everyday practice (see also Guzula, McKinney and Tyler, 2006; Krause and Prinsloo, 2016; Makoe and McKinney, 2009).

By way of brief conclusion, there is clearly a need to re-think multilingualism as a 'semiotics of relationality', the articulation in language(s) (or other forms of semiosis) of relationships between individuals, groups and/or institutions, and its role as a site for racial contestation.

A rethought multilingualism can provide one necessary space to interrogate the 'unmaking' of race.

## NOTES:

- 1 Christopher Stroud is Emeritus Professor of Linguistics and former Director of the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research (CMDR) at the University of the Western Cape. Jason Richardson is a Junior Fellow at the CMDR. We are indebted to Robyn Tyler, CMDR for a careful reading of an earlier version of this text.
- 2 An important moment (not covered here) was the racialized defeat in the South African war of Afrikaners by the British, and the formation of the Union of South Africa. Rasool ms notes that Afrikaners, a creole population of slave and Khoesan ancestry ultimately only really became white at this juncture. This whiteness was to assert itself in Afrikaner nationalism and later apartheid.

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# Linguistic Citizenship and Non-Citizens: Of Utopias and Dystopias

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## **Abstract**

This article reflects on (the lack of) voice and agency for migrants in South Africa and explicitly introduces the idea of ‘dystopia’ into the framework of Linguistic Citizenship. This is done with the purpose of entering into a dialogue with Stroud’s (2001) Linguistic Citizenship, and to move towards a theoretical understanding of what linguistic resources can and cannot do. This article will contribute to the notion of Linguistic Citizenship and to the recent introduction of ‘utopia’ into this framework. My central argument is that utopias should be part of a utopia/dystopia dialectic. This is implied in Stroud and Williams (2017) but not explicitly theorized. To do this conceptual work, I draw on literary theory, where the idea of dystopia has been extensively explored as a fictional genre. I also draw on decolonial theorists (Freire, 1998; Mbembe, 2001; Spivak, 1988) to expand the possibilities of a dystopian reading of Linguistic Citizenship. In the next section, I provide some context on migrant life in South Africa. I introduce the central concepts of “linguistic repertoire” and “Linguistic Citizenship” before I briefly refer to the methods used to gather the data for the project which this paper explores. Finally, I argue that utopia/dystopia should be an entangled dialectic in a theory of Linguistic Citizenship by presenting extracts from the migrant narratives of Ash, Dunbar, Hydran, Novel, Tshepo, and Ulrich.

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## **BEING A MIGRANT IN SOUTH AFRICA**

A substantial body of research confirms that migrants are regularly discriminated against, deprived of basic human rights, and subjected to violence (Crush & Tawodzera, 2011; McDonald, 1998) in South Africa (Crush & Tawodzera, 2011; McDonald, 1998). Before the onset of the democratic dispensation in South Africa, migration policies were highly selective and racist. Since 1994, migrants from

other African countries have been able to enter South Africa more freely, although there has not been all that much high-level support for ‘legal immigration’, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain residency permits (see the body of work done by the Southern African Migration Programme). Nevertheless, the number of African migrants entering South Africa has increased significantly. Since 2008, there have been sporadic waves of intense xenophobic violence. Dodson (2010) reports that these

outbreaks are not isolated or sudden, but that xenophobic attitudes towards migrants of African descent are obdurate. Therefore, xenophobia will have to be dealt with systematically to change such widely-held and longstanding attitudes.

In addition to the physical forms of violence that African migrants in South Africa experience, they are subjected to discrimination and human rights abuses in the legal, medical, and educational sectors (Crush & Tawodzera, 2011; Lefko-Everett, 2007). Some of these abuses can be attributed to general structural failures (such as state medical facilities that are overstretched to begin with) and/or language differences and miscommunication. However, many of these human rights abuses occur because of the deeply-held beliefs and attitudes towards migrants (Crush & Tawodzera, 2011). As recently as 2013, Crush et al. (2013: 34) reported that nearly 80% of surveyed citizens either support prohibition of the entry of migrants or would like to place severe restrictions on it.

Despite the substantial body of work on African migrants in South Africa, the role of language in establishing identity, in social inclusion and exclusion, and in accessing goods and services has not been sufficiently explored (Siziba & Hill, 2018). This is surprising considering that language has been used as a marker of 'foreignness' by both officials and general members of the public. As Siziba and Hill (2018: 118) recount, during the May 2008 xenophobic attacks, 'shibboleths were used to identify' foreigners. The research that does investigate language in migrant contexts tends to provide essentialist readings of language and culture (Siziba & Hill, 2018: 118) without engaging with recent re-theorization(s) of language. The

project that this chapter is based on uses current reconceptualizations of language to understand how African migrants use their linguistic repertoires to navigate social spaces where their linguistic resources did not necessarily match the preferred ones.

## LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRES

In this paper, I draw on the notion of 'repertoire' (Blommaert, 2009; Busch, 2012), which has been favoured as a way of working outside "named languages" to embrace the diversity of varieties, styles, and registers to which individuals and communities have access (see also similar arguments around translanguaging, for example, Otheguy et al. (2015)). Clearly, within mainstream sociolinguistics, a 'sociolinguistics of repertoires' is steadily gaining ground on 'a sociolinguistics of languages' (Blommaert, 2009: 425). This shifts to a focus on 'the real bits and chunks of language' (Blommaert, 2009: 425).

With the resurrection of this concept, which has been around since the 1960s, additional foci have been added to turn linguistic repertoire into 'an empirically more useful and theoretically more precise notion, helpful for our understanding of contemporary processes of language in society' (Blommaert & Backus, 2013: 12). This has led to an increased focus on mobility (Blommaert & Backus, 2013), biographical dimensions, lived experience (Busch, 2012; 2017), and space (Pennycook & Otsjui, 2014). Central to this reconceptualization is the view that repertoires do not only include linguistic dimensions but also include all meaning-making resources that individuals can use to make themselves understood (Rymes, 2014). One context in which repertoires have been

extensively investigated is in educational spaces. In this educational research, the fact that linguistic repertoires are not used to their full potential is bemoaned, and recommendations are often made that closer attention to the linguistic repertoire, and better use of it, will make for a more socially-just educational experience (Bristowe et al., 2014; Rymes, 2014). Otheguy et al. (2015: 305) suggest, for example, that translanguaging increases equality by providing bilingual students with the opportunity to learn while having the benefit of all their linguistic resources. There seems to be an underlying premise that a more inclusive use of linguistic varieties can go a long way in addressing issues of discrimination, social injustice, and the breach of linguistic human rights.

Other research points out how individuals deploy their linguistic repertoires to resist institutional structures and practices (Banda & Bellonjengele, 2010; Busch, 2016). This is exactly where Linguistic Citizenship resonates with linguistic repertoire – focusing on how the semiotic resources people have available to them can deploy voice and agency in everyday life and within a broader political process.

## **LINGUISTIC CITIZENSHIP: ON UTOPIAS**

Stroud first introduced Linguistic Citizenship in 2001. His central concern in that seminal text was finding alternative explanations as to why African mother-tongue educational programmes often fail. These programmes usually do not deliver on issues such as cognitive enhancement and language maintenance. At that time of writing, the failure of mother-tongue

programmes was often blamed on the lack of material resources or on bad programme management. Stroud (2001: 340) proposed that what was needed was a theoretical rethink which located the problems of mother-tongue programmes within the ‘social fabric of the postcolonial community itself’. The dominant model for language policy and planning at the time, namely linguistic human rights, was described by Stroud (2001: 344) as an ‘affirmative model’. Affirmative models tend to add rights for marginalized groups in pre-determined categories, thus leaving these categories intact rather than breaking them down. Instead, Stroud suggested that what was needed was a ‘transformative’ model located within a broader politics of citizenship. Transformative models deconstruct the categories on which rights are based. Stroud’s proposal for a transformative model is Linguistic Citizenship. Drawing on Weeks (1997: 4), Stroud (2001: 345) refers to Linguistic Citizenship as an attempt to include language issues in a way in which citizenship is discussed in the ‘sense of broadening the definition of belonging, equal protection of the law, equal rights in employment, parenting, [and] access to social welfare provision and education’. Since this introduction, the uptake of Linguistic Citizenship has been much more wide-ranging than in educational contexts, and is now considered a broader sociolinguistic theory of how inequality can be opposed both in local interactions and on a bigger scale in wider socio-political encounters. Subsequently, Linguistic Citizenship has been used as a central concept in such diverse terrains as ethnographic studies of Hip Hop (Williams & Stroud, 2010) and the study of language ideologies (Shaikjee & Milani, 2013).

More recently, Stroud (2015) has emphasized the utopian qualities of Linguistic Citizenship. Drawing on Bloch's (1968) notion of "utopia", Stroud (2015: 25) argues that 'a productive sense of utopia is not the conventional non-place in a non-time usually associated with the concept, but the condition ... that references a better way of living that is foreshadowed in the present (and past) but [is] as yet unrealized'. Claeys (2010) states that, although myriad conceptualizations of utopia exist, a common thread is a commitment to conviviality which is sometimes connected to principals of friendship. It is this common thread within utopian understanding that Stroud uses to conceptualize his current iteration of Linguistic Citizenship. Stroud and Williams (2017: 184) argue that a Linguistic Citizenship approach to language allows for the focus on possibilities to re-figure language and to challenge power relations by reinserting voice. Glimpses of these utopian visions of language can be seen when participants engage in language practices that use multi-semiotic resources which challenge and disrupt common and dominant ideologies of language (Stroud & Williams, 2017: 184). The importance of the linguistic repertoire within a conceptualization of Linguistic Citizenship is thus apparent. Stroud and Williams (2017: 184) further argue that Linguistic Citizenship is 'a way of thinking through the potential of language, thinking about a space where language could be used "otherwise"'. It is this recent emphasis on the utopian qualities of Linguistic Citizenship that this paper will draw on, specifically by focusing on African migrants in South Africa, and their linguistic repertoires.

## LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRES AND ARTS-BASED METHODOLOGY

The empirical examples used in this chapter come from a project that used arts-based methods to collect multimodal narratives on the experiences of African migrants. Arts-based research methods seek to make active connections between theories, emotions, thoughts, and ideas. Leavy (2015: 14) states that arts-based practices have the goal of evoking meanings, rather than denoting them. Bochner and Ellis (2003: 509) argue that arts-based research produces narratives that show characters going about the complexities of their daily lives which include 'moments of struggle, resisting the intrusions of chaos, disconnection, fragmentation, marginalization, and incoherence, trying to preserve or restore the continuity, and coherence' of their lives. The research team found that this description poignantly resonated with the complex and precarious lives of the African migrants they were exploring.

Two groups of migrants participated in the project. The intention was not to focus on national groups, but when initially establishing networks, our contacts were asked to bring friends along who are also migrants. We ended up with two homogenous groups in terms of country of origin: seven participants who were originally from the Republic of Congo (all men) and eight participants originally from Zimbabwe (six men and two women). An interdisciplinary team consisting of sociolinguists and visual artists developed the arts-based research methods. We completed two art-based tasks together with the participants, which included filling in a language portrait (Busch, 2012) and producing a drawing on a scraperboard – a piece of black cardboard which, when scratched

with a sharp object, reveals its white underlayer. In the language-portrait task, participants were invited to display their linguistic repertoires on a blank body silhouette, which they filled in with different colours on different parts of this body silhouette. We asked the migrants to depict their journeys on the scraperboard, using any metaphor, picture, or other representation. They were free to take the scraperboard home to work on their depictions. In the next session, the migrants discussed their creations in English, which was not the first language of any of the migrant participants or the researchers (see Anthonissen et al., *etc.*), for more information on the methodological processes and pitfalls). The migrants constructed several narratives featuring linguistic repertoires, both from the task that specifically focused on linguistic repertoires and the task which did not.

## **DYSTOPIAN LINGUISTIC REPERTOIRES**

In this section, I illustrate how linguistic repertoires, even when exemplified by multiplicity and diversity, are often still not enough to resist inequalities. I will evoke the idea of a “dystopia” to make sense of this. First, I will very briefly refer to the linguistic repertoires of the participants in general before concentrating on the position of English within these repertoires. All the participants in our study had linguistic repertoires consisting of multiple registers and varieties. These repertoires consist of bits and pieces of language (Blommaert, 2009). Participants readily admitted not knowing the languages in their repertoires perfectly (see e.g. the extract from Tshepo’s narrative). The repertoires also consisted of

language ideologies (Busch, 2012), with participants using descriptions such as “national language”, “vernacular”, “metropole languages”, or “community languages” in their narratives of their language portraits (see e.g. Figure 1).

### **Tshepo**

By the time I was in Botswana, I started to stay in Botswana from 2005 up to November, I speak maybe Tswana maybe 50%. Then I was in Joburg, I speak Sotho. Then I move to Kwazulu-Natal, I speak Tswana and in Cape Town I speak Xhosa. I speak 70%, maybe I speak Tswana 80% now.

In the narratives told by the participants, there was scant recounting of how their repertoires might have ruptured the status quo or allowed them to navigate a new sense of self. Instead, as Stroud and Williams (2017: 168) argue, multilingualism in their retellings is viewed as a ‘[tool] of colonial governmentality’ used to order languages and people hierarchically, with languages such as Lari identified as community languages and French as a school language. English emerged even more strongly from the narratives, as did silence, which occupied important places in the participants’ linguistic repertoires while in South Africa. Interestingly, English played a very different role for the two groups.

For the participants from the Republic of Congo, English represented a utopia, not in the Blochian sense in which Stroud uses it, but as a non-place in a non-time. Scott and Bell (2016: 11) state that, when used in a negative sense, utopia is regarded as ‘an impossible dream’. English is seen as the magical quality or characteristic which will



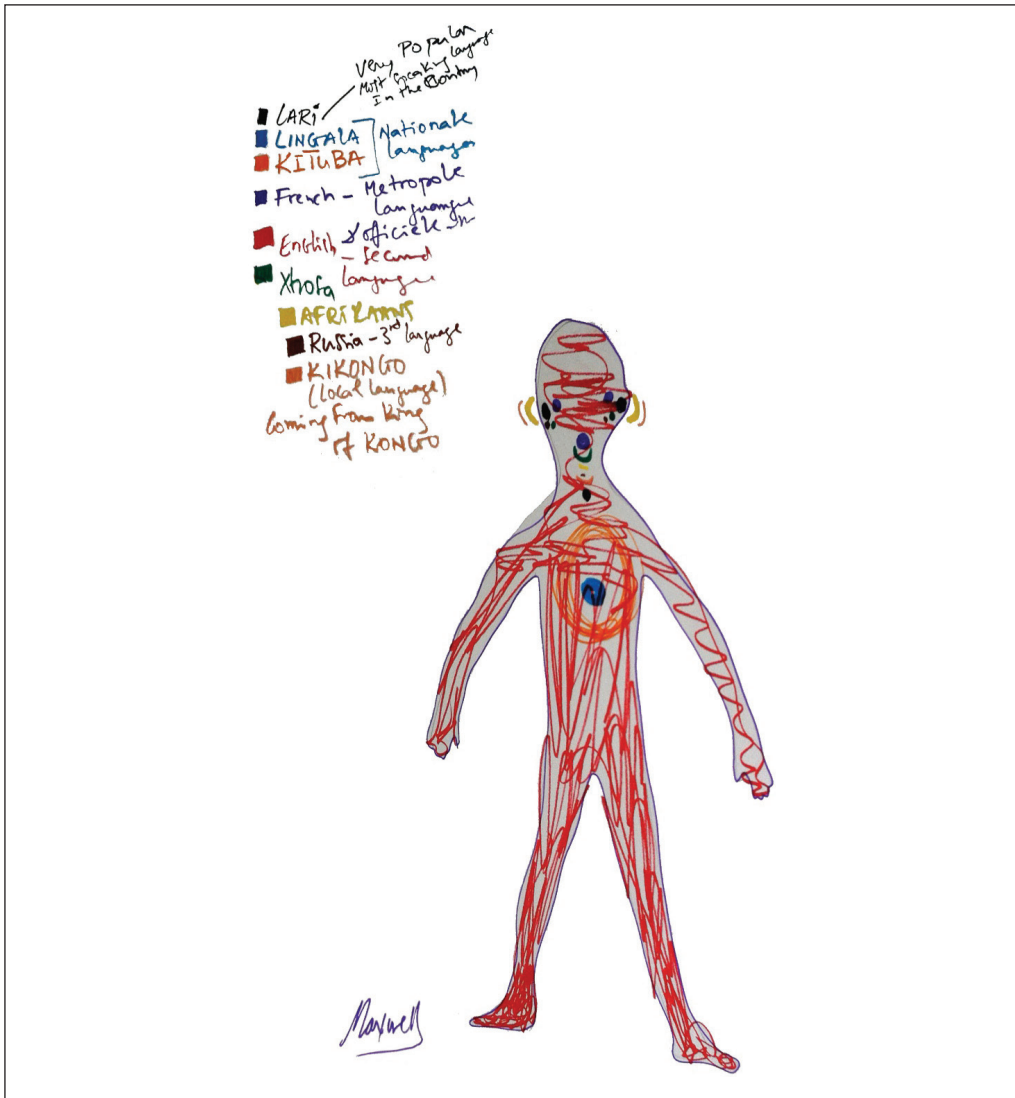


Figure 1. Example of a language portrait

unlock possibilities in South Africa. Ash's small story and the extract from Ulrich's narrative is illustrative of this group's general sentiments about English.

**Ash**

When I arrived in South Africa, things was very difficult for me, because I was coming from the French country

to the new society. Things were very tough to be connected to the society and especially the language; language was a big issue for me. English was a big problem. I went to library. My friend used to push me, he used to say 'Ash, without English you won't get any job, you won't get any money, you won't

survive in this country'. Otherwise you will be back to where we coming from. And I try my best. He gave me some books, some dictionaries. I try to read, to study, to learn about English. From 2007, I came down to Cape Town, to the Western Cape; I was in Gauteng and then I come to Western Cape. Things were tough at the beginning, but afterwards things got more open because of the language. I started to communicate to people. I got opportunity, I got a job. That was my first job – it was a little bit difficult. Sometimes when they say get some stuff to put there, I did not understand. I had to turn to people from my country, who got more experience and was talking nicer than me. It was difficult; I didn't understand. Now I am getting somewhere. Now we are getting somewhere can communicate with people. There is a people who is happy. Not totally, but a little bit happy. Unfortunately, we are still struggling. As a foreigner in a country, there is many things man, many things you have to be on line, you have to be on time. You have to follow the law of the country to join the society. We still have that problem. We do our best. Things are going a little bit OK.

### **Ulrich**

We have to be focused on the books to learn more. When we come from our place to South Africa, most of us were busy learning. When we come to South Africa, our diploma was not valid. What we supposed to do to get a normal life? We have to go back to school to get some knowledge and skills. Because when you learn more, you also get more skills and knowledge and you have the ability

to struggle or defend your live anywhere. Because you are unable to speak English. You have a border inside yourself. There is no way you can get there – only in books.

However, despite great effort, taking classes, and eventually acquiring English, things are only 'a little bit OK' (Ash) for the Congolese migrants. For the Zimbabwean migrants, English does not have this kind of utopian potential, since the schooling system in Zimbabwe requires proficiency in English. Instead, it marks them as "other" in the spaces in which they move. Scott and Bell (2016: 14) state that the term 'dystopia', meaning 'bad place', is often regarded as the direct opposite of 'utopia'. Instead, they argue that there is no clear separation between the two. Gordin et al. (2010: 1) state that, whereas a true opposite of a utopia would be 'a society that is either completely unplanned or is planned to be deliberately terrifying and awful', a dystopia is not either of these. Rather, 'it is a utopia that has gone wrong or a utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society' or, perhaps, a particular part of one's life. English might provide the Zimbabwean participants with work (all of the Zimbabwean participants were employed, while only one of the Congolese participants had permanent employment), but it is also the language that marks them as outsiders and thus subjects them to violence. Generally, for life in a Western Cape township – where all of our Zimbabwean participants reside – isiXhosa becomes the ideal language and, retrospectively, many of them regretted not learning isiNdebele, a minority language in Zimbabwe related to isiXhosa. The Zimbabwean participants believe that proficiency in isiNdebele would have made it easier to

learn isiXhosa. Siziba (2015) similarly reports on the “usefulness” of isiNdebele. He found that isiNdebele-speaking Zimbabwean migrants often try to pass for Zulu with interlocutors who do not have the necessary skills to recognize the fact that these migrants are not Zulu, but remain silent with those who can call their bluff. For Nolan and Dunbar, as is evident in their respective anecdotes below, the migrants’ proficiency in English combined with their lack of proficiency in isiXhosa is what marked them as foreigners, and thus they chose to remain silent.

#### **Nolan**

To me, it was difficult. Just because I come from Masholand-West. I don’t know Ndebele. I know only Shona. It was a very big problem to me to understand each other. When I talk to somebody, they don’t like to speak in English. They shout me. But I want to learn. I take it easy. I am scared of people. I am a foreigner. I have to take it easy here. If somebody shout me or beat me, I take it easy.

#### **Dunbar**

At first it was very difficult for me to speak Xhosa. I was forced to learn that language. So Xhosa and Ndebele, they are very close together. If you speak English, they become rude to you. They say: ‘You guys, we are going to chase you back. You don’t want to speak our language’.

According to Lewis (2014: 19), a dystopia is ‘usually conceived of as a “social elsewhere”, either implicitly or explicitly framed as a future into which the reader’s current society has devolved’. Here, similarities with Stroud and William’s

(2017) ‘utopia’ are drawn upon, where Lewis emphasizes the ‘not yet’ quality of utopias. Dystopias have similar qualities as a ‘social elsewhere’, with the current situation having the potential of turning into this dystopia. According to Gordin et al. (2010: 2), whereas a utopia takes us into the future, dystopia places us in a depressingly dark reality, evoking a terrible future if we do not address the current dystopia. In this case, the reality is that English is seen as the magic language by some migrants, yet using English in spaces and/or ways in which it should not be used can mark them as “the other”. Stroud and Williams (2017: 173) powerfully illustrate the dystopian possibilities of Afrikaans in their analysis of Luister, a recent documentary which maps the experiences of black students at Stellenbosch University. The authors argue that their analysis illustrates the ‘power of language to determine the parameters along which the body appears visible and is experienced subjectively’ (Stroud & Williams, 2017: 173). A similar function is performed by English enplaced on the migrant body, with specific bodies evoking different types of social exclusion. As Busch (2017: 356) argues, the linguistic repertoire is chronotopic with the ‘co-presence of different spaces and times in speech’ that are transferred to the linguistic repertoire. English evokes an imperial or colonial chronotope. According to Tlostanova (2007: 407), this is part of a ‘particular condition of transcultural subjectivity – that of restless non-belonging and a specific double consciousness’. This is the case for both migrant groups in the study: for the group from the Republic of Congo, this is a more traditionally colonial chronotope – the imposition of a colonial language as the most important language to find employment. For the group from Zimbabwe, this chronotope

plays out differently. Here we find the colonial chronotope which divided black people and positioned them against each other. Similarly, Stroud and Williams (2017: 169) talk about how Afrikaans can ‘reproduce Apartheid frameworks’, with the use of languages other than Afrikaans requiring validation at Stellenbosch University and constraining the mobility of people. It is thus clear that the idea of dystopia is present in Stroud and Williams’ (2017) work, but the possibilities of what a dystopian understanding of language offers are not laid out to the same extent as those of a utopian understanding.

## **DYSTOPIA/UTOPIA**

In the preceding section, I have argued that, instead of the migrants tapping into the utopian dimensions of Linguistic Citizenship, they are trapped in a dystopian society regarding their linguistic repertoires/abilities. This dystopia is created through their “non-citizenship, in the traditional sense, and their lack of appropriate voice. Theoretically, what does this exposition add to the development of Linguistic Citizenship and, specifically, the utopian qualities thereof? According to Scott and Bell (2016: 14):

In pointing us towards the worst possible scenario, dystopias provide a warning of what will happen if we continue to follow current trends and practices. In pointing us towards the worst possible scenario, dystopias provide a warning from the future in our present. They give us new eyes to look at how current developments may evolve.

From the snippets of data that are provided, the following questions come to mind: which trends can be identified and which should we pay attention to

in sociolinguistics in order to avoid a full-on dystopia? Firstly, language is still seen in a hierarchical sense, with English being the language that gives one access to employment while a local indigenous language helps one to fit in. Secondly, it is not only what one speaks but who speaks it. English means different things to the two groups and evokes different reactions. Thirdly, for these migrants, it is a linguistic “lose-lose” situation: it does not matter how well one speaks English, the odds of being accepted into the community are still against them because they are perceived as “outsiders” or “foreigners” by the indigenous community members. These are, of course, not new sociolinguistic insights, and are not restricted to migrant contexts. However, the current reconceptualizations of linguistic repertoire, agency, and voice (with some exceptions), spotlight the individual possibilities for mobilization. The emphasis seems to be on showcasing how, despite overwhelming social forces, people can carve out resistance and a new way of being through language. This seems to be a characteristic not only of sociolinguistic research but also of other research within the broader humanities. For example, Mbembe (2001: 5) states that with the rediscovery of ‘the subaltern subject’, there has been great emphasis on this subject’s ‘inventiveness’. As such, scholars have invoked notions such as ‘hegemony, moral economy, agency and resistance’ to describe subaltern subject positions. Thus, he says, the subaltern subject is seen as ‘capable of challenging [his/her] oppression; and that power, far from being total, is endlessly contested, deflated, and re-appropriated by its targets’ (Mbembe, 2001: 6). Less attention has consequently been paid to social formations of power and more to individual efforts to subvert power.

Snell (2013: 123) remarks that we have to 'take account of voice' and also pay attention to 'how and why some speakers make themselves heard in educational settings while others fail to do so'. It is in the latter part of Snell's assertion that an engagement with dystopia can play a role. Glimpses of utopias are essential as they show us the positive possibilities. However, we also get glimpses of dystopias in the present, with both being equally possible as a future status quo. According to Gordin et al. (2010: 2), the dialectic between utopia and dystopia, 'the dream and the nightmare[,] begs for inclusion together'. The authors claim that 'by considering utopia and dystopia together, we are able to consider just how ideas, desires, constraints and effects interact simultaneously' (Gordin et al., 2010: 2).

By introducing dystopia explicitly into the toolkit of Linguistic Citizenship, we learn which conditions and which bodies (do not) make it possible for people to express their voice and agency. The migrants, as shown in the generated data generated during this study, wish to conform, either by learning English or by hiding their English language proficiency because the imminent threat of harassment, violence, and deportation. We can, therefore, ask what conditions would allow for those extreme circumstances to be subverted, even in conditions of fear. A focus on dystopias allows us to look at old questions in a different way, and to foreground themes which might have been prominent before in sociolinguistics but have now drifted into the background. Three specific themes that I see emerging from the narratives of this chapter, which I interpreted through a dystopian lens, include a focus on silence, hope, and vigilance.

Two kinds of silence can be found

in the migrants' narratives: silence as a result of not being able to speak because they do not have the specific linguistic resources necessary to do so, and silence as a form of survival, where the migrants refuse to speak to avoid being revealed as a foreigner. Both examples can be described as being silenced rather than being silent, where Fivush (2010: 88-89) describes the difference between the two as follows:

[W]hen being silenced is contrasted with voice, it is conceptualised as imposed and it signifies a loss of power and self. But silence can also be conceptualised as being silent, a shared understanding that need not be voiced, and in this sense, silence can be a form of power, and the need to speak, to voice, represents a loss of power.

In an interview with Steve Paulson (2016) for the Los Angeles Review of Books, Spivak expands on the meaning of 'subaltern', from her famous essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (in Nelson & Grossberg, 1988). She states that the 'subaltern' refers to 'those who don't give orders; they only receive orders', but this term can also denote 'those who do not have access to the structures of citizenship'. In her case, she refers to people who might have voting rights but no 'access to the structures of citizenship'. The migrants referred to in the data for this chapter are subaltern in that they have neither voting rights nor access to structures of citizenship. To paraphrase Spivak (1988), being black, migrants, and poor, they get it three ways. By focusing more on silences, we can stress the importance of what cannot be said (Spivak, 1988: 82). In addition, Ferrari (2020) argues that silence is more than lack of voice and that a focus on silence provides the opportunity to open up decolonial understandings of voice and agency, and silence as voice.

According to Gordin et al. (2010:

12), dystopias are just as vulnerable as utopias. Just as utopias can disintegrate, so too can dystopias. This reminds us that there is hope. Van Heertum (2006: 46) draws attention to Freire's (1998) ideas on hope which, he suggests, point to the need to 'help people recognize not only their oppressed situation, but their position as subjects in history with the power to change it'. Hope is what makes utopia possible, and dystopias are what calls for hope. One can argue that utopias cannot exist without dystopias and are both visions that we need.

In the data that I have presented, there are some glimpses of hope. Hydran uses the metaphor of a half-moon when he says:

There is also a positive side. The positive thing I am speaking a language today. Yesterday I did not speak the language. But I am proud today. When was at home I was to be lawyer, but now I am in the hospitality industry. I got that knowledge here and I have skills. Tomorrow when I go home, I can take this skills with me. That's why you see the little moon here, a half moon. I have a little light that is coming.

Similarly positive, Nolan says:

Now, for now, I am trying. I am trying. When I am trying to talk to each other, they know what I'm trying to say. At least now it's better, it's better.

Hydran's half-moon metaphor show us that it is possible for communality to be achieved. Hope allows us to think through the possibilities of Nolan and Hydran's positions if their efforts to make themselves understood were reciprocated by a society who wanted to understand them.

The last important focus that dystopia adds is vigilance. According to Vieira (2010: 17), 'dystopia rejects the idea that man can reach perfection'. This vision of the future is expected to evoke a positive reaction from readers, namely that human beings will always have flaws and that the way of building a better world is through social improvement rather than individual improvement. In addition, readers should react by understanding that a dystopia is a possibility that we can still learn to avoid (Vieira 2010: 17). Acknowledging the fact that we will always have flaws will ensure that we never become complacent in our activism. This vigilance will allow us to scrutinize our practices of placing language at the centre of social problems (despite theoretical arguments to the contrary) and will remind us that we will never have an ideal society – just a better one, provided that we work to make it so and maintain our progress. And here perhaps lies the greatest use of dystopia within Linguistic Citizenship: the fact that it puts the emphasis on social improvements – not individuals – thus returning our attention to Stroud's (2001: 353) original idea that '[mother tongue] education needs to be part of a general emancipatory social context, where affirmations of diversity in the form of local knowledge structures and systems of language might find their appropriate sociopolitical place in a regional and national context'. I am not calling for an abandonment of utopia because, as Stroud himself shows, utopia and dystopia are always simultaneously present. Rather, I am calling for a better understanding of the utopia/dystopia dialectic, and an explicit theorization of it, in order to unpack the possibilities of dystopia and thus the possibilities of utopia and Linguistic Citizenship.

**ENDNOTE**

- (1) I have lumped together Mbembe, Spivak, and Freire as decolonial theorists, knowing that this oversimplifies things. Mbembe's work would perhaps be positioned as postcolonial, while Spivak is associated with subaltern studies. Freire, although used in some decolonial theorizing, did not identify himself as a decolonial scholar. I follow Bhambra (2014) here in seeing the similarities in these related movements in the 'intellectual resistance' they offer to 'epistemological dominance' and the possibilities of a 'new geopolitics of knowledge'.

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# Exploring family language policy in action: Child agency and the lived experiences of multilingual Ethiopian and Eritrean families in Sweden

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## ABSTRACT

Existing family language policy (FLP) scholarship has been criticised for insufficiently addressing children's voices and perspectives on their multilingual experiences, as well as lacking representation and heterogeneity in terms of studies involving multilingual families from diverse family types, languages, and contexts outside the experiences of Western middle-class bilingual families. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the multilingual familial experiences of three Ethiopian and Eritrean migrant families in Sweden by paying particular attention to children's agency and caregiver-child dynamics in FLP making. The study draws on multimodal biographic data obtained from children and parents through language portrait methods of body and space mapping activities, post-mapping narration, and semi-structured interviews. The data are analysed in light of Smith-Christmas's (2020) framework, which views child agency in FLP at the intersection of compliance regime, linguistic competence, linguistic norms, and power dynamics. The findings reveal that the process of FLP making is characterised as a process that is (1) filled with language choice dilemmas triggered by competing linguistic demands, (2) in part shaped by the family constellation via power dynamics between family members, and (3) mediated by family members' varied linguistic proficiencies in majority and minority languages. Additionally, children's agency about which language they choose to use impacts the language practices of the home, as they tend to establish their own linguistic norms within the home by overrunning the negotiated language policy set by caregivers.

**Keywords:** Family language policy, heritage language, migrants, children, language portrait

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*DIKE CALLED OUT from the bathroom, where he had been sent to brush his teeth before bed.*

*“Dike, I mechago?” Ifemelu asked.*

*“Please don’t speak Igbo to him,” Auntie Uju said. “Two languages will confuse him.”*

*“What are you talking about, Auntie? We spoke two languages growing up.”*

*“This is America. It is different.”*

*Ifemelu held her tongue.*

*Americanah – Adichie (2013)*

## INTRODUCTION

In the novel *Americanah*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie beautifully captures a long-standing quandary experienced by migrant families – namely, which language caregivers should use to speak to their children in the countries to which they moved. These may be contexts characterised by a monolingual norm that devalues the concomitant acquisition of different languages, as Auntie points out in the above extract. The decisions caregivers make about which language should be transmitted to their children have been studied at length in the extensive literature on bilingual parenting (see e.g. (King and Fogle 2006, Lanza 1998). However, it is only recently that family language policy (FLP) has emerged as a more comprehensive framework that brings together insights from a variety of interrelated research strands such as child language acquisition, language socialisation, and language policy and planning (Curdt-Christiansen 2018, Lomeu Gomes 2018, King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry 2008, King and Fogle 2013, Smith-Christmas 2020). While I delve into FLP in more detail in the next section, suffice to say for now that FLP seeks to capture the interrelation of the

following elements: (1) family members’ language ideologies, (2) language use within the home, and (3) the observable efforts put into encouraging desirable language behaviour among family members (King, Fogle, and Logan-Terry 2008, Curdt-Christiansen and Lanza 2018, Curdt-Christiansen 2018).

As Lomeu Gomes (2018) points out in a critical overview, FLP research has concentrated primarily on bilingual parenting and language socialisation processes among Western middle-class bilingual couples, their implicit and explicit home language policies, and the underlying ideologies that inform their policy decisions and practices (King and Fogle 2013, Smith-Christmas 2017, King 2016). Moreover, in such research, adult caregivers have been taken as the main source of FLP research data, whereas children’s views and perspectives on their multilingual experiences have remained largely overlooked (Palviainen 2020).

To partly redress the focus on Western middle-class families and the privilege given to parents in previous research, the present study focuses on three Ethiopian and Eritrean migrant families in Sweden and discusses children’s perspectives in relation to what their caregivers say. More specifically, drawing on data elicited through multimodal research methods, the article illustrates the multilingually mediated interactional experiences of children and their parents in the process of FLP-making by paying particular attention to children’s agency and the overall caregiver-children dynamics.

The article is organised as follows: The next section of the paper gives a brief overview of FLP scholarship and seeks to problematise some of the constraints in the literature about issues of multilingual families with immigrant backgrounds, including children’s viewpoints. This is followed by a presentation of the

conceptual framework that informs the data analysis, coupled with the research context and methodology. Finally, multimodal research data generated through visual and verbal research methods are presented, analysed, and discussed.

## **MULTILINGUAL FAMILY PROTOTYPES AND CHILDREN'S REPRESENTATION IN FLP SCHOLARSHIP**

In classifying existing FLP studies, Smith-Christmas (2017) outlines three multilingual family prototype contexts: (1) the one-person one-language (OPOL) prototype, (2) the migrant community, and (3) the autochthonous community. OPOL is a typical strategy followed by Western middle-class bilingual couples (Wilson 2020), in which one parent is from the majority language-speaking community of the host society, while the other is a minority language-speaking parent, often from another Western country (Smith-Christmas 2017). A distinctive factor in the OPOL family configuration is that a child's linguistic experience is limited to what happens in the 'nuclear' family. Here, the principal task of maintaining the minority language rests on the minority language-speaking parent, while extended family members play a minimal role in relation to the child's exposure to the minority language (Smith-Christmas 2017). By contrast, in migrant and autochthonous minority language communities, precisely by virtue of being a 'community', children typically have more exposure to minority language speaking interlocutors. However, as Schwartz (2008) notes, the extent of minority language exposure

outside the family space depends on the size of the speech community that speaks the language.

Two main critiques have been levelled against existing FLP scholarship. The first concerns the lack of diversity in terms of family types, languages, and contexts under investigation (King 2016). In this regard, most previous studies have been carried out within the context of Western middle-class multilingual families, which focused on children acquiring more than one European language (King 2016, Smith-Christmas 2017, Curdt-Christiansen 2018). The second point of critique pertains to the fact that the empirical data described in these studies consists of caregivers' accounts, whereas children's perspectives on their experiences have been insufficiently addressed (Schwartz 2020) or only indirectly represented (Smith-Christmas 2017, Palviainen 2020).

Since children are the main targets in the process of FLP making, incorporating their views and perspectives would give a more holistic picture and enhance our understanding of children's language-based agency (Schwartz 2020, Schwartz and Verschik 2013). Children are not passive recipients of the heritage language (Palviainen 2020); rather, they are active participants in language socialisation (Revis 2019), something that has been described as a reciprocal socialisation process (Smith-Christmas 2020) or bidirectional language socialisation (Schwartz 2020).

Moreover, Lomeu Gomes (2018) emphasises that FLP has been largely framed by what he calls 'Western-centric', 'canonic epistemologies'. The most prominent example of such epistemological trends is the pervasiveness of Spolsky's (Spolsky 2004, 2009) generic conceptual framework in

FLP literature. According to Spolsky, the three components of a speech community's language policy are

its language practice—the habitual pattern of selecting the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire; its language beliefs and ideology—the beliefs about language and language use; and any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning or management (Spolsky 2004: 5).

Part of the critique of Spolsky's framework is that a model that revolves around decision making and management has inadvertently made caregivers the 'default choice' for the collection of data that would illustrate the practices, management strategies, and underlying language ideologies that inform the decision-making process. Despite being the ultimate target of FLP, children's age could be a factor in excluding them as a source of direct data. Yet, little effort has been made to obtain direct data even from older children, not least because—as Smith-Christmas (2017) points out—innovative research methods are needed for the elicitation of children's views on their multiple-language experience.

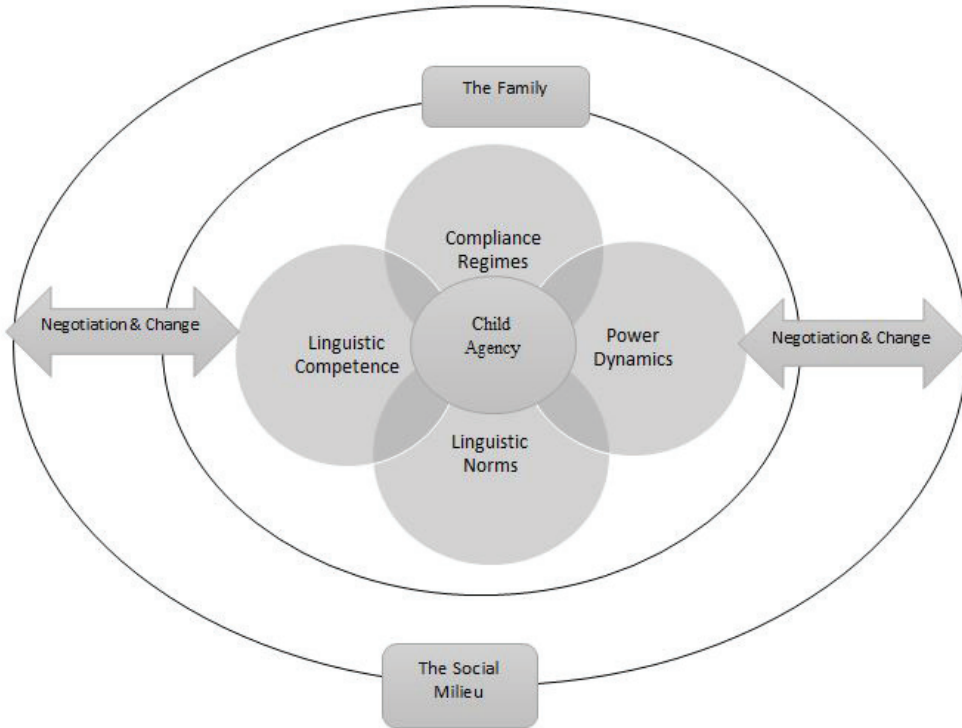
Against the backdrop outlined above, there is a growing call for shifting the focus of FLP research from adult-oriented empirical data to studies that represent children's perspectives and views on their multilingual experiences and home language practices as equal co-participants in the process of FLP making (Smith-Christmas 2017, Schwartz 2020, Smith-Christmas 2020, Palviainen 2020). A similar shift is sought from Western middle-class bilingual families to increasing emphasis on migrant

communities from the Global South to diversify the family types, languages, and contexts under investigation (King 2016, Smith-Christmas 2017).

## **COMPLIANCE REGIME, LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE, LINGUISTIC NORMS, AND POWER DYNAMICS**

Given the centrality of the child's role as a subject and an object in the process of FLP making, the data analysis of the present paper draws on Smith-Christmas's (2020) framework of child agency in FLP (figure 1). Smith-Christmas (2020) captures child agency in FLP as located at the intersections of the four following dimensions: the compliance regime, linguistic competence, linguistic norms, and power dynamics. Moreover, these four dimensions of child agency can be understood through the lens of negotiation and change. Accordingly, I use this model to not only analyse the agentive role of children in the process of establishing FLP, but to also make sense of the overall caregiver-children dynamics in the target families' pursuit of FLP development.

A certain level of linguistic competence is a requisite for adherence to the compliance regime because lack of proficiency in a target language makes speakers shy away from choosing and using the given language as the compliant code. Conversely, strict adherence to the compliant language could eventually improve proficiency in the target language. Moreover, as Smith-Christmas (2020: 221) explains, 'both compliance regime and linguistic competence contribute to the formation of linguistic norms within the family'. The relationship between



**Figure 1. Intersectional, multidimensional, and multi-layered nature of child agency in FLP**  
(Smith-Christmas 2020: 221).

competence and compliance, however, is complicated by the power dynamics between children and caregivers and the ensuing negotiation and change. Put simply, the home domain is a site of constant negotiations between family members about which language should be spoken. Such negotiations about language choices are partly mediated by individuals' linguistic competence. Language choice, in turn, illustrates whether compliance to a certain code is observed by members and leads over time to the formation of family linguistic norms. The data analysis below draws on these four concepts as an analytical framework to make sense of the multilingual interactional experiences of

the three participating families, paying particular attention to both children's agency and caregiver-children dynamics in the process of establishing FLP.

In analysing children's agency in the process of establishing FLP, this study draws on the conceptualisation of agency as 'considering individuals as actors with the ability to make sense of the environment, initiate change, and make choices' (Kuczynski 2002: 9). By considering child agency in relation to the compliance regime, it is possible to illustrate how 'a child not speaking Language X' can be an act of resistance against his/her caregiver's command to 'speak language X' (Smith-Christmas 2020: 222).

## CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Sweden actively supports *de jure* multilingualism and cultural diversity (Milani and Jonsson (2018). As a result of this commitment to multilingualism on the part of the state, over 150 different languages are taught as ‘mother tongues’ alongside five national minority languages (Finnish, Meänkieli, Romany Chib, Sami, and Yiddish; (Kheirkhah 2016). Moreover, a recent report from Statistics Sweden (2020a) illustrates that over half a million children below the age of 18 have a foreign background, which means that they were either born in another country or were born in Sweden from one or two foreign-born parents. This figure captures the wider sociocultural and linguistic diversity in Swedish society and indicates that there are many multilingual families experiencing the interface of majority and minority languages, a nexus point in which these families are ‘open to influences and interests from other broader social forces and institutions’ (Canagarajah 2008: 171). Put differently, multilingual families in Sweden and elsewhere are sites of ‘a dialogic and ever-evolving co-construction, which is in turn shaped by the dynamic relationship of the family to the wider community’ (Smith-Christmas 2017: 21). This means that families with minority language backgrounds in Sweden are entangled in simultaneous processes that involve the competing interests of maintaining a heritage language and the pursuit of meeting the sociolinguistic and socioeconomic demands of the country to which they moved (Canagarajah 2008).

To the description above, it could be added that certain migrant communities – by virtue of being small in terms of population size – tend to have reduced

access to resource allocation by public sectors, limited social contact, and community networks that support heritage language maintenance and transmission to second- and third-generation children. For instance, if the number of pupils speaking the same mother tongue is less than five in a school in Sweden, the school is not obliged by law to arrange mother tongue instruction for them (Utbildningsdepartement SFS 2010: 800). Likewise, these groups are less likely to be represented in multilingualism research, which tends to privilege larger migrant groups. Hence, Amharic-speaking families from Ethiopia and Eritrea, which are the focus of this study, can be taken as a ‘minority among minorities’ in terms of community size compared to Arabic-speaking, Finnish-speaking, Polish-speaking, Somali-speaking, Persian-speaking, and other migrant groups with larger community sizes in Sweden (Statistic Sweden 2020b).

## METHODOLOGY

The study upon which this article is based employs a multimodal data collection method, which means that the data collection process was primarily carried out using visual methods of body-mapping (language portrait) and space-mapping activities that generated visual and textual data. These visual methods were supplemented by data obtained through post-mapping verbal narration and interview techniques. The language portrait method, as Busch (2018: 4) explains, ‘is understood as a means of gaining insight into everyday linguistic practices of bodily and emotional language experience, or of ideologically informed ideas about, of attitudes to, and of stance taking towards particular languages or modes of speaking’.

Consequently, the language portrait is increasingly becoming a very useful method in multilingualism research, particularly when the objective of the research is to obtain the ‘experiential perspectives’ and ‘subject positioning’ of multilingual speakers.

Generating a language portrait, as a pictorial–linguistic form of text production (Busch 2018), is a manual activity (Purkarthofer 2017) that involves colouring a blank silhouette of a human body using multi-coloured pens to graphically visualise one’s linguistic repertoire, language history, language attitude, language practices, linguistic experiences, linguistic disposition, and so on (Busch 2010). Similarly, the body-mapping method has been described as ‘an embodied way of knowing and storying the self’ (De Jager et al. (2016: 52).

As a creative method of visual representation and meaning-making process, the language portrait has brought a shift from traditional qualitative verbal methods, such as individual or focus group interviews, to a mode that allows participants to reflect and visually depict their embodied experiences and multilingual repertoire (De Jager et al. 2016, Busch 2018, Prasad 2014). The shift from a verbal mode to a pictorial mode helps express certain aspects of individual experiences that cannot easily be traced through interviews and other traditional qualitative methods (De Jager et al. 2016). Moreover, as Busch (2010: 286) explains, ‘The switch in mode of representation from word to image helps to deconstruct the internalised categories, to reflect upon embodied practices and to generate narratives that are less bound to genre expectations’. Another aspect of this visual method is that it takes more time, such that

participants tend to ‘linger longer and reflecting more deeply’ on the subject than they do during verbal response (De Jager et al. 2016).

Visual methods allow participants to decide how they represent their linguistic repertoire and multilingual experiences through visual portraits and post-mapping narratives (Busch 2018, De Jager et al. 2016). Such a heightened role of the participants reduces the power imbalance between them and the researcher (De Jager et al. (2016: 20). Storying the self freely through image, caption, and oral narration allows ‘participants to have greater influence on the data created and the initial interpretation of the data via their testimonies’ (De Jager et al. 2016: 20). Furthermore, as there are ‘associative, metaphorical and symbolic elements’ that are embedded in participants’ visual representation of their multilingual experiences, combining the visual with verbal narration (which offers other dimensions that cannot be captured visually, including body languages) allows to obtain thicker description of the multilingual selves (Salo and Dufva 2018: 442). Most crucially, visual methodologies are a better choice than other qualitative techniques because of their suitability for children and adolescents. Drawing and colouring are ‘less anxiety-provoking to children, who are likely to have been exposed to similar tasks at home or at school’ (De Jager et al. 2016: 25). It is also a method that functions well in a situation in which there is limited literacy among participants or whenever a linguistic barrier exists between a researcher and participants; this is because a mapping task depends less on verbal articulation compared to interviews or focus groups (De Jager et al. 2016).



## Participants

The study presented in this article is about three multilingual immigrant families who moved to Sweden from Ethiopia and Eritrea and are speakers of Amharic. The researcher also speaks Amharic, a language spoken by the majority of Ethiopians and a considerable number of Eritreans. Having a common language with the research participants is instrumental in exploring the research questions in depth without a linguistic barrier. The target families were recruited via the researcher's social network and comprised 11 participants, including children. As revealed through the body and space portraits, 12 different languages were mapped as part of the multilingual repertoire of these three families. These languages are Amharic, Tigrigna, Swedish, English, Guragigna, French, Spanish, Geéz, Finnish, Kiswahili, Hebrew, and Arabic. As I illustrate in more detail below, these languages are closely associated with the spatiotemporal life trajectories of each family. The following paragraphs provide a brief overview of participants' profiles in terms of family structure, family size, and linguistic profile.

*Family 1* is a single-parent-headed family of three, including a daughter (10), a son (15), and a mother. The mother immigrated to Sweden 20 years ago from Ethiopia. Her mother tongue is Amharic, and she claims to speak Swedish fluently and to have rudimentary proficiency in English.

*Family 2* is a coupled family of three, including their five-year-old daughter. Both parents were born and raised (until adolescence) in Ethiopia from Eritrean parents. They speak fluent Amharic alongside their heritage language, Tigrigna. The father, who moved to Sweden seven years ago, had lived in Sudan and Israel, where he learnt

some Arabic and Hebrew. The mother immigrated to Sweden 12 years ago.

*Family 3* is a coupled family of five, including their three daughters aged 8, 10, and 13 years. The mother immigrated to Sweden 25 years ago from Ethiopia. The father, who is also originally from Ethiopia, moved to Sweden 15 years ago from Finland, where he had attended university. Before moving to Finland to study, he had worked in Tanzania for six years, where he had learnt Kiswahili. Both parents speak Amharic as their first language. The mother also knows Guragigna as a heritage language through her parents. The father has limited Tigrigna, which he acquired through work-related relocation.

It should be noted that the nearly all the children in the study are girls. I am aware that gender may play a key role in socialisation processes. Therefore, the inclusion of boys could have brought additional insights to children's perspectives regarding their multilingual interactional experiences at home and their role in the process of FLP-making. However, gender (femininities and masculinities) did not emerge as a relevant category in the data under investigation herein.

## Data collection

Data were collected mainly during six different sessions – I visited each participating family twice (excluding the recruitment visit). In the first session, both parents and children participated in the body-mapping task and post-mapping narration. Drawing on recommendations given by Busch (2018) and adapting her techniques (Busch 2010, 2012), I provided A4-sized blank body silhouettes for the participants and asked them to visually describe their linguistic repertoire, multilingual

experiences at home and outside, and any language-related views and perspectives they had towards language(s). I suggested that they should think about language holistically and try to incorporate every instance of language-related experience and views in their portrait, regardless of how proficient they thought they were in each language. No definitive or specific direction was given as to how participants should represent their linguistic repertoire in the self-portrait task. Rather, they were instructed to map and colour as they wished. Participants were also told that there was no right or wrong way of completing the body-mapping tasks. The language portrait activity was followed by a post-mapping narration task where participants narrated their body portraits orally.

In the second session, the parents were interviewed, and the children did the space-mapping task. Interview questions were posed in such a way as to prompt issues that were not covered through the language portrait method, as well as issues triggered by the visual-narrative data obtained during the first session. Family multilingualism and its lived experiences are situated in shared living spaces. Therefore, capturing spatially related multilingual experiences is equally relevant to understanding the embodied linguistic experiences illustrated through the body language portrait method. Thus, children were asked to draw, map, and colour their apartment using multi-coloured pens to present their multilingual experiences in the home and family language practices. A similar post-mapping narration procedure was followed. All the post-mapping narrations and interviews were audio taped. During the post-mapping oral narration, the researcher asked the children to talk in the language they wished: Swedish and Amharic were used.

In terms of research ethics, I followed the guidelines recommended by the Swedish Research Council (Hermerén 2011). Adult participants gave their written consent for themselves and their children. Children were also informed about their participation and gave their assent (Ericsson and Boyd 2017) for participation in the study. Children had the right to withdraw from participation. This right was stated in the consent form and was communicated verbally by parents to their children. Moreover, during data collection meetings, I reiterated that they were free to opt out from participating at any time.

Now I turn into the data presentation and analysis section where the multilingual interactional experiences of the participating families, particularly in relation to children's agency and caregiver-children dynamics in FLP-making, are analysed, drawing on Smith-Christmas's (2020) model of child agency in FLP.

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

### **Dilemmas and power dynamics: The case of either-or FLP**

The experience of multilingualism by families with migrant backgrounds is not always a straightforward life trajectory lived with a positive bilingual advantage narrative (Hua and Wei 2016). It is a complex, chaotic, and continually evolving endeavour filled with language choice dilemmas triggered by multiple yet simultaneous linguistic demands, as well as competing language ideologies held by individual members of a family. What is intricate about the simultaneous linguistic demands of multilingual families with migrant backgrounds is that

learning the majority language is often challenging, but at the same time, it is crucial for socioeconomic integration for first-generation migrants; by contrast, learning and maintaining the heritage language in parallel to the majority language is a difficult task for second-generation children to accomplish (Hua and Wei 2016).

An example of language dilemmas can be taken from family 2, in which the parents have Amharic and Tigrigna as their first languages. They have a sort of an ongoing disputed home language policy that can be construed as an ‘either/or’ FLP. With this term, I am referring to parents’ stance about what kind of home language policy each finds in relation to their daughter’s heritage language learning, as well as their majority language learning in the family space. The following dialogue, which was recorded during an interview with family 2, illustrates the either/or FLP and the dilemmas experienced by this family. (All excerpts are presented first in the original language [Amharic], followed by a translated version.) Family 2 members are given the pseudonyms of Robel (father), Melat (mother), and Liyu (daughter).

Extract 1 Family 2 (Robel): እኛ ሁለት አማራጭ ነዉ ያለን ወይ ትግሬኛዉ ላይ በርትቶ እርሷን ማስተማር ወይም እኛ ሲዉድንኛ በደንብ ችለን በሲዉድንኛ መግባባት።  
We have to choose one of the two alternatives, either to work hard on her [referring to their daughter] Tigrigna or to try hard to catch up with our Swedish.

Extract 2 Family 2 (Melat): እኔ ትግሬኛዉ ላይ በደንብ መስራት አመርጣለሁ። ችግሩ በሲዉድንኛ ብናወራ ልጃችንን

የተሳሳተ ቋንቋ ልናስተምራት እንችላለን ለእርሷም የቋንቋ እድገት ጥሩ አይደለም ደግሞም ትግሬኛዉን እንድትለምድ እንፈልጋለን።  
I would rather choose to work hard on her Tigrigna. The problem is, if we speak to her in Swedish, we could teach her a wrong kind of Swedish, which is not good for her Swedish learning – and of course, we want her to learn Tigrigna too.

Then, Robel suggested the benefits of communicating in Swedish at home by emphasising that the family space is the only language ecology that remains at their disposal to improve their much-needed Swedish skills through familial conversational routines.

Extract 3 Family 2 (Robel): በአማርኛ እና በትግሬኛ ከማዉራት በሲዉድንኛ እየተሰበሰበርንም ቢሆን ብናወራ ለኛ ይጠቅመናል ምክንያቱም ሲዉድንኛ የምናወራበት ሌላ ቦታ የለም ስራም ቦታ ሳይቀር።  
Instead of conversing in Amharic and Tigrigna, it could be beneficial for us if we practiced only in Swedish at home with all our broken Swedish since we have nowhere to practice Swedish, including our workplaces.

The parents’ lack of linguistic competence in Swedish, and hence, lack of choice, puts them in a home language choice dilemma, with regards to two competing linguistic demands in the FLP-making process. On the one hand, the family/home domain is viewed as a social space where the parents can improve their skills in the majority

language (extract 3). On the other hand, the realisation of the same social space is viewed as a language ecology in which they can transmit the heritage language to their daughter (extract 2). Drawing on the above extracts, one could deduce that there are power dynamics and negotiations between the parents in the process of establishing a linguistic norm informed by a choice of a particular language as the compliant code of the family (Smith-Christmas 2020).

During the interview, the father insisted on the importance of having consistent language use at home to avoid confusing their daughter with three or more different languages. Such a fear of multilingual confusion was also expressed by the mother, who said the following:

Extract 4 Family 2 (Melat): እንደገና ደግሞ ልጃችን ቋንቋ በዝቅባት ልታውጣዉ አልቻለችም። አማርኛ አለ ትግሬኛ አለ እንግሊዘኛ አለ።  
Our daughter is not speaking well in any of these languages [referring to Amharic, Tigrigna, Swedish, and English] because it is too much for her to manage.

As Curdt-Christiansen and Huang (2020: 175) put it, ‘the dilemma to raise children bilingually or only in societal language is never a fading issue’. Such a quandary often depends on an empirically unfounded claim about children being confused by exposure to multiple languages, which is then believed to be the cause of speech delay (Piller and Gerber 2018). Such beliefs are at work in the extracts above. They are compounded by the push and pulls created by the simultaneous attempt on the part of the parents to

accomplish the following: (1) enhance their own proficiency in the majority language, Swedish; (2) make sure their daughter also acquires a suitable level of proficiency in Swedish; and (3) facilitate effective heritage language transmission to their child.

### **Family constellation, compliance regime, and perceived linguistic competence in FLP making**

Whenever there is a change in family constellation triggered by a divorce, members living apart, or the arrival of a new family member (sibling or other), the family language ecology changes and affects the power dynamics in the process of FLP making (Caldas 2012, Palviainen 2020). To date, few studies have explored the effect of changes in family structure on FLP (Palviainen 2020). In the case of one of the families under investigation here, a theme that emerged through a closer reading of the parental interviews is that a single-parent family (family 1 in this case) seems to have and run a uniform and consistent FLP and practice. This could be ascribed to one parental voice that does not face competing voices and perspectives regarding the what and how of FLP from another caregiver. The existence of a consistent family language ideology towards heritage language maintenance and home language choice can be seen in extracts 5-7. Family 1 members are given the pseudonyms of Eden (daughter), Ruth (mother), and Eyasu (son).

Extract 5 Family 1 (Eden): ቤት ከሲዉድንኛ በላይ አማርኛ ነዉ የምናውራዉ።  
At home, we speak more in Amharic than in Swedish

[excerpt taken from the body-mapping narration].

Extract 6 Family 1 (Eden): ሁሌም በአማርኛ ነው የምናውራው። ግን ወንድሜም እኔም የሚከብደንን ቃላት በሲዊድንኛ እንላለን። We always talk in Amharic, but sometimes, my brother and I use Swedish words if we don't know what we want to say in Amharic [excerpt taken from the space-mapping narration].

Extract 7 Family 1 (Ruth): እቤት ከልጆች ጋር በብዛት አማርኛ ነው የምናውራው። ያዉ የቤት ስራ ሲኖራቸው በሲዊድንኛ እናውራለን፡ ፡ ከዛ ዉጭ ግን በአማርኛ ነው። We, my children and I, always speak in Amharic at home. We use Swedish when we do their homework together. Except at homework time, we usually speak in Amharic.

The interview data from the mother, Ruth, and the space-mapping testimonies given by her daughter, Eden, showed a strong and consistent adherence to using the heritage language (Amharic) as a compliant code in familial communication encounters. In light of Smith-Christmas (2020) framework, it could be argued that speaking Amharic has become the linguistic norm of the family. Besides what is shown in the extracts above, the researcher also witnessed family members' use of Amharic as a compliant code during the data collection visits.

By contrast, family 2 (extracts 2 and 3) and family 3 (extracts 8-14) have varied views, perspectives, and

preferences between parents regarding their home language choice and use. The excerpts below from interviews and post-mapping narration testify that there are very different views about daily home language choices and uses in parent-child and parent-parent interactions in the same family. Members of family 3 are called Tigist (mother), Henok (father), Feven (oldest daughter), Blen (middle daughter), and Hana (youngest daughter).

Extract 8 Family 3 (Henok): እኔ ከልጆቻችን ጋር ሳውራ ምንግዜም መጀመርያ በአማርኛ ካውራኋቸው በኋላ ያውራሁትን ለማስረገጥ በሲዊድንኛ እደግምላቸዋለሁ። In conversation with my children, I always speak to them first in Amharic, and then I repeat the same thing in Swedish to make sure that they understand me.

Extract 9 Family 3 (Tigist): እኔ እራሱ ልጆቼን ስቆጣ እና ቁጣየ እነርሱ ጋር በትክክል እንዲደርስ የማደርገው በሲዊድንኛ ነው። በአማርኛ ሲሆን ወይ አይገባቸውም ወይም ባለማወቅ። ለእኔ የሚቀርበኝ ሲዊድንኛ ነው። When I yell to discipline my children, I speak in Swedish to make sure that my message is well understood. When it is in Amharic, they may not fully comprehend the message. The Swedish comes first to my mouth.

These short snippets in which parents share their individual language choices and use patterns, particularly in parent-child interaction, indicate that

parents’ perceptions of their children’s proficiency in Amharic (or lack thereof) inform their language choices. However, when asked more specifically which languages they prefer to speak at home, the caregivers gave conflicting answers.

Extract 10 Family 3 (Henok): ቤት ውስጥ በአማርኛ ነዉ የምናወራዉ።  
We speak Amharic at home.

Extract 11 Family 3 (Tigist): ቤት ውስጥ እኔ የምመርጠዉ ሲዉድንኛ ነዉ።  
At home, I prefer to speak Swedish.

Extract 12 Family 3 (Henok): ወጥ የሆነ የቤት ውስጥ ቋንቋ ህግ የለንም። አማርኛ እንላለን ነገርግን እኛ እራሱ እንደ እለቱ እና ሁኔታዉ የተመቸንን ቋንቋ ነዉ የምንተቀመዉ።  
We do not have a consistent home language policy. We use to say Amharic, but we do not comply with the rule. We often use the language that is comfortable for us and suitable for the situation.

That the mother prefers Swedish while the father favours Amharic is confirmed by Feven, their oldest daughter.

Extract 13 Family 3 (Feven): ማማ ብዙ ሲዉድሽ ታወራለች ፓፓ ብዙ አማርኛ ያወራል። ብዙ ጊዜ አባት እና እናት ሲዉድስ ነዉ የሚያወሩት።  
Mama often talks in Swedish, while Papa talks mostly in Amharic. However, most often they [parents] talk in Swedish.

A possible explanation for the discrepancies in family members’ language choices may be given in light

of Canagarajah (2008: 171) observation that ‘members of the same family might also come with different orientations to LM [language maintenance]’. In the case of family 3, the difference in parents’ language preferences could be attributed to the higher linguistic competence (‘The Swedish comes first to my mouth’; extract 9) that Tigist claims to have in Swedish rather than Amharic after two and a half decades of residence in Sweden. Thus, whether the disparity is explained via linguistic competence that overrides individual home language choice or differences in individual language ideology, the two families displayed ambivalent (family 2) and varied (family 3) FLPs. Such variation can be attributed to the two-parent family structure, which can easily host varied family language ideologies, practices, and language management strategies. Hence, a coherent FLP was not established in family 2 (extract 1) and family 3 (extract 12) through joint decision making between parents.

Again, looking back to Henok’s description of the situation regarding their home language policy and habitual home language use, Amharic appears to be the negotiated compliant language of family 3 (‘we use to say Amharic’). That being said, speaking Amharic is hardly adhered to or practised by family members (extract 12). This claim is substantiated by the following extracts taken from parents’ interviews in reference to children’s home language use:

Extract 14 Family 3 (Henok): እርስ በእራሳቸዉ ሲዉድንኛ ነዉ የሚያወሩት። አማራኛ ከእኛ ጋር እንደሁኔታዉ ነዉ። ለምሳሌ ሲዉድንኛ ተናጋሪ እቤት ካለ እና የሆነ ነገር ለራሳቸዉ መጠየቅ ከፈለጉ ወደ አማርኛ ይዞራሉ።

እራሳቸውን በአማረኛ መግለጽ ይችላሉ።  
 They [children] speak Swedish each other. They occasionally speak Amharic with us [parents] depending on the context. For example, if there is a Swedish-speaking guest at home and they want to ask something of their thing, they switch to Amharic. They can describe themselves in Amharic.

What emerges in this extract is not only children’s use of the non-compliant language (Swedish) between themselves and with their parents as a norm, but also their strategically selective choice of Amharic in certain interactional contexts. The father’s narration also gives an account of children’s agentive role in determining linguistic norms in the family space, and by extension affecting the overall home language practices and FLP-making process.

However, because of the absence of parental power dynamics, a single parent-headed family in this study was characterised by more uniform FLP and practices.

**Perceived agentive role of the child in majority language socialisation**

The child in family 2 (Liyu), who is five years old, is perceived by her parents as a socialisation agent to the majority language. This could eventually bring a shift in traditional family power structure as the child’s proficiency in the majority language (Swedish) increases (see also Revis (2019). During the interview, the parents portrayed themselves as novice

learners of Swedish, and they predicted that their daughter would socialise them into the majority language.

Extract 15 Family 2 (Melat): ልጃችንን በሲዊድንኛ ብናወራት ትክክል ያልሆነ ሲዊድንኛ ልናስተምራት እንችላለን። የኛ ሲዊድንኛ የልጃችንን ሲዊድንኛ እድገት አይረዳዉም፤ ምናልባትም እርሷ የኛን ሲዊድንኛ ልታርም ትችላለች።  
 If we talk to our daughter in Swedish, we might mislead her and model her Swedish in a wrong way. Our Swedish will not benefit her Swedish learning at all. She could perhaps correct our Swedish instead of us correcting her.

Extract 16 Family 2 (Robel): ልጅችንን በሲዊድንኛ ሳወራት እናቷ ትቆጣለች እኔም እሷን በተመሳሳይ መልኩ እቆጣለሁ ምክንያቱም ልጃችን ናት እንጅ የኛን ሲዊድንኛ ማረም የምትችል እኛ የሷን ሲዊድንኛ ማስተካከል አንችልም።  
 When I speak to our daughter in Swedish, her mother always complains and tries to stop me, and I do the same when her mother speaks in Swedish with our daughter. Because it is she – our daughter – who can correct our Swedish – not us who can correct her Swedish.

These extracts are examples of what Schwartz (2020) describes as reciprocal learning or bidirectional language socialisation, which is an outcome of the linguistic competence asymmetry (Smith-Christmas 2020) often existing between migrant parents and their

children. As Hua and Wei (2016: 656) also point out, ‘the first-generation migrants find learning the languages of the new resident country is the most important and often challenging task, whilst their local-born children face the challenge of maintaining the home/heritage language’. While we can only speculate about the role Liyu will have in influencing family 2’s FLP, it is interesting to see how the parents already foresee the epistemic authority or agency that their daughter will have correcting their Swedish, rather than the other way around.

Against this backdrop, Robel reported how they (parents) used to police each other to ensure compliance with what seems to have been a no-Swedish norm during parent–child interaction (extract 16). The no-Swedish norm or policy (extract 16) at home in parent–child interaction is not geared to opening up more space to accommodate heritage language use and practice; rather, it is to avoid affecting Liyu’s Swedish with what Melat calls ‘fel svenska’ (the wrong kind of Swedish). As can be seen in the extract above, both parents are convinced of their daughter’s agentive role in socialising them into the majority language.

### **Children’s metalinguistic awareness of their multilingualism**

One of the initial premises that informed the present study was to research FLP through children’s direct engagement and representation as a way of including their views and perspectives on their multilingualism. Such an approach allows us to avoid relying entirely on data collected from caregivers, which was the case in previous FLP scholarship (Curdt-Christiansen 2018, King 2016).

All participating children, except the daughter in family 2, who is five years old, described themselves as functionally multilingual; they rated their levels of proficiency, feelings, and challenges regarding each language they could speak, as well as where, when, and with whom they used them. Referring back to the conceptualisation of agency as described in Kuczynski (2002: 9), making a choice to use a certain language over the other is an act of agency. Hence, children’s metalinguistic awareness allows us to see which language choices they say they make and what mediates such choices. Some instances of children’s words taken during body- and space-mapping narrations are given below. The second daughter in family 3, Blen – who did the oral narration in Swedish and Amharic – described her proficiency in Amharic as shown in extract 17.

Extract 17 Family 3 (Blen): Jag är inte jätte jätte mycket bra men jag är helt okej.  
I am not really very very good, but I am totally okay (Sic).

By contrast, the daughter in family 1, Eden – who did the post-mapping narration in Amharic by her choice – claimed to be proficient in Amharic and said that she conversed with her grandmother in Amharic via telephone. She also reported using Amharic more often than Swedish in daily communication encounters with her mother and her brother.

Extract 18 Family 1 (Eden): ከአያቴ ጋር በአማርኛ ብቻ አወራለሁ። አማርኛ ብቻ ነዉ የምቸለዉ።  
I only speak in Amharic when talking to my grandmother (via



telephone). I can speak a lot in Amharic [excerpt taken from the body-mapping narration].

Similarly, the oldest daughter in family 3, Feven, and the son of family 1, Eyasu, made metalinguistic commentaries on the writing aspects of Swedish, English, and Amharic.

Extract 19 Family 3 (Feven): በጣም የሚቀለኝ ቋንቋ ሲዉድንኛ ከዛ ኢንግሊሽ ከዛ አማርኛ። አማርኛ መጻፍ ይከብዳል ግን ማዉራት ይቀላል ኢንግሊሽ መጻፍ ይቀላል ማዉራት ትንሽ ይከብዳል። በጣም የምወደዉ ቋንቋ ሲዉድንኛ ነዉ። Swedish is the easiest language to me, then English comes, and finally, Amharic. Writing in Amharic is difficult, but [it is] easier to speak. English is easier to write but difficult to speak. Swedish is the language that I love the most.

Extract 20 Family 1 (Eyasu): የአማርኛ ፊደል ከሲዉድንኛዉ ፊደል ይከብዳል በሲዉድንኛ መጻፍ ይቀላል ከአማርኛዉ። The Amharic alphabet is more difficult than the Swedish one. Writing in Swedish is much easier than writing in Amharic.

Looking at the children’s metalinguistic commentaries in light of the reported home language choices, the choices they made to speak Swedish instead of Amharic, particularly in the case of children in family 3 (see extracts 14 and 21) or vice versa in the case of family 1 (extracts 5 and 6), are instances

illustrating the agentive role of children in determining the compliance regime and linguistic norm of their respective families, and by extension, influencing the entire process of FLP-making.

Concerning the writing skill challenges that the children described in their metalinguistic commentaries, Amharic language is considered an easier language to speak compared to English but more difficult to write compared to both English and Swedish (extracts 19 and 20). The writing-related challenge could be attributed to the fact that Amharic has quite a different and complex orthography compared to Swedish and English. The alphabetic and writing system used in Amharic and Tigrigna, which is known as ‘Geéz script’ or ‘Ethiopic script’, has over 276 different letters, posing a huge challenge to children born, raised, and schooled outside Ethiopia. Moreover, the 40-60 minutes of weekly mother tongue instruction offered to students with a mother tongue other than Swedish, which is mostly arranged outside the normal school time, is not enough or ‘too marginal’ (Ganuza and Hedman 2019) compared to the many hours of weekly lessons given in Swedish and English subjects.

### **Represented family multilingualism in a monolingual-dominated social space**

In the space-mapping portraits, the children provided a detailed account of language-mediated interactional patterns between family members in terms of who speaks which language to whom and how often. In the space-mapping portraits, the children also gave detailed descriptions of their own

monolingual and multilingual language practices. Accordingly, the space-mapping data and the follow-up oral narration revealed a rich description of language use by family members in various common spaces and private rooms, particularly the language use pattern in parent-child interaction between children, language use at the individual level, and language choices in the presence of guests and visiting friends. Figure 2 shows one instance from the children’s space-mapping portraits, and an excerpt from the post-mapping narration is presented below the figure.

Extract 21 Family 3 (Feven): ምድር ቤት ሸላሬ ነዉ ሲዉድንኛ እና አማርኛ አረኩኝ። ቲሺ በሲዉድንኛ፣ እንግዳ ሲመጣ አማርኛ ወይም ሲዉድንኛ ነዉ። ሽንት ቤት ዉስጥ ሲዉድንኛ ነዉ፤ ብቻ አስባለሁ በሲዉድንኛ ፡ ኪችን አማርኛ እና ሲዉድንኛ ከአባቴ ጋር ሳወራ በሲዉድንኛ ነዉ፤ ግን እንደዚህ ብርጭቆ ስጦኝ በአማርኛ ነዉ። ምግብ ስንበላ በሲዉድንኛ ነዉ ትንሽ አማርኛ። ከዛ ሳሎን ቤት አማርኛ እና ሲዉድንኛ ነዉ እኛ ብዙ ጊዜ ሳሎን አንሆንም፡ ፡ ደረጃ ላይ ሲዉድንኛ እና አማርኛ ነዉ። የሜሮን እሩም በሲዉድንኛ ነዉ የምናወራዉ አማርኛ ስንፅልይ ግን ሲናወራ ሁልጊዜ በሲዉድንኛ ነዉ። ሃና ክፍል እንግሊሽ እና ሲዉድንኛ፤ ሃና በ እንግሊሽ ትዘፍናልች። እማማ እና ፓፓ ክፍል ዉስጥ አማርኛ እና ሲዉድንኛ ነዉ፡ ፡ ማማ ብዙ ሲዉድንኛ ታወራለች ፓፓ ብዙ አማርኛ ያወራል። ብዙ ጊዜ አባት እና እናት ሲዉድንኛ ነዉ የሚያወሩት። ከዛ እኔ እሩም (room) አማርኛ፣ ሲዉድንኛ ፣ እስፓኒሽ እና እንግሊሽ ሆነ። እስፓኒሽ ስለምማር ክፍሌ ዉስጥ አጠናለሁ።  
 In the basement, I coloured it in Swedish

and Amharic. Television is in Swedish. When we have guests, we speak either in Swedish or in Amharic. In the bathroom, I use Swedish because I think or contemplate in Swedish. In the kitchen, it is in Amharic and Swedish. When I talk to my dad, we talk in Swedish, but we use Amharic in some instances, like ‘give me a glass’ or something. When we dine, we talk in Swedish with little Amharic. In the living room, it is Amharic and Swedish, but we [children] do not often sit in the living room. In Hana’s room, we always talk in Swedish, but we use Amharic when we pray. In Blen’s room, we use English and Swedish. Blen used to sing in English. In mama and papa’s room, it is Swedish and Amharic. Mama often talks in Swedish, while Papa talks mostly in Amharic. However, most often they [parents] talk in Swedish. In my room, I use Amharic, Swedish, Spanish, and English. I am learning Spanish, and I do homework in Spanish.

In the above space-mapping portrait, multiple languages are represented through the colours of national flags all over shared and private spaces. The post-mapping verbal narration elaborates and explains. The space-mapping and the verbal narration clearly

indicated that Swedish is a prominent language in a monolingual-dominated multilingual space, where the minority language (Amharic) has a less functional communicative role except as a language of prayer, and it is seldom used in child–parent interaction and in child–guest interactions. The use of Amharic also seems less frequent even between parents, even though it is their first language. As narrated by Feven (extract 21) and her two younger sisters, the children seem to have established a monolingual linguistic norm characterised by the sole use of Swedish between themselves and largely with their parents.

Moreover, Feven’s space mapping portrait offers a panoramic view of the home language practices in the given family, which, in some respect, is telling of the overall linguistic context in which the process establishing FLP operates. Parallel to this, the children’s dominant use of Swedish over Amharic – even though Amharic is explicitly negotiated as a desired compliant language of family 3 (extract 12) and children can explain themselves in Amharic (extract 14) – highlights their agentive role in shaping the process of establishing FLP. Put differently, the above space mapping narration appears to attest that Swedish is the dominant linguistic norm of the given family.

Curdt-Christiansen and Huang (2020) report a similar phenomenon about children’s roles in establishing not only a multilingual space where both the minority and majority languages co-exist in the family space but also a monolingual space dominated by majority language practices. As stated in Caldas (2012), language choices and uses between siblings are often out of the oversight of parents. Seeing this in light of Smith-Christmas’ (2020) framework, the monolingual-dominated family space in

part reflects members’ varied linguistic proficiencies in majority and minority languages, which – as a by-product – pave the way for the establishment of a *laissez-faire* kind of linguistic norm where the compliance regime is ruled by members’ individual choices rather than by jointly established FLP.

## **HYPHENATED IDENTITY**

The body-mapping portrait of Hana from family 3 (figure 3) – which is decorated by the colour of the Swedish and Ethiopian flags in proportional fashion – represents a sense of her built identities. The affective texts of ‘I love Swiden, I love Ethiopien’ (sic) written in her body-mapping portrait could index a harmonious embodiment of the two ethnocultural identities. This case is strengthened in her oral testimony, where she said, ‘I am Ethiopian but still a little Swedish, half-half’. Although Hana is only eight years old and was born and raised in Sweden, her self-identification resembles the way in which many youth respondents identify themselves in the United States. As reported in Kagan (2012), based on a survey conducted by the National Heritage Language Resource Center in 2007–2009, many youth respondents identified as hyphenated Americans (e.g. Asian-American, Latino-American) with dual identity. Hana’s use of the term half-half perhaps defies the common ethnonational and racial identity categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’; hence, it could be taken as “we” and “they” at the same time’ – a wording that Kagan (2012: 72) uses to describe hyphenated Americans by citing Rudyard Kipling’s poem titled ‘We and They’.

Extract 22: Jag är etiopisk fast ändå lite svensk, fifty-fifty. Jag

kommer från Amarigna.  
I am Ethiopian but still a  
little Swedish, half-half. I  
am from Amharic.

As can be inferred from the portraits in figure 3, Hana depicted her identity through the languages she speaks and identified herself as half-Ethiopian and half-Swedish. As seen in her body portrait, she chose to map her body in proportionately partitioned fashion using the colours of the Ethiopian and Swedish flags. The brown colour used around her face and arms, and the cross sign shown down her neck are additional signposts of her identity. The body mapping portrait, the metalinguistic commentary given in the form of text, and the oral narration that she gave all speak to the co-existence of multiple identities, which is formed by both the societal context she is in and her familial background. Children's data tell us, in particular, about how they feel, position, and identify themselves within their immediate social and familial context; this contrasts with the caregivers' data, which tend to be about children's heritage language learning outcomes and learning strategies.

Although identity positioning is not part of Smith-Christmas's child agency framework in FLP, it is plausible to make a claim that the ways in which children identify themselves is an important point of consideration when studying children's multilingual experiences in the home domain and their role in the formation of FLP. By making sense of the environment she is in, Hana made an identity choice that embraces Ethiopian-ness and Swedishness. While relating Hana's identity positioning to her language choices at home, as depicted by her older sister Feven, – "In Hana's room, we always talk in Swedish, but we use Amharic when we pray"

(extract 21) – the use of Amharic as a language of prayer and Swedish as a language of interaction can be taken as the materialisation of her identities.

### **Competence-run FLP and home language use**

Although the three families are distinctive in terms of language ideologies and power dynamics, a consistent aspect that emerged throughout the visual and verbal data is that language competence or proficiency seems to have a decisive role in the process of FLP-making in these families. Parents' beliefs about the importance of heritage language maintenance seem to have little role in shaping home language practices. Canagarajah (2008) also noted such a discrepancy between language ideology and language proficiency in his study on language shift among families of the Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas. Many parents told the researcher that 'rather than their language practices influencing their children, their children's language choices shaped the everyday language use of everyone at home' (Canagarajah 2008: 164). These parents also admitted that their acts did not align with their beliefs. Similarly, in the present study, family members' habitual home language use is found to be a function of competence or proficiency in the target language – not an ideology-driven and value-oriented course of action set to achieve a certain goal. In this regard, the overwhelming majority of the participants tend to choose the language with which they feel more competent and comfortable to converse, regardless of what they believe or wish to have as a home language policy. As reported through interviews with parents and children's space-mapping narratives – for instance, in the case of family 3 – heritage language

use is more of a suggestion than a strictly followed compliant code, as Henok, the father in family 3, reported.

Extract 23 Family 3 (Henok): ሁልጊዜ በአማርኛ እንላልን ነገር ግን እንደ ህግ አንከተለዉም፤ እንደመጣልን ነዉ የምናወራዉ። ልክ ግን ትዝ ካልን አማርኛ ብቻ እንላልን። በሌላ ቋንቋ እያወራን አማርኛ ሲበል እነሱም እየተንደፋደፉ በአማርኛ ያወራሉ እኛም በአማርኛ እናወራልን።

We often say Amharic as a rule to speak at home, but we – ourselves [he is referring to them as parents] – do not follow it. We speak in a spontaneous manner. However, when we recall the rule in the middle of a conversation, we say, ‘Speak only in Amharic!’, and then the children – with all their difficulties of conversing in Amharic – try to speak in Amharic, and we – parents – do the same.

The son, daughter, and mother in family 1 often communicate in Amharic rather than Swedish, while all three daughters in family 3, as well as the mother, use Swedish as a default choice, while the father prefers Amharic over Swedish. Similarly, family 2 mentioned Amharic and Tigrigna as dominant languages spoken at home, in which parents speak Tigrigna to their daughter, whereas Amharic is used between them. The choice of these two languages over Swedish is aligned with a lack of proficiency in Swedish. Although the parents believe that speaking Swedish at home is a strategy that could benefit them in improving their much-needed Swedish, they avoid doing so to prevent modelling their daughter’s Swedish with

‘a wrong kind of Swedish’ (extract 2). Here, it is important to note that the two parents in family 2 were born and raised in Ethiopia from Eritrean parents. (They later moved to Eritrea as teenagers during the 1998 Ethio-Eritrean war). Thus, they wanted their daughter to learn her Eritrean heritage, for which knowing Tigrigna is necessary.

To sum up, what seems common in all three families is that many of them prefer the language in which they feel more competent. The only exception is the daughter in family 1, who still uses Amharic more often than Swedish, regardless of having more competence in Swedish. This resonates with Smith-Christmas (2020: 221) conceptualisation of the role of language competence in dictating the ‘formation of linguistic norms within the family’ and the interplay between language competence and choice. Smith-Christmas (2020) also emphasises the importance of understanding the relationship between language preference and competence as reflexive entities.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study presented in this article is a response to two growing critiques of the existing FLP scholarship. The first is a burgeoning call for more FLP research that includes diverse family types, languages, and contexts than the OPOL family prototype that has been pervasive in previous FLP research (King 2016). Second and perhaps more crucial to this article is that children’s voices, perspectives, and experiences have been poorly represented in previous FLP literature (Palviainen 2020, Schwartz 2020, Smith-Christmas 2017). However, including and engaging children in

FLP research requires methodological innovation. This means developing appropriate techniques through which ‘to elicit the children’s views of their two (or more) languages’ (Smith-Christmas 2017: 20), rather than employing the widely used survey, interview, and observational methods that have dominated the research tradition of the field (Palviainen 2020).

In this article, both visual and verbal data were collected from children and parents of three Ethiopian-Eritrean families in Sweden. The multimodal research approaches of body and space mapping activities were devised particularly to accommodate children as active research participants. The data were analysed by adopting Smith-Christmas’ framework of child agency in FLP, which conceptualises how the compliance regime, linguistic competence, linguistic norm, and power dynamics intersect in child agency (Smith-Christmas 2020).

This study provided additional evidence of the complex, chaotic, and continually evolving nature of multilingual experiences among migrant families in the home domain. First, the FLP-making process is filled with home language choice dilemmas triggered by competing linguistic demands that are at play simultaneously. In this regard, the case of family 2 is a notable example that reflects the above claim. In family 2, the question of balancing or prioritising between the socioeconomic value of learning and practising the majority language (parents) and the sociocultural value of transmitting the heritage language to the child in the home domain remains a perplexing situation in the FLP-making process.

Second, family constellation, where the issue of power dynamics between family members comes into play, appears

to be one driver that shapes the process of FLP making. Although it is not possible to generalise based on the data from this study, the single-parent-headed family (Family 1) runs a consistent and uniform FLP compared with the two coupled families. The two coupled families – as a consequence of family members having different language ideologies and varied proficiencies in the majority and minority languages – are either experiencing the home language choice dilemma (family 2) or have a laissez-faire kind of FLP (family 3), in which home language choice is ruled by individually chosen norms rather than a certain compliant language set by the family. The latter two cases will affect parental language input patterns in terms of both the quality and quantity of inputs that children need to acquire the heritage language (De Houwer 2007). Parallel to what family constellation does in the FLP-making process, children’s agency manifested through their home language choices was found to be pivotal in determining whether a compliant regime to minority language use is adhered to, thereby contributing to what kind of linguistic norm is established in their respective family.

When it comes to children’s views and perspectives about their multilingual experiences in the home domain, the visual and verbal narrative data provided a highly detailed account of their metalinguistic commentaries on their multilingualism, their home language choices, and interactional patterns described in line with interlocutors and spatial-based experiences within their living spaces. These multilingual accounts highlight the centrality of children’s agentic role in affecting the whole process of FLP-making. For instance, the three daughters in family 3 have established a monolingual norm

in which they practise Swedish entirely between them and largely with their parents. Hence, the heritage language of Amharic had a minimal place and role in everyday familial communication encounters, which clearly contrasts with the case of family 1. Likewise, in family 2, the parents foresaw the agentive role of their five-year-old child, Liyu, in socialising them in the majority language in the future since they expect her to become proficient in Swedish through schooling.

In addition, individual language competence in the majority and heritage languages is partly what determines home language choices and home language practices regardless of family members' beliefs about heritage and other languages. Finally, except for a few studies by parent-researchers (Kopeliovich 2013, Caldas 2012), FLP research tends to examine the home language policy and practices of a family at a single point in time (Lanza and Gomes 2020, Päivi et al. 2020). Hence, when the family is considered 'a dynamic temporal body' (Lanza and Gomes 2020: 164), the effect of time on the process of FLP-making remains an interesting empirical question in the field that requires longitudinal studies. For instance, how the now five-year-old daughter of family 2, Liyu, will shape the FLP of the given family in the next four, five, or more years is an important area of future research. Similarly, as the present study is based on a small number of migrant families from a similar sociocultural and minority language background, which can be considered the minority of the minority in the Swedish context, more studies involving diverse families from other minority language communities with migration backgrounds are needed to gain further insights into the commonalities and

particularities in the FLP-making experiences.

I wish to conclude by going back to the exchange between Aunty Uji and Ifemelu in *Americanah*, with which I started this article. The quandary of choosing which language to speak to children in the context of migration was not the only part of the puzzle in the Ethiopian and Eritrean families I studied; the issue was also about which language children chose to speak at home, which eventually had a considerable impact on the FLP.

## NOTES

By using the term linguistic competence – one of the four dimensions in Smith-Christmas' conceptual framework – I am referring to participants' proficiency in a language in question or their perception of their own and other family members' proficiencies in the target language(s).

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# Book Review: "Decolonising Multilingualism in Africa: recentering silenced voices from the global South" by Finex Ndhlovu and Leketi Makalela

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'Decolonising multilingualism in Africa: recentering silenced voices from the global South' published by Multilingual Matters offers fresh accounts of key concepts in the field of multilingualism from an African perspective. The authors, Finex Ndhlovu and Leketi Makalela, draw together the sociolinguistic mainstay 'multilingualism' and theories of decoloniality. This provokes a stimulating conversation in which 'the multilingual and decolonial turns rub up against each other' (xi). The book locates the conversation of how to decolonise multilingualism within an African setting, unapologetically offering the African linguistic context as a center from which to explore these concerns. The title of the book refers to this as a 'recentering' but in fact what this publication means is that the authors have placed Africa in the center of this corner of the academy for the first time.

The authors contend that 'there is no universal concept of language' (84) which opens the way for them to propose

a plethora of language concepts from African ontologies and epistemologies. These will no doubt find a place within mainstream linguistic research. The book may deal with significant theoretical ideas, but it has its feet firmly on the ground in praxis. Fine-grained empirical studies in educational contexts and contexts of migration, African language invention studies, policy case studies, personal histories and autoethnography elucidate the arguments.

In Chapter 1, in order to emphasise that the book is concerned with the phenomenology of African multilingualism, both authors offer accounts of one of their parents and the kinds of meaning-making that they regularly participated in in the everyday practices of cattle herding and catering for the family. Through these stories they are able to demonstrate that language or meaning-making diversity is more complex than diversity according to quantity, or countable nomolanguages (Krause, 2021).

Chapter 2 offers a searing critique of African languages as linguistic entities, arguing that “African languages” as we know them today are as recent as colonialism itself’ (27). The examples used in this chapter are from Zimbabwe (Shona) and South Africa (Xitsonga), the home countries of the authors. The authors argue that these languages, along with African identities, have been invented by colonial administrators, missionaries and linguists. They also note that it is difficult to return to a pre-colonial era to inform our conceptualisations of multilingualism because scholars and populations have internalised colonial impositions of language categories.

Chapters 3 and 4 consider decolonising and unsettling multilingualism within school and higher education contexts. Key to the data analysis in these chapters is the notion of ubuntu translanguaging (Makalela, 2016). A unique perspective on multilingualism is given in the case studies of the interaction of community elders and educators in schools in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces of South Africa. Here the home-school binary is broken and elders’ conceptions of multilingualism are given primacy in language planning in school. In data from higher education contexts in South Africa, ubuntu translanguaging is shown to be a key feature of multilingual languaging in multilingual seminars as well as in language learning classes. An important cornerstone of African multilingualism noted in these chapters on education is that not only languages, but styles of discourse such as circumlocution, mesh together for meaning-making in learning.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with language policy at the national and regional level, using the case studies of

South Africa’s language in education policies and the project for the creation of African Vehicular Cross-Border Languages. The authors argue that while the intentions of those crafting VCBLs are good, they are mired in what they call, following Veronelli (2015), the ‘coloniality of language’ – a view on the world in which the nature of language is assumed to be that it coalesces as countable objects ready for reification in policy (76). This concept adds another strand to Quijano’s (2000) taxonomy of coloniality (the others being coloniality of power, knowledge, being and nature), connecting to the arguments made in Chapter 2 about African languages being colonial inventions.

Chapter 7 addresses how language practices of African migrants in the diaspora enrich our conceptions of multilingualism, with a special focus on immigration into Australia. The idea of denizenship is reimagined to be a situation where migrants and displaced people inhabit a ‘sphere of possibility’ (109) where their acquired multilingualism presents new opportunities both in the host country and on the migration journey. Denizens have the freedom to deploy many language varieties which enable them to engage wider social networks, countering the assumption that denizens require more, or improved, English in order to function well in Australian society. Denizenship has parallels to another Southern concept: linguistic citizenship (Stroud, 2001). Linguistic citizenship leverages the political power built up in association with the notion of citizenship in order to emphasise the agency and voice inherent in multilingual speakers. Denizenship, as argued by Ndhlovu and Makalela, leverages the position of marginality which refugees and immigrants find themselves in as a place of potential and

thinking and acting otherwise (Mignolo, 2009). Both concepts emphasise the agency which is enacted by multilingual speakers even as the languaging occurs within a power differential. The notion of denizenship is further articulated alongside the notion of marginality. The authors show that the margin is a place of possibility where power is questioned and where multilingual linguistic capabilities of denizens become visible, for example, the use of African Englishes and Australian Englishes in the same community.

Chapter 8 describes an auto-ethnography by Ndhlovu in which he has a chance meeting with a young boy, Omphile, with whom he shares a conversation and a game of soccer. This data is presented in more detail in an earlier volume of this journal (Ndhlovu, 2018). The authors point to some characteristics of this multilingual interaction which they argue is typical in an African setting: neither party offered or asked for information about which languages were commonly held before speaking; the action of the soccer game was an integral part of the multilingual discourse; and language boundaries were fluid, aligning with the strong version of translanguaging. Significant about Ndhlovu's experience was that it took place just outside of formal conference proceedings on the topic of multilingualism. The interaction with Omphile stood in stark contrast to the weak version of translanguaging that Ndhlovu had just experienced during lesson demonstrations at the conference. This reinforced his understanding that African multilingualism 'in the wild' is feature-based rather than nomolanguage-based. It would have been helpful for the authors to draw attention to their use of nomolanguages in the

analysis of the Omphile interaction (for example on page 136), perhaps framing this as a methodological conundrum for further unravelling.

A very satisfying contribution made by the book is one in the area of decolonial methodologies. As part of the project of decolonisation in applied and sociolinguistics, calls have been made to decolonize research methodology (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020; Phipps, 2019). The offering of ubuntu research methodology (44) is an attempt towards this goal. It is a reiterative methodology which is highly participative and inclusive. In the community-based research conducted on conceptions of language in Limpopo reported on in Chapter 3, URM emphasizes complementary roles for the researcher and the participants with data collection and analysis being undertaken by both parties and results being shared. In addition, Chapter 8 reports on an autoethnography and argues for this approach being anti-methodological and breaking from a conventional scientific method. Anti-methodological approaches, the authors argue, move away from claims to universality, reading from the center/metropole and exclusion of non-Western methodologies that have characterized conventional scientific methods. Building on Li Wei's (2011) proposal of 'moment analysis', the authors put forward a case for autoethnography in research on multilingualism. The advantage of this approach is that it enables the narration to be engaging, emotionally rich and fine-grained, positioning the researcher as part of the story.

This book introduces and extends many concepts relevant to the study of multilingualism. In the discussion of the capabilities displayed by actors in positions of denizenship (Chapter 7), an

engagement with linguistic citizenship (Stroud, 2001), would have been useful. The convergence of denizenship and linguistic citizenship with their mutual focus on agency would make for an interesting discussion in relation to decolonizing multilingualism in Africa.

'Decolonising multilingualism in Africa: recentering silenced voices from the global South' advances the field of multilingualism studies both in Africa and globally. Indeed its international relevance is enhanced by the approach of presenting fine-grained research conducted in Africa as illustrations of decoloniality within language theorising. Future multilingualism research will certainly benefit from both the critiques of the coloniality of language and the propositions of decolonial linguistic concepts contained within the pages of this book.

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