

Navigating Local and Global Voices via Translanguaging in Climate Change Mitigation Talks in Kenya

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Abstract

Building on the theoretical frameworks of translanguaging and polyphonic voices, this paper demonstrates the relation between translanguaging practices, on the one hand, and the local and global perspectives on climate change mitigation (henceforth, CCM), on the other hand, in the multilingual Pokot context in Kenya. The CCM campaign, partly defined as one that is made up of more talk and less action, has in the recent years turned to the views of the local population to effect the much-needed behaviour change. Thus, focus is on how, with the fluid use of a single linguistic repertoire (drawing from Pokot, Kiswahili, English and Sheng), Pokot religious beliefs, ideas and assumptions are drawn into CCM talks, highlighted, synchronised and contested. The notion of voice as a distinct dialogic position is introduced to investigate the local i.e. Pokot religious beliefs and global i.e. the more diffuse CCM discourses, and how they together or separately (re)shape the debate on climate change mitigation. Audio-recordings of three CCM sessions collected from Makutano town in West Pokot County in 2024 were analysed at the level of content. Audio data was complemented by observation data. It was observed that drawing on translanguaging practices the interactants navigated the local and global perspectives as they made sense of mitigation of the adverse effects of climate change. By investigating translanguaging practices in CCM talks in Kenya, the findings of this paper contribute to discussions on the application of the concept of translanguaging to a non-school context and on CCM efforts.

1.0 Introduction

As a bi/multilingual's communicative tool or way of deploying resources from diverse, and in some cases related, named languages while at the same time going beyond the boundaries of such languages, translanguaging is complex, fluid and multi-sensory phenomena, which also provides invaluable insights into how bi/multilinguals, especially in the context of (im)mobility, negotiate their complex reality. This is especially the case principally due to the fact that translanguaging, which has gained currency in the last two decades, has drawn a sharp scholarly interest in different disciplines (including linguistics, anthropology, and sociology among others), where it has been investigated collaboratively with different aims, from different viewpoints and in diverse contexts.

While academic research on translanguaging in contexts of (im)mobility is generally both extensive and diversified, in some contexts it tends to be more extensive than in others. Compared to the academic context, a non-academic context, such as the climate change, the focus of the current study, is relatively unexplored. Within the academic context, studies in translanguaging have yielded interesting findings. Translanguaging has been established as a communicative tool with which bi/multilingual learners understand their world (Garcia and Li Wei, 2014), and, therefore, as a resource with which teachers can impart language-related knowledge (Creese and Blackledge, 2010; Vogel and Garcia, 2017; Mazzaferro, 2018; Liu and Fang, 2022). Teachers have, therefore, been required to drop their monolingual bias and to recognize and embrace languages that learners come to school with as integral to the learners' communicative repertoire (Liu and Fang, 2022). Within this understanding translanguaging has also been established as a lens through which bi/multilingual language practices can be investigated (Vogel

and Garcia, 2017). There has also been need to extend translanguaging studies to include non-academic contexts characterised by (im)mobility, such as markets (Blackledge and Creese, 2017).

In order to allow a deeper insight into translanguaging mechanisms in non-academic contexts and to understand how it is used by bi/multilinguals to understand their world, the present study examines the use of translanguaging in the climate change mitigation context, which, to the best of my knowledge, has not yet received a systematic treatment. Of importance, it is not the translanguaging itself that is of particular interest, but rather its application in a context that brings together not only a number of languages but also the global or more diffuse climate change mitigation ideas on the one hand and the local beliefs, ideas and assumptions based on Pokot traditional religion. This context-based approach can enrich studies in translanguaging, showing not only how idea-collisions resulting from (im)mobility of people and ideas are revealed but also how bi/multilinguals navigate global and local ideas on climate change.

Translanguaging has been considered disruptive of the normal language learning process in schools, a long-held monolingual bias by language teachers and the understanding of language as a fixed, bound unit that has all along been associated with modern European nation states. Nevertheless, shifting the focus to the bi/multilingual, translanguaging becomes a resource available for a bi/multilingual and it provides a useful lens through which bi/multilingual practices can be investigated. Especially in a context of flux of languages and ideas such as the climate change mitigation, translanguaging enables the bi/multilingual to navigate the diverse viewpoints.

1.1 Climate Change and the Pokot Context

As climate change adaptation among the Pokots of West Pokot is partly centred upon the traditional social structures (Riche, et.al. 2009), an investigation of interactions can provide interesting insights on how Pokot people navigate the local and global ideas on mitigation of adverse effects of climate change through translanguaging. Situated in the Northern Kenya within the Rift valley, West Pokot county has a population of 621, 240 inhabitants (KNBS, 2019). Bordering Turkana County to the North East, Trans Nzoia County to the South, Uganda to the West, Elgeyo Marakwet County to the South East and Baringo County to the East, West Pokot County is made of diverse topographic regions. While the North and North Eastern parts are dry plains, the South Eastern and the Cherangani Hills are wet highlands. The dry lowlands receive 600mm of rain with temperature of up to 30⁰ C while the highlands receive 1600mm of rain per annum with moderate temperature of about 15⁰C. West Pokot is predominantly occupied by the Pokot and the Sengwer, with Luhya, Luo, Turkana and Kikuyu as minority communities. The Pokot community practices pastoral, agro-pastoral and mixed farming.

Livelihood in West Pokot is climate-change sensitive as it relies heavily on rainfall. Reduction of arable land due to increased desertification and reduced food and livestock production due to fluctuation in rain and increased pests and diseases are some of the challenges facing the Pokot people (Schilling, J. 2019). Further, the adverse climate change effects such as prolonged drought, floods and landslides

have often resulted in loss of the limited resources and lives (Schilling, J. (2019). The ensuing increased poverty and the competition over few and ever diminishing resources has led to conflicts among members of the community and between Pokot people and the neighbouring communities. In the recent years, a number of initiatives have been rolled out to stem growing conflicts that also make it difficult for children to go to school. Apart of holding peace talks to stem conflicts, conservation of forests has been viewed as a long term solution to climate change adverse effects. Generally conservation of forests has taken two intertwined focal paths. On the one hand there has been a concerted effort, mostly associated with the global ideas, to plant trees to reduce carbon emission and, on the other hand, there has been a call to re-examine and integrate traditional practices that support conservation of forests. This paper investigates how with the use of translanguaging elders navigate local and global ideas on climate change adverse effects.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Translanguaging: origins and application to educational contexts

As a lens and as a resource, translanguaging has its roots in the bi/multilingual language alternation practices (Wei, 2018). It is a development on – and an attempt to debunk - the traditional conceptions that first view languages as fixed and bounded systems that define the modern European states (MacSwain, 2014). Second, as stable and separate systems that are mostly asymmetrical (Makoni and Pennycook, 2007), languages are viewed as phenomena to be acquired separately and the acquisition of one language as capable of diminishing the language learners' competence on the already acquired languages (Cummins, 1980). Third, though bi/multilinguals use languages as material resource bases, they switch predictably from one language to another (MacSwan, 2014).

Translanguaging is built amidst four competing debates. The first is based on the principle of dual correspondence (Otheguy, Garcia, and Reid, 2019) in which the individual's system of specific grammar shapes the individuals other acquired multiple languages. That implies that acquired languages operate in systems that run parallel courses (MacSwan, 2017). The second is the principle of the unitary language system in which an individual relies on one language system from where he/she selects features based on the context-based information during interaction (Otheguy, Garcia and Reid, 2019; Vogel and Garcia, 2017). Third, the integrated multilingual model holds that multilinguals have both "shared and discrete" resources from the first two systems and that the systems are acquired "through [the learner's] participation in divergent speech communities" (MacSwain, 2017). Fourth the plurilinguistic approach proposed by the European Council recognised the capacity for an individual to "use several languages to varying degrees and for distinct purposes". One shortcoming with this view was the symmetrical relationship between acquired languages and the danger of one of the languages being partially acquired (Garcia and Wei, 2014).

Translanguaging adopts a fluid and flexible approach to bi/multilingual language practices that views language in terms of languaging i.e. flexible use of language or idiolect to "create meaning ...[and] construct knowledge" (Mazzaferro, 2018:3). Thus, "as part of complex interactional processes",

language combines with other languages as well as other “multimodal and multisensory signs to construct meaning” (Mazzaferro, 2018: 3). The orchestrated semiotic signs or discursive practices make up a single repertoire (Garcia and Li 2014). The orchestration of signs from different languages goes beyond mere movement (Canagarajah, 2013) to include the “speakers’ construction and use of original and complex interrelated discursive practices that cannot be easily assigned to one or another traditional definition of a language but that makeup of speakers’ complete language repertoire” (Garcia and Li, 2014; Wang, 2022:2).

As languaging involves the use of language to “transform the social reality in which individuals act” (Garcia and Li, 2014; Mazzaferro, 2018:3), translanguaging re-centres the language user, the context and the information being conveyed. In this, first, the language users’ ability to fluidly use a single repertoire is emphasised, allowing the bi/multilingual to deploy resources from different languages (as the key resource materials), while overlooking the language boundaries (Garcia, 2009; Garcia and Li Wei, 2014). Second, translanguaging identifies the context as super-diverse in terms of languages and ideas, owing to increased mobility of people and ideas and, therefore, as heterogenous (Bakhtin, 1981). Third, the selection of discursive practices is determined by the information at hand in a given communicative context (Otheguy, Garcia and Reid, 2015).

Translanguaging has been applied in the educational context with interesting results. First it has been observed that the language learning process can be greatly enhanced when teachers take the learners’ repertoire into consideration and ignore the “socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages” (Otheguy et al. 2015:281). As a pedagogical approach, translanguaging can enhance meaning-making/negotiation ability of the learners by enabling the learners “to select the right help from the entire repertoire to meet their communicative needs” (Wang, 2022). This is especially the case since the repertoires also “contain multimodal resources integrated with the linguistic resources” (Li 2018; Wang, 2022). Viewed this way, translanguaging causes a shift in perspective from emphasis on the language to the learners’ and teachers’ roles as they co-create knowledge (Garcia et al., 2017). The recognition of the “learners’ languages and cultures in school contexts” and the “democratis[ation] of the translanguaging space” (Wang, 2022:2) allow teachers and learners to translanguage as they jointly create knowledge (Cook, 2010; Garcia et al., 2017).

Within the educational context, a shift in ideology has been suggested. Accordingly teachers have been required to drop ideology based on the separate learning of one language in an educational system and to recognize the learners’ languages and cultures (Duran and Palmer, 2013; Garcia and Li, 2014). It has also been suggested that judicious application of translanguaging in a context characterised by mobility of people and ideas, such as the educational context, can lead to fruitful engagement between learners and teachers as they jointly create knowledge (Garcia, et al. 2017; Wang, 2022). It has also been suggested that the concept of translanguaging can also be extended to the context of English as a Foreign Language, EFL, where learners from other cultures learn English, and where learners can gain by incorporating language and other semiotic resources from the diverse languages at interplay (Wang, 2022).

2.0 Literature Review

Extant literature suggests the need to expand translanguaging studies – especially in the context of mobility – to include non-academic contexts (Blackledge and Creese, 2018). Existing against and fluidly interacting with, the backdrop of increased mobility (Vertovec, 2007; Wood and Landry, 2007; De Fina and Mezzaferro, 2021), the bi/multilingual world is not only characterised by complex “processes of circulation of linguistic and semiotic resources across the physical [...] spaces” but it also involves “the development of communicative practices as well as subjectivities” (Mazzaferro, 2022). It is in the sense of Bakhtin (1981), essentially heteroglossic and dynamic (Blackledge and Creese, 2018). The context-based approach can not only make available the language practices of a bi/multilingual but it can also demonstrate how bi/multilinguals negotiate, situate and even contest the complex standpoints not just in the pedagogical setting (Yilmaz, 2021) but also in a range of settings within the bi/multilingual world (Mazzaferro, 2022).

Translanguaging has been defined as a lens or a perspective (Wang, 2022) that can be used to investigate the language practices of the bi/multilinguals. Considering language as a construct and focusing on the language user’s creative capability, translanguaging allows for the investigation of the language and other practices of the bi/multilingual as they navigate the multiple perspectives that form their world (Canagarajah, 2011). Of interest is the bi/multilinguals’ “multiple discursive practices” (García, 2009:45) that – though constituted by resources from diverse languages – “make up [...] the speakers’ complete language repertoire” (Wang, 2022:2). Of interest too is how through the multiple discursive practices - made up of language and other semiotic resources – bi/multilinguals “make sense of their bilingual worlds” (García, 2009:45). As an approach that underscores contextual uses of language and, therefore as one that “endorses a flexible view of named languages (Durán and Palmer, 2014; Wang, 2022:2), translanguaging can inform an investigation of “the hybrid dynamic discursive practices” (Wang, 2022:2) of bi/multilinguals as they pursue their day-to-day life goals.

For a bi/multilingual, translanguaging is, thus, a multi-sensory resource in which the bi/multilingual deploy to interpret their daily lives. For instance, Mazzaferro (2018) argues that in this language as a communicative means becomes a “mobile resource working together with multimodal and multisensory signs to construct meaning”. It, thus, becomes an organizing tool for speech, gesture and other signs as it creates meaning in situated interactional activities (Garcia and Li Wei, 2014:42). It further becomes a semiotic tool for organizing space (Pennycook and Otsuji, 2015). Li Wei (2011:1223) observes that translanguaging enables individuals to “question and problematise received wisdom, and to express views adequately through reasoned responses to situations”. This is especially the case since, viewing language as languaging, translanguaging “release[s] histories and understandings” embodied in languages (Garcia and Li Wei, 2014:21).

Thus, as a resource and a lens, translanguaging approach has been applied successfully in the educational context under pedagogical translanguaging. For the learner translanguaging can be an invaluable singular resource-base from which learners can “select the right help [...] to meet their

communicative needs” (Wang, 2022:2). The teacher and the learners’ negotiation and meaning-making sessions are richly enhanced when they deploy not only their individual repertoires but also when they jointly use their repertoires (Wang, 2022:2). As they jointly create knowledge (Garcia et al, 2017), teachers and learners can also gain from a diverse semiotic base, especially since individual repertoires contain multimodal elements. Allowing the learners and indeed the teachers to mobilise their repertoires in the school setting has consequences for the school context and the pedagogical practice. While the school becomes a “democratic translinguaging space”, it becomes necessary for the teachers to work on their “monolingual ideology”; this enables the teacher and the learner to “perform dynamic, fluid and creative translinguaging practice” as they pursue their communicative needs (Wang, 2022:2).

The educational context is one example of what has been called the everyday. The everyday is here taken to refer to the “complex, multidimensional, dynamic, mediated and socially-constructed” space that “emerges from individuals’ lived experiences and encounters with others” (Mazaferro, 2018:5). While the everyday can be used in reference to conversations in informal contexts, it can also refer to formal contexts where “pre-given norms and rules of behaviour and socialization contribute to the development of formalised communicative practices, and where social agents commonly conform to institutional discourses” (Mazeferro, 2018; Wee, 2015). Interest in the research on translinguaging has been on the everyday since it is the “site of transformation, resistance and in some cases, reconciliation of identities, ideologies or discourses” (Mazaferro, 2018:5). The everyday is a site where “individuals are able to develop, organise and experiment different ways of being and becoming in the world” (Mazaferro, 2018:5).

Viewed using the translinguaging lens and a resource, the everyday can provide an opportunity for individual minority languages to be freed from structural categories such as code-switching and diglossia that both separates languages and functionally assigns more communicative roles upon one language at the expense of the other (Garcia, 2009). Garcia (2009) considers the “making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge” that happen through translinguaging as activities that go beyond language boundaries. Thus, the different languages are jointly utilised to achieve understanding. For Garcia (2009) translinguaging is distinct from other dynamic uses of languages as its emphasis does not lie on the need to create language asymmetries; its emphasis is on “giving voice to new social realities” through integration of resources from different languages (Blackledge and Crease, 2017:33). Through translinguaging, especially in climate-related discourses, synergy among “different dimensions of [individuals’] history, experience and environment” is achieved (Blackledge and Crease, 2017:33).

The everyday is especially a site of becoming as it is characterised by a flux of people and ideas. For instance, Blackledge and Crease (2017) observe that improved economic and technological infrastructure has led to increased movement of people and ideas. The result of such movement has been the creation of super-diverse neighbourhoods that generate and are layered by “complex multilingual repertoires” (Blackledge and Crease, 2017: 32). Blackledge and crease (2017) argue that in a world that is increasingly globalizing, language can be considered as “a complex of mobile resources,

shaped and developed both because of mobility, by people moving around, and for mobility, to enable people to move around” (Blackledge and Crease 2017:32). Mobility can also be used in reference to translinguaging or the flexible use of semiotic resources i.e. the “phonological, lexical, grammatical and discourse forms” (Garcia 2009; Blackledge and Crease 2011)

Translinguaging, therefore, becomes a useful tool with which language practices of a bi/multilingual can be investigated. Blackledge and Crease (2017) argue that translinguaging can offer invaluable insights into how bi/multilinguals make meaning. Translinguaging can also provide an avenue into the understanding of not only the practices that bi/multilinguals deploy in their day-to-day lives but also the ways through which bi/multilinguals make sense of their super-diverse worlds (Li Wei, 2018; De Fina and Mezzaferro, 2021)). Through translinguaging diverse voices can be revealed. Thus, by challenging traditional approaches and, hence, engendering the shift of focus from languages and language policies to the language user’s creative capability to mobilise languages and available forms of knowledge (Garcia and Li 2014), translinguaging can enrich studies on bi/multilingual practices.

3.0 Material and Method

For this study the discussion with elders on climate change adverse effect is taken as a community of translinguaging practice where the elders mobilise linguistic resources to navigate global and local ideas on climate change adverse effect and innovations that augment conservation efforts. This qualitative study reports on how elders take part in translinguaging during discussion sessions. The paper specifically addresses the following questions.

1. To what extent is translinguaging used during elders’ discussions on climate change adverse effects?
2. How do the elders navigate global and local ideas on climate change adverse effects via translinguaging?
3. What identities emerge from the interaction in climate change talks?

To achieve this, the study adopts a case study design (Yin, 2018) of the elders’ translinguaging practices discussing climate change adverse effects in order to understand the translinguaging phenomena in context of climate change. Together with Dornyei, (2007:152) we consider the case study as a method of “collecting and organizing data to maximize our understanding of the unitary character of the social being or object studied”. The focus is, thus, on the “particular one” (Dornyei, 2007:152).

West Pokot is one of the regions in Kenya that have experienced climate change adverse effects that include flooding, landslides, extreme drought. The consequence of this has been the loss of property and livelihoods. Further, competition over ever-diminishing resources has led to conflict between Pokots and her neighbours, the Turkana to the North, Karamojong to the west, Nandi to the south and the samburu to the East. One of the ways of saving lives, stemming the loss of property and reducing competition over resources has been planting of trees. Another way has been turning to beliefs and ideas that

promoted and still promote conservation of indigenous trees, known for emission of less carbon. Pokot beliefs, ideas and assumptions promote conservation of trees considered sacred, but conservation can also be said to be part of the global discourse on climate change.

Makutano town where elders meet for discussions on beliefs related to conservation is situated in Pokot County on the Kitale Lodwar highway. The elders who can speak pokot, English, Kiswahili and a little Sheng and are familiar with both the local beliefs and global ideas on conservation participate in CCM talks. Consent forms were read out to the elders and the elders were asked to sign.

Three sets of data were collected between June and September 2024. Observations during discussion sessions were supplemented by field notes where elders’ interactions were recorded. During observation the languaging practices deployed by elders were noted. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the aim of determining reasons for the use of their translanguaging practice. During discussions, as non-participant researchers, we paid attention on the progress of the discussions, took observation notes and tape recorded the discussions. The consent of the elders was sought during data collection and the names in the data sets were anonymised.

4.0 Findings

A close analysis of interactions indicates that translanguaging functions to indicate local and global perspectives on climate change, establish an encounter between the local and global perspectives and align or contest the local and global perspectives. The table 1 below indicates a summary of findings gleaned from the data.

Table: Functions of Translanguaging

Function	Objective	Linguistic Strategies	Example from Data
context setting/perspective setting	To indicate local and global perspectives, histories beliefs, ideas and assumptions on mitigation of adverse effects of climate change.	Use of Pokot for place names, trees as objects of and reason for conservation; use of English to establish global perspectives; reported speech.	<i>Tatu ni hamsini kulen</i> (Text A): Kiswahili base ensures price clarity.
Interactional Work	To establish the encounter between local and global perspectives on mitigation of adverse effects of climate change.	Use of Kiswahili for explanation, narration, description; the use of English to indicate an encounter between local and global perspectives, metaphors, reported speech.	<i>Karibu sana, lakwenyun</i> (Text A); <i>Chamkei, wera?</i> (Text B) establishes familiarity.
hybridisation	To align and/or contest local and global perspectives on mitigation of adverse effect of climate change and express mixed identities	Switches to Sheng to indicate mixed identities; switches to English and Kiswahili to indicate a mixture of ideas, perspectives.	The full switch to Marakwet in Text C; the ironic <i>kiririon</i> in Text B.

In the following analysis it is clear that translanguaging is crucial for the participants as they make sense of the mitigation strategies related to climate change adverse effects.

TEXT 1

In the continuing conversation, elder A responds to the question about protected places within the Pokot community. In the excerpt, the elder switches between Pokot, Kiswahili, English and Sheng.

-----*Sasa kuna hizo places ambazo wazee wamekataa wamekataa.*

Now we have sacred places where no one is allowed to encroach;

Na wewe mwenyewe ukiingia huko utajipata pahali

And if 'you' enter such places you will be in trouble.

imagine kuna hii miti inaitwa simwoton hapo juu

Imagine there is a large tree called simwoton, up there

hii hapo juu bendera hapo mti kubwa hiyo

at Bendera. That big tree up there

inaitwa xxx ama mnagei. Hapo initwa mnagei ward.

Is called mnagei. That place is called Mnagei ward

Hiyo miti inaitwa mnagei. Mnagei ward ni hiyo

That tree is called Mnagei; the place is named after the tree

miti jina hiyo. Hiyo miti hakuna mtu kugusa .

No one is allowed to touch that tree;

ukikaribia kuna kitu itakutema ndio ujue

should you encroach, the tree will repulse you to

kwamba hapa si mahali pa kusongea wazee

show you that yu should not encroach; the elders

waliempower hiyo miti through the culture.

empowered the tree through culture

In this presentation, elder A engages the other elders in what appears to be a report on the prohibited places, as they negotiate the connection between traditional beliefs and global ideas on climate change. The elder makes general reference to the authority of the elders and emphasizes the prohibition through repetition, saying *na hizo places zenye wazee wamekataa wamekataa* “and those places that elders have prohibited, they have prohibited”. The switch to English in *places* identifies situates the site under discussion within the global discourses on the interaction between climate change and the earth surface.

The interaction predominantly takes place in Kiswahili to sound a warning to those who destroy trees and to state the consequences of destruction. The elder does this using a conditional expression directed at a non-specified second person, he sounds a warning with unspecified consequences in *na wewe mwenyewe ukiingia huko utajipata pahali* “and if you step in there, you will find yourself somewhere”. What is to happen to the offender is further demonstrated using a general term *utajipata pahali* “you will find yourself somewhere” suggests the indeterminate power of the supernatural. With the English word *imagine*, the elder not only signals the use of imagination in the conservation debate, but he also the mode of presentation from general to a specific example of a protected tree. Using Pokot language he provides two tree names, *Simwoton* and *Mnagei* for the tree, establishing the space and object of conservation within the Pokot setting, thereby unleashing the histories and beliefs of the Pokot as a voice in the negotiation on climate change (Blackledge and Crease, 2017). The link between natural environment and the associated beliefs is further demonstrated in the quality of the tree i.e. size, *mti*

kubwa hiyo “that large tree” and function of the tree as a landmark in *Mnagei ward ni hiyo mti, jina hiyo* “Mnagei ward is named after that tree”. Using Kiswahili in *hiyo mti hakuna kugusa* “no one is supposed to touch that tree”, the elder reiterates the prohibition and the punishment *kuna kitu kitakutema* “there is something that will ‘spit’ you”. The punishment is a reminder to the trespasser *ndio ujue kwamba hapo si pahali pa kusongea* “that is when you will know it is not a place one can approach”. Using Sheng, *waliempower* “they empowered it” the elder extends the prohibition to the youth, before situating it in global discourses when he uses English in *culture*. This implies that the need to conserve and the culture of conservation is not only restricted to Pokot, but it is a recognizable norm for all.

The fluid movement among languages plays a number of functions. Apart from helping specify the context, the object of conservation and reasons for conserving trees, translanguaging serves to display local beliefs and indicate their role in preventing the wanton cutting of trees. Further, translanguaging features embed conservation and indeed the need to conserve trees in the global discourses on mitigating adverse effects of climate change. It also serves to show the hybrid identities that characterise discourses on the mitigation of the adverse effects of climate change

TEXT 2

Elder B gives a specific example of what happened to the members of the Pokot community who defied the elders, and in this he shows that consequences for defiance is not only limited to members of the community but that they also apply to people from other communities.

Ata ndio ukaona parua.

That is why you saw at Parua

Ile shida ilitokea parua ile slide ilitokea parua huko.

The problem that occurred at Parua; the landslide that happened there at Parua

Kuna mahali vijana waligusa.

There is a place that the boys touched

Mahali watu wazee walikataa inaitwa kailat.

A place forbidden by elders called Kailat

Because sponsor kutoka ng’ambo alienda kutoa maji pale.

Because a sponsor from Europe went and tapped water from there

Wazee wakasema enda juu usiende pale.

Elders said go upstream; do not go at that place

Na kailat ni nyumba ya mungu.

And Kailat is the house of god

Akapiga picha akafanya nini.

He photographed the place and did many things

Wazee wakasema usitoe maji hapo.

Elders told him not to extract water from that place

Si huyu mtu akaenda akaingia huko akaenda akakatakata miti.

This person went and cut trees at that place

Paka saa hii upana yenye iko hapo hakuna kuingia huko kutoa maji.

Until now there is a wide gorge that no one can enter; no one is permitted to get water from there

So ile wazee wamekataa wamekataa.

So what elders have forbidden is forbidden

Ukiingia kwa lazima yenu kuna kitu itawatoa

If you encroach by force there is something that will repulse you

na utapata kifo na utakua funzo kwa wengine

you will die and be a lesson to others

In this excerpt, using Kiswahili language *hata ndio ukaona* “that is why you saw”, the elder draws the attention of elders to another protected space, *Parua*, as a topic of discussion. The word *Parua* does not only evoke the histories, beliefs and ideas as a voice in the conservation debate, but it is also a place where the climate change adverse effect identified in Kiswahili as *shida* “problem” and in English *slide*, was witnessed. The use of English situates climate change adverse effects as discussed in discourse side by side with the local Pokot beliefs and ideas. With *kuna mahali vijana waligusa* “there is a place that was encroached by the youth” expressed in Kiswahili, the youth are identified as agents of destruction. Another agent of destruction is from the West identified using English in *sponsor* together with his place of origin *ng’ambo* “abroad”.

The language most used in the excerpt is Kiswahili to provide details on the interaction between the elders on the one hand and the youth and the sponsor on the other hand. The elder describes the destruction as partly rooted in the clash of voices, in *alienda kutoa maji pale* “he went to draw water from there” that happened despite the elders warning, as shown in *wazee wakasema enda juu usiende pale*

“the elders told him to go upstream and not where he went”. With *na kailat ni nyumba ya mungu* “and Kailat is the house of god”, the elder provides the reason why the elders forbade the sponsor from approaching the site. The word *Kailat* uttered in Pokot in the context of the word *sponsor*, uttered in English establishes Pokot beliefs as a voice in conserving what was to be potentially destroyed by a person from Europe. The desecration of the ordained sacred site happens through entry to the place shown by *akaingia huko*, cutting trees, shown by *akakata miti*, drawing water, as shown by *kutoa maji* and taking pictures shown by *akapiga picha*. Then in order to change the mode or presentation from narrative to comment he uses English, in so. With repetition in Kiswahili he emphasizes the prohibition, in *ile wazee wamekataa wamekataa* “what elders have prohibited; they have prohibited”. The consequences for forceful entry, *ukiingia kwa lazima* “should you enter by force”, is ejection, *kuna kitu itawatoa* “there is something that will eject you” and death, *utakufa* “you will die”.

Features of translanguaging serve to establish the context where conservation takes place and provide an example of what happens, and indeed what can happen, when elders (the voice of conservation) are defied. They also indicate the parties in conservation, both local and non-local and the need for the voices to be heard and heeded. Further, the place of local beliefs in conservation and potential sources of destruction are also displayed, showing the hybrid relations that characterise discourses on mitigation of adverse effects of climate change.

TEXT 3

As a way of supporting elder B’s argument with another example, elder C provides another example of conserved places and states the consequences of encroachment on such places

Imagine pahali panaitwa parua secondary school.

Imagine a place called Parua secondary school

Tangu hakuna kukata

Ever since there has not been tree cutting.

Hata nini ukikula matunda yake utakufa

Even when you eat fruits of the tree you will die

so wazee wamejua na ndio maana inaitwa Mnakei saa hii.

So the elderly know and that is why the place is now called Mnagei

Hapana chezea wazee wamesema hakuna kugusa huko.

Do not joke with elders; they have said no one should encroach the place

Na kuna kitu ingine itakutoa pale

And there is something else that will repulse you from there.

ndio ujue hiyo ni sacred place.

That is when you will know the place is sacred

In this interaction, the elder introduces an example of the sacred place, *Parua* with the word *imagine*, inviting the elders to reflect on reasons why for many years the place has not been destroyed as shown by *tangu hakuna kukata* “ever since there has not been tree cutting”. The elder then provides the reason i.e. the belief that trespassing to the place leads to death, in *ukikula matunda yake utakufa* “should you eat fruits from the trees, you will die”. The place name *Parua* and *Mnakei* uttered in Pokot demonstrates local histories of non-destruction as a voice in the conservation debate. He then proceeds to warn the trespassers in *hapana chezea wazee* “do not disregard the elders” and *wamesema hakuna kugusa huko* “they have said, ‘there is no chance for those encroaching on the land’”. The consequence is stated in a general way *kuna kitu itakutoa pale* “there is something that will eject you from there”. By using English, in “sacred place”, the elder identifies Pokot beliefs and situates them in the global discourse as a voice in conservation.

One of the reasons for this has been the punishment of death for even those looking for fruits, as shown by *ukikula matunda yake utakufa* “if you eat fruits from there, you will die”. With the expression *wazee wamejua* “the old men know” and *hapana chezea wazee* “do not disregard elders”, he demonstrates the authority of the elders as conscious and powerful. The power of elders as custodians of the beliefs is further demonstrated by *kuna kitu itakutoa hapo* “something will eject you from there”.

In these excerpt translanguaging features serve to indicate places, such as *Parua* and *Mnakei*, where trees have been conserved and to demonstrate why such places have not been destroyed. It also serves to display local beliefs associated with conservation and to show the elders as the authority behind the conservation efforts, showing that defying the elders can lead to death or to some unspecified consequences.

TEXT 4

In this excerpt, elder B, making reference to one of the conserved places explains what is permitted with respect to the interaction between members of the community and nature.

Hata mtelo saa hii kuna mahali huwezi karibia.

Even at Mtelo, there is a specific place where you cannot encroach

Unaweza pita kando kando but kuna mahali huwezi karibia.

You can pass by but you cannot encroach

Na ukiingia kuna kitu itakutema

And should you encroach, you will be repulsed

ndio ujue hapo iliwekwa namna hiyo.

That is when you will discover that that place has been set as such

Ata ile ya peace talks ya pokot na karamojong ile

Even during peace talks with pokots and Karamojong people

wanaenda kuwekelea mkono ni wazee pekee

where they anoint their leaders only the elders

yao na opinion leaders si watu wote

and opinion leaders are allowed there and not everyone

In this presentation, the elder gives another example of a sacred place as they discuss the place of beliefs in the curbing climate change adverse effects. With the noun *Mtelo* uttered in Pokot, the elder reveals a sacred place within the Pokot context and identifies Pokot beliefs as a voice in discussions on mitigation of adverse effects of climate change.

A major part of the excerpt is delivered in Kiswahili to display the interaction between members of the community and nature. Kiswahili also serves to show the unspecified consequences should any member of the community encroach on the forest. Members of the community are only permitted to pass by the sites as shown in *unaweza pita karibu kando kando* "you can pass by" and places where they are forbidden from encroaching are also stated, as shown in *kuna mahali huwezi karibia* "there are places where you cannot come close". With switch in English, in *peace talks* which are presided over by *opinion leaders*, one of the consequences of adverse effects of climate change is contextualized i.e. conflicts among communities as a result of diminishing resources due to climate change.

Within the Pokot region and in most parts of the Northern Kenya prolonged drought often results in conflict between pastoral communities. The government as well as other non-governmental organisations often organise peace meetings to resolve conflict and ensure neighbouring communities live peacefully. The competition over diminishing resources has also adversely affected the economy of the region.

In this example translanguaging features serves to display the consequences of adverse effects of climate change. Apart from the peace talks, conservation of trees as a measure of mitigation adverse effects of climate change is advocated. The features also provide the extent of prohibitions, showing the extent to which members of the community can interact with nature.

TEXT 5

Elder D reminds a participant (a teacher) about a tree that grew in the neighbourhood of a mission where the teacher used to live while teaching in a neighbouring school. He then goes on to explain what happened to a member of the community who cut the tree.

5

Nafikiri mwalimu kwa sababu ulikuwa kacheliba.

I think mwalimu, since you were in Kacheliba

Na uliishi kwa nyumba ya mission pande hii.

And since you lived in a mission house , you

Unakumbuka hiyo miti ile iko karibu na borehole.

Can remember the tree that was near the borehole.

Hiyo ndio miti inaitwa Longarkau.

That is the tree we call Longarkou

Halafu kuna huyu mzee musa.

Then there was an old man called Musa

Akaenda kuleta mutu ya power saw akakata part of the branch.

He invited a lumber who cut a branch of that tree

Na kijiji yote iliamka tukaenda pale tukasema hii ni sacred tree.

As a result we as a community marched to the place and told him this is a sacred tree

Naa few days ule mwenye alikuwa na power saw alikufa two three days.

After a few days the lumber died

The elder first reminds one of the participants, a teacher about a tree growing near a borehole in a place called Kacheliba before he turns to the account involving an old man called Musa. Musa contracted a power saw owner asking him to cut a branch of the tree, *Longarkou* by the borehole. The switch to Pokot, in *Longarkou*, contextualises the setting, thereby revealing the local histories and beliefs. Musa, together with his accomplice, is the agent of destruction who faces the wrath of – not just the elders but of the members of the community as shown in *kijiji yote iliamka* “the entire village rose”. With the switch in English, in *sacred tree*, the object of conservation is revealed and further embedded in global discourses on conservation.

Kiswahili is used predominantly in the excerpt to display events involving Musa who sets out to destroy a sacred tree. With *kijiji yote iliamka* “the entire village rose”, demonstrates the view that the different perspectives notwithstanding, conservation is the responsibility of all members of the community. With the switch in English, in *sacred tree* and *few days...two three days*, the elder demonstrates that beliefs and the consequences of breach of beliefs, though local, apply to all persons interested in conservation

Features of translanguaging serve to show not only the importance of conserving trees, but they also show that conservation is everyone’s responsibility. Further, that the consequences of destruction do not apply only to select few, but that they apply to all human beings.

TEXT 6

In order to elaborate the question of disregard for what the elders say, elder E provides an account in which the people who disobeyed the elders were destroyed through a landslide. The landslide happened at Turkwel river; it was something that elders had foreseen and forewarned the people.

nilitaka kuzungumzia mambo ya kupuuza

I wanted to talk about the story of disdain

aah ile catastrophic ya landslide ilitokea.

Aah that catastrophe of the landslide that happened!

Hao wazee walikuwa wameforesee na waka foretell.

Those elders had foreseen and had foretold

And they warned people wakawambia kuna kitu

And they warned the people, saying there is something

inafanyika mfanye hivi na hivi kama remedy ya kufanya nini kuzuia.

That will happen and you should do this and that to prevent the damage

Just like turkwel ilisemekana hii inaweza spill over

Just like turkwel river, it was said it would spill over

watu waishi pande ile wazee walikuwa wamesema kitambo.

People were to live on the side where elders had told them

Wakati tulianza kuskia hii kitu ilisemekana zamani

We started hearing this long before the rains started

wakati hakuna mvua. So watu wanaanza kuregret saa hii

now they started regretting, saying

wakisema oho kumbe ile mambo ya wazee walikuwa wakisema

oh this is what elders used to tell us.

With *nilitaka kuzungumzia mambo ya kupuuza* ‘I wanted to talk about issues related to disdain’ the elder introduces his account. The switch to Kiswahili language enables the elder to articulate consequences of the failure to listen to the warning from elders to both the local and global audiences. The express *aah* denotes the enormity of the destruction that happens. The switch to English in *catastrophic* and *landslide* does not only enable the elder to articulate and embed a local occurrence in global discourses of the adverse effects of climate change, but it also evidences a hybrid identity of the discourses related to climate change mitigation. The mixed identities are further demonstrated when the elder switches to Sheng in *wameforesee* ‘they had foreseen’, *wakaforetell* ‘they had foretold’, *kuregret* ‘to regret’. The word *Turkwel*, a pokot word for the physical feature, evokes the local context as a space for the encounter between nature and human beings; it is also a context where adverse effect of climate change is experienced partly as a result of failure of the people to listen to elders.

The features of translanguaging, therefore, do not only reveal an attempt by elders to conserve their environment through talk, but it also reveals local beliefs as a voice in conservation that when defied dire consequences are certain to follow. Further features of translanguaging also show that adverse effects of climate change apply to people of different ages and races. Traditionally Sheng has been spoken predominantly by the youth and English has often been associated with the West. While the Sheng can indicate the youth as a defiant party in the efforts to mitigate climate change adverse effects, the fluid use of Pokot, Kiswahili, Sheng and English serves to show the mix of diverse identities in the discourse related to climate change mitigation.

Discussion

The current project investigated how translanguaging features are used to navigate local and global perspectives on climate change mitigation. It is evident from the data and from the entire data that translanguaging features demonstrate that languages contain histories, beliefs, ideas, assumptions (Blackledge and Crease, 2017; Mazaferro, 2018) about climate change. Thus, the strategic fluid use of Pokot, Kiswahili and English languages, as is the case in the context of climate change talks, display the histories, beliefs, ideas, assumptions that are part of the local perspectives as well as those that underlie global perspectives on climate change mitigation. This is in line with what Garcia and Wei (2014) observe i.e. that within multilingual contexts the languages and other semiotic resources become tools with which bilinguals understand their circumstances and in this case how the members of the Pokot

community mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. For instance the use of Pokot names of trees that are also landmarks in the Pokot region display beliefs about tree names, beliefs, ideas and assumptions that protect them and what is likely to befall anyone who attempts to cut them down. As for the switch to English, the terms such as *slide*, evoke histories and ideas about adverse effects of climate change that belong to the global perspectives to climate change.

The displayed perspectives do not just exist side by side, they also, as the features of translinguaging have shown sometimes encounter - and even contradict - each other. The features of translinguaging show that, while global discourses promote conservation, there can be instances when agents from the global scene can advocate destruction. When for instance the sponsor decides to cut trees in order to draw water from a sacred site regardless of the warning from elders, he is punished just the same way a member of the community would be punished. This serves to show that the need to conserve the environment is a call to all, and that consequences of adverse effects of climate change apply equally to all. Thus, the context of discussions on climate change mitigation becomes a context where different ideas collide and where talk becomes an important step towards making sense of such collisions.

The features of translinguaging also demonstrate that in a super-diverse context of CCM languages and ideas are in a state of flux and that they are available use. Accordingly, participants draw on Pokot, Sheng, English and Kiswahili languages as well as local and global ideas on the mitigation of adverse effects of climate change. Thus, the participants display hybrid identities as they make sense of their ever-changing climatic environment.

Conclusion

The current study demonstrates that fluid use of languages can be a lens and a resource in understanding how bi/multilinguals understand their environment. Translinguaging, thus, enables the participants to establish connection between their own local ideas and the global ideas on climate change. As they seek to embed their own experiences in global discourses on climate change, the topic ceases to be remote and it becomes integral to their world. The current paper, thus, applies the concept of translinguaging to a non-academic context of climate change and serves to demonstrate translinguaging as a useful resource in contexts of (im)mobility.

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