

# the Global South (and beyond)



## INTRODUCTION

by *Andrea Hollington, Tijo Salverda, Oliver Tappe, Sinah Kloß, Nina Schneider* (GSSC)

Increased mobility and migration in a globalized world have led to the rise of multilingualism in the Global North, especially in urban areas. This increase of languages has led to a range of new studies of and perspectives on (urban) multilingualism. One example of this new interest in urban linguistic settings in the North is illustrated by the project [Multilingual Manchester](#).

In the Global South, on the contrary, multilingualism has been part of the linguistic reality of people in the majority of societies for ages. In many parts of the South it is nothing new. Yet the linguistic environments and the social practices involving languages and policies are very diverse. And, of course, the picture gets more complicated as the Global South also exists in the Global North and vice versa.

What does it mean to speak more than one language and to live in a multilingual society? How do people cope with and use linguistic diversity? How do societies deal with multilingualism on institutional levels?

Answers to these questions are as diverse as the multilingual settings themselves. There are many ways in which people live with and use their linguistic resources and these are influenced by many different factors and the various environments they exist in, which may determine which linguistic resources are used in a particular context. Language policies may determine the way languages are recognized at an institutional level (for instance, while some postcolonial countries practice 'exoglossic' language policies, i.e. promoting the language of the former colonizer as an official language, South Africa has named eleven languages as official languages), or used and taught in institutional contexts (e.g. the educational system), while people's biographies and ways of life impact individual multilingualism (which languages and linguistic practices do people encounter during their lives and how?).

Just as there are many different multilingual societies and environments, there are many diverging opinions about multilingualism and languages. Lately, cultural and linguistic diversity are regarded as something positive and enriching, and something to be celebrated, in many public discourses in the North. In this regard, diversity can be measured by 'counting' languages (which, of course, requires a certain definition of 'language', especially in a multilingual setting, as a clearly delimitable entity). The [Ethnologue](#), a major authority in cataloging and indexing the World's languages, currently counts 7,102 languages. Another recent perspective is to look more critically at the concepts of 'language' underlying such approaches to multilingualism. Based on the observation of actual linguistic practices in multilingual societies, it is evident that multilingual speakers use their whole repertoire in a fluid and boundless way, not separating 'languages'. Such insights have led people to rethink 'language' and multilingualism and to consider both sides, language as social and political construct on the one hand and actual linguistic practices (the ways people actually speak) on the other hand.

In this issue of *voices from around the world*, the contributors seek to present a variety of perspectives on multilingualism which illustrate a broad spectrum of ways of thinking about language(s) and multilingualism. The contributions are diverse: while some contributions introduce a perspective from a sociolinguistic point of view, they do so in different ways, either reflecting cutting-edge research perspectives on multilingualism or presenting more traditional accounts. Moreover, looking at multilingualism in society, other contributions include or represent voices of speakers as protagonists of their multilingual performances or reflections. Likewise, the contributions are in various formats: from sociolinguistic accounts to creative individual statements, from the critical to the poetic and from the written to the visual, the contributions animate the reader to rethink ideas about languages and multilingualism, especially with regard to the Global South.

The predominant Northern or Western view on multilingualism, which is informed by

monolingual language ideologies and the idea of languages as distinct, separable entities, is deconstructed by [Friederike Lüpke](#), who mentions various examples of small-scale multilingualism in the Global South. Her observations challenge the notion of languages as structured and delimitable systems. On the other hand, she shows that the construction or identification of separate languages with distinct names or labels is an important social practice and political act, and shapes our ideologies of language.

[David Barasa's](#) contribution reflects on his study of the Iteso people, who live in two multilingual communities in Kenya and Uganda, divided by a colonial border. He discusses the similarities and differences in multilingualism in these two communities, looking at linguistic practices such as borrowing or code-switching, particularly with regard to education and language policy.

The fact that multilingualism is also an important and challenging aspect in the classroom is illustrated by [Eunjeong Lee](#), who looks at the Global South in the Global North's classrooms. Moreover, she brings the written domain to our attention as she looks at oral and written practices and multilingual strategies in an English writing class, exploring the classroom as a dialogic learning space.

The short documentary film by [Miriam Weidl and Andres Carvajal](#) opens up yet another view on multilingualism from the perspective of Maxime, a deaf young man who lives in Casamance, a highly multilingual area in Senegal. The way he interacts with people who exhibit large multilingual repertoires inspires new thoughts on lived multilingual experiences.

Multilingual practices in a range of different domains and contexts are presented by [Nico Nassenstein](#), who specifically looks at the use of Swahili in multilingual Uganda. By taking into account the history and politics of languages and linguistic practices, the author explores the various meanings and social conceptualizations that Swahili embodies for people in Uganda. Swahili's strong associations with the military and with power in Uganda underlie the deliberate and conscious usage of Swahili resources in particular communicative situations. The author looks at everyday conversations, the linguistic landscape, popular culture and digital media

[Anne Storch](#) dives into philosophical debates about language and languages and looks at non-academic perspectives on language practices and ownership in a postcolonial context. Investigating an online blog on language and citing an interview with the Nigerian politician Patrick Obahiagbon, as well as subsequent comments, she illustrates how language (and ways with languages of the other) can be conceptualized differently in the South, and thus offers a critique of Northern concepts and ideologies of languages.

A different and poetic approach to language and multilingualism is presented by [Penelope Allsobrook](#), who creatively processes experiences and encounters with languages. Full of emotional and witty poetry, she interrogates multilingualism by asking questions of representation, of speaking and listening, of silence and muting, of ownership, belonging and understanding.

[Abbie Hantgan](#) discusses the role of accent in "the Crossroads", a highly multilingual area of Casamance, Senegal. She explores the meaning and implications of accents and illustrates the social functions of accent, which play a special role with regard to identity in this multilingual crossroads community: specific sounds, perceivable to people as accents, emblematically relate to particular places and origins and are used by speakers to construct and express identity.

A visual journey to transnational Rastafari communities in Jamaica and Ethiopia is presented by [Andrea Hollington](#), who took photos of linguistic landscapes which illustrate the social semiotics of specific linguistic resources, such as particular expressions or typefaces, in transnational, multi-sited and multilingual settings. Contrasting photos from Jamaica and Ethiopia, the author lets the pictures speak for themselves and presents images of the meaningfulness of specific linguistic practices from a transnational perspective.

## DENORTHERNISING MULTILINGUALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM RESEARCH FRAMING LANGUAGE IN THE NORTH: FROM THE MONOLINGUAL NATION STATE TO ACKNOWLEDGING (SU- PER)DIVERSITY

by *Friederike Lüpke* (SOAS, University of London)

At our recent conference on [African multilingualism](#), Jeff Good reminded the audience of how Westerners (or Northerners) are trapped in language ideologies that give them ownership of only one language. Concepts like “mother tongue” or “native speaker” reflect widespread Northern ideas on language and express the ideology that an individual can only have and master one language, and that this one language embodies identity. When monolingual Northerners learn other languages, they aspire to keep them apart from their first language and learn them to native-like perfection, with a monolingual native speaker of the target language being the usually unattainable goal. As most of us know from traumatic experiences in foreign language classrooms, this is a very costly idea of multilingualism. It instantiates what Peter Auer has called a “[monolingual bias](#)”: the idea that the languages of multilingual speakers can be clearly separated and should ideally correspond to two combined monolingualisms.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, more and more (socio)linguistic research is taking stock of a very different reality: that of lived multilingualism in an era of globalisation. The majority of this research looks at multilingualism in the Global North, where migration on a new scale has created an unprecedented “[superdiversity](#)” in the ways in which people interact and are exposed to languages. [Blommaert and Rampton have extended the concept of superdiversity to describe sociolinguistic settings](#). Research on Northern and Southern urban multilingual settings questions many of the tacit assumptions underlying conceptions of multilingualism, including the one contained in its name: that we can in fact identify separate languages within an individual’s language use. In their research, sociolinguists such as [Angela Creese](#), [Adrian Blackledge](#), [Brigitta Busch](#) and [Li Wei](#), to name but a few, find that language use transgresses the boundaries of the sociohistorical constructs

that we have come to know as languages in the dynamic and heteroglossic practice of speakers.

### **Standard language culture propping up reified Northern languages**

In the North, the idea of languages as discrete entities with fixed boundaries is still reinforced by many practices reflecting the centuries-old standard language culture, which has its roots in Renaissance Christian reform movements and the invention of the printing press – the former fuelled by a need for the Bible to be available in vernacular languages rather than in Latin, the latter requiring Bibles be printed in a limited number of standardised codes to minimise costs. Standard language culture culminated in the creation of European nation states and the concomitant eradication of local languages. As long as this essentially written language culture lives on, languages are tangibly reified, as dictionaries, prescriptive grammars and spelling rules forcefully testify. In prescriptive writing, language separation persists through different orthographic representations or writing systems in contexts where non-standardised forms of writing show no boundaries between languages. This language ideology, with its reliance on writing and access to all domains as the central insignia of languagehood, also relegates all languages not used in writing to a subaltern position. Standard language culture is present in many contexts in the Global South as a reflex of colonialism, in the mainly ex-colonial official languages that occupy the highest position in the new polyglossic linguistic markets there. Many of the areas in question are hotspots of linguistic diversity. What are the multilingual configurations in these areas, beneath the highly visible polyglossia? Are there ideas of language and languaging that differ from those of Northern imaginations?

### **Small-scale multilingualism in the Global South**

Radically different multilingual settings persist worldwide where small-scale pre-industrial societies exist at the margins of globalisation, and survive in the shadows of those settings and of languages regulated by standard language culture. These small-scale societies have been described as practising “[egalitarian multilingual-](#)

ism” by Alexandre François, or as [“traditional multilingualism”](#) by Pierpaolo di Carlo. When attempting a characterisation of different settings of this kind, it appears that a useful preliminary generalisation might be to group together all those configurations where multilingual language use is not primarily motivated by power relations or prestige accorded to particular codes. This does not entail that these societies are necessarily egalitarian or traditional; rather, it means that they have remained on the margins of those processes that create monolingual societies with standard language cultures or stratified multilingual settings, as produced in settlement colonies. There are many such societies still thriving across the globe, particularly in Africa, parts of South America, Oceania and vestigially in Australia. While small-scale multilingualism, if present in the public mind at all, is often imagined as induced by contact between small, essentially ‘tribal’ groups, it is rather characterised by very different linguistic and cultural practices creating heterogeneous societies with intriguingly complex patterns of language use and language ideologies. Within a single geographical area, Amazonia, societies in the [Vaupés](#) and [Upper Xingu](#) areas show striking contrasts in the makeup of their multilingual societies. In the Vaupés, a different language is, nominally speaking, a prerequisite for a woman to be an eligible marriage partner, and according to the ideologies, it is important to keep one’s father’s and one’s mother’s language separate. Yet, because of cross-cousin marriage patterns, women often return into their mother’s villages, so that in fact, whole villages share multilingual repertoires. In the Upper Xingu area, there is markedly less intermarriage and multilingualism, although the peoples in this society have a long history of trade and ritual exchange. In [Vanuatu](#), the country with the highest linguistic diversity in the world, small-scale multilingualism often results not only in multilingual households and villages, but is also reflected in multiple identities. Traces of complex multilingual societies remain in [northern Australia](#), where, prior to forced resettlement and linguistic assimilation, small groups maintained intricate relationships with their environment by owning one language, passed down from their fathers (which was linked to autochthony and land rights), and speaking several others depending on their trajectories, as it was

considered impolite to traverse territories whose languages one didn’t speak.

### **Language and land – a fateful misunderstanding**

Australian language census data, reflecting Northern language ideologies by only asking for a single first language, notoriously fail to grasp patterns of language use, since they erroneously record only the owned language, which is not necessarily the one an individual speaks. Similar links between land and language based on concepts of autochthony and spiritual security are also attested in Africa. In the [Lower Fungom](#) area of Northwestern Cameroon, where Jeff Good leads a project investigating rural multilingualism, speaking a language gives access to the spiritual security of the chief of the village with which this language is associated. Being multilingual offers the protection of several villages. In the [Crossroads Project](#) on multilingualism in Lower Casamance in Senegal, we find similar links between language and land. [Multilingual speakers](#) can name one patrimonial language – the language of the founding clan of their village, passed down as the identity language in patrilineal fashion – which is not necessarily related to language practice but only conveys claims of patrimony and first comer status. Their language use reflects their life trajectories, social networks and systematic regional alliances. Since places have their languages, many villages have a nominal language, even though in reality they are multilingual due to women marrying in and out, children being fostered and strangers being hosted. These strangers can become very settled, but as long as they do not sever their links to their points of departure and become owners of their new territory, this is not reflected in their patrimonial language. Crucially, all other linguistic identities are [erased](#) in the patrimonial language ideology. This lack of necessary alignment between languages owned or claimed and languages spoken invites powerful misunderstandings, since it is so very different from the European ideologies that strongly associate father country with mother tongue. Many analyses of languages as endangered result from it, as mismatches between patrimonial languages and spoken languages are often interpreted as ongoing language shift when, in fact, the lan-

guage of the land was never the language of many of the people inhabiting it.

### **Not languages or languaging but languages and languaging**

*What the existing research on small scale multilingual settings worldwide reveals is that multilingualism is not just a product of large-scale processes of migration and globalisation that turn formerly homogeneous places and communities into superdiverse spaces. What it also shows is that in these societies, there is not just fluid and boundary-free languaging. There, as in the North, languages can be reified as potent ideological constructs for a variety of reasons. It is revealing to study them and how they differ from Northern monolingual language ideologies and essentialist conceptions of nation and ethnicity. It is also very worthwhile having a closer look at how and to what extent these ideologies are reflected in linguistic practice. For Casamance, there is [first research](#) on the interplay of local language ideologies and language use, with polyglossic ideologies manifest at the national level. For this area, we have come to recognise named languages as notional and ideological reference points that can at best be partly reflected in the most [monolingual language modes](#) or [single language contexts](#) of language use. In contrast to Northern standard languages, where this reference point is reified by a prescriptive canon present in parts of linguistic practice, its manifestation in speech in non-standardised settings is questionable. This*

*holds especially for contexts in which the closely related nominal languages of locations have been named based on [patrimonial deixis](#). For these languages, such as many varieties of the Jóola cluster in Casamance, the extent to which they are fully reified as full-blown linguistic systems is questionable. Our ongoing research looks exactly into this: to what extent emblematic areas of language, such as greetings, are fully differentiated, and local provenance signalled through an accent, while other areas may be more fluid [[Hyperlink to Mriam Weidl's film](#)] and not instances of code-mixing but of constant code-creation [[Hyperlink to Abbie Hantgan's contribution](#)]. Such findings question the very idea of language that is enshrined in Northern language ideologies. Crucially, both imaginary monolingual reference points and fluid practice are systematically at work in settings like Casamance. We have just started to scratch the surface of understanding small-scale multilingual settings and what they mean for the nature of language and linguistic interaction, despite the fact that most of human language was shaped in similar settings. Understanding these settings and how multilingualism in them actually facilitates social cohesion and communication, rather than resulting in the Tower of Babel situation so feared by monolingual Northerners, could teach a lesson to the North.*

## ITESO'S LANGUAGE REPERTOIRE USE PATTERNS

by David Barasa (*University of Cape Town, CALDi*)

This article considers language use and contact phenomenon among the Ateso speakers.<sup>1</sup> The Iteso live in two countries with quite distinct language environments. The language comprises loan words from English, Bantu and other Nilotic languages that are spoken by people who live close to Ateso speakers. English and Swahili are official languages both in Uganda and in Kenya while Luganda is a dominant language in Uganda.

Based on the researcher's assessment, the majority of young Ateso speakers grow up bilingually, with Ateso as the first language and either English, Swahili or Luganda also being present in the home. English, Swahili and Luganda, which are second languages for Ateso speakers, are the most prominent languages in formal education. English is prevalent not only in the formal education sector but is also the language of the media. Surveys conducted by Bunyi (1997) and Piper (2010) show that the young generation is shifting to English and other dominant African languages. In Kenya, there is a widespread tendency for speakers of smaller languages to shift towards Swahili and English. In Uganda, the language policy since independence has "been exoglossic, with English as the official language; in September 2005, Swahili was added as the second official language, and the language policy changed formally to a mixed one." (Rosendal, 2010: 27). According to Nakayiza (2012: 44), "[a]lthough Swahili has been accorded this [official; DB] status [in Uganda; DB], its official use is still highly symbolic, especially as a result of the formation of the East African Community in which Uganda is a member." Luganda and English continue to be the dominant languages in Uganda. Nakayiza (2012: 43) further observes that "English and to a certain extent the majority languages such as Luganda, enjoy a special status in the country". They are considered 'prestigious' by a majority of citizens who increasingly choose to bring up their children in

<sup>1</sup> Ateso is an Eastern Nilotic Language spoken by the Iteso people in Uganda as well as in Kenya.

these

languages.

### The case on multilingualism and language use

There are very few monolingual Ateso speakers and most of these are old (usually above 65 years) and live in remote areas. The vast majority of Iteso are multilingual (bilingual), with Ateso as their first language and either Swahili in Kenya or English/Luganda in Uganda as a second language. In Kenya, English is found only as a third language in the rural settings, whereas in urban areas it may be used as a second language. The generalizations in this study are only approximate estimations of language use based on the researcher's impressions. Specific studies need to test these impressionistic expressions.

### Major linguistic influences

Ateso-speaking people have undergone major linguistic influences resulting from living among the Bantu and other Nilotic-speaking people. Languages which are spoken by neighbors of the Iteso are Luganda, Karamojong', Samia, Lubukusu, Sabaot and Luo. It is evident that intermarriages and shared social life across the borders of these languages has led to borrowing of new words between the adjacent communities. Heavy lexical borrowing<sup>2</sup> is a new phenomenon that is becoming more and more prominent in Ateso. Borrowed words mostly represent new items or concepts previously not found among the Iteso. The borrowed items have been integrated into the language and they contribute to the corpus of the Ateso vocabulary.

<sup>2</sup> Consider the following nouns borrowed from Swahili or from English through Swahili. The first column indicates relevant Swahili forms that are the source for the Ateso equivalents. All the loan nouns acquire tone that corresponds to the Ateso native noun tones, which are High, Low and Low-High.

a. baisikeli	à-bàísíkèlì	à-bàísíkèlì-ò	'bicycle'
b. mbao	à-bàó	à-bàwó-í	'board'
c. kitabu	è-kítàbò	èkítàbò-í	'book'
d. bakuli	à-bákùlì	à-bákùlì-ó	'bowl'
e. motokaa	à-mótòkàà	àmótòkà-í	'vehicle'

In Uganda, for instance, great influence from Luganda and Karamojong is attested, while in Kenya, a mixture of Luhya (Samia and Lubukusu), Turkana and Sabaot has had a major influence on Ateso. This kind of influence can also be noted in clan names, as revealed by Mwakingile (2012: 147), who notes that, "Iteso clan names reveal long-standing ethnic interactions. Names of Bantu and Northern Nilotic are found among them." In extreme cases, as noted by Webster et al (1973: 11), the "early Iteso migrants who moved to the Bugwere region integrated culturally and dropped the Ateso language in favour of Lugwere." However, it is also worth noting that Ateso linguistic items are also found in languages spoken by neighbouring communities. For instance, "...lexical forms of Kumam [a Western Nilotic language] common in Eastern Nilotic languages are likely to have been recently borrowed from [A]Teso due to close contact continuing still today" (Hieda 2013: 1). The adoption of Ateso linguistic items is limited as forces of prestige and demographic prominence are not in its favour.

Literacy is limited to less than half the Iteso population in Kenya and about 68% of the population in Uganda (UBOS, 2006). In Uganda, literacy is exclusively in English, but in Kenya, it is also in Swahili. Those whose repertoire covers more than one language prefer English, Swahili or other Bantu languages such as Luhya and Luganda that are deemed to have a high social standing within the social context. Based on the researcher's observations during fieldwork, the young people mostly employ Ateso when talking to elderly people but use Swahili or English when communicating with their peers.

### **Ateso use in the social domain**

Language use patterns differ significantly between the Iteso of Kenya and Uganda. Iteso speakers in Uganda switch much less and if they do they use English phrases and lexical items, which must in many cases be considered borrowing. In Kenya, there is more code switching in Swahili.

Ateso does not receive much attention in the social domain. English is spoken mainly by the educated in the society and serves as the language of the people deemed to be upper class. English is also dominant in electronic media.

English, Swahili and Luganda are predominant in all public settings and have all but marginalized Ateso and other non-dominant languages.

In school, although Ateso is not officially prohibited by either the Ugandan or the Kenyan governments, most schools actively suppress the use of L1s within school premises (Gacheche, 2010: 6). During fieldwork, the researcher visited two schools within the Teso region, where he observed that the use of Ateso is discouraged and learners who use it are punished either by teachers or selected students, who are chosen to guard against 'mother tongue' speaking. The situation is becoming even worse at home, where some parents have started to consciously abandon Ateso in favour of the dominant languages in their interaction with children. This may lead to a gradual decrease in the number of Ateso speakers and to the death of the language.

In church, the main languages used are English, Swahili and Ateso. Ateso is used for the oral presentation of the church teachings while Swahili in Kenya and English in Uganda are usually the written languages that the Bible is read in. Sometimes the translated Ateso Bible is used.

The Iteso are organized into clans, which form the primary social organization. Their social organization defines the cultural constraints and taboos that guide the use of language. Most vocabulary related to body parts is confined to use among members of the same social groups. Elders are seen to be guardians of the language and their conversations are often clothed with proverbs. Other social groups include lineages, age and generational sets. Unfortunately, with the influence of modernity the traditional social systems are almost completely disappearing from Iteso life.

### **Language**

### **policies**

Through national language policies, most African governments have pushed the majority of the African languages to the periphery. As a consequence, not only hundreds of small African languages, but also many languages with larger numbers of speakers like Ateso, are either undocumented or under-documented (see UNHCR 2003). Inadequate financial and intellectual support from the governments has halt-

ed efforts directed at developing African languages.

More recent government policies in Uganda and Kenya are in favour of first language education. These policies aim to ensure that mother tongue languages in Kenya are re-introduced into the education system and used as a medium of instruction at lower primary level. The guidelines – if implemented – will officially introduce Ateso into the institutions of learning. In Uganda, *The Government White Paper* (1992) recommended first language instruction up to Primary 4. Ateso is identified as one of the languages that should serve as a medium of instruction within the areas inhabited by Ateso speakers. Like Labwor, a Southern Lwoo language, and many other indigenous languages, Ateso is a de facto medium of instruction in the first four years of primary education, even though there are no textbooks in the language. The common practice is for teachers to translate their teaching materials from English (see Heine & König 2010: 10). For Ateso to be an effective medium of instruction and also a subject in schools, there is an urgent need for the development of Ateso educational material. The increased number of studies on Ateso (e.g. Barasa, 2015) aims to have a significant impact on the development of the literacy materials in the language.

In summary, this study offers an overview of language use patterns among the Iteso. Based on the existing literature and the researcher's knowledge, information on Ateso-speaking people is discussed in the various sub-sections. This aims at contributing to an understanding of the Iteso people in general, while also making known factors that have had an impact on their language. Such information is important as it demarcates the functions and milieus of language use and changes that have occurred due to the Iteso people's movements and interactions with other speech communities.



## MOBILIZING THE GLOBAL SOUTH: STRATEGIC USE OF MULTILINGUAL REPERTOIRE OF A LANGUAGE TEACHER IN THE U.S.

by Eunjeong Lee ([Penn State College of the Liberal Arts, Department of Applied Linguistics](#))

With the influence of globalization, it is now natural to consider most of the areas in our globe as consisting of contact zones. As the distance between people from different language backgrounds is getting narrower with increased mobility, we are witnessing an increasing number of studies that examine contact zone communication, where people bring multiple linguistic and paralinguistic resources to the interaction. As the field is moving away from the view of language as a discrete, separate system toward a view that focuses on language use and practice as integrated and performative (Garcia, 2009; Hornberger, 2003; Canagarajah, 2013), it is imperative to understand more about how multilinguals use their linguistic repertoires and how they manage the differences that might arise during their interactions in the contact zone (Pratt, 1991).

The discussion of multilingual practice as drawing from multilinguals' repertoires is particularly important in U.S. college classrooms, where English is often considered as the only "norm" despite the increasingly multilingual campus (Matsuda, 2006). Despite the presence of the "Global South" everywhere on campus, multilingualism is not considered or practiced in classroom in the U.S. In addition, while there are a great many studies theorizing the reconceptualization of multilingualism as integrated and performative practice, there is still relatively little discussion of what it means to adopt this approach in practice. What can we gain by reconceptualizing language competence as language repertoire? What can we gain when we start utilizing our multilingual repertoire in the language classroom? This paper attempts to answer the above questions by illustrating how a multilingual writing instructor utilizes her linguistic repertoire in her writing course and what this achieves in terms of semiodiversity of the multilingual space as well as the pedagogical goal.

### **Data**

Before I narrate the story of Kristine, let me introduce her briefly. Kristine teaches English writing to multilingual writers at different levels in different programs: an intensive English program (IEP), undergraduate ESL composition, and English composition at a research university in northeast U.S. She started her career with 9 years in a university in Kurdistan as an instructor teaching different subject areas such as literature and composition, and only recently came back to the U.S. Kristine and I first met as colleagues in one of the programs that she was teaching, and our relationship included the different labels of research participant and researcher as she became one of the participants in my research project. The data below comes from an ongoing research project, and has been collected since the summer of 2015 at the research university where Kristine and I work.

### *Kristine's story: Not the multilingual, but doing multilingual*

While Kristine's linguistic repertoire includes multiple cultural practices and languages such as English, Farsi, Arabic, and French, she does not see herself as a multilingual as she "does not speak all the languages the same way." Particularly, Kristine does not value her long experience of teaching in Kurdistan. However, during my observation of her class and subsequent interviews, it was clear that Kristine was freely utilizing her multilingual resources in her class. One day in her academic writing course in the IEP, one of her students had trouble understanding what "taboo" meant:

Excerpt 1. You know *haram*

S: Kristine, what is taboo?

K: Taboo is something you don't talk about or avoid talking about.

S: um:

K: You know حرام (*haram*)

S: oh:

With her knowledge of Arabic, Kristine was able to help this student to negotiate the meaning of the unfamiliar word, *taboo*. Instances like this have been reported in a number of studies relating to how multilinguals negotiate meaning

using their native language. Kristine, as multilinguals often do, also utilized her knowledge in Arabic, enabling her class to continue discussing the subject matter.

Kristine's drawing resources from her multilingual repertoire did not stop at just helping her students to understand an unfamiliar word. In a different class, Kristine and her students were discussing possible options for one of their main assignments for the course, a definition essay. Here, Kristine gave an example of the word, *'ib*, as a sample topic for a definition essay, and brainstormed with students what this word means. Kristine reflects on her use of Arabic in class as follows:

I used two Arabic concepts (they are both words that we talked about, *'ib*, used to label something as shameful or disgraceful, and waste, which is connections, or nepotism) and explained how there is no direct translation in English, but I could still explain the concept enough so that the students could understand. Some of them even had a similar concept in their own language and used the concepts in their own languages. The writing that came from this assignment has been excellent students' writing. I have loved this assignment because it has given me a wide open window into other cultures. I think my examples were helpful and benefited the whole class.

Here, Kristine's use of Arabic is significant on multiple levels. First, she is able to achieve the pedagogical purpose, namely engaging her students in a brainstorming activity for a definition essay using a concept that they can best explain. In doing so, Kristine chooses a word that she and some of her students share together; by drawing on students as linguistic experts and resources, Kristine was able to make the classroom into more democratic dialogic learning space. From another perspective, the dialogic learning space also benefits the instructor as well; the students' multilingual practice also becomes a learning moment for the instructor. Indeed, Kristine reflects further, "During a brainstorm activity, two students wrote words in Arabic script, and I was able to

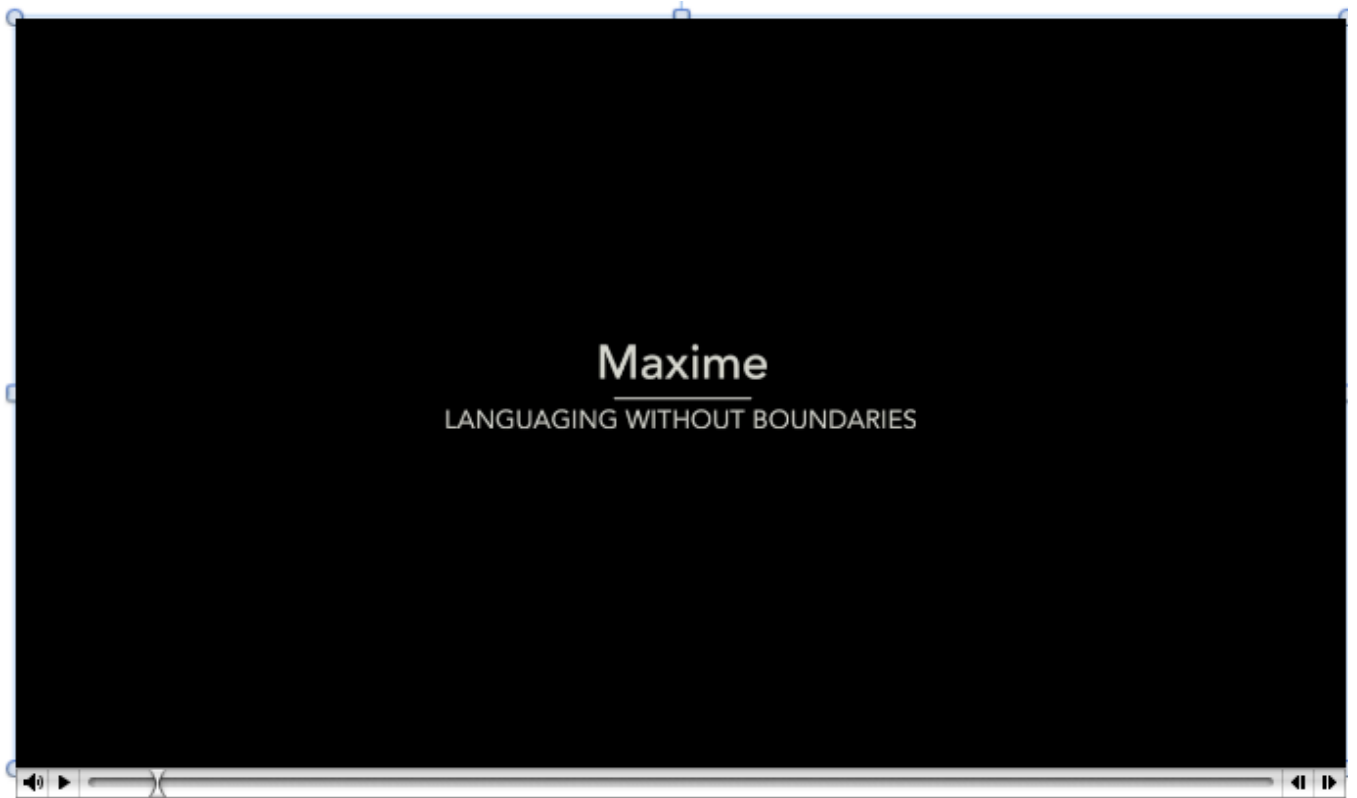
read the words and was familiar with the concepts they were trying to communicate. That helped to make a link."

The act of adopting a foreign word also expands the range of semiodiversity (Halliday, 2007). That is, the classroom becomes a space where the students are welcome to bring their own cultural practices and values and to engage in a dialogue with others and themselves, creating opportunities to make meaning around their multilingual resources. In this way, multilingual writing practice goes beyond what a typical monolingual English college classroom environment might allow students to do and be. Through the use of foreign words, Kristine is making her multilingual identity available to students, creating an opportunity to build solidarity between herself and her students as fellow multilinguals. In addition, by valuing multiple languages and cultural influences, Kristine and her students make their multilingual space more visible; she welcomes the semiodiversity of the classroom, and by doing so, she positions students as agents of their own meaning making practice, encouraging them to fully utilize the resources available in their own linguistic repertoires.

*Language teachers do not tend to think of themselves as multilingual, influenced by the traditional understanding of multilingualism as "multiple monolingualisms" (Makoni & Pennycook, 2006), although they do already engage in performative language practice, drawing upon multiple linguistic resources (Tardy, 2011). When teachers do utilize their multilingual repertoires, it provides certain benefits: it helps the students in their negotiation of meaning, making semiodiversity of the multilingual space more visible, and thereby making the classroom more democratic and appreciating students' individual voices and agency. As this paper suggests, along with Tardy's (2011) findings, language teachers do engage in multilingual practices regardless of whether they define themselves as multilingual or not, or whether they value their "global south" experience or not. It is time to raise awareness of the everyday multilingual practices that language teachers engage in, which I believe will lead to a reconceptualization of multilingualism, more grounded in people's actual language practices.*

A SHORT DOCUMENTARY FILM

by *Miriam Weidl and Andres Carvajal*



## THE METROLINGUAL USE OF SWAHILI IN URBAN UGANDAN LANDSCAPES AND EVERYDAY CONVERSATION [1]

by Nico Nassenstein (*Institute for African Studies & Egyptology, University of Cologne*)

### **Swahili in everyday conversations – metrolingual practices**

Despite the use of Swahili for official purposes over several decades, it has never fully become a 'Ugandan language', according to the inhabitants of Kampala, in terms of identification and unification. It was introduced into the army in colonial times and more widely established since Obote's presidency (from 1966 on), then propagated under Idi Amin Dada's dictatorship. Often perceived as a potential threat to Luganda as the predominant language of Buganda Kingdom (and thus, the capital city Kampala) (Pawliková-Vilhanová 1996: 169), it has spread more in the northern (non-Bantu-speaking) parts of the country than in the southern parts. Today, Kiswahili still serves as a *lingua franca* throughout large parts of the West Nile region (Nakao Shuichiro, p.c. 2015), through Acholi-land and adjacent areas, and is also much more prominent in Karamoja (Steffen Lorenz, p.c. 2015) than for instance in the areas surrounding Lake Victoria.

However, Swahili has become an integral part of communicative practices in the capital Kampala and can be heard in conversations between Swahili-speaking and non-Swahili-speaking inhabitants all across the city. Rather than classifying the use of Swahili as cases of borrowing, or codeswitching, the notion of 'metrolingualism' is suggested here, as defined by Pennycook & Otsuji in their theoretical approach to language entanglement and dynamic language practices in the city.

Rather than the demolinguistic enumeration of mappable multilingualism or the language-to-language focus of translanguaging and polylingualism, however, metrolingualism focuses on everyday language practices and their relations to urban space, on the ways in which the spaces and rhythms of the city operate in relation to language. [...] While not rejecting

the ludic possibilities of language play, metrolingualism takes seriously the everyday language practices of people in cities, which may be playful and convivial or divisive and contested. (Pennycook & Otsuji 2015: 57)

Kiswahili in 'everyday language' in Kampala is usually not used by speakers in isolation over long stretches of speech, but is rather intertwined in Luganda and/or English utterances; nor do speakers have extraordinary proficiency of the language (as assistants would frequently emphasize). The sometimes playful and creative ways in which Swahili is employed in conversations among speakers of multiethnic and multilingual backgrounds in their urban encounters in Kampala adds to current theoretical aspects of metrolingualism. Otsuji & Pennycook (2010: 240) see metrolingual practice as exactly that, as a "product of modern and often urban interaction, describing the ways in which people of different and mixed backgrounds use, play with and negotiate identities through language", while they also confirm and perform identities. As stated by both authors in their groundbreaking seminal paper, 'languages' here are not considered as systems but more as something emerging from 'contexts of interaction', which makes use of fluid language, but also of a concept of 'fixed' language. Kiswahili has always been part of the capital Kampala ever since the establishment of the King's African Rifles (the British Protectorate's soldiers) in East Africa in 1902, and has served a number of official as well as individual functions. Various lexical influences in languages such as Luganda are a testimony to constant language contact in the area, and to overlapping language practices that reveal a certain kind of 'fixity' of language, since speakers still clearly distinguish between *olulimi yaffe luganda* ('our language Luganda') and 'those Swahili words' that have entered over time. Swahili has always had a place in interaction in Kampala and speakers are aware of carefully and consciously employing it, rather like a cook using certain spices to season the dish.

Kiswahili is either used as an emblematic trigger and initial element in conversations (with a phatic function, as when friends address

each other with *wewe...!* 'you, guy...!'), or as an expression of personal stance in the speech act, when the expression of authority, determination and decisiveness are indicated by the speaker through the use of Swahili. The latter could be witnessed when I repeatedly spent time in a multilingual Ugandan family, where Acholi, Luganda, English and Rutooro were spoken, and where little children were often disciplined by adults with a harsh command in partial and "incorrect" Swahili, for instance when told to get off the chairs (*wewe, toka huyo! I will beat you!*, meaning 'get off over there! I am going to punish you!'). Grammatical 'correctness' in terms of standardized ECS is not an essential condition in the dynamic practices of Swahili when entangled with other languages, since its mere use is already expressive enough. Speakers themselves would, when asked how they acquired their Swahili resources, in most cases emphasize that they "don't speak it but everybody knows some of it" (Ivan Dean Ochan, p.c.). This is a very European, and a very academic definition of 'speaking' and 'mastering' a language, aimed at the goal of overall proficiency and 'correct speech'.

Kiswahili can often be heard in Kampala's larger markets such as Owino Market, Nakasero Market and Nakawa Market, and also when street vendors communicate with passersby in cars. The use of Swahili creates a certain intimacy in the act of trading between customer and vendor. In various situations I witnessed potential customers addressing the vendors with *boss wangu, mmeka?* ('my boss, how much?'), wherein the English *boss* is followed by the Swahili possessive *wangu* and the Luganda quantifier *mmeka*.

While collecting data on Swahili in 'everyday language' in Kampala, various inhabitants with different linguistic backgrounds were asked where, according to their own view, Swahili plays a role in Kampala nowadays. In most cases, Swahili was described as a 'language in uniform', often considered as not very prestigious and mainly used by policemen, soldiers and security guards.

A lot of people who speak Swahili are people in the military in Uganda, people who have military background, or... it's very rare finding

ordinary people speaking Swahili. Nowadays people are taking it in schools, people learn it as an additional language in secondary schools... yeah. Guards... but that's more or less like military, soldier backgrounds. Well, today musicians are beginning to sing in Swahili because they want their music to go outside their country, to be listened to in the whole of East Africa, [...] they are picking the culture of speaking in Swahili, of singing in Swahili. (Vivianne Lindah Lamunu, p.c. 2015)

The use of Swahili is, as well as embodying authority and being useful in trade, of emblematic value when dealing with policemen and security guards at the entrance to night clubs and bars, and also to supermarkets. Because Kampala citizens assume that Swahili is the appropriate language in which to address a uniformed person, and to express respect, Swahili becomes the marked linguistic choice (and thus a kind of register) in the range of speakers' broad communicative repertoires. However, in many cases, supermarket guards have very limited knowledge of Swahili, while soldiers or policemen (usually all addressed as *afande* in Kampala) really do know the language and use it for purposes of in-group communication. The fact of being addressed in Swahili, or encountering Swahili-speaking customers, is in generally accepted by security personnel all alike and evaluated as a sign of respect, as becomes clear in the following conversation that was witnessed at the entrance of Tusky's supermarket in Kampala-Ntinda.

Customer 1: Yes, *afande?* (while being checked) ('yes, chief?')

Guard: Gyebaleko... ('hello'; Luganda)

Customer 2: *Abali abali? Pole pole...* ('what's up, what's up? Slowly...')

Customer 2: *Niko muzuri sana...* (while entering) ('I am very fine')

The metrolingual use of Swahili in the example presented shows that both customers apparent-

ly do not actually speak the language but that they combine the resources to which they have access despite their limits and potential shortcomings. In this sense the metrolingual use of different fragmentary resources that one acquires through ‘encounters with language’ (Blommaert & Backus 2011) are “part of a complex and densely woven fabric, with holes in it and changing colours and embroidery” (Lüpke & Storch 2013: 346). This is certainly true of the emblematic use of Swahili in Kampala. The Luganda realization of *habari* (‘news’) as *abali* is part of the colorful and complex fabric that makes up a speaker’s multilingual repertoire.

The second example illustrates the use of Swahili in situations with clear power imbalances, used in the Kampala context by the conversational partner at the higher end of the power gap, which also has a warning function. I took notes of the following conversation while seated in a taxi coming from the airport and entering Kampala city, when the taxi driver began to interact with begging street children in the traffic jam on Jinja Road.

Taxi driver: *Wewe! Unajua kiswahili?*  
(‘You! Do you know Swahili?’)

(A girl looks at him without moving.)

Taxi driver: *Unajua kiswahili?*  
(‘Do you know Swahili?’)

*Unataka nini – pesa?*  
(‘What do you want – money?’)

(The girl keeps staring at him without moving or replying.)

Taxi driver: What do you want? Money?

(He holds a coin up but she first seems scared to take it; he then places the coin on her palm.)

*Kwenda huku!* (in a loud voice)  
(‘Go there/Leave!’)

When asked how he learnt Kiswahili, the taxi-man answered me “you know... people from the north often speak Swahili”. I asked him whether he originally came from the north, to which he replied “no, I am from the west”. When asked if he had travelled to the north, he denied it but replied “I was among the SF, special forces...”. Here the use of Swahili thus stands as indexical of a certain regional identity, or, when this condition is not fulfilled, of a military education. In

the example presented, Kiswahili serves furthermore as an initial admonishing expression of power and dominance, in rather as species of frogs and lizards make use of specific warning colors that are recognized as dangerous by potential predators. The performance of a certain military/authoritarian identity is verbally expressed by the Swahili-speaking person, and affirmed by the hearer who perceives it as a warning. It is particularly interesting that Swahili – as the language of the British army and the colonial hegemony – still represents this covert prestige, whereas languages such as Acholi or Karamojong, that have played a salient role in the armed conflicts in northern Uganda in the past decades, do not. Since its colonial foundations, the social role of Swahili in Uganda has generally maintained its stigma and performative power.

### ***Linguistic landscapes – Metrolingual resources on billboards and warning signs***

Kiswahili has, apart from its use in everyday conversations for various pragmatic reasons, made its way onto billboards and banners that advertise restaurants, bars and special offers, as part of the linguistic landscape, understood as “the scene where the public space is symbolically constructed” (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy & Barni 2009). As shown in Fig. (1), the proverbial Swahili expression *hakuna matata* (‘no problem’) is used to emphasize the comfort of the restaurant ‘Rhino 1 Pork Joint’, and potentially also the chef’s mastery of (and authority in) the good East African *muchomo* barbecuing tradition.



**Fig. 1:** The ‘Rhino 1 Pork Joint’ in Nakulabye neighborhood

The second example of the prominent use of Swahili in the urban linguistic landscape is the sign attached to power distributors that can be found all across Kampala, which is presented in three languages, namely Luganda (*kabi*), English (*danger*) and Kiswahili (*hatari*). Again, as is also the case in everyday language, Swahili is employed to underline the danger and severity (due to the high voltage) associated with the act of trespassing in the marked area. The indexical function of Swahili as a language of authorities and ‘uniforms’ also operates here.



**Fig. 2:** A power distributor in Makerere-Kivvulu

The third photograph was taken at one of the side entrances of Bugema University (Kampala-Makerere), where nocturnal thieves are warned against trespassing by indicating the presence of *mbwa kali* ('tough/hard dogs'). The bold printing of the Swahili warning after the English equivalent, even preceding the Luganda one, and also the use of an exclamation mark, illustrate the emblematic use of Swahili on signposts when a specific authoritative effect is intended.



**Fig. 3:** The use of multilingual signposts to warn against dogs at Bugema University

Kiswahili is also known for its use in orature in the form of proverbs, *hadithi* ('stories') and poems. Proverbs, particularly, have spread from the East African coast into the hinterland, and can be found on Ugandan (taxi)buses, motorbikes and trucks (see Fig. (4)). The widely known proverb *haraka haraka haina baraka* ('too much of a hurry does not bring blessings') is used as a polite warning to the following vehicle not to speed or tailgate. As has been pointed out before, Swahili is often perceived as a language of 'authority' and 'order'. In the example presented, the use of Swahili expresses both an idiomatic cross-reference to a hegemonic and standardized language from the East coast, and as an educative appeal to other road users.



**Fig. 4:** Kiswahili proverb on a truck in a Kampala traffic jams

### Popular culture and online practices

In Uganda's music industry, too, Kiswahili plays a significant role, both as a commercial strategy and in the quest for a feeling of unity across music genres, languages and styles. The popular musician 'Dr.' Jose Chameleone, who spent a considerable part of his early career in Kenya, sings entirely in Swahili, which has become both his personal trademark and a general popular feature of Ugandan music. The use of Kiswahili has become indexical of the city's music industry and its contemporary popular culture, and is also used in social media. In 2013 and 2014 I usually crossed paths with Jose Chameleone at least once a month in one of the crowded Kampala bars such as 'BBQ Lounge' or 'Bubbles', and he would be noticeably happy when I addressed him with "mzee, habari za leo? mambo vipi?" ('Old man, what's the news today? What's up?'). The encounter with strangers who address him in Kiswahili in the evenings confirms the success of his professional choice of languages, and serves as a recognition factor of his label as a 'Swahili artist'. The advertising of his upcoming single *Maali yangu* ('my property/my wealth') has led to a multi-faceted and metrolingual exchange of comments on Chameleone's Facebook page (see Fig. (5)).



Fig. 5: Online advertising for Jose Chameleone's upcoming single

Among the 'languaged' comments are statements with intertwined English and Luganda words (*we love you so much gwe asinga*; '(...) you are the one who wins'), emblematic lexemes from Swahili (*africaz number moja*; 'number one' with Luganda-like geminated consonants) and others. Swahili in Ugandan music unifies listeners with divergent linguistic backgrounds, and equally serves as a powerful commercializer, aiming to connect Kampala's music scene with the vibrant East African metropolises of Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.

Altogether, Kiswahili has become an everyday component in multilingual and metrolingual communication among Kampala citizens, despite its changing anchoring in the country's language policy over time, and has equally become a powerful resource with many different functions and modes of employment. It is also an urban trademark in linguistic landscapes, soundscapes and semioscapes – in most cases serving as a metrolingual register of power and order in the public space.

[1] This Paper is based on research conducted in July 2015 in Kampala/Uganda. The Photographs were taken in September 2015 by Paulin Baraka Bose, and provided as a courtesy.

[2] See <https://www.facebook.com/josechameleone/photos/a.540328369377551.1073741825.105660196177706/824584454285273/?type=1&theater> (accessed 21 September 2015).



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## METABABBLE

by Anne Storch (Professor, [Institute for African Studies, University of Cologne](#))

LANGUAGE is an ephemeral concept. Whenever we refer to a specific communicative practice or to a particular sonic phenomenon as ‘a language’, we refer to certain epistemologies and ideologies. A language therefore can be imagined as a form of speech shared by a community, or as a national language based on a standard and normed literacy, but it can also be seen as a practice and as a fluid and dynamic part of the complex repertoire used by a multilingual individual. These concepts have in common, however, that they all rest upon the assumption that something like a single language might exist – either as a fixed thing or as flexible practice. And although the increased interest of sociolinguists in multilingualism has produced new insights into communicative practices, which rather put the validity of language as a sequestered thing into question, we cannot easily think about linguistics without this concept. As a consequence, seemingly subversive approaches to language as speaking, in a framework of subjectivity, context, interpersonality, situatedness and creativity, hardly leave their imprints in academic writing about *a language*. Whatever the setting might be, a language can always be constructed on the basis of its lexicon and grammar, which are parts of the whole, or rather some singled-out entities of which the entire structure of a language is made. In other words, the difference between languages “is merely a specific sector in an ocean of isoglosses that comprise its systemic limits” (Holquist 2014: 8).

From the perspectives of other people, who are not linguists or members of northern academia, these might be arbitrary criteria. Structure – the order of morphemes and words and phrases – is just one of many possible criteria of defining a language, and one that is reserved to a specific group of experts.

A glimpse into an interview with one of Nigeria’s most prolific language users, the lawyer and politician Patrick Obahiagbon, illustrates how a deviating metalinguistic discourse – talking about language – is able to dismantle a language, which in terms of its structure might be seen as whole, at least from the perspective of northern

descriptive linguistics. Patrick Obahiagbon was interviewed in *Laila’s Blog* about GRAMMAR:

### **Why do you always speak ‘big grammar’?**

I am not really consensus ad idem with those who opine that my idiolect is advertently obfuscatory. No no no, it’s just that I am in my elements when the colloquy has to do with the pax nigeriana of our dreams and one necessarily needs to fulminate against the alcibiadian modus vivendi of our prebendal political class.

### **Is this the way you were speaking in your school days?**

I’m sure if you confer with my school mates they will tell you that I no longer speak what those who just know me now call “grammar.” I could speak for about twenty minutes when I was in the university and you won’t understand one word of what I said. I must say I have deteriorated in my grammatical construct.

Patrick Obahiagbon speaks about English, and yet not the form of English that might be controlled by ‘its owners’. The difference lies in the words, and the power to dismantle language lies in the possession of these words:

### **When you speak to Caucasians of English origin, how do they react to you?**

My friends that are whites simply marvel and sometimes get maniacally bewildered when we engage, most times to my consternation.

### **Do you think that you understand English language better than the owners of the language?**

I have never had the ambition to know the English language more than the owners. However, I must mention that they are shocked most times to find out several words from me they never heard of that existed in the dictionary. Yet, those words are supposed to be theirs. Na so we see am.

Later in the interview, Patrick Obahiagbon describes how he began to become different as a languager when he developed the habit of reading dictionaries. Not structure, but amassing words, and using them, is 'grammar'.

The comments on Patrick Obahiagbon's way of speaking, just below the interview in the same blog, are much more deviant from English in terms of academic concepts of language. They use Naijá, or 'Nigerian Pidgin English' (which exhibits structural differences to other Englishes; c.f. Faraclas 1996), some bits of Jamaican (Odimegwu 2012), emblematic tokens such as *plz*, *ASAP*, etc. that are characteristic of language use in social media, and some textpl@y (Deumert 2014):

BXXX7 September 2013 at 13:23

What da fuck is he saying plz? " Academic braggadocio, farrago of baloneys, peper soup objurgators.....mehn diz dude ain't normal!...hehehe. infact I don develop vavous bunkum from reading this egregious ambience.

AXXX7 September 2013 at 13:35

Mr. Grammarian don come again.

EXXX7 September 2013 at 23:18

T☺☞ bad he  $\frac{\text{is}}{\circ}$  from  $\frac{\text{My}}{\circ}$  state.  $\frac{\text{A}}{\circ}$   $\frac{\text{m}}{\circ}$  gonna sue him  $\frac{\text{F}\bar{\text{O}}\bar{\text{R}} \text{ } \bar{\text{t}}\bar{\text{h}}\bar{\text{e}}\bar{\text{s}} \text{ } \text{papatual}}{\circ}$  paribus. ASAP

There is an interesting twist here. The essence of northern concepts of the mastery of a language, knowing grammar, is inverted in a funny way that at the same time bewilders us. Patrick Obahiagbon's reflexivity of his own linguistic practice translates into grotesque mimetic interpretations of the other, the 'owners of the language'. The reactions to his way of speaking in turn artfully play with the negation of similarity with these owners – a kind of inverted mimetic performance, a mirror in a mirror.

This metalinguistic discourse reflects other ideas about what language might be. While northern scholars tend to distinguish languages according to structure, and ask about which language (L1, L2, L3) a speaker knows best, in

which one she or he is able to produce poetic speech, express feelings, learn maths, etc., the Nigerian metalinguists of *Laila's Blog* are interested in the power of the word: just another ideological choice.

This choice might be an arbitrary one, as well, in another context. Here, it can be read as a symbolic critique on forced bilingualism and post-colonial experiences. There is something serious in all this fun and play: if the owners of English don't have to learn Bini and Yoruba as well – if it's only 'we' who will have to use a language owned by others, then we should at least do with it what needs to be done.

The ways in which Obahiagbon and the anonymous commenters make language blast bears a lot of similarity to critiques on neoliberalism and late capitalism made in cyberpunk novels and digital post-modernism. In her exciting analysis of Neal Stephenson's novel *Snow Crash*, Sabine Heuser (2003) describes how (in the future and in the book) a new, multilayered concept of a virus is created that is so complex that it cannot be disposed of:

This plague to both humans and computers throws everything into question: languages, ideas, ideologies, and religions all become prey to the chaos. [...] This notion of physical disease is then increasingly writ large and applied to language, which degenerates into meaningless and unintelligible noise. (Heuser 2003: 174)

The confrontation between the colonizer and the colonized, and between neoliberal imperialists and subjugated people, translates into chaos and noise. What remains is grammar.

These brief glimpses into 'non-academic' writing and texts that represent 'popular' genres illustrate how and where there might be other ways of framing and grasping language and speech. And the critique inherent in these texts metaphorically relates to a critique on the effects of hegemonic epistemes on subjugated ways of making knowledge. This particular metalinguistic discourse highlights that what used to make sense is not meaningful any longer, has been marginalized or oppressed: for instance, ideas about differentiating languages on grounds other than structure; attributing the power to transform reality to specific languages; wanting to speak many different languages in order to be

complete; seeing the possibility of providing a person with a name as the core of language; thinking of language as the sacred, as something that can be controlled as a powerful secret.

But language remains a social construct, and critique on the effects of the silencing of local metalinguistic discourses may be uttered in the respective socially adequate forms – as mimetic performance, in popular media and poetic genres. This critique invites us to turn the gaze to experiences of inequality shared in a post-colonial world that include forced bilingualisms at the expense of both local linguistic resources and metalinguistic concepts. In Rey Chow's (2014) book on what it means to be *Not like a Native Speaker*, this asymmetrical post-colonial languaging is irrevocably entangled with race, class, gender and biopolitical boundaries. Metalinguistic discourse here is, for example, discourse on food, noise, mourning, calligraphy and the radio, in a figured world.

The radical conclusion that can be drawn with the help of critical theory is that the plague (so to speak, in accordance with Heuser's text) has indeed infected language in its entirety. There is no indigeneity without the colonial dispositive embedded in it, and the notion of INDIGENOUS (AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN, ORIENTAL) languages already bears in itself the potential failure of decolonizing linguistic methodologies. Linda Tuhi-

wai Smith (2012) writes about four words – imperialism, history, writing and theory – that are the basis of northern practices of making linguistic knowledge, and at the same time are difficult from the perspective of southern theory:

I have selected these words because from an indigenous perspective they are problematic. They are words which tend to provoke a whole array of feelings, attitudes and values. They are words of emotion which draw attention to the thousands of ways in which indigenous language, knowledges and cultures have been silenced or misrepresented, ridiculed or condemned in academic and popular ways or avoided altogether. In thinking about knowledge and research, however, these are important terms which underpin the practices and styles of research with indigenous peoples. (Tuhiwai Smith 2012: 21)

To the people whose experiences are put at the centre of post-colonial enquiries, the spread of imperial epistemes – of the multilayered virus – has produced not clarity but noise, chaos and feelings of perdition. Philosophies of language and linguistic ideologies, seen as incoherent, naive, not scientific, turn into metababble. But is this not actually a sound, echoing voices that have something else to tell than what we have already said?

## WHAT A BEAUTIFUL VOICE – FROM LISTENING TO THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS OF THE FYNBOS TO FINDING COMFORT IN A FOSTER TONGUE

by Penelope Allsobrook, [University of Cologne](#)  
([Language Lab](#) / [Writing Center](#))

I *could* speak with you about how it feels to be comforted, reassured, and encouraged.

Hoe voel dit om getroos, gerusgestel, en aangemoedig te word?

تري كيف يكون ذلك الشعور بالإحتواء والركون للأمان؟!

Ciamar a tha e a' faireachdainn nuair a gheibh thu cobhair 's cuimhne 's do mhisneachadh ?

Kunjani ukuthuzelwa, ukuxhaswa noku khuthazwa?

I could tell you just this in these languages, languages which I feel drawn to for various reasons, languages which are all a part of me, and yet not really me.

Can we be gifted with the ability to speak many languages, and yet find we have nothing to say? I do have something to say about comfort and reassurance. But not just yet.

### An Exercise

Listen to me. Please stop for a moment.

Stop going. Please wait for just a moment.

Listen to the sound that surrounds you.

(silence)

What can you hear?

Please wait another moment and try to listen to what you can't hear.

(silence)

Thank you for listening.

Frahm (2005: 4)

Comfort. Reassurance. Encouragement. I can't tell you, I don't want to; not now. Allow me to begin instead, by telling you about my friend, Friday.

Friday-of-the-Fynbos:

Hammering against the door because the bell was broken, as usual, and wondering whether it

wasn't the hammering she heard still louder in her breast, she caught sight of him approaching her. Just minutes into their interplay: "Do you really mean to tell me you don't know what fynbos is", she called out incomprehensibly. He shrugged, looking at her blankly: "Feign hoarse?" "Absolutely nothing connects us", she responded impatiently. "All we have ever shared is *Inside Out*".

Yes, whatever it was that connected them seemed inside out at the best of times. It was as if they had different scripts, as do Hindi and Urdu, but that the latter share at least mutual intelligibility. Her dreams of one day managing to unravel this cryptic inconnu were long since neutered.

He can speak a variety of languages, my Friday, but speak, he does not.

Can one be multilingually mute? How to connect with the other; how to allow others to recognize themselves in your voice, when you feel you have lost your own voice? And what does it help to know how to describe what fynbos is in 20 odd languages, when you seem unable to connect, as one human being to another? *Je jette ma langue au chat* – I literally throw my tongue to the cat, I can't guess the riddle. The English language has a similar saying: when the cat has got your tongue, you are at a loss for words. Sailors, so it is said, became silent at the mere threat of a flogging with the cat o' nine tails. The thrashing was usually so relentless that it kept them quiet for a long time. I am reminded of Coetzee's Friday in his novel, *Foe* – Friday, whose tongue was cut out. "Friday has no command of words and therefore no defense against being reshaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others" (1986: 121); while Susan, the narrator in *Foe*, refers to Friday's muteness and lack of language as a "puzzle or hole in the narrative" (Ibid.). Coetzee seems to be pushing for a realm beyond language.

A castaway, cast away on a desert island

A castaway without his daily bread

Cast (away) (no) ration(s) - castration – mute

It's where language

Starts to break

Down

That poetry comes

Comes running

(all out of breath)

Into play

How to address the challenge of attuning oneself to the language of the other? To opening oneself to perhaps yet unknown symbols and metaphors?

And: no defense against being reshaped, as described in *Foe*, is this what it could mean to be multilingual? To have had the reins stolen from you? Or could it mean having a choice? Phipps, a linguist, a poet, an anthropologist, invites the reader in her paper *Unmoored: Language Pain, Porosity, and Poisonwood* to look at concepts of being moored and unmoored, and relates this to language and multilingualism. She argues that “the nature of multilingualism is becoming increasingly unmoored” (2013: 97). She associates being moored with safety, certainty, being anchored; while being unmoored means to her a move to the unknown, a loss of control, potential pain. She describes how poets unmoor themselves in playing with words; she continues by drawing our attention to “those who have little choice about words (...) with the bureaucratic and state powers” (Ibid: 101). For Phipps, the asylum seekers are among the unmoored, and she opens her home to those “whose status is often determined in languages they do not speak” (Ibid: 102).

#### Another Exercise

Please listen.

I have a question I cannot answer myself.

What difference does it make if I am talking or if I'm silent.

(silence)

I repeat: What difference does it make if I am talking or if I'm silent.

(silence)

I repeat: What difference does it make if I am talking or if I'm silent.

Frahm (2005: 8)

Phipps takes on a foster child, a girl from Eritrea, a girl who has two mother tongues, and who speaks six languages consisting of four different scripts. Mentioning her “mother tongue pain (...) couldn't speak, as a mother, the languages of her daughter”, she starts to learn one of these languages, calling it her “daughter tongue, and a tongue to foster” (Ibid: 105).

Reading this excerpt, my thoughts travelled to a funeral I had attended two years before. I had gone to pay my respects, to say goodbye, to my foster mother. Back then, when I was a child, she had joined our family home to bring us up. The sun just rising above the houses, I arrived at the home she had returned to, her original home, with my brother, to join a group of people which quickly grew. We had gathered in her front garden under a marquee for the ceremony. It was the hymns, the lifting up of voices that touched us most keenly. Every so often, someone stood up to relate a story which connected them to Liz, uMamu Jack. Then it was my turn. I stood up, not knowing what I would say. Feeling awkward and rather inept due to my sketchy knowledge of her home language, I soon remembered how she had scolded us for not making our beds, how she had held me in her arms, me whom she called her child. How she had taught us respect. These were the memories I spoke of to the audience present. Despite my barely being able to speak her *ulwimi Iwenkobe*, I found I was able to speak her tongue after all. Standing there at her graveside, I was comforted and reminded of the wider community surrounding me, which, through her person, Liz had connected me to.

A sense of belonging, a sense of home, in another language which is, which can become, one's own.

This is the beginning of the story.

(And whatever became of Friday? My mute friend in the fynbos?)

Oh, I won't forget *him*. Don't be silly!

## HOW FOREIGN IS ACCENT? EXPRESSIONS OF PEACE IN CASAMANCE\*

by *Abbie Hantgan* (SOAS)

Our journey from the Global North to the Global South entails two trips across the Atlantic Ocean: the first by air above the ocean from Europe for half a day, and the second aboard a ship overnight sailing down the Senegalese coast. Given that language families and regions are often based on their proximity to bodies of water, it's not surprising that most of the languages spoken in this region, Casamance, are classified in the Atlantic branch of the Niger-Congo linguistic family tree. The latter trip by ship ends at the Casamance region's capital city, Ziguinchor, at the mouth of the Casamance River. From there we travel by land south-west 12 kilometres until we come to a Crossroads. The roads lead in three different directions: north-west for approximately six kilometres until we reach the first of the villages that make up Mof Avvi, "The Kingdom", south for only about one kilometre into Djibonker, or to remain in Brin which borders the paved road from the city. For each chosen path, there is an associated choice of language. Upon first arriving, the uninitiated Global Northerner is confounded by the confrontation with the multiplexity of language. Even the naïvely simple question "how do I say hello in your language" evokes multiple responses.

However naïve, even a first time linguistic fieldworker has usually encountered varieties of a language before that differ only in the pronunciation of words. Greetings and other formulaic expressions, in particular, are emblematic in representing the speaker's identity and background. In the context of cultures which are in close contact, the word for "hello" can serve a speaker who reaches such a crossroads as a means of asserting one's alliances to the place from which one has come, and at the same time delineates a boundary with the listener, who inhabits the place at which the speaker has arrived.

Because there are differences, there are decisions. Curiously, the new researcher is given the same choice as the long-time residents of the three villages that make up The Crossroads, the name we have given to this area of linguistic

diversity. We learn that the three named languages are the Jóola language, Kujireray of Brin, the Bainouk language Gubëeher of Djibonker, and the Jóola language Eegimaa of The Kingdom. Sometimes speakers, upon making a choice to follow a given path, seek allies among those they find at the destination. After establishing the contrasts there is the opportunity to converge. Because the locus of the potential convergence or divergence is often established through pronunciation, that is the line of inquiry which interests me the most.

The terms "accent" and "dialect" are often used interchangeably even though they refer to difference concepts. The term accent is defined here as being distinctive phonetic attributes that are detectable when a speaker is communicating in a language other than his/her own. Accent is distinguished from dialectal differences within a shared language. While differences in dialect and language also influence pronunciation, the scope of a regional accent goes beyond that of dialect and language; rather it is an indicator of the place where, and from whom, a person first learned to speak. An accent is formed and shaped from early childhood and is created by the phonological system of contrasts and rules present in the first language(s) a person learns; it is impossible to speak a foreign language without an accent. Listeners perceive speakers' accents and, depending on their own backgrounds, may be able to determine the language(s) a person learned early in their life and thus from where they originate. When speakers communicate across languages, information about their backgrounds is necessarily conveyed through their accents. Speakers can, to some extent, albeit often subconsciously, alter their accents to influence the perception a listener has of them. However, because accent is established so early in life, certain aspects of a person's phonology, the ways in which sound is organized in a speaker's mind, are difficult to alter.

While most studies of foreign accent are based on data from language learners with mono- or bilingual backgrounds, evidence shows that the more phonetic variability across phonological systems a person is exposed to at birth, the

more easily a person will be able to control his/her accent. The current study examines the speech of highly multilingual individuals living in a completely cooperative social structure in order to examine to what extent they manipulate their own accents when speaking each other's languages. Although a foreign accent can include any aspect of a person's grammar, my work deals with the phonetic outcomes of the phonological underpinnings of accent.

Results of a preliminary study reveal that the pronunciation of [k g] and [x h] are indicative of an accent in the Crossroads:

- Word-initially [k]: Kujireray
- Word-initially [g]: Eegimaa and Gubëheer
- Word-finally [h]: Kujireray
- Word-finally [x]: Eegimaa
- Word-finally [g]: Gubëheer

In many cases, the only distinction between words in the different Crossroads languages is pronunciation. Within that pronunciation, the velar sounds (those which are formed by the tongue touching the roof of the mouth in an area called the velum) [k g] play opposing roles among the Crossroads languages. Just as in the initial greeting illustrated above, whereas words in Kujireray may begin with [k], corresponding words in Eegimaa start with [g]. The change is minimal but noticeable and speakers are aware and often comment on the difference.

My preliminary hypothesis is that, because of the languages' individually complex prosodic systems, the degree of immersion of a speaker in a particular village is proportional to the influence of that village's associated language. That is, a person who has spent their childhood in Djibonker is more likely to have a higher frequency of sounds associated with that village's language, Gubëheer. The results of a study in which participants from Djibonker pronounced words in Kujireray shows that, despite their fluency, an accent is still audible and is indicated by a difference among the velar sounds.

Communication through speech is ephemeral. The speech act lasts no longer than its moment of utterance. Only the imperfect memories of the participants retain the discussion. Conversation is between speaker and listener and as such is private. It is a secret to be shared only among the parties which are present. Like a coded message in self-authorizing language, the absence of written words seems like a purposeful act of oral cultures to pass on only privileged knowledge.

The code is a continuum of convergence. At the ends of the spectrum are these emblematic sounds which quickly and clearly indicate the origin of a speaker: in the case of Kujireray and Eegimaa, [k]assumay vs. [g]assumay respectively, the words for 'peace', used as a way to say 'hello'. The directionality of accommodation is not always equal: all residents of Djibonker speak both Gubëheer and Kujireray, but few residents of Brin speak Gubëheer. Residents of Brin speak Kujireray and many at least understand Eegimaa, and vice versa. Although the two Jóola languages are more closely related to each other than to the Bainouk language, because of Brin's close proximity to Djibonker, Kujireray and Gubëheer overlap. While speakers can disentangle words, especially the roots of nouns and verbs, the pronunciation of prefixes is often fused, as illustrated here.



RASTAFARI TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS AND MULTILINGUALISM: A PICTURE SERIES

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Rastafari is a global phenomenon with far-reaching networks and communities all over the world. It connects various places but in particular Jamaica and Ethiopia, bringing together different languages and establishing emblematic linguistic practices. Rastafari emerged in the 1930s in Jamaica and focuses on Ethiopia in African identity formations and as home in Repatriation discourses and practices. Ethiopia is host to a global Rastafari community in Shashemene, in which Jamaican Rastafari constitute a majority. The photos in this picture series were taken in Shashemene, Ethiopia (2014) and Kingston, Jamaica (2015) and give impressions of the linguistic landscapes which reflect local contexts and transnational connections.<sup>3</sup>



መስቀል ስኩዌር Mesk'el Square at the veggie meals on wheels restaurant (Kingston, Jamaica)

Front of a house (Shashemene, Ethiopia)



ራስ ተፋሪ Ras Tafari (Shashemene, Ethiopia)



Irie Hardware: the commodification of Rasta language (Kingston, Jamaica)

<sup>3</sup> I extend my warmest gratitude to the Global South Studies Center for financing my research trips on which the photos presented here were taken.



Zion Train Lodge (Shashemene, Ethiopia)



Health food (Shashemene, Ethiopia)



Simiya House (Kingston, Jamaica)



"Today's menu" at the veggie meals on wheels restaurant (Kingston, Jamaica)



Oromo & Rasta Love (Shashemene, Ethiopia)



Wall at the veggie meals on wheels restaurant (Kingston, Jamaica)