

The role of language ideologies in the development of indigenous languages in Namibia

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Abstract

This paper examines discursive language practices, more particularly among the youth, in the Kavango Region. The initial motivation for this study was data from the Kavango Region that suggests that traditional linguistic boundaries between indigenous African languages (IALs) have been re-negotiated to express expanded views of the self. The study shows that expansion of linguistic codes is enhanced by common substrate systems in the three major Kavango languages, using lexical borrowings, semantic shifts and morphological derivations from Afrikaans, English and German as source languages.

Using a translanguaging framework, hybrid language practices challenge traditional conceptualizations of language. That is to say, hybrid language practices reflect heteroglossic speech where rules and norms overlap traditional language boundaries. Likewise, the current study explores how the multilingual youth in the Kavango Region challenge the monolingual discourse practices in pursuit of voice and agency when they engage in their everyday way of speaking. The paper reports on data predominantly collected from the 'Rukavango Service' (radio) call-in programme commonly known as 'Mudukuli' or 'Mutuyuri', and general discussions and conversations on Wato FM.

The initial data for the current study were collected as part of my PhD data collection. Additionally, data for the study were also collected through discussions with some laypersons, educators in the Kavango Region, fellow post-graduate students at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), and colleagues at the National Institute for Educational Development (NIED).

Furthermore, the study calls for more studies on this language development from translanguaging, migration and settlement angles in order to draw comprehensive accounts of hybrid language use in Namibia's towns and cities, and comparable situations. Moreover, the study highlights the implications for language planning and policy in Namibia. Last but not least, implications for future research based on the study's findings are also highlighted.

Keywords: *language ideology, standard language, non-standard language, standardization, hybrid language, codeswitching, translanguaging*

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to evaluate some of the work that has been done on translanguaging and the emergence of other new and hybrid forms of language and communication in Africa, with a focus on Bantu languages spoken in the Kavango Region. The initial motivation for this study was data from that region that suggests which suggest that traditional linguistic boundaries between IALs have been re-negotiated to express expanded views of the self (Makalela, 2013).

As Makalela (2013) observes, it is almost axiomatic that traditional language boundaries in highly multilingual and hybrid communities are growingly blurred as new discursive linguistic resources emerge (Blommaert, 2010; Garcia, 2011b; Creese &

Blackledge, 2010). Makalela (2013, p. 11) further observes that migration patterns towards developed countries and translocal movements that are facilitated by rapid urbanisation have created new sites of linguistic and identity negotiation in the 21st century, which characterize what Blommaert (2010) refers to as a "critical sociolinguistics of globalisation".

According to Makalela (2013, p. 111), a plethora of studies that are framed within translanguaging has revealed that mobile linguistic resources are exerting pressure on monolingual practices and ideologies worldwide (Baker, 2011; Blommaert, 2010; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Shohamy, 2006). In the current study, therefore, there was an

interesting phenomenon about attitudes structuring adults' and the youth's use of the standard language in the Kavango Region. In our informal talks both adults and the youth overwhelmingly maintained that the standard language(s) should be used at all times, rather than the hybrid language(s). Nevertheless, the adults' position on this matter was in conflict with not only their perceived discomfort towards employing the hybrid language(s), but also their own linguistic practices (Mohamed & Banda, 2008).

It is particularly striking that the adults' linguistic practices were also paradoxical in two ways: first, they accused the youth of codemixing (CM) and codeswitching (CS) in their discourse practices (Mohamed & Banda, 2008). However, CM and CS phenomena were also noted among adults, especially during the radio call-in programmes, and general conversations and discussions. The adults were thus performing exactly that for which they blamed the youth of doing, i.e. the adults failed to see the point that the youth's language behaviour is indeed a reflection of the adults own discursive practices (Mohamed & Banda, 2008). As the adults believe that using CM and CS is against the established cultural practice, which privileges the standard language, adults allow neither themselves nor the youth to exercise their full potential in using both the traditional linguistic codes and discursive linguistic resources in functionally integrated ways (Makoni & Mashiri, 2007). In other words, it is not that CM and CS are considered as a hindrance to the youth's discursive language practices, but more critically, the hybrid language itself is prevented from being used in bilingual symbiosis with the standard language (Mohamed & Banda, 2008).

As Da Costa, Dyers, and Mheta (2013) observe, we live in a world where we accept as 'commonsense' and 'natural' the power of certain languages, and the prestige attached to being highly proficient in these languages. For Da Costa et al. (2013), one of the ways in which a language variety attains power is by being chosen as the standard variety for a particular language. However, as Da Costa et al. (2013, p. 12) put it, "... a standard language is just another variety of a language which differs from others in terms of its elevated functions, high prestige and elaborate codification".

Definition of terms

It sounds imperative that some terms and concepts have to be defined, especially those on the basis of which the rest of this paper will be developed. That is to say, as terms and concepts such as language ideologies, language attitudes, standard language, non-standard language, and so forth, are seminal to our discussion, in this paper, they need to be defined. Nevertheless, these terms and concepts need to be defined the way they are interpreted, and used in this paper.

To begin with, Myers-Scotton (2006, p. 135) defines ideologies as "the patterns of beliefs and practice, which make some existing arrangements, almost always appear 'natural' because they ... are the ones who put these arrangements in place". By 'they' Myers-Scotton clearly means the dominant groups in society who have over lengthy periods of time established the existing arrangements in that society so that everyone, even the dominated groups, comes to view such arrangements as normal and natural (Da Costa et al., 2013). For example, the current study tries to show that both adults' and the youth's attitudes and thinking towards hybrid language use in the Kavango Region are explicable within the framework of ideological formation and hegemony. In this regard, hegemony entails influence of the dominated to an extent of accepting the status quo as legitimate (Mohamed and Banda, 2008). In Myers-Scotton's (2006) definition, therefore, one sees how ideologies are part and parcel of the maintenance of relations of power in societies. As Da Costa et al. (2013) argue:

Languages can be powerful tools of domination in the hands of those in power, and can be used to control and exploit the rest of the country's population. Even in courts of law, speakers of varieties other than the official standard variety may often find themselves at a disadvantage and unfairly discriminated against, leading to miscarriages of justice (Da Costa et al., 2013, p. 315).

Further, Da Costa et al. (2013, p. 312) point out that:

Language ideologies are the beliefs about language shaped over time in

societies, in the interests of the powerful in such societies. An example, of a language ideology would be the belief that only certain languages are appropriate for use in particular domains like education and the courts.

Da Costa et al. (2013, p. 312) note that “... More personal beliefs about languages are called language attitudes”. Therefore, our personal attitudes are often a reflection of the more powerful language ideologies held in our societies.

Da Costa et al. (2013) state that the notion of standard language has a long history. As Crowley (1989, p. 125) notes, for instance, the term was used in the mid-19th century to indicate “the uniform and commonly accepted national literary language upon which linguistic historians and lexicographers worked”. Yule (2006, p. 194-195) argues that the standard variety of a language is usually “the variety used for writing, for example, in newspapers and books”. Holmes (1992, p. 83) observes that the standard variety is “generally one which is written, and which has undergone some degree of regulation or codification ...; it is recognised as a prestigious variety or code by a community, and it is used for high (H) functions alongside a diversity of low (L) varieties”. Garvin (1993, p. 41) defines a standard language as “a codified variety of a language that serves the multiple and complex communicative needs of a speech community that has either achieved modernisation or has the desire of achieving it”.

The standard language is often used for writing books, newspapers, and in official government documents and high functions, such as formal meetings, and is often used alongside what are considered low varieties (Banda, 2016). Weber and Horner (2012) are critical of what they call the standard language ideology which is based on the assumption that languages are internally homogenous entities with strict borders between them, a belief which completely ignores the constant blending and borrowing between various languages by ordinary people, as is the norm in multilingual societies.

Contrasted with standard language, a non-standard language is defined by Swann, Deumert, Lillis and Meshtrie (2004) as a variety which is used often by particular

geographical, ethnic or social groups, and which is different from the dominant standard variety. This differentiation (between standard and non-standard varieties) is indicative of another powerful language ideology, namely that of a language hierarchy (Weber & Horner, 2012). According to Da Costa et al. (2013), this particular ideology allows for language varieties to be divided, labelled and ranked.

The study

This is an exploratory study which heavily relied on data from the local radio conversations and call-in programme. The current study was largely part of my PhD data collection which I carried out in 2011 (mostly) in the Kavango Region. In its preliminary stage, the data for the study were mainly collected from the radio call-in programmes during my field research using convenience sampling. During that period, I dedicated myself to listen to as many callers as possible, specifically during the ‘Rukavango Service’ call-in programme commonly known as *Mudukuli or Mutuyuri* among the locals of the Kavango Region.

Nevertheless, it is particularly worth mentioning that the current study continued after completing my PhD studies. The study forms part of an ongoing research project that seeks to explain and interpret translanguaging practices in urbanized multilingual contexts of Africa, more particularly among multilingual speakers in Namibia generally, the Kavango Region in particular. To supplement the current study’s data I often hold casual (corridor) talks with laypersons in and around Okahandja (where I currently dwell), Namibian educators, more specifically those who usually come to NIED for workshops.

This paper draws on the notion of multilingualism as social practice (Heller, 2007) in attempting to explore the following research questions:

1. Who communicates with whom, in what setting, for what purpose and in agreement with which norms and conventions?
2. Which attitudes and ideologies underlie the communication, and which languages or language varieties and styles are selected by speakers as appropriate for the messages they want to communicate?

3. What and how are social actions and activities of people manifested linguistically in people's everyday life?

In addressing these questions, the paper shows how people use language in social contexts for real communication (Bock, 2013). Equally, the paper shows how language ideologies and language attitudes enhance or hinder language development in Africa. As Mohamed and Banda (2008, p. 106) put it, "... people's ways of doing things ... are shaped by socially valued ideologies and beliefs. These ideologies not only influence people's attitudes towards particular practices, but they also configure their thinking about such practices".

Theoretical considerations

This study operates within a post-structuralist paradigm that involves "a philosophical questioning of many of the foundationalist concepts of received canons of knowledge" (Pennycook, 2001) to emphasize the fact that they are "products of particular cultural and historical ways of thinking" (Pennycook, 2001). Even the key taken-for-granted concept of language will be unpacked. Equally, other notions, built around the structuralist and nation-state ideologies of language, are problematized (Mambwe, 2014). This entails a different theorization of language and other notions built around the structuralist and nation-state ideologies of language that account for the translocations and diasporic nature of late modern African identities and lifestyles (Banda, 2016).

What is language?

It is important to note that there are two competing models of what a language is, one of which could be referred to as the 'popular' model and the other as a more 'expert' model. According to Weber and Horner (2012, p. 27), "The 'popular model' differentiates between 'languages' and 'dialects', and postulates a hierarchical relation between them". An evaluative dimension is tagged on to this hierarchy, with languages being perceived as better than or superior to dialects. Weber and Horner (2012) observe that 'language' tends to be automatically identified with the standard language, as described in grammars and dictionaries. However, as Weber and Horner (2012, p. 27) further observe:

Most of these beliefs and assumptions are rejected in the expert model, which is shaped by many linguists and especially sociolinguists. According to this model, there is no purely linguistic difference between languages and dialects, and hence it would be preferable to refer to them all as 'linguistic resources' or 'varieties'. Furthermore, in linguistic terms no variety is 'better' than any other variety.

According to Musk (2010), therefore, our taken-for-granted conceptions of what constitutes a language are historically, culturally and socially contingent. As Musk (2010) so aptly puts it, the concept of a language as a discrete unit is historically and culturally part and parcel of the European nation-building project, founded on nationalist ideologies, which "established an innovative link between ethnicity and language" (Lewis, 1977, p. 24).

Increasingly, however, researchers recognize that languages are not always easily treated as discrete isolatable units with clear boundaries between them. Rather, languages are more often continua of features that extend across both geographic and social space. The Ethnologue approach to listing and counting languages as though they were discrete, countable units, does not preclude a more dynamic understanding of the linguistic makeup of the countries and regions in which clearly distinct varieties can be distinguished while, at the same time, recognizing that those languages and their dialects exist in a complex set of relationships to each other (Aronin & Hufeisen, 2009; Mambwe, 2014).

It is important to note that this paper's conceptualization of language is informed by recent post-structuralist thinking in which speakers' spaces of interaction and use of linguistic resources are not bound by rigid boundaries or inflexible hegemonic systems (Pennycook, 2010; Heller, 2007). In this conceptualization, the notion of multilingualism and the relationship between language and identity is different from the traditional one built around the notion of linguistic distinctness (Heller, 2007), in which the world is seen as "a neat patchwork of separate [ethnic], monolingual, geographical areas almost exclusively populated by

monolingual speakers” (De Schutter, 2007, p. 3).

According to Banda (2016), therefore, language is seen as social practice operating across ethnic, cultural, geographical, etc. boundaries, and across semiotic artifacts (spoken modes of semiosis, books, media, music, internet, etc.) as well as spaces (classrooms, homes, church/mosque, playgrounds, etc.) in different ways (Heller, 2007; Stroud, 2007). As Banda (2009b, p. 8) points out, “... The problem is that in multilingual contexts, defining a person’s linguistic repertoire based on ethnic or home language is rather inadequate because of the translocations and diasporic nature of late modern African lifestyles”.

In urbanized multilingual contexts of Africa, people draw their identities not only from mother tongue ownership or pandering to rural ‘ethnic’ identities, but more from their repertoires as diasporic multilingual urbanites (Makoni, Brutt-Griffler & Mashiri, 2007). As a consequence, Banda (2009b) argues that:

[...] the relationship between language use and ethnicity is not always a straightforward one, contrary to how it is depicted in literature on language policy and education. The argument is as follows: To take advantage of the large pool of first, second, third, etc. language speakers of these African tongues, language planning and policy needs to cross ethnic, regional and national borders (Banda, 2009b, pp. 8-9).

According to Banda (2009b), it is necessary to recognize that geographic, linguistic, ethnic, etc. borders are social constructs and not impermeable structures. As Banda (2009b, p. 9) puts it more succinctly when he argues that:

There is ... a need for the democratization of multilingual community spaces so as to enable hybridity and temporal and spatial identities to be exhibited through multiple languages/dialects. This entails weaning African multilingualism from distortions resulting from the colonial legacy and the pervasive monolingual

descriptions that underlie models of language education.

Consequently, García (2009, p. 40) questions the usefulness of the concept of language per se in the bilingual context, and suggests focusing on children’s “multiple discursive practices” that constitute “linguaging”. More often than not, individuals and communities engage in bi-/multilingual discourse practices, that is to say, they “translanguage” (García, 2009). Bock and Mheta (2013, p. x) put it more succinctly when they point out that:

We live in a multilingual, transforming society in which languages play a dynamic and central role. Not only do we live in a region that has an immensely rich and complex linguistic inheritance, but the developments associated with globalisation and the increased mobility of people and information across borders, have added to the emergence of new and hybrid forms of language and communication.

Translanguaging practices

Translanguaging started in Wales in the early 1980s as a pedagogic practice to reinforce skills in both English and Welsh (Makalela, 2013). This practice has caught the imagination of educational linguists about the prospects of using two or more languages in the same lesson and, in this way, moving away from the negative 20th century notion that learning or using more than one language causes mental confusion (Baker, 2011; Lindholm-Leary, 2001).

Makalela (2013) observes that classroom translanguaging has been studied in different parts of the world as a new framework that shifts the focus from cross-linguistic influence to how multilinguals intermingle linguistic features that are assigned to a particular language (Hornberger & Link, 2012). Beyond the classroom, which is the focus of this paper, translanguaging has been extended to include all discursive resources that apply among multilingual speakers in their everyday way of communicating (Garcia, 2009).

The question is: Isn’t translanguaging what others call “code-switching”? Absolutely not! Translanguaging is not simply going from

one language code to another (García, 2011a). As García (2011a, p. 1) so aptly puts it:

The notion of code-switching assumes that the two languages of bilinguals are two separate monolingual codes that could be used without reference to each other. Instead, translanguaging posits that bilinguals have one linguistic repertoire from which they select features strategically to communicate effectively.

Accordingly, Makalela (2013) captures the distinction between translanguaging and code-switching thus: While translanguaging encompasses instances of code-switching in language contact situations, it differs from traditional conceptions of code-switching in that the starting point is not language as an autonomous skill. Rather, the starting point is what the speakers do and perform with their mobile and flexible discourse practices (García, 2009). Surprisingly, according to Makalela (2013), there is a paucity of research on hybrid language forms as well as on the points of view of the speakers in complex multilingual contexts.

Sociolinguistics of mobility

It is remarkable to note that increased movements of people between and within nation states in the 21st century have correspondingly resulted in movements of languages and shifting of traditional boundaries (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Makoni & Mashiri, 2007; Creese & Blackledge, 2010). According to Makalela (2013), this new development has spurred interest among sociolinguists who started shifting their attention to language and mobility in superdiverse communities. As Makalela (2013) puts it, in this new context of superdiversity, the intermeshing and interweaving of numerous factors create a post-migration experience that sets aside regional, ethnic, cultural and linguistic characteristics of particular groups in favour of a more hybrid habitus (Heller, 2007).

According to Makalela (2013), to describe multilingual practices in the post-migration communities, some sociolinguists discredit treatment of languages as hermetically-sealed units in favour of weakening boundaries between traditional

linguistic codes and the use of discursive linguistic resources in functionally integrated ways (Makoni & Mashiri, 2007). To this end, Makalela (2013) argues, a large body of scholarship has identified globalized communication practices as those involving a constant merger of translocal, transcultural and transnational use of languages when multilinguals engage in their everyday ways of meaning-making and identifying in their new settlement spaces (Blommaert, 2010; Heller, 2007; Hornberger & Link, 2012), which includes new language inventions. Makalela (2013) argues that this new type of communication is best explained as spatio-temporally complex as one language can no longer be tied to space and time. Here, multilingual speakers are engaged in a negotiation of multiple identities which cut across traditional language boundaries, and keep making choices in defining who they want to become (García, 2009, 2011b). Consequently, this global languaging trend calls for detailed research on linguistic complexity in local situations under the notion that can best be described as “the sociolinguistics of mobility” (Makalela, 2013).

The role of ideologies in language development

The key ideology in the development of languages is the consideration that some languages are better or more powerful than others. As García (2011a) points out, in most bilingual situations, one language group is more powerful than the other. García (2011a, p. 3) further points out that “keeping the two languages separate at all times creates a linguistic hierarchy with one language considered the powerful majority language, and the other minoritized”.

Unsurprisingly, this situation also prevails in Namibia, with English considered the majority language, and the other Namibian languages minoritized. In my view, this is one of the ideologies that informed the choice of English as the sole official language of a highly multilingual country like Namibia. However, there were various reasons, too. For Da Costa et al. (2013, p. 312), it was “... an attempt by the post-colonial leadership not only to build a nation, but also to reduce the influence of a former language of power, Afrikaans”. In line with the slogan from the struggle days, ‘one Namibia one nation’, the

post-apartheid leadership in post-independent Namibia wanted to form a nation defined by only one single language, as the use of many languages in the country was (and still is) considered a problem rather than an asset.

Weber and Horner (2012) refer to this notion, that is to say, the belief in one language, one identity and nation, as the one nation-one language ideology. As Ferris, Peck and Banda (2013) put it, the notion presupposes that a nation has only one language and, therefore, one identity. As Weber and Horner (2012, p. 18) point out, "According to this ideology, language can be equated with territory, and the link between language and national identity is essential".

Nevertheless, just like the one nation-one language ideology is difficult to apply to Namibia, so is the ideology, which Weber and Horner (2012) refer to as the mother tongue ideology. In combination with the one nation-one language ideology, the mother tongue ideology is based on the belief that every speaker has only one single mother tongue (MT) (Weber & Horner, 2012), which is not necessarily the case throughout Africa. In my view, having so many languages within Namibia, it would be impossible to expect that, in such a complex multilingual country, every citizen would have only one 'MT'. Consequently, it would make no sense to strictly enforce MTE in Namibia (Banda, 2000).

In view of that, Weber and Horner (2012) suggest that it is important for teachers to respect the whole of their learners' linguistic repertoires if they want to provide them with the best possible chances of educational success. They opine that teachers need to build upon all the children's linguistic resources in a positive and constructive way. As Weber and Horner (2012, p. 78) aptly put it, "Indeed, it is important to take into account all the children's resources and to build the best possible education system upon these foundations".

According to Banda (2009a, p. 109), "In this conceptualisation, there are problems with the applicability of the mother tongue based bilingualism model in multilingual contexts as it appears conceptualized and described in monolingual terms". As Banda (2009b, p. 6) observes:

Based on the monolingual perception of a direct relationship between

language and identity, the failure of imported models of education is crystallised in the language planning and policies in African education, which are pursuing a monolingual agenda. The language policies and the models that they spawn are designed for a monolingual child and his vernacular/mother tongue, or a child and his second language English. The models take an 'either/or' approach when, in fact, the two languages are both important, and thus both need to be developed as part of the child's linguistic repertoire.

As Banda (2009b) so aptly puts it, this means that there is a place for IALs and English in the repertoires of late modern globalized societies throughout Africa.

Distortions in official, regional and national language designations

After independence, the emergent African countries followed the 'Western' tradition of labelling certain languages as 'official' and others as 'regional' or 'national'. Thus, the distinction between official and national languages is not always clear, as these are described differently by various countries. In practice, some of the languages designated as national languages are best described as 'regional' languages, because they are restricted to regional use (Banda, 2009b).

As I argued elsewhere, this appears to be the case with Namibia's 'national languages' which are predominantly region-based and mostly used for cultural functions and occasionally in local governance, while English is used nationally in all official functions (Haingura, 2017). In view of the above, Banda (2009b) criticizes the labelling and division of languages in a hierarchical structure, which currently prevail throughout Africa. As Banda (2009b, p. 7) aptly puts it:

In almost all cases, the colonial languages became the official languages and, ironically, what should be regional indigenous languages are proclaimed national languages. The proclamation of languages as official, national and non-official imposes a power and status hierarchy not only among the languages, but also among

the speakers of these languages. Material resources for the development and use of the languages depend on official designations, meaning that the colonial languages retain the monopoly in terms of national exposure in the media (...) as well as in government communication. This has led to distortions in the multilingual landscapes of Africa as it becomes desirable, and even fashionable, for individuals to acquire colonial languages at the expense of local ones.

Following Banda's (2009b) observation, Rumanyo would fall within the ambit of a 'regional' language, since it is solely used as MoI, and taught as a subject in the Kavango Region (Haingura, 2017). I therefore fully concur with Banda (2009b, p. 2) when he points out that "The linguistic influence of ... African languages is mostly confined to the same regions to which the colonial governments had assigned them, for administrative convenience". In Namibia therefore there is a big difference between the official language (viz. English), which receives a lot of support from the Namibian Government (as well as from other donor-funded projects, more particularly from the British and US Governments), and the country's IALs ('national languages'), which receive very little support.

This labelling of languages mainly occurs owing to the influence of the ideology of language hierarchy. As Weber and Horner (2012, p. 16) point out:

This is the belief that linguistic practices can be labelled and divided into 'language' or 'dialects', 'patois', etc. which are then subsumed into a 'hierarchy', with 'languages' being looked upon as 'superior' to 'dialects' and, additionally, certain languages being given a higher status as the 'national' or 'official language' of the state or community.

For Kosonen and Young (2009, p. 12), the distinction of language and dialect is treated from the linguistic perspective, which emphasizes intelligibility. They argue that only when people speaking different language

varieties understand each other sufficiently and can communicate without difficulty can they be said to speak dialects of the same language. If intelligibility between speakers of different linguistic varieties is insufficient, they speak different languages (Kosonen & Young, 2009). Nevertheless, as Weber and Horner (2012) put it:

[I]t is not possible to distinguish between language and dialect in purely linguistic terms. The most common argument put forward in support of such a distinction is the criterion of mutual intelligibility: 'if two varieties are mutually intelligible, they are dialects, and if not they are languages. However, some 'languages', such as Danish, Swedish and Norwegian are largely mutually intelligible, and some 'dialects', e.g. of Chinese, are not (Weber & Horner, 2012, pp. 16-17).

Banda (2009b, p. 7) therefore notes that:

[I]f we ignore the designations of the languages and dialects above, we see the range of linguistic repertoires available to Africans. The fact that very few languages are listed as extinct, despite policies that appear designed for monolingualism, suggests that speakers use the official, national or regional languages but have also not abandoned indigenous languages which do not fall into these three categories. In other words, the multilingual repertoires of speakers contain codes of both officially recognised and unrecognised languages.

Furthermore, in Africa, the hierarchy of languages is informed by both standard and purist ideologies. That is to say, both standard language and purist ideologies underlie teachers' concern with language correctness. Unfortunately, the purist ideology has also, in a subtle manner, found its way into the Namibian educational system where teachers insist on teaching learners what they consider to be the 'pure' form of the language, and look down upon varieties spoken by the learners and their families. Little wonder that

standardization and linguistic purism are frequently regarded as two sides of the same coin (Horner, 2005).

Moreover, according to Da Costa et al. (2013), the very use of the term standard points to the standard language ideology (Weber & Horner, 2012; Milroy & Milroy, 1999). As Da Costa et al. (2013, p. 313) note, “This ideology is based on the belief that languages are internally homogenous entities with strict boundaries between them, a belief which totally ignores the constant blending and borrowing between different languages by ordinary people, as is the norm in multilingual societies”. They further note that this ideology allows for certain language varieties to be chosen for standardization simply owing to the socio-political power of their users, not due to any inherent superiority of these varieties over others. Thus, a standard language is just another variety, although it is often considered the most important one from a social and cultural point of view. That is, the standard language is a ‘dialect’, but for socio-political reasons, it is frequently valued more highly than the other ‘dialects’ and even (mistakenly) identified with the language as a whole (Weber & Horner, 2012).

Da Costa et al. (2013) point out that the standard language is the norm according to which people occasionally judge what others write or say as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, ‘good’ or ‘bad’. As Da Costa et al. (2013) further point out, it also becomes clear that a person who uses that standard variety is often seen as having more social power than the one who uses a non-standard dialect. As Weber and Horner (2012, p. 20) so aptly put it, “Such judgements are indicative of a third language ideology, namely an ideology of language purism, which stipulates what constitutes ‘good’ or ‘bad’ language usage, and associates values of ‘purity’ with the standard variety”. As Weber and Horner (2012) point out:

Closely intertwined with the one nation-one language and mother tongue ideologies, this ideology has a powerful evaluative component, which stipulates what constitutes ‘good’ or ‘proper’ language. It is based on a denial of the linguistic ‘fact of life’ that language always changes ... (Weber & Horner, 2012, p. 20).

As Weber and Horner (2012, p. 143) further point out:

Hence, there is an urgent need for both policy-makers and teachers to break through the standard language ideology and to valorize all the different linguistic and cultural resources of all the children, including not only standard indigenous ... languages, but also non-standard ... varieties.

Following the purist ideology, in the current study, the word, that many of my informants seemed to have stigmatized, was *pire*, used mostly by the youth in and around the town of Rundu. They labelled the word *pire* as bad, non-standard, illogical and alien to the speakers of the major Kavango languages, namely Rukwangali, Rumanyo and Thimbukushu. For example, when one asks someone, particularly the youth: Do you have a book? If he/she does not have it, he/she would answer *pire*, instead of using the word *kwato*, considered by most speakers of the main Kavango languages, specifically speakers of Rukwangali and Rumanyo, to be correct and ‘good’, and compatible with the ‘standard’ versions of their languages.

Most ‘Rumanyo-speakers’ perceived the word *pire* to have originated from Rukwangali, and therefore needs to be rejected. In contrast, however, Rukwangali-speakers also reject(ed) this assumption, as the word *pire* appears to be illogical and non-standard in their own language as well. It is notable that its variant *pira* is also often used in the same way. Sometimes, if one asks a child in Rumanyo, *Vana ya tiki kare vakondi voye kumundi ndi?* (‘Have your parents arrived home already?’ He or she would answer, *pira!* (‘no!’). In a full sentence this will read as follows: *Pira shimpe vana ya tiki* (‘No, they haven’t arrived yet’). [Cf. one of the Rukwangali advertisements presently being aired on Wato FM “*Wa kwara ndi pira wa kwara*”? (‘Are you married or not yet married?’)].

One of the things you may have noticed (above) is the ‘ungrammatical’ nature of the participants’ language. You might have wondered whether this is due to their educational levels or linguistic competence (Bock, 2013). As Bock (2013) so aptly puts it:

However, false starts, hesitations, ungrammaticalities, repetitions and, in multilingual settings, the mixing of languages, is normal in informal spoken language, even among the 'educated' speakers, so we should not judge people's level of education on the basis of these features (Bock, 2013, pp. 10-11).

There are some of the interesting points of analysis that can be made about the above phenomenon. As Bock (2013, p. 17) observes:

[Researchers] of language and communication should focus on discovering and analysing the range of communicative situations, and acts which have meaning for participants within any given speech community. They should explore the ways in which participants use the range of language resources that they have at their disposal to signal things about their identities or feelings, or compliance or resistance to the unspoken rules of the context.

Consequently, both (words) *pire* and *pira* qualify to be called hybrid language, with no particular owner. Makalela (2013) refers to this phenomenon as "internal translanguaging", which takes advantage of the similarities in the substrate systems of mutually intelligible IALs.

As I have argued elsewhere, the hybrid language should not be stigmatized, but need to be embraced by all late modern Africans (Haingura, 2017). Certainly, nonetheless, we are likely to encounter a lot of resistance, as those who examine bilingualism from a monoglossic angle stigmatize hybrid language use as code-mixing or an example of semi-lingualism. As Banda (2017, p. 7) so aptly puts it, "The very notion that 'mixing' languages helps learners with learning and acquiring new knowledge might not sit well with traditional pedagogical practices which are premised on using a singular language at a time and space for teaching and learning". Similarly, Weber and Horner (2012) remind us that those who try to preserve one (traditional) form of linguistic diversity may not be ready to acknowledge other, newly emerging forms of linguistic diversity, for example, the new mixed urban youth languages.

Further, in line with the ideology of linguistic purism, most 'Rumanyo-speakers', seem to question the use of the word *mitiri* ('teacher'), which was in use for many years, as it is perceived to have originated from Otjiherero. However, following etymology the word *mitiri* actually derives from the word *meester* (an Afrikaans word used when referring to teachers, especially during the apartheid era). If one phonologizes the Afrikaans word *meester* to fit the writing system of the major Kavango languages, it would, indeed, read as *mitiri*.

Furthermore, instead of the word *mitiri*, previous Rucgiriku teachers and authors opted to use the word *murongi* (teacher) as evident in a number of Rumanyo textbooks currently used in schools. Surprisingly, nonetheless, this word is also rejected by current Rumanyo teachers and authors who prefer to use the word *mushongi*, as the former, according to them, originated from Rukwangali, while the latter is considered to be a 'pure' Rumanyo word which had been used in the past, even in the Holy Bible (Haingura, 2017).

It is noteworthy that, during my fieldwork, it was not uncommon to come across statements expressing concern about Rumanyo being a marginalized language. In these ideological debates, Rumanyo was even presented as an endangered language that is in need not only of standardization, but also of preservation and promotion. Even these days, most 'Rumanyo-speakers' point to Rukwangali as the main culprit for this, referring to it as a 'killer language'. That is, Rukwangali is 'killing' Rumanyo. The intention of this purist discourse is to establish a clear boundary between Rumanyo and Rukwangali, because, as a language in its own right, rather than a dialect, Rumanyo can be positioned as a valid competitor with Rukwangali (Haingura, 2017). In other words, Rumanyo is perceived here as being in opposition to Rukwangali, and all other languages spoken in the region or even the nation, which is counterproductive and dangerous for language development in Africa. As Banda (2009b, p. 2) aptly puts it, "The danger here is that African languages which have existed side by side for significant periods of time, complementing and supplementing each other in multilingual symbiosis, are suddenly cast as competing for spaces".

Notably, the linguistic purism debate has been (and is still) popular on the Rukavango Service phone-in programmes, and general

discussions on Wato FM. Sometimes, there are heated debates, i.e. people from all walks of life (would) make calls and lament, especially the youth, for ‘bad’ language usage. They (would) use metaphors such as “the youth is ‘killing’ our languages”. If we are not careful, we are about to ‘lose’ our heritage”, viz. our languages. Some of the statements often uttered in the three major Kavango languages are:

Rukwangali: *Vanona ava kuna kudipaga eraka lyetu*, (“these kids are killing our language”). *Oru ngesi kapisi Rukwangali rwene-rwene*, (“this is not ‘pure’ Rukwangali”).
 Rumanyo: *Vanantjoka kuna kudipagha liraka lyetu*, (“the youth are killing our language”). *Runo kapishi Rumanyo rwene-rwene*, (“this is not ‘pure’ Rumanyo”).
 Thimbukushu: *Otho ne mbadi Thimbukushu thene-thene keho tho*, (“that is not ‘pure’ Thimbukushu”).
 Hamurereya kuna kupagha ndimi dhetu, (“the youth are killing our language”).

Nevertheless, if one listens more carefully, they themselves (i.e. the defenders of the standard language ideology, and/or apostles of linguistic purism) end(ed) up ‘translanguaging’.

Presentation of real communication data

The texts below (what I will refer to as data) are extracts that one often hears in everyday conversation, especially among the youth in the Kavango Region. The results of the present study show that hybrid language speakers have an extended repertoire of languages that they pool together to fit their communication needs. That is, they display linguistic flexibility, which suggests a case of versatile intermingling of linguistic resources rather than static and separated codes (Makalela, 2013). The Extract underneath shows this flexibility:

A: *Una duna kare unsuku kuposa ndi?*
 (‘Have you already applied for the post/vacancy?’)

B: *Mukuranti munke yina kara?* ([‘In which newspaper is it] advertised?’)

Here, Speaker A begins the conversation in Rumanyo with *Una*, a marker for the pronoun (“you” – singular), and then uses a phonologized Afrikaans phrase *ansoek doen* for “apply”. Speaker B does the same. Participants use a mix of local language, Afrikaans and English (which include words such as *posa* – a Rumanyo word for ‘post/vacancy’, *kuranti* derived from *koerant* – the Afrikaans word for ‘newspaper’) which signal their identity. Below follows another extract of a conversation by two Rukwangali-speakers:

C: *Nkera kani resere mbudi zondona.*
 (‘I read bad news yesterday’)

D: *Mosaitunga musinke?* (‘[In which newspaper?]’)

Speaker C uses the word *resere* derived from *kuresa* from the Afrikaans word *lees*, meaning “to read”. Note that Speaker D’s question “In which newspaper?” is preceded by a Rukwangali prefix, *Mo*, a marker for the English preposition *in*, followed by a phonologized Rukwangali word *saitunga*, derived from the German word *Zeitung*, for “newspaper”.

You probably noticed from the language mixing that these participants are multilingual individuals, using Rumanyo/Rukwangali, and Afrikaans/English/German in one conversation. Their mixing of languages is evidence that the group is probably close knit in social and cultural terms and that they are comfortable and relaxed in this setting as language mixing is typically found in informal settings. These conversations show a typical case where multilingual speakers choose discursive resources from various languages to communicate and carry out social functions – something that typifies a translanguaging practice. Above all, these conversations show that hybrid language speakers have a language repertoire that breaks boundaries in ways that render them versatile speakers and listeners (Makalela, 2013). Besides, the mixing of languages is characteristic of informal spoken interactions (Bock, 2013). What is interesting about these interactions is the way in which the norms and values of what is considered to be ‘decent’ and ‘appropriate’ way of speaking shape the participants’ interactions. I pick up this point later on.

As will become clearer underneath, the notion of ‘imagined communities’ is used in language and identity studies to refer to desired membership of groups of people to which we connect through the power of imagination (cf. Kanno & Norton, 2003). This membership includes using identity markers and approximating the behaviour of the imagined community. Most notably, the current study shows that hybrid language speakers do not only use vocabulary from local contexts, they equally draw from transnational cultural expressions with which they identify. Let us consider the following extract:

*Wami topi na yi tjeka mu tau kuna
kupita mushitavura opo na yi veisa ndi
yi mpeko zak topi kuna ka baleka*
(‘My friend I saw my father walking
in town when I asked him to give me
money he started to run’).

First, the Speaker uses a slang term, *topi*, which, in this case, refers to father. In the same utterance, he brings in phonologized English words, *tjeka* (‘check’), *tau* (‘town’) as well as phonologized Afrikaans word *veisa* (derived from the word *wys*) followed by Rumanyo words within the same stream of thought. He also uses the word *baleka* originating from IALs across our (Namibian) borders. The word *baleka* in isiXhosa means ‘run’. It is remarkable to notice that the word *topi* is re-appropriated by the speaker here to mean father in a pledge of solidarity (Smitherman, 2000) to their own speech community.

This imported usage shows that hybrid language speakers often have imagined communities owing to international exposure to various cultures and behaviours. While they localized their linguistic repertoires, they also develop transcultural repertoires that cut across national boundaries as part of their expanded ways of seeing themselves with respect to others in the 21st century. It is in this context that Blommaert’s (2010) concept of a ‘critical sociolinguistics of globalisation’ becomes relevant. That is, hybrid language speakers are not only preoccupied with local ways of identifying, but they also assume transcultural identities that are mediated through globalization (Makalela, 2013).

For that reason, the ideology of linguistic purism has been found, by post-structuralist (socio)linguistic scholars, to be

dangerous and counterproductive for language development, specifically in our globalized late modern African societies. Particularly, in this regard, one needs not look further than the metaphors that the language purists rely upon (Haingura, 2017). In the domain of education, for example, the discourse of endangerment tends to be connected with the discourses of standardization and purism (Weber & Horner, 2012).

Implications for language planning and policy

Language planning and policy in Africa has not moved along with the current language practices (Makoni *et al.*, 2010). That is to say, it has not accounted for massive migrations and urbanization all over Africa, and the constant crossing of the rural-urban spaces by both rural and urban people due to improvements in air and road networks. For that reason, there is a need for multilingual models of education and language policies which are based on natural linguistic repertoires of the speakers concerned and for the cross-border configuration of such models and policies that account for border-crossing multilingual landscapes (Banda, 2008, 2009a, 2010). Africa is constituted of multilingual landscapes that cross national, ethnic, etc. borders. Multilingualism and multiculturalism being the norm means that Africans do not shy away from ‘crossing’ ethnic, cultural and linguistic borders in their quest for voice and agency (Banda, 2009b).

Language planning in Africa needs to take into account that languages spoken in a specific country are also spoken outside its borders, and that ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and so forth, borders are social constructs. This would build and extend multilingual democratic spaces for speakers as a way of enhancing and taking advantage of multilingualism as a voice for experience and identity performance, and hence as a linguistic resource. This would enable material production through local agency and voices across borders, be they ethnic, community-based or national. In this way, multiple languages would become tools for the socio-political, cultural and economic transformation of Africa, as multilingualism becomes the means for increased socio-economic, political, and so forth, participation across broad African populations (Banda, 2009b).

Discussions

The current study sought to explain how hybrid language speakers perform their multilingual practices in the towns and cities throughout Namibia. The key finding from these dialogues is that communication among these speakers is spatio-temporally complex and it embodies the transcultural and linguistic movements of people. Their linguistic moves cut across traditional linguistic boundaries in ways that reflect their multiple identities and hybrid habitus.

The first instance of translanguaging practices was found in the speakers' ability to mesh codes within single thought units. For instance, there were opportunities to use more than three languages in one utterance. This linguistic flexibility suggests that multilingual speakers have an extended linguistic repertoire from which they extract a range of language forms in order to express meanings. As this process of relating meaning in enmeshed codes has been automatized, one is able to affirm a common understanding in translanguaging studies that the languages used are not differentiated, but rather form an amorphous continuum in which speakers "soft-assemble" (Garcia, 2009) and use available discursive resources as and when the social environment dictates. In other words, from the point of view of the speakers, multilinguals do not necessarily switch from one code to the next as studies on code-switching tend to suggest (Gumperz, 1982; Slabbert & Myers-Scotton, 1996).

The study has shown that mixed ways of using language is very creative. Instead of using traditional forms that characterize a specific language group, the speakers prefer more neutral forms. We have seen that *pire* and/or *pira*, as discussed above, have become common hybrid language distinguishing properties, which have no ethnic lineage to any of the IALs spoken in the Kavango region. Instead of using complete words, the speakers creatively use semantic shifts as in *pire* and *pira* for *kwato* and *kapi*. In doing so, the speakers resist mother-tongue labels of their so-called heritage languages.

It is particularly striking that, even though hybrid language speakers are enmeshed in their environment where they bridge linguistic gaps, the study has shown that they are constantly involved in transcultural imagination of the globalized world. For

example, the word *baleka* has found its way into the streets of Rundu, which may reflect transcultural identification with South Africans. While this lexical item has no history in Rundu, it seems that transcultural imagination takes precedence due to exposure to popular culture from South Africa. That is to say, owing to globalization and the fast exchange of information in the 21st century, languaging expressions are no longer attached to particular spaces and times. This is a typical example of linguistic mobility that is indexical of the permeability of boundaries between languages and cultures (Blommaert, 2010; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Makoni, 2003).

Another significant finding of the study is with regard to experiential harmonization of discretely defined Kavango languages. Mixed neighbourhoods of traditional users of the three major Kavango languages in the town of Rundu have brought these languages so close together that the hybrid language speakers use them interchangeably when they communicate with one another. The study has shown that translanguaging between speakers of mutually intelligible languages is a natural process where these languages become indistinguishable in everyday use. While the translanguaging frequently refers to a mixture of non-cognate languages, here we saw an opportunity for using the Kavango language varieties without boundaries.

It is remarkable to note that most Bantu languages in Namibia are mutually intelligible to the extent that their orthographies could be harmonized and/or restandardized into a common form (Holmarsdottir, 2001; Haingura, 2017). It is argued that, orally, most of the 'Bantu languages' in Namibia are, to some extent, similar and mutually intelligible, which may be ascribed to the syntactic and morpho-phonological similarities of Bantu languages (Holmarsdottir, 2001).

Finally, the languaging experience has shown practical opportunities for harmonized use in hybrid communities such as our towns and cities (Makalela, 2013). The notion of indistinguishable forms and traditional boundaries in IALs was shown further through lexicalization processes when hybrid language borrows words from African languages, German, English and Afrikaans.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the youth and adults in the Kavango Region practice multilingualism in fluid, mobile and flexible ways that transcend traditional language boundaries. Designations such as ‘MT’ seem increasingly irrelevant to individuals from these areas who favour a hybrid form, which involves a confluence of Afrikaans, English, German and IALs. From a translanguaging perspective, their linguistic repertoires have expanded to give them the flexibility to ‘soft-assemble’ and make choices in their everyday encounters, such as when they are in monolingual situations. This languaging practice goes far beyond what has traditionally been referred to as ‘codeswitching’, which routinely focuses on language interference. What we see instead is the way in which multilingual speakers tend to become socially versatile by actively making choices about who they want to become in fluid language context situations. In Garcia’s (2011b) terms, they identify through languaging.

While at the surface this phenomenon reflects how hybrid language speakers see themselves as a new generation of speakers who cannot be tied to a single linguistic and cultural code, the transcultural and linguistic mobility of people in the 21st century provide new opportunities to redefine languages. The study calls for more studies on this language development from translanguaging, migration and settlement angles in order to draw comprehensive accounts of hybrid language use in our towns, cities and comparable situations throughout Africa. It forms a basis for future studies that need to take into account these hybrid forms of languaging and identity negotiation (Makalela, 2013).

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