SOAS Working Papers in Linguistics. Volume 21 (2023): 64 – 82

Reflections on how Family Language Policies have contributed to language shift among Yorùbás in London[1]

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Abstract
This paper presents a small-scale, qualitative, interview-based investigation into Yorùbá families' language policies, according to the tripartite model of practice, management, and beliefs. The objective was to determine factors that have resulted in the second-generation of Yorùbá in London not being active speakers of their heritage language. Findings suggest that first-generation parents were not intentional about transmitting Yorùbá to the next generation because they did not perceive any value in language maintenance. Language management was primarily confined to safeguarding English; any explicit Yorùbá policies were not sustained, and a laissez-faire management style arose as a theme. As a result, the home was not an environment that supported the development of Yorùbá. In terms of language practices, the quantity and quality of language input was sufficient for the second-generation to acquire rudimentary working knowledge of Yorùbá, however because participants felt no impetus to speak their mother's tongue, English was adopted as their 'mother tongue'. Beliefs about language were largely centred around economic principles where value was ascribed on the basis of the ability to create numerous and economically prosperous connections. The value and utility of Yorùbá to create connections with culture and heritage has only begun to be considered important in the wake of a recent attitude shift.

Keywords: Heritage Languages, Yorùbá, Family Language Policy, Language Shift

1. Yorùbá in London

The Yorùbá people and language have travelled far and wide – willingly and forcibly – across the globe. The migration relevant to this study is that of post-WWII movements to the UK. One of the primary purposes for this wave was education. The colonial legacy of Britain in Nigeria had imposed English as the country's official language, and an English education increased the possibility of prestigious jobs back home. In the mid-twentieth century, Nigeria's economy was prosperous, and these early expatriates were among the wealthier communities of emigrants to Britain. However, in the 1980s, motivation for migration shifted from education to escaping the declining socioeconomic and political situation in Nigeria. The succession of military regimes, coupled with the high levels of inflation resulting from the stifling IMF structural adjustment policies, led to the flight of both elite and middle-class Nigerians seeking a better life abroad (Akinrinade & Ajibewa 2003). The vast majority made their homes in London. The largest population of Nigerians grew up in Peckham around the community of Yorùbá owned shops and Nigerian churches and mosques so that the area has come to be known affectionately as Little Lagos. Despite the Yorùbá people appearing to replicate the comforts of home, the

[1] My sincerest gratitude for the very constructive critiques made by Kendall King, and for the attention to detail provided by Selena Hong in reviewing this paper.

lamentations of language and cultural loss with the emergence of the second generation[2] has become a common narrative. Over two decades ago Oyètade´(1993: 90) wrote about the adolescent second-generation:

> They were all born or raised in London and cannot speak the language they considered to be their mother tongue, or they speak a few words of it and they feel inadequate and want to learn more.

And a BBC article (White 2005) quoting a Yorùbá interviewee stated that:

> The trouble is that many London Yorùbás have neglected to pass their traditions on to their children. A few insist on Yorùbá being spoken at home, but many have given up the struggle of teaching Yorùbá to unenthusiastic children, and English has become the family language.

According to the 2011 census (Office for National Statistics 2013), in England and Wales, 14,914 people (0.03% of all residents aged three and over) spoke Yorùbá as a main language. In London, 10,119 people (0.13% of all residents aged three and over) spoke Yorùbá as a main language. We can draw from this data that Yorùbá speakers are concentrated in London. However, this figure does not account for those who identify as ethnically and culturally Yorùbá but who would not speak it as a 'main language', i.e., the second-generation participants in this study[3].

2. Language shift

Situations of language contact give rise to modification in habitual language behaviour. It also often results in asymmetries where power and status translate social difference into social deficiency (Edwards 1999: 101). Language shift (LS), i.e. the gradual displacement of one language by another, therefore occurs where there is a difference in prestige attached to the languages (Hornberger & King 1997 as cited in Kigamwa 2016). LS is much more common than language maintenance among the children of immigrants in countries where there is one dominant language (Fenigsen 1998; Fishman 1991; Portes & Rumbaut 2005).

In the writings of scholars such as Oyètáde´(1993) and Adéniyi (2016) and via social media and online content (Daramola 2017; Feyi 2014; Kuku 2016; Spectra 2013a; Spectra 2013b), there is plenty of evidence suggesting that there has been a 'mother tongue' shift from Yorùbá to English between the first and second generations of Nigerians in Britain. Therefore, the prevailing assumption of this study is that the second-generation Yorùbá cannot speak the language of their parents. It is consequently concerned with the disruption of intergenerational language transmission (Fishman 1991); where the

[2] In this study, 'first-generation' is used to denote the Nigerians born abroad who migrated and settled in the UK without their parents. They are the first generation of Nigerians to live in the UK in the modern era. Consequently 'second-generation' refers to their children. This categorisation includes those who were born abroad but who migrated with their families as children as well as those born in Britain. Some research has delineated a category of 'Generation 1.5' (Rumbaut 2004) to refer to the former. Although the division may provide insight into variations in FLP, this initial study will not make a distinction between generation 1.5 and the second for reasons mentioned in **7**.

[3] Further detailed demographic information on Yorùbás in the UK is difficult to come by. One may find information on Nigerians as a national group but rarely is it broken down further into ethnic or linguistic sub-divisions.

ordinarily assumed process of passing one's native language to their children has been interrupted.

The traditional conceptualisation of LS is provided by Fishman's three-generational model of migrant families (1991). This model presumes that the first-generation add the new dominant language to their repertoire, the second-generation grow up bilingual and a third generation becomes monolingual in the dominant language. This pattern is pervasive but not evidenced in all communities. As it was based on Europeans-ancestry groups in the USA, its application to migrants who have moved from African and Asian countries which have colonial histories needs to be questioned because language use in the diaspora is influenced by language status and practices in the home countries (Kigamwa 2018; Canagarajah 2008).

In a study on language shift in the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, Canagarajah (2008) demonstrated how the family and consequently their languages practices, are shaped by historical relations; reproducing ideological values and power inequalities established in colonial Sri Lanka. In many former colonies, like Nigeria, the colonial language is used in high status activities and local languages are ring fenced into the family domain (Phillipson 1992: 27). The dominance asserted and maintained between English and other languages in a colonial context is what Phillipson (1992) referred to as *Linguistic Imperialism*. Such a system ensures that indigenous languages are stigmatised and devalued in comparison to the colonial one, and a lack of proficiency in the latter closes doors to opportunities. English is essential for upward mobility and privileged positions in society, and acquiring proficiency is therefore seen as desirable by the indigenous populations. Thus, the colonial history of Nigeria would likely contribute its challenges to language transmission and maintenance of Yorùbá language in the UK.

3. Family Language Policy

Schwartz (2010: 172) notes that research in the field of LS and maintenance has underscored the role of the family because of its critical role in forming a child's linguistic environment. Family Language Policy (FLP), as a field of enquiry, conceptualises the family's role in phenomena such as LS and maintenance. Initial definitions emphasized the explicit and overt planning of language use within the home setting (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry 2008) although, the reality is that only a small percentage of families make definitive choices on which languages to speak and then strategize on how to raise their children as multilingual. All FLPs lie along a continuum from highly planned to invisible, and decisions regarding language use at times arise spontaneously and without discussion (Schwartz 2010). In recent years, scholars have demonstrated the value of family policies that are implicit, covert, unarticulated and occurring because of ideological beliefs, in understanding processes of language change (Okita 2002; Kopeliovich 2010; King & Fogle 2017; Curdt-Christiansen 2018).

Conceptualising family language use within the vein of *policy* emphasises the agency that brings about a particular linguistic environment. It has also meant that the majority of research has adopted a Spolskian (2004) model where language policy is analysed according to the three components of: language practices (what people habitually do with language), language management (efforts to modify language practices) and language beliefs (what people think about language and its value). Using this model enables

researchers to examine how beliefs play out in the level of practice and then how practices, including management and intervention may or may not contribute to the development of a heritage language[4] (Smith-Christmas 2015).

4. Objectives

The primary objective is to determine factors that have contributed towards the shift in use of Yorùbá as the language of the home within British-Nigerian families. The FLPs that may accelerate or impair heritage language maintenance vary between speech communities. Although the trends, patterns and challenges of intergenerational language transmission have been widely documented for decades, there has been a disproportionate focus on WEIRD (white, European, industrialised, rich and democratic) populations (Wright & Higgins 2022). Within the framework of FLP, studies focusing on the experiences of the African diaspora are relatively few (see Kamuangu 2008; Gafaranga 2010; Obeng 2010; Kigamwa 2016). In the British context this is even more markedly so, with the notable exception of Abdullahi & Li Wei's (2021) research on Somali families. The Yorùbá population has been in Britain for over half a century, yet their language choices and factors influencing them have not been observed in a substantive way. This study is an attempt to redress this imbalance. Knowledge of this speech community can only illuminate the field of FLP and further our understanding of LS within different migrant and linguistic communities.

Within literature on FLP there is often a disproportionate focus on reports from parents, with the children being forgotten partners in negotiations on language use in the home. Parents are viewed as the 'architects' of policies so their ideologies and attempts at managing language are frequently at the centre of a family's linguistic narrative. A few recent studies have emphasized children's role and agency in the process (Gafaranga 2010; Kopeliovich 2010; Schwartz 2010; Smith-Christmas 2016), however it is rare that their views are at the centre of the analysis. Consequently, this paper presents primarily the reflections of the second-generation on their bilingual development and FLPs throughout their lives as an alternative perspective to investigating LS. Often the viewpoint of those impacted by the policies is also missing from analysis in FLP research and such reports could be used to strengthen or call into question the validity of data collected from parents. It is hoped that this in turn would contribute to a deeper understanding of how LS may be arrested and reversed.

4.1. Research questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Has there been a shift away from the use of Yorùbá between generations of families living in the UK?
2. How do Yorùbá families use language within the home; what are their language practices?
3. How has language been managed within the Yorùbá families?

[4] Languages within a migrant or diasporic context are generally viewed against a backdrop of dominant languages, and thus always considered as 'other' (Fishman 1991; Valdés 2014). Although the term community language is usually favoured within the UK, the fact is that the Yorùbás in Britain also use English in the communities of which they are a part. It is because a salient feature of a heritage language is the personal connection and ability to act as a marker of cultural heritage and identity, that this paper will refer to Yorùbá as a heritage language (HL).

4. What beliefs do Yorùbá families in London hold about language?
5. How have the beliefs, practices, and management of Yorùbá language led to intergenerational language shift?

5. Data collection & analysis

This paper presents a small-scale qualitative study consisting of semi-structured interviews with second-generation Yorùbá adults in London, and where possible their parents. It is an attempt to understand the factors that have contributed to an intergenerational shift away from the heritage language use within the family. The analysis utilizes the tripartite model of family language policy. For the purposes of this study the 'family' is conceptualized as the nuclear family consisting of parent(s) – or those in loco parentis – and child(ren).

5.1. The participants

Table 1 shows a breakdown of all participants, with names changed for anonymity. SOAS University of London offered a Yorùbá language course on which most of the students enrolled at time of writing were of Yorùbá heritage. Initially, participants for this study were recruited from the language course then subsequently through referral sampling. The requirement that second-generation participants were born and raised in the UK until adulthood was required; however, during the recruitment process it emerged that a significant proportion have had transnational lives. Some participants were born in the UK but lived in Nigeria for extended periods during their childhood before returning, and others who were born in Nigeria and had migrated as infants or children also identified as British-Nigerian[5]. The latter in some sociological studies are termed 'generation 1.5' (Rumbaut 2004). They are differentiated from second-generation on the basis that primary socialisation would yield different outcomes. However, the 'one-and-a-half' generation were included in this study as they also reflect the truth of Yorùbá families in Britain and any differences would contribute interesting findings for analysis.

Interviewing siblings was a way to create multiple points of entry in a family's language policies, corroborate stories and mitigate against inaccurate reports. The intention was also to interview parents of each second-generation participant to add a multidimensional layer to the analysis. However, in many cases not all members of the same family were willing or able to participate.

In order to confirm the assumption that there had been a disruption in Yorùbá language transmission, Yorùbá language competence was established among participants on the basis of self-reporting. Each person was asked what languages they spoke, how fluently, then asked to compare their levels of comprehension and production across all the languages in their repertoire. They were also asked about situations in which they would use Yorùbá in order to understand the role that the language plays in their lives.

Although self-reporting is not the most accurate method to assess language ability, the lack of readily available level tests for Yorùbá meant it was the only option available. In

[5] While the term could be used to refer to a Nigerian citizen of British heritage; in this paper, it denotes those of Nigerian heritage with geographical ties to Britain by virtue of being born or primarily socialised in the UK. It is thus used to refer to the second-generation rather than first-generation of migrants and is an ideological rather than a political definition.

addition to some limitations of self-report such as social desirability bias, the reliance on retrospective data also throws up the potential for inaccurate reporting of past events due to the fragility and malleability of memories. While an ethnographic study with the ability to observe daily interactions would be beneficial to triangulate the data, this study was subject to the constraints of time. In the absence of an option to conduct a longitudinal study this is a good starting point as perception of events that determine behaviour may be equally as important as what actually transpired, particularly when trying to uncover ideologies.

5.2. Data analysis

Prior to every interview, participants were given a copy of a consent form to read and sign. Interviews typically lasted one hour and were recorded. Rather than transcribing all interviews in their entirety, I began by closely listening to the recordings as there was a lot of information that would not have been relevant for the research concerned. During the second listen, I transcribed any data that I believed would be useful and relevant in answering the question as suggested by Bryman (2016: 483). Although the procedure of transcribing the entire interview has certain advantages, the time constraint for this project also necessitated expediency. In coding the transcribed data, I followed Auerbach & Silverstein's (2003) method of selecting relevant text from the raw data, identifying repeating ideas and then organising them into themes. The themes were categorised under the concepts of language practice, management, and ideology according to the Spolskian framework of FLP and analysed using previous research and literature.

Table 1: Summary of Participants

	Age range	Genera-Tion	Home	Relationship to other participants (if any)
Fọlárìn	22-25	2nd	London	Sibling to Tókẹ́
Tókẹ́	22-25	2nd	London	Sibling to Fọlárìn
Tolú	22-25	2nd	London	n/a
Adé	25-29	2nd	London Festac age 10 – 14 (Boarding school)	n/a
Fisáyọ̀ Fáwọlé	25-29	2nd	London aged 0 – 3; Lagos age 3 – 10; London age 10+	n/a
Mrs. Fáwọlé	60-64	1st	Lagos	Fisáyọ̀'s Mother
Mr. Fáwọlé	60-64	1st	Lagos	Fisáyọ̀'s Father
Daniel	30-34	2nd	London	n/a
Ibi	30-34	2nd	Ibadan age 0-5 London age 5+	n/a
Kìitán	30-34	2nd	London	n/a
Andy	30-34	2nd	Jos age 0-10 (Boarding school) London age 10+	n/a
Dùnní	25-29	2nd	London	Sibling to Gbenga

Gbenga	30-34	2nd	London	Sibling to Dùnní
Ms. Dábírí	60-64	1st	Ibadan	Mother of Dùnní & Gbenga

6. Findings

The assumption that intergenerational language shift has taken place was born out because the second-generation participants reported not being able to speak Yorùbá beyond a few phrases. All participants reported being able to understand Yorùbá to varying degrees or infer meaning when spoken to, however no one had any literacy skills in the HL. A few participants used Yorùbá in the interviews, but it was primarily to demonstrate phrases they were familiar with rather than instances of code-switching. The self-reported level of fluency and comprehension of Yorùbá would allow us to conclude that the second-generation participants are receptive bilinguals or latent speakers (Basham & Fathman 2008). Having been raised in an environment where the HL was spoken, they acquired comprehension and advanced phonological production, but they did not become confident speakers as their receptive skills surpass productive skills. They tended to be hesitant to speak and have a low estimation of their language ability but remembered common expressions and emotion-laden vocabulary.

6.1. Language practices

> **Andy (2nd Gen):** *...that* [English] *is what we were speaking in the house. I grew up around Yorùbá speakers but yeah, that's what we'd speak in the house.*

The pattern of language use reported by the second-generation was in line with Pauwels' (2016: 91) observation that first-generation parents are likely to communicate through the HL with each other and with same-age or older relatives. Interactions between first and second-generation was predominantly through English: parents spoke to their children in English more often than Yorùbá and the children responded in English, and it was the language used between siblings. This finding confirms what other studies looking at intergenerational language transmission have found: children growing up with two languages invariably learn to speak the majority language of the wider environment (De Houwer 2007).

The majority of Yorùbá conversation that surround the second-generation was not directed at them but towards other adults:

> **Ibi (2nd Gen):** *Mum and Dad would actually be speaking Yorùbá to each other in full topics on something other than washing the plates, but we were never involved in those conversations.*
> **Andy (2nd Gen):** *I learned Yorùbá from my mum but not directly, she was always speaking to people around me and I'd always just pick it up like that.*

When parents did speak to their children in Yorùbá, they practiced heavy code-switching. In some cases, it appeared that the switching was not intentional but simply a way to facilitate quicker communication. However, in some two-parent households the HL was used to obscure meaning and a switch in code signalled that the children were to be excluded from the present conversation:

> **Fọlárìn (2nd Gen):** *They'll start having a conversation in English over something important or like some drama or scandal and they'll switch to Yorùbá and often they'll say certain phrases which, like, imply that they don't want Fọlárìn to hear. Which I can pick up on.*

Response to this exclusion fell into two camps: either the children were disinterested in the language enough to be indifferent, or they used it as an opportunity to secretly acquire more Yorùbá knowledge:

> **Adé (2nd Gen):** *And she [Nan] would talk about me to my parents while I was there, or my parents would talk to her about me while I was there … But I'd sit there and like, listen … they might be talking about someone else, they might be talking about my Aunt or Uncle or whoever but they felt like they could have that full blown adult conversation in my presence cos I didn't understand what they were saying. And I'm there just there acting like I'm not listening. I'm listening to everything.*

Code-switching was also employed to give instructions or when disciplining children:

> **Adé(2nd Gen):***...so they would say, like the odd thing to me as parents would like...**wá ba mi gbá rimòt** [pass me the TV remote]*
>
> **Kúnmi:** *How did you learn Yorùbá?*
> **Dùnní (2nd Gen):** *From my mum speaking it to me as I was growing up...telling me off! [laughs]*
>
> **Kúnmi:** *How did you learn Yorùbá?*
> **Daniel (2nd Gen):** *From home, it would be people giving me commands*
>
> **Mr. Fáwọlé (1st Gen, Fisáỷọ̀'s father):** *And most of the time when you do speak Yorùbá to them – it just occurred to me now – you're telling them off.* ***"ma na ẹ o ... t'o ba kuro ni beyen"*** *[I'll spank you...if you don't move from there] you know, so it wasn't the greatest fun*

Pavlenko (2004) noted that sometimes bilingual parents code-switch to emphasize that they really mean what they are saying. When this happens, the HL can become associated with rebuke and correction (Kigamwa 2016). Although many of the participants laughed about this during the interviews, as Mr. Fáwọlé mentioned, such a practice created negative associations with the HL for the second-generation. One participant, Ibi (2nd Gen) cited it as the reason she forcibly willed herself to not understand Yorùbá as an adolescent.

Aside from the habitual language practices described, second-generation participants also referred to extra-linguistic habits that interfered with any attempts at speaking their HL. Often, Yorùbá mispronunciations were met with laughter. Yorùbá is a tonal language, so the same phoneme produced with different intonation results in several possible meanings. In the 'wrong' context, the mispronunciations may seem amusing. However, the Yorùbá children did not have enough comprehension of the language to distinguish the mistake and were thus excluded from the joke. It, therefore, appeared as though they were being 'laughed at', creating what some scholars have referred to as 'heritage

language anxiety' (Xiao & Wong 2014). Participants reported that this became a deterrent in attempts to engage with Yorùbá.

6.2. Language management

Explicit attempts to manage language were predominantly reserved for the promotion of "proper" English, and in some reports the prohibition of Nigerian-Pidgin as it contravened attempts at ensuring children spoke good English:

> **Andy (2nd Gen):** *We spoke Pidgin among ourselves…which my mum hated. She was like "why are you talking like that? I didn't send you there to start talking like that".*
>
> **Adé (2nd Gen):** *...so she didn't allow Pidgin in the house...my nan spoke the Queen's English to me and she always wanted me to speak English and she always wanted my English to be very, very...[pause]...polished, as it were... Like no ebonics, no slang, proper use of diction and that's what my nan wanted.*

Most participants did not report much of what could be construed as explicit management of Yorùbá. Almost across the board the second-generation felt that the HL was never expected, enforced nor encouraged. This is the reason why, when parents spoke to them in the Yorùbá, their practice was to respond in English. Occasionally extended family members would encourage them to converse in Yorùbá, however such instances were rare enough not to have any impact on their development of the HL.

> **Tolú (2nd Gen):** *We wasn't (sic) really encouraged or, we wasn't (sic) required to speak it. So, if your parents were speaking to you in English, it wasn't a requirement that you have to respond in Yorùbá or anything like that. There was just no major requirement for me to speak it as much.*

In one reported instance of explicit Yorùbá management, Fisáyọ̀'s parents – Mr. & Mrs. Fáwọlé – employed a language tutor for her and her brother when they were living in Nigeria. It is during this time that Fisáyọ̀ recalls speaking Yorùbá to their domestic help because her parents had imposed a Yorùbá only policy with their staff. In their interview, they stated two reasons for this: to expose the children to more of the HL and to reduce exposure to 'bad English'. It should be noted that Fisáyọ̀'s parents did not believe they alone were able to transmit the HL to the children despite it being their mother tongue. They blamed this on the linguistic situation in Nigeria:

> **Mr. Fáwọlé (1st Gen, Fisáyọ̀'s father):** *[Yorùbá] is not a language of science, you learn science in school. It's not a language of mathematics. It's not even...when you learn African literature, they called it African literature 'in English'. So, you're in this sea of English. So those of us who did 60:40 [Yorùbá/English] it was even good, because many parents did not. Including those I wouldn't consider as middle class as we were.*

Once back in London, the Yorùbá tuition did not continue and Fisáyọ̀ was aware of a shift in focus to English at the expense of the family's native tongue:

> **Fisáyọ̀ (2nd Gen):** *...when our parents moved here [to London] it feels like they were focused a lot more on like, teaching us English and wanting us to be good at English to the point where it almost seemed as if Yorùbá and other languages were not as important.*

Fisaýọ̀'s parents expressed a love for and pride in their culture and which is reflected in their intention to transmit the HL to the next generation. However, the desire to safeguard their children's English language acquisition is very evident in their management policy. When in the UK, the dominance of English was too powerful to attempt to overcome, so in an instance of ideological conflict, the Yorùbá management policies were abandoned. Curdt-Christiansen (2018: 431) had previously written that language ranking and ideological conflicts often invoke complex power relations that can inhibit intergenerational language transmission. English was permitted to take prime place within the family.

In contrast to Fisaýọ̀'s parents, Ms. Dábírí was very deliberate in her decision not to impose Yorùbá language on her children:

> **Ms. Dábírí:** *...it wasn't like I thought "we need to have Yorùbá lessons now". But I would speak it to them and they would understand. But because they're going to school they would also speak English. So English was the language they spoke but they understood Yorùbá.*

Her attitude corresponds inversely to the language management she was accustomed to during her childhood. In Nigerian schools, English was the medium of instruction imposed by the colonial powers. Pupils' native languages were prohibited in class with punitive measures taken against those who dared to speak 'vernacular'; a term that stigmatised the indigenous languages and held English up as the norm (Phillipson 1992: 40). Rather than follow the same controlling measures she had been subjected to, Ms. Dábírí decided to take a laissez-faire approach to language management and permit the children to speak what she believed was their language. She felt it sufficient that they understood her because, despite being bilingual, Yorùbá was at times more comfortable to use than English. The fact that she spoke her children's language made for an easy life for all the family. From their interviews both Ms. Dábírí's children, Gbenga and Dùnní, were very aware of their mother's policy for them to understand Yorùbá but not necessarily speak it. Consequently, they made no attempts to do so. The English language proficiency of all their extended family members further facilitated this.

> **Gbenga (2nd Gen):** *I think as a child you go for the path of least resistance so if an Aunty or Uncle is communicating to me in Yorùbá and I know that they could speak good English, then the best way for me to get my message across to them would not be for me to attempt to speak a language in a broken form. Let me speak the language that I can speak well, to communicate with them.*

Another parent who attempted to develop their children's Yorùbá through literacy was Tókẹ́'s father. She recalls him buying books for her and her brother, Fọlaŕìn. However, this initiative was short lived in the face of opposition from the children:

> **Tókẹ́ (2nd Gen):** *...but I think we weren't really interested at the time, and we were quite young ... we were kind of like "no" and it was made, kind of like an errand like, "you have to learn Yorùbá, you have to speak to us in Yorùbá" so it was more like a battle.*

Ms. Dábírí's attitude and Tókẹ́'s father's decision to abandon his language maintenance project is in line with Okita's (2002) findings that raising children bilingually is an

emotionally demanding and at times stressful task which may cause tension in the family. Additionally, as a single parent, maintaining the heritage language alone was a battle that Ms. Dábírí was not willing to fight.

6.3. Language beliefs

Yorùbá was on the whole not believed to be a useful language socially or economically. More useful languages mentioned in interviews were English, Spanish, French, Arabic, and Chinese (Mandarin) on the basis that knowing these would permit one to speak to many more people around the world, and Swahili in the context of Africa.

When discussing what may encourage a community to maintain their HL, most answers were predicated on economic prosperity:

> **Kunmi:** *What do you think would keep people speaking Yorùbá in London?*
> **Fọlaírìn (2nd Gen):** *Like, so, economic call for necessity, in the sense that if people in the culture need to speak Yorùbá to make money or do business, then yeah, they're gonna speak Yorùbá and that keeps it like, thriving and keeps it developing.*

Despite Yorùbá being perceived as having very little economic and social utility, its value is predicated entirely on its ability to connect one to Yorùbá culture and act as a marker of Yorùbá identity. Yorùbá language was seen as essentially for Yorùbá people:

> **Daniel (2nd Gen):** *It's a way to keep the culture, to keep the identity that I have as a descent of someone who is of the Yorùbá people.*

Parents giving their children Yorùbá names was the main marker of cultural identity. However, for a significant portion of their lives, the second-generation did not want to be connected to or identify with their heritage. They described how, as children and adolescents, they held negative attitudes towards Yorùbá culture and language; from feelings of disinterest to embarrassment at being spoken to in Yorùbá when in public, and contempt for their *"long and unpronounceable"* (Kìiťań, 2nd Gen) names that were frequently *"butchered"* (Adé, 2nd Gen).

Before the millennium and rise of Afrobeats in mainstream pop culture, being African in Britain was *"not cool"*. This sentiment was repeated across multiple interviews and no doubt stemmed from the overt racism and anti-immigrant narrative that was the mainstay of much of post-war Britain (Fryer 1984; Olusoga 2016). As a result of the stigmatisation that Africans in Britain faced, some participants attempted to obscure their heritage and align themselves with the more *"fashionable"* (Tolú, 2nd Gen) Caribbean population that had arrived a generation or two prior:

> **Kìiťań (2nd Gen):** *Well, I remember growing up being 'African' as a generalisation wasn't so cool, so I wasn't so into the culture as much, and my friends, a lot of them were Caribbean growing up. So I think that was part of why I like "urgh, keep that [Yorùbá] at a distance".*

Fishman (1991) states that such self-views reflect a destruction of self-esteem due to decades of negative comparisons with the dominant power. 'Linguistic self-hatred' (Labov 1966: 489 in Sallabank 2013) may not be too extreme a description in this case and was enough of a motivator for a Yorùbá child to anglicize or change their name and

relinquish association with their heritage. Tolú felt that a sense of pride in the culture and thus language was not evident in his community:

> **Tolú (2nd Gen):** *I don't think we were taught to be overly proud of where we're from. Or outside, around us people weren't proud to be Nigerian as much.*

Participants appeared to have a lot of insight into their attitudes as children and adolescents because they are markedly different to the ones they hold now. In recent years, coinciding with the visible rise of commercially successful Africans in mainstream media and entertainment (Abiade 2018), it is possible to observe what Sallabank (2010: 78) refers to as an "attitude shift" or potentially an "ideology shift" because it seems to be happening on a society-wide basis:

> **Dùnní (2nd Gen):** *Our culture or black cultures are a lot more accepted in England now, ever since afrobeats and stuff like that. It's not just about being Jamaican.*

7. Discussion

The objective of this study was to determine factors that have contributed to the intergenerational LS away from Yorùbá by the second-generation in London using the framework of family language policy. The three components of language policy are to some degree hierarchically structured; practice is often as a result of management (or lack thereof) and management tends to be influenced by beliefs or ideology. Consequently, most research into FLP has focused on parents' language beliefs; as the policy makers, what they believe underpins most decisions within the family. However, the micro level of daily interactions is also important for understanding how and why LS occurs. At times it is difficult to finely delineate the boundaries of practice, management and ideology as the components are interrelated and interdependent, nevertheless this study demonstrates the efficacy of the tripartite model for the analysis of intergenerational LS in a previously unstudied group.

Participants subscribed to the belief that language was a form of capital, the market value of which is determined by the number of speakers it gives one access to and the status of these speakers. The more valuable the interactions it makes possible, the more valued the language (Robichaud & Schutter 2012). The high status 'global languages' are well endowed in terms of linguistic capital which can then be converted to economic capital and used to improve one's socioeconomic standing (Bourdieu 1991; Curdt-Christiansen 2009). The most useful and valuable languages mentioned by participants, correspond to a list produced in a study conducted by the European Institute of Business Administration in which Kai Chan created a Power Language index (2017) to compare the efficacy of more than one hundred languages. It placed English, Spanish, French, Arabic and Chinese (Mandarin) in the top five positions demonstrating that participants' beliefs reflect wider global ideologies of language value and utility. In the modern world, the 'global' languages provide more opportunities for valuable linguistic transactions that may result in economic wealth. Yorùbá is just for Yorùbá people and consequently unable to fulfil this function. It is not a useful or valuable commodity for modern London living. Because of this belief by parents, there was no intention to transmit the heritage language to the next generation. According to Fishman (1991; 2001 cited in Kigamwa 2016: 44), effective HL learning is predicated upon intentional home use. The lack of intention on

the part of most parents discussed was the starting point for the family language practices and management that resulted in the disruption of intergenerational Yorùbá transmission.

At the level of management, we observed the primacy of English. Most steps to modify language were centred around safeguarding and ensuring the development of English with explicit policies created to curtail 'bad' varieties. The Queen's English and Nigerian Pidgin can be conceptualised as extreme ends of a language hierarchy. Pidgin was seen as a bastardisation of the prestigious English language; it was the code of the non-literate and considered an indicator of one's (low) proficiency in English. The general assumption was that those who used Nigerian-Pidgin have little or no formal education (Akande & Salami 2010: 70). Despite the reality being that most sections of society use Pidgin, both in Nigeria and the diaspora, the low status is such that parents felt that its use needed to be curbed among their children. The prestige of English means that parents insisted on its development in order to position their children for a good education and prospects of economic advancement (Bamgbose 2003: 423). The HL is not highly valued because it does not facilitate as many interactions that would offer the same economic or social advantages. Therefore, both the first and second-generations conduct a cost-benefit analysis and forgo the opportunity-cost of investing in low yielding HL. Instead, they spend time and effort on the more lucrative languages like English, French or Spanish because they have a higher potential for economic return.

Any attempts to develop Yorùbá proficiency were not upheld in the face of English dominance. An ideological conflict between cultural and economic value of language forced parents to reconsider educational priorities for their children and abandon deliberate language management strategies. Additionally, laissez faire policies that left matters to the laws of the linguistic marketplace strengthened the more powerful, dominant language (Phillipson 2003: 19). In the case of the Yorùbá it has meant that without active management or encouragement Gbenga, Dùnní and the other second-generation participants felt no impetus to speak their mother's tongue and English was adopted as their 'mother tongue'.

The *"sea of English"* (Mr. Fáwọlé) as was mentioned was conceived of as being too powerful for families to fend off alone and required external support. Being able to afford domestic help situates the family firmly within the Nigerian middle class[6] meaning they would have been interacting significantly with English in their daily lives. As a result, the amount of Yorùbá input for their children would inevitably be reduced hence the perceived difficulty in transmitting the language. Mr. Fáwọlé's comments implied that the lack of available Yorùbá input was seen as a direct result of their socioeconomic status; those of a lower class should have been more successful at language transmission because they would not have been subjected to the same onslaught of English as middle-class families. However, the force of English was such that even lower-class families were struggling against the tide. His comments demonstrate the hegemonic power of English in Nigerian society and more importantly in the minds of Nigerians, including those who emigrated. Under such a system of linguistic imperialism the minds and lives

[6] Although a proper class analysis is out of the scope of this paper, it was a recurring theme that cannot be ignored. All participants were from university educated families which reflect the demographic of the initial wave of migration in the 1950s. However, it would be interesting to conduct research into more recently arrived Yorùbá families with younger second-generation children.

of the speakers of a language are dominated by another language. This colonisation of the mind is so entrenched that individuals believe that they can and should only use the foreign language in more certain higher status spheres of life such as education, philosophy, literature, governments, the administration of justice (Ansre 1979: 12–13 cited in Phillipson 1992: 56).

As a result of the linguistic history of Nigeria, the English/Yorùbá bilingualism of the first-generation ensured that language shift among the Yorùbá in London occurred faster than Fishman's three-generational model. This community did not need to spend time acculturating to a new language and in fact parents were able to be a source of English language input for their children. Even though in Nigeria the family sphere had been the preserve of Yorùbá language in all generations since British rule, within one generation after migration parents had begun to use English in a domain previously reserved for Yorùbá. LS at the individual level resulted in a disruption in intergenerational language transmission.

Understanding what family members actually do with language allows us to see how, at times, unconscious practices may result in a disruption in language transmission. The Yorùbá parents were unaware of the impact of their practices. Laissez faire, short lived, and non-existent Yorùbá management resulted in habitual practices that did not create an environment conducive to the development of the HL, and in some cases were counterproductive. The type of interactions participants reported were consistent; every family demonstrated a preference for English with the first-generation being the only ones engaging significantly with the HL. And although the home incorporated Yorùbá, most of it was not directed at the younger generation and was at times even used to obscure meaning from them. Döpke (1992 as cited in Smith-Christmas 2016) found that language maintenance hinged on the extent to which interactions are 'child-centred', for instance involving playtime and story time. Because most Yorùbá content was not intended for children, the second-generation were not directly engaging with the HL and so it was difficult for them as language learners to benefit from this input (Kigamwa 2016: 51).

Despite the practice of covert language learning by some, parental code-switching also curtailed the use of the HL within the home. It diminished the amount of comprehensible input that the second-generation were able to benefit from in order to develop Yorùbá proficiency. In line with Smith-Christmas's (2015) discussions; the quantity of Yorùbá used in the home was not substantial and the quality that the children were exposed to meant that despite Yorùbá being around, the second-generation were not able to benefit from it. Language practices also did not create opportunities for two-way interaction in Yorùbá between parent and child. This was compounded by negative association of the language with rebuke and laughter at mispronunciation which created 'heritage language anxiety' and a reluctance to speak Yorùbá. All this has combined to keep any acquired language skills latent.

The cultural aspect of Yorùbá language had previously not been prized highly enough by both the first and second-generations to warrant explicit language maintenance efforts. For the second-generation, their negative self-views reflect a destruction of self-esteem due to decades of negative comparisons with the dominant power (Fishman 1991). 'Linguistic self-hatred' (Labov 1966: 489 cited in Sallabank 2013: 66) may not be too

extreme a description in this case and was certainly enough of a motivator for a Yorùbá child to anglicize or change their name and relinquish association with their heritage. However, in recent years the group identity that Yorùbá language affords has been increasing in value for British-Nigerians as they seek to connect culture and heritage. The second-generation now expresses pride in their culture, confidently claim their Yorùbá heritage and assert a Nigerian or dual British-Nigerian identity through the music they listen to, the food they eat, the clothes they wear and the hairstyles they fashion. Some participants are also seeking ways to reconnect by taking classes or downloading Yorùbá language apps. It was interesting to hear that some have begun conceiving of their own FLP in order to reverse the shift, maintain the language and then transmit it to their own children. However, group identity can exist outside of language so it remains to be seen whether initial observations of this attitude or ideological shift will have a linguistic effect on the third-generation of Yorùbás in London.

8. Reflection

A qualitative study of this sample size cannot make generalisations about patterns of LS across the entire Yorùbá diaspora. It nonetheless provides valuable insight into family language policy formation, intergenerational language transmission and HL shift of a speech community not significantly studied. It supplies information for the future development of qualitative and quantitative studies and highlights the significant component of colonial history into the discussion on family language policy.

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