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‘Only Tonga spoken here!’: Family language management among the Tonga in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: This article analyses language management strategies that are employed by Tonga parents towards the conservation of the Tonga language. Since Zimbabwe gained independence, Tonga, alongside a host of other previously designated minority languages has endured marginalisation in terms of use in public and official spaces, leading to language shift. In the presence of dominant endoglossic languages, Shona and Ndebele, within Tonga communities, Tonga speakers have found it difficult to maintain their language. In the context of family and societal bilingualism, parents, as the custodians of the home language are better placed to manage language use, for example, by encouraging and rewarding preferred language practices and sanctioning or punishing undesirable use. This study sought to understand some of the language management strategies that parents employ to promote the use of the Tonga language at home. Deploying insights afforded by the language management approach, the reversing language shift theory and family language policy, the study reveals that Tonga parents have high impact beliefs regarding their potential to control their children’s linguistic behaviour in the home. These impact beliefs tend to inform parental language management strategies.

Introduction

The past few decades have witnessed a proliferation of scholarship on minority language conservation worldwide, particularly enthused by the publication of international conventions and guiding principles detailing the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity. Conventions such as *the Cultural Charter for Africa* (OAU 1976), *the Language Plan of Action for Africa* (OAU 1986), more recently, the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (UNESCO 2001) and the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (UNESCO 2003) have reinvigorated researchers to invest intellectual effort not only to understand the twin phenomena of language endangerment and language shift, but also to proffer strategies aimed at negating them. In the African context, increasing interest in the fate of minority languages has seen a resurgence of studies that identify endangered minority languages as well as those that seek to interrogate ways by which they can be developed and promoted (Nyika 2008). This scholarship is in agreement that intergenerational language transmission of a home language from parents to their children remains the core element of language conservation (Fishman 1991). In the Zimbabwean context, studies have also demonstrated the centrality of family language practices in conserving minority languages (e.g. Ndlovu 2014; Nyota 2015; Maseko, Dhlamini and Ncube 2017). In order to understand the mechanics of intergenerational language transmission in the family, the concepts of family language policy (FLP) and language management are indispensable. Regarding minority language conservation, previous studies have tended to focus on the impact of national language policies, while assigning marginal attention to the workings of language policy in the home. Consequently, many studies have focused on the centrality of legal provisions (e.g. Kadenge and Mugari 2015; Nkomo and Maseko 2017), education and language use in public spaces and how they impact the conservation of minority languages. This has disregarded the important observation that ‘endangered languages become such because they lack informal intergenerational transmission and informal daily life support, not because they are not taught in schools or lack official status’ (Romaine 2002: 2, citing Fishman 1991). In any case, the

evaluation of the potential and actual impact of language policy on endangered languages is complicated by lack of straightforward causal connections between types of policy and language maintenance and shift, as well as by confusion of policy and planning (Romaine 2002: 1).

Drawing on insights from the language management approach, reversing language shift (RLS) theory and the notion of FLP, this article analyses language management practices and strategies deployed by parents to encourage informal intergenerational transmission and provide informal daily life support (Fishman 1991) to the Tonga language. Tonga is a previously designated minority language, now one of the 16 officially recognised languages in the new constitution (Government of Zimbabwe 2013). Although Tonga has been marginalised for a long time in Zimbabwe, alongside other minority languages such as Kalanga, Nambya, Sotho and Venda, among others, it has made significant inroads in the education sector. It is one of the first minority languages to be offered as an examinable subject at both primary and secondary schools (Ndlovu 2014). The success story of Tonga is credited to a host of factors, including the levels of language awareness in the Tonga community itself and the efforts of language and culture associations that have worked towards promoting the recognition and development of the language. In particular, efforts by the Tonga Language and Culture Committee (TOLACCO), together with the Zimbabwe Indigenous Languages Promotion Association (ZILPA) have been key in that recognition (Ndlovu 2014). Tonga is now offered at degree level at the University of Zimbabwe. However, given the fact that 'conventions and treaties adopted by international organisations and agencies recommending the use of minority languages in education usually lack power to reinforce them' (Romaine 2002: 1), the role of the home in their conservation becomes paramount. Focusing primarily on macro-institutions such as the school, or seeking conferment of official status to revitalise minority languages is futile, because it is akin to someone looking for lost keys under a lamp post, not because that is where they were lost, but just because that is where light seems to shine brighter (Romaine 2002).

Just as it is easier to see under the lamp post, it is far easier to establish schools and declare a language official than to get families to speak a threatened language to their children, yet only the latter will guarantee transmission (Romaine 2002: 3).

Understanding what speakers of minority languages themselves do, is therefore key in understanding language conservation, which ultimately depends on the home language choices of native speakers (McCarty and Watahomigie 1998, in Romaine 2002).

Conceptual and theoretical issues

Reversing language shift, and language management

Language shift is defined as the gradual replacement of one language by another as the primary means of communication by a group of speakers (Fasold 1987). Since the home is critical for the maintenance of any language (Fasold 1987; Fishman 1991), when speakers begin to use a language that is not their mother tongue in the home, that can be an indicator of language shift in progress (Fasold 1987). Fishman (1991) proposed a theory of reversing language shift. He identified the use of the endangered language in the home as the most critical factor that can negate the course of language shift. This is so because the home 'acts like a natural boundary, a bulwark against outside pressures' (Schwartz and Verschik 2013: 2). Because of its emphasis on language use in the home, RLS speaks to the pivotal nature of language practices and family language management. This study therefore leans on the ideas espoused by Fishman (1991) and the concept of language management as elaborated by Spolsky (2004; 2009). Fishman is viewed by many as 'an early proponent of proactive language research' (Schwartz and Verschik 2013: 2). His RLS theory is fashioned to afford linguists and language revivalists a rational and a systematic approach to minority language maintenance (Fishman 1991). It attempts to inform speakers and supporters of threatened languages about how to consolidate efforts designed to fight language shift or extinction (Fishman 1991).

The RLS framework foregrounds four salient issues that should be clear to language revivalists before they embark on RLS. They constitute what Fishman (1991) terms the ideological clarification

phase. Firstly, agents of RLS must be convinced that RLS efforts can be executed without compulsion. They need not necessarily be driven by central government but by the volition of individuals who are in agreement with specific RLS objectives. Such individuals wilfully devote their resources to the cause, even without society's assistance (Fishman 1991). Secondly, he warns that RLS efforts must not interfere with majority rights. To that end, RLS advocates should not fashion their programme in a way that infringes on anyone's rights and dignity. This should not merely be a public relations position but a deep-seated conviction (Fishman 1991). Because RLS is pursued under the aegis of linguistic and cultural democracy, advocates should seek a new dispensation that leaves no potential for linguistic and cultural imperialism after the reversal of the old order. The envisioned new standing of the language should not precipitate into hegemony over its newly dominated networks, just as former slaves who themselves morph into cruel masters do great disservice to the cause of abolition of slavery through the re-creation or perpetuation of a vicious cycle (Fishman 1991). Thirdly, Fishman stresses the need for RLS efforts to embrace bilingualism entirely, not just as a transient strategy for achieving a monolingual order in the minority language. Bilingualism should be viewed as an enriching phenomenon, not as an implicit threat to the multicultural realities of the modern world (Fishman 1991). It must be foregrounded as a resource than to associate it with 'the curse of Babel' (Bamgbose 1991: 2). Additive bilingualism should be encouraged as it brings perspective, variety and nuance to the lives of the speakers. Monolingualism is neither practically conceivable nor philosophically desirable, and any RLS efforts targeting a return to monolingualism will quickly deplete the political, economic, physical and emotional resources and concomitantly provoke early antipathy and lethargy (Fishman 1991). Lastly, agents must concede that RLS measures cannot be treated as a 'one size fits all'. They have to be localised in concordance with varying problems and opportunities encountered (Fishman 1991). Specific strategies should be targeted for specific languages, depending on their degrees of intergenerational disruption.

For the present study, one of the imperative facets of the RLS theory is the graded intergenerational disruption scale (GIDS). Fishman proposed the GIDS as a measurement of the 'extent to which a particular language is endangered and serves as a heuristic device to assist communities in targeting their efforts' (King, Fogle and Logan-Terry 2008: 917). The GIDS is presented as a scale of disruption akin to the Richter scale, comprising eight stages (Darquennes 2007). In this sense, the GIDS suggests that the higher the stage at which a language is placed, the greater the degree of endangerment or intergenerational disruption. This means that languages placed at stage eight of the GIDS are severely endangered, while those in stage one are safe.

Among other things, Fishman's theory foregrounds the centrality of intergenerational transmission of minority languages as the single most important prerequisite for the survival of any threatened language. To that end, stage 6 of the GIDS is given the most prominence. It represents a crucial point in the lifecycle of a language where 'the threatened language becomes the everyday language of informal, spoken interaction between and within all three generations within the family' (King, Fogle and Logan-Terry 2008: 917). The importance ascribed to intergenerational transmission as represented by stage 6 of the GIDS speaks directly to the pivotal nature of the concept of language management and family language policy (FLP). Together, they lend important insights into understanding the family as a vital frontier in reversing language shift. For this reason, this study also leans on Spolsky's (2004; 2009) views on language policy. In particular, his concept of language management being one of the key components of language policy is enlightening for the study.

The theory of language management is a processual outgrowth of the language planning theory (Nekvapil 2012; Nekvapil and Sherman 2015). It is a product of the enduring work of scholars such as Neustupný (1978), Jernudd (1973), Jernudd and Neustupný (1987), and Neustupný and Nekvapil (2003). The multiplicity of perspectives on language management is therefore not unexpected. Although the term 'language management' is now generally used (Nekvapil 2012; Nekvapil and Sherman 2015), the language management theory has tended to assume fluid shades of meaning. While 'the theory is based on the set of its theoretical claims rather than on the heading "language management"' (Nekvapil 2012: 9), some of the core features of the theory have been discussed under dissimilar labels such as 'the theory of language correction' (*ibid.*), yet 'some authors employ the term language management without referring to the theoretical propositions of Neustupný, Jernudd and

their colleagues' (ibid.). They have opted to deploy the term synonymously with language planning (Nekvapil 2012). For Nekvapil and Sherman (2015), language management is an innovation that continues to inspire new insights in language planning theory and scholarship by making important contributions that speak beyond the agency of the state and other macro-institutions in language policy. According to Spolsky (2004; 2009) language management is one of the three components of language policy, the other two being language ideologies and language practices.

Language ideologies are the beliefs shared by speakers in relation to appropriate language practices. These beliefs sometimes form consensual behaviours and assign values and prestige to various aspects of the language(s) used in a community (Spolsky 2004). Ideologies are therefore 'what people think should be done' (Spolsky 2004: 14) regarding their linguistic resources. Language practices are the predictable behaviours concerning language choices in a community (Ren and Hu 2013). They are 'the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire' (Spolsky 2004: 5). Language practices relate to the explicit linguistic behaviours and choices of speakers. Spolsky (2004: 9) explains that language practices are more than just 'the sum of the sound, word and grammatical choices that an individual speaker makes, sometimes consciously and sometimes less consciously, that makes up the conventional unmarked pattern of a variety of a language'. This notion can extend to multilingual situations to include rules for the appropriacy of each named variety (Spolsky 2004). Language ideologies and practices impact on each other in substantial ways. Ideologies themselves are not practices although they may influence practices (Spolsky 2004; 2009). Thirdly, and most illuminating for the present study, language management relates to the explicit efforts by someone or some group that has, or claims to have, authority over the participants to impose, modify or adapt their language practice and ideology (Spolsky 2009). In other words, language management denotes the nuanced interventions deployed by these authorities or 'language managers' to expose children and other participants to the parents' preferred language practices (Spolsky 2009).

Representatives of the language management approach stress its capability to explain both macro and micro language planning dimensions (Nekvapil 2012). The former is used in relation to state-sanctioned language planning, and the latter is reserved for language planning that is influenced by less complex social systems involving individuals or grassroots associations (Neustupný and Nekvapil 2003; Nekvapil and Nekula 2006; Nekvapil 2012; 2016). In this study, we build on the thinking that it is 'imaginable and in fact, not unusual, that even ordinary speakers in everyday interactions contribute to changes in language(s) and their use' (Nekvapil and Sherman 2015: 1). The interest invested by language management on the dialectical and reflexive interaction between macro and micro planning (Nekvapil 2016) allows the model's extendibility to the domain of FLP. It represents a paradigm shift from the traditional conception of language policy as a macro notion. By focusing on the family, it is possible to explore parental language management that fosters intergenerational language transmission, since the loss of natural intergenerational transmission in the family is the key marker of language loss (Spolsky 2008; 2009). This study foregrounds parents as authorities with the potential to plan, control and actively shape children's language activities and language practices. It is therefore less focused on children's own perspectives and actions (Kheirkhah 2016).

Literature review

Fewer studies have invested effort to understand the interactions between FLP, language management and language conservation. This is, however, not unexpected, given that the notions of FLP and language management are nascent offshoots in language planning and policy. Although the concept of language management is still an emergent perspective, particularly in the African tradition, where it has thus far been punctuated by profound intellectual lethargy (Mwaniki 2011), the Israeli and American tradition, with Spolsky as its representative, has gained significant traction (Mwaniki 2011; Nekvapil and Sherman 2015). Similarly, the European/Asia-Pacific traditions have been explored quite significantly (Nekvapil and Sherman 2015). Consequently, Mwaniki (2011) talks of the need to cultivate an African language management tradition that considers the precise character of the African language situation, rather than relying on one that mechanically transfers

theories of language management from other contexts and traditions, developed on the basis of data alien to African experiences. Most studies on language management in the context of FLP have focused on immigrant families, especially in the West (e.g. Kasatkina 2011; Schwartz and Moin 2011; Pérez Báez 2013; Altman, Burstein-Feldman, Yitzhaki, Armon-Lotem and Walters 2014). Mwaniki (2011: 255) retorts that the African tradition should reject any attempts at 'foisting a language management theory on African data and circumstance, when such a theory is not generated from African data and circumstance'. The present study profits from and builds on insights afforded by the Europe/Asia-Pacific and the Israeli American traditions of language management. Kheirkhah (2016) attempted to fuse insights from FLP, language socialisation and language management to understand how family interactions among Iranian immigrant families in Sweden in the context of child bilingual development impacted language maintenance and shift (Kheirkhah 2016). To do that, Kheirkhah (2016) analysed spontaneous daily interactions in families of Persian and Kurdish language heritage. The study demonstrated that parents tended to encourage, and in some instances, to enforce the use of the heritage language in the home through the employment of such dynamic practices as the one-parent-one-language strategy in parent-child interactions as well as demanding that children use the heritage languages in adult-child interactions (Kheirkhah 2016). These language management strategies or 'heritage lessons' fostered a rich environment for language development among the children. In some instances, especially where children addressed their parents in Swedish, parents would feign or 'display non-understanding' (Kheirkhah 2016: 38). However, the parents' focus on the child's undesirable language use was to the detriment of the child's conversational contributions and threatened the social atmosphere of the interaction (Kheirkhah 2016). This shows the kinds of trade-offs that parents are willing to make to encourage heritage language development in their children.

Related to Kheirkhah (2016), Ren and Hu (2013) sought to demonstrate the importance of FLP and family literacy practices for 'early language and literacy acquisition in the familial milieu' (Ren and Hu 2013: 63). By means of a comparison of two Chinese-English bilingual families in Singapore, they demonstrated 'how such language socialisation processes such as prolepsis, syncretism and synergy mediate the influence of larger sociocultural context on the focal children's bilingual and bi-literacy learning at home' (ibid.). In particular, they showed how family members' cultural backgrounds, education and parental aspirations for their children impacted on language management. Ren and Hu's study illuminates the present study in significant ways. It demonstrates the efficacy of Spolsky's (2004; 2009) notion of language management in understanding language policy issues in the home domain. It also sheds light on how various parental language-management strategies such as storybook reading, tuition classes and utilising siblings have a potential to shape language practices and acquisition patterns in the family.

At the macro level, national language policy can be a precursor to language shift. For example, 'the use of a common language in the service of a national ideology' (Seloni and Sarfati 2012: 10) has in many instances triggered language shift. The official 'Turkification' ideology in Turkey in the 1920s resulted in a language shift from Judeo-Spanish, leading to its endangerment (Seloni and Sarfati 2012). State-sanctioned campaigns such as the 'Citizen Speak Turkish!' also compelled speakers of Judeo-Spanish to assimilate into the Turkish ideology and language. In such situations, speaker attitudes can either perpetuate or resist the shift (Ó hlfearnáin 2013). By focusing on FLP and first language Irish speaker attitudes and community-based initiatives to negate the course of language shift, Ó hlfearnáin (2013) demonstrated the importance of collective responses and attitudes to language shift among the Gaeltacht Irish speakers (Ó hlfearnáin 2013). Deploying Fishman's RLS theory (1991), he showed that language awareness in the community rather than authority-led coercion appears to be the panacea to intergenerational transmission (Ó hlfearnáin 2013), thereby underlining the important role of micro-level language management and FLP.

De Houwer and Bornstein (2016) analysed parental language choices in child-directed speech. Informed by the view of parents as 'authorities' whose language practices and management can potentially impact the overall development of children's language, they focused on thirty-one bilingual mothers' self-reports of what language they used in mother-child interactions (De Houwer and Bornstein 2016). They demonstrated the centrality of regular and frequent language input

for intergenerational language transmission to take place. The present study profits from insights afforded by De Houwer and Bornstein, particularly in relation to the importance of parental language choices in addressing their children, which essentially is one of the language intervention strategies aimed at encouraging language development in children.

Studies on FLP and language management have demonstrated that despite explicit parental and multidirectional language management efforts, they do not always succeed in constraining children's language choices (e.g. Luykx 2005; Kheirhah 2016). Although parental language management is pivotal, its impact is at times curtailed by children's negative responses to language management, leading parents to terminate their language instructions (Kheirhah 2016) or resulting in parents themselves capitulating to children's preferred language practices (Luykx 2005). When this happens, Luykx (2005) and Kheirhah (2016) concede that it usually culminates in a renegotiation of FLP in parent-child interactions, leading to changes or modifications in 'their heritage language maintenance attempts owing to child-resistant agency in relation to family language policy' (Kheirhah 2016: 39).

In the Zimbabwean context, studies on minority language conservation have tended to discuss the dynamics of FLP and language management without explicitly mentioning these labels (e.g. Maseko, Dhlamini and Ncube 2017). Focus has also been placed on the impact of the national language policy on the conservation of minority languages (e.g. Nyika 2008; Nyota 2015). Maseko, Dhlamini and Ncube (2017) analysed how parental language practices and language choices impacted the intergenerational transmission of Tshwao in Zimbabwe. Like Nyika (2008), they used the reversing language shift theory as an analytical framework to understand the degrees of intergenerational disruption of Tshwao, especially considering its diminished use in the home domain.

Methodology

This study presents selected findings of a larger research project that investigated the impact of family language policy on the conservation of minority languages in Zimbabwe. Empirical data for this study were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with 28 L1 Tonga parents. Participants for the study were drawn from the Binga district in Matabeleland North province of Zimbabwe. Binga district is considered to be the epicentre of Tonga-speaking peoples in Zimbabwe (Ndhlovu 2009; Ndlovu 2014). Interviews were conducted over a six-month period, stretching from January 2015 to July of the same year. Each interview lasted between one and a half to two hours. To be eligible to participate in this study, participants had to be first language speakers of Tonga, as well as fathers or mothers from nuclear families. Of the total number of parents interviewed, 64.3% ($n = 18$) were fathers and 35.7% ($n = 10$) were mothers. Participants' ages ranged from 35 to 70 years. Because all participants had Tonga-Ndebele bilingual abilities, interviews were conducted in Ndebele, with the consent of the participants. The first author is an L1 Ndebele speaker, hence Ndebele was the common language. Participants were selected through a triangulated sampling toolkit, pivoting on purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The initial primary participants were selected through purposive sampling, also known as judgemental sampling (Marshall 1996) or convenience sampling (Ruane 2005). The first author used his networks from previous research activities in Binga to draw up a purposive sample. To increase the sample size, snowball sampling, also known as chain referral sampling (Ruane 2005) was used. To that end, the purposive sample provided us with referrals of other Tonga parents with similar profiles who could potentially participate in the study. This was done with successive referrals until no new perspectives emerged from the interviews.

An interview guide (Appendix 1) was generated to guide the interview process. Some questions were formulated around issues to do with parents' levels of language awareness, while others elicited the explicit and deliberate strategies the parents deployed to impose or modify children's language practices. Because this study focused on parental perspectives, some questions revolved around the parents' own assessments of the impact of their language management on intergenerational transmission of Tonga. Interviews were recorded using an audio recorder and later transcribed and translated into English. Interview data were then subjected to thematic content analysis. This was done to identify common themes emerging from the data for discussion.

Presentation and discussion of findings

Language awareness, parental impact beliefs and language management in the family

Parental awareness regarding the threat of language endangerment has in many cases been a catalyst to language practices and management that are intended to disrupt the course of the threat. Such awareness usually push speakers into readiness to defend their language, often resulting in an increased desire to maintain it and promote its acquisition and use by their children (Schwartz 2008; Kheirkhah 2016). Language awareness therefore emboldens speakers to take corrective steps to redress any predicament their language might face (Kheirkhah 2016) by developing strong impact beliefs (De Houwer 2009) and a tendency to appreciate and value their language. The notion of ‘impact belief’ relates to the degree that parents believe that their own language practices can influence the language acquisition processes of their children (Pérez Báez 2013). Because impact beliefs are linked to the importance or value that speakers attach to their language, which is by far the most important of the factors that promote or prevent language shift (Ravindranath 2009), parents with strong impact beliefs are likely to employ language management consistent with this disposition.

Findings of this study reveal a strong sense of language awareness among the Tonga parents who were interviewed. Their language awareness ultimately instilled strong impact beliefs in them. Responses from the majority of parents show that they attached a lot of value to Tonga as a carrier of culture and as a medium through which they effectively communicate among themselves and with their ancestors. Some participants, for example, indicated that they valued the Tonga language so much that they were prepared to do anything possible in its defence. This is demonstrated in the following interview excerpt:

Ulimi lwethu luqakatheke okumangalisayo. Yiyo insika yethu njalo yilo olusixhumanisa lamadlozi ethu. Nxa umuntu engasalwazi ulimi lwakhe uyabe ezenza njani nxa sokumele kuthethelwe. Kungakho ke kumele silulondoloze ulimi lwesiTonga.

(Our home language is very important beyond measure. It is our mainstay and the medium through which we communicate with our ancestors. If one abandons their mother tongue, what will he or she possibly do when the need to communicate with the ancestors arises? It is for this reason that the Tonga language must be conserved.)

The participant’s language awareness is likely to arouse an attachment to the language that may lead him/her to take explicit steps to conserve it. The interview excerpt above reverberates with a view expressed by another respondent who pointed out that

Ulimi lwethu lwangekhaya luqakathekile kakhulu. Singabantu besiTongeni nje ngenxa yolimi. Sizwanana kangcono nxa sikhulumisana ngalo ulimi lolu. Kungakho nje kuqakathekile ukuthi siludlulisele phambili kusizukulwana ezilandelayo.

(Our mother tongue is very important. We are who we are because of it. We understand each other better when we communicate among ourselves in it. It is therefore important that we also pass on this language to the next generation.)

As demonstrated in the excerpts above, respondents felt that Tonga should be conserved as it is the mainstay of their rich Tonga cultural heritage and a symbol of identity which defines their very existence. Maseko, Dhlamini and Ncube (2017) have shown how the absence of similar language awareness and sense of identity has precipitated language shift among Tshwao speakers in Tsholotsho, Zimbabwe. Unlike Tshwao speakers, high levels of language awareness among the Tonga engendered in them strong impact beliefs and an inclination to effect language intervention strategies that foster the active use of the Tonga language by their children. Pérez Báez (2013) also demonstrated the importance of impact belief and particularly how its absence has resulted in the diminished use of San Lucas Quiavini Zapotec, a language spoken by Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles, California. As a result of the lack of parental impact beliefs, language intervention factors external to the family, such as school, have added unchecked impetus to the process of language shift (Pérez Báez 2013).

Parental language management strategies in the home

The study established that when faced with situations where children's language practices conflicted with parental language ideologies, parents have at their disposal a variety of language management strategies or 'parental capital' (Curd-Christiansen 2013: 2) which they deploy to achieve desired language practices. 'These practices can be managed and controlled implicitly and explicitly through a range of actions' (Kheirkhah 2016: 11). Most of the common language management and intervention strategies used by parents pivoted on the 'proscription of all things not Tonga' in the home. Parental levels of language awareness and their concomitant strong impact beliefs led them to articulate and reify extremely monolingual pro-Tonga FLPs. These FLPs were reproduced through Tonga-centred language management which enforced Tonga-only FLPs. To achieve this, parents deployed nuanced measures.

Some of the common language management strategies included, for example, the promotion of family literacy practices to cultivate and encourage a reading culture in Tonga among the children. A number of parents ($n = 20$) reported that they regularly exposed their children to Tonga literature. For example, one parent submitted that

Ngilamabhuku esiTonga ekhaya. Abantwabami ngiyaba forcer ukuthi bawabale nxa bengaphuma esikolo lange weekend ukuze bafunde ukukhuluma ilanguage yakibo
(I have a collection of Tonga books at home that I make sure the children read every day after school and on weekends.)

Other parents explained how they went out their way to source Tonga literature for the sake of their children's language development. This is evident in the following excerpts:

Nxa ngingatshayisana lebhuku lesiTonga angilitshiyi. Ngihle ngenze imizamo yokuliphathela abantwana ukuthi bayebala ngekhaya
(If I come across any Tonga book, I make an effort to take it home with me so my children can read it as well.)

Sometimes ngiyake ngibhale ama short stories ngesiTonga ngisenzela ukuthi abantwana babale then bachasise ukuthi bazweni
(I sometimes write short stories in Tonga for my children to read and I then ask them to explain what they have understood.)

From the interview excerpts above, parents believed that facilitating family literacy activities as a language management strategy had some of the desired effect of cultivating Tonga proficiency among children, thereby positively impacting on intergenerational transmission. As evident from the interviews, parents went even further to assume the role of language teachers to their children by cultivating Tonga proficiency in the children through reading Tonga books and short stories for their children in Tonga 'child-centred contexts' (Smith-Christmas 2014: 516). These contexts foreground Tonga as 'the child-centred code' (Smith-Christmas 2014: 518). Other studies have also demonstrated the importance of family literacy activities in child language competency development (e.g. Schwartz 2008; Curd-Christiansen 2009; Schwartz and Verschik 2013). These practices expose children to regular and frequent language input (De Houwer and Bornstein 2016). Pérez Báez (2013) and Seloni and Sarfati (2013) have also shown how parents in some contexts have deployed similar family literacy and cultural activities to enhance intergenerational transmission and resistance to language shift.

Besides the employment of family literacy activities, some parents ($n = 24$) reported the practice of encouraging and participating in conversation with children exclusively in Tonga. This strategy is captured by the response below:

Mina ngi strict ngolimi. Abantwabami ngenza isiqiniseko ukuthi nxa bekhuluma lami, basebenzisa isiTonga kuphela. Nxa bengasesbenzisa eyinyi language ngiyazitshaya umuntu ongezwanga. Ngiyabakhuthaza njalo ukuthi lanxa bebodwa bakhulumisane ngesiTonga.
(I am strict when it comes to language. I demand that children speak to me only in Tonga. I even feign not understanding if they use any other language when they address me. I also encourage children to speak in Tonga even among themselves when playing.)

In extreme cases, some parents reported how they have gone to the extent of explicitly 'banning' the use of any language that is not Tonga in the home. This practice is intended to enforce an extremely pro-Tonga FLP. To discourage the use of other languages at home, some parents introduced sanctions such as non-response when addressed in a language other than Tonga, admonishing the children for using a language other than Tonga at home, reacting angrily when addressed in any language other than Tonga by the children, while 'incentivising' the consistent use of Tonga by the children. The interview excerpt below vividly captures this language management practice:

Kwami akukhulunywa limi okungayisiso isiTonga. Vele lokho akwenziwa. Ngumtetho ongaqanyulwayo, njalo everyone uyakwazi lokho. Kodwa ke sometimes ngyabapha abantwana into ezinjenge ziwiji nxa bethe bawulandela lumtetho ukwenzela ukuba khuthaza.
(In my home, no language other than Tonga is allowed. That cannot happen. It's like a law. It's a law that cannot be broken by anyone. However, I reward my children with goodies such as sweets for consistently abiding by that law just to reinforce the practice.)

In certain instances, some parents ($n = 15$) indicated that to expose their children to language input, they enabled regular contact between children and members of the extended family who are fluent in Tonga. For example, one parent explained how he facilitated and encouraged school holiday visits by children to their grandparents and other relatives who are fluent in Tonga:

Nxa izikolo zivaliwe, ngihlala ngibahambisa kogogo wabo. Ugogo wabo uyasitshaya isiTonga ngokupheleleyo. Lapho ke yikho abafika basifunde kuhle.
(During school holidays, I usually allow my children to visit their grandmother. She is very fluent in Tonga. That way, the chances of learning it are increased.)

The practice of sending children on regular visits to their grandparents and other relatives during school holidays as a language management strategy was intended to foster regular access to language input. A number of parents indicated that grandparents are some of the most fluent speakers of Tonga. Therefore contact between grandparents and grandchildren was considered to be an effective strategy for exposing children to the Tonga language beyond the nuclear family. The exploitation of the traditional extended family structure as a language intervention measure is a creative strategy of blending heritage and new practices (Ren and Hu 2013). This strategy is also known as syncretism (Gregory, Long and Volk 2004, cited in Ren and Hu 2013). Syncretic practices involving children and their older siblings, their parents, their grandparents and other supporters in their lives have proven to be important and effective in children's language development (Ren and Hu 2013). Essentially, grandmothers play pivotal roles not only as caretakers and agents of language socialisation for the children, but also in FLP (Ren and Hu 2013). Through their everyday interaction with their grandchildren, their language practices become important 'funds of knowledge' (Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez 1992: 133) that can facilitate children's language and literacy development (Ren and Hu 2013). The term 'funds of knowledge' was deployed by Moll et al. (1992: 133. cited in Schwartz and Verschik 2013: 9) to refer to the 'historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being'. The importance of a family external environment has also been demonstrated by Schwartz and Moin (2011). They cite the case of South African immigrant children in Australia whose parents, upon being dissatisfied with their L1 knowledge in Afrikaans, had to seek an external

supporting sociolinguistic environment by relocating to residential suburbs with high concentration of South African immigrants so as to increase their children's exposure to Afrikaans (Schwartz and Moin 2011).

Some of the interviewed parents ($n = 18$) reported the use of cultural activities such as the retelling of folktales in the Tonga language as one of the common language management strategies. Such activities cultivate in the children an intimate connection with the language and the culture depicted in the folktales. A similar strategy was found to be common among Chinese-English bilingual families in Singapore. In trying to cultivate her grandchildren's proficiency in their heritage Chinese language, their grandmother frequently read them Chinese fairy tales, only in the Chinese language (Ren and Hu 2013). These findings therefore show that Tonga parents also creatively use their parental capital as well as linguistic and cultural resources to negotiate and co-construct their FLP (Curdt-Christiansen 2013).

Proscription of 'all things not Tonga': Minority rights interfering with majority rights?

While family literacy practices and other parental capital presented and discussed in this study constitute important language intervention strategies by parents, the proscription and imposition of sanctions for the use of languages other than Tonga at home run counter to Fishman's caution. In particular, this intervention disregards the advice that all efforts must be implemented in such a way that minority language rights do not interfere with majority language rights. Interview data show that engaged parents have a very strong sense of language ownership and loyalty, which partly explains their predominantly pro-Tonga FLP. Their FLP thrives largely because of the support from external familial domains such as the larger community and its institutions. For example, in the quest to promote the use of Tonga in the home and other spaces beyond, the Tonga community in Binga, with the support of the district council and some Tonga chiefs, once proposed banning the teaching of Ndebele in Binga schools, arguing that parents who wanted their children to learn Ndebele should transfer them to neighbouring Nkayi and Lupane districts (Muponde 2014). Banning the use of languages other than Tonga in the home and other spaces, while driven by the desire for Tonga conservation, could be detrimental to other people's rights, particularly if the same practice is reproduced in external familial domains. Because RLS efforts are implemented in pursuit of linguistic democracy, this practice could be viewed as advocating for cultural imperialism by attempting to hegemonically dominate its new networks, thereby creating a vicious cycle (Fishman 1991). Different languages have different roles to play in a multilingual society and are useful to their speakers in various ways.

Fishman (1991) avers that RLS advocates need to embrace the benefits of bilingualism and avoid viewing it in a bad light or as a threat, and see it as an enriching phenomenon in the multicultural realities of modern society. An acknowledgement of this fact could provide helpful direction to parents as they articulate, implement and enforce their language interventions. This may inform parental flexibility, which underpins successful FLP (Schwartz and Verschik 2013). In developing Tonga competency in children, emphasis could be placed on child-centred approaches, invariably characterised by a consideration of pragmatic flexibility of language choices as well as the consideration of sociolinguistic, situational and interpersonal factors (Palvin and Boyd 2013, cited in Schwartz and Verschik 2013). Although this may be seen as being contradictory to the wishes of parents, Kopeliovich (2013: 250) suggests a 'happy lingual' approach, a strategy that

...reflects the positive emotional colouring of the complex processes related to the heritage language transmission, a special emphasis on the linguistic aspects of childrearing, unbiased attitude to diverse languages that enter the household and respect to the language preferences of the children.

Distilling from the above, RLS efforts in the home could benefit from embracing bilingualism to minimise antagonism and lethargy from the children. The 'happy lingual' approach in language management can potentially reduce 'fights against natural sociolinguistic forces' (Schwartz and Verschik 2013: 15) which may result in children wholly gravitating towards the dominant language. It

represents an ecological approach which takes ‘the sociolinguistic reality as it is: without unrealistic expectations and without criticism’ (Kopeliovich 2013: 273).

Conclusion

This study focused on L1 Tonga parents’ perspectives regarding the language management strategies that they employed to promote the use of Tonga by the children at home. The findings demonstrate high levels of language awareness among Tonga parents, which concomitantly leads to high-impact beliefs among parents to control the language practices of their children in the home. To do that, parents pursued a pro-Tonga family language policy by employing a range of language management strategies that fuse family literacy practices with cultural resources to cultivate Tonga language proficiency among the children. Some language management strategies were found to border on the minority language rights interfering with the majority rights. The proscription of other languages, although driven by parents’ desire to conserve Tonga, could be problematic in the sense that it may be viewed as disregarding the benefits of additive bilingualism.

Note

This article is based on findings from the first author’s PhD research.

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Appendix 1

Interview guide for Tonga parents

1. Please confirm the following; that you consider yourself a Tonga first language speaker; that you are a parent to at least one child of school-going age.
2. Besides Tonga, what other language(s) do you speak?
3. Comment on any other languages spoken in your home by other family members
4. What would you consider to be the importance of conserving your mother tongue? (Tonga)
5. As far as language practices within your home are concerned, what language do you prefer to use; and what are your preferences for your children? (i.e. what language(s) do you usually use and what language(s) do you prefer your children to use when they are at home?)
6. What are the reasons that motivate the preferred language practices that you just stated?
7. In cases where children's practices conflict with your preferences, what strategies do you employ to encourage conformity to your preferred language practices (i.e. what steps do you take to make sure children use language the way you want as a parent?)
8. How effective do you think your interventions have been?