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Multilingualism as social relationalities: A linguistic citizenship approach

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Magister Artium in the Department of Linguistics, University of the Western
Cape

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2024

Abstract

Multilingualism as social relationalities: A linguistic citizenship approach

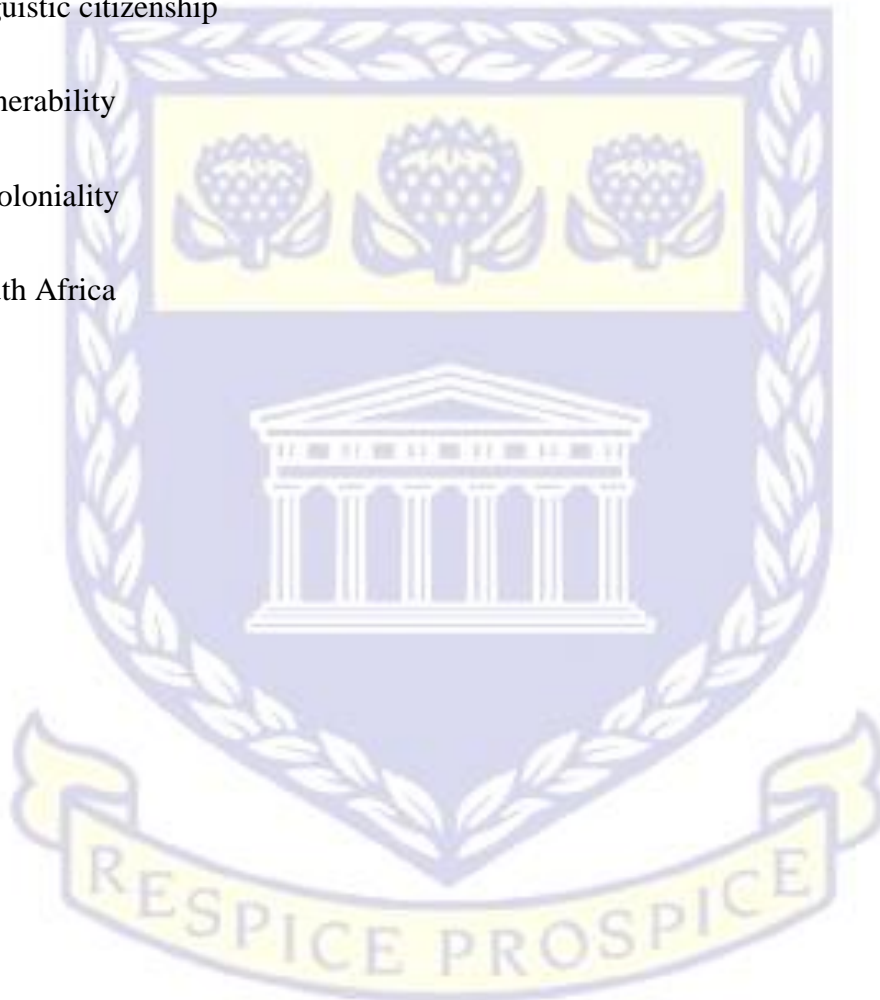
Multilingualism as a social phenomenon is particularly significant in South Africa, a country in which citizens pride themselves on its 12 official languages. Rethinking and deepening our understanding of multilingualism, and how this can help us work towards a more cohesive sense of belonging and social justice, has become the focus of research in recent times. In this paper, I deconstruct the dominant notions of multilingualism as named, separate languages by exploring how multilingualism functions as social relationalities. I draw on the experiences of a member of an internationally acclaimed choir which creates and performs original, multilingual songs. I argue that multilingualism and relationality are intrinsically linked by exploring the ways in which multilingualism functions, in the experiences of the participant, to build and shape relationships with others. Using a *linguistic citizenship* approach (Stroud, 2015), I look at how the participant repeatedly cares for the other and connects with the other across difference. Linguistic citizenship is understood as the “emergent and sensitive process of disinhabiting, stepping out of, imposed and linguistically mediated and entangled subjectivities” (Stroud, 2018, p. 5). Rethinking multilingualism as social relationality through linguistic citizenship presents an opportunity for learning how to engage with and coexist with different subjectivities, thereby stepping out of the colonial binaries that separate people.



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Keywords

- multilingualism
- linguistic citizenship
- vulnerability
- decoloniality
- South Africa



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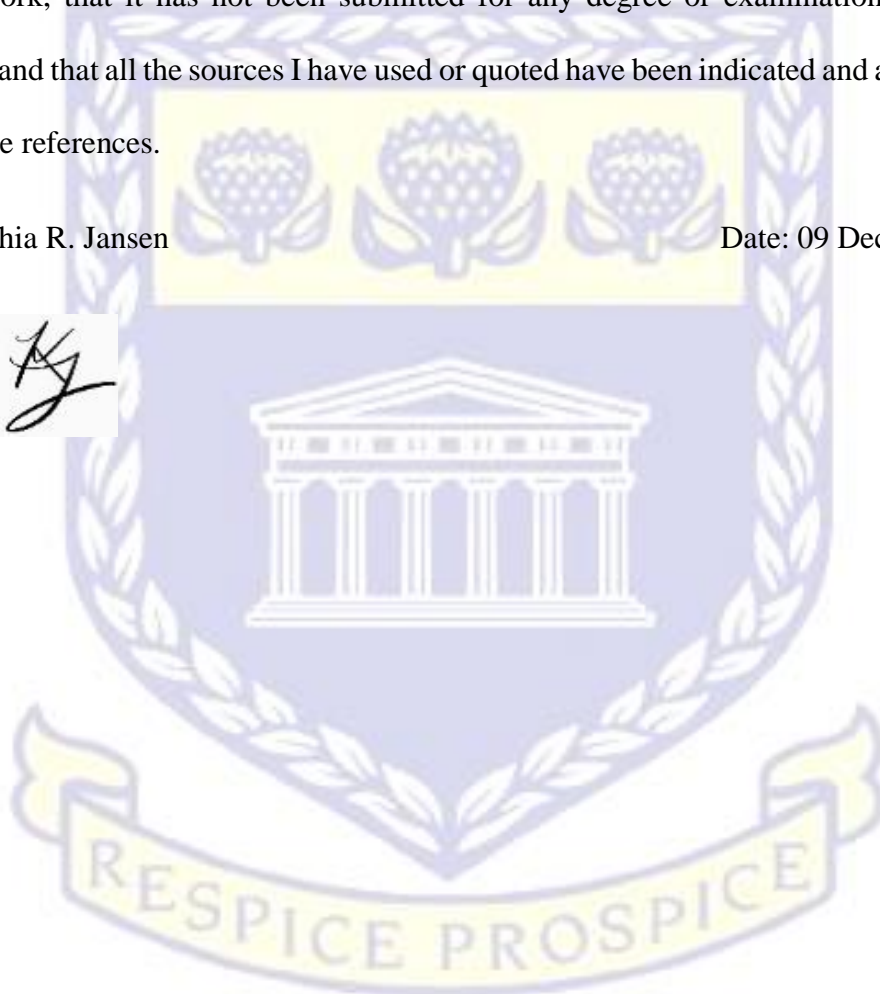
Declaration

I declare that **Multilingualism as social relationalities: A linguistic citizenship approach** is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Name: Keshia R. Jansen

Date: 09 December 2024

Signature:



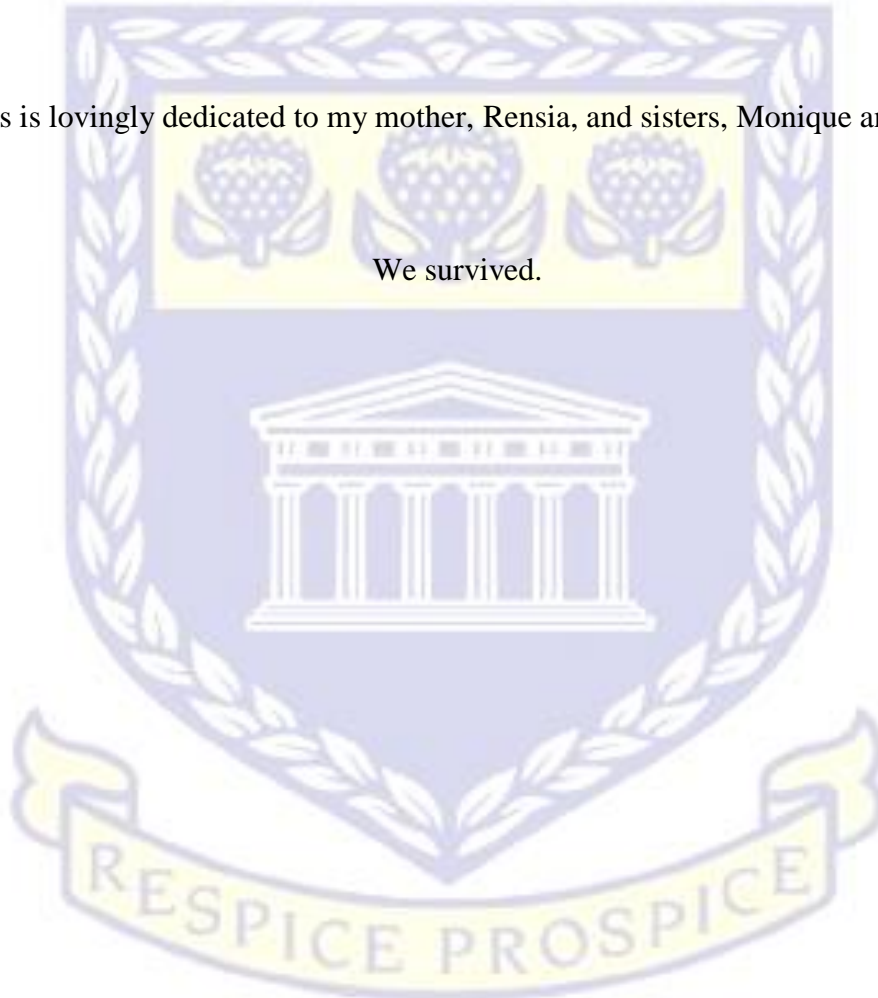
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Dedication

“The oak fought the wind and was broken, the willow bent when it must and survived.”

-Robert Jordan, *The Fires of Heaven*

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to my mother, Rensia, and sisters, Monique and Mickayla.



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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors, Prof. Bock and Prof. Stroud, without whom I would not have been able to cross the finish line. It has been an honour and a privilege to learn from you. Prof. Bock, thank you for all the encouragement and pictures of your pets. Prof. Stroud, thank you for all the support and new words that you (unintentionally) taught me. I am immensely grateful for your guidance and could not have asked for a better team to have in my corner.

To my mother, Rensia, thank you for being patient with me and for encouraging me to pursue this academic journey. I am extremely grateful for everything you have done for me.

Thank you to Monique for the library sessions and endless (dry) humour. You have no idea how much this helped.

Mickayla, thank you for always listening to me rant and for asking all the right questions.

Kelly, your love and support has been my anchor. Thank you.

Thank you to my participant for being a part of this project and allowing me to share this rich and wonderful research with you.

I am grateful to all my friends and peers at the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research (CMDR) for the workshops, seminars and chats in the corridor. Thank you also to the staff of the CMDR for creating the space for said engagements.

Lastly, thank you to Leila for being the purr-fect writing companion.

You are my village, and I appreciate you all.

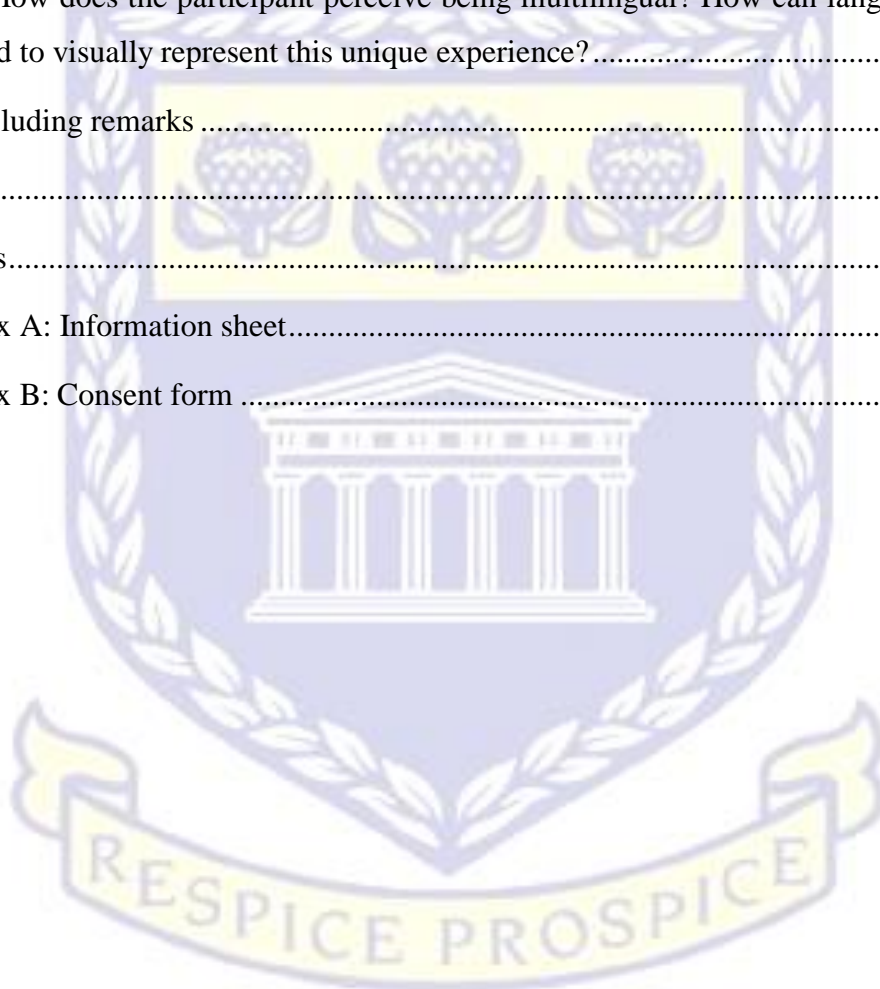
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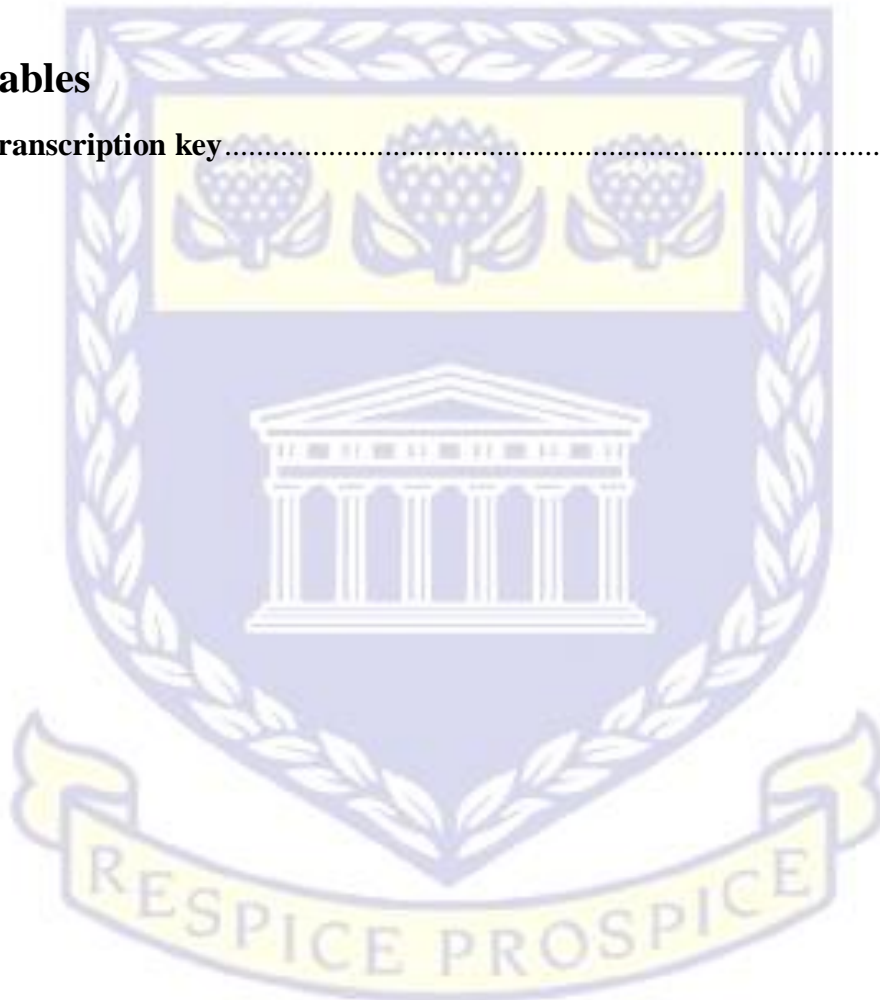
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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Language is an indispensable tool that can be used to deepen our democracy and also contribute to the social, cultural, intellectual, economic and political life of the South African society.

RSA Government Communications¹

1.1 Context

This research is set in a country in which language has been a controversial issue for decades. On paper, South Africa has been a multilingual country since the enactment of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, which granted official status to 11 languages (and South African Sign Language in 2023). However, owing to its rich racial, ethnic and cultural diversity, multilingualism has been prevalent in South African societies for a much longer, indefinite period of time. Yet, the widespread struggles of navigating this multilingual society remain a reality for many. See, for example, Mashazi and Oostendorp (2024) who explore how a participant uses discursive strategies to create new subjectivities for himself thereby undoing the normative conceptions of identity imposed on him; and the continued struggles of multilingualism in education in Heugh and Stroud (2020), Tyler (2023), and Bock, Abrahams and Jansen (2019).

This is unsurprising given the role of language in the country's historical context. Benjamin (2003, p. 97) highlights that “the communicative function of language has been obscured [in South Africa] by the tendency of those in power to use language as means to maintain relations of dominance.” This is illustrated in the use of language (among other factors) by the apartheid government to oppress and divide South African societies into racial categories. These categories, ideologies and other remnants of colonisation, also known as *coloniality* (Quijano, 2000), continue to plague South African societies in the form of racism, discrimination and various socio-economic inequalities (Alexander, 1989).

¹Government Communications, Department of Government Communication and Information System, Republic of South Africa. 2016. *Language Policy*. Available here: https://www.gcis.gov.za/sites/default/files/images/resource_centre/GCISLanguagePolicyJune2016.pdf

Since the abolition of apartheid and the installation of the democratic government in 1994, there have been growing efforts from the state to aid in reparation and transformation. Such efforts include the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which aimed to bring restorative justice to victims of human rights violations during apartheid, and the implementation of Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) policies to enhance the economic participation of black people in the South African economy. There have also been efforts from the state to preserve marginalised languages, protect language rights, and promote multilingualism through the establishment of the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB). However, this has not been without issue.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Rethinking and deepening our understanding of multilingualism and how this can help us work towards a more cohesive sense of belonging and social justice, has become the focus of research in recent times [See Horner and Weber (2017); Gonzales and Butler (2020); Stroud and Kerfoot (2021); and Wei (2024)]. It is important to note that our understanding of multilingualism is largely influenced by our perception of language itself. During the debates for a new language policy in South Africa in the 1990s, among growing calls for a multilingual policy, language was commonly thought of as separate entities with clear boundaries between them (Heugh, 2018). Thus, a multilingual language policy would involve 11 languages (now 12) arranged side by side with corresponding governmental plans and strategies to achieve equal treatment of each one. Naturally, this garnered collective concerns about the financial implications of implementing such a policy (Heugh, 2018).

During this time, an alternative view of language was emerging, “one which recognised that multilingual citizens draw on their linguistic repertoires to negotiate meaning between and across language systems,” and that languages and repertoires are therefore useful resources (Heugh, 2018, p. 383). This notion can be linked to *functional multilingualism*, whereby people use different ways of speaking for different purposes (Heugh, 1995), and *translanguaging* (or ‘trawsieithu’) which Williams (1996) used to describe intentional code-switching between English and Welsh in bilingual classrooms. Although the notion of language as a resource was adopted by the South African government (with the establishment of PanSALB in 1996), Heugh (2018) argues that there was still a lack of understanding of this concept. To Heugh (1999, p. 310), an approach to language planning that is underscored by the idea that language *is* in fact a resource would:

- acknowledge that there are sources of knowledge and expertise to which users of each of the country's languages have access;
- ensure that effective measures would be taken to access and harness this knowledge for the maximum advantage of everyone;
- unlock the potential of existing patterns of local and regional multilingual communication systems;
- utilise international systems for communication across linguistic boundaries;
- build a flexible network of multilingual communication systems to suit the domestic and international requirements of a national plan for development

Herewith, the author highlights the impact of the state's perspective of language on societal or ground level experiences of multilingualism. However, the author states that the government still viewed multilingualism as a challenge which would be difficult (and costly) to manage in education and public sectors. Notions of functional multilingualism and translanguaging were therefore overlooked. Consequently, language planning in South Africa tends to be informed by a "limited understanding of multilingualism," and has come to be understood as "multiple forms of monolingualism" (Heugh, 2018, p. 383).

In a broader sense, the understanding of language as separate entities has undoubtedly given rise to many concepts which have proved invaluable to our understanding of communication (such as code-switching, code mixing, etc.). However, this idea of language does not account for a whole range of activities and processes which take place in communication *in context*. Instead, terms such as *linguaging*, which is defined as "the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (Swain, 2006, p. 98), *functional multilingualism* and *translanguaging* captures this dynamic activity.

To view language as a verb (as something we do), rather than a noun (as an object) allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the human condition. After all, "Language is the gift and resource that makes us human. No human activity can take place without it" (Mesthrie & Bradley, 2018, p. 1). Ranging from our most basic level of thinking to enquiries about various aspects of the universe, from our psychological sense of who we are as individuals to the broader social understanding of community, these experiences all rest on and are made possible through language (Mesthrie & Bradley, 2018). Similarly, García and Wei

(2014) point out that language is inseparable from human interaction. It is clear that these two are therefore intrinsically linked.

In this paper, I rethink the dominant notions of language as named, separate languages by exploring how multilingualism functions as social relationalities. Lejano (2023), cited in Kan and Lejano (2023, p. 1), defines relationality as “the condition by which individuals (or groups) think and act in coherence with the web of relationships of which they are part.” In other words, relationality has to do with the consideration of the ‘other’ in one’s thoughts and actions. Relationality therefore highlights the social connectedness in human engagement. Building on this notion, I therefore argue that if language (or *linguaging*) is one of the primary distinctive features of what it means to be human, we can assume that language itself has a strong relational component. Engaging with others through language requires careful consideration (both conscious and unconscious) of the other. Understanding how this might function as a resource has broader advantages for creating more open and caring spaces.

In this paper, I draw on the experiences of a member of an internationally acclaimed choir which creates and performs original, multilingual songs. I argue that multilingualism and relationality are intrinsically linked by exploring the ways in which multilingualism functions, in the experiences of the participant, to build and shape relationships with others. By overlooking the relational aspect of multilingualism, current approaches perpetuate the colonial binaries which continue to separate people (or groups of people) based on linguistic, racial and ethnic identities. Using a *linguistic citizenship* approach (Stroud, 2015), I look at how the participant repeatedly cares for the other and connects with the other across difference. Linguistic citizenship is understood as the “emergent and sensitive process of disinhabiting, stepping out of, imposed and linguistically mediated and entangled subjectivities” (Stroud, 2018, p. 5). Rethinking multilingualism as social relationality through linguistic citizenship presents an opportunity for learning how to engage with and coexist with different subjectivities, thereby stepping out of the colonial binaries that separate people.

1.3 Research aims and questions

The aim of this project is to reconstruct or rethink the dominant notions of multilingualism as named, separate languages by exploring how language and multilingualism functions as social relationalities.

The research questions are as follows:

1. How does the multilingual participant navigate their linguistic repertoire in the different spheres of their life?
2. How does the participant navigate the social and relational dynamics within diverse spaces?
 - 2.1 How do they manage to engage and collaborate with others despite their differences? How does this relate to linguistic citizenship?
3. How does the participant perceive being multilingual? How can language portraits be used to visually represent this unique experience?

1.4 Chapter overview

Chapter 2: This chapter provides a detailed overview of the current literature relevant to this paper. This includes literature on decoloniality, race and language, Linguistic Human Rights, linguistic citizenship and vulnerability. This section also serves to outline linguistic citizenship as the theoretical lens and framework for this paper.

Chapter 3: The methodology chapter details the research methods used to collect the data for this paper as well as how this will be analysed. This includes a discussion of literature on Qualitative Research, the data collection process, Language Portraits, Transcription and Thematic Analysis. This chapter also contains the ethical statement and some methodological limitations experienced.

Chapter 4: This chapter comprises the analysis of the data collected for this paper. This includes the interview and language portrait. The data is analysed using Thematic Analysis.

Chapter 5: This chapter provides a reflection on the research findings in relation to the research questions set out in Chapter 1.

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Chapter 2:

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of relevant literature to contextualise and support this paper. Given the emphasis that has been placed on challenging colonial ways of thinking, decoloniality is a fitting point of departure. The first section of this chapter therefore outlines the notion of decoloniality, with a particular focus on race and language. This chapter then traces the origins of Linguistic Human Rights (LHR) more broadly, before unpacking language rights within a South African context. Although LHR has played an instrumental role in the advancement of multilingualism, the paradigm has not been without issue. This chapter therefore explores the critique of the LHR paradigm and the literature which supports this critique. Using this critique as momentum to explore alternative ways of navigating multilingualism in society, this chapter then explores linguistic citizenship, the key theoretical approach of this paper. Lastly, this chapter briefly outlines alternative views of language known as linguistic and semiotic repertoires.

2.2 Decoloniality, race and language

This paper is rooted in the ever-growing field of decoloniality as it challenges traditional perspectives of language and multilingualism. To better understand decoloniality, it may be useful to first explore what is broadly understood by coloniality. Decolonial scholars concede that Anibal Quijano is one of the seminal scholars in the field. In his writing, Quijano (2000) introduces coloniality as the darker, concealed side of Western modernity. This is not to be confused with colonisation, however. In general terms, colonisation is understood as the historical process of establishing control over the indigenous people of a given area. Coloniality is an umbrella term for the *effects* of colonisation. Coloniality can therefore be thought of as a product of colonisation. Quijano (2000) explains that Western European colonisers viewed themselves as superior, owing to their seemingly exclusive possession of modernity. It was understood that, through colonisation, modernity was passed on or gifted to the indigenous people, who they, colonisers from the West, perceived as inferior or barbaric. According to Menezes De Souza (2015), this sharing of modernity, and therefore of some kind of advancement of humanity, to what was then thought of as primitive societies concealed the inequalities that resulted from it. In summary, coloniality refers to the unequal relations of power and knowledge (among other things), that is enforced and controlled by European

colonisers and their descendants (Menezes De Souza, 2015). In other words, the remnants of colonisation. According to Mignolo (2011, p. xxvii), decoloniality involves “delinking from...the colonial matrix of power”, thereby disrupting and rejecting Western ways of thinking about and understanding the world.

2.2.1 Racial and language-based inequality

Menezes De Souza (2019) further explains that labour and local resources were used to establish control over indigenous people and to affirm the self-proclaimed superiority given to the colonisers. It is interesting to note that these local resources include knowledge and language. It is therefore not surprising that in today’s society, race, language and knowledge are the central features upon which inequality is based. In the South African context, there is a plethora of instances (both historical and contemporary) which can be drawn on to illustrate this. According to a report by the World Bank Group published in 2022, racial differences among citizens were the largest contributor to income inequality in South Africa in 2008 (Sulla, Zikhali, & Cuevas, 2022). Race contributed to 38% of income inequality, 35% was owed to education attainment and 15% to labour market factors. In 2018, racial differences accounted for 41% of income inequality in South Africa. When race is removed from the statistics, the contributions to income inequality of labour market factors, education, household demographics, and location all decline, suggesting that race appears to be channelled through these various dimensions (Sulla, Zikhali, & Cuevas, 2022). In other words, quantitatively, racial difference appears to be the main contributing factor not only to income inequality in South Africa, but also to other crucial aspects of life.

On the qualitative front, race and language are ongoing tropes on the topic of inequality in South Africa. See, for example, the Open Stellenbosch movement of 2015 which was formed to challenge the hegemony of white Afrikaans culture and the exclusion of black students and staff at Stellenbosch University. These and other inequalities are sustained by the Eurocentric societal power structures and ideologies perpetuated by coloniality. Another key example in this regard is Flores and Rosa’s (2015, p. 150) concept of *raciolinguistic ideologies* which “conflate certain racialized bodies with linguistic deficiency unrelated to any objective linguistic practices.” In other words, raciolinguistic ideologies create “racialized speaking subjects” who are deemed linguistically deficient even when they engage in linguistic practices that are viewed as normative when used by their privileged, white counterparts (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 150). This, in turn, delegitimises the racialized individual all together [(Rosa, 2016a) & (Rosa, 2016b)]. A black person speaking Standard English, regardless of their proficiency,

might therefore still be viewed as incompetent purely based on these preconceived raciolinguistic ideologies. It is clear, then, that there is a deep rooted stigma attached to simply being black, and that adopting 'normative' ways of speaking does not challenge or change this stigma.

Interestingly, Sekaja, Adams and Yağmur (2022) point out that issues of raciolinguistic ideologies are not limited to English-speaking societies, and that these ideologies plague multilingual societies as well. Their recent work focuses specifically on how English creates and perpetuates inequality in South African higher education "by privileging Whiteness and its linguistic landscape and continuing to disadvantage Blackness accordingly" (Sekaja, Adams, & Yağmur, 2022, p. 2). Needless to say, raciolinguistic ideologies are closely linked to coloniality. According to Rosa and Flores (2017, p. 623), "the construction and naturalization of the concept of race along with the construction and naturalization of languages as bounded and separate objects associated with particular racial groups" were two key constituents of European colonisation. In fact, Stoler (1995), cited in Rosa and Flores (2017), states that the notion of race was a key part of the colonial agenda as it produced racial Others in contrast to the superior European bourgeois identity. These conceptions of a superior and inferior race were therefore used to justify and support the idea of modernity.

As with race, the conception of language as bounded entities had similarly troublesome implications for society. Heugh (2018) traces the shift perceived in sociolinguistics research from understanding the notion of language as a noun towards understanding it as a verb. Traditionally, a language is thought to be understood as a separate, distinct entity whereby we are able to identify the 'borders' between languages. For example, one may think of being able to identify English and Afrikaans as two different languages and therefore completely separate systems. From this perspective, these two languages are identified as two objects, otherwise known as nouns.

According to Heugh (2018, p. 383), formerly colonised states began critiquing European notions of language as "fixed or stable entit(ies)" towards the second half of the 20th century. This critique was in response to what was then referred to as a country's 'national' language, typically enforced by the coloniser, which served to represent the nation state. According to Dua (1993, p. 293), the national language was viewed as "a symbol of national identity and prestige". One of the underpinnings of the national language, among others, was therefore to instil a sense of unity and pride in the nation state. However, the decision to identify

one language variety to serve as the national language ultimately lead to the introduction of a hierarchy of languages (Heugh, 2018). With the national language sitting at the top of this hierarchy, speakers of varieties other than this were marginalised. Heugh (2018) traces the critique of the national language to many scholars in the field [See Kusch (2010); Anzaldúa (1987); and Mignolo (1996)]. What the authors highlight is the lack of voice experienced by the minority language speakers.

2.3 Linguistic Human Rights

We often see links drawn between language and identity. Tabouret-Keller (2017, p. 315), for example, states that “the language spoken by somebody and his or her identity as a speaker of this language are inseparable.” We therefore know that there is a strong connection between the ways in which we speak, and how that influences our perception of ourselves. Furthermore, language acts are acts of identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985), and therefore certain linguistic choices may be used to index details about our identity. However, if perceptions of language are distorted by coloniality and inequality, then links between language and identity on an individual level may also be fraught. The marriage of language and rights to form Linguistic Human Rights (LHR) serves as a turning point for such and other language-based inequalities.

According to Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2023), the first international attempt to provide a platform for the promotion of Linguistic Human Rights (LHR) was at a UNESCO-supported seminar in Brazil, in 1987, organized by Francisco Gomes de Matos. The seminar adopted the resolution on linguistic rights which proclaimed the following:

1. Every social group has the right to positively identify with one or more languages and to have such identification accepted and respected by others.
2. Every child has the right to learn the language(s) of his/her group fully.
3. Every person has the right to use the language(s) of his/her group in any official situation.
4. Every person has the right to learn fully at least one of the official languages in the country where s/he is resident, according to his/her own choice (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2023, p. xxvi)

After 1987, Linguistic Human Rights (LHR), or Linguistic Rights as referred to by some scholars, became a focus of many academics' research [See, for example, Rannut, Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1994); de Varennes (1996); and Hamel (1997)]. The work of Robert Phillipson and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas on LHRs is commonly accepted as seminal in the field. In their early work, the authors state the following as their point of departure:

linguistic rights are one type of human right and as such one intricately interlocking element in a set of inalienable, universal norms for just enjoyment of one's civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights;

depriving people of their human rights leads to conflict. If the rights of minorities are respected, there is less likelihood of conflict. Linguistic diversity is not causally related to conflict, though of course language is a major mobilizing factor in contexts where an ethnic group feels itself threatened (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995, p. 483).

Commenting on the origins of LHRs to contextualize his critique, Wee (2005) highlights the premise on which Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas's (1995) approach to LHR rests – the authors' discussions focus on links between minority groups and their mother tongues. He suggests that, from this perspective, LHR is concerned with ensuring mother tongue languages receive appropriate status and that minority groups are able to use them across domains to participate in society. This is illustrated in the following quote:

What such a declaration (and later a convention) should guarantee, in our view, is that:

A) everybody can:

identify with their mother tongue(s) and have this identification accepted and respected by others;

learn the mother tongue(s) fully, orally (when physiologically possible) and in writing (which presupposes that minorities are educated through the medium of their mother tongue(s));

B) everybody whose mother tongue is not an official language in the country where s/he is resident, can become bilingual (or trilingual, if s/he has 2 mother tongues)

in the mother tongue(s) and (one of) the official language(s) (according to his or her own choice);

C) any change of mother tongue is voluntary, not imposed. [Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1995), cited in Wee (2005)].

2.3.1 Language Rights in South Africa

In the South African context, the government led by the African National Congress (ANC) sought to bring justice to those affected by colonialism with a human rights-based constitution which was implemented in 1996 (Heugh, 2023). Herewith, the Pan South African Language Board² (PanSALB) was established. In terms of the Pan South African Language Board Act 59 of 1995, amended as PanSALB Amendment Act of 1999, PanSALB was established to develop the 11 official languages and to promote multilingualism in South Africa. The PanSALB Act is also aimed at initiating research centered on developing these languages, as well as the Khoe, San and South African sign language. The focus areas of this development include Status Language Planning, Language in Education, Translation and Interpreting, Lexicography, Terminology and Place names, Development of Literature and Previously Marginalised Languages, Language Rights and Mediation, and Research. PanSALB continues to offer services in these areas of work, with one of the more recent initiatives being a workshop on lexical and grammatical standardisation of South African Sign Language (SASL), which is since July 2023 recognised as the 12th official language in South Africa.

2.3.2 Critique of Linguistic Human Rights

The LHR paradigm has been instrumental in the development and advancement of language and multilingualism both nationally and internationally. However, it has also been widely critiqued. For example, Blommaert (2005) acknowledges that the LHR paradigm (or the linguistic rights paradigm (LRP), as he refers to it), has had great success, but is based on fundamentally flawed assumptions of language. He argues that instead of acknowledging language varieties, the LRP centers on discourses of named, separate languages (Blommaert, 2005). Consequently, crucial distinctions within the language complex are overlooked. Instead, the static conception of language as an object is favoured. Blommaert (2005) explains that certain languages (as objects) have frequently been linked to certain groups of people. By definition, these people would be speakers of such a language. This link, he explains, was

² More information available here: <https://www.pansalb.org/history/>

straightforward, and exclusive. In other words, each language has a single group of speakers and each group of speakers have a single language, thus completely overlooking crucial differences between the people and their various linguistic practices and ways of using language. Therefore, a group of people may be identified as speakers of a specific language, despite their fundamental internal differences. Blommaert (2005) argues that this led to a complete distortion of perceptions of language and society. Blommaert (2005) suggests that similarly to language planning and studies on multilingualism and code-switching, LRP (or LHR) is influenced by these flawed perceptions.

Blommaert (1999) explores the Tanzanian government's promotion of an indigenous language, Swahili, to national language status in an attempt to create a more homogenous and uniform society while attempting to escape the grips of colonialism and oppression. Blommaert (2005) revisits this study and demonstrates the value of an ethnographic sociolinguistics perspective over LRP. Blommaert's (2005) re-visitation of this of this study highlights the flaw in attaching single languages to single collections of qualities and values because, ethnographically, there will always be complex blending and mixing processes at play.

The LHR paradigm has also been critiqued for focusing too heavily on cases of inter-language discrimination rather than intra-language discrimination (Wee, 2005). Interestingly, this line of argument bears resemblance to Blommaert's (2005) advocacy for focusing on language varieties rather than languages. Wee (2005) explores intra-language discrimination by bringing attention to the case of English in Singapore, more specifically, the much-contested colloquial variety of Singapore English known as Singlish. The author explains that the Singapore government views English proficiency as necessary for attracting foreign investors and as a tool for gaining access to science and technological knowledge. Singapore therefore has a policy of 'English-knowing bilingualism' in which citizens are expected to be proficient in English as well as their respective mother tongue language [Pakir (1992), cited in Wee (2005)]. According to Wee (2005), the Singapore government has become increasingly concerned over the rise of Singlish since English (of the standard variety) is so closely linked with the country's economic advancement. There is a strong effort from the state to eradicate Singlish. Interestingly, the citizens themselves are divided in their attitudes towards Singlish. Wee (2005) states that those who support Singlish regard it as part of their national identity, and those who oppose it view it as improper English. Citing Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas' (1995) notion of '*linguicide*', Wee (2005) argues that the government's attempt to eradicate

Singlish in favour of Standard English is a LHR violation. The authors define linguicide as “an extreme form of deprivation of linguistic rights” (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995, p. 484). This is contrasted with ‘language death,’ which suggests the demise of a language due to natural causes. Linguicide, however, occurs when there is a conscious policy developed by the dominant group to eliminate minority languages (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995). However, the LHR paradigm fails to acknowledge such intricacies.

A third body of critique of the LHR approach can be found in the work of Christopher Stroud which outlines why a Linguistics Human Rights paradigm has its value, but is deeply flawed. Stroud (2001) lists four main points of critique, roughly outlined below. Firstly, LHR is understood to have a “potentially discriminatory and socially divisive nature” (Stroud, 2001, p. 346). This is based on the selective approach through which it attempts to bring justice to previously disadvantaged groups. Some disadvantaged groups may be selected for special initiatives to remedy LHR issues, placing them above others. Stroud (2001, p. 346) suggests that such “selectively based welfare legislation” tends to create a preferential treatment which others may perceive as unjust or too costly. Secondly, the focus of LHR on language issues that are specific to certain ethnic groups leaves room for potentially creating even bigger ethnolinguistic divisions (Stroud, 2001). This is because LHR understands languages to be exclusively linked to certain groups of people and therefore serve as identity markers of particular ethnicities. This notion draws boundaries between ethnic groups on the basis of language. The third point of critique rests on how the concept of language is defined. LHR views language as “an essentially unproblematic construct,” when language as we know it has been much contested and is the source of many a social conflict (Stroud, 2001, p. 348). Viewing language solely as separate entities rather than as a set of practices overlooks the community in which it occurs. The fourth point of critique lies in forecasts regarding the dissolution of the nation state in Africa (Stroud, 2001).

The commonalities between much of the critique of LHR is succinctly outlined in Stroud’s (2018, p. 4) more recent work:

the notion of rights is applicable to language only with difficulty; that rights discourses *de facto* create many of the problems they were originally set to resolve; that rights discourses assume a particular type of political agent, social order and form of governmentality that is non-existent in many societies; that rights tend to ignore the many contingent materialities needed for their successful

implementation; and that rights discourses construct unequal opportunities for individual and social agency.

Ultimately, the critique is justified as each of the above presents an issue that LHR is unable to address. A more fitting approach may be to use the notion of linguistic citizenship [Stroud (2001); Stroud & Heugh (2004); Stroud & Williams (2017)] as a theoretical lens as it emphasizes the active participation of speakers in shaping their own experiences of and through language. This is further explored in the following section.

2.4 Linguistic citizenship

The ongoing and continuous development of the concept of linguistic citizenship, as with most theoretical concepts in academia, has resulted in several slightly varying definitions of the term - perhaps demonstrating its relevance to markedly different geographical and socio-political contexts. For the purpose of this paper, linguistic citizenship shall be used to refer to:

cases when speakers exercise agency and participation through the use of language (registers etc.) or other multimodal means in circumstances that may be orthogonal, alongside, embedded in, or outside of, institutionalized democratic frameworks for transformative purposes (Stroud, 2018, p. 4).

Linguistic citizenship therefore refers to communicative situations and interactions in which speakers resist or reject the 'rules' which aim to govern and dictate ways of being, speaking and/or engaging in institutionalised spaces. These 'rules' may serve to restrict and control not only the participants in the interaction, but also the broader society. By resisting these imposed ways of being, speakers transform the space and therefore claim, or reclaim, a sense of agency, participation and often, pride (Stroud & Bock, 2021).

"Linguistic citizenship" was coined by Christopher Stroud in the early 2000s in the geopolitical South. The concept originates from a critique on the programs and practices of mother tongue and bilingual education in Mozambique in the 1990s. Stroud (2001) found that identical government and NGOs investments and efforts towards language teaching provisions for mother tongue and bilingual education often lead to very different results. In other words, the methods of these projects yielded varying results in different contexts, thereby rendering them rather unreliable or unpredictable. According to Stroud (2001), what determined the success or failure of these programs was whether the people it sought to service actually found the vernacular/local language provisions to be helpful in navigating their everyday issues (e.g.

issues of employment, education, health, etc.). Moreover, the level of community involvement in the design and implementation of these programmes greatly determined the long-term viability of these efforts (Stroud, 2001).

Furthermore, Stroud (2015) argues that linguistic citizenship emerged from the urgent need for an understanding that “situate[s] linguistic practices and representations of speakers firmly within their everyday sociopolitical strivings for agency and transformation” (Stroud, 2015, p. 22). He highlights that simply replicating programmes used in the North without tailoring them to suit the needs and priorities of those in the Global South³ almost guarantees failure.

Ultimately, the concept emerged as a way to highlight the most basic level of engagement with multilingualism – or ‘grassroots engagements’ as Stroud (2023) describes it - as a driving force for transformation. Stroud (2023) notes that the concept implies the need to critically examine the educational policies and practices generally designed for minority language speakers. More specifically, linguistic citizenship highlights that the mother-tongue educational policies were greatly influenced by an understanding of multilingualism that was rooted in the colonial extraction of people and resources. Here, the author draws on Veronelli’s (2015) ‘coloniality of language’ to detail how multilingual engagements during colonial times were understood as having clear distinctions between those with access to languages with grammars (the colonisers) and those without (the colonised). In this way, a strong imbalance of power is (re-)emphasized and leaves little room for any ‘real’ or substantial dialogue between the coloniser and the colonised beyond communication regarding the exchange of labour (Stroud, 2023).

This, paired with the impact of having numerous language varieties (and therefore groups of speakers) overlooked in the selection of a national language, highlights a fundamental lack of voice for the marginalised. Stroud (2023) posits that this lack of voice, rather than being a consequence of marginalisation *per se*, is one of the primary means by which colonial governments imposed marginalised subjectivities on subjugated groups of people. Furthermore, the author argues that this restriction of both voice and public perception of people creates a society defined by ‘semiotic rejection’ and the compartmentalisation of

³ Instead of referring to a geographical location, the term Global South is used to denote “broader histories of exclusion and disenfranchisement” (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020, p. 1) and “the conditions of suffering and inequality brought about by capitalism and colonialism and to the resistance of such conditions” (Pennycook & Makoni, 2020, p. 2).

difference. It is important to note that rather than simply being a critique on LHR, linguistic citizenship opens up opportunities for engagement across difference, which may not have been otherwise possible.

2.4.1 Vulnerability

The importance of linguistic citizenship lies in its consideration for the co-existence of different subjectivities and selves in diverse spaces. This is highlighted in Stroud's (2018, p. 16) description of linguistic citizenship as "an attempt to work through a blueprint for language for navigating living the complexities of a diverse and difficult world in conviviality (and convivial contest) with different Others." In any sphere of life, diversity is a certainty. Consequently, tensions arising in diverse spaces seem to be a certainty as well. More recently, Stroud et al. (2021) explore how focusing on acts of linguistic citizenship can shift thinking on voice and agency to various sites of the body, while also offering insights into the complexities of vulnerability.

Understanding the term 'vulnerability' seems to be pertinent at this stage as one can be vulnerable to disease and simultaneously be vulnerable to economic deprivation, social injustice, and environmental concerns, for instance (Florczak, 2021). Thus vulnerability may exist in various forms and to various degrees. On a governmental level, to understand who is 'vulnerable' is to understand where leaders need to develop policies and infrastructure to protect those at risk (Florczak, 2021). This raises the question of what exactly it means to be vulnerable, and whether it refers only to this state of being 'at risk'. Vulnerability is used widely across disciplines including (but not limited to) psychology, medicine, geography and economics. In the field of Human Geography, for instance, Adger (2006, p. 268) defines vulnerability as "the state of susceptibility to harm from exposure to stresses associated with environmental and social change and from the absence of capacity to adapt." This definition highlights the risk of physical harm that may come to the body and the inability to adjust in a way that would overcome this harm. Similarly, Proag (2014, p. 370), defines vulnerability as "the degree to which a system, or part of a system, may react adversely during the occurrence of a hazardous event." Thus being vulnerable entails being exposed to some degree of risk without the ability to cope with its consequences. The author further states that a person may "become vulnerable" if access to resources directly determines their ability to achieve a secure livelihood or recover from a disaster (Proag, 2014, p. 370). The suggestion that one may 'become vulnerable' under these circumstances implies that this vulnerability may not exist if access to resources is not a critical factor.

The work of legal theorist and political philosopher Martha Albertson Fineman challenges this notion. Instead, Fineman's [(2008), (2010), (2017), (2022)] primary thesis of vulnerability theory is that vulnerability should be understood as a universal and constant feature of the human condition. Thus, vulnerability does not only refer to a special, temporary fragility that certain people may have in certain contexts. According to Fineman (2022), vulnerability emerges from our human embodiment, which inevitably carries with it a susceptibility to harm or injury whether accidental or intentional. The author further posits that we are always in a state of vulnerability and that there is no such thing as invulnerability. In Fineman's (2010) view, the primary purpose of the state (government) is to respond to human vulnerability, and should do so by providing equal access to social goods such as wealth, healthcare, employment and security. Although the author's approach to understanding vulnerability centres on the body, and therefore acknowledges the body's need for connection and care, Fineman (2022, p. 2) suggests that "the body should be understood as prior to the social or political, as independent of existing or imagined ethical, or moral social arrangements." In other words, the human body is a body first before it is a social or political being influenced by that which may occur in the social or political world. Therefore, the physical body may operate independently from societal norms which dictate ethical and moral obligations toward others.

Over the years, Fineman's theory of vulnerability has been revisited and refined. In a 2014 publication, Fineman and Gear (2014) acknowledge that whilst vulnerability should be understood as universal, it should also be understood as particular as experienced uniquely by differently positioned actors. However, this universality remains heavily critiqued. For instance, Davis and Aldieri (2021, p. 322) note that reducing vulnerability to a feature of the human condition erases the non-universal ways in which certain groups, such as black people in the United States, are "more vulnerable by way of racist policies and practices." Seen from this perspective, vulnerability is definitely not something that is felt or experienced equally among all people. Polychroniou (2022, p. 118) further points out that "Fineman's vulnerable subject is constituted in equally abstract, exclusionary and monistic terms as the autonomous Cartesian subject it aspires to replace." In other words, Fineman's conceptualisation of

vulnerability as universal creates a version of the self that is based on the same flaws as the Cartesian Self⁴ in that it is vague, divisive and does not allow for plurality of being.

Perhaps more progressively, philosopher and gender studies researcher Judith Butler presents an alternative view of vulnerability. Similar to Fineman, Butler notes that vulnerability is a shared human condition in that we are all susceptible to bodily harm or ‘violence’ (Butler, 2004). However, the author also suggests an alternative view of the body. Butler (2016), argues that it is not entirely correct to think of individual bodies as completely distinct from one another as all bodies are dependent on other bodies and on networks of support (such as the infrastructure which supports our bodies). The author does not mean to imply that we are all “blended into some amorphous social body” (Butler, 2016, p. 4), but rather, “that the body, despite its clear boundaries, or perhaps precisely by virtue of those very boundaries, is defined by the relations that makes its own life and action possible” (Butler, 2016, p. 5). In other words, we cannot understand vulnerability without the idea of social relationality. To Butler (2012), relationality means being exposed or open to others. The idea of being bound to one another through social relationality therefore also means being open to precarity or uncertainty (Butler, 2012). This can be viewed as both good and bad.

It is here that we make the link between Butler’s view of vulnerability and linguistic citizenship. Stroud (2023) notes that contemporary research on linguistic citizenship has focused mainly on (1) reimagining the role of language and multilingualism in the reconstruction of postcolonial citizenships [e.g. Hames (2017); Lim, Stroud & Wee (2018); Cooke & Peutrell (2019)], (2) in looking at the value of linguistic citizenship in the revitalisation and maintenance of language (e.g. Dube & Wozniak (2021); Foster (2021)) and (3) in creating educational contexts which aim to create more space for student voice and agency which challenge normative, ‘traditional’ educational approaches through the use of multimodal, multilingual, non-normative approaches [e.g. Cooke and Peutrell (2019); Rampton, Cooke & Holmes (2022); Oostendorp et al. (2021); Bock, Abrahams and Jansen (2019)]. Stroud’s (2023) recent work highlights the human and affective nature of language by exploring linguistic citizenship across three broad themes: love, hope and care. Ultimately, these three themes are built around one common line, relationality. In other words, we cannot

⁴ In philosophy, the Cartesian Self or the Cartesian subject is a concept developed by the philosopher René Descartes. Simply put, the self can be understood as just the mind which is separate from the body as well as from the physical world.

experience love, hope or care as individual, independent or invulnerable bodies. This idea is further explored in the section which follows.

2.4.2 Linguistic citizenship and love

Expressions of voice and agency can only be perceived as such through a sense of recognition by others in the public realm [Arendt, (1958) cited in Stroud (2023)]. Thus, we need others in order to be ‘heard’ and feel ‘seen’ or acknowledged. Linguistic citizenship attempts to provide a space in which speakers can publicly be ‘seen’ and affirmed through language both as an individual and as part of a collective (Stroud, 2023). Here, we begin to see parallels between linguistic citizenship and vulnerability in the Butlerian sense. If we need others in order to be recognised as agentive beings with a voice, we understand that it is through being viewed *in relation* to others, as well as through having our expressions *perceived* by others, that we are able to appear as such. This requires an understanding of vulnerability that suggests an openness to others. Butler (2012, p. 141) recognises that our vulnerability means “being exposed to the other ... in ways that sustain us but also in ways that can destroy us.” In other words, being vulnerable means being open to being harmed at the hand of another, but it also means being open to experiencing those things which may build and strengthen relationality (such as mutual recognition and feelings of inclusion).

Stroud and Bock (2021) conceptualise language as relationality and argue that using linguistic citizenship as a lens may allow us to move beyond colonial understandings of language, thereby serving as a useful tool in the broader project of decoloniality. The authors draw on Maturana and Cabezón (2001) who characterise the human condition as being torn between the forces of *love* and *patriarchy*. Here, *patriarchy* is understood as the culture “founded in the negation of the other, that emphasized relationships of appropriation, competitiveness, struggle, success and control” (Maturana & Cabezón, 2001, p. 244). Stroud and Bock (2021) liken this to coloniality. Furthermore, Maturana and Cabezón (2001, p. 242) define *love* as “the biological dynamic system that constitutes trust and mutual acceptance in body and spiritual relations of nearness and intimacy.” Stroud and Bock (2021) liken love to decoloniality, and therefore deduce that decoloniality would involve a ‘delinking’ [in the sense of Mignolo (2011)] from patriarchy (or coloniality) in order to reinstate a culture of love. This would therefore mean reconnecting with the culture and ways of living with one another which were destroyed by coloniality.

For Maturana and Cabezón (2001), there is a crucial link between language and love in that they are both centred on consensual coordination of relationality and cooperation rather than on competition. The act of speaking to another human therefore involves far more complex processes than encoding and decoding. Instead, the social engagement which occurs during communication is foregrounded. Stroud and Bock (2021) argue that understanding language as ‘love’ or human relationality rather than as separate, named entities is central to creating spaces in which we can co-exist. The authors further argue that linguistic citizenship offers a view of language and multilingualism that resonates with relationality. “Acts of Linguistic Citizenship are the semiotic means whereby speakers create transient or more permanent interpersonal engagements, feelings of conviviality and belonging, and a sense of mutual care” (Stroud & Bock, 2021, p. 7). Thus the notion of linguistic citizenship offers a theory of language which goes beyond simply understanding it as a tool of communication or a set of symbols, and therefore offers the potentiality for building a more just and cohesive society with a strong focus on relationality.

2.4.3 Linguistic citizenship and hope

Stroud (2023) posits that acts of linguistic citizenship highlight the possibilities for living differently and bring to life the ‘utopian surplus.’ Here, the author draws on Bloch’s (1985) understanding of *utopia* which does not refer to an imagined, ideal state which cannot be pinpointed in time. Instead, Bloch (1985) theorises utopia as the ‘not-yet’. In this sense, utopia does indeed refer to a better way of living, but because the world is ever changing, there are several ways (or a *surplus* of ways) in which it can ‘become’ a more just equitable society (Stroud & Williams, 2017), hence the utopian surplus. The utopian surplus highlights the excess of possibilities of new ways of living together in the future, which is a fundamental aspect of the concept of citizenship. Here, the author makes reference to communities who, as a result of colonisation for example, have been unable to determine their own future. The desire for a new future, one in which they are not oppressed by the remnants of coloniality, has seen various forms of “language activism” (Stroud, 2023, p. 7). This includes programs centred on language revitalisation, language maintenance or mother tongue education. These initiatives often assume a top-down approach in which those who are meant to ‘benefit’ from these programmes have little to no say in how these initiatives are run. Here, Stroud (2023) problematizes *indigenization* which generally aims to return a language to a more ‘authentic’ version. However, in doing so, it becomes easy to overlook speakers’ creativity and agency which comes with adapting language for everyday use at the ground level. Stroud (2023)

suggests that linguistic citizenship invites speakers to exercise control over their languages and be involved in the decision-making processes where these programs are concerned. Through this active participation, hope for a new and better future is generated.

2.4.4 Linguistic citizenship and care

Finally, the third theme is centred on linguistic citizenship and care. Stroud (2023) notes that caring for ourselves, for others, and for the commons is an important aspect of a type of citizenship which may allow for different and better futures. Here, the *commons* refer to “a variety of goods (understood in a broad sense) that do not belong to a single individual, but are shared, used, and protected by a community” (Fernández, 2020, p. 74). It is understood that these resources are held in ‘common’ by members of a society. Moreover, Stroud (2023, p. 10) suggests that multilingualism is crucial to an education which is “careful.” This is based on the near certainty of having to engage with different others (due to proximity), particularly in post-colonial societies. To Stroud (2023), multilingual education offers a space where diverse cultural and ethical perspectives can come together to build a shared commitment to care for the commons through, what Lugones (2006) calls, *world traveling*. (Figuratively) traveling to another person’s ‘world,’ or moving between different cultural perspectives, allows you to understand that person (Lugones, 1987). In this way, multilingual education provides a space for mutual understanding, empathy and openness. Therefore, multilingual education not only encourages linguistic diversity, but it also encourages an ethical engagement with different subjectivities. Ultimately, this may contribute to a more inclusive and *caring* society.

However, such an education would require indigenous languages and knowledges to be viewed very differently to how they are commonly viewed today. According to Stroud (2023, p. 11), “indigenous languages [were] carved out in the image of colonial languages” during coloniality-modernity. In other words, colonial languages were viewed as a sort of blueprint for communication, and indigenous languages were consequently modelled after them. This is despite already being established as unique and comprehensive meaning-making systems to their respective communities. This is exemplified in instances where translation was used to make indigenous knowledge more ‘sensible’ to missionary linguists (2023). However, an important caveat is that the only forms of indigenous knowledge that were accommodated in colonial languages are those which “could be written down, lexicalized and articulated discursively in ways that made sense to missionary linguists” (Stroud & Kerfoot, 2021, p. 25). This therefore means that a great deal of indigenous knowledge may have been lost through this process of translation. Translation itself has been widely explored and critiqued by

decolonial scholars [See, for example, Menezes De Souza (2014); Bandia (2024); and Price (2015)] and has even been referred to as *erasure* (Vázquez, 2011). Stroud (2023) highlights that translation, and therefore the erasure of indigenous knowledge which did not fit into the parameters of colonial language, laid the foundation for Western monovocality.

A multilingual education informed by linguistic citizenship, however, aims to move beyond this monovocality of knowledge and acknowledges plurality of voice (Stroud, 2023). This is exemplified by the focus on grassroots engagements with multilingualism. To Stroud (2023), this shifts the focus away from policy makers, and instead, highlights the ‘language actors’ themselves thereby creating a sense of agency and empowerment.

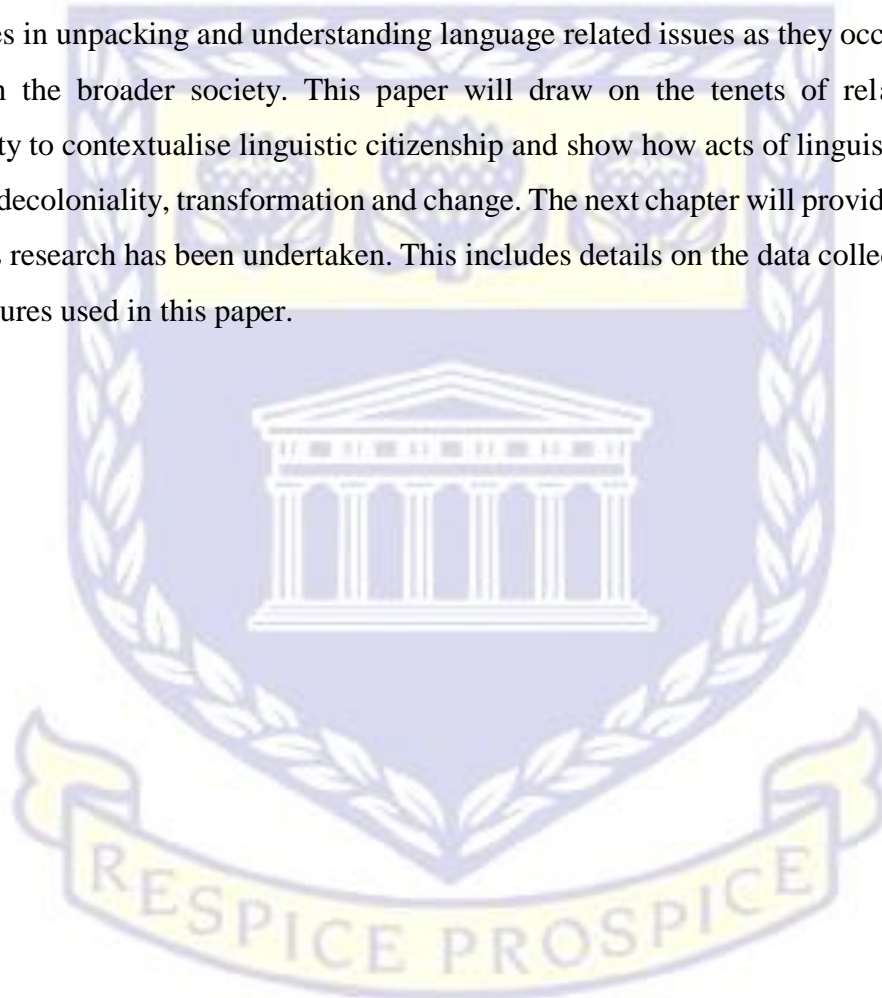
2.5 Linguistic and semiotic repertoires

Thus far, this section has reviewed literature surrounding the impact of how we talk about and define language and multilingualism on the broader social context. Two important concepts to bring to this discussion are linguistic and semiotic repertoires. According to Stroud (2014, p. 308), a “*repertoire* is a good way of capturing the complexity with which speakers organize and use linguistic features.” The use of ‘linguistic features’ as opposed to ‘languages’ is significant here. It is clear that the author adopts a more fluid understanding of language, similar to Swain’s (2006) concept of *linguaging*. Stroud (2014, p. 308) further states that a linguistic repertoire refers to a person’s “collection of forms, practices, and linguistic features that [they] can access and deploy in conversation.” This may therefore be taken from many different language varieties and ways of talking, and is largely dependent on social factors (e.g. place of birth, socialisation into certain linguistic practices, etc.). Interestingly, a person’s linguistic repertoire need not be made up of ‘whole’ languages only. Instead, the repertoire includes the different ways of communicating in varying degrees of proficiency (Stroud, 2014). For example, a person can be considered to have *Kaaps* in their linguistic repertoire, even if they only know certain fragments or phrases. In this way, the focus is less on mastery of particular languages, but rather on the social function of communication, which speaks directly to linguistic citizenship.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of relevant literature, which situates this research in the broader field of decolonial sociolinguistics. In this paper, the notion of language as named, separate entities will be deconstructed by exploring how language functions as social relationality in the life of the participant. This is well aligned with decolonial theory which

aims to challenge and dismantle the power structures and perceptions of knowledge and culture which continue to be shaped and influenced by coloniality today. Rather than taking a Linguistic Human Rights or language rights stance on language and multilingualism, this paper will use linguistic citizenship as an overarching lens and theoretical framework through which to view and analyse the data. Relationality and the notion of vulnerability therefore also play crucial roles in unpacking and understanding language related issues as they occur in the data, but also in the broader society. This paper will draw on the tenets of relationality and vulnerability to contextualise linguistic citizenship and show how acts of linguistic citizenship may aid in decoloniality, transformation and change. The next chapter will provide an overview of how this research has been undertaken. This includes details on the data collection methods and procedures used in this paper.



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Chapter 3:

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the data which was collected and used to explore how language and multilingualism functions as social relationalities in the life of the participant. This includes the type of data that has been collected, and a detailed description of how the data has been obtained and processed for analysis. The first section of this chapter discusses the qualitative nature of the research. The two data sources for this project are an interview and a language portrait conducted with a participant who, at the time, resided in Cape Town. The second section describes the data and the processes used to obtain it. This chapter also briefly outlines the methods of analysis that will be used to analyse the data. Finally, this chapter addresses the ethical considerations relevant for this project

3.2 Qualitative research

This research adopts a qualitative approach. This widely used umbrella term refers to a complex research methodology which is based on the understanding that meaning is socially constructed (Croker, 2009). In other words, meaning is formed and shaped by the very society in which it originates. Meaning therefore stems from human interaction within society. Qualitative research serves to provide content rich, non-numerical data which aids in attempting to unpack meaning making and the experiences of society. Great emphasis is placed on the participants of the research and how they explore their experience of a phenomenon within a particular context (Croker, 2009). In this regard, the natural setting of the participants is of great importance. Rossman and Rallis (2003), cited in Croker (2009), highlight that qualitative research involves going into these natural settings rather than removing the participants from them. However, due to various potential constraints, this may not always be possible.

3.3 Data collection and processing

I had always planned to center this research project on a South African youth choir with a rich multilingual and multicultural context. The choir is renowned for its eclectic musicality, owing to the diversity of its members who come from various parts of the country. However, in the early conceptual stages of the project, the aims of this research were slightly different to what eventually materialized. One aspect of the choir which I found particularly interesting is the creative process they use to create and perform original, multilingual songs. This process includes a mixing and blending of the musical styles, genres and languages of members of the

choir, in the fusion of something uniquely South African. I had initially planned to document and analyse this process. The two broad research aims of the project were to (1) explore the nature of the relationship between the languages used in the compositional/creative component of the choir's rehearsal sessions, and (2) to explore how members navigate their roles and identities in, what appears to be, a very diverse environment. With this departure point, the project was intended to be primarily ethnographic.

The concept of ethnography, which has roots across many disciplines, involves extensive fieldwork whereby data is collected by exploring the space or 'field' in which a phenomenon occurs (Blommaert & Dong, 2010). Drawing on the importance of socially constructed meaning to qualitative research, physically going into the participants' space offers an opportunity to gather rather rich data. This immersion in the lives of the participants by becoming a member of the field is highly conducive to providing valuable insights to the field (Rampton, Maybin, & Roberts, 2015). Blommaert and Dong (2010) provide a useful guide to ethnographic fieldwork whereby the field is first observed in its entirety and then gradually the researcher focuses on more specific details as they emerge. Such an approach also helps to allow the field to guide the research, instead of attempting to fit findings in the field into the expected outcomes of the research. Additionally, this allows for important information to be sifted out as not all details will necessarily be relevant to the focus of the project. While trying to focus the research more and more, these observations must be noted as data to allow for referral in the future. Blommaert and Dong (2010) suggest collecting photographs, field notes and interviews which can then serve as an archive of the field. Once fieldwork has been complete, the researcher may select the most fitting method of analysis in an attempt to unpack the findings.

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, I managed to make the acquaintance of the choir director. During this exchange, I learnt a lot about the choir such as the origin of the group, the various prestigious events they have performed at and some details of the demographics. I also studied past performances of the choir via their various social media platforms online. After consulting with my supervisors, I set out to document and analyse the ways in which the choir members draw on their multilingual (and musical) resources in the re-imagining of both new musical styles and participant identities and trajectories using ethnography. The ethnography was set to run across four to five of the choir's biweekly rehearsals during early 2020 as they prepared for an upcoming showcase. This would have

been accompanied by two focus group interviews with three to four senior members (18 years+) of the choir.

The fieldwork for this research commenced and ethnographic data in the form of field notes and reflections (via a research diary) were collected. The 'field' was comprised of the choir rehearsal space in which all members gathered to work through administrative issues of the choir and to practice for upcoming events. I was able to attend two such sessions. During this time, I was able to gain a sense of the dynamics of the choir and how the members interacted with one another. I noted that the rehearsals were very informal and social. The participants were quite comfortable with each other and their director. During the rehearsals there was casual chatter among the participants in different varieties of South African languages. I also observed the choir practice songs in various different languages and genres such as Christian hymns in English and Sesotho, an Indonesian folk song, and a love song with both English and isiZulu lines – this was confirmed by speaking to the choir chairperson. Each song was accompanied by different styles of movement and dance.

However, this period of fieldwork was short lived. In an attempt to contain the spread of COVID-19 in South Africa, a hard lockdown (Alert level 5) was enforced on the country from midnight 26 March 2020. Under the amendment to Section 27 (2) of the Disaster Management Act 2002, a restriction of the movement of persons and goods confined non-essential workers to their homes (Department of Co-Operative Governance and Traditional Affairs South Africa, 2020). In the period that followed, strict restrictions on large gatherings remained in place. Globally, each country adopted their own set of restrictions to contain the spread of the virus. Although successful, these restrictions tasked researchers and academics (including myself) with finding ways to continue making progress in their respective fields without compromising the safety of those involved. Many turned to online data collection methods. A very helpful resource in this regard was a crowdsourced document initiated and edited by Deborah Lupton in 2020 entitled 'Doing Fieldwork in a Pandemic'. This collaborative document offered guidance and examples of papers by social sciences researchers who had to utilize mediated forms (digital and non-digital) of data collection (Lupton, 2020).

In an attempt to combat the effects COVID-19 restrictions might have on the project, the research approach was restructured to ensure adherence to the national protocols. The information gathered from the field prior to the lockdown played a significant role in restructuring the project. Ultimately, this data helped to shape the direction of the restructured

project, as well as to contextualise that which was collected later on. Although collecting data online was an option, it presented its own set of difficulties. Not only is this option based on the assumption that each participant has access to a smartphone, but it also assumes that the participants have access to a fast, stable internet connection. Additionally, managing group dynamics can be more challenging online. Participants may be less likely to speak up or may even dominate the conversation due to the virtual setting. Although this may occur in physical settings as well, body language and non-verbal clues (which are less visible in a virtual setting) can typically be used by the researcher and participants alike to either encourage a quiet participant to engage, or gently signal to one participant that they should share the floor. There is also the increased risk of distraction which may lead to a reduced focus on the online conversation. Lastly, and perhaps more pertinently, as a researcher in the Social Sciences, I have a preference for in-person interaction. This allows me to connect with participants and have in-depth discussions, which may lead to richer data.

Instead, since I was able to establish some rapport with the choir chairperson during the rehearsals I attended, meeting up with her in a safe environment where we could both maintain social distancing protocols was a more sensible choice. Additionally, this allowed me to gather richer, more in depth data. The data was gathered through the use of an in-person interview several months after the peak of the pandemic. At the time, this method posed the least risk to myself and the participant.

The participant, Sethu⁵, and I met for an interview at a local restaurant in February 2021. The interview was semi-structured. Semi-structured interviewing refers to one-on-one interviews that incorporate both closed- and open-ended questions with follow-up *how* or *why* questions (Adams, 2015). The latter is typically unscripted. Adams (2015) acknowledges that semi-structured interviewing can be quite time consuming. However, this approach allowed for more in-depth discussions on topics I may not have initially anticipated or even viewed as important when drafting the interview questions.

Below is the list of interview questions drafted as a guide:

1. What is your name, age and where are you from?
2. When did you first join the choir? What made you decide to join the choir?

⁵ Pseudonym used.

3. What voice group do you belong to?
4. What is your favourite song to sing as a choir? Why?
5. What language(s) do you speak at home? Do you speak any other languages at home/school/work etc.?
6. What are some of the languages you use to sing in the choir?
7. How much time do you spend learning the lyrics of a song in language you do not speak? What process do you normally follow to do this? Is this a difficult process?
8. How would you describe the experience of being in a rehearsal space where so many of you speak different languages and on top of that, still need to work to understand a new language well enough to deliver a convincing performance?
9. Introduce language portrait by asking participants for a graphic representation of the languages they speak.
 - a) Think about languages and ways of speaking that are currently important to you, and also those which are further in your past or maybe even your future. How would you represent that on this portrait? What colours best suit this?
 - b) Think about your language and ways of speaking with different people and different situations you find yourself in, any other language you've been exposed to. How would you represent that on this portrait? What colours best suit this?
 - c) Further exploration/discussion of language portrait.

As noted in the interview questions above, a language portrait was used to further expand on the interview discussion.

3.4 Language portraits

In order to deepen the exploration of Sethu's linguistic repertoire, a language portrait was used. Language portraits have long been used in educational settings to encourage reflection about language and promote sensitivity among students grappling with multilingualism. Increasingly, they have been used as a research tool to explore how speakers experience and interpret their multilingual practices and repertoires (Busch, 2018). Busch (2018, p. 2) describes language

portraits as “graphic visualizations of the linguistic repertoire using the outline of a body silhouette”. See Figure 1 for an example of the language portrait template.



Figure 1: Language portrait template⁶

Early use of language portraits can be found in the works of Neumann (1991) and Krumm & Jenkins (2001) where learners in German schools were instructed to paint their languages on a body silhouette using a different colour for each language variety. This served as an opportunity to discuss where the learners came from and compare the German language with their native languages, ultimately creating a space for the expression of feelings tied to language use. It is therefore unsurprising that this method has seen use in various other contexts. For instance, psychology researchers Botsis and Bradbury (2018) use language portraits to reflect on a creative visual-narrative approach to understanding South African students’ lived experiences of languages. The authors found that this mode allowed for a shift in the focus of narrative talk while highlighting the affective, embodied experience. Botsis and Bradbury (2018, p. 3), suggest that offering participants a creative modality provides them with a ‘new language’ for articulating their experiences.

⁶ Available here: <http://heteroglossia.net/Sprachportraet.123.0.html>

Figure 2 below shows an example of a completed language portrait:

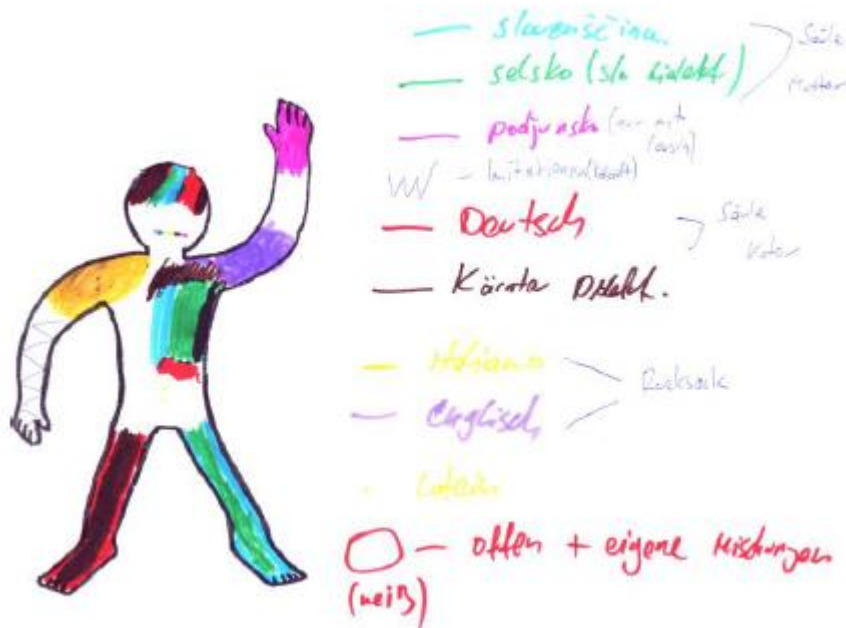


Figure 2: Example of a completed language portrait

(Busch, 2018, p. 10)

Figure 2 was produced by Peter, a participant in a workshop with 17 to 18-year-old students at a bilingual school (German and Slovenian) in Carinthia, Austria (Busch, 2018). The author explains that Peter assigned one foot to German and one to Slovenian. The two dialects are represented again in the chest area, while in the head “the German language is actually predominant because in Carinthia practically everything is German” (Busch, 2018, p. 10). Peter also learnt a particular Slovenian dialect depicted in the raised hand to, as he describes it, “stretch out a hand to [his] younger cousin” (Busch, 2018, p. 10). The Italian and English that he learned at school was placed on the shoulders, because they were a “burden” (Busch, 2018, p. 10).

According to Busch (2018), the language portrait functions as both as a means to open the discussion around language and as a point of reference during the discussion. Thus, the language portrait is understood to elicit narratives from the participant, as we see above. With this understanding, pairing a language portrait with an interview as a methodology suggests using the language portrait fairly early on in the interaction. In this way, the language portrait can guide the discussion by encouraging the participant to share more biographical and experiential details and stories.

However, during the interview for this project, there was more value in gathering a biographical history first and using the language portrait second. This allowed me to gain a sense of the participant's background and experiences and in turn allowed for a more targeted discussion during the language portrait. The participant was therefore able to highlight particular themes or areas of interest to map out on the portrait. In this way, I was also able to integrate the insights I gained during our initial discussions, into the conversation that followed the language portrait. Overall, this made for a very rich and comprehensive discussion.

Before starting the data collection process, I provided the participant with an information sheet explaining the nature and purpose of the research project (See Appendix A). During this discussion, I encouraged Sethu to ask any questions she may have regarding the research or data collection process. I then read through the consent form (See Appendix B) with her, explaining the implication of each point. When she was satisfied that she understood the information, she signed the consent form. As previously mentioned, the interview was conducted at a restaurant in which social distancing protocols were observed. The interview was recorded on an audio recording device.

Towards the second half of the interview, I provided the participant with the blank language portrait and various pencil colours, crayons and markers. As she completed the language portrait, I busied myself making notes based on our discussion. After completing the language portrait we had a further discussion about the language varieties she chose to include and the significance of the different modes such as colour and drawings (e.g. decorative lines) and placement. At the end of the interview I asked the participant to choose a pseudonym for herself which would appear in the research project. She chose 'Sethu'.

3.5 Transcription

Following the interview, the audio recording, scanned consent form and language portrait were uploaded to a password protected computer. I transcribed the audio data myself, using widely accepted transcription conventions. Although this was a time consuming process, the focus was on verbatim transcription. The accuracy of the transcription was checked by listening with the transcript in hand. Any inaccuracies were addressed and corrected. The following transcription conventions were used:

Table 1: Transcription key

Symbol	Meaning
...	Pause
(words in parenthesis)	Inaudible/transcriber's guess
[words in square brackets]	Transcriber's own insertion (for clarity)
[<i>italic words in square brackets</i>]	Nonverbal information
WORDS IN CAPITAL	Increased volume/stress
Words in italics	Spoken in another language
“words in quotation marks”	Change in tone indicating reported speech
***	Section omitted due to irrelevance

Although the process of transcription often seems tedious or even frustrating, Braun and Clarke (2006) cite this process as part of the first phase of data analysis, namely, familiarizing yourself with the data. In other words, it is in the reading and re-reading, and the listening and re-listening that you get to know your data. Similarly, Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) recognize transcription as an interpretive act where meaning is created. At this stage, the researcher may already begin to identify themes or make notes of relevant codes, as preparation for the thematic analysis. Transcription is therefore an important step in the research process, as it allows the researcher to immerse themselves in the data.

3.6 Thematic analysis

The data was analyzed thematically, using the thematic network framework presented by Attride-Stirling (2001) as a guide. This involves a complex coding process to make the data more digestible and easier to work with. Attride-Stirling (2001) suggests devising a coding framework and applying to the data. However, in an attempt to approach the data from the ground up, I began by listening to the audio recording and reading through the transcript and

language portrait several times. Doing so allowed me to identify words or ideas which may have been repeated throughout the interview and reflected in the language portrait. These words or ideas, also known as codes, were written down in no specific order. From these codes, three broad themes were initially established: *knowledge, musicality vs linguistic accuracy* and *belonging*. However, upon much refinement in the form of online data workshops with peers during the COVID-19 pandemic, presentations of the data at various different conferences and the input of my supervisors, the following themes emerged: (1) *caring for the other through language*, (2) *being othered through language*, and (3) *engaging with others through language*. Using Attride-Stirling's (2001) framework, these may be thought of as the Global Themes. These themes are further explored in Chapter 4.

3.7 Ethics statement

This research complies with the standardized ethical procedure for all research projects involving human participants as put forward by the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The participant was well informed about the nature and purpose of the study. She understood what the interview process would entail and that her participation in this project was voluntary. This was communicated verbally and in written form as per the Information Sheet (See Appendix A). The participant was also completed a consent form (see Appendix B) and was assured confidentiality and anonymity.

The data was collected with adherence to national COVID-19 social distancing protocols. The digitized data was uploaded to a personal, password protected computer where it will be stored for a minimum of five years after the completion of this project.

3.8 Limitations

One of the main limitations of this study is that it features only one participant. It could therefore seem optimistic to base claims on a single perspective. However, in this case, having a single participant served to be extremely beneficial as it allowed for a deep and detailed exploration of the participant's experience in various different contexts. This provided very rich and nuanced data, which may not have been possible with a larger group. Despite this, it is important to acknowledge that findings from a single participant paper may not have generalisability. However, due to the nature of the study, generalisation was not one of the objectives. Instead, the objectives of this methodology are more aligned with that of case study research.

Most definitions of case study are centred on the “singular nature of the case, the importance of context, the availability of multiple sources of information or perspectives on observations, and the in-depth nature of analysis” (Duff, 2008, p. 22). The data collected for this paper, as will be shown in the next chapter, is singular in nature and relies heavily on the context in which it occurs. There are multiple sources of information (ethnographic field notes, the interview, the language portrait), which have been critically analysed. The value of this data is that it provides a rich, in depth insight into one person’s experience of multilingualism and how this connects with her sense of self and others.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the data collection methods and procedures utilized for this project. This paper is qualitative in nature and draws on ethnographic field notes, a semi-structured interview and a language portrait produced by the participant. The data will be analysed using thematic analysis in order to address the research questions and explore an alternative view of language and multilingualism. The chapter which follows is comprised of the analysis of the interview and the language portrait using the research methods described above.



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Chapter 4:

Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter comprises an analysis of the data collected for this project. As detailed in the previous chapter, the data have been thematically analysed. In this chapter, I argue that multilingualism and relationality are intrinsically linked by exploring the ways in which multilingualism functions to build and shape relationships with others. In this analysis, I will argue that through multilingualism and linguistic citizenship, the participant repeatedly cares for the other and connects with the other across difference. The data illustrates a constant forming and negotiating of relationships *through* language. The analysis explores the following themes which emerge from the data: (1) caring for the other through language, (2) being othered through language, and (3) engaging with each other through language.

4.2 Description of participant

The participant for this paper, Sethu, is a 22-year-old black woman. She is a final-year Dentistry student at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), and is from Centurion in Gauteng, South Africa. She relocated to Cape Town in 2017 to pursue her studies and, at the time of the interview, was residing at a UWC student residence. Sethu's home language is isiZulu, with which she has a strong emotional connection. This can be seen later on in how fondly she speaks of both the language and culture. Sethu and her family moved to Kimberly when she was in pre-primary school (around 5 years of age). She then learnt to speak Setswana and Afrikaans. Her family lived in Kimberly until she was in grade three (around 8 years of age). During this time, she spoke isiZulu, Afrikaans and Setswana within the household, and English at school.

Sethu has been involved with music and choirs since the age of 12, and credits her musical growth to being in youth choirs growing up. A youth choir is a choir for young aspiring musicians to learn and develop their talent. It may consist of minors only, but often has members of up to 25 years old. An example of a youth choir in South Africa includes the popular ensemble, The Ndlovu Youth Choir, which was established in Moutse Valley in rural Limpopo in 2009. Sethu recalls how, when she came to Cape Town, she wanted to be part of a choir that would feel like a youth choir. According to Sethu, she was drawn to a particular youth choir in Cape Town because of its diversity. She auditioned for the choir in 2017 and joined them in 2018. The choir she joined is an internationally acclaimed, diverse group of

youth aged between 13 and 25. The choir creates and performs original, multilingual songs using a range of different musical styles, genres and languages of the choir members. Many of Sethu's experiences with multilingualism, which will be explored in this chapter, occur within the choir and her home environment. As previously mentioned, the data analysis centers on three global themes. The first theme, *caring for the other through language*, will be explored in the section which follows.

4.3 Caring for the other through language

Generally, one of the primary things we are socialised to do as children is to care for others. In the field of psychology, this is often thought of as 'prosociality', individual behaviour aimed at benefitting others (Tintori, Ciancimino, Palomba, Clementi, & Cerbara, 2021). Prosociality is especially relevant in South Africa where the quality of being human and showing humanity ('I am because we are') is captured in the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*. Traditionally, children are taught to share, be kind and to be considerate towards others. The data suggests caring for the other through language is a central theme. This is evident in the way in which Sethu uses language to show kindness and consideration towards her family. In the following extract, Sethu recounts how her mother discouraged her and her siblings from speaking English at home. At first glance, this might seem overly restrictive, but further exploration allows us to uncover the gesture beneath it.

Sethu: My mother's philosophy is she pays for us to speak English at school ...
when we open that car door [at home] we leave it outside

Keshia: That's interesting

Sethu: So uhm at that time 'cause we were very young so we spoke a lot of English and I must explain why she used to say that and I'm glad she said it at THAT time ... I come from a family that we're okay we're not like ... overall now with my relatives and my grandfather's kids uhm we're not RICH or whatever but most of my family is still in KZN [KwaZulu-Natal] on in the rural areas some of them some of them uhm in townships whatever uhm we were the first siblings to go to a multiracial crèche multiracial schools all those things so ... coming back in the holidays and then we are these ... fat black kids just speaking English it was embarrassing for my parents ... it was very embarrassing for them uhm firstly they're the type of people that don't like they don't like praising themselves they don't like saying that they've worked hard for what

they've done ... they've worked really hard for where they've put us and everything and so it it was a thing of we're going to downplay where we actually are ... so English was seen as a status thing when we would go back to the farm whatever to visit my grandparents whatever uhm it was seen as oh they they better because they they can speak English and they go to a multiracial school uhm ... and we I didn't realise but later it was THEY used to call it white school

This extract is extremely rich and can be read from two opposing views. On the one hand, speaking isiZulu in this context can be understood from the perspective of identity. Semiotic resources such as language choices, gestures and attire are all examples of *identity acts* through which a person performs their identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). It can therefore be said that speaking isiZulu when visiting her family members is an identity act. This identity act may serve to indicate that Sethu is a member of the 'in-group,' her family. Although this understanding offers valuable insight in its own right, there is much to be explored beyond this identity focused approach. Regardless of the approach chosen to unpack this extract though, it is clear that being accepted by Sethu's extended family is important to her and her parents. Otherwise, any language would be permitted in this space.

Sethu explains that she and her siblings were the first to attend "multiracial crèche [and] multiracial schools." To many people in post-apartheid South Africa, racially diverse classrooms have become the norm. However, here, racially diverse classrooms seem to be viewed as a privilege. Tracing the painful history of segregated education during the apartheid era allows us to understand why it may be considered a privilege to be seated next to a white student in a classroom. In 1948, the white minority National Party (NP) came into power and ordered South African society and public institutions to abide by their apartheid legislation (Karlsson, 2004). The NP passed a range of laws which enforced strict racial segregation. One such law was the Bantu Education Act 1953 (Act No. 47 of 1953; later renamed the Black Education Act, 1953), which sanctioned racially separated education facilities and curriculums tailored towards the communities they served. Four differentially funded education departments were established across the segregated populations, namely, separate departments for white, Indian, coloured and black schools (Murray, 2005). This was accompanied by unequal regulations and funding in favour of white communities (McKeever, 2017). In terms of resources, white schools received by far the most funding, followed by Indian schools, and

then coloured schools, which received marginally more than the poorest-funded black schools. Education for black students was designed to equip them with skills for manual labour and menial jobs only, while white students were afforded more prestigious opportunities which prepared them for higher status professional employment. The apartheid government was met with resistance through political organisation and strike action until apartheid was eventually abolished in 1994, but the damage done to these marginalised communities by the inferior Bantu Education is still felt today by later generations.

Although South Africans are free to attend any school they wish, socio-economic factors still largely influence the kind of school, and therefore the standard of education, that young people may receive. Generally, more highly resourced schools are able to offer higher educational standards, while the reverse tends to apply to the lesser resourced schools. For example, a 2021 research report by Equal Education, a youth-led NGO, shows that learners from rural, marginalised or densely populated urban communities are most affected by overcrowded schooling in South Africa (Soekoe, 2021). As a result, these learners are also most affected by poor classroom infrastructure and shortages of educators, undoubtedly a hindrance to sound teaching and learning. With that said, if Sethu's extended family is not financially capable of sending their children to schools outside of the rural community, where they might encounter significantly improved infrastructure and a more racially diverse group of students, being able to attend a "multiracial school" or a formerly "white school" in the urban areas, which have historically received a much greater share of the state funding, would undoubtedly be seen as a huge privilege.

In the same vein, the fact that Sethu and her siblings are able to speak English is also viewed as a sign of status. Sethu explains that "English was seen as a status thing." This undoubtedly highlights the complexities of English proficiency. Internationally and nationally, English is viewed as the language of opportunity. This is echoed in a 2012 article published by *Harvard Business Review*, a leading publication on business theory and management, titled 'Global Business Speaks English'. The article maintains that multinational companies are moving towards mandating English as the corporate language, and that any company with an aspiration to go global should do the same (Neeley, 2012). This suggests that in order to stand a chance in the business world, English proficiency is crucial. Just over a decade later, the conversation in popular business publications is still ongoing. The 2023 article published by *The European Financial Review*, titled 'English the Language of Business: Lingua Franca or

of Dominance?’ explores how technological advancement is excluding non-English users from the Artificial Intelligence (AI) revolution (Husillos, 2023). The association between English and financial opportunity is, therefore, not surprising.

Interestingly, English may be the primary language of business in the world, but according to the National Census Data of 2022, only 8.7% (5.39 million) of the South African population consider it the language most often spoken in the household. The language most popularly spoken is isiZulu, making up 24.4% (15.13 million) of the population (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2022). Sethu’s family falls into the latter category. However, it is clear that more value is placed on being proficient in English for socio-economic mobility. It is important to note that Sethu’s family would definitely have some degree of English competency. In accordance with the South African Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP), the learner’s mother tongue should be the preferred medium of instruction in the Foundation Phase (grade R – 3), and English should be taught as a subject. From grade 4 onward, all subjects (except language subjects) are taught in English (with the exception of Afrikaans schools). This would mean that Sethu’s cousins would have been exposed to English at school. The level of competency is not known, but likely to be less than Sethu and her siblings, given that the cousins would have attended a rural school where the medium of instruction is likely to be heavily dependent on isiZulu or mixed English-isiZulu.

Another interesting point is Sethu’s reference to herself and her siblings as the “fat black kids just speaking English”. Here, being ‘fat’ seems to be equally inappropriate as speaking English. This may be an allusion to a historical belief, shared by some in sub-Saharan Africa, that being overweight is a sign of wealth and success. Renzaho (2004) explains that this region is known for battling with issues such as severe poverty and natural disasters, among others, which subsequently leads to high levels of malnourishment. As a consequence of being exposed to such suffering, the author suggests that this has had a large influence on how body weight is socially constructed. Renzaho (2004) maintains that a bigger body size may be indicative of social rank, status and power. Similarly, a study conducted at the University of KwaZulu-Natal titled ‘Sexual body ideal among Zulu women: Continuity and change,’ acknowledges “favourable cultural associations of plump women” with wellbeing and wealth (Ogana & Ojong, 2012, p. 32). In this way, being heavier or ‘fat’, as Sethu describes, can be seen as a privilege.

Privilege (and reducing the appearance thereof), therefore, seems to be a recurrent theme in this extract. This is evidenced in her listing of all these ‘privileges’ which her extended family have not received (i.e. going to “white school”, being proficient in English and being “fat”). This is also illustrated in how there was a need to “downplay where [they] actually are.” Although Sethu says that they are not rich, it is clear that she is aware that these ‘privileges’ may make it seem as though they are, especially to her extended family in this rural area.

Reducing the appearance of these ‘privileges’ is achieved by the avoidance of any other language except isiZulu. It could very well be argued that this is being done in order to be *accepted* by the extended family, but on the other hand, it is also being done *for the sake of* the extended family. Later, in the same conversation, Sethu says “you don’t wanna rub in their faces that you are able to speak the other languages.” Quite simply, choosing not to speak English in this context is equated with choosing not to boast about the experiences and opportunities that she has had, which her other family members have not. This offers an understanding of her linguistic choices that move beyond identity acts. In this instance, speaking isiZulu is a way of being kind and considerate towards her family. In this way, Sethu is caring for them through language. Through speaking isiZulu, Sethu is able to preserve the relationship between her and her extended family.

There is also one other relationship being shaped here, the one between herself and her parents. In the extract, Sethu explains that they were the “fat black kids just speaking English it was embarrassing for my parents.” By speaking English, she would not only be making her extended family feel inferior, but she would also be bringing shame on her parents. Sethu says, “they don’t like praising themselves they don’t like saying that they’ve worked hard for what they’ve done ... they’ve worked really hard for where they’ve put us and everything.” Here we see acknowledgement for the hard work her parents have put in to give her a particular kind of life and education, as well as an awareness of their humility. Through speaking isiZulu in this context, Sethu is choosing not to bring shame to her parents. She chooses to respect their choice to be humble. She is choosing not to disappoint them. Once again, we see an illustration of caring for the other through language. In this extract, the relational aspect of language, as conceptualised by Stroud and Bock (2021), is so much more pertinent than identity performance.

Furthermore, this concern for the other is highlighted in Stroud and Bock’s (2021) ‘Loving and languaging in higher education’ chapter in which cooperation and mutual

recognition are seen as two key elements for a decoloniality rooted in love, in a South African context. The authors maintain that this would involve “recovering entanglements that bind us together” as opposed to those which set us apart (Stroud & Bock, 2021, p. 4). This is believed to open up spaces of relationality. In this instance, Sethu is well aware of the differences between herself and her family in the rural areas as well as the efforts her parents have made to afford her certain privileges. However, there is a strong focus on preserving the relationship with her parents. Language therefore becomes a mode through which these acts of care are performed. This exemplifies Stroud and Bock’s (2021, p. 6) view of “language as ‘love’ rather than ‘label’.” In other words, this extract illustrates moments in which language can be understood as human relationality rather than a set of named entities. In this way, language becomes the mode through which relationality can be used to “generate *alternative and autonomous* spaces of existence” [Papadopoulos (2018, p. 3), cited in Stroud & Bock (2021)]. These ‘spaces of otherwise’, as Papadopoulos (2018) refers to it, offer opportunities to ‘delink’, in the sense of Mignolo (2011), from the prescribed, colonial ways of being. The following section will explore the next theme, being othered through language.

4.4 Being othered through language

Sethu appears to be very conscious of the vulnerability that lies in being othered, undoubtedly due to her own experiences thereof. In the following extract, Sethu explains how and why, for a period during high school at a predominantly white institution, she intentionally mispronounced her surname:

Sethu: I was the first child to go to now this this honestly very Afrikaans packed (unclear) I don’t wanna lie to you it was very “boer”⁷ uhm uhm we were less than 20 black people in my grade it was it was ... interesting to say the least uhm then round about grade 10 when I discovered UP Youth Choir then again I switched back then I became comfortable even to say my surname is [pronounces surname with two click consonants] not [omits clicks] because I’ve been saying for years

Keshia: REALLY?

Sethu: I’ve been saying [omits clicks] for years I’ve been saying [omits clicks] and my parents were also like you what just so that you don’t have to fight

⁷ The term *boer* refers to “a South African person of Dutch descent” (Britannica, n.d.). See also the definition of *Boer* and *boer* which means Afrikaner or farmer (Odendal, Schoonees, Swanepoel, Du Toit, & Booyens, 1992).

with people then my dad explained that also so both of them when they went into corporate uhm no one wanted to learn to say their surname properly ... they'd even make jokes or whatever they ended settling for [omits clicks] but my surname is [pronounces clicks]

Here Sethu recounts omitting the two click consonants in her surname because she was not comfortable pronouncing them at her high school, which was a white, Afrikaans dominated space. The oppression and silencing of black (and other oppressed) South Africans by the apartheid regime has undoubtedly left lasting effects on society, even three decades after its abolition. Marginalised groups are still battling with stigmas surrounding their race, language and culture. This exemplifies Flores and Rosa's (2015) *raciolinguistic ideologies* in which black speakers are racialized and deemed linguistically incompetent regardless of how proficient they may be in 'normative' ways of speaking. Being one of only 20 black students in a grade of predominantly white, Afrikaans students, naturally makes Sethu conscious of how these raciolinguistic ideologies and other prejudices might influence how she is perceived and treated.

Notably, Sethu does not mention any mistreatment by her classmates, yet still decides to purposefully westernize or anglicize her name, signaling her desire to 'fit in' with their linguistic normativity. During another part of the interview, Sethu states that "[the accent of black South Africans] has connotations sort of and almost a type of being illiterate and you don't really know how to speak English hence I spent most of my time in high school gaining the accent I speak with right now". It is clear that the negative stigma surrounding sounding black and being wrongfully labelled as less intelligent is a huge driving force of these decisions. We can assume that this is an attempt to blend in with her classmates and evade the still prevalent social positioning of black people as inferior to other racial groups. In this way, Sethu tries to reduce the effect of being perceived as different, or being 'othered' by her classmates.

She further explains that her parents encouraged her to do this as they dealt with it in the same way. The reason provided for this is to avoid having to "fight with people" or face being ridiculed. It is clear that Sethu's parents have had their own negative experiences with being othered in (what can be assumed to be predominantly white) corporate spaces. Their advice to Sethu as she finds herself in a similar space is an attempt to protect her from having a negative experience. They are trying to protect her from the vulnerability, in the sense of Butler (2004), which she might experience in this scenario. They are therefore trying to protect her from harm

(whether physical or emotional) which perhaps they themselves have experienced. However, Butler (2016) highlights that all bodies are dependent on other bodies, and on networks of support, and that this can be understood as relationality. By encouraging Sethu to avoid or deny this vulnerability means that she is not given the chance to fully engage with her classmates as herself. The sense of relationality is lost. In this instance, neither Sethu, nor her white classmates have the opportunity to learn to accept or even acknowledge the other's differences. Bock, Abrahams and Jansen (2019) posit that vulnerability plays a central role in making engagements across difference possible. When both parties are vulnerable and open themselves up to seeing and being seen by the other, they are able to engage beyond the barriers of language and race. However, Sethu was not afforded this opportunity.

Furthermore, it is clear that Sethu's father's colleagues were not being vulnerable, or rather choosing to display very limited vulnerability, in that interaction. Vulnerability in this instance would mean a willingness to learn and pronounce the Zulu name even though it is beyond their comfort zone. Vulnerability would mean being willing to try, despite the risk of getting it wrong and having to try again therewith opening oneself up to ridicule. To Sethu's father, being vulnerable would mean being willing to open himself up to the subjectivity of the other. In the instance of Sethu at high school, the same would be true. In other words, it would mean enacting their linguistic citizenship (Stroud, 2018). These moments of vulnerability allow for the engagement across linguistic and racial barriers as both parties are willing to make themselves vulnerable and, in a sense, meet each other half way.

Through experiences like this, Sethu seems to have developed a certain awareness. She is therefore able to show empathy for others. In the following extract, Sethu talks about the sensitivity required for engaging with choir members of different races:

Sethu: so at one stage it was just A LOT it was just coloured dominant the choir and it was ... okay black and (inaudible) and then that one white person and shame they stayed ... and then you're like "aw shame man this is so cute" like ja like it's rude to a certain degree but it's just like it's cute because I would be intimidated personally even though sometimes you try not to be aware of just colour but it just it happens you see it and it's in the way you moving and in the way you pronouncing things and now we're correcting you every single rehearsal but shame your language doesn't allow for you to be able to pronounce the languages you're singing so

***omitted for irrelevance

Sethu: you're dealing with people from different backgrounds and you were not raised the same so the manner in which to address it uhm it becomes difficult because you'll find now in the row of people there is this group that is that is not teaching in a productive way in a constructive way and is just rude and laughing at the poor other people whereas in a choir we're meant to help each other and so you end up having to ... like I was chairperson from 2018 to last year ... you have to try and bridge the gap between uhm helping people be able to let's take the pronunciation aspect of it ... you have to help them be able to pronounce the words and be able to be authentic in the way they say it and understand what's happening and also manage the others that have gotten it and are busy laughing and not helping and help build the self-esteem so that becomes a challenge in a way

Here, Sethu shows awareness of a white choir member being othered due to their inability to pronounce certain words from African languages as well as their inability to perfect the dance moves. The white choir member is met with people being “rude and laughing” or simply not helping in a “constructive” way. In this scenario, language and race, and the physical embodiment thereof, plays a crucial role in how in-groups and outgroups are formed, despite the general understanding that they are meant to help one another in the choir. Another interesting point here is how obvious the differences between this white choir member and some of the others appear to Sethu. She says “you see it and it's in the way you moving and in the way you pronouncing things.” She also explains that it is hard not to notice that someone is of a different race (“sometimes you try not to be aware of just colour but it just it happens you see it”). This raises the question of whether we *should* in fact be trying not to notice the traits that make us different to others (e.g. race, language, culture) in the first place. In this instance, actually perceiving the other choir member as white, allowed space for Sethu to be mindful of them and tailor her teaching in a more intentional way. This is seen in her conscious efforts to help those who are struggling with “authentic” pronunciation while simultaneously trying to boost their self-esteem.

This can be further unpacked using Santos' (2016) notion of intercultural translation. Intercultural translation is necessary in order to bring together different knowledges without compromising their specificity (Santos, 2016). The author posits that this involves:

searching for isomorphic concerns and underlying assumptions among cultures, identifying differences and similarities, and developing, whenever appropriate, new hybrid forms of cultural understanding and intercommunication that may be useful in favouring interactions and strengthening alliances among social movements fighting, in different cultural contexts, against capitalism, colonialism, and sexism, and for social justice, human dignity, or human decency (Santos, 2016, p. 22).

In other words, intercultural translation would mean finding something, for instance a concept, that is similar across cultures and deeply exploring the idiosyncrasies. Since direct translation often involves a loss of meaning, the author proposes that, where appropriate, we form a new understanding of the concept which draws on both cultures. This new understanding formed through different cultures being in dialogue with one another may then go on to significantly enhance interactions and attain other mutually beneficial accomplishments. In this instance, what we see is an awareness and understanding of the white choir member as different, but rather than trying to impose a sense of 'sameness' on the other, Sethu embraces the diversity and uses this to help bring about a mutual understanding. In doing so, Sethu appears to successfully interpret the white choir member's experience while also relaying her own through intercultural translation.

4.5 Engaging with others through language

This section explores the third theme, engaging with the other through language. Like race, language has historically divided people in the South African context. Yet, whether promoted or not, multilingualism is a norm in many southern contexts, including South Africa (Gambushe, Nkomo, & Maseko, 2017). It is interesting, then, to see how strict language policies play out in linguistically diverse spaces. 'Rules' regarding language use (including which languages or varieties are allowed to be used by participants) are common in educational spaces, particularly when Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is involved. The argument for or against the use of students' native language (L1) when learning an additional language (L2) remains an ongoing debate [see, for example, Laufer & Eliasson (1993); Storch & Wigglesworth (2003); De La Campa & Nassaji, (2009); Lightbown & Spada, (2020)]. Although the choir to which Sethu belongs is not primarily an SLA or educational space, the

fact that choir members are often taught to sing choral pieces in languages which differ from their home language(s) could allow the space to be seen as similar in nature. Choir members are not necessarily expected to be fluent in these languages, but a certain level of proficiency in communicating during the choral performance is required.

Another important factor to remember is that the choir is made up of members from all over the country who speak many different languages. Therefore, it is not only these ‘new’ languages being introduced to them that are circulating in this space, but also the many different languages of its members. It is interesting, then, to see how an English-only rule plays out in the linguistically diverse space of the choir. In the following extract, Sethu details how she and a friend responded to a new rule which the choir master attempted to enforce, namely, that only English was to be spoken during rehearsals:

Sethu: [speaking to each other] became a challenge uhm you would think it’s nice I mean you’re listening to different languages but it became a problem because people were gossiping about each other in their languages ... okay fine then it got changed uhm to okay strictly English policy

Keshia: Oh that was actually a rule?

Sethu: It was a RULE ... it was a rule it was see that sounds like it was I don’t know if it was of relevance or whatever I just want to tell you it was interesting it was in 2018 it was a rule that you are not allowed to speak ANY other language in the rehearsal space other than English

Keshia: And was that enforced?

Sethu: It was enforced for maybe one rehearsal ... ALL PARTIES INVOLVED were NOT happy ... AT ALL but the beauty of it what came out of it afterwards there’s a friend of mine who was in the choir... so I would greet her in Afrikaans every time I see her and she would greet me in isiXhosa from then on after that we realised we hate this rule of just English we speak primarily English and whatever but now you forcing me to do this it was it was weird uhm from then on certain people would would we started teaching each other so I asked her to help polish up my Afrikaans because I felt like it was lacking I wasn’t speaking it enough anymore and I didn’t have the high school incentive of getting good marks or whatever uhm ... and she wanted to learn more Xhosa so that she can communicate

with other co-workers better at work and whatever and we started basically a trend to a certain degree where if I greet you I will greet you in Afrikaans or whatever language and you greet me in isiZulu or Setswana or whatever and to this day that happens where now we've started greeting each other and teaching each other in every rehearsal at least one word that's not a swear word because you know how people teach each other swear words

In the above extract, Sethu explains how a “strictly English policy” came about in the choir. She notes that none of the members were happy about this rule and that there was some resistance. Sethu and her friend resisted the rule by teaching each other phrases from the other's language during rehearsals. It is clear that the introduction of this rule was brought about by the choir director to encourage a certain sense of unity as members were using their languages to create divisive groups. This is interesting though because contemporary language policies are typically introduced or amended to *add* more languages to a space, not remove them. The result of such a seemingly simple and most likely well-intended rule, is the politics of language within the choir. This rule gave rise to the policing of language and interaction among people. Speaking English became a compulsory term for engaging with these other ‘selves’ because this language is the one factor that brings about ‘sameness’ among the choir members. Yet, no one seemed to respond well to it. Sethu says, “ALL PARTIES INVOLVED were NOT happy.”

However, this resulted in a positive change which Sethu refers to as “the beauty of it.” Sethu and her friend started this greeting ritual of sorts that went against the rule. Her reasoning for this is that “[they] hate[d] this rule of just English.” This illustrates why finding the sameness with the other is not necessarily helpful. Sethu reached across that barrier of difference, and spoke Afrikaans. Even though she learnt to speak Afrikaans as a child, her competency was diminishing because she was not using the language often enough. She explains, “I felt like it was lacking I wasn't speaking it enough anymore and I didn't have the high school incentive of getting good marks.” To Sethu, Afrikaans is the barrier between these two ‘selves.’ It is the difference. To her friend who knows very little isiXhosa, that is the barrier. Yet, they found a way to engage across these barriers by learning from each other, once again highlighting the advantages of intercultural translation. Rather than simply adhering to the restrictive language rules, Sethu and her friend were able to identify the similarities as well as the differences between themselves, and find new ways to communicate. We therefore see

a “new hybrid form of cultural understanding” (Santos, 2016, p. 22) in which the two friends have chosen to share their knowledge and learn from each other.

This extract is undoubtedly rich. The choir is an extremely diverse space, there are members from all over South Africa. This means that there are so many different ‘selves’ and subjectivities within the choir who speak different languages and have completely different cultural backgrounds. It is a space in which learning about other languages and cultures are encouraged. Yet, as we see in the extract, the selves that see commonalities with others, are being grouped together, gossiping about those who aren’t part of this in group. They are forming relations with some people and, in turn, distancing themselves from others. Interestingly, the central factor creating these groups or these barriers between people, is language. This in itself has the potential to be viewed as an act of linguistic citizenship. This act is transformative of the space in that it allows the choir members to engage in ways of speaking that are familiar to them - thereby enabling them to create a sense of in-group and belonging through gossip. However, for the purpose of this section, we will continue to focus on the interaction between Sethu and her friend, which appears to be most generative.

It is important to note that acts of linguistic citizenship are also a source of vulnerability. Stroud (2015) explores how linguistic citizenship may contribute to the perception of multilingualism as a space of vulnerability. This is described as

a space where speakers meet different others in disruptive and unsettling encounters that *interrupt* the status quo (Pinchevski, 2005), and where senses of self may be juxtaposed and refashioned as part of the deconstruction of dominant voices and more equitable linguistic engagement with others (Stroud, 2015, p. 22).

This is to say that there is vulnerability in interacting with others in ways that go against the norm or ways that bring about discomfort. This is especially true when engaging with someone who might speak a different language. It may be ‘disruptive’ and ‘unsettling’ in that communication or understanding may be hindered. Additionally, when we engage across difference, especially in a multilingual space, we open ourselves up to the subjectivity of others. We allow them to perceive us through their own lens, their own perceptions and understandings. In that way, we allow ourselves to be ‘othered’. However, it is that same vulnerability that make these interactions possible and bring about a sense of conviviality. Blommaert (2013, p. 90) describes conviviality as “the attitude that enables people to accept

different trajectories of life and different ways of going about things within the same space.” This sense of acceptance and cohabitation is echoed in Stroud’s (2001) utopian dynamic of linguistic citizenship – linguistic citizenship offers a space where differences can be negotiated, rather than focusing on finding commonality with others. This captures the essence of the main interaction in the extract. Sethu and her friend, two subjectivities, accepting that of the other and cohabiting this space.

In the following extract, Sethu describes a similar instance of conviviality in which multilingualism plays a central role. Here, she talks about the time she first came to the choir for an audition and how intimidated she felt by what she found:

Sethu: I go to [the choir] for an audition just to check it out and I’m intimidated firstly that it’s a different it’s different cultures and races and whatever but THEY’RE doing something that I know to be my culture and THEY’RE DOING IT WELL and like they seem to have it down so that was an interesting thing for me to get there and I’m being taught with all due respect by a coloured person to sing a Zulu song and I’m like what that doesn’t make sense to me so it challenged a few things in me to learn that you CAN learn someone else’s culture and you can learn whatever they want to teach you and you can be able to teach it because what I found was I would I would bring a song to the choir and I would just just teach it or something and I wouldn’t look at what the meaning of the song is in what context the song is sang but then the Indian kid or the coloured kid would ask okay in what context is this song sang and why would you sing it this way and whatever and they would want to to learn as much as they could about that particular song so it was intimidating in that sense in that YOU must now know everything that I do now how does that work so it was a bit intimidating at first

In the above extract, Sethu details her first encounter with the choir and expresses how feelings of intimidation and defensiveness preceded an environment in which it was acceptable to learn from each other. Sethu’s feelings of intimidation in this extract have three different sides. Firstly, there is the fact that she was surrounded by other selves with whom she has had very little interaction in the past. Sethu says, “I’m intimidated firstly that it’s a different it’s different cultures and races and whatever.” Here, we see that Sethu is intimidated by the

diversity of the space. It is clear that being surrounded by so many people who, to her, were so different from her, was overwhelming. Just like in the previous extract, Sethu is experiencing an encounter that is ‘disruptive’ and ‘unsettling.’ However, she does not elaborate on this right away. She states that she was intimidated by the different races and cultures, but quickly brushes it off with a “whatever,” as if to move on to something more important.

It seems as though what brought an even greater feeling of discomfort, was the fact that the people she considered to be so different from herself, were performing music from her own culture better than she had expected. This shock is expressed in her exclaiming, “but THEY’RE doing something that I know to be my culture and THEY’RE DOING IT WELL and like they seem to have it down.” This reflects a very taxonomic view of language and culture, a ‘common-sense’ notion of language and culture which is shared by most people. There seems to be very distinct boundaries between language and culture that she considers to be her own. Building on Sethu’s experience of language and culture as ‘possessions’ (for lack of a better word), having to *share* them with others seems very difficult. This is especially true considering that when one shares something, permission is usually asked. In this case, Sethu entered this space and found others drawing on *her* language and culture without asking.

The third source of Sethu’s discomfort is being questioned by others about the meaning and context of the songs she is teaching. This is evidenced when she says “it was intimidating in that sense in that YOU must now know everything that I do now how does that work.” Once again, this issue of strict classification is raised. There is certain knowledge that she understands to be hers, or belonging to others, because of these strict boundaries between the languages, and, therefore, between these groups of people.

Interestingly though, these unfamiliar (and uncomfortable) circumstances and Sethu’s feelings of discomfort, result in a shift in her understanding and also in the space itself. Sethu admits, “it challenged a few things in me to learn that you CAN learn someone else’s culture and you can learn whatever they want to teach you.” This quote points to that change in her perception. Although it was a challenge for her, it resulted in finding a meeting point of sorts. The feeling of intimidation and, in a sense, of needing to defend her language and culture created a space for learning with and from others. It is important to highlight that a key factor contributing to conviviality in this regard, was, essentially, a rethinking of multilingualism. What emerged is a multilingualism that is not rooted in classification and distinction. There is an engagement across these boundaries. In this interaction, there is an opening up to be heard

and perceived by others. In this way, Sethu and the choir members have also exercised their linguistic citizenship.

The diversity of the choir seems to provide an ideal space for acts of linguistic citizenship. The fact that Sethu taught isiZulu songs to the choir is significant. In the interview, she mentions that it is quite common for the choir members to teach new African songs to each other. Instead of passively learning and simply repeating the songs being taught, the choir members become active agents in this space. This provides an opportunity to recognize other subjectivities in the space. Once again, it opens up the individual to be 'seen' and perceived by others. They are then able to engage with one another without enforcing a likeness or sameness on each other. It is about more than simply finding a commonality. Such an interaction calls for the coexistence of these subjectivities in the same space. Ultimately, what is attained is a sense of conviviality, acknowledgement and acceptance of difference and the formation of relationships. This is another example of Santos' (2016) notion of intercultural translation. Sethu's experiences detail how the choir members interpret their differences to one another. In doing so, they are building understanding and respect for one another. This certainly establishes a reconnection with others and perhaps even, in some cases, a reconnection with their own culture.

The absence of intercultural translation greatly impedes interaction in the immediate sense, but could also have detrimental effects on the community as a whole. The following extract details an incident where an Afrikaans composer compiled a songbook for a production which featured various South African languages. However, the composer favoured musicality over correctness of the language. The result was songs which lacked meaning.

Sethu: he consulted different poets and different ... elders and speakers and whoever and he compiled this whole basically songbook basically of different African languages of different of South African languages Afrikaans right down to Tswana Swati everything ... and it was it was good but it was MUSICAL ... it wasn't correct I don't wanna lie to you ... a lot his translators would give him the correct translation but because it didn't fit in his music score he would change it for himself ... so that caused trouble already back then 2015 ... we take it my my first choir youth choir we take it and we try to to just change a few things 'cause our parents are gonna get offended we're offended already but OUR

PARENTS are gonna get offended because you know you change one letter in a word and all of a sudden that word is something else

**removed for irrelevance

Sethu: so then what happened then uhm we sat down with with [the composer] the choir sat down with [the composer] and the the main actors and we tweaked it a bit so that it could still it could still keep the musicality 'cause it's a BEAUTIFUL piece it's beautiful pieces of music but it had lost MEANING ... there was just no meaning to it uhm the languages and his argument was but no one will know ... OUR argument was WE will know

It is clear that intercultural translation was considered in that the composer consulted with various skilled speakers of the languages in question. However, that consideration was nullified not only in the choice to omit the suggestions, but also in the choice to change the lyrics to prioritize the musicality or how it would sound. This raises questions highlighted by decolonial theory such as what constitutes knowledge and whose knowledge is considered valuable (see, for example, Mignolo (2009)). In this instance, it is undeniable that the trained, experienced composer has vast knowledge on music and the requirements of a harmonious song. It can also be said that the various consultants (“poets and different ... elders and speakers”) hold a vast knowledge on the language in question. Santos (2016) prefaces his explanation of intercultural translation with the crucial acknowledgement that different knowledges are required for different purposes. Furthermore, the author highlights the importance of bringing these different knowledges together. In this scenario, one kind of knowledge seems to have been favoured over the other, resulting in a crucial loss of meaning. As Sethu notes, this would have caused great offense to the choir members' parents as the choir members were themselves already offended.

In the following extract, Sethu explains the motivation behind performing songs in a different language:

Sethu: so when we do sing 'cause we do sing songs from all over South Africa ... when we do sing them although all the cultures aren't physically represented let us represent them through music then that has been one of our goals I don't wanna speak for everyone but the older people that have been in the choir for a while now that has been one of the goals that although we don't physically you can't physically say this person is maybe

Venda for example but when we sing the music we deliver it authentically in such a way that they would be surprised and they would say “wow thank you ... thank you that you took the time I know you aren’t uhm Venda or whatever culture it is but you took the time to understand the language and took the time to deliver it in a way that we understood it”

Here, Sethu talks about how the limitations of ‘physical’ representation of culture is made up for with language. She expresses that her motivation for singing songs in many different South African languages lies in the possibility of connecting with an audience member. She explains that as a choir, they try to perform the songs “authentically.” This undoubtedly raises issues about language competency. It seems as though competency would be equated with being authentic. Nevertheless, the primary goal seems to be to be able to create a sense of togetherness by taking the time to understand the subjectivity of the other. Although she mentions authenticity, towards the end she expresses that the person may say they “took the time to deliver it in a way that [they] understood it.” This implies that a ‘perfect’ performance of the language itself might not even be necessary. It simply needs to be understood and show that the choir has made an effort to learn the language. The emphasis here is on the other – representing, giving a voice to and perhaps truly seeing the other. In this way there is also acceptance of the other within the same space, ultimately creating a sense of conviviality.

The following section will analyze the second main set of data, the language portrait prepared by Sethu. The language portrait adds to the interview data by enabling a deeper exploration of Sethu’s thoughts and feelings about language.

4.6 Sethu’s language portrait

Although stories and narratives are often used as a productive lens in sociolinguistic research, [see Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008); De Fina (2008); and De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2012), for instance], stories are often criticized for being too linear. Busch (2012) explains that language portraits, as an alternative, give a visual representation on the body of the space taken up by language. The language portrait for this project is a direct reflection of that. It encapsulates similar themes which emerged throughout the interview and provides a visual representation of the proportionality of Sethu’s linguistic repertoire. Botis and Bradbury (2018) highlight that the body silhouette emphasizes that language is embodied and encourages conversations about what it feels like to have those specific repertoires. Sethu’s language

portrait (Figure 3) demonstrates this embodiment of language and revisits the notion of relationality.

It is important to note that language portraits as a methodology are highly sensitive to the kind of prompts used [Chik (2018), cited in Kusters, & De Meulder (2019)]. Prompts may be driven by research aims, or could be informed by the theoretical frameworks. The following prompt was given to Sethu:

Keshia: I just want to ask you for a graphic representation or a visual representation of everything you were speaking about now of basically of the languages that you speak. I have this silhouette, so you can think of this as yourself. I want you to represent the languages and ways of speaking that are currently important to you. I want you to think about the languages that are close to you, those that are even further from you, or the languages you think you might encounter in your future. If there's any language or ways of speaking that you want to learn, think about different situations that you find yourself in and different people you speak to.

The first part of this prompt unintentionally aligns with taxonomic ways of thinking about language, and could thus have influenced what Sethu chose to represent. However, the second part is a bit more open and invites the participant to play with the boundaries of her own mind when it comes to how language is viewed.

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In response to the prompt, Sethu produced the following language portrait:

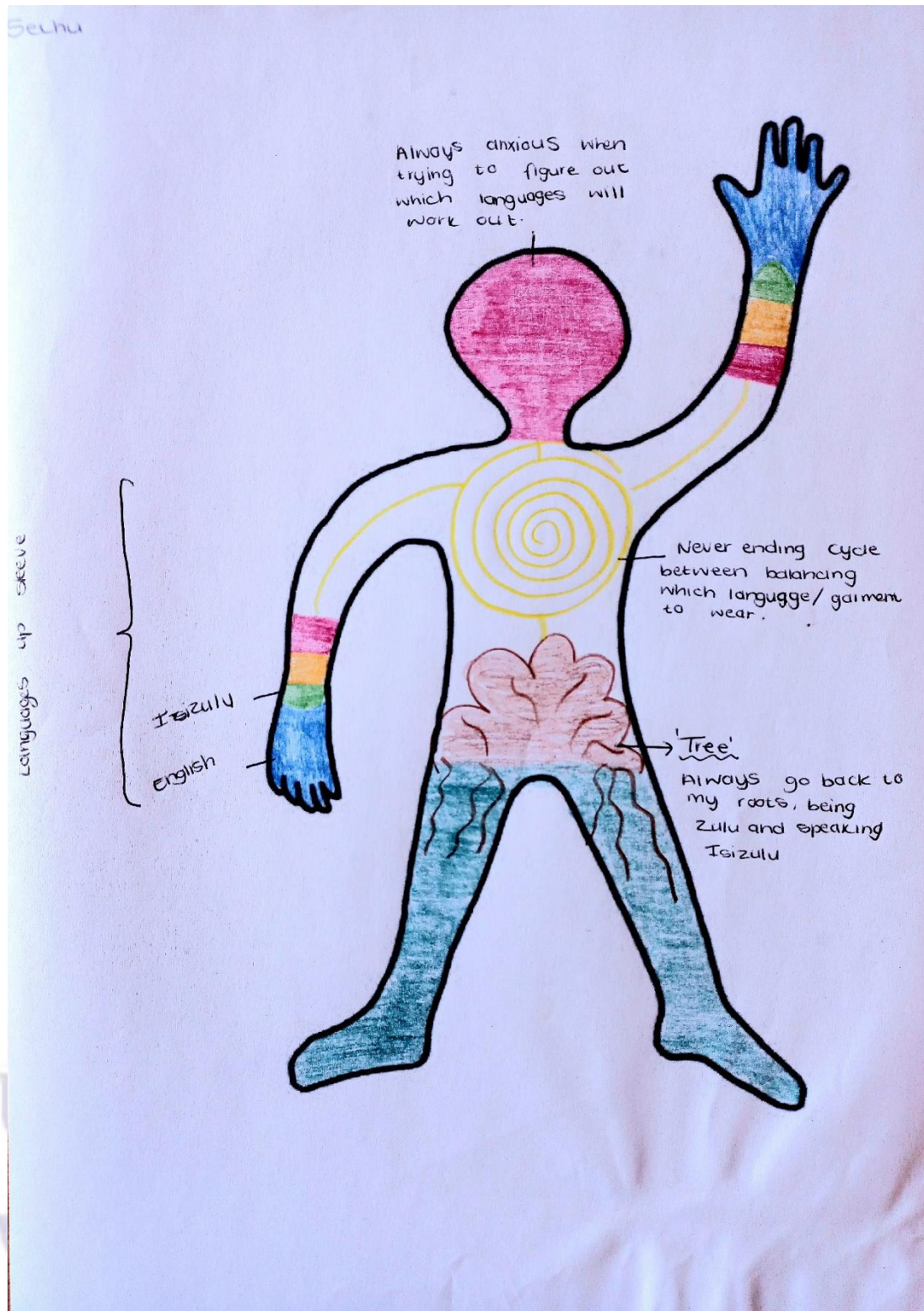


Figure 3: Sethu's language portrait

Sethu's language portrait is analysed along the following themes: (1) the body as a container of languages, (2) language as dynamic, and (3) language as relationality. The following section will unpack the first theme.

4.6.1 The body as a container of languages

It is interesting to note how participants across different studies interact with the blank language portrait silhouette. Some participants may choose to use solid colours like in the findings of Oostendorp and van Zyl (2022) and others may use more intricate patterns or even draw faces like in those of Bristowe, Oostendorp, & Anthonissen (2014). This emphasizes how unique the lived experiences of the various participants are. One of the most obvious things to note about Sethu's language portrait is that all of her drawings are contained within the body silhouette. She does not colour outside of the lines, apart from the inscriptions comprising the key/legend. This reminds me of the age-old expression to 'colour inside the lines', generally understood as following the rules. Considering how Sethu has followed the 'rules' of her parents to learn English, but not use it as a means to boast or bring shame to the family, this is a fitting visualization.

This containment of drawings to the inside of the silhouette is also observed by Coffey (2015). The author uses this to expand on the notion of the human body as a container of languages. This is similar to what is perceived here. Rather than drawing in the space around the silhouette, all representations of Sethu's linguistic repertoire are housed within the body, effectively capturing the embodied nature of language (Busch, 2012). Coffey (2015) does, however, note that this is unsurprising given that providing a body silhouette sets the expectation for the containment of drawings within the body. Nevertheless, the fact that it is unsurprising does not mean that it is irrelevant. After all, Busch (2018) highlights that the silhouette does provide a framework, but that it allows for open interpretation that could range from creative design to more 'typical' representations of data such as a diagram. Here, what seems most pertinent is the embodiment of Sethu's experience of language.

4.6.2 Language as dynamic

Sethu's language portrait illustrates the role that language plays in developing relationships with people. She used an 'accidentally' upside down tree on the pelvic and leg area to represent isiZulu. In the key she writes, "Tree" – Always go back to my roots, being Zulu and speaking isiZulu." Sethu's attachment to the isiZulu language and culture is highlighted here. From an identitarian perspective, being Zulu could be understood as something constant. Sethu would

simply be making a statement about her identity and, essentially, placing herself into a specific category. However, looking at the way in which Sethu interacted with others across the boundaries of language and race, it may be helpful to explore this from a different perspective. Sethu has close relationships with many people in her life that are all centered on being and speaking isiZulu. By speaking isiZulu, she is able to protect and spare the feelings of her cousins who have not had the same opportunities as she has. She is able to make her parents feel proud instead of embarrassed. By speaking isiZulu she is able to connect with and care for her family. Perhaps being and speaking isiZulu could be better understood as a way to build relationships with others. In this way it becomes dynamic and interaction-driven, rather than an essentialised statement of her identity.

Interestingly, however, Sethu does seem to draw boundaries between different languages in her depiction of them. She used the forearm and hand area to depict other languages in her repertoire. The blue hands represent English, which she mentions she now uses the most. The green wrist represents isiZulu, once again. She admits that not much thought was given to the specific colours on her forearm, but that she is able to speak Afrikaans and Tswana as well. In the key she describes this section as “languages up sleeve.” Having tricks up your sleeve hints at having some kind of secret plan or having an advantage in a situation. We can therefore assume that Sethu associates positive qualities with this ‘strategic multilingualism’ and that she considers being multilingual as an advantage.

Despite listing the languages rather categorically, Sethu’s language portrait still reflects the acknowledgement of the dynamic nature of language and communication. This is depicted by the yellow spiral structure in the chest area which she says shows being in a “never ending cycle between balancing which language/garment to wear.” This highlights that this is a continuous process with no clear beginning and end. Notably, this bears resemblance to Swain’s (2006, p. 98) definition of the term *linguaging* as “the process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language”. This definition brings attention to the complex activities and processes that are experienced when communication occurs. Sethu is constantly engaged in a set of complex processes that allow her to make meaning and shape her experience (as well as that of others) through language.

Additionally, the comparison of language to clothing provides a strong visual representation of how she navigates different spaces. Her linguistic choices are made in the same way that one would decide which clothing is appropriate for a specific event. In the same

way that you would not wear a wedding gown to a funeral, for example, she would not speak English with her family in KZN. It would simply be inappropriate. Furthermore, the act of enrobing oneself in a language illustrates the embodied nature of multilingualism.

Sethu does not explicitly state whether she regards this ‘never ending cycle’ in a positive or negative way. However, the very nature of the complex, dynamic processes allows for a positive experience the one moment, and a very different one the next. On the one hand, Sethu appears to think of being multilingual as advantageous (see comments on having “languages up sleeve”). On the other hand, however, this is also a source of anxiety for her. The anxiety is depicted by filling the entire head and neck area of the language portrait in solid red, explaining that she is “always anxious when trying to figure out which languages will work out.”

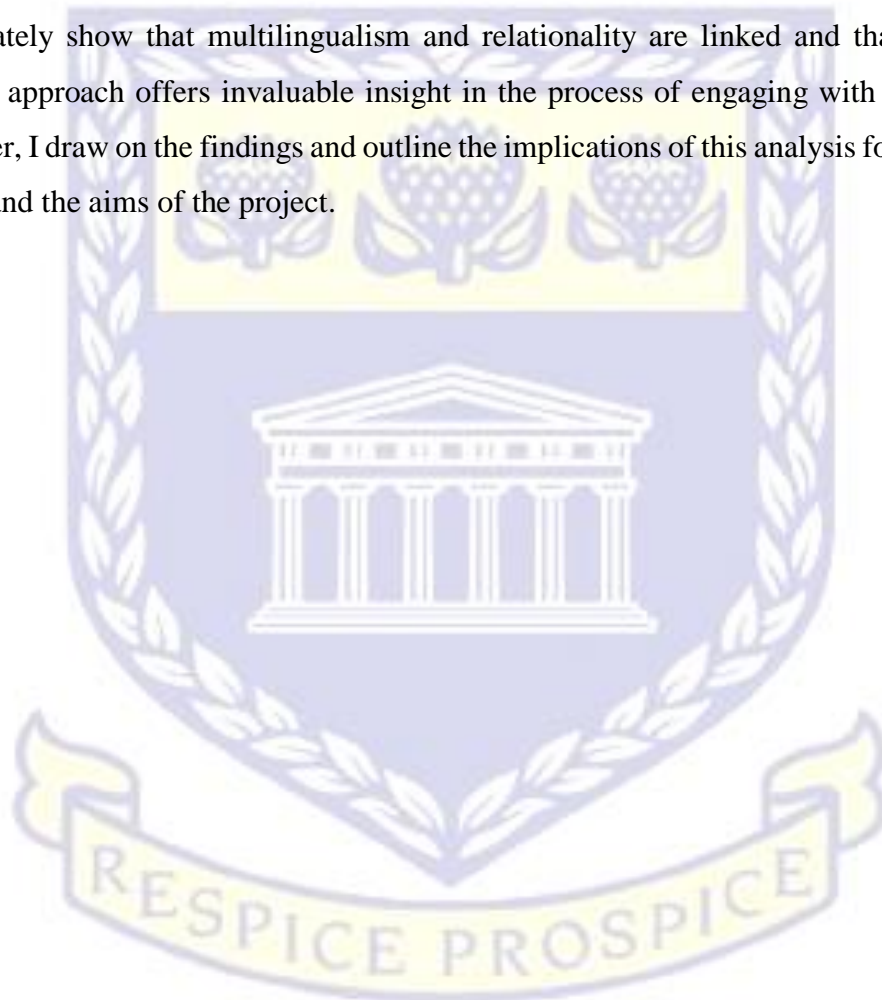
4.6.3 Language and relationality

Building on the previous section, it may be helpful to explore what it would mean for a language to ‘work out’. This could be understood from the perspective of roles and domains, which would mean that linguistic choices are being made based on the role she is undertaking in different domains or contexts. However, there is another important aspect to consider, the interlocutors or the ‘other’ involved in her conversations. Her linguistic choices need to be received by someone else in order for it to ‘work out.’ Beyond simply being received, they also need to be *heard*. This agreement between “production and uptake” can also be understood as *voice* (Blommaert, 2013, p. 449). To illustrate this, Blommaert (2013) explains that if he manages to make a person *perceive* him as funny when his *intention* was to be funny, then he has ‘voice.’ Both production and uptake of Sethu’s linguistic choices are integral here. Therefore, for her to have a voice in this instance, there is a need for some kind of engagement or relation with the other. This can mean different things in different scenarios, but ultimately, what is necessary is human relationality. Stroud and Bock (2021) refer to this as some sort of coordination between two people. More specifically, the authors call for an understanding of language itself as relationality because, ultimately, if decoloniality is “about recovering and conserving what makes us human” then language has an integral role to play (Stroud & Bock, 2021, p. 6).

4.7 Conclusion

The analysis of the data consciously tries to break away from traditional ways of thinking about language and multilingualism. The data show that one of the primary functions of

multilingualism is to negotiate ways in which to coexist with other selves. This is seen in how language is used to care for/relate to others and learn from others. This is also illustrated by how relationships between different selves are formed and negotiated within the choir. This analysis also shows the importance of vulnerability. Without it, these interactions are not possible. This is evidenced in the resistance to opening up to being perceived by others. The data ultimately show that multilingualism and relationality are linked and that a linguistic citizenship approach offers invaluable insight in the process of engaging with others. In the next chapter, I draw on the findings and outline the implications of this analysis for my research questions and the aims of the project.



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Chapter 5:

Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Introduction

In this paper, I attempted to reconstruct or rethink the dominant notions of language as named, separate languages by exploring how language and multilingualism function as social relationalities. This paper used a qualitative research approach to analyze various personal accounts of multilingual engagements in the life of my participant. This chapter will now describe the significance of the findings and discuss the insights which emerged as a result of this research.

5.2 General reflections on the paper

In this paper I have explored two broad paradigms for understanding language and multilingualism in society, Linguistic Human Rights and linguistic citizenship. As highlighted by the various scholars discussed in Chapter 2 [Rannut, Phillipson, & Skutnabb-Kangas (1994); de Varennes (1996); Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2023); Stroud, (2001); Dube & Wozniak (2021); Foster (2021); Heugh (1999); Santos (2016), Menezes De Souza (2014) and others] both of these perspectives offer significant value to the field. However, the review of the literature suggests that linguistic citizenship offers a more comprehensive understanding of the nuances of multilingualism and diversity.

With that said, this paper argues that linguistic citizenship is an ideal lens through which to explore and unpack multilingualism as it draws attention to the grassroots interactions in which people use language and other modalities to build and shape relationships with others. This suggests a strong link exists between multilingualism and relationality which will be expanded on by reflecting on the findings in relation to the research questions.

5.3 Comparative reflections on the research questions

5.3.1 How does the multilingual participant navigate their linguistic repertoire in the different spheres of their life?

As Tabouret-Keller (2017, p. 315) states, it is no question that “the language spoken by somebody and his or her identity as a speaker of this language are inseparable.” However, to claim that language functions solely as a marker of identity disregards a whole range of complexities. While it is true that people do, in fact, make conscious choices regarding their language use in certain domains in order to position their identities, it is also true that these

decisions impact the relationships and societies that we form part of. The data suggest that the participant navigates her linguistic repertoire in different domains by foregrounding this relational aspect. This is shown in Sethu's conscious decisions regarding her ways of speaking with the different members of her family. Combined, these decisions act to reduce the appearance of the privileges she's had in order to show care for her family, emphasizing the idea of social connectedness. Lejano (2023, p. i) highlights that relationality "uncovers how social connection, across divides, moves people to act for the other". The data echo this sentiment in that Sethu's navigation of her linguistic repertoire shows a strong consideration for the other.

5.3.2 How does the participant navigate the social and relational dynamics within diverse spaces?

How do they manage to engage and collaborate with others despite their differences?

How does this relate to linguistic citizenship?

The data show that engagement and collaboration across difference is not without difficulty. This is evident in the participant's accounts of interaction with others in the school space and the choir. There are instances of being othered through language as well as instances of engaging with the other through language. A linguistic citizenship approach allows us to unpack the specific acts of linguistic citizenship that allow for these engagements to occur despite the differences between the participants. As discussed in the Chapter 4, an act of linguistic citizenship involves opening oneself up to the subjectivity of others. This, in itself, is the othering of oneself. The data shows that when we allow ourselves to be othered in the face of vulnerability, this creates a convivial context, as described by Blommaert (2013), in which relationality can be built and strengthened.

5.3.3 How does the participant perceive being multilingual? How can language portraits be used to visually represent this unique experience?

The use of language portraits as a research method proved to be very useful. This allowed the participant to express insights regarding how she perceives herself as a multilingual person which were not elaborated on as freely during the interview. Sethu perceives being multilingual as an advantage, but also acknowledges the anxiety that accompanies it. The visual representation of these two seemingly opposing views (the drawing depicting the languages as tricks up her sleeve and the spiral structure depicting the never ending cycle of navigating her repertoire) highlight that they can co-exist at the same time. This mirrors the dynamic nature of language itself.

Overall, the findings of this paper demonstrates that there is an intrinsic link between multilingualism and relationality, and that language plays a vital role in navigating relationships between people. This is shown in how Sethu uses language to reduce the appearance of the privileges she's had in order to show care for her family, how she uses language to reduce the appearance of difference so as to avoid being othered at her school, and finally how she uses language to reach across difference and engage with other choir members. Sethu's accounts of multilingual engagement speaks to a dynamic cycle of othering and being othered, giving rise to a series of vulnerabilities. As we see in the data, it is this vulnerability that leads to more fruitful collaboration between the participant and various people in her life.

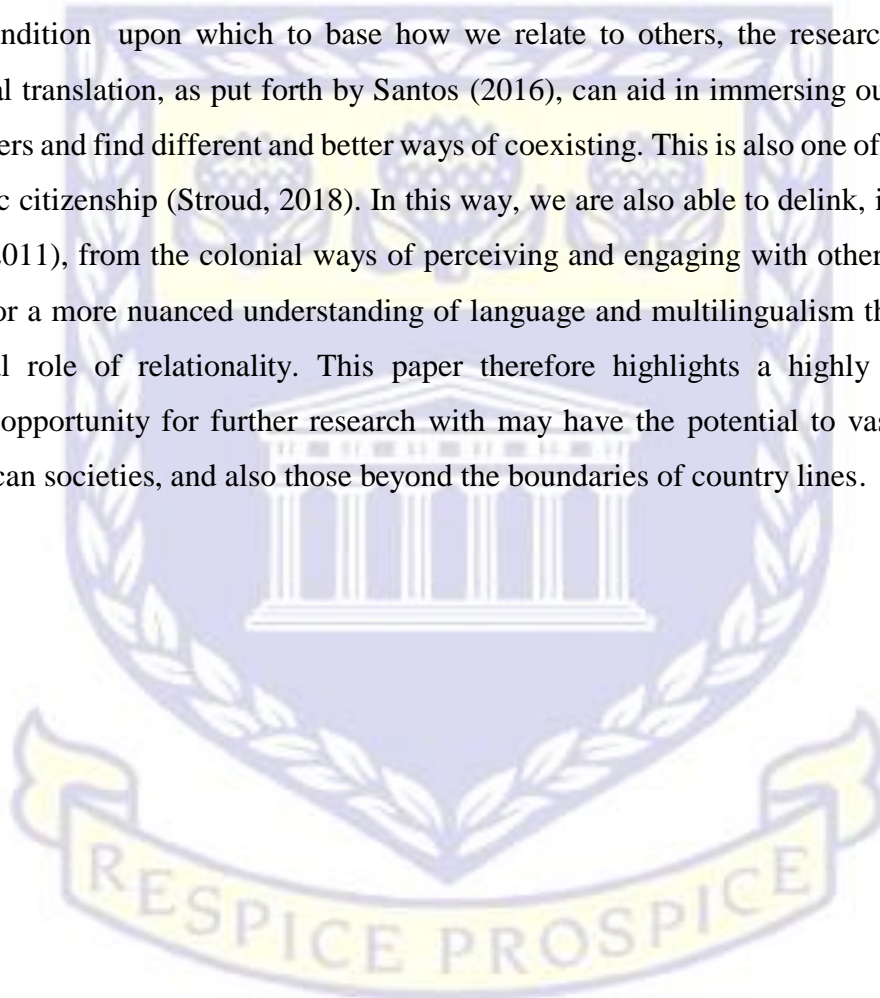
5.4 Concluding remarks

Using linguistic citizenship as a lens through which to explore multilingualism as social relationality has highlighted the complex, multifaceted ways in which multilingualism naturally occurs in everyday life. Focusing the project on the lived experience of one participant has further provided a very rich and personal account of these complexities. This provides us with concrete examples of acts of linguistic citizenship that help contextualize linguistic citizenship in everyday life. This paper illustrates how the various language varieties play differing and complementary roles in the life of the participant, and highlights that they are not neatly boxed. Instead, Sethu draws on the various resources available to her, or on her linguistic repertoire, to situate herself in very different contexts. Through the various examples provided, we see the flexibility in this very dynamic process. Furthermore, we see that Sethu is able to use language in its entirety to enact love, hope and care for others, and therefore enact her linguistic citizenship.

This foregrounds that multilingualism is based on social relationality and how we relate to others. However, as the data show, this does not mean that this will always be a 'positive' experience. These moments of relating to each other through language are a deep source of vulnerability, and therefore open us up to being othered in various ways, being ridiculed (as seen in the case of Sethu's parents) or to experiencing other types of discomfort. Yet, it is this same vulnerability that allows us to learn from others and engage with others as our 'full' selves. In other words, it allows us to show up in society without shielding the parts of ourselves that we value the most. This paper has therefore shown the importance of recognizing and engaging with this vulnerability.

Furthermore, the research highlights the potentiality for building more *caring* and *loving* societies [in the sense of Stroud and Bock (2021)] that lies in rethinking our

understanding of language and multilingualism through linguistic citizenship. This can be achieved through acknowledging our differences (linguistic, racial, cultural and the likes) and using this to open ourselves up to being *heard* and feeling *seen*. After all, as Arendt (1958) describes, our sense of agency and voice can only be perceived as such by being recognized by others. Furthermore, rather than attempting to find the sameness with others and using this the primary condition upon which to base how we relate to others, the research shows how intercultural translation, as put forth by Santos (2016), can aid in immersing ourselves in the lives of others and find different and better ways of coexisting. This is also one of the key tenets of linguistic citizenship (Stroud, 2018). In this way, we are also able to delink, in the sense of Mignolo (2011), from the colonial ways of perceiving and engaging with others. Ultimately, this calls for a more nuanced understanding of language and multilingualism that recognizes the integral role of relationality. This paper therefore highlights a highly valuable and generative opportunity for further research with may have the potential to vastly transform South African societies, and also those beyond the boundaries of country lines.



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Appendices

Appendix A: Information sheet



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Linguistics Department

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Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities

Research

Information sheet (interview)

Title of research project:

Multilingual harmonies: An ethnographic study of a South African youth choir

Dear choir member

I, Keshia R. Jansen, am a Masters student in the Department of Linguistics, at the University of the Western Cape. I would like to invite you to partake in the research project, Multilingual harmonies: An ethnographic study of a South African youth choir. Please read the following information carefully. Feel free to ask any questions or request further information.

My research seeks to understand your experience of being a member of a South African youth choir. My research is focused on how people communicate using different languages, even those they are not necessarily fluent in. I am particularly interested in language use within the choir during rehearsals and performances. I would, for example, be interested in the language/s you use at home and how this changes when you are at rehearsals. I am also interested in how you learn and perform songs in languages you do not speak. Language commonly divides people in society. This project is aimed at exploring the different views people have on language and multilingualism. This may lead to the discovery of opportunities for people to feel a sense of inclusion in society.

As a senior member of the choir, you have been selected to be one of three members who will participate in my project. I will ask you to participate in a one-on-one interview. This will revolve around your involvement in the creative process the choir uses to create new, multilingual songs. This will take place during January – February 2021. With your permission, this interview will be audio recorded. You may rest assured that your participation will be voluntary at all times, and that all data pertaining to you (and other participants) will be anonymized. Your participation in this research project will not affect your involvement in the

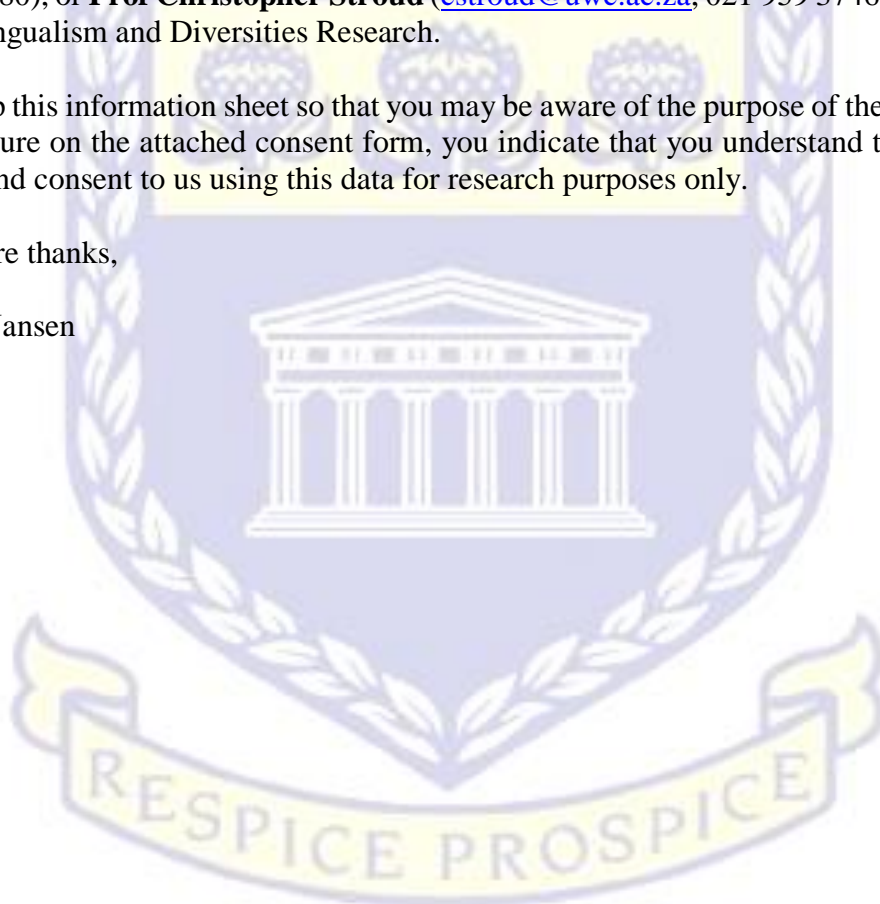
choir in any way. If you agree to participate in the project, you may withdraw at any time, for any reason, without any negative or undesirable consequences. If you agree, I will ask you to sign the attached consent form which explains the UWC 'code of conduct' for research.

Although there is a minimal foreseeable risk, should you in any way feel uncomfortable or distressed, you will be referred to professional counselling with a reputable Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on (xxx xxx xxx) or via email (3534205@myuwc.ac.za). Alternatively, you may contact my supervisors, **Prof Zannie Bock** in the Linguistics Department (zbock@uwc.ac.za, 021 959 2380), or **Prof Christopher Stroud** (cstroud@uwc.ac.za, 021 959 3746) in the Centre for Multilingualism and Diversities Research.

Please keep this information sheet so that you may be aware of the purpose of the project. With your signature on the attached consent form, you indicate that you understand the purpose of the study and consent to us using this data for research purposes only.

With sincere thanks,

Keshia R. Jansen



UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Appendix B: Consent form



Consent Form: Interviews

University of the Western Cape

Research Project Multilingual harmonies: An ethnographic study of a South African youth choir

Researcher: Keshia R. Jansen

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. If I wish to withdraw my consent, I may contact the lead researcher at any time.
3. I understand my responses and personal data will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymized responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the reports or publications that result for the research.
4. I give permission for this interview to be audio recorded. I understand that this recording will be used for research purposes only.
5. I will not disclose the identity of the other participants or the content of the discussion.
6. I agree that the data collected can be used in future research.
7. I agree to take part in the above research project.

Name of Participant
(or legal representative)

Date

Signature

Keshia R. Jansen
Lead Researcher

(To be signed and dated in presence of the participant)

Date

Signature

Copies: All participants will receive a copy of the signed and dated version of the consent form and information sheet for themselves. A copy of this will be filed and kept in a secure location for research purposes only.

Researcher:

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3534205@myuwc.ac.za
xxx xxx xxx

Supervisor:

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