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Engaging dystopia: linguistic citizenship and migrant voice

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Abstract

Stroud (2015: 36) recently emphasized the utopian dimensions of linguistic citizenship as "where encounters can be reconstituted as an arena for the negotiation of difference rather than the imposition of commonality (in language, speech norms, or social identity)." A prominent feature of this utopic view of linguistic citizenship is agency and voice and the imagining of a different way of living through language. In this paper I want to draw not on examples of agency and voice, but on silence. This paper reports on a project that used an arts-based approach to investigate narratives of two groups of African migrants living in South Africa. This paper will investigate linguistic citizenship from a particularly dystopian perspective, in the sense of "a utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society" (Gordin, Tilley & Prakash 2010). Thus, the paper focusses on a lack of voice, not silence out of resistance, but the kind of silence that comes from an inability to speak. Stroud (2015: 37) states that linguistic citizenship "invites us to talk about language in visionary and utopian terms by encouraging reflection on the way in which the humanity of each of us depends on respectful recognition of, and engagement with, the linguistically mediated humanity of others". This paper will investigate linguistic citizenship from the perspectives of those who have been stripped of humanity, and who choose not to talk. Specifically, I interrogate how silence fits into a utopian view of linguistic citizenship.

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

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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 & Otsiju, 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

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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 & Bellononjengele, 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).

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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

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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., ftc), 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

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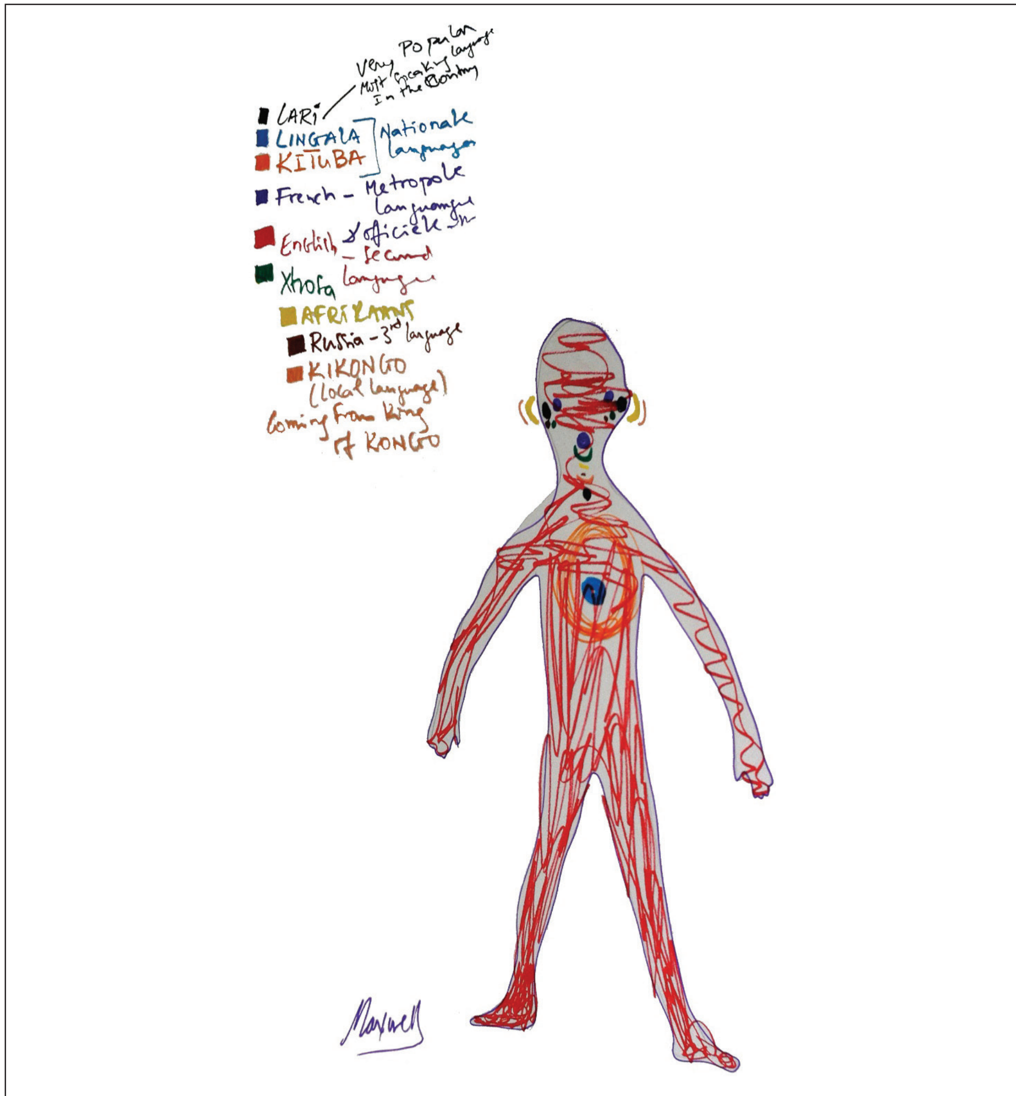

Figure 1. Example of a language portrait

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

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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 been 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

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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 emplaced 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

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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-citizenness, 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.

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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 the 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:

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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.

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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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