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Perspectives on Language from Street Produce Vendors in Cape Town: An examination of education, trading, and development in the informal sector

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Perspectives on Language from Street Produce Vendors in Cape Town: An examination of education, trading, and development in the informal sector

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<u>Abstract</u>

Language is vital for the functioning of societies, from education to economic interactions. Language of education presents challenges in Africa due to colonial linguistic legacies and the diversity of indigenous African languages. While education trains learners for work in the formal economy, the South African formal cannot absorb all the available labor. The informal economy therefore provides vital work and income to millions of South Africans and immigrants. Language use in the informal sector was studied, including the education and work traders had before working as street produce vendors.

Six interviews were conducted: two near the Cape Town taxi rank, one in the Cape Town CBD, one near the Mowbray taxi rank, and two near the Langa taxi rank. Participants were chosen through opportunistic sampling and interviews were semi-structured.

English was found to be a pivotal language in both formal and informal sector work. It seems to be, or is perceived to be, a default common language in Cape Town. Language proficiencies were shaped by both educational and vocational experiences, although to different degrees for each participant. It was not a barrier of entry to the informal sector, but a skill developed through the work. Other descriptions of linguistic value appear to undervalue the cultural and relational value of indigenous African languages. The desire to learn Xhosa cut across the participants' racial categories.

KEY WORDS: informal economy, language hierarchy

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

I must thank:

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Introduction

Language is the foundation of civilization on which all other social functions rely: "In the lives of individuals and societies, speech is more important than anything else" (Saussure, 1959, p. 7). As the instrument of communication, language is the means by which knowledge and skills are transmitted. Africa's diverse linguistic landscape therefore presents challenges in everything from education to trade.

South Africa recognizes 11 official languages and includes broad language rights in its Constitution. South Africa is also an economic beacon in sub-Saharan Africa, attracting immigrants who compound the linguistic landscape (International Monetary Fund, 2016). These conditions provide fertile grounds to examine the interrelations of language, education, and economics.

Despite being an economic beacon, South Africa has relatively high unemployment in the formal economy, due in part to historical disadvantages under apartheid (Statistics South Africa, 2017). The informal sector is therefore essential for absorbing the growing labor force. There are lower barriers of entry for working in the informal sector than the formal sector, especially at the lower levels, such as street traders (Skinner, 2000). However, some skills are still required. In terms of street traders, they must procure and sell their products, and language is instrumental in these dealings. Low requirements isolate language as a skill as much as possible in a complex social and economic environment.

Street produce vendors who trade in fruits and vegetables were chosen as the subjects of this study. First, they are visible and thus easily identifiable. Second, their products have a broad appeal as basic necessities. Third, given their broad appeal and the linguistic diversity of South Africa, it was assumed that they

operate in many languages, and these experiences provide a unique perspective on language in their local context and, to an extent, their national and regional contexts.

Government intervention begins long before informal businesses are established. Education is the first intervention, and its aim is the develop the knowledge and skills to make the learner economically productive. Therefore, education, the informal economy, and government policies regarding the two are considered in this study through the lens of language use. These language economics and language politics perspectives are examined as part of development goals.

The objectives of this study are fourfold. First, the linguistic histories of six street produce vendors in Cape Town were traced from home language to education to work experiences. Second, the ways in which language functions in their business transactions were examined, particularly as it acts as an asset or a barrier. Third, governmental role was considered, including how it has and has not delivered in promoting indigenous languages, particularly in education, and in supporting informal businesses. Fourth, the venders' perspectives on the future of language used, based on their experiences, were explored.

This paper consists of five sections. The first is a literature review examining language, education, and the informal economy, particularly within the African and South African contexts. The second details the methodology used and the rationale behind choices made during the research, as well as ethical reflexivity on the researcher. The third is a discussion of the findings situated within the context of previous research. The fourth is a conclusion summarizing the study and the findings. The fifth is a recommendation for further study, which

includes both extensions of this study and details that arose during this research that this study could not delve into.

Limitations of this study are due largely to time and budgetary restraints. Six vendors were interviewed, and the interviews covered a range of subjects. Additionally, interviews were conducted in three different urban environments. Opportunistic sampling was used, which means the findings cannot be generalized, but it also offered a more diverse set of experiences to be considered. However, the interviews had to be conducted in English because budgetary restraints did not allow for an interpreter. This biases the sample to only include people who speak English well enough to express themselves in depth in the language. Regardless, the findings offer compelling insights on the use and perception of language in society.

<center>**Literature Review**</center>

Language

      Language enables the creation and diffusion of knowledge, and is inextricably intertwined with culture. It therefore underlies all other social functions: "It is axiomatic that language is an essential and significant part of the concept of culture and that it enables human beings to form stable social-structural aggregates" (Apte, 2001). Indeed, "language is a precondition for social life" (Romaine, 1994, p. 235). It is used to construct meaning individually and communally and to effectively communicate those meanings, both practical and cultural, between people. Language is a tool, and use of it is a skill. Because it is so vital, language rights are widely accepted as a human right.

      Language rights.

      Language rights, as recognized by multinational organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), include that all peoples should be able to use their indigenous languages in their daily lives, including in education (Kamwangamalu, 2016). However, there are myriad complications in ensuring these rights, particularly in Africa. The density of the linguistic landscape, as well as the hierarchy of prestige ascribed to each language, makes language choices varied and complex (Kamwangamalu, 2016).

      Kamwangamalu (2016) asserts that languages are ascribed status and value due to political and economic factors. He argues that former colonial languages, particularly English and French, continue to dominate the hierarchy as the preferred languages of education, government, and socio-economic advancement, at the expense of indigenous African languages.

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However, indigenous languages continue to play an important role in Africa. Laitin (1992) claims that "data show an average of two languages per person [in Africa], going up to nearly three for those who have moved at least once in their lives and have lived in an urban area for at least six months" (p. 71). His theory is that these languages will spread across two to three geographic or geopolitical levels: an international language, such as English or French; a national integration language, such as Swahili in Tanzania; and a national or regional language "which shall be the medium of instruction in early years of primary education and shall serve as the language of government and administration in home regions" (Kamwangamalu, 2016, p. 13). Laitin (1992) contends that this spread will be the result of economic forces promoting development. Policy, however, has a vital role to play in mobilizing these forces.

Governmental role in language policy.

The official policies in South Africa are progressive in their acknowledgement of language as a resource in both cultural and economic domains. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) enshrines 11 official languages, while recognizing that due to "the historically diminished use and status of the indigenous language of our people, the state must take practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use of these languages" (Section 6.2). The National Language Policy (2002)

> also takes cognizance of the fact that the value of our languages is largely determined by their economic, social and political usage. When a language loses its value in these spheres the status of the language diminishes. This Policy Framework also takes into account that we are faced with the challenge of globalization and

that our indigenous languages should be part of the rapidly

expanding technological environment. Hence, it intends to

reaffirm the status and use of indigenous languages of South

Africa (Department of Arts and Culture, 2002, Foreword).

Using Kamwangamalu's (2016) framing, the status of a language is elevated by

its economic value. The hierarchy, which he describes as levels of prestige,

places greater value on former colonial languages and impairs the use of

indigenous languages, such as those that would be in the national or regional

categories. Indeed, although

speakers of the ALs [African languages] have been the political

and state-administrative decision-makers and have had full

managerial control over every domain of public life in the country,

at every level, for the past almost 20 years, the ALs are still not

being used meaningfully in public life: in parliament, courts of

law, universities, schools and the printed media (Webb, 2013, p.

179).

Gilmartin (2004) asserts that "as the language of government, business and the

media, it [English] has connotations of social advancement and progress" in

South Africa (p. 415).

Kamwangamalu (2016) credits this disparity between official policy and

political reality to perceptions of prestige. Elite preferences "perpetuate the

marginalization of the indigenous languages and the majority of their speakers"

(Kamwangamalu, 2016, p. 61). Therefore, while the "government's language

policy and planning initiatives are generally viewed as commendably

enlightened," they have largely failed to effectively promote indigenous languages, including in education (Beukes, 2009, p. 36).

Education

Education is a distinctly influential sphere impacted by language "because it is universally recognized not only as a powerful instrument of change but also as a vital site for social and linguistic reproduction, [and] the inculcation of relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Kamwangamalu, 2016, p. 2). Education is the principle vehicle of social change and economic development. It fosters the creation of human capital, beginning with literacy and numeracy.

The role of language in education primarily concerns the choice of the language of instruction (LoI), also referred to as the medium of instruction (MoI). Kamwangamalu (2016) argues that this "language question, though couched in terms of language education, has as much to do with language as with a polity's socioeconomic development" (p. x). Effective education through the most appropriate LoI contributes to social advancement and economic development.

Governmental role.

The Constitution (1996) indicates that "everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable" (Section 29.2). 'Reasonably practicable' means that enough students wish to learn in a certain language and that it is economically viable for the school to provide instruction in that language. As the majority of the official languages are indigenous African languages, in principle, the Constitution promotes their use in this pivotal institution.

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The Department of Education's Language in Education Policy (2002) asserts that "the underlying principle is to retain the learner's home language for learning and teaching, but to encourage learners to acquire additional languages as well" (Department of Arts and Culture, p. 8). The governmental responsibility outlined in the Policy is to support "the learning and teaching of all official South African languages at all levels of schooling" (p. 18). However, these 'commendably enlightened' policies have encountered negative attitudes at the implementation level.

Resistance.

Rather than advocating for the use and development of indigenous African languages, parents, teachers, and learners have impeded these objectives (Mda, 1997, p. 366). Parents "worry that the movement to boost the prominence of African languages in South African schools might mean that their children have lessened access to the perceived economic and social benefits associated with speaking English and Afrikaans – the languages that still 'matter' in South Africa" (Mda, 1997, p. 372). The prestige of English means it is "inextricably linked to their quest for a 'better education' for their children" by "maximiz[ing] their exposure to and mastery of the language of social mobility" (Beukes, 2009, p. 46). English-language education is therefore demanded, and as soon as possible for maximum exposure.

Indeed, although it is common to change the LoI in Grade 4 or 5, the official Language-in-Education Policy (LiEP) does not mandate it: "According to the policy, the whole of primary school and indeed secondary school could be conducted in African languages as the languages of instruction" (Brock-Utne,

2005, p. 187). That the conversion occurs at all is indicative of the lower status ascribed to indigenous African languages.

Kamwangamalu (2016) contends that these attitudes characterize much of post-colonial Africa. He posits "that African masses might embrace their own indigenous languages as the mediums of instruction in schools if that education were as profitable as an education through the medium of a former colonial language" (p. 4). Indigenous languages therefore will not be accepted or desired as the LoI in schools until they also provide the same socioeconomic advancement associated with the dominant and prestigious languages, such as English.

Economic realities.

Ironically, the impetus to introduce English as quickly as possible ignores a foundational reality: it is difficult, if not impossible, to learn in a language the learner does not understand. There is an "apparent paradox that the language that learners so desperately desire for access to jobs, further education and upward social mobility in fact in many cases limits their opportunities for academic success" (Probyn, 2005, p. 165). But the human capital assets of literacy and numeracy, much less mastery of other subjects through these skills, is impaired by the early insistence on using English as the LoI.

One of education's imperatives is to produce a knowledgeable and skilled labor force. The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) asserts that

> language is a critical factor influencing education outcomes and is
> a determinant of scholastic and career performance. Language
> forms the basis for conceptualization and understanding. In its
> absence, important skills and knowledge, including numeracy,

cannot be transferred. This in turn impacts on the availability of a

variety of much-needed skills in South Africa, thus perpetuating

on unemployment in the long term (PanSALB, 2013).

It is significant that numeracy cannot be conveyed without language, particularly

because basic numeracy is crucial for most work. Indeed, "a labor-based model

[of economic development] emphasizes the importance of the literacy, numeracy,

skill, and information base that make the self-employed better able to operate

their businesses effectively" (Steel & Snodgrass, 2008, p. 6). As language,

particularly a language the learner understands, is essential to building these

skills, it is evident that "language is one of the core facilitators for the attainment

of sustainable development" (Kamwangamalu, 2016, p. 58). The informal

economy has become an increasingly vital arena for development as well.

Informal Economy

There is no standardized definition of what constitutes the informal

economy, in part because informal operations are not uniform. Formality is often

associated with government oversight and regulation, but Skinner (2000) argues

that it "is a widely held misconception that street traders do not pay rates and

taxes. In restricted trade zones street traders pay for permits for trading space and

this constitutes revenue to local government" (p. 56). Indeed, local authorities

often allocate sites in public markets to informal vendors, so the businesses are

not always unknown to the government (Benjamin, Beegle, Recanatini, &

Santini, 2014, p. 9).

Accordingly, Skinner (2006) asserts that "there is no clear line separating

the formal from the informal," particularly where formal and informal operations

supply inputs and demand goods and services from each other (p. 128). There is

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therefore an "increasing consensus" that there is a continuum from formality to informality, and that "the entire economy [can be seen as having] formal and informal ends" (Skinner, 2006, p. 128). The role of the informal economy, however, is contested.

Some schools of thought see "the informal economy as having vast potential for employment creation and growth"; other schools see "the informal economy as a structural problem that is unlikely to generate growth" (Skinner, 2000, p. 50). In the latter view, the goal should be to stimulate growth, and that this will create incentives to formalize. However, "even when macro policies are able to reverse stagnation and improve the business environment, rather than disappearing, informal enterprises tend to benefit along with the rest of the economy" (Steel & Snodgrass, 2008, p. 3). This suggests that the informal economy is important in itself and not necessarily as a step toward the formal sector.

Labor absorption.

The informal economy is particularly important in most developing countries, absorbing a considerable portion of the labor force when the formal economy is not producing enough jobs, and contributing significantly to the GDP, even though it is less efficient than the formal economy:

> Focusing on Africa, Steel and Snodgrass (2008) report that the informal economy accounts for 50 to 80 percent of GDP and as much as 90 percent of new jobs…. Chen (2001) estimates that 93% of newly created jobs in Africa during the 1990s were part of the informal sector. Comparing the performances of the formal and informal sectors in terms of job creation, Xaba et al. (2002)

find that employment in the formal sector is stagnant at best, or

falling sharply, while in the informal sector it is experiencing

dazzling growth (Benjamin et al., 2014, p. 6).

In South Africa, "current estimates hold that county's informal economy

provides employment for at least 2.4 million people (13% of the labor force)"

(Charman, Petersen, Piper, Liedeman, & Legg, 2017, p. 37). Such volume is

especially pertinent as South Africa's unemployment rate for the formal sector

climbed to 27.7% in the first quarter of 2017 (Statistics South Africa, 2017).

Informal work provides critical income to individuals and families when access

to formal sector work is limited.

Poverty influence.

Internationally, "there is a strong correlation between poverty and

participation in the informal sector." Therefore, support for the sector "provides a

unique opportunity *both* to alleviate poverty and to promote economic growth,"

two prominent development goals (Skinner, 2006, p. 127). Historically

disadvantaged groups are overrepresented in the informal economy, including

Black Africans and women in South Africa (Lund & Skinner, 2004). Support for

these groups is also crucial for development.

Women tend to be more economically distressed than men, escalating the

importance of the informal economy as it "contribut[es] to both growth and

poverty reduction agendas" as a "vehicle for economic participation by the poor

and especially working poor women" (Steel & Snodgrass, 2008, p. 2). Indeed,

"60% of working women in the developing world are in the informal sector. In

Sub-Saharan Africa, 84% of employed women are in the informal sector"

(Benjamin et al., 2014, p. 7). Informal work alleviates the burden of poverty for these women

Immigrants play a significant role in the South African economy in particular:

> A significant number of migrants, immigrants and refugees have moved into South African cities because of the relative economic strength of South Africa in the Southern African region, coupled with violent conflict in a number of areas of the region. Competition from foreign street traders has become a pressing issue for local traders in South African cities (Skinner, 2000, p. 52).

Most of the violent clashes between South African and immigrant traders have been in Johannesburg (Skinner, 2000), but mediating these sorts of issues, coupled with the development of the sector to accommodate more workers, are pressing areas for governmental intervention across South Africa.

Government role.

During apartheid, street trading was tightly controlled by authorities. Legislation in the early 1990s loosened these policies, resulting in a "complete legal turnaround from a situation in which traders could not trade (with a few exceptions) to a situation where traders could trade freely (with a few exceptions)" (Lund & Skinner, 2004, p. 434). This resulted in a trading boom that has been constricted under subsequent legislation (Lund & Skinner, 2004).

While the Constitution reserves the writing and enforcement of trading regulations to local governments, Skinner (2000) asserts that these policies have not been produced, resulting in a reliance on by-laws in their stead: "By-laws,

although important with respect to managing urban space, are aimed at restricting rather than facilitating street trading" (p. 55). This trend stifles the economic potential of the informal sector.

The Informal Trading Policy (2013) for Cape Town asserts its vision is that, "through a developmental approach, the City seeks to facilitate the access to job and entrepreneurial opportunities within the informal trading sector" (City of Cape Town, 2013, p. 8), acknowledging "the legitimacy and role of the informal economy, in terms of its employment and economic growth prospects" (City of Cape Town, 2013, p. 10). However, "as Fourie (2013) notes, the informal economy presently has little to no influence on the economic development agenda in South Africa" (Charman et al., 2017, p. 37). It is another area where 'commendably enlightened' policies have failed to materialize in implementation.

Methodology

Method Used

Punch (2005) contends that "different questions require different methods to answer them" (p. 19). A qualitative method was chosen for this study because of the interconnectedness of the themes investigated – language, education, informal sector work, and government intervention. Glesne (2006) asserts that qualitative research is a search for patterns with the assumption that the variables involved are complex and interwoven. It "seek[s] to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them" (Glesne, 2006, p. 4). The educational and vocational settings of the participants were investigated through the construct of language in this study.

Opportunistic, or convenience, sampling was used due to time constraints for both the study and the participants interviewed. Opportunistic sampling consists of interviewing the subjects nearest the interviewer, with the main criteria being that they are available and willing to participate (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). A shortcoming of this method is that the results cannot be generalized across the studied demographic as the sample is not representative of that demographic. Therefore, the findings of this study have no claim to be representative of the gender distribution, race, immigrant status, or age, across South Africa, Cape Town, or street produce vendors.

Interviews were conducted for two reasons. First, the complexity of the themes was unlikely to be properly explored through a survey. Second, the circumstances of the study subjects were not conducive to focus groups.

Benjamin et al. (2014) asserts that while surveys can help quantify opinions, they do not give depth to the answers. For instance, as many surveys

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ask businesses what their greatest constraints are, "the responses do not tell us how a given issue is a constraint, how it affects business, or how they might respond if policies were changed" (p. 13). Because one of the objectives of this study was to scrutinize language as an asset or barrier, much like a business constraint, a survey would not have provided adequate depth for the analysis.

To conduct focus groups, the participants must be able and willing to meet at a designated place at the same time. Street traders work long hours and it was assumed, due to the correlation between the informal sector and poverty, that it would be difficult for them to travel to the focus group site. A focus group would have provided a different environment and may have revealed more personal information than the interviews because of the interaction between participants. Some of the interviews conducted had a survey-like quality with interviewees giving short answers and not elaborating on the more open-ended questions.

Pragmatically, only vendors who could conduct the interview in English were included in this study. This homogenizes the experiences analyzed to a certain extent, but was also necessary due to time restraints for the study and the participants. Working through a translator increases the length of the interview. Relatedly, budgetary constraints placed more importance on travel to sites than hiring a translator.

The interviews were semi-structured. A list of questions was produced beforehand as an interview guide, but follow-up questions deviated from the guide when an aspect of the participant's experiences required clarification or elaboration (Punch, 2005). In the flow of the conversations, some questions were

unintentionally skipped with some participants, resulting in certain data gaps. Therefore, some details cannot be compared across all participants.

The interviews were premised on hypothesis-testing rather than exploration (Kvale, 1996). The interviewer had preconceived notions about language use and language economics, and these notions affected the types and directness of the questions.

The questions were ordered to trace language use through the interviewee's life, and the same structure is used in the discussion section of this paper. Personality of the participant was the main factor dictating the depth and length of the interview, as the running of the stand was delegated to another worker in four of the cases. The same arsenal of questions resulted in interviews from ten to 30 minutes. As Kvale (1996) asserts, there is no perfect interview subject. Indeed, the "ideal" subject as imagined by Westerner researchers represents "an upper-middle-class intellectual," and that even in a Western context, this subject's "views are not necessarily representative of the general population" (p. 146). Caution was taken to avoid this bias, and to recognize that each interview was illuminating in its own way.

Ethical Reflexivity

Interviews "convey important knowledge as they stand, and they also open to further interpretations" (Kvale, 1996, p. 145). The interpretations in this study are shaded by the researcher's perspectives as a Westerner, as an American, as a White person, as a university student, as a female-bodied person, and as a queer person. These identities were assets in some situations and detractors in others, beginning with who was willing to participate in the interviews. The

identities were then brought into the interview dynamic where there were complex interactions between the research and the participant:

> The conversation in a research interview is not the reciprocal interaction of two equal partners. There is a definite asymmetry of power: The interviewer defines the situation, introduces the topics of the conversation, and through further questions steers the course of the interview (Kvale, 1996, p. 126).

In this way, the interview situation creates power dynamics that are not neutral; they affect the atmosphere, the answers, the depth.

Additionally, the researcher's economic status also affected their assumptions about the studied country and thematic areas. The researcher is also from a largely monolingual country, which impacts their perceptions about language use and utility of multilingualism.

While background research was conducted before the interviews, there are always gaps in knowledge, particularly from a cultural and geographic outsider. For instance, the researcher did not recognize many of the names of places that were mentioned in the interviews, and asking for repetition of these names served as a reminder of the distance between the experiences of the interviewer and interviewee.

Approaching to request an interview, the research at times launched into their pitch ("I am a university student doing research on language use") and other times, particularly after getting blank stares from others, asked the vendors first if they spoke English. The latter approach had an unintentionally patronizing implication, especially in light of the status associated with knowing English. The legacy of apartheid has "resulted in language inequality, and the dominance of

English and Afrikaans created an unequal relationship between these languages and the African languages" (Department of Arts and Culture, 2002, p. 6). This hierarchy has social implications, including on how language ability is read into social status and hierarchy. A few vendors said they did speak English, perhaps due to status they wished to assert, but it became clear they could not fully express themselves in the language. Indeed, even with a common language – in this case, English – there are barriers between native speakers, like the interviewer, and many of the participants who spoke it as a second or third language.

Many of the interactions, including with participants and non-participants, were at times uncomfortable, but the interviewer remained cognizant that they were not the only person affected by these implications.

Additionally, research regarding the informal economy often aids to "aid in the development of policy recommendations" (Benjamin et al., 2014, p. 4). However, this study did not set out to do so and the findings provide limited considerations on the subject. The researcher felt they were not in the position to seek or offer these suggestions, due to their limited level of expertise on both the examined themes and the research contexts.

Difficulties During the Research Process

The main reason vendors declined to participate in interviews was that they were busy. Although stands were visited at different times of day across several days of the week, there seemed to be no predictable pattern for levels of busyness. One episode that demonstrates this vividly was a female vendor near the Langa taxi rank who was approached on a Saturday, signed a consent form, and asked the researcher to come back the next day at 10:00 a.m. because she was

busy at the moment. On Sunday, she again said she was busy, and to come back on Wednesday at 1:00 p.m. On Wednesday, she was not at the stand; it was being run by two men who had been with her on the other days. This highlights the unpredictable nature of the work.

Another woman whose stand was in the Cape Town CBD initially agreed to an interview, but terminated the interaction when she found out she had to sign a consent form. This likely illustrates a distrust of some aspect of the process or interviewer's identity.

Lastly, the interviews were conducted in noisy places. The stands targeted were near busy streets, so traffic, both vehicle and pedestrian, and wind effected the atmosphere of the interviews. Some street produce venders were not even approached, particularly those located under bridges, due to the noise levels.

Discussion of Findings

The interviews with the six participants traced their linguistic experiences through their lives and explored the conditions of working in street produce vending. Their educations, vocational experiences, and perspectives on language use in the future are the primary focus of the study, examined through the lens of language use.

Limitations of Terms

Because street vendors are commonly categorized as informal businesses, all street produce vendors were considered to be informal for this study. While four participants do pay rent to the government for their stand locations, this is taken as indicative of the continuum of informality, and the fact that not all informal enterprises are unknown to the government.

Immigrants were not questioned on their immigration status. It was not relevant to the study questions, and Skinner (2006) reported that "many foreigners do not have proper documentation and thus are reluctant to be interviewed" (p. 129). The researcher wanted to include and examine their linguistic experiences, so they avoided this matter.

The subjects of this study are referred to with any combination of street, produce, vendors, sellers, or traders. These terms refer to both the owners of the stands and people working for them, family and non-family alike.

References to the government usually mean the Cape Town government. It should be clear from context.

The language isiXhosa is referred to as Xhosa.

Descriptions of Participants

Six interviews were conducted with people working in street produce vending. Two of the participants were women; four were men. Ages ranged from 26 to 45. Two worked near the Cape Town taxi rank, one in the Cape Town CBD, two near the Langa taxi rank, and one near the Mowbray taxi rank. Four participants were South African, one was Malawian, and one was Sierra Leonean. Racial identifications included one Indian, two Coloured, and three Black. All consented to the use of their first names, but not their last. They are described individually as follows:

- Abdul: 26 years old, Coloured, works at his wife's stand when he is not working his job as a porter at a hospital. Cape Town taxi rank. English is his first language, and he is fluent in Afrikaans with minimal knowledge of Xhosa.

- Christopher: Black Malawian, owns his own stand and has two men working for him. He has worked two years in produce vending. Langa taxi rank. Chichewa is his first language. He is fluent in English and he speaks conversational Xhosa, Zulu, and Shona.

- Clinton: 42 years old, Indian, owns his own stand and has two men working for him. He has worked ten years in produce vending. Cape Town taxi rank. English is his first language, and he is fluent in Afrikaans with minimal knowledge of Xhosa. He was worked in produce vending for 10 years.

- Jamiela: 40 years old, Coloured, owns her own stand where she is helped by a man. She has worked 23 years in produce vending. Cape Town CBD. Afrikaans is her first language and she is fluent in English.

- King: 38 years old, Black Sierra Leonean, owns his own stand where he is the only worker. He has worked two years in produce vending. Mowbray taxi rank. Creole is his first language, he is fluent in English, and he speaks conversational Afrikaans and Xhosa.

- Nokulunga: 45 years old, Black, works at her sister's stand where she is also helped by a man. She has worked one year in produce vending. Langa taxi rank. Her first language is Xhosa and she is fluent in English.

Justification of participant choice

      Location.

As described by Charman et al. (2017), street traders tend to be more localized to "the high street" than "spacially distributed evenly" through an urban area (p. 48). Participants were therefore selected near taxi ranks and in the Cape Town CBD, areas with higher foot traffic. These areas are also assumed to offer more varied linguistic interactions. Downtown, suburban, and township locations were chosen so that comparisons of linguistic experiences and linguistic involvement could be made. Such comparisons differ from other studies. For instance, Charman et al. (2017) focused exclusively on township settlements in several South Africa cities. Skinner (2000) focused on the Cape Town CBD, acknowledging that "local government's approach to street traders in, for example, former 'black township' areas, is likely to be quite different and was not considered here" (p. 53). These differences were integrated into this study.

      Availability.

Participants occupied various positions at the street produce stands, but are all referred to as street produce vendors because they work in street produce vending. Owners, or primary operators, were included along with secondary

operators. Because they all participate in the buying and selling activities, their perspectives were considered equally.

Interviews were conducting during business hours, and stand dynamics determined who participated. If multiple people were working, either the operation of the stand or the interview could be delegated to a secondary operator. At single-person stands, interviews were conducted around normal stand operations.

The remainder of the discussion is structured to trace language use through the participants' lives and their perspectives on language in the future.

Education

While South Africa has a unique colonial experience, with formal European colonization succeeded by apartheid, it has followed a linguistic path similar to the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. In the post-colonial era, there has been a continued reliance on former colonial languages as the language of instruction (LoI) in schools, especially after primary school years (Kamwangamalu, 2016).

During apartheid,

> the language of instruction in South Africa's schools for English, Afrikaner, Colored, and Indian students was either English or Afrikaans (the two former official languages), and the other official language studied as a subject. African students, however, were instructed in their 'home' or ethnic African languages for the first four years and then allowed to switch to either English or Afrikaans. Of the two, English was almost always the preferred language (Mda, 1997, p. 369).

These dynamics have largely persisted in the new South Africa: "The majority of learners in South Africa (approximately 80%) are in township and rural schools that were previously reserved for African learners and have remained *racially and linguistically unchanged* [emphasis added]" (Probyn, 2005, p. 156). Indigenous African languages are still confined to Black African learners. English and Afrikaans retain a higher prestige, from education to formal sector businesses, and English remains the preferred of the two.

The experiences of the South Africans interviewed largely reflect this description of the South African system. The two African immigrants' experiences also aligned with the broader descriptions of post-colonial Africa.

Jamiela, who identifies as Coloured, had Afrikaans, her first language, as her LoI, and learned English as a subject. Abdul, who is Coloured, and Clinton, who is Indian, both had English, their first language, as their LoI and learned Afrikaans as a subject. However, Nokulunga, the only Black South African interviewed, reported being taught in English from the beginning of her schooling:

> Interviewer: "When you first started school, did you know any
> English?"
> Nokulunga: "Nothing."
> Interviewer: "And so how did they teach you in English?"
> Nokulunga: "Yeah, it was very hard. It was very hard for the
> teachers."
> (Nokulunga, personal communication, November 12, 2017)

While this diverges from the norm for Black learners under apartheid, the promotion of English-language education is consistent with the broader African trend.

Christopher, from Malawi, was taught in English from Grade 1 as well: "When I went to school, the language I learned was English, because it is the common language all around the world. That's why we learned English" (Christopher, personal communication, November 12, 2017). King, from Sierra Leone, had an experience most like the typical Black South African. He was taught in his first language, Creole, to Grade 2 or 3, and then was switched to English as the LoI. Asked if it was difficult to switch to English even after two or three years of studying it as a subject, he said yes, but you must "so it becomes an advantage for you" (King, personal communication, November 16, 2017). This comment is characteristic of the socioeconomic perceptions of the language.

English has an "increased prestige and economic and political value and is therefore still viewed as indispensable for attaining personal advancement and for being seen as 'modern and successful'" (Webb, 2013, p. 18). As Beukes (2009) asserts, 'better education' is associated with maximum exposure to English. However, a study found that "Grade 5 learners in African schools were not able to engage with the curriculum effectively through the medium of English after learning English as a subject for four years" (Probyn, 2005, p. 156). It seems rational to assume that there is even less engagement when the LoI is English from Grade 1, 2 or 3. However, it remains true that the participants with these schooling experiences could conduct their interviews in English, to some extent justifying the assumptions on which they are built.

Indigenous African languages.

With the focus on English, indigenous languages have been neglected across Africa, including South Africa: "African languages were virtually neglected as both subjects and languages of instruction in South African schools until the present era" (Mda, 1997, p. 164). While she never had it as her LoI, Nokulunga was taught Xhosa as a subject up to Grade 8. This represents some support of the language, but it is also an anomaly.

Abdul reported that, in addition to learning English and Afrikaans in school, "there was a bit of isiXhosa," although he concedes "it wasn't really for me, it was a language I struggled with a bit" (Abdul, personal communication, November 9, 2017). Clinton did not have a similar opportunity to study Xhosa, but expressed a desire for it: "We would have liked to learn Xhosa, out of the native languages, but it wasn't offered to us" (Clinton, personal communication, November 9, 2017). It is unclear if this desire arose during his time in school or after he left school, and was due to work experiences. Regardless, there is demand for indigenous African languages that has not been fully met.

Previous Work and Other Jobs

Following their educations, the interviewees entered the workforce in various capacities. Their career trajectories were traced to illuminate both their reasons for working in the informal sector and their linguistic experiences up to their current work.

Leading to and entering the informal sector.

Given the conditions of the informal sector, such as the lack of work benefits (like health insurance), formalization is considered more desirable by some schools of thought: "The association of less informality with higher income suggests developmental advantages of reducing and formalizing the informal

sector over time" (Benjamin et al., 2014, p. 4). Movement from the formal to the informal sector would therefore be seen as regressive. However, King worked in the formal sector for several years after college. He has a diploma in marketing management and was at a formal company until he quit to begin his own business in produce vending. He said he did so because he wanted to do something different and be his own boss. This is one allure of the informal sector.

Nokulunga also has a diploma; hers is in accounting and office practices. She worked in the accounts department and in customer relations in formal businesses, as well as a secretary at a school. Due to personal circumstances – her mother fell ill – she is no longer in those jobs, instead helping her sister at her sister's stand. Clinton left school in Grade 9 because his mother fell ill and he had to take over the business, make money, and care for his younger sister. Trading is his family business. The parallels of these experiences illustrate another reason people enter the informal sector, and how it "serves as a social safety net" (City of Cape Town, 2013, p. 10). Although informal work doesn't offer formal benefits, it does provide income when other work is unavailable, or personal circumstances block access to it.

Jamiela worked in housekeeping before she worked in vending. She did not say her motive for moving from housekeeping to vending, but both activities are generally categorized as informal.

Christopher had no other jobs before beginning his own produce vending business. He immigrated to South Africa in search of opportunity, and he spoke "to other people to ask how to do this business. That's how I also start to know how to make this business" (Christopher, personal communication, November

12, 2017). He and King both started their stands to create opportunities for themselves.

Abdul currently has work in the formal sector, as a porter at a hospital, and helps his wife at her stand on his days off. While she was present for the interview, she did not participate. Her reasons for entering produce vending and her previous work is therefore unknown.

The reasons for entering and operating within the informal sector were found to be varied; more varied, indeed, than the researcher expected, particularly due to the education level of two of the participants. This reflects on the heterogeneity of the informal economy through the heterogeneity of informal workers.

Language use.

In their formal sector jobs, King and Nokulunga both purported to have primarily used English. King said that English is the language of business; even in a job interview, English is used. In her former housekeeping work, and his current porter work, Jamiela and Abdul use(d) both English and Afrikaans. Clinton sold ladies' underwear before he switched to produce ten years ago. He did not say, but likely had similar language experiences selling underwear as he does in selling produce. Abdul and Clinton both said their Afrikaans improved because of their work. Much of this work is in the formal sector, and these reports reflect the primary importance of English and Afrikaans in it.

Stand Dynamics

Stand dynamics, such as who is the owner and who are the workers, are an illuminating feature of power dynamics and the functioning of the informal economy.

The interview participants occupy different positions within the vending businesses. King runs his own stand alone. Christopher and Clinton both have their own stands with two men working under them. Jamiela owns her stand and had a man helping her, perhaps her husband. Abdul's wife owns the stand and he helps her when he wasn't at his other job. Nokulunga's sister owns the stand and is helped by Nokulunga and a man, perhaps her husband.

The gender distribution of owners and workers, as well as the number of workers at each stand, was indicative of broader power dynamics within the informal economy: "According to Rogerson (1996:10) 'a widespread finding in micro-level studies is that the informal economy exhibits a sexual division of labour with a disproportionate clustering of women at the lower end of the South African informal economy'" (Skinner, 2000, p. 50). Skinner (2000) asserts that street vendors inhabit "the lower reaches of the informal economy," and thus women are likely overrepresented in the trade (p. 51). Due to the small sample size, women did not make up the majority of the interview subjects, but the division of labor and relationships of laborers were consonant with previous descriptions.

While the men's role at the women participants' stands were not questioned during the interviews, it is likely they are family members who are not paid wages: "Men [are] more likely to employ others, are better off and have more assets" (Skinner, 2006, p. 146). Abdul is a family member to the stand owner; the men working at Jamiela's stand and Nokulunga's sister's stand are also likely unpaid family members. Clinton and Christopher, however, both had two workers who were not family and were paid wages.

A related aspect of power dynamics was who agreed to speak to the interviewer. Christopher and Clinton both own their stands and left the functioning to their non-familial workers. Abdul's wife and Nokulunga's sister dispatched familial workers to do the interview. Jamiela and King did their interviews while continuing to be the primary operator of their stands. It is unclear why these decisions were made because the power dynamics were not questioned in this study. The researcher was most intrigued by these dynamics when interviewing Abdul, as his wife was present for the interview and affirmed some of his answers, but did not wish to be interviewed herself. It could be that she did not want to talk about herself at length, or that she did not want to talk to an outsider; it could be a matter of personality or a matter of power dynamics between the researcher and the research participants.

In addition to labor and familial relationships, the size of stands has been correlated with the gender of the owner in previous studies: "Male traders are more likely to have larger-scale operations… while female traders tend to have smaller-scale operations" (Skinner, 2000, p. 50). This was also not observed in this study, likely due to the small sample size. Some of the women's stands were bigger than some of the men's. The most formalized stand was Abdul's wife's; it had a permanent structure for both selling and storing the produce. King has the greatest variety and quantity of produce but lacked any sort of structure, such as an awning, to protect his produce.

Language at Work

Language is used throughout the supply chain, from the farmers supplying the produce market to the customers buying from the street stands. The vendors,

as the pivotal actors in this process, have unique linguistic experiences from both buying and selling the produce.

Buying.

The participants indicated that their produce comes from the Cape Town Food Market, also called the Epping Food Market, which is supplied by local farmers. This market supplies "over 8,000 registered buyers" (Cape Town Market, 2017).

Even participants with similar linguistic repertoires described different experiences buying at Epping. King and Christopher indicated they use English only. Clinton also said he uses English: "Even if I speak to an Afrikaner person, I am going to speak English, [even though] I speak Afrikaans fluently" (Clinton, personal communication, November 9, 2017). Abdul, however, said, "Mostly on the market they speak Afrikaans" (Abdul, personal communication, November 9, 2017). Jamiela uses both English and Afrikaans. Nokulunga said they use English and Xhosa. When she was asked if people try to use Afrikaans, which she does not speak, she said: "Yeah, there are, but then we use English because it is the most under[stood] – because English is the national language" (Nokulunga, personal communication, November 12, 2017). Racial-linguistic assumptions made by the market agents were not investigated, but these reported experiences do reflect on the typical race-language breakdown of Cape Town.

Selling.

The bulk of the vending business is the selling. A central element of this study was determining if vendors learned languages from conducting their

business. This includes improving a language they had some experience in or learning a language from scratch.

It was a recurrent assertion from the participants that it is essential to be able to communicate with the customers. Christopher said it succinctly: "If you don't know the languages, it is difficult to you to communicate with the other people" (Christopher, personal communication, November 12, 2017).

Nearly all the communication used in selling is verbal. For instance, King was the only seller who had prices posted for his produce – and it wasn't posted for all types. Prices at the other stands are only conveyed verbally. The impetus, then, is on the customer to begin the interaction. This means that the customer sets the language choice, and the seller either responds in the same language or, if they do not speak that language, defaults to a language assumed to be common. This process and its linguistic choices were not directly questioned, but other answers suggest that the default would be English.

King said he uses English, Afrikaans, and Xhosa equally in selling. He was fluent in English from his schooling and his former work, and has picked up conversational Xhosa and Afrikaans on the job. He said you must learn these languages because "you have to survive in this business" (King, personal communication, November 16, 2017). This phrasing indicates that he sees these languages as vital business skills.

Jamiela has spoken English and Afrikaans fluently her whole life, and uses both to sell. She did not claim any knowledge of Xhosa.

Abdul uses primarily English and Afrikaans, which he is fluent in, and a small amount of Xhosa he has picked up: "I wouldn't say I've learned a lot [of Xhosa], yes, but at first my Afrikaans wasn't that good, but from working here

and the place where I am [at the hospital], my Afrikaans has gotten much better"
(Abdul, personal communication, November 9, 2017). His experience indicates
that there is demand for Afrikaans; enough so that his skills have improved.
Xhosa plays a very minimal role in their business, but he said, "You need to
speak the language – different types of languages to communicate with your
customers" (Abdul, personal communication, November 9, 2017).

Clinton learned Afrikaans in school, but said his skills really developed
from his work: "The reason I speak Afrikaans is I am amongst the masses.
You've got to adapt. Afrikaans is not my preferred language, but if I am forced to
speak Afrikaans, I speak it just as well as a Coloured person or an Afrikaner"
(Clinton, personal communication, November 9, 2017). He uses both English and
Afrikaans to sell. As for Xhosa, he said he has picked up a few key words, but he
asserted that most people speak English, so he has not achieved even
conversational proficiency.

Christopher said he uses "any language, but more of people speak
English… or Xhosa" (Christopher, personal communication, November 12,
2017). He expressed the same sentiment as King and Abdul in that it is important
to be able to communicate with anyone.

Nokulunga said she makes sales in "mostly Xhosa, because there are few
people that speak English" (Nokulunga, personal communication, November 12,
2017). This could be a locational assumption from operating in Langa, where
most people are Xhosa, but it is also juxtaposed with Christopher saying most
people speak English. He said, "I speak English to communicate for everyone,"
including his customers in Langa (Christopher, personal communication,
November 12, 2017). Xhosa was added almost as an afterthought. It is unclear

what drives these different descriptions of the same customer demographics, but it might be influenced by Christopher's immigrant status; people recognize he is not Xhosa and default to using English with him.

Afrikaans was not found to be an important language in Langa, but is used in downtown Cape Town and the suburb of Mowbray. As with the experience at the Epping Market, this might be a reflection of racial-linguistic associations.

Language as a Resource

In multilingual societies, language can be viewed as a problem or as a resource. The National Language Policy (2002) declares "languages are resources to maximize knowledge, expertise and full participation in the political and socio-economic domains" (Department of Arts and Culture, p. 11). Indeed, all six participants responded with an emphatic yes when asked if they considered language a resource. Their responses as to why reflected two interconnected themes: that it is good to know at least the basics to interact with other people and that without it, you wouldn't be able to understand your customers.

Christopher has the most diverse linguistic arsenal. Although he has only worked for a few years, he seemed to have traveled more than the other participants. He knows conversational Shona and Zulu, the latter from being in Johannesburg last year. He said he picked up Xhosa more from being in Cape Town than from working, but he had been in Cape Town for some time before beginning his business. While he did not necessarily learn it on the job, this is a reminder that language is not solely a commercial tool. It is used for all types of interactions.

While Christopher has picked up more languages than the other participants, King was a close second. They are both immigrants, and the majority of the languages they know are languages used in South Africa, evincing the conformity power of language in society. Christopher said, "It is nice to know the language to communicate with everyone" (Christopher, personal communication, November 12, 2017). The word choice – that it is "nice" to learn other peoples' languages – is a deviance from the hierarchical economic model posited by Kamwangamalu (2016). Human connection through language is important, not just socioeconomic advancement through language.

Nokulunga has a similar perspective. Asked if she had learned other languages, even just small amounts, from work or other life experiences, she said:

>Nokulunga: "Yes, there are people who speak in other languages. Sometimes you ask, 'What do you mean by saying this?'"

>Interviewer: (paraphrase) Have you picked up words from other languages in this way?

>Nokulunga: "We do. Like these Malawian guys. Others, they are coming from Zimbabwe, [they speak] Shona. Because you do want – because they do speak our language, but… [we] sometimes do ask them, 'When you are saying hi, how do you say it in your language?' and we pick up – 'When you want to say you want to buy this, how do you say it in Shona?'… and we pick it up from that."

>Interviewer: "And you try to use it with them?"

>Nokulunga: "Yes, yes, yes."

Interviewer: "Why do you think you do that? Why wouldn't you

just default to English?"

Nokulunga: "No, No, No, you want to know. It is curiosity."

(Nokulunga, personal communication, November 12, 2017)

She added that it is not necessary to become fluent in their languages "because they know our language" (Nokulunga, personal communication, November 12, 2017). But these positive attitudes counter the narratives of xenophobia and Afrophobia in particular.

Challenges

Participants were questioned about the challenges they face in their businesses with the intent to probe linguistic facets of those challenges. Given the emphatic agreement that language is a resource, it was assumed that language was deployed to overcome some challenges in their work. However, the answers largely related to simple and unavoidable factors affecting the operation of produce stands. Locations of the stands were investigated, as well as competition, weather, and types of customers.

Locations.

The location of stands has an important role in the number of customers they receive: "A key determinant of the viability of trading is access to customers. As a woman trading in fruit and vegetables on a street corner in Johannesburg said, 'Whether I make enough to feed my family at the end of the day depends on the number of passing feet' (interview, 7 Oct. 1998)" (Skinner, 2000, p. 65). Skinner (2006) conducted a survey where participants were not just asked if they had a good location for their business, but if they would prefer to be somewhere else. A similar formulation was followed in this study.

The participants all said they are at good locations, and most were happy with their site. However, although Nokulunga conceded that there is good traffic from the street and neighboring business, it would be better to be at the Langa taxi rank terminal. But while she was not sure if they pay for their current spot, she was certain a vendor must pay to be at the rank. This seemed to be the main barrier to accessing this preferable site.

Christopher also does not pay for his site, although he does pay to store his produce in a building behind his stand. He echoed Nokulunga's assertion that they have good spots "because this place – people is up and down, up and down so – the business must find a nice place" (Christopher, personal communication, November 12, 2017). These considerations seemed, sensibly, central to the positioning of the stands.

Indeed, King and Christopher have already moved from previous spots. King had his stand in Rondebosch, but was not getting enough business. Christopher had his stand in Epping, but he moved because there were more sellers there than in Langa. These illuminate two reasons for relocation: due to a weak customer base or due to strong seller competition.

Competition.

Competition for customers could come from either supermarkets or other produce vendors. When asked who the vendors thought their greatest competitors were, only Christopher specified a supermarket. Nokulunga said that even if Shoprite is closed, their stand is still open, indicating a time convenience as the stand's competitive edge. Jamiela said her main competitor was the stand across the street, not the Shoprite near her stand because her product is cheaper and more convenient than the supermarket.

The density of produce stands has different effects of perceptions of different vendors. Clinton said:

> There's a lot of people that sell fresh produce. A lot. If you walk to every corner. I think it's – the people's choice. We all pay the same price for the stuff, I think it's the way you are with the people. Like you notice that I don't pre-pack the stuff. I leave it open. The choice is yours. It's your money after all. If you aren't happy with an item, it's not in a bag where you are forced to take it with you. If you see something wrong with the fruit, you can always change it. It's up to you (Clinton, personal communication, November 9, 2017).

He says he doesn't think about competition, but the depth of the answer regarding the prevalence of stands and thus the importance of treating customers well implies it has some impact on his business: "This is our model: the choice is yours, the money is ours" (Clinton, personal communication, November 9, 2017).

Abdul said there was no competition because there were no other produce vendors on their row of stalls at the Cape Town taxi rank: "We're the only fruit vendors here. So there is no competition for us" (Abdul, personal communication, November 9, 2017). There are, however, other fruit vendors at the taxi rank, even if not on the same row. Similarly, King said that while there were stands around the Mowbray station, he didn't consider them competition per se.

Nokulunga also didn't single out other vendors as competition. Although Christopher's stand is near hers, she said nothing negative about him. Indeed, her

response about learning bits of languages such as Chichewa and Shona indicate a welcoming attitude.

Overall, there was no suggestion of an adversarial relationship amongst street vendors or between vendors and supermarkets. The responses instead suggest that the survival and low-skill aspects of the work offer few competitive edges, and thus little consideration of competition. Location is the primary strategic decision. As Clinton said, the vendors all pay the same for the produce, and price gouging isn't really an option in a survivalist operation. Additionally, other basic factors, such as weather and the financial status of their customers, are entirely out of the vendors' control.

Weather and customer base.

There are certain intractable factors affecting the produce vending business. Clinton said, succinctly, that his biggest challenge is "that it mustn't rain. If it rains, there is no business" (Clinton, personal communication, November 9, 2017). Weather affects whether people are out and whether they will stop at the stand.

Relatedly, produce is an inherently precarious product. It can get overripe, it can shrivel and look bad, it can rot. There is an inability to stockpile it, eliminating economies of scale while procuring the product and presenting possibilities of loss that cannot be eliminated.

Customers' ability to buy is also crucial. Clinton said that in choosing where to shop, it "comes down to your financial status as well. If you have a credit card, you can walk into Woolsworths and buy the best of the best. But we sell cheap, that even people with credit cards tend to buy outside" (Clinton, personal communication, November 9, 2017). Indeed, he said that their product

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of fresh and cheap, it's just not washed and packed as it would be at a store. It was observed that many stands have a bottle of water customers can ask for if they want to wash their fruit when they buy it, but this is not done ahead of time.

Still, the quality of the product means little if the customers can't afford it. The base seemed particularly precarious in Langa, likely due to the historical disadvantages and poverty of the residents. Nokulunga said the produce sometimes doesn't sell because people don't have the money, and it then becomes rotten: "People, they don't have money every time. That's the thing" (Nokulunga, personal communication, November 12, 2017). Other times, people borrow produce but don't pay the stand back. She said that then they don't have money to buy from the market the next time. This too is indicative of the survivalist nature of the business.

With most of the factors affecting the business outside the control of the vendors, language skills seem to be one of a very few advantages they can gain outside of government intervention.

Government Role

With the precarious nature of business in the informal sector, particularly for survivalist enterprises, government intervention ought to play some role. Because support for survivalist traders is not included in national policies, Skinner (2000) argues that "the onus is then on local government to devise appropriate strategies" (p. 51). These policies should contribute to the development of the informal economy.

Location and infrastructure.

The zoning of stand locations and infrastructure development at those locations are areas in which the government frequently plays a role. For instance,

the Informal Trading Policy of Cape Town includes the objective of

"infrastructure provision and maintenance" to promote trading (City of Cape

Town, 2013, p. 13). This is built off the foundation of the 1995 International

Declaration on Street Vending, which has guidelines to

> protect the right to seek secure livelihoods and enable access to
>
> secure space. It also specifies the importance of increasing the
>
> allocation of resources to street trading, including facilities and
>
> infrastructure, as well as support services such as access to credit
>
> and training and highlights the importance of mechanisms that
>
> promote the participation of vendors in local governance (Skinner,
>
> 2000, p. 51).

On the infrastructure side, the Cape Town CBD

> is different from trading in any other city. There are more
>
> structured markets, and street trading is a more lucrative activity.
>
> Traders outside Cape Town's station pay between R800 and R960
>
> a month per site – an amount traders operating in other CBDs,
>
> particularly survivalist traders, would be unlikely to afford
>
> (Skinner, 2000, p. 54).

Abdul, whose wife's stand is at the taxi rank, said the stand had been moved

"because they did some renovation work here…. They moved everyone from the

bottom to the top" (Abdul, personal communication, November 9, 2017). They

pay 1,200 ZAR a month for the spot, an amount corroborated by a 2015 news

article as a relatively high cost (Matyila, 2015). This shows that Abdul and his

wife are not in produce vending as a survivalist activity.

Three traders indicated that they paid for their spots, while another, Jamiela, was not asked but it is likely she does pay as her stand is in the CBD. The two participants in Langa did not report paying the government, suggesting less government involvement and a more survivalist position.

Abdul's stand was the only one reported to be affected by government infrastructure work. However, he asserted that the location of their stand before the renovation work was better than their current location, and that another stand had been moved into their former spot, preventing them from moving back. This suggests there is a governmental removal from trader needs despite its involvement in infrastructure development.

None of the other stands were impacted by these sorts of policies. There was little indication of any level of government involvement in Langa, especially because the vendors do not pay for their spots as the vendors do downtown and in Mowbray. Infrastructure was not mentioned by other participants, even when pressed, unlike in other studies of the informal economy (Skinner, 2006). It was presumed infrastructure needs such as toilet and water facilities access, quality of roads or sidewalks, or stand shelters would surface, including infrastructure to store the produce when the stand is not in operation. But even the question of what the government should be doing that it is not evoked little regarding physical infrastructure. Instead, the vendors in Langa both indicated a desire for monetary aid.

Monetary aid.

When asked what the government could be doing, Christopher said it could be giving him money. He said he would buy more produce with the funds, because you can't sell it if you don't have it. Nokulunga, however, said that it

doesn't matter if you have it if the customers can't afford it: "You could do more [with aid], but… people don't have the money every time. Even if you can buy a lot of stuff, and there is a lot of stuff here, it is not guaranteed at all" (Nokulunga, personal communication, November 12, 2017). She added that

> the government is doing something, but I think at the moment she [her sister] never goes to the government to apply for some stuff, because people that are selling in the street are supposed to go and lend some money from the government. But that money is not for free, you have to pay it back. But the problem is, why they aren't going there to lend some money from the government, is because sometimes the business is not right. And then you will have the installment to pay back and won't be able. So that's why you have to start on your own (Nokulunga, personal communication, November 12, 2017).

This again reflects the precariousness of the produce business, particularly as it hinges on customer ability to buy.

Nokulunga followed this by arguing that the government should be supporting street vendors more robustly:

> Nokulunga: "They are supposed to help – without paying them back. Government is supposed to help people…. People who are selling on the street, they do not want to stand on the road and ask [for] something from the cars that are passing, at the robots. So at least when you are doing something, you are helping yourself, because – having something to eat at the end of the day, for yourself and for

your children. And so I think government is supposed to help these people who are selling in the street because there is also less crime."

Interviewer: "Less crime if people are working?"

Nokulunga: "Yeah. Because you can do something on your own."

(Nokulunga, personal communication, November 12, 2017).

But other than suggesting loans that wouldn't have to be repaid, she offered no ideas of how to encourage street vending.

Christopher's argument for monetary aid was as follows:

Christopher: "Give me more money, more money for my business because you know, I make myself, pick up this business. So if someone comes to join me, to pick up this business, it is good to me."

Interviewer: "What would you like to be able to do? What would you want the money for?"

Christopher: "If it is maybe 10,000 or 5,000 [rand], it is fine to me."

Alex: "Yeah. What would you do with it? With the money?"

Christopher: "I would just add this business, because more people come to buy this stuff."

Alex: "So would you buy more types of produce, more types of fruits and veg? Or would you build a structure, like an awning?"

Christopher: "No, no, I would just [order more stuff], because if you don't have the stuff people can't buy it."

(Christopher, personal communication, November 12, 2017).

He did not express the same concerns as Nokulunga about customers being unable to buy.

It also seems unsustainable to provide money in either proposed way. However, Davies & Thurlow (2009) argue that "South Africa has a small informal sector compared with other countries at similar income levels… suggest[ing] that significant barriers to entry exist in the informal sector, such as poor access to credit, high levels of crime, and a reservation wage inflated by social transfers" (p. 1). Greater access to credit may be what Christopher and Nokulunga seek, but it was not thoroughly investigated in this study.

Government detachment.

Previous studies of informal street traders, including in Cape Town, have included discussions on trading zones, regulations, and trader organizations. In Cape Town, "area managers with specific trading zones have been introduced. They spend a lot of time on the streets, speak the language of the traders and, in the best cases, build sound relationships with traders" (Skinner, 2000, p. 62). The Informal Trading Policy includes that "new traders will be encouraged to join a trader association in the trading area" (City of Cape Town, 2013, p. 19).

However, the central question about government involvement that was posed – are there things the government is doing that it should not be doing, or things it is not doing that it should be doing? – yielded no comments on these subjects. This suggests a nearly complete detachment from these policies and processes; even if they are operating, the policies evidently have little impact on the interview participants. None, except for Abdul, seemed to have considered government involvement deeply before, particularly in Langa. It is therefore

difficult to ascertain the role government could play in their livelihoods as they had little idea themselves.

Clinton voiced the most particular indictment of government policies. He said, "The reason we all do this is because of government…. You've heard about affirmative action? Yeah, I'd never stand a chance to get a job because I'm not Black enough, and I'm not White enough…. There's no work for us" (Clinton, personal communication, November 9, 2017). In the broader context of the interview, this comment was not entirely racial – it also included an indictment of government corruption. He said, "I don't think language is a barrier at all… Men's decisions and choices that they make, they can make this country better. But it is not – language is not going to help…. Respect, love, honesty, and integrity – if all men could have that, we'd all live in a better place" (Clinton, personal communication, November 9, 2017).

Language Status

Language offers both cultural and economic value. The primary focus of this study was on the latter, but the former was also addressed by some participants.

Most important.

Language value was evaluated both by the languages the participants said were the most important to know in Cape Town or South Africa and the ones they said they wanted their children to learn, which are two sides of the same coin.

English, Afrikaans, and Xhosa were all said to be important. This is in line with the racial and linguistic demographics of Cape Town as a whole. In the 2011 census, Cape Town's racial demographics were as follows: Coloured,

42.4%; Black African, 38.6%; White, 15.7%; Indian/Asian, 1.4%; and other, 1.9%. As first languages, Afrikaans is spoken by 34.9%, isiXhosa by 29.2%, and English by 27.8% (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Abdul described the top three as "the main languages in South Africa" (Abdul, personal communication, November 9, 2017). King said these were the three "you have to master" (King, personal communication, November 16, 2017). But he also singled English out as the language of business. Jamiela speaks English and Afrikaans but affirmed the importance of knowing Xhosa too.

Nokulunga said English is the national language of South Africa and the international language, but also emphasized the need to preserve Xhosa. Clinton primarily focused on English as the most important language.

Christopher said English is the most important language in South Africa, and the Afrikaans is the most important in Cape Town. He, however, does not speak Afrikaans, despite seeming to pick up languages quickly.

English was recognized as important by all the participants. Several made comments that suggested they assume everyone speaks English. For instance, Jamiela said, "All Xhosa speak English" (Jamiela, personal communication, November 16, 2017). Clinton said, "[We] sell to the Blacks, and they know English just as well as they speak their language" (Clinton, personal communication, November 9, 2017). Christopher and Nokulunga's conflicting descriptions, detailed above, are another layer on the assumptions: "More of people speak English" (Christopher, personal communication, November 12, 2017).

For the children.

Kamwangamalu (2016) argues that the perceived statuses of languages are motivating factors in terms of which languages are taught in schools and used in different areas of society. Indeed, in Africa, "ex-colonial languages are demographically minority languages, but because of their comparatively higher economic status vis-à-vis the indigenous African languages, they are perceived as mainstream or majority languages" (Kamwangamalu, 2016, p. 106). This 'majority' assumption seemed apparent from the interviews.

Predictably, all six participants want their children to learn English. King said that there are three languages to know in Cape Town, but stressed the importance of knowing English, particularly for formal sector business. Abdul wants his kids to learn English: "That's our home language, so it has to be English" (Abdul, personal communication, November 9, 2017).

Jamiela said, "English is a compulsory language," referring to school and life more broadly (Jamiela, personal communication, November 16, 2017). However, she also said her kids "must" learn Xhosa, a language she does not speak. This indicates a value that deviates from the assumptions of Kamwangamalu's (2016) hierarchy.

Clinton focused primarily on English, but said he wanted his daughter to learn French and Portuguese, too, indicating a broader linguistic perspective. One of his workers is Mozambican and speaks Portuguese, which likely informs his support of this language. The prevalence in French in western and central Africa also likely plays a role in his perspective.

Oddly, despite his broader linguistic experiences, Christopher said, "With the Xhosa people, you must use the Xhosa language. But if you want anyone, foreigners, what-what, use English" (Christopher, personal communication,

November 12, 2017). So he said he'd want his children to learn English and Xhosa.

A distinction was not made in the interviews between the language the participants want their children to be taught in and the languages they want their children to learn. It was assumed that English was the preferred medium of instruction. Nokulunga's answer, however, was contrary to this assumption.

Nokulunga was the only Xhosa person interviewed and she said she wanted her daughter to learn English and Xhosa. She said her daughter "knows English, but her own language, she must know better – best" (Nokulunga, personal communication, November 12, 2017). But she said her daughter didn't start studying Xhosa in school until Grade 9 and cannot spell in the language. Nokulunga was clear that this is embarrassing; Xhosa should be able to read and write in their language.

Diverging from the general understanding that "many African language-speaking parents view the African languages in which much of their schooling was mandated during apartheid as part-and-parcel of the reasons for their disadvantagement" (Mda, 1997, p. 371-372), Nokulunga views her language in a strikingly positive light. For instance, she asserted that all subjects should be taught in Xhosa in schools so that the language isn't lost to English; she said she thinks the process has begun with the teaching of maths in Xhosa. Asked if this was a good idea, she said, "I think so. Because English is always there for them" (Nokulunga, personal communication, November 12, 2017). This is notable: although Nokulunga believes in the use of Xhosa, there is still an assumption that the children will learn English.

Jamiela, King, Christopher, and Nokulunga all wanted their kids to learn Xhosa. This calls into question the view that indigenous African languages like Xhosa are *de facto* at the bottom of the prestige hierarchy, or at least questions the assumptions about different levels of the hierarchy. Indeed, Nokulunga's desire to switch to Xhosa as LoI contradicts Kamwangamalu's (2016) analysis of linguistic trends in Africa broadly and South Africa particularly. While Laitin (1992) argues that there is no evidence for massive language death in Africa, there is a difference between maintaining a language and phasing that language in as the LoI. One factor not emphasized in Kamwangamalu's (2016) hierarchical model of value is the cultural connotations of language.

Cultural importance.

It is "well-recognized that culture is transmitted over time through language" (Apte, 2001). Indeed, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the precursor to the AU, declared

> language is at the heart of a people's culture,… the cultural advancement of the African peoples and the acceleration of their economic and social development will not be possible without harnessing in a practical manner indigenous African languages in that advancement and development (as cited in Kamwangamalu, 2016, p. 58).

Language and culture are recognized as vital for social and economic development.

Clinton observed that "Blacks are very cultural-based. They don't like to deviate from culture" (Clinton, personal communication, November 9, 2017). This is why, he argues, indigenous African languages won't disappear. King

echoed that they won't disappear, even if they are spoken by fewer people in the future. Abdul explained it as follows: "I might not speak that language, but there is someone else that does speak that language… [and] I think it is more valuable for us to speak different languages" (Abdul, personal communication, November 9, 2017). This 'value' is not derived from economic value alone, but from cultural implications as well. Nokulunga values the maintenance of her language, and this is not derived singularly from economic value. Therefore, linguistic hierarchies, and their implications for language choice, need to be understood in light of other sources of value as well. Economic value does not limit the languages that are considered useful to know.

Conclusion

Language use is consistent with the demographics of Cape Town. English, Afrikaans, and Xhosa are the primary languages, statistically, and the interview findings support this.

The six interviews conducted with street produce vendors in Cape Town traced their linguistics histories through their education and work experiences. Language proficiencies were found to be shaped by both educational and vocational experiences, although the relative importance of each varied by participant.

The two immigrants interviewed demonstrated the most diverse linguistic repertoire, indicating the conformity power of language in society. This is also consistent with Laitin's (1992) data showing "an average of two languages per person [in Africa], going up to nearly three for those who have moved at least once in their lives and have lived in an urban area for at least six months," although the distinction between the 'national integration' language and the 'national/regional' language is murky in this case (p. 71)

Language did not seem to be a barrier of entry to the informal sector, specifically informal street produce vending, but was often a skill acquired or improved over time. This was particularly true for the immigrants interviewed.

All of the participants learned English in school, and these experiences were likely formative in their even being able to participate in the interviews. English is broadly accepted as the language of the formal economy, but it also seems to serve as the default common language in the informal sector.

Racial differences marked knowledge of Xhosa, even amongst participants who said they want their children to learn the language. For instance,

the Black participants, both South African and immigrants, speak Xhosa at least conversationally. The other three participants, two of whom are Coloured and one of whom is Indian, have a very limited understanding of Xhosa. However, there was a general consensus that indigenous African languages, like Xhosa, are important, not just for cultural preservation but for communication between different racial groups. Clinton's wish to have learned Xhosa in school and Jamiela's insistence that her children learn Xhosa are indicative of this agreement.

Linguistic value is therefore not confined to raw economic power, but to cultural and relational factors. Even though Xhosa does not have the status and 'universality' of English, it is still valued for the communication it allows. This extends beyond the commercial interactions in the informal sector, exemplified by the participants who wanted their children to learn the language.

Shortcomings in government involvement were observed across the board, from promotion of indigenous African languages in education to supporting development of the informal economy. Stronger promotion of mother-tongue education ought to be pursued more forcefully, particularly if further study finds Nokulunga's stance is not anomalous. Credit and infrastructure are complex areas that also require further study, particularly if the intent is to make policy recommendations. The policies in place are, by and large, admirably progressive, but the implementation has left much to be desired.

Recommendation for Future Study

Further study should include people who are more able or willing to participate in interviews in languages other than English. As Nokulunga's answers were contrary to much of the literature regarding apartheid's legacy affecting language in education, more Xhosa people should be interviewed with a focus on this area.

Geographic expansion could also offer more complete comparative data. Street produce vendors could be considered from more parts of the greater Cape Town area, other urban environments in South Africa, and urban environments in other developing countries.

As this study aimed to trace the linguistic thread through multiple spheres, other studies should concentrate on language use in one of them. The informal economy is the least studied sphere of those examined in this study, particularly with regards to language use.

The idea of national unity arose in the literature and indirectly in the interviews. Language's role in national unity should be examined in future study.

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Appendix I: Interview Questions

- broad outline

  - can you tell me about yourself?

    - how old are you?

    - how would you racially identify yourself?

  - where are you from?

    - when did you move to South Africa? to Cape Town?

    - why did you move?

  - what languages do you speak? how well?

    - what languages did you learn in school? which were you

      taught in?

  - what languages do you think are the most important to know

    generally? in South Africa? in Cape Town? why?

  - how long have you worked in produce vending?

    - what are the demographics of your customers? what kinds

      of people do you see most?

      - male, female, white, Xhosa, Coloured, etc.?

    - what languages do you use in a typical day? which do you

      use most?

  - would it be easier if everyone spoke the same language? is there

    value to maintaining small languages?

  - what are your main challenges? in your work? in living?

- education
    - what languages did you learn in school? how good are you at each? do they help you in your work?
    - what language was used as the medium of instruction in school?
        - if not first language, do you think that impacted your understanding of material?
    - do you think you would be better off if you were more proficient at a certain language? which? why?
- vending
    - how long have you worked in produce vending?
    - do you work another job?
    - where do you get your produce? what languages do your suppliers use?
        - do you use different languages to acquire different products?
    - have you ever been unable to obtain products due to language barriers?
    - do you have people working for you? how many? what languages do you use to communicate with them?
    - why did you locate your business where you did? (have you ever had to move? why?) do you pay for this spot?
        - is it a good location? where are the best areas?
    - has language prevented you from making sales?

- have you learned languages on the job, even just conversational?

- how would you describe the demographics of your customers?

- competitors

  - who do you view to be your main competitors?

  - does language make you more competitive? less?

- challenges

  - what are your biggest challenges in your work? why?

    - is there a linguistic component to any of them?

- government policies

  - do any government policies affect your work?

  - what should the government be doing that it is not?

  - what is the government doing that it should not?

- perspective

  - do you see language as a resource? why?

  - what language(s) do you think are the most important to know in South Africa or in Cape Town? why? which do you/would you want your children to learn?

  - what do you think will happen to smaller indigenous African languages in the future?

  - do you think you would have more opportunities if everyone spoke one language? would South Africa have more development?

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