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Interrupting Ideologies of Cultural Deficiency: Illustrating Curricular Benefits of Plurilingualism in a Kenyan Classroom

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&
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Abstract: In this paper, we exemplify the resourcefulness of using non-sanctioned ways of speaking in classroom communication within a cross-age literacy collaboration between elementary-level grade 5 and high-school level grade 9 students in Nairobi, Kenya. Our goal is two-fold: to contribute to scholarship that affirms this resourcefulness, and to respond to the need for more studies within western scholarship that are based on non-western linguistic and cultural contexts. Through spotlighting some dynamics of multilayered non-western linguistic practices, this study enriches available evidence for pedagogical planning in our contemporary pluralistic world. We employ discourse analysis grounded in an interactional sociolinguistics approach (Gumperz, 2003) to examine students' use of standard Kenyan English, Sheng, and Swahili. Overall, we argue for inclusivity at two levels: first, culturally inclusive teaching through tapping into active learner participation among other benefits of plurilingualism, and second, at the level of research through challenging western research traditions to achieve comprehensive up-to-date understandings of contemporary language use by broadening contexts of inquiry.

Keywords: plurilingualism, culturally inclusive pedagogy, classroom talk, Sheng, Standard Kenyan English.



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Introduction¹

Contemporary scholars continue to draw attention to the robustness of multilingual communicative resources through concepts such as “superdiversity” (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011). This attention is necessitated by the inadequacy of some “traditional vocabulary of linguistic analysis” (p. 3) in accounting for some complexities of language use due to rising instances of cross-cultural communication. Increasingly, one finds complex ways of communication which bear “traces of worldwide migration flows and their specific demographic, social and cultural dynamics” (p. 2) and which are further “complicated by the emergence of new media and technologies of communication and information circulation” (p. 3). In an effort to account for complexities in oral and written language, several studies employ concepts such as plurilingualism (Clyne, 2003; Farr, 2011; Garcia, 2010), code meshing (Canagarajah, 2013), poly-lingual languaging (Jorgensen, 2008), metrolinguistics (Pennycook, 2010) and translanguaging (Garcia, 2009). The concept of plurilingualism, which we elaborate on in the following sub-section, will be the most salient throughout this paper.

It is beyond our scope to define all these terms; we define some later. Notably, amidst such variation in

terms most studies highlight how diverse linguistic communicative resources employed by urban youth are denigrated in school settings. Instead of acknowledging student linguistic diversity, curricula and practices are informed by monoglot ideologies (Silverstein, 1996). By monoglot we mean a valuing not only of one language but also one standard variety of that language. Yet, contrary to these monolingual and monoliteracy ideologies, linguistic diversity, and oral and written plurilingualism, are in fact the norm in actual linguistic practices across the world (Canagarajah, 2013; Farr, 2011).

In spite of this empirical reality, the philosophy of one nation—one (standard) language (Dorian, 1998) has been adopted even in places such as Sub Saharan Africa, which is notably multilingual. It is commonplace for countries in this and other world regions to articulate an official policy position designating both a national language and an official language; the latter is normally a post-colonial or a so-called, international language. On the surface such policies do not appear to be strictly monoglot. However, extant systemic social structures privilege one language, and literacy in that language, above others in terms of access to resources, power and prestige. Unsurprisingly in such places,

¹ We acknowledge that there is a gender spectrum and that myriad pronouns exist that we can use when referring to individuals in our writing. Throughout this article, we will use “he” to refer to individuals who identify as male, “she” to refer to individuals who identify

as female, and we will employ other pronouns that will be chosen by individuals who identify as gender-neutral. We have selected to use these pronouns to reflect this gender spectrum and to not make assumptions about how individuals identify or refer to themselves.

classrooms—which are significant sites for secondary language and literacy socialization—experience tensions based on marginalization of, and even contempt for, so-called “small” languages and dialects (Dorian, 1998, p. 19). This marginalization disrupts the learning process of students who speak them natively.

In response, calls for democratizing education, such as The Conference on College Communication’s policy ‘affirming students’ right to their own language’, argue that language policies have implications for defining “our students as human beings” (Scott, Straker, & Katz, 2009, p. xi). Relatedly, González, quoting Gloria Anzaldúa, argues: “I am my language” (as cited in González, 2001, p. vii). Thus we argue, with Rickford and Rickford (2010), that allowing the use of marginalized language varieties which students speak outside of learning spaces can enhance standardized language literacy in the classroom.

Plurilingualism: Spotlighting Students’ Communicative Repertoires

The purpose of this study is to illustrate how use of various language resources lead to curricular benefits, specifically enhanced student participation. The concept of plurilingualism is particularly useful in shedding further light on the robustness with which students employ vernacular languages and dialects. In our case informal Swahili and an urban youth language variety called Sheng are employed within a classroom context which privileges standard Kenyan English (hereafter, SKE). We define plurilingualism as did Clyne (2003): “the use of more than one language, or variety of language, by an individual speaker [including] bi/multilingualism, as well as bi/multidialectalism, or their combination” (cited in Farr, 2011, p. 1161). Plurilingualism, then, is distinguished from multilingualism in two ways. First, plurilingualism

occurs at the level of interaction, whereas multilingualism describes society-level linguistic pluralism. Second, plurilingualism includes the use of vernacular dialects as well as “named” languages in order to capture the empirical reality of what speakers actually do in interaction. Further, unlike translanguaging (Garcia, 2009), which considers how bilingual speakers “maximize communicative potential” (p. 140), plurilingualism considers bi/multilingual users’ situated use of diverse communicative resources.

Our examination of language use establishes a basis for two claims. First, a key implication for language and literacy teaching and learning is for educators to go beyond honouring students’ repertoires. We propose creating pathways for achieving curricular goals through lesson design and instructional strategies which tap into students’ out-of-class linguistic experiences. To exemplify this pedagogy, we analyse excerpts of recorded speech in a class taught by the first author (a native of Kenya) during a project called the Grade Nine/Five collaboration. This was a collaboration between elementary students (approx. 11 years old) and high school students (approx. 14 years old). These recordings of students’ utterances during joint writing tasks illustrate how they bring to bear their cache of communicative resources as they take up curricular tasks. Data from these recordings also showcase skilful manoeuvring within the learning space through peer-to-peer meaning negotiations that are undeterred by monoglot expectations. We describe this project in detail in a section entitled ‘The context of the study.’

Second, for a comprehensive, up-to-date understanding of phenomena related to language use in society and for a more accurate presentation of such phenomena, the field of literacy studies should unshackle itself from a western-centric focus to engage with instantiations of language use from a

broad perspective. Here, we focus on Kenya, a site that is seldom covered in such scholarship. We argue that studying this context is important for five reasons.

Firstly, although this argument for recognition and affirmation of non-dominant languages and dialects has been made frequently in the sociolinguistic and educational research literatures, most of this research has been based in the United States, England, or other similar linguistic and sociocultural contexts. Our study provides exposure to unique linguistic and cultural dynamics in relation to the classroom setting. For instance, in 1963, like some other post-colonial societies in Africa, Kenya chose two languages after independence from Britain (e.g., Luganda and English in Uganda; Bemba and English in Zambia; and French and Arabic in Chad). English became the official language and Swahili became the national language. English, of course, is the colonial language which was and is spoken by the elite in Kenya, and Swahili is an indigenous language which was deliberately positioned as a *lingua franca* to be used among multi-ethnic, multilingual Kenyans. In spite of this official bilingual language policy, Kenya, like most other nations in contemporary Anglophone Africa, in practice values standard (British) English language and literacy (upon which SKE is based) above other languages, including Swahili. This dominance of English is most notable in Kenyan schools, which, at least beyond the first three grades of primary school (taught in some areas in an indigenous language), rigorously insist on English-only in the classroom. In spite of this marginalization of Kenyan indigenous languages, however, some voices still call for more official roles for both Swahili and other indigenous languages.

Secondly, seen through the lens of world Englishes (Crystal, 2003), this present study provides opportunities to explore classroom talk in a notably multilingual context where SKE is the dominant

variety. Thirdly, focusing on a Kenyan-based example heeds calls by some researchers (see Kuo, 2010; Miike, 2009; Smith, 2012; Thiong'o, 1986/1991) for scholarship that complicates overarching narratives which gloss over or obscure historically marginalized lives. Specifically, though discussing the resourcefulness of Nairobi's multilingual landscape, we counter ideologies of cultural deficiency which pervade portrayals of sub-Saharan Africa in western spaces.

Fourth, researchers interested in culturally inclusive teaching (see Paris & Alim, 2017) argue that the assimilationist role of schools, whereby marginalized communities are expected to “lose or deny their languages, literacies, cultures, and histories” (p. 1) to succeed academically, is ongoing. They ask that educators “reimagine schools as sites where diverse, heterogeneous practices are not only valued but sustained” (p. 3). This present study exemplifies such re-imagination while extending the application of culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017) to a site not currently considered in this literature.

Fifth, due to global mobility, teachers in the west are faced with prospects of teaching students who are non-native in English or who employ Englishes other than their own. Oftentimes, these teachers are exposed to literature which positions such students as lagging behind and needing “to catch-up with their monolingual English classmates” (Lesaux, Geva, Koda, Siegel, & Shanahan., 2008, p. 27). Some scholars (see Webster & Lu, 2012) challenge the deficit lens inherent in these kinds of depictions and propose foregrounding students' existing language competencies through using labels, such as ‘learners of English as an additional language’ (LEAL). Here we exemplify this existing competence through examining Nairobi students' oral discourse in a collaborative cross-age creative writing project. To contextualize these five points, we describe the

Kenyan language context in the section entitled ‘The Kenyan Language Space: Languages, Ideologies, and Policies.’ This description includes a discussion of both historical and contemporary Kenyan multilingualism as well as Kenyan language ideologies, policies and practices.

Rather than focus on the outcome of the collaborative project, namely the writing which students produced, we focus instead on collaborative conversations around peer tutoring and highlight instances in which they employed non-English languages together with English. We therefore explore plurilingual speech within peer interactions in the Grade Nine/Five collaboration, showing how such plurilingualism might have contributed to learner participation and literacy learning. Through this spotlight on productive co-mingling of communicative resources within an SKE-dominant context, this paper exemplifies and argues for potential resourcefulness of the use of non-sanctioned language varieties found in day-to-day student speech. The paper also interrupts the cultural deficiency narrative, pointing instead to a diversity deficiency that characterizes western-centric scholarship.

Research Questions

Our study responds to the following questions: What are some plurilingual resources that students in the Grade Nine/Five collaboration employ? How do these function as communicative resources in peer-to-peer interactions? Of what curricular benefit is such functionality for these students?

Subsequently, what understandings of this functionality emerge for educators about pedagogical possibilities in a pluralistic classroom?

Literature Review

Language Use in Multi-Ethnic Contexts

Culturally situated language socialization happens before young children attend school, and when they eventually arrive at school they encounter language (and literacy) practices which may be vastly different from their socialization. This disconnect

happens in both rural (Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984), and urban spaces (Harris, 2006; Paris, 2011). Both spaces are sites of dynamic and emergent linguistic and literacy diversity (Farr, 2011), although perhaps more intensely so in urban settings due to higher incidence of interethnic interactions. Such interactions can lead to language mixing and/or “crossing” (use of each other’s languages, as in Rampton, (1995)). Canagarajah (2013) has referred to such entwined use of various

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languages as code meshing, a feature of “translingual practice” (p. 6). Translingual practice is an umbrella term based on a social interactionist perspective which underscores the “primacy of practices and treat[s] repertoires as resultant” (p. 31) rather than as autonomous structures. He thus proposes moving beyond traditional research on code-switching to focus on negotiated speech practice. Rethinking language in terms of practices (Blommaert, 2010; Canagarajah, 2013; Pennycook, 2010) is critical in illuminating the contingent nature of language use.

We take up this lens of situated use of language in this paper.

Through a similar approach, Harris (2006) studies 30 “Blackhill youth” (p. 3) who construct their identities by synchronically using features from various languages in their multi-ethnic linguistic ecologies. In accounting for their diverse communicative resources, he argues that various languages are “interwoven synchronically” (p. 101) in urban youth speech, evidencing not only a complex mixing of languages, but also a complex construction of multiple social identities. Harris (2006) finds that urban youth use a complex and layered multilingualism (we prefer the term plurilingualism) to construct membership in several “ethnic and cultural sub communities” (p. 118). Paris (2011) also examines this complex layered use of language and proposes that educators and policymakers should re-imagine school as a “site of critical language learning [to] bolster the pride of...youth about their linguistic heritage” (p. 116). Through “pedagogies of pluralism” (p. 55), educators can enact such re-imagination by sustaining the use of non-academic communicative resources which students bring to multi-ethnic classrooms. This notion of pluralism in terms of learning resources lies at the core of our argument.

Taken together, these studies visualize three threshold concepts for understanding plurilingual language use. These are: a) language use is spatially, socially and interactionally situated; b) the ways with words employed by the teenagers in this study are layered and complex; and c) repertoires of communication employed by these teenagers are characterized by pluralistic resources. In the next section, we contextualize our analysis of student plurilingual language use by describing Kenya’s linguistic landscape, specifically in Nairobi; the urban setting of the Grade Nine/Five Collaboration.

The Kenyan Language Space: Languages, Ideologies, and Policies

Multilingual Kenya. Like much of Africa, Kenya is notably multilingual, with over 40 indigenous languages. Over two thirds of the population speak indigenous languages belonging to the Bantu branch of the Niger-Congo family (e.g., Swahili, Kikuyu, Kamba and Luhya), almost one third speak Nilotic languages (e.g., Kalenjin, Luo, Turkana and Maasai), and 3% speak Cushitic languages (e.g., Rendile, Somali, Borana, and Gabra) (Musau, 2003; Ogechi, 2011). One of these indigenous languages, Swahili, is used as a lingua franca for inter-ethnic communication, its Zanzibar dialect having been standardized by the Inter-territorial Language Committee in 1930 during British colonial rule (Nabea, 2009).

In addition to Swahili, English, and indigenous mother tongues, several other languages are used by nonindigenous Kenyan populations, including those from the Indian subcontinent such as Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Urdu, many of whose speakers have lived in Kenya for generations. Other languages also include French, Arabic (especially along the coast), and Asian languages (Japanese, Korean, and Chinese) used primarily for business dealings (Nabea, 2009). This linguistic diversity is most salient in urban areas such as Nairobi to which both rural Kenyans and global populations have migrated. Coherent with our findings, many, including speakers of different indigenous languages, learn to use Swahili for cross-ethnic communication.

This impressive array of societal multilingualism, however, must be considered in the context of the varying statuses of these languages across populations. As elsewhere in the world, languages in Kenya function in social, political, and economic hierarchies based on language ideologies, or beliefs

speakers hold about particular languages. These ideologies and beliefs have material consequences on social relations. In Kenya, prevailing ideologies invest English with the power of upward mobility and place it at the top of the language hierarchy. Swahili occupies second place even though it is valued for national unity and inter-ethnic communication, especially in urban areas. Indigenous mother tongues are valued for ethnic identity and solidarity. Many scholars (see King'ei, 2001; Mukhwana, 2013; Nabea, 2009) argue that to understand the contemporary Kenyan language space, one must understand the history of language policies and practices in Kenya, including the role of colonialism.

Language policies and practices: A quick overview. We define language policy as does Schiffman (1996), including both its explicit and implicit aspects. Johnson (2013) defines the former as being overt and *de facto* and stipulated as policy while the latter is covert and occurs in common practice. More specifically, explicit language policy is written and formal, e.g., English is designated the official language in legal, governmental and institutional documents in Kenya. Implicit language policy is informal and unwritten, e.g., as found in widespread language attitudes among speakers who might prefer using other languages over the stipulated language. The power of informal language policy should not be understated. Language ideologies (Farr & Song, 2011; Schieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity, 1998) or widespread beliefs about language(s) often result in, or can undermine, explicit language policies. In the following description, we offer a brief history of language policy, as well as of language ideologies to contextualize Sheng, Swahili, and English. These languages characterize classroom talk in our data.

Over the course of British colonial rule in Kenya, English was variously promoted and denied to

Kenyans, vacillating according to the interests of different groups. During the first part of colonial rule, Christian missionaries evangelized in indigenous languages believing this best for spreading Christian gospel (King'ei, 2001). As elsewhere in the world, developing Roman alphabets for indigenous tongues led both to promoting indigenous languages and to literacy, as indigenous language speakers were then taught to read Christian materials (Farr, 2005).

In 1909 the United Missionary Conference in Kenya proposed an official language policy recommending that mother tongues be used during the first three years of schooling, then Swahili for two years, and then English for the rest of schooling up to university (Nabea, 2009). In 1930 the Inter-territorial Language Committee standardized the Zanzibar dialect of Swahili in pursuance of a policy to promote indigenous languages. Even though colonial administrators needed low-level clerks who knew English, and thus allowed limited English learning, they increasingly became concerned that with many Kenyans knowing English, they would not be satisfied with menial work, preferring white collar employment. Many English settlers, likewise, viewed Kenyans learning English as a potentially subversive force (Mazrui, 1995). Thus, a tri-focal language policy for education generally matched the tri-level racial hierarchy in Kenya at the time: Europeans (who were taught in English), Asians (who were taught in Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi, or Urdu), and Africans (who were taught either in Swahili or the vernacular languages) (King'ei, 2001).

During the second part of colonial rule (post World War II to independence in 1963), English was increasingly promoted at the expense of indigenous languages, including Swahili, which was viewed as dangerously associated with a growing nationalist movement. This shift to English is attributed partly to the growing awareness of colonial administrators

that a Kenyan elite who knew English would likely promote colonial interests after independence (Nabea, 2009). Thus, both explicit language policy, as expressed in various reports, and implicit language policy, as expressed in widespread language ideologies, promoted English over indigenous languages. From 1965 to 2000, periodic national reports continued to promote English in education, although they also recommended indigenous languages for the first three years of schooling. Two government-commissioned reports, however, the Mackay report of 1981 and the Koech report of 2000 (cited in Muricho & Chang'ach, 2013), placed some emphasis on indigenous languages, including Swahili. Language policy (both explicit and implicit) in the post-independence period continued the division between the elite, whose linguistic repertoires were characterized by SKE, and the masses, who used local languages (King'ei, 2001; Mukhwana, 2013).

Sheng and the urban teenager. On one hand, youth in urban areas such as Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru, and Kisumu communicate with each other in Sheng. This teenage way of speaking has been variously defined as slang (Githiora, 2002), a youth dialect (Mazrui, 1995), and a “highly pidginized colloquial form of peer language” (Abdulaziz & Osinde, 1997, p. 44). Lexical similarities between Swahili and Sheng suggest Sheng is an “innovative mélange of Swahili as a matrix language with English embeddings” (Myers-Scotton, 1993, p. 39). However, other studies (see Bosire, 2006/2009; Ogechi, 2005) reveal greater complexity than embeddings and structural similarity. Overall, Bosire (2009) characterizes Sheng as a linguistic outcome of youth dealing with a transition from formerly isolated monolingual ethnic communities to diverse post-colonial urban settings.

On the other hand, SKE, which is normed towards British Received Pronunciation (RP), is a post-

colonial privileged language variety associated with education, professionalism, power, economic access and a modern identity. However, given changes in language ideologies, recent research documents various ways in which dominant language hierarchies are contested. Day-to-day language is characterized by the use of indigenous mother tongues, code-switching between varieties, and meshing to form varieties that combine two or more languages. Abdulaziz and Osinde (1997) note two varieties called Sheng and Engsh based primarily, but not exclusively, on Kiswahili and English. Nabea (2009) notes an increase in language mixing and new creolized language varieties, notably Sheng. Thus, the already multilingual urban landscape in Kenya is further diversified by the inclusion of age-specific ways of speaking such as Sheng. As exemplified by our data, Sheng is used both to include (other youth “in the know”) and exclude (adults in authority, or those who speak standard varieties of English and Swahili) (Abdulaziz & Osinde, 1997; Bosire, 2006/2009; Githiora, 2002; Mazrui, 1995). Even though Swahili is rigorously regulated and Sheng is heavily sanctioned in school (Momanyi, 2009), these two will emerge prominently in our data as features of students’ communicative repertoires.

Resistance to Sheng by educators. The proliferation of Sheng has received criticism. Momanyi (2009) laments the injurious effects of Sheng on standard Kenyan Swahili in schools, arguing that Sheng merely breaks Swahili morpho-syntactic rules. This view, not based on linguistic evidence, casts Sheng as linguistically deficient rather than different, a decades-old position critiqued by much sociolinguistic research (e.g., Adger, Wolfram, & Christian, 2007; Farr & Daniels, 1986; Labov, 1969; Rickford & Rickford, 2000). Momanyi also fails to perceive the function of Sheng as a counter script (Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995) and a linguistic medium for Nairobi teenage

worldviews (Wandera, 2013). Unfortunately, however, this deficit view of Sheng reflects widespread language ideologies regarding vernacular languages and dialects. Such ideologies preclude any possibilities for using Sheng (or other vernacular languages and dialects) to scaffold learning. A larger danger of such a deficit view is that students who speak non-sanctioned languages and dialects become disaffected with schooling (Mahiri, 2004) in the face of a dismissive monoglot pedagogy.

Sheng continues to be deemed by traditional educators and significant segments of Kenyan society as inappropriately informal, often vulgar (Githinji, 2008), and a manifestation of inverted prestige (Stenstrom & Jorgenson, 2009). Such perceptions endure within the collective Kenyan discourse even though Sheng reflects the Kenyan urban teenager's ways with words and indexes coolness and trendsetting. For teenagers in our study, Sheng is a resource for social capital, and a viable tool for regulating exclusion and camaraderie. Its lexical content is linked to everyday youth concerns: unemployment, entertainment, restrictions of movement, and behavior. Overall, despite language regulation, school youth, such as the ones in this study, use Sheng along with other languages and dialects.

Our data show that these languages do not simply disappear but emerge in classroom talk. A traditional response to this emergence by some educators has been explicit discouragement of usage. Youth are aware that their vernacular varieties are marginalized in the classroom. Wandera (2013) discusses a popular Kenyan hip hop

song *Amka Ukatike* by C'zar (2007), which employs various performance devices such as exaggeration, metaphor, symbolism, and sound effects to illustrate a chasm between speakers of Sheng and intolerant school regulations.

Such intolerance, which puts the curriculum on a collision course with teenage-worldviews, could be mitigated through engagement (Wandera, 2013). Examples of this engagement include authentic consultations, displacement of rigidity regarding learning processes, and re-visioning curricular notions of 'success' in ways that are cognizant of varied worldviews. In this present study, we examine

transcripts of class interactions where vernacular ways of speaking (which are typically unwelcome in those schooling spaces that privilege particular ways of speaking over others) emerged and led to demonstrable student participation in peer-tutoring sessions.

Methodology

The Context of the Study and Participants

The Grade Nine/Five project, undertaken in the 2009–2010 academic year, was a cross-age collaboration between the participants in this study; 20 fifth grade and 16 ninth grade students at Akili Academy (all names of schools and students are pseudonyms). In line with the impetus for this study on resourcefulness of diversity, participants included males and females, cross-age collaborators, with various ethnic and linguistic heritages (see appendix A for table of demographics).

The two student groups had been instructed to take up peer-tutor/peer-learner roles. Here, we conceive of peer tutoring as student-to-student

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mediated learning whereby students serve as each other's resources. This peer-tutoring activity was centered around the quality of creative and descriptive writing, and was to be undertaken within their one-hour, bi-weekly, cross-age interactions. The older students were to position themselves as tutors for the younger students. They were to study writing produced by their tutees, discuss with them ways to improve their rhetorical craft, brainstorm writing ideas, and introduce them to literary terms and their applications. To achieve this, they were to:

- a) ask prodding questions
- b) make suggestions to alleviate spelling difficulties
- c) study the grade five teacher-feedback on the grade fives' writing submissions and explain how they understood the feedback
- d) collaboratively compose and write stories with the grade fives
- e) model constructions
- f) answer questions regarding creative writing.

They encountered questions such as, "I want a better grade. Why did I get this grade?" or "how do I make this captivating?" On their part, grade fives were to bring to their peer-tutoring sessions creative writing that they had produced that term, discuss theirs and other students' writing, and take up strategies to enhance the quality and appeal of their writing. Each tutoring session had an overall theme or aim, e.g., "using literary devices to make your descriptions pop," or "mind your spelling." Whereas the younger students benefitted as tutees, the older ones got opportunities to position themselves as writing mentors and to reflect on creative writing styles. Interview notes corroborate that in addition to "enjoying teaching," the expectation that grade nines would model writing and respond to questions necessitated that they be at their "best." Importantly, these students' plurilingualism was

unanticipated by the protocols they had been given to guide their peer interactions and this emergence of language use is at the core of this study.

This collaboration happened at Akili Academy; a private co-ed school in Nairobi, Kenya, comprising two independently-administered sections. Grades one through six form Akili Junior Academy with a population of 250, and grades seven through thirteen form Akili Senior Academy with a population of 460. The curriculum at both academies is continuous and cohesive. Akili Education Services, with overall oversight for both schools, had been encouraging joint ventures between the two schools to market the Akili brand as a seamless education experience. Mr. Oketch (pseudonym of the fifth-grade teacher) and Wandera (ninth grade teacher) planned the ten-week collaboration in support of this official policy.

The collaboration commenced when ninth graders went to the elementary school foyer to read stories, which had been written and displayed by fifth graders. They made notes in response to these stories, planning to use them in peer discussions. For the duration of the collaboration, the two grade levels worked in seven fixed-membership groups; one group had two students from grade five and two from grade nine; four groups had three from grade five and two from grade nine; and two groups had three from grade five and three from grade nine. For scheduling purposes, the two classes were slated to meet during coinciding English timetabled sessions; there were two such coincidences each week leading to 18 hour-long joint sessions over the term. During these sessions, both teachers circulated among the groups, listened, held brief consultations, and observed.

Theoretical Approach

In this paper, we employ a discourse analysis that is grounded in an interactional sociolinguistics approach (Gumperz, 2003). Our justification for this approach is that it lends itself well to analyzing language in use (e.g., by considering transcriptions of talk) while being attentive to the interactional environment (i.e., features of the multilingual and multicultural landscape). Further, using this approach we are alert to the role of language as a form of social action (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) by considering how participants position themselves multifariously to achieve interactional ends. We are also attentive to tensions due to power disequilibrium between dominant discourses within the regulated school space and the tendency by Nairobi teenagers to employ non-sanctioned ways of speaking. In our methodology, we assume that language use is situated and that meaning is contingent upon interaction (Gumperz, 2003).

Data Collection

Generally, data comprised of transcriptions of audio-recorded student-interactions, descriptions of pertinent aspects of the context, excerpts from informal follow-up interviews whereby the ninth-grade teacher (Wandera) sought clarification from some students (soon after the Grade Nine/Five collaboration), and field notes. After fulfilling ethical procedures for participant assent and care-giver consent, several episodes of classroom talk were recorded. The entire corpus consisted of approximately 10 hours of recorded peer-to-peer and student-teacher conversations. The main criterion for selecting data for this paper from the corpus was the extent to which recorded interactions manifested plurilingual language use. That is, we selected data showing multiple language use from students' linguistic repertoires. Another criterion was preference for recordings of language use where

students were focusing on joint writing tasks as opposed to social interactions. In addition to meeting these criteria, the four episodes in this paper were also chosen because they instantiate plurilingualism involving many students. That is, the data in this paper are not produced by two students in a dyadic conversation, since this kind of usage would not exemplify the fact that plurilingualism is prevalent among the group that was engaging in the collaboration.

The first episode occurred in the initial stages of the project when two grade nine students (John and Faraz) felt overwhelmed by questions from their grade five group members. In the course of communicating their concerns to their teacher, these students employ Sheng and SKE. The second episode occurred when Ben (grade five) misspelled the word "alarm" and instead wrote "ala". This misspelling evoked the informal Swahili interjection "ala!" which was subsequently taken up by two groups and used to monitor usage and signal language errors. The third episode features a co-animated trickster story where Sheng expressions, informal Swahili, and direct-from-Swahili translation emerged during negotiations of character roles. The result was a trickster story that departed from Swahili narrative traditions through featuring two competitive protagonists. The fourth episode occurred toward the end of the collaboration when grade five students were learning names and functions of literary devices. The Swahili/Sheng expression "anamatope" (he/she is covered in mud) emerged from a mispronunciation of the word "onomatopoeia."

Data Analysis

Broadly, in designing this study we devised research questions, obtained participant access and consent, collected data, triangulated, transcribed, coded, analysed, and made a written case for our argument.

More specifically, the following procedures characterize our analytical process:

1. We acknowledge that transcription, in itself, entails a level of interpretive decision making (Bucholtz, 2000; O'Connell & Kowal, 1995) even as we provide a key of our transcription conventions for transparency. The transcription protocol entailed three key steps: A) The first author transcribed from primary audio data. He was well-positioned for this task because of his shared linguistic and cultural socialization and familiarity with the nature of the students' communicative repertoires. He was also the grade nine teacher during the collaboration. Unlike Wandera, Farr's positionality is informed by her western upbringing, her role as educator in higher education, and her extensive experience as ethnographer in Mesoamerica. Insights from both authors combine to give this present study an insider-outsider dynamic (Banks, 1998) that is critical in qualitative research. B) Parts of the transcription were cross-checked by some participants (member-check) to ensure accuracy. C) Both authors arrived at the transcription conventions (see appendix B) and formatting. These conventions cater for transcription of both linguistic and extra-linguistic communication; the former through text, and the latter through curly and square brackets.
2. Following transcription, we undertook close reading to identify and examine occurrences of SKE, Swahili, Sheng and other languages in students' interactions. We reviewed these data independently and then jointly to arrive at shared understandings of plurilingual language use.
3. From our transcribed data corpus, we selected primary data relevant to our

research questions by identifying instances (which we refer to as "episodes") of diverse linguistic resources. These being numerous, we identified four for the purposes of this paper.

4. We similarly examined specific instances of students' use of language to identify evidence of interpersonal functions (Gumperz, 2003) and to explore students' construction of discursive identities.
5. Finally, we coded language functions within the chosen episodes to spotlight instances and functionality of plurilingual language use. We commenced with two a priori codes: "socializing talk" for talk about non-class issues, and "task-related talk" for talk that was project-related. This was coded and translated by Wandera, who has familiarity with the languages being used, and was checked by Farr. We then employed open-coding. We found this approach effective since plurilingualism is spontaneous. We, therefore, formulated labels as they emerged from our examination of data. This step was done by the two authors separately then jointly to establish agreement. Various codes (e.g., Sheng use, SKE use, Swahili use, informal Swahili use, language mixing) emerged. Another code was "erroneous constructions" where an error in usage (such as the word "ala" and "anamatope" which we discuss later) was central to the interaction. Yet other codes include: "shared resource" e.g., Swahili, Sheng, and SKE; and "non-shared resource" such as Kisii, Somali, Arabic and Hindi. Our data show that students did not employ "non-shared resources" in the collaboration. Through follow-up interviews participants provided clarifications and feedback which confirmed some of the codes.

Data Presentation and Analysis

“Hey Buddy, Things are Bad”: Regulating Participation through Sheng

During one of the first joint sessions, the task was to examine carefully written feedback by the grade five teacher responding to fifth graders’ descriptive writing submissions. Tapping into their general experience with creative writing and interpreting teacher feedback, ninth graders were to explain to their younger peers what the teacher’s feedback might have meant and to model some ways of taking up teacher-feedback. By the end of these consultations, each group was expected to co-author an improved descriptive piece. At the start of that session, two grade nine students who apparently felt beleaguered by a barrage of questions from their grade five peers sought intervention from their teacher:

John: Oh my god sir! {pause} They are asking mob mob questions--

Faraz: Yeah, what do we do? [looking at John] /inaudible/manze nikunoma (hey buddy, things are bad)

Wandera: {laughing} Tell me, what are they asking?

Faraz: Zainab wants to know if we shall make sir change her grade, I mean Mr. Oketch. I can’t do that!

John: And Adeel is saying that Mr. Oketch always likes his work.

Here John and Faraz insert Sheng into their primarily English utterances, using the expressions mob mob and manze nikunoma. In the first instance, the English word “mob” (a large disorderly crowd) is duplicated in Sheng as “mob mob.” Word duplication is a feature of Swahili syntax, employed by speakers to signify emphasis (Mohammed 2001, p. 115), for instance as an intensifier. The duplication

of mob in John’s “mob mob” thus follows Swahili morphology. John could have said “mob questions,” but this repetitive “mob mob” more effectively conveys affect through spotlighting their surprise over what they perceive to be incessant questions. Thus, Swahili grammar combines with English localized lexicon “mob” yielding Sheng “mob mob” to convey John and Faraz’s concerns. In Faraz’ Sheng phrase “manze nikunoma” (hey buddy, things are bad) the words “manze” and “nikunoma” are lexical creations unique to Sheng and are therefore not resourced from Swahili, English or any of Kenya’s indigenous languages. It is noteworthy that within an SKE dominant classroom context, the more Anglicized Sheng was directed to the teacher (“mob mob”), while the “deeper” Sheng (“manze nikunoma”) was peer-directed.

Might this usage have been a strategic communicative move to exclude the teacher? Faraz, a third generation Kenyan Indian, speaks to John, an offspring of an interethnic marriage (Maasai and Kikuyu), using “manze nikunoma” to index camaraderie between the two. In addition, Faraz’s oriented gaze towards John and his lowering of his voice contribute to excluding the teacher. While the two students do not literally move to the side, the use of “manze nikunoma” and Faraz’s turned gaze (oriented away from the teacher and specifically towards John) regulate participation and carve out a space for conveying shared frustration. Though not present in this transcript, the teacher’s familiarity with some Sheng enabled him to comprehend their protestations and to subsequently advise them to cooperate further with their younger peers.

“I Was Telling Myself, Ala!”: An Illustration of Learner Autonomy

The second episode occurred during the same session. The students involved come from a variety of ethnicities (Arab, Kisii, Somali, Luhya, Indian,

Kamba, Kikuyu) and their linguistic repertoires encompass a variety of languages (English, Swahili, Sheng, Arabic, Kisii, Somali, Luhya, Gujarati, Kamba, Kikuyu). Some students were discussing how to spell misspelled words in the fifth graders' writing:

Jared [grade nine]: Now what does *ala* mean? Is that even a word?

Juma [grade five]: *Ala!* {general laughter}
Ben (grade five), who had intended to write the word *alarm*, had inadvertently omitted the final *-rm*, thereby spelling it as *ala* in the sentence *My phone rings the ala very loud*.

However, when Juma echoed *ala!*, he pronounced it in the same way that a Swahili speaker would pronounce the Swahili interjection "*ala!*" leading to laughter. This interjection is acceptable in both formal and informal Swahili. The group subsequently adopted "*ala!*" to signal that a mistake (written or oral) had been made. In the uptake of this word, the first student who recognized a mistake would say *ala!* often embodying and vocalizing exaggerated surprise. Students in the group competed to see who would express surprise with the greatest aplomb, realized through articulating a comparatively louder and higher-pitched final */-la/* syllable, accompanied with exaggerated facial and hand gestures. The entire group (including the person who had made the mistake) would then laugh. As a result, students tried to speak carefully to avoid receiving the *ala!* reaction.

Another group of students adjacent to this group, observing this exchange, also adopted the use of *ala!* in their consultations:

Letty [grade five]: My father's car makes a sound *brrrrrm!*

Amina [grade nine]: *Ala!* You have to describe the sound *ala!*

{general laughter}

Aziz [grade nine]: Letty, say it this way {pause}, my father's car is so loud, it is like a Subaru Evolution. I love those cars.

Patel [grade five]: Yeah, those things move fast [gestures] and they are wery loud.

Amina & Aziz: *Ala!* "Very," not "wery."

Patel: What did I say?

Amina: *Ala!* {laughing} You messed up the word "very."

Letty: You said "wery loud" instead of "very loud."

Patel: {laughing} ...*ala!*

Mike [grade nine]: You can't say "*ala*," since you are the one who made the mistake.

Patel: {laughing} I know. I was telling myself {general laughter}

Some native speakers of Gujarati (and second or third generation Kenyans of Indian origin) articulate */v/* as */w/* as illustrated when Patel pronounces "very" as */wəri/*. Patel's pronunciation elicits an "*ala!*" from both Amina and Aziz. Notably, his self-directed "*ala!*" aligns him with his peers to criticize his own mispronunciation. Although this comment-to-self is contested by Mike, Patel insists on positioning himself as both the producer of errant speech who deserves "*ala!*" and as co-participant in noting the error.

Buda Bee vs. Superwoman Najma: Linguistic Kairos in a Diverse Classroom

The third episode emerged during a session on co-authoring stories. As the discussions commenced, one group left the classroom to animate their story in the hallway so as not to distract the others. These students were discussing, demonstrating through embodied action, and jointly directing and shaping the unfolding action before writing it down. Like the other groups, this group consisted of a variety of ethnic identities (Arab, Kamba, Kikuyu, Somali,

Indian) and linguistic diversity (English, Swahili, Sheng, Arabic, Kamba, Kikuyu, Somali, Hindi):

Tony [grade five]: [flapping his arms as if they were wings] So the bees are coming like this [more flapping]

Khalif [grade nine]: [to Najma] Hey! You should be standing here [pointing]

Najma [grade five]: I will not just stand there and let the bees bite me.

Khalif: But you have not taken the honey.

Najma: I did. {laughing} Here it is. I used super powers.

Tony: Ah...*vaco!* (It is a lie!) I never saw you [pokes her on the shoulder using his extended index finger] There! I stung you. {laughing}

Aamir [grade five]: If we say that she is invisible in her house, you can't see her.

Tony: *Zi!* (emphatic no!) I saw her [pokes her shoulder again]. Sting! Now you are feeling pain.

Najma: {laughing} I will just use my super powers to make the pain go away. {general laughter}

Mweni [grade nine]: What if the bee has super powers too?

Najma: *Hakuna!* (Rubbish!) You are saying that because he is your sister's friend.

Tony: {laughing} Yeah! I am the *Buda Bee* (big "daddy" of all bees).

Khalif: [first glancing at the teacher who is standing some distance away observing them, and then turning to the others] So our story is about Buda Bee fighting Super Woman because she stole his honey.

both "bite" and "sting." In addition, Tony uses Sheng three times:

vaco (it is a lie)

zi (emphatic no!)

buda bee (big "daddy" of all bees)

Although it is Tony who vocalizes Sheng lexicon, it can be inferred from the reaction of others that they understand him. For example, he says "*vaco*" directed at Najma contesting her act of stealing honey. Aamir's response, "if she is invisible...you can't see her," builds onto the plot. His additive contribution suggests that he understood Tony's use of Sheng and he is advancing the plot with a twist about Najma's invisibility. All of Tony's Sheng usage receives uptake and engagement from the others even when they themselves do not vocalize in Sheng. Further, as shown in appendix A, these students have Sheng as a common communicative resource in their linguistic repertoire. Thus, within this group Sheng is a shared communicative resource. Further, the various languages interact to develop the storyline. Najma could have said "*zi*" like Tony when she disagreed with him, but instead she said "*hakuna*," which in informal Swahili means "it is not there" or, translated it means "nothing!" and functions as a dismissal equivalent to "what you have said is rubbish." Najma's response in formal Swahili would have been *sikubali* (I disagree) or *hapana* (no). *Hakuna* is used instead to communicate the same meaning, maintaining the informality already set in the interaction with Tony's use of Sheng. Notably, the name *Buda Bee* comes from Sheng and means "the big daddy of all bees" (Khalif and Mweni in informal interview), whereas "Super Woman" was adopted from a popular comic.

There are several instances of the use or influence of non-English languages here. Najma speaks of bees that "bite" instead of "sting," a direct translation from the Swahili homophone *uma* which means

Anamatope is Onomatopoeia: Cross Linguistic Collaboration

The last episode of plurilingualism occurred toward the end of the Grade Nine/Five collaboration when ninth graders were teaching fifth graders some uses and effects of literary devices in composing stories. The room was filled with conversations about similes, metaphors, personification, paradox, and hyperbole. Some of these terms were difficult for the fifth graders to pronounce:

Jackson [grade nine]: Can any of you say
[pauses] onomatopoeia?
{some laughter}
Farhana [grade five]: [loud voice]
anamatopa!
{loud laughter by any
students in the class}

Prior to this, Njoroge (fifth grader) pronounced metaphor as /metelfo/. However, onomatopoeia was the most challenging to pronounce. The online OED recommends two pronunciations:

British English =
/ɒnəmatə'pi:ə/ and
U.S. Standard English = /ənəˌmɑdə'piə/

Within this multilingual group, Farhana’s attempt to pronounce this word evokes a Swahili word *anamatope* (he/she is covered in mud, pronounced as “a na ma TO pe” in /anamatope/). Her articulation i.e., /anamatopa/ also evoked a Sheng word *matope*; a word used to communicate dismissal (similar to saying “rubbish” or “useless” in English). Follow-up semi-formal interview data confirm this emergence of Sheng and Swahili; Ben, Amina and Julie reported that Farhana’s /anamatopa/ sounded like *anamatope* and conjured

for them an amusing image (of some disheveled muddy filthy person). They also confirmed that Farhana’s mispronunciation, /anamatopa/, had served as a mnemonic cue for recalling the unfamiliar word and its definition. Also notably, Jackson’s pronunciation of “onomatopoeia” draws some laughter, perhaps due to its unfamiliarity and the fact that his voice is not as loud as Farhana’s. Contrastingly, Farhana’s contribution draws louder laughter which might point to the affective potency of oft-marginalized ways of speaking.

Overall, these episodes illustrate how plurilingual usage[s] interacted differently with student’s participation in the classroom: as a site where diverse communicative repertoires are employed to

“Collectively, data from these four episodes show how much of the students’ authentic voices would be silenced if they were only to speak in SKE.”

enact identity and affirmation (Canagarajah, 2013; Montero, Bice-Zuagg, Marsh, & Cummins, 2013; Wandera, 2013); as a means to realize learner autonomy and self-regulation; as a window to visualize meaning making within peer tutoring collaborative talk; and as an instantiation of cross linguistic synergy for learning (Makalela, 2014).

Discussion, Limitations, and Conclusion

Collectively, data from these four episodes show how much of the students’ authentic voices would be silenced if they were only to speak in SKE. For instance, in the first episode Faraz and John entwine SKE, Sheng, and Swahili. Initially, John describes the fifth graders’ “mob mob questions” to his teacher, and then Faraz, in a quiet aside to John, laments their situation with “manze nikunoma” (hey buddy, things are bad). Tactful use of Sheng is instrumental for these students to concurrently carve a space for signaling camaraderie while articulating shared lamentations regarding Zainab and Adeel’s incessant

demands. Their use of Sheng to evoke or solicit peer-solidarity is illustrative of how out-of-class languages are undeterred by the linguistically regulated nature of classrooms. These oral identity texts are instrumental in mediating knowledge of self and other through authentic self-expression (Montero et al., 2013), in this case realized through synergy between SKE, Sheng and Swahili. Subsequently, what would otherwise have been a point of frustration between the John-Faraz duo and their grade 5 tutees is diffused through a combination of student teacher interaction (appeal for intervention), and peer-to-peer canvassing (pursuit of peer-sympathy). Perhaps through finding ways to harmonize their expectations with Zainab and Adeel, John and Faraz learned some ways to foster productive peer-collaboration.

In the second episode of plurilingual language use where one group and then another group adopt the Swahili “ala!” to signal errors in SKE, this usage co-occurred with increased tempo in interaction and vociferous student involvement in the task at hand. Importantly, errors in SKE were not punished or stigmatized by the teacher but, instead, these students seized instances of error as opportunities for jovial peer-correction through self- and other-monitoring. Although the normally rigorously-enforced target language of the curriculum was SKE, it did not seem to concern these students that the word “ala” was, itself, not SKE indicating a lack of the usual tension between standard and vernacular language varieties. Thus, we find that decreasing this typical tension through constructing learning spaces which tap into students’ plurilingualism may create conditions for student participation and promote responsibility for learning.

In the third episode, a similar kind of learning space is evident. In a follow-up interview, Khalif, Mweni, and Aamir described the outcome of this group’s collaborative composition as a “trickster story” in

which Super Woman stole honey using magic and was countered by a boisterous Buda Bee. Swahili trickster stories are a popular anthropomorphic traditional genre in Kenya featuring a protagonist animal that wins the day due to quick thinking and wit. Yet, in the story by this group, Super Woman and Buda Bee go head-to-head in a battle of wits, thus upending conventions of a single trickster protagonist. These students employed embodiment (flapping their arms as if they were wings, using an extended index finger to represent a bee stinging) in collaboration with Sheng and Swahili to create pathways for participation. Whereas a comprehensive analysis of embodied learning is beyond the immediate scope of this paper, it is noteworthy that there was synergy between movement, oral languages, and spatial proximity during peer negotiations in planning the storyline. In other words, planning employed Sheng, Swahili, devices of voicing (high pitch), and body language (arms flapping, a pointed index finger), as well as intertextual referencing of the Swahili trickster narrative tradition. The final draft of the co-authored story was, however, written entirely in SKE.

A writing-as-product approach where assessment considers this final draft, an SKE-compliant, co-authored story (featuring a clash between the highly animated Buda Bee and wily Super Woman Najma, the honey thief), would ignore the generative plurilingual interactions that characterized these students’ collaborative peer planning. Such a monoglot evaluation ignores the significant positive affect resulting from students’ use of their out-of-class cultural and experiential resources. Assessments which consider writing as a product rather than as a process (Barnett, 1989; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007) fail to appreciate students’ agentive strategizing e.g., how these students drafted their story while recognizing themselves as the initial audience of a plurilingual embodied draft

and the teacher as a later audience of an SKE-compliant draft. Put differently, pedagogy should not erase the exploratory co-construction of meaning (Bean, 2011) which showcases these students' capacity for linguistic Kairos (the right or opportune moment) in their use of diverse communicative resources.

In the fourth episode, this Kairos is also evident. When Farhana mispronounced the word onomatopoeia as /anamatopa/, her language use evokes both the Swahili word *anamatope* and the Sheng word *matope*. In addition to creating classroom humor, this interaction of diverse repertoires of communicative resources harmonized to construct mnemonic cueing for learning the target concept. Pedagogically, educators in linguistically diverse classrooms who take advantage of such interactions among communicative repertoires open up pathways to learning that would, otherwise, be barred if out-of-class languages were not conceptualized as learning resources. Data from this episode also suggest that teenagers' ways with words have a capacity for affect which is often muted in monoglot schooling systems.

Our argument to value rather than denigrate students' varied sociolinguistic resources, and to use them pedagogically, is coherent with an emphasis on deliberate, sustained, culturally responsive and relevant learning and teaching, as called for by many scholars (see Freire, 1970; Kinloch, 2009, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mahiri, 2004; Paris, 2011; Wandera, 2013/2016). Taken together, these instances of classroom plurilingualism spotlight curricular benefits of diverse sociolinguistic resources. In other words, contrary to dominant perceptions in many traditionally monoglot classrooms, culturally inclusive pedagogies which tap into the resourcefulness of plurilingual language use can be beneficial to the learning process. For instance, our data consistently illustrate how

plurilingual resources enhance learner-participation, enable students to amplify their authentic voices, and ease tensions which typify interactions between preferred ways of speaking and non-sanctioned teenage ways with words. We, therefore, make two proposals for educators:

- 1) They should habitually expose themselves to linguistic contexts that are different from their own in order to extend their understanding of possible classroom interactions. This kind of exposure broadens their own understanding of learning in our pluralistic world. For educators in the west, this paper diversifies examples of the application of culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017) while adding some dimension to what teaching and learning look like in our contemporary pluralistic world.
- 2) Beyond honoring students' repertoires, educators should maximize pathways for achieving curricular goals by designing and implementing instructional experiences that take up plurilingual-based writing-as-process approaches. To this end, a component of assessment should consider pre-writing meaning-making navigations that might happen in marginalized languages.

Limitations

This study is, however, limited in a number of ways. Notably, we do not analyze the written products from student's plurilingual interactions. An analysis of these products, which are SKE compliant, would spotlight how students' interactions culminated in subject-required text. Also, we focus exclusively on a Sheng-Swahili-SKE linguistic context in urban Kenya which might cause some readers to imagine that this site is linguistically and culturally very different from their own, suggesting that communication

works differently there. Notwithstanding, students in other contexts might not speak Sheng or Swahili but they bring to the classroom rich cultural and experiential resources that have a potential to enhance curricular goals.

Conclusion

In terms of future directions, a study such as this one would benefit from insights of a longitudinal examination of classrooms that employ plurilingual-resource-friendly approaches. Further, there is need for more studies from non-western linguistic and cultural spaces for the field of literacy studies to achieve a comprehensive and more accurate understanding of language use in contexts not typically presented in western scholarship. Interrupting the limiting rhetoric of cultural deficiency necessitates spotlighting the diversity deficiency which characterizes western-centric

research and scholarship. It is not by accident that in this scholarship there is scarce coverage and engagement with some peoples, places, and experiences. A first step is to name this diversity deficiency which is unsustainable in our pluralistic world. Then, stakeholders should expand awareness by shining a light on complex communicative strategies in oft-marginalized places. Researchers and practitioners should advocate for inclusive practice while investigating language use in contexts other than their own. All and sundry should complicate silencing western-centric research traditions which obscure some lives and experiences. Through such a stance, students' diverse communicative repertoires, such as the example we provide in this paper based on Nairobi youth, provide essential illumination for understanding some dynamics of classroom talk in linguistically pluralistic classrooms.

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Appendix A

Table of *participant demographics

	Male	Female	Ethnic heritage	Linguistic repertoire
Grade Nine 16 total aged 14 – 15 years	8	7		
John	M		Interethnic (Maasai and Kikuyu)	English, Swahili, Sheng, Kikuyu, (some) Maasai
Faraz	M		Third generation Kenyan Indian	English, Swahili, Sheng, Gujarati, Kikuyu
Jared	M		Kisii	English, Swahili, Sheng, Kisii
Amina B		F	Somali	English, Swahili, Sheng, Somali
Aziz	M		Luhya	English, Swahili, Sheng, Luhya
Mike	M		Kikuyu	English, Swahili, Sheng, Kikuyu
Khalif	M		Arab	English, Swahili, Sheng, Arabic
Mweni		F	Kamba	English, Swahili, Sheng, Kamba
Jackson	M		Luo	English, Swahili, Sheng, Luo
Grade Five 20 total ages 10 –	9	11		

nyrs				
Adeel	M		Third generation Kenyan Indian	English, Swahili, Sheng, Gujarati
Zainab		F	Swahili	English, Swahili, Sheng
Juma	M		Arab	English, Swahili, Sheng, Arabic
Ben	M		Luo	English, Swahili, Sheng, Luo
Letty		F	Kamba	English, Swahili, Sheng, Kamba
Patel	M		Third generation Kenyan Indian	English, Swahili, Sheng, Gujarati
Tony	M		Kikuyu	English, Swahili, Sheng, Kikuyu
Najma		F	Somali	English, Swahili, Sheng, Somali
Aamir	M		Third generation Kenyan Indian	English, Swahili, Sheng, Hindi
Njoroge	M		Kikuyu	English, Swahili, Sheng, Kikuyu
Farhana		F	Third generation Kenyan Indian	English, Swahili, Sheng, Hindi
Amina A		F		English, Swahili, Sheng
Julie		F	Interethnic (Kikuyu, Kamba)	English, Swahili, Sheng, Kikuyu, Kamba

**although 36 students took part in this study, this table features names of students who were mentioned in this paper.*

Appendix B

Transcription Conventions

1. { } Braces Silences and sounds that can't be transcribed with alphabet, including laughter, clapping, pause
2. [] Brackets Transcriber's descriptors, including aside to friend; shouting; singing; whispering
3. () Parentheses English translation
4. /inaudible/ Slashes Portions of transcript that are inaudible