Communicating 'Self': Language and Issues of Belonging

Maheshvari Naidu

Anthropology, School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
E-mail: naiduu@ukzn.ac.za

ABSTRACT There has been for the last decade, in the tenor of general scholarship, much enthusiastic talk about the 'mobilities turn' in the social sciences, and of borders made porous by mass communication and the various patterns of migration and circuits of mobility. International foreign 'students' form one vector amongst the multiple trajectories of migratory movement, and represent foreign 'bodies', who (choose to) become mobile in search of educational opportunities. Such movement renders them 'international', and in some instances cosmopolitan. Many remain however, rooted to their home spaces through their use and choice of communication through their home languages; and further use their home language to satisfy a sense of belonging in a foreign host space. Language (and communication) is thus considered key in unpacking notions of belonging. This exploratory paper employs an interpretivist lens and works through a sample of narratives of a small group of foreign African students and unpacks how language(s) and communication are used by the students in a way that 'speaks' to a sense of self and belonging.

INTRODUCTION

Transnational Flows of Foreign Bodies (and Languages)

The contemporary sociologist John Urry draws on metaphors of fluidity, flux and flow to show how "liquid" societies have become. Reminiscent of the classical anthropologist Morgan Spencer, Urry states that "blood is a fluid moving through the extraordinarily complex networks of blood vessels in the human body and as a result it gets more or less everywhere in the body" (2007: 30). Stretching the metaphor from 'body' to 'society', he points out that the contemporary 'global condition' is likewise one of heightened circuits and 'flows' of mobility through borders rendered permeable.

John Urry has over the last two decades, written extensively on what culminates in a rather erudite unfolding of a 'new paradigm' in the social sciences in his seminal work '*Mobilities*' (2007). It has been seven years since Urry wrote *Mobilities* (2007) in which he sought to articulate what he termed 'a mobilities paradigm'. Urry was not the first or the only one to seek to articulate the world within a mobilities framework, but he did so elegantly and cohesively, drawing a critical gaze to not only issues of movement and mobility, but also a world of mobile theories and mobile methods. 'Transnationalism', 'migrancy', 'diaspora' and 'mobilities' have in turn, for some time now been buzz words in the social sciences, with an explosion of work around mul-

tiple and multiplexed issues of transnational and diasporic identities, nation-state, migrant labour, remittances, etc. There has been a substantial amount of work done in the area of student mobility (see Rosenzweig 2008; Byram and Dervin 2008; Zheng 2010; Shields and Edwards 2010; Shields 2013; Nelson and Johnson 2014) as well as some work in the field of transnationals and (im)migrants in the context of language (see Hidalgo 1986; Ballinger 2004; Butcher 2008; Valentine et al. 2008; Ullman 2010; Nawyn et al. 2012). Closer to home there have been studies looking at language issues in a South African transitional/transformational and educational context (see Kamwangamalu 2007; Bangeni and Kapp 2007). There has, however, been relatively less research on language in the context of foreign University students and issues of mobility, identity and belonging. Such issues take on even greater significance in a highly diverse and multilingual society such as South Africa, and within a context of erecting and articulating institutional language policies. This paper however, is not directly related to institutional language policies or the newly introduced language policy at the University of KwaZulu Natal (UKZN). For work that engages more directly with the complex dimensions of this issue, the reader is pointed to several recent works that are positioned from a theoretical (see Wildsmith 2010; Kotzé and Hibbert 2010) as well as from an empirical perspective (see Moodley 2009, 2010; Mashiya 2010).

This particular paper is exploratory in nature and looks at language in its *everyday* context, in

this instance, within an institutional setting. However, in looking at the routinised 'everyday', in terms of language preference and use, it seeks to pull back the cover on issues of mobile foreign student, and their experiences of belonging and identity. Increasingly, transnational processes are examined at the micropolitical level of the individual (see Poros 2001; Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004; Gernsheim 2007; Thieme 2008; Naidu 2012). As Portes et al. (2001) and Voigt-Graf (2004) point out, there are particular typologies of transnational flows that can be spoken of within the contexts of 'little' and 'great'. However, the authors caution, '*little*' and '*great*' are not to be reified as oppositional streams of transnational flows, but are rather to be understood as the articulation of the *global* with *local* manifestations. The composition of immigrant inflows is of key importance for the socio-economic outcome in a receiving country. One such inflow, 'international student mobility', is claimed as a potentially vital pathway of skilled immigration (Kahanec and Králiková 2011: 4). Student migratory movements (which are of varying durations) can be seen as examples of 'little' flow, as they represent individualised mobility. Transnational students in turn, bring with them, their cultural traits and cultural capital in the form of their linguistic diversity. Put simply, they bring with them their languages. They also bring with them, through the conduits of their languages, *much more than their languages.*

As Butcher puts it, *language* is an explicit marker of belonging and identity that also represents the "tension between cultural continuity and change in diverse societies" (2008: 371). Butcher's paper probed language in the context of second-generation migrant youth in Sydney, probing how language was deployed to un/successfully navigate difference and belonging, both between communities and between generations, in turn serving to erect and establish boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Butcher's findings showed that language was used as a 'symbolic resource' in the performance of both *difference* and *sameness*, in discriminating between and "demarcating and fixing difference and belonging", in defining new social spaces, as well as contesting and "resisting points of authority" within hegemonic fields of power (see Butcher 2008). The work by Valentine et al. (2008: 377) shows that migrants (whether migrant student or labour immigrants) are often defined as

being 'out of place' in their new environment, despite being multi-lingual. What might have otherwise been seen as an (linguistic) asset becomes a 'liability' of being 'out of place', because their particular individual linguistic competencies do not always fit the norms or expectations of the particular spaces which they inhabit and so their identities are ascribed and inscribed by others as *not belonging*.

While the linguistic study of language accents quite literally, the formal structure or linguistic *features* of language; the morphology, phonology, syntax and semantics- a socio-linguistic approach, as Blommaert (2010: 3) reminds us, instead engages a shift 'from focus on structure to focus on function – from focus on linguistic form in isolation to linguistic form in human context'. Across the (now porously understood spectrum of) the multiple disciplines; cultural anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists have increasingly come to conceptualise language and discourse as explanatory constructs in theories of culture, identity and learning (Wortham 2001: 254). While the highly popular phrase, 'the world has become a village' sits comfortably alongside many globalisation processes, and is indeed semiotic vocabulary spawned within the (albeit potholed and uneven) processes of globalisation, there is both insight and common sense in Blommaert's assertion, that in the context of languages, and for the sociolinguist, "The world has not become a village, but is rather a tremendously complex web of villages, towns, neighbourhoods and settlements connected by material and symbolic ties in often unpredictable ways" (2010: 6). While a village conjures up images of a monolithic (monolingual?) topography of citizens all related and living within the clichéd 'six degrees of separation', a webbed metaphor brings up to the gaze the tiered and levels of a world architecture that is more densely crisscrossed and more about 'being in relationship' with each other, linguistically speaking. This linguistic complexity, rather than 'flattening out' in the context of mobility, has become even more heightened, with languages crisscrossing multiple borders.

There is thus immense intellectually commonsense in Blommaert's (2010: 3) assertion that we have shifted into a so called second paradigm-the 'first paradigm' saw language as bounded fixed and nameable. He names this second paradigm, rather aptly, as a 'sociolinguistics of mo-

bility'. The *naming* is most apposite, given that this paradigmatic approach focuses "not on language-in-place but on language-in-motion", as the sociolinguistics of mobility is concerned with actual language resources deployed in real sociocultural contexts (Blommaert 2010: 5). As languages 'snake' and 'fork' their way alongside what many would construe as the hegemonic (strangle)hold of English, one also agrees with Butcher's (2008: 371) assertion that "language use, as a marker of belonging, appears more complex than a simple correlation between spoken word and subjectivity". Indeed as social anthropologists working within linguistics, Garrett and Baquedano-López point out;

"[L]inguistic anthropologists have long recognized, local values, ideologies, patterns of social organization, and cultural preferences are inscribed in everyday discourse and social interactions, making it possible to discern and investigate the relationships between everyday linguistic and discursive practices and broader social structures and systems of cultural meaning ..." (Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002: 341).

The above quotation links everyday language and linguistic transactions to values and ideologies and social interactions. Linguistic anthropologists, study the role language plays in culturally patterned behavior and how language use can richly constitute aspects of culture and identity (Wortham 2001: 5). It is with some of these embedded aspects of cultural (linguistic) belonging and identity, as they come to feature in the articulations of foreign African students; that this paper is concerned with.

Foreign African students as part of the cohort of international students within South African educational institutions are a critical context. South Africa has courted, attracted and now host many such foreign/ international students, who may well be out of place. A cursory glance at the web pages of the several educational institutions in the country (University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Witwatersrand, University of Cape Town, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University etc.) reveals a drop down menu with full details to invite the international student to South African universities. International student mobility thus emerges as a discernible vector among the several different kinds and typologies of migratory fluxes. This exploratory paper chooses to focus on one category of international student, the foreign African student who comes in search of educational opportunities, as foreign (mobile) bodies bringing with them their linguistic capital.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was used and narratives gathered from a sample of 31 male and female senior foreign African across three Durban campuses of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard, Westville and Edgewood). There was a simple selection criteria followed.

1. Students had to be international African students from a Sub Saharan country.
2. Students had to be senior postgraduate students (Honours, Masters and Doctoral)
3. Students had to have to been living in the country for at least two years.
4. Students had to consider themselves as 'foreign' and transnational, who were open to the possibility of either returning home after completion of their degree, or remaining on in South Africa.

The first criteria was meant to eliminate the large number of international students who either came in for either a part, or all of the Masters or Doctoral work from USA or other parts of Europe. The assumption was that these students would be English speaking students, or relatively speaking, fairly comfortable with English. The study was not in this instance, directly concerned with this category of student perceptions. Many studies also indicate that this category of international students seeks out 'exotic' destinations like South Africa as part of what is construed as 'academic tourism', meaning that their views on multi-culturalism and bilingualism etc. was not what this study was concerned with, given that in most cases, they were students who were going to return to their sending countries (in the developed North).

Most students[1] selected and interviewed were over the age of 22 years. (The average ages ranged from 22 to 34). Students who had been in the country for a minimum of 2 years were chosen as the responses of new immigrant or transnational students was assumed to be different from those who would have had time to become somewhat familiar with the language and cultural traits of their host country. The third criteria was considered vital as responses were sought

from students who still strongly identified with their sending countries and who were *both* open to returning home after completing their studies, or remaining here should opportunities present themselves. It was felt that the responses of students who had already attempted to position themselves for local employment opportunities would be qualitatively different (greater assimilative tendencies) to questions around language as they would be thinking of acquiring language skills that made them more marketable to prospective local employers. Thus, sampling was initially selective and non randomised and identified male and female postgraduate students known to the interviewer, and who fitted the above selection criteria. Thereafter, the snowball sampling technique was used, with participants often pointing the interviewer to other potential participants that they were familiar with.

The initial set of narratives was collected over the months of April/May 2013 by a research assistant. This was a Masters level student who was also a foreign African student. She had been in South Africa for three years. She was in her early twenties, and a university Social Science student who had had substantial experience with doing qualitative research work. A research assistant was used as the assistant was familiar with potential participants across the age groups identified. It was also believed that the participants would be more comfortable sharing their experiences with someone they felt was 'one of them'.

Working with some of the responses noted in the preliminary interviews with the interviews, the researcher was able to pick up particular themes in the recorded conversations that allowed her to probe more deeply, in the next phase of the research process. The second stage of interviews (October/November and February/March 2014) aimed at facilitating deliberative inquiry. According to Ackerly (2009), deliberative inquiry disrupts the commonly positioned polarised dualities of subject and researcher and challenges the 'ontological perspective' that research 'participants are the objects of study', and that 'theorists are the constructors of knowledge'. Such an inquiry instead privileges the co-roles (of researcher and those we do research on) as collaborative in the process of knowledge production. These meetings with the participants were more discussion oriented conversations than the earlier stage interviews conducted by the research assistant. The researcher thus met with approximately twelve participants from the larger group, who indicated both consent and willingness to meet, for another set of deliberative interviews. The interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, and were conducted at a place that was comfortable to the participants, in most part on the campuses where they were studying. The responses were written down and later transcribed. Questions attempted to probe wide issues of sense of language and belonging, notions of exclusiveness (if any), inclusion and exclusion, as well as possible understandings of language loyalty.

Once the transcribed material was ready, it was read over several times to gain familiarity with the empirical data, against the archival and textual research. The responses were then coded into thematic clusters, allowing potential patterns and commonalities to emerge. The data was in turn cast within an interpretivist analytic. An interpretivist approach does not assume there to be a dominant singular truth claim and the paper thus worked from the understanding that 'truth' and truth claims from the participants are relative and multiple, *and valid*.

Foreign Bodies, Foreign Languages and Mobilities: The Students' Narratives

Erik is from Namibia and has been in the country for three years, all spent as a postgraduate student at UKZN. He is 27 years old and currently in his second year of a Masters degree in Political Science. He speaks Afrikaans and English and says that he does not speak or understand any isiZulu. Erik says that he is open to career opportunities in South Africa, although ideally, he would prefer to work back home. When asked about his language preferences, Erik shares:

I find myself slipping into Afrikaans when I am around Afrikaners on campus. It feels comfortable, it comes naturally. I do not plan for it to happen. My own language represents my culture and defines my roots and true sense of belonging. Language defines who I am ... it defines my culture and heritage. I think my language links me to my background. We wouldn't know our culture had we not known our language. My home language satisfies my feelings of belonging because I am able to identify with

a certain society back home through language. They [referring to the local African students] say I do not look foreign, so every time they see me they speak isiZulu thinking that I will understand... it's a bit annoying ... must every African person speak Zulu or something....?

Igwe is 34 years old and from Nigeria. He is studying towards his Masters degree in Education and has been in South Africa (in the Kwa-Zulu-Natal province) for five years. Igwe says that he is fully bilingual in French and English. He says that although he cannot speak isiZulu, he is able to understand it. He shares that he yearns for his extended family back home, but knows that he is probably "better off getting a job here and sending money back home". He adds:

When I get a chance to speak French, I relish it...I feel comfortable with it because I do not get much chance to speak my home language, I usually speak English here, so getting a chance to converse in French is a relief for me. I feel like the other French speaking guys 'get' me. I think it just happens naturally without even being aware of it, that when we meet someone who is also French speaking, we just 'fall into' it. I do think it is good to know other languages. Personally, I wouldn't mind learning a local language to blend in, and I think it would help because I would be able to communicate with many people. If you can speak one of the local languages they usually treat you and include you like one of their own, at times even fail to see that you are not from South Africa ... this would help in many situations ... especially when moving around the city...

But remember isiZulu is not the only language in the world and there are other languages that are spoken in this province [Kwa-Zulu-Natal], so no one has to learn 'their' [local Zulu] language. My mother tongue (French) represents my heritage and culture, and reflects who I am. Language defines who we are and reminds us of our roots, if you are Zulu and the other is Xhosa or Sotho, we are able to identify and appreciate diversity in our languages. Language plays a very important role in defining cultural diversity.

My home language does not directly link me to my African culture and tradition. I speak French which is a 'foreign' language, but by now of course it's' my language... so maybe not foreign to me (haha), rather it represents my culture back home, here to me... I am not sure how to fully explain it, but that is how it is to me. And I wouldn't say that I have a particular culture that I subscribe to. But yes, French does reminds me of who I am and where I come from... Nigeria...

Findings from a study (see Valentine et al. 2008) of Welsh migrants in London revealed that young people often sought out those who shared the same language background in the city, assuming that if they spoke the same language they might also share the same views. Valentine et al. (2008: 377) claim that such enactments reveal that 'language, space and identities' are being 'constantly and mutually' constituted through such 'same' or 'sameness-seeking behaviours. The 'critical intertwining of language and identity underpins a deep(er) sense of cultural loss associated with declining language use (see Butcher 2008: 383). For the students in this study, it was not of course a sense of (permanent) language loss, as they all understood that they were not in their home countries, the main reason for not hearing their home languages as often. However, their narratives revealed that this *mobile* status as migrant and transnational students meant that, although they understood the point, they still longed for spaces and places *and people*, where they could feel *that much* closer to home. Both Erik and Igwe came from African countries (Namibia and Nigeria respectively), in which there was a rich and dense complex of languages and dialects spoken. As part of the urban so called elite and mobile, they claimed as their 'home languages', Afrikaans and French, and likewise claimed to be attracted to other students who spoke those languages. They did not say that they were attracted to other students from their home countries (while that may also, on some level be the case), but explicitly explained the attraction in terms of their 'home tongues' and (missed) language preferences. They in turn '*fell in*' with fellow students speaking the *same* language. Igwe even mentioned that he was part of a social group of French speaking students which included students from France and other French speaking African countries.

Naidu and Nzuza (2014) working with Sierra Leon migrants, showed how migrants in general (students included) used 'evocative memories of home', to reconnect emotionally, and bridge the space between the sending society and host

society. The Naidu and Nzuza study revealed that 'language' was a critical 'artefact' in the process of 'shrinking' the space between the migrants and the loved ones back home. It was also critical in (re)establishing a sense of 'self' in a foreign space, underpinning Igwe's point that the French language reminded him of who he was and where he came from. Igwe had also opened his narrative with *"When I get a chance to speak French, I relish it…getting a chance to converse in French is a relief for me"*. Igwe uses the word 'relish' which is evocative of the joy embedded in the use of one's "*heritage*" language. He also used the word, "*relief*", as if he had been 'holding it in' and it was a (linguistic) release of sorts to engage in a language which one was inherently comfortable with, *and with other individuals who felt similarly*.

Erik shared that he found himself slipping into Afrikaans when around Afrikaners on campus, *saying that "it feels comfortable, it comes naturally. I do not plan for it to happen."* Language is thus intimately linked to an individual's or group's social identity. Erik's case was of course more complex than a mere subjective interest in a particular language preference. As an Afrikaans speaking Black African from Namibia, he was not impervious to the particular historical and ideological embeddedness of Afrikaans, and its perhaps continued perception as 'the language of the oppressor'. However, from what Erik shares, his sense of self was entangled with language that somewhat transcended any kind of simple linear equating of Afrikaans as being oppressive. He simply shrugged his shoulders when prodded further and reminded me of *"all the coloured and African people in the Cape whose language had also become Afrikaans."*

Kamwangamalu points out, that it is often argued that linguistic acts are in themselves performative acts of identity (2007: 263) and help with the *navigation* of cultural belonging. For Erik, slipping into Afrikaans allowed a performance space for *who* and *how* he saw himself, both in the host country South Africa, and in relation to his sending country, Namibia. Such a navigation and articulation of self is often facilitated through *relational resources. Relational resources* refer to the positive relationships with others in the context that can increase connection to a practice, such as opportunities to speak a language of preference. *Ideational resources* refer to the ideas about oneself and one's rela-

tionship to and place in the practice, as well as ideas about what is personally valued (see Nasir and Cook 2009: 47). Following Nasir and Cook (2009), one can suggest that the migrant students seek out what can be referred to as both relational and ideational resources. Even the act of 'slipping' into another language in the presence of other, so called 'native' speakers, or the use of 'switching', is on some levels, an affirmation of membership and (group) solidarity. Studies by Naidu with Gujarati migrants (2008) and Bilola who worked with migrants from Cameroon (2012), reveal through social network theory, how group membership is further reinforced by shared artefacts from home, as well as by being able to 'switch' to home languages.

Igwe shares that he would not be averse to learning a local language (isiZulu) "to blend in" and "*to communicate with many people*". He adds that *"If you can speak one of the local languages, they usually treat you and include you like one of their own, at times even fail to see that you are not from South Africa*". Igwe like many of the other migrant students interviewed was open to learning the local language, understanding that it played an important dynamic in fitting in or "blending in" and perhaps helping in navigating cultural differences. All the migrant students appeared to clearly understand what one could refer to as 'linguistic competencies, and how that competency shaped their inclusion or exclusion amongst the local populations.

The story of both Erik, who asks *"must every African speak Zulu or something....?"* as well as Igwe, who states, *"If you can speak one of the local languages they even fail to see that you are not from South Africa",* reminds us that the mobility of African bodies in the postcolony, is complex. Igwe states that his *"home language does not directly"* link him to his *"African culture and tradition"*. He claims that he speaks*; "French which is a 'foreign' language, but by now of course it's' my language",* and ends by pointing out that maybe it was no longer foreign to him. Igwe comes from Nigeria, a country of multiple indigenous African languages and regional dialects. French was foreign to Igwe's background and 'adopted' within the context of the scramble for Africa and coloniality, and the later formal adopting of English as the country's official language. Igwe says that he is considered to have 'progressed further'

than his *"cousins back home who had a local education, and had not travelled out of the country"* like him. "*Being able to converse in English of course helped me there"*, he shared.

Such (elite?) vectors and mobilities of these students, are juxtaposed alongside the realisation that their foreign bodies and the linguistic competencies embodied by them, represent the appearance of otherness, and some level, represented regimes of exclusion, as their own competencies lay *outside* that of the majority of African students speaking the local language. Thus, part of the process of enclosing (within social networks or groups of similar speaking others) and performing and articulating their own identity, was a valorisation of elements of their languages, and other cultural belongings that they claimed to associate with their languages. Such performances underpin the role of language as a situated practice in articulating identities in local contexts (see also Naidu and Nzuza 2014).

In a paper entitled 'Globalization and International Student Mobility', in the journal *Comparative Education Review*, Shields (2011) gives a wonderfully critical overview of university students' mobility using 'network analysis' (see Burt 1992; Coleman 1998). The use of network analysis in sketching out the mobility contours of both large flows and 'great transnationalism' (as in Shield's work), as well as small flows and 'little transnationalism' (see Naidu 2012) is highly successful. Using recent figures from a 2011 UNESCO Institute for Statistics report, Shields points out that the "flows of international students have become immense-exceeding 3 million in 2009" (Shields 2011: 1-2), which she ascribes and predicates on globalisation and the increased levels of interconnectivity that come in its wake. Shield's comment about international student education opportunities are buttressed by the equally high numbers of educational institutes and universities that openly advertise and competitively 'court' international students. Shield's makes the point that;

There is immense complexity to the international student network: millions of students make autonomous choices about their international study, picking from thousands of courses of study, motivated by any number of peer, family, economic, and cultural influences, yet in this complexity there are discernible trends (Shields 2011: 3).

South Africa is no exception to these migratory flows. Erik and Igwe are part of this vector of migratory (student) flow. Each have indicated their autonomous choice in host destination and institutional and study preference. Murphy-Lejeune (2008: 16) points out that in general, particular "pull" factors reveal the interplay between "distances and proximities, linguistic, geographic, cultural and historical, as well as academic considerations", and goes onto to add that "student mobility cannot be understood outside the wider geopolitical" (Murphy-Lejeune 2008: 17). It has also been noted that despite increased competition and connectivity, international student flows are often characterized as having a strong South to North polarity. English-speaking countries in the global North have particularly high levels of incoming international students (see Butcher 2008: 373).[2] However, on the African continent, *South Africa* acts as the gravitational 'North' in drawing students from other parts of sub Saharan Africa. South Africa performs as *North* to sub Saharan Africa, and many of the 'South' students, who are 'newly mobile' within the postcolony, come with diverse linguistic capital, a 'heritage' (sic) of the colony. Figures in 2007-2009 revealed that two out of every three international students, some 36,000, were from the 14-member Southern African Development Community (SADC). South Africa received 17% of mobile students from Sub-Saharan Africa in 2010[3]. Zimbabwe was the major 'source' sending country, sending 18% of the international students, followed by Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland – neighbouring countries where English is commonly spoken.[4] A paper in *University News Online* states what may well appear obvious, that the dominance of SADC students is in concert with studies that have shown that the factors that influence student mobility are geographic region, historical connections and *language*. In 2009 the total international student enrolment was 60 856. The top 10 sending places of origin for the same period were; Zimbabwe (14 359), Namibia (7 264), Botswana (4 849), Lesotho (4 004), Swaziland (3 453), Democratic Republic of Congo (1 815), Zambia (1 529), Angola (1 135), Mauritius (1 108), Malawi (854) (see International Education Association of South Africa -IEASA)

In 2005, the online UK newspaper *Times Higher Education* put forward a headline *'Foreign Students Flock to SA',* and is quoted as stating;

Out of a total of 770,000 university enrolments, an estimated 60,000 came from outside

South Africa, equaling 8 per cent of all students. This is a higher proportion than in most European countries[5].

'*Project Atlas –South Africa'* claims that since 2007, there has been an 8 percent increase of international students studying in South Africa. The claim is that most of these students come from other African countries, with the top 10 sending places of origin, all African countries, making up 69.4 percent of the international student cohort[6]. "Universities have done exceptionally well in attracting foreign students," claims Roshen Kishun, the then president of the 'International Education Association of South Africa', asserting that *"South Africa is the number one destination for foreign students in Africa, and we believe it is among the top 20 international student host countries in the world."*[7]

It is thus clear that student mobility is a critical topic. Chien and Kot (2011: 2) in their recently published discussion paper 'New Patterns in Student Mobility in the Southern Africa development Community' claim that student mobility has become a topic of much discussion on the policy agenda of international and regional organizations, attracting increased attention in Africa. The point they make is that "higher education is now widely recognised as an important driver of socioeconomic growth and human development." And while student mobility and dispersal has also become a driver of sorts for economic growth and sustainability, my concern as an anthropologist is what this mobility and migratory flux means in terms of probing issues of belonging and inclusion/exclusion. Given that many of the foreign graduates are also expected to remain and contribute their knowledge and skills sets to the local economy, their ideologies of belonging and their sense of inclusion become important points of consideration. Although languages are invisible until they are spoken, movement of people across space is never a move across empty spaces, claims Blommaert (2010: 6). According to him, the spaces are always someone's space, and they are filled with norms, expectations, conceptions of what counts as proper and normal (indexical) language use. Mobility, sociolinguistically speaking, is therefore through different monitored spaces in which language 'gives you away' (Blommaert 2010: 6). Migrant students in turn attempt to recreate a sense of linguistic familiarity in a diverse environment.

Shiela is a 24 year old from Zambia. She speaks Bemba and English and has been in South Africa for four years and is currently in her forth year LLB. She says that she speaks a "bit of isiZulu".

I speak English most of the times so when I meet someone who speaks my language, that Zambian in me just pops up. But sometimes, even English helps with guys from Zambia who don't speak Bemba. And I just laugh at those idiots that think we have to learn the local language just cos we are studying here... By the same token, I wouldn't resist learning isiZulu. It is a good thing, so why resist it? But to be compelled by what others think you should do... that's another thing.

People easily accept you if you can speak their language, the local community would accept me and put away the notions of 'amakwerekwere'[8] or foreigner - if I were to speak isiZulu properly. They actually begin to like someone who can speak their language. But my own language represents who I am and where I come from. My home language enables me to understand who I am, it has a relationship with my culture and tradition, and it is heritage ... more than just a means of communicating. I am defined by what and how I speak.

Mary is from Zimbabwe and is doing her Masters in Social Work. She has been at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and in the country for a little over 4 and half years. She speaks English and isiNdebele.

I speak a bit of isiZulu. My language is isiNdebele which is similar to isiZulu but there are many distinctions and I don't understand some things in Zulu. But Black African people (in particular) seem to think that every black person is Zulu-speaking, whereas we have people from so many different countries and are of dark skin- but don't know Zulu.

I do think that sometimes the local students, or even in town and in taxis, people will speak in their own language to 'freeze you out'.

I don't speak in my mother tongue with other students from the same country as me, as most of the times I'm with someone who is from a different country so I speak in English to accommodate them. Also, most of my friends and fellow students from my country speak a different language from me. Using English as the medium for communicating makes sense ... my language of course evokes feelings of belong-

ing as it's something I sort of belong to vs. where others belong. Yeah if I really think about it, isiNdebele represents my identity and obviously where I come from.

Discourses of '*difference*' and '*same-ness*' constantly shape and reshape socially constructed borders of belonging and non belonging. In the context of a globalized, post-colonial society, borders are supposedly fluid, malleable and flexible. Yet they are simultaneously reified in discourses of exclusion as locked- indexical markers of identity (Kurczewska 2009: 198). Mary and Shiela are openly proud of their languages and refer to languages evoking belonging. Even though Mary sees the similarities between her home language and isiZulu, she is quick to point out that the languages are still different, and that she does not understand everything in isiZulu. The pride shown in a 'mother tongue' as in the case of Mary, who claims that isiNdebele "*represents my identity and obviously where I come from*", is related to the creation of oppositional culture, or oppositional identity, what the classical anthropologist Gregory Bateson referred to as 'schizmogenesis' (see Bateson 1935).

For Wenger, identities are created through the "tension between our investment in the various forms of belonging and our ability to negotiate the meanings that matter in those contexts" (Wenger 1998: 188). This means identities are forged through our identifications with ('our') people and our beliefs, and the meanings we assign to them. Part of the process of enclosing and articulating identity is thus a valorisation of elements of "parental" or heritage culture to "fill out the gaps of being in-between" (Butcher 2008: 385). Language additionally, is not only an expression of identity (Valentine et al. 2008: 372/ 373), but also a means of gaining and exhibiting social capital. Both Shiela and Mary see their proficiency in English as a kind of social capital that allows them to bridge distances, even with people from the same country as them, but who may speak *another* language of the home country. Such a sociolinguistics of mobilities and mobile resources is of course vital in the context of South Africa which acts as a major 'pull' factor for many migrant labour flows into the country (see Otu 2009; Muthuki 2010). Consider the words of Fazela Haniff, voiced in 2005, when she was president of the International Education Association of South Africa:

"South Africa welcomes international students, especially at the postgraduate level, since intellectual capital is what the country needs...Our pool of talent is not enough to support continued economic growth and development."

South Africa, as shown earlier, is also a major pull for transnational flows of students from other parts of Africa, seeking educational opportunities. According to Beine and Noel (2011: 2) who looked at literature of student mobility in Europe and USA, foreign students represent an important source of income for universities. Developed countries, South Africa included, are highly interested in attracting foreign students. The point about attracting 'intellectual capital is a critical one, and 'international students', is inclusive of students from other parts of Africa, not only students from the global North, that is, Europe and USA. However, within the local context, the South African government subsidises SADC students along the same rate that it subsidises local students, so foreign African students are not a form of (tuition) income as such. South Africa's agreement with the 14-member Southern African Development Community (SADC) meant that students from these sending countries are considered as 'local' students in terms of tuition costs. This undergirds the assertion of those like Haniff, that South Africa sees hosting students from the rest of Africa as a way of contributing to the continent's human resource development, and helping stem a brain drain[9]. In an online paper entitled '*South Africa: Huge growth in foreign students*', written in 2007, (as numbers of international students to South African institutions began to swell), Patrick Fish of the Higher Education South Africa, is quoted as asserting that "The country also feels it has an edge in terms of diversity: Since 1994 our universities have become good at traversing cultures and identities". It is not sure what is meant by 'traversing cultures and identities', but a safe assumption would be to assume that cultural diversity is valued[10].

The Caudery et al. (2008) study looked at cultural diversity in terms of international students in a university and examined the motivations of international students at Scandinavian universities, in terms of language learning. The context of Scandinavia is salient as very few students knew the local languages. The Caudery et al. study revealed that these students lived and studied in English as a *lingua franca*. Their study raised important questions about language learning motivation and probed why the

students remained within "English as a lingua franca bubble"; asking why students did not wish to learn local languages. As the responses from the students in this study revealed, very few foreign African students were actually proficient or even comfortable in isiZulu. There were a few that could speak a little or understand some isiZulu. Many indicated that they were 'open' to learning isiZulu, feeling that it would help blend in better, and facilitate intergroup communication. Most lived and studied in large part, *through* English. Although it is speculative, as the foreign students in South Africa have different situated realities from the foreign students studying in Scandinavia, one suggests that students who chose to live in this kind of cultural and linguistic 'bubble' would not attempt to broker and meaningful relationships with the local student population *except in and through English.* This would also perhaps be suggestive of a similar situation with the foreign African students studying in South Africa, who appeared to either operate through English with the local students, or, retreat to the sense of belonging and familiarity offered by same language speakers.

These observations point the researcher to further research needed in understanding the linguistic preferences and negotiations of the foreign students that we wish to attract to our institutions, and the skills we claim, we want to attract to our economy. It also alerts the researcher to the research needed in terms of how we are conceptualising the 'economy'. Hart et al. (2011) point to the value and worth of treating the economy as something *made and remade by people*. This human economy includes brokering relationships rather than just desiring to add to intellectual capital and the talent pool. Such a view of human capital and socio-economic growth is also about "communities of practice" (Wenger 1998). According to Wenger (1998, 2000), both learning and identity have to do with shifting relationships to people and objects in a particular setting, and involves membership in communities of practice. In Wenger's understanding, it was not just about doing well academically (acquiring skills and intellect and adding to South Africa's talent pool). For Wenger, learning was not so much an "in-the-head phenomenon" in as much as it was a matter of engagement, participation, and membership in a community of practice.

CONCLUSION

While this is an exploratory paper, further research is needed that probes how foreign African students (choose to) negotiate their linguistic differences (and relationships) with the local isiZulu speaking students. Research is also needed into how migrant social networks, where same language speakers can come together, may be *both* assisting and possibly hindering foreign students from more fully linguistically integrating/communicating with the local students. Such research becomes important in the context of Haniff's assertion, quoted earlier, where she points out that intellectual capital 'is what the country needs' to 'support continued economic growth and development'. Put simply, the idea is that there needs to be a meaningful contribution of intellect and skills set to South Africa. For such an international contribution, that makes *both* economic as well as social and 'community' sense, there needs to be, one argues, an equally meaningful relationship between foreign students/graduates and local students/graduates. Although one may concede that migratory student flows are increasingly taking place in the context of so called neo-liberalism, it is not however, as simplistic as viewing these flows (of students) as intellectual and socio-economic capital. It is perhaps more critical to view such vectors of movement into a country as contributing to the 'human economy'. This human economy includes brokering relationships with the local communities rather than just wishing to add to the intellectual capital and the talent pool of the country.

NOTES

1 Pseudonyms are used for the students.
2 According to Butcher (2008: 373) five predominantly English-speaking countries (the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) enrolled 47 percent of all international students in 2003). However, some evidence suggests that this is changing: the growth of incoming students to China, Japan, and Southeast Asia has dramatically outpaced that of established destinations.
3 University World News online http://www.university worldnews.com/paper.php?story=201211021435 24394
4 Online paper entitled 'South Africa: Huge Growth in Foreign Students' by Karen MacGregor, dated 9 December 2007 states;
   Non SADC African student numbers nearly doubled in the five years to 2006, to 16% of all foreign

students, or 8,569In 2007, the number from the rest of the world swelled by more than a third, to 14% or 7,673. Europe is the biggest 'rest of world' supplier, followed by Asia and North America. The great majority of international students in South African enroll in the same courses as local students. But there has been expansion in recent years of credit-bearing semester courses aimed primarily at the American higher education market. The Open Doors 2007 report, published by the Institute of International Education in the US, shows that South Africa has moved to number 18 among destinations preferred by American students, up 9% on the previous year, just ahead of Brazil and just behind New Zealand. Among contact institutions, the University of Cape Town had the highest number of foreign students while Rhodes University has the highest proportion: one in four students are foreign. There is still growth in international students but it is slowing and there have been concerns that government limits on overall numbers might constrain further expansion. These fears have now largely been allayed, however, and guidelines are being developed that will underpin the further internationalisation of higher education. http://www.universityworldnews.com/paper.php? story= 20071206163532421

5 See online paper entitled 'Foreign Students Flock to SA' in online paper 7 October 2005 http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/foreign-students-flock-to-study-in-sa/198903.paper. The number of international students studying in South Africa has grown dramatically since 1994, from 12,000 to over 60,000 international public university students in 2009, which represents nearly eight percent of the total 800,000 students in South Africa's 23 public universities. The top five places of origin in 2009 were Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland and South Africa ranks 11th in the world as a destination for international students. Source: IEASA

6 Project Atlas- South Africa, http://www.iie.org/en/Services/Project-Atlas/South-Africa

7 http://www.universityworldnews.com/paper.php?story=20071206163532421

8 *Amakwerekwere* is a pejorative term that the local Black African community uses towards foreign Black Africans.

9 The online newspaper, goes on to say that many international students stay on in the country where they study, and an argument is that African students who choose South Africa as a place to study are more likely to remain on the continent than if they studied abroad.

10 There are indeed programmes of welcome and integration for international students. UKZN also puts on a programme celebrating cultural diversity and internationalism amongst the (international) student population.

REFERENCES

Bangeni B, Kapp R 2007. Shifting language attitudes in linguistically diverse learning environment in South Africa. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 28(4): 253-268.

Bateson G 1935. Culture contact and schismogenesis. *Man*, 35: 178-183.

Beine M, Noel R 2011. The Determinants of International Mobility of Students. From <http: //www.michelbeine.be/pdf/Beine, %20Noel,%20Ragot%20(2).pdf>.

Coleman JS 1988. Social capital in creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94(1): 5-120.

Bilola NF 2012. Caught between two worlds: The (re)negotiation of identity among Cameroonian migrants in Durban. *AlterNation,* 19: 199-216.

Blommaert J 2010. *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization.* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, New York and Mexico.

Butcher M 2008. FOB Boys, VCs and Habibs: Using language to navigate difference and belonging in culturally diverse Sydney. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 34(3): 71-387.

Burt RS 1992. *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Byram M, Dervin F (Eds.) 2008. *Academic Mobility in Higher Education.* UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Caudery T, Petersen M, Shaw P 2008. The motivations of exchange students at Scandinavian Universities. In: M Byram, F Dervin (Eds.): *Academic Mobility in Higher Education.* UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 114-130.

Chamberlain M, Leydesdorff S 2004. Transnational families: Memories and narratives. *Global Networks,* 4(3): 227-241.

Chien C, Kot FC 2011. Building Regional Higher Education Capacity through Academic Mobility, Published by the Southern African Regional Universities Association, 1-17. From <http: //www.uis.unesco.org/FactSheets/Documents/ib7-student-mobility-2012-en.pdf> (Retrieved on 12 March 2012).

Garrett PB, Baquedano-López P 2002. Language socialization: Reproduction and continuity, transformation and change. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31: 339-361.

Hart K, Laville J, Cattani AD 2010. *The Human Economy.*UK: Polity Press.

Kahanec M, Králiková R 2011. Pulls of International Student Mobility. Discussion Paper Series. From <http: //ftp.iza.org/dp6233.pdf.> (Retrieved on 16 July 2013).

Kamwangamalu NM 2007. One language, multi-layered identities: English in a society in transition, South Africa. *World Englishes*, 26(3): 263-275.

Kotzé E, Hibbert L 2010. Are multilingual education policies pipe dreams? Identifying prerequisites for implementation. *AlterNation,* 17(1): 4-26.

Levitt P 2001. Transnational migration: Taking stock and future directions. *Global Networks,* 1(3): 195-216.

Murphy-Lejeun E 2008. The student experience of mobility: A contrasting score. In: Mike Byram, Fred Dervin (Eds.): *Students, Staff and Academic Mobility in Higher Education.* UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 12-30.

Muthuki JM 2010. *Transnationalism and the (Re)construction of Gender Identities Amongst Foreign Stu-*

dents of African Origin at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa. Doctoral Thesis, Unpublished. KwaZulu-Natal: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Mashiya N 2010. Mother tongue teaching at the University of KwaZulu-Natal: Opportunities and threats. *Alternation,* 17(1): 92-107.

Moodley DL 2009. Bilingualism gridlocked at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. *Nordic Journal of African Studies,* 18(1): 22–72.

Moodley D 2010. Bilingualism at the University of KwaZulu-Natal: Staff- and student preferences. *Alternation,* 17(1): 328-354.

Nasir NS, Cooks J 2009. Becoming a hurdler: How learning settings afford identities. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 40(1): 41-61.

Naidu M 2008. The mobile global subject: Mobility and transnationalising Hinduism. *Nidan*, 20: 16-31.

Naidu M 2012. *'Mind the Gap;*: The structural ecology of small networked communities. *AlterNation*, 19: 280-305.

Naidu M, Nzuza N 2014.Transnationalised memories among migrants: How 'indigenous' food can bring home closer. *Anthropologist*, 17(2): 333-340.

Nelson ME, Johnson NH 2014. Multimodality, creativity and language and literacy education. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 9(1): 1-6.

Otu MN 2009. *An Exploration of the Lives and Livelihoods of African Professional Migrants in Institutions of Higher Learning: The Case of University of KwaZulu-Natal.* Master's Thesis, Unpublished. KwaZulu-Natal: University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Poros MV 2001. The role of migrant networks in linking local labour markets: The case of Asian Indian migration to New York and London. *Global Networks,* 1(3): 243-259.

Portes A 2001. Introduction: The debates and significance of immigrant transnationalism. *Global Networks,* 1(3): 181-193.

Rosenzweig M 2008. Higher Education and International Migration in Asia: Brain Circulation. In: *Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics*. Washington DC: The World Bank, pp. 59-100.

Shields R, Edwards R 2010. Student mobility and emerging hubs in global higher education. In: LM Portnoi, VD Rust, SS Bagley (Eds.): *Higher Education, Policy and the Global Competition Phenomenon*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 235-238.

Shields R 2013. Globalization and International Student Mobility: A Network Analysis. Comparative Education Review. From <http: //www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/67175.2> (Retrieved on 15 July 2012).

Thieme S 2008. Sustaining livelihoods in multi-local settings: Possible theoretical linkages between transnational migration and livelihood studies. *Mobilitie*s, 3(1): 51-71.

Urry J 2007. *Mobilities*. Cambridge UK: Polity Press.

Valentine G, Sporton D, Nielsen KB 2008. Language use on the move: Sites of encounter, identities and belonging. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 33: 376-387.

Voigt-Graf C 2004. Towards a geography of transnational spaces: Indian transnational communities in Australia. *Global Networks,* 4(1): 25-49.

Wildsmith R 2010. The development of a sustainability model for the integration and use of an African Language as a language of learning and teaching in higher education. *Alternation,* 17(1): 27-48.

Wenger E 1998. *Communities of Practice: Leaning, Meaning, and Identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger E 2000. Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems. *Organization*, 7(2): 225-246.

Wortham S 2001. Language ideology and educational research. *Linguistics and Education*, 12(12): 253-259.

Zheng 2010. Neoliberal globalization, higher education policies and international student flows: An exploratory case study of Chinese graduate student flows to Canada. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences,* 2(1): 216-244.