

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Conceptualizing Èbùnlilingualism: A Gifting Perspective of Family Language and Literacy PraxisYetunde S. Alabede ^{a*}^a Michigan State University* Contact Info: 620 Farm Lane, Room 303, East Lansing, MI 48824, U.S.A., alabedey@msu.edu**Article Info**Received: October 23, 2024
Accepted: August 25, 2025
Published: June 30, 2026**Abstract**

This paper introduces èbùnlilingualism, a conceptual framework grounded in Yorùbá epistemology that reimagines family language and literacy praxis among African and African (im)migrant families. Drawing on Yorùbá word èbùn, meaning gift, and lilingualism, èbùnlilingualism frames language as gifts parents give their children as acts of love, care, and intergenerational continuity rather than tools of linguistic performance or policy compliance. Combining a critical review of family language policy (FLP) literature with participant observations and insights from reflective conversations with African (im)migrant families in Nigeria and the United States, this paper explores how parents navigate the tension between promoting English proficiency and sustaining heritage languages. Grounded in African multilingual realities where language use is dynamic, layered, and communal, the paper redefines what counts as “family”, “language”, and “policy”. By positioning language as a relational gift, èbùnlilingualism offers a decolonial alternative to the FLP framework, highlighting communal care, affective reciprocity, and cultural continuity in multilingual upbringing. For researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, èbùnlilingualism invites collaborative engagement with families honoring their linguistic gifts and supporting a more inclusive multilingually-rooted pedagogy.

Keywords

African diaspora; African immigrant families; èbùnlilingualism; family language policy; praxis

INTRODUCTION

... we learn from each other ... the connection is important ... we learn from English writers, from French writers, from Zulu writers, from Indian writers, from Chinese writers, and so on. And hopefully, they also have a lot to learn from African (language) writers (wa Thiong’o, 2024, p. 93)

In this paper, I invite you to journey with me as I engage in the complexity of confronting the problem of double consciousness (DuBois, 1903) that percolates in my mind, both as an African child from the Global South studying in the Global North, and as an intellectual nomad (Makoni, 2023) occupying the academic *transcultural* (Wynter, 2001) space. This invitation is inspired by wa Thiong’o’s (2024) quote above about *learning from each other* as writers, scholars, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners, regardless of geographical location and the *language* in which we write. Hence, readers are invited to engage with this paper through the lens of African epistemic styles of orality and storytelling (Osei-Tutu, 2023), as I weave in

the existing literature to introduce an Afrocentric and transnational lens for examining the language practices of Africans and African (im)migrant families. Specifically, this paper describes a conceptual framework for studying Family Language Policy (FLP) within African and African (im)migrant families, as well as their desires for their children's multilingual development at home, at school, and in community socialization.

This framework matters because it helps us capture language praxis among African and African (im)migrant families beyond the epistemological perspective of the Global North. The paper highlights the family's language praxis in Nigeria and the context of Nigeria's diaspora, but the same could be said of other African nations where multilingualism is the norm (Bámgbósé, 2021). For example, in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, multilingualism is woven into the fabric of daily life as the country boasts over 500 languages, including dialects (Akindele et al., 2022; Inuwa-Dutse, 2025; Umezuruike & Onuegwunwoke, 2025). While English is the official language used in formal education and government, local languages like Hausa, Yorùbá, and Igbo dominate regional communication, and these languages are supposed to be the language of instruction in the first three years of schooling (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). In urban centers like Lagos and Ibadan, code-switching and translanguaging (Agoke, 2023; Li & García, 2022; Sanuth, 2019) practices are common, especially among youth, who creatively blend English with indigenous languages and Pidgin to communicate across ethnic lines.

A different yet equally vibrant multilingual scene plays out in Senegal, another West African country. In the city's bustling streets, school children greet teachers in French, the official language, but switch to Wolof, the lingua franca, when talking to peers. At home, many families blend Pulaar, Serer, or Mandinka with Wolof, depending on their ethnic background. This example demonstrates that multilingualism in Senegal is not only functional but also strategic, with each language serving a domain: French for formal settings, Wolof for national identity, and others for cultural heritage and intimacy (Fall, 2020). Further south, in the Republic of South Africa, known constitutionally as the *Rainbow Nation*, multilingualism is legally and culturally embraced. The country has 11 official languages, including Zulu, isiXhosa, Afrikaans, and English, and 12 with the addition of South African Sign Language (SASL) in 2023 (Senekal & Brokensha, 2023). Yet, in a township in Cape Town, it is not unusual for children to switch between isiXhosa at home, Afrikaans in the community, and English in school. This fluid language use reflects both the country's linguistic diversity and the enduring legacy of apartheid-era language hierarchies (Heugh, 2013). However, there is

increasing recognition of the need for multilingual education policies that validate and support learners' home languages, not only in theory but in implementation (Nkadimeng et al., 2023).

In Tanzania, a country in East Africa, the story takes a slightly different turn. Unlike many African nations such as Ghana and Cameroon, Tanzania has successfully elevated Swahili to a national language that can foster unity. Children from diverse linguistic backgrounds learn Swahili as a first or second language in school and public life. Although English is used for secondary and tertiary education, Swahili is the dominant language of everyday life and national discourse. This approach, promoted since the post-independence era under Julius Nyerere, exemplifies a deliberate policy of fostering national cohesion through a common African language (Blommaert, 2014; Legère, 2006). These examples show that multilingualism in Africa is not an exception; it is banal, with language use as dynamic, layered, and responsive to social context. The banality here is not a pejorative but a means of capturing the normalcy of multilingualism in Africa (Bámgbósé, 2021) and how multilingual development becomes complicated when accounting for the order in which languages are classified as first, second, or third.

In what follows, I do a brief literature review of FLP research with a closer examination from the Global South (GS) perspective and then provide an argument for the introduction of *èbùnlíngualism* (from the Yorùbá word, *èbùn*, meaning gift, and *língualism*), to see language as a gift that parents give their children. *Èbùnlíngualism* is a framework for examining language praxis and its relevance to language use among African and African (im)migrant families from a Global South epistemology. Global South epistemology is an epistemic stance that transcends discipline-specific knowledge-making approaches while refusing epistemic apartheid beyond geographical location (Gordon, 2024). Conceptualizing *èbùnlíngualism* is part of a longitudinal study on the language praxis of African and African (im)migrant families. The study is guided by the question of what counts as family, language, and policy in African and African diasporic¹ contexts. Africa is used in the broad sense, while data and literature that guide the conceptualization cover the Nigerian context and beyond. To explore the guiding questions of what is family, language, and policy that guides this study, and to introduce *èbùnlíngualism*, I interviewed five Nigerian families across Nigeria and the diaspora.

In addition, I worked with three Ghanaian families: two biracial families and one family in which both spouses identified as Ghanaian. In one biracial family, the father identifies as a

¹ (Im)migrant and diasporic are used interchangeably throughout this paper.

White American, and the mother identifies as a Ghanaian; in the other, the mother identifies as a White American and the father identifies as a Ghanaian. All families participated in interviews and were also engaged in participant observations. These participants were recruited using purposive sampling based on their language practices, family dynamics, and the intersection of their identities. The recruited families were selected based on social networks and their willingness to participate in the study. Their interview transcripts were thematically coded and analyzed using keywords like gift, family, community, identity, in addition to the literature on FLP, and carefully examined to identify common patterns in language praxis, prior to highlighting the three dimensions of *èbùnlilingualism* as an approach to understanding the FLP from the context of African and African (im)migrant families.

Although this paper does not present data as a formal, empirical methodological component, given its conceptual nature, relevant insights from interviews, observations, and the existing literature are integrated throughout the discussion of the dimensions of *èbùnlilingualism* and in the literature review section. This paper concludes by outlining the implications of *èbùnlilingualism* as a framework for understanding the language practices of African families, with a future goal of using it to examine the language praxis of African and African (im)migrant families across multiple contexts.

FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY: A LITERATURE REVIEW

FLP as a Field of Inquiry

FLP, a contemporary topic of debate in sociolinguistics (Smith-Christmas, 2016), gained prominence through the work of King et al. (2008). As an area of inquiry, FLP entails parents' conscious and unconscious decisions, rules, and strategies about language use, practice, and implementation in the home (King et al., 2008; Piller & Gerber, 2018), which leads to the development of multilingual children (Nelson et al., 2022). In most cases, (im)migrant and multiracial families adopt FLP so that their children are proficient in languages other than the host society's dominant language, which is English in the United States, while also maintaining their heritage identities (Choi, 2019; Fabusoro, 2022). Importantly, increased international marriages and transnational mobility have created a need for children to learn more than two languages (Braun & Cline, 2014). Beyond international marriages, relationships involving couples that speak different languages from the same country also result in practicing FLP (Nwagbo, 2018; Ochonogor & Ikems, 2019; Offiong & Mensah, 2012), as do transnational

families navigating the tension between English linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) and their home language (Fabusoro, 2022).

In practicing FLP, Smith-Christmas (2016) theorized One Person, One Language (OPOL) as an important strategy. According to Smith-Christmas (2016), OPOL is traceable to the 1913 publication of *Observations sur le langage des enfants* (Observations on Children's Language) where parents adhere to speaking of one parent one language enunciated by Grammont (Ronjat, 1913), leading to the introduction of *une personne, une langue* (one person, one language) in FLP. OPOL is a strategy in which each parent/adult uses one language with the child (Choi, 2019; Kwon, 2020; Nwagbo, 2018; Piller & Gerber, 2018). In exploring how OPOL works in the home, Choi (2019) conducted a longitudinal ethnographic case study that examines how each adult in the home, including the mother-in-law, uses different languages with the children, thereby making the children trilingual. According to Choi (2019), the mother uses Korean with the children, while the mother-in-law, another primary caregiver, uses Farsi. The study includes “more than 300 audio and 300 video recordings of conversations, collected from birth until 6:0” (Choi, 2019, p. 537) as data sources, and the findings reveal that the children translanguage using all the languages in their linguistic repertoires. Kwon (2020) also conducted a case study examining a Korean-American family in which the mother is Korean and the father is American. In practicing FLP in the biracial home, Kwon's (2020) data reveal that Mrs. Park, the Korean mother, uses Korean with the children despite her fluency in English, whereas her husband, who is American, uses English with them.

However, Piller and Gerber (2018) examined how parents in a general Australian online parenting forum discovered that OPOL does not necessarily mean that both parents are involved in their children's language development. The study's findings indicate that mothers engage more with children's multilingual development because they are usually the primary caregivers, while fathers are often busy with their careers and are often the ones who provide for the family's needs. This idea is also evident in Kwon's (2020) and Choi's (2019) works, which show that mothers are at the forefront of maintaining OPOL. Whether with the adoption of OPOL or other strategies of practicing FLP in the home, several scholars have theorized on how FLP has helped (im)migrant children to be multilingual (Curdts-Christiansen, 2018; da Costa Cabral, 2018; Gomes, 2018; Piller & Gerber, 2018) and even maintain connectedness to their roots when language in the home serves as a heritage language (Afolalu, 2024; Alabede, 2025) while not fully accounting for children's agency. For example, Kwon's (2020) qualitative research demonstrates that the focal child in the study speaks Korean at home to

embrace her mother's Korean-language ideology and make her mother happy. In an empirical study by Maseko and Mutasa (2019), the authors conducted semi-structured interviews with 28 Tonga-speaking parents in Zimbabwe. Tonga is one of the native but minority languages in Zimbabwe. In the study, the family's language management strategy was "proscribing anything not Tonga in the home" (p. 295) to manage their children's language use, thereby preventing Tonga, their home language, from extinction (Maseko & Mutasa, 2019). To foster children's perspectives and agency in FLP, Wilson (2020) introduced the concept of harmonious bilingualism, in which children's agency becomes crucial in home language practices.

Components of FLP

There are three essential components of FLP, according to Spolsky (2004): ideologies, practice, and management. Ideology entails the family's thoughts and ideas about language; practice concerns how the method is applied in the family's daily language use; and management involves organizing language use in relation to beliefs and practice. For instance, Choi, a researcher and the mother in Choi (2019)'s ideology, is shaped by the desire to raise her children as multilingual and not forget their heritage language, which is also what Kwon (2020) refers to when she generalizes that many (im)migrant parents enforce FLP at home to promote multilingualism. FLP also fosters connection to one's native or heritage language, reinforces elitism, or aims to make children fit into their multiracial/transnational lives (Choi, 2019; Piller & Gerber, 2018).

Different families practice FLP in different ways at home, depending on their routines, ideologies, and available resources. For example, Mrs. Park in Kwon's (2020) study utilized numerous artifacts, including texts, calendars, pictures, and even established rules about the specific language to use at home, as practical measures to organize the ideology of FLP within the home. Punishments were also used among Tonga families in Zimbabwe if the children spoke languages other than those desired in the home (Maseko & Mutasa, 2019). Some homes are structured to promote the desired outcome, just like in Choi (2019), where the children became trilingual by age three and translanguage when communicating. However, in some homes, especially in Nigeria, and by extension across Africa, where multilingualism is the norm, the rules are not structured (Offiong & Mensah, 2012).

Decisions to use FLP are strongly shaped by parents' ideologies, language background, and even their learning experiences (King & Fogle, 2006; King et al., 2008). An example is in Choi (2019), where the son speaks to the grandmother in Farsi and, when he needs permission

from the mother, switches to Korean. While in school, he uses English, and this does not affect his cognitive development. Instead, it supports his executive functioning, supporting Bialystok's (2011) findings that having more than one language aids children's executive functioning. On the other hand, in Kwon's (2020) case study, Lydia, the focal child, is uncomfortable speaking Korean at school but does well speaking it with her mother at home. Hence, the home environment and parental beliefs are vital to child development.

FLP Research in Nigeria

I conducted a systematic review of the literature using a synthesis matrix to organize and analyze the literature from multiple academic databases, including Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, journals, and the Michigan State University Library search engine. Search terms such as *Africa*, *FLP*, *immigrant families*, *Global South*, and *Nigeria* were applied to identify peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters relevant to FLP in African and African diasporic contexts. The retrieved studies were screened for relevance, peer-review status, and publication date (2010–2025) to ensure inclusion of current relevant scholarship. Each study was then coded thematically based on its geographical focus, methodological approach, participants, and key findings. Through iterative reading, cross-comparison, conversations, and feedback from my dissertation co-chairs, mentors, peers, and conference presentations between summer 2022 and spring 2024, emerging trends were identified to illuminate the state of FLP research across African and African diasporic contexts.

The review revealed few empirical studies on FLP conducted in Nigeria, with a few additional studies emerging from Southern Africa, most notably by Maseko, whose doctoral research examined FLP in the Zimbabwean context. One particularly significant study explored the language praxis of Tonga families in Zimbabwe (Maseko & Mutasa, 2019). In the Nigerian context, Offiong and Mensah (2012) conducted research in the southeastern region, focusing on three inter-ethnic couples (Efik-Ibibio, Igbo, and Lokaa) residing in Calabar. Using interviews, audio recordings of family conversations, and direct observations of children, their study found that children from inter-ethnic marriages were not balanced bilinguals, exhibiting language practices in which one language typically dominated the other. Offiong and Mensah's (2012) use of *balanced bilingual* highlights the ability to fluently use English and other home languages in Nigeria, since it is uncommon to say a language is acquired first or second in most Nigerian contexts.

Ochonogor and Ikems (2019) conducted their study in six South-South States in Nigeria, using a survey research method and administering 384 questionnaires to respondents carefully selected from inter-ethnic marriages and focus groups. Their findings show that many inter-ethnic marriage homes placed less emphasis on the survival of their native languages, preferring and encouraging their children to master English because it was the language of instruction in school. Nwagbo (2018) adopted a mixed-methods approach to examine the language ideologies, actual language practices, and management strategies of 100 Igbo bilingual parents in the Bariga area of Lagos State. The study demonstrates the fluidity of language management despite the parents' ideology to make their children speak Igbo. This research highlights why language praxis needs to be carefully understood in the West African and even Global South context.

As stated by Curdt-Christiansen and Palviainen (2023), FLP research needs methodological reorientation, which means observations should be included as a methodological tool that FLP in Nigeria has not accounted for. Aside from methodological orientation, Gomes (2018) conducted a careful review of FLP over 10 years, and a key finding was how FLP research is not fully captured in the Global South, with few studies in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. In cases where research is captured, it does not always account for the Global South, including African families' dynamics that lead to the introduction of family multilingualism (Lanza & Gomes, 2020). The paucity of research in Nigeria and the Global South as a whole is the motivation for conceptualizing *èbùnlíngualism* as situated and as an invitation for scholars to examine language praxis beyond the Global North.

FLP and Global South Practices: Epistemological Gap

Families play an integral role in children's educational success. Edwards (2004) argues that culturally relevant teachers collect data to deepen their knowledge of families and children. Language spoken at home is one of the family's data, and Edwards' assertion explains the importance of collaboration between family, school, and, by extension, the community. However, little literature accounts for the Global South's family language practices and the connection to the school.

Additionally, the literature on language practices in Africa has not established a robust study of children's agency. In the Language Policy special issue (Curdt-Christiansen & Palviainen, 2023) on the growth of FLP since 2013, the 2023 special issue still lacks context on Africa, let alone consideration of African children's agency. This is because Curdt-

Christiansen and Palviainen (2023) noted that contributions in the special issue focus only on multilingualism and FLP in countries such as the UK, Norway, Singapore, and Mexico, but none from Africa. The lack of adequate context-based African research on FLP exemplifies Gomes' (2018) assertion that FLP is situated more in the Global North. In the African context, however, the banality of multilingualism (Bámgbósé, 2021) makes FLP an area of inquiry that needs to be critically examined from a lens in which *èbùlingualism* is designed to fill the gap.

INTRODUCING ÈBÙNLINGUALISM AS A FRAMEWORK

Èbùlingualism

Èbùlingualism is a portmanteau of two words, *èbù* and *lingualism*, that I found best describes how I saw African (im)migrant families refer to their roles/strategies regarding their children's language development, based on a series of interviews, artifact reviews, reflections, and participant observations. These interviews were conducted between summer 2022 and fall 2024, with ongoing interaction with participating families since this is a longitudinal project. These families were also observed in settings outside their homes, including playgrounds, celebratory events, and religious sites. Some of the questions they were asked centered on their language practices, their daily routine (especially night routines, such as the books they read to the children), their choice of social networks, and different cultural and religious programs they allow their children to engage in (Alabede, 2025).

Apart from the interviews, which are semi-structured and conversational, conducting multiple participant observations provided important insights and clarity, as I see myself in the participants' language praxis as well. I am a multilingual Nigerian with over a decade experience teaching English, Yorùbá, and Mandarin before coming to the United States. In the United States, I am raising a second-generation (im)migrant child. The tension of teaching her Yorùbá through songs, books, and video calls with members in Nigeria resonates deeply when families shared their language practices and strategies. My emic perspective plays a significant role in understanding the lived experiences of the families I observed and interviewed before conceptualizing *èbùlingualism*.

Èbùlingualism frame language as a gift that parents give their children to foster multilingualism and connection to ancestry. I define *èbùlingualism* as the parental practice of giving children the gift of language. This definition is inspired by reviewing FLP literature, rounds of interviews, participant observations, and photovoice interviews with biracial families inter-ethnic Nigerian families and Nigerian (im)migrant families (Alabede, 2025) on their

language practices, especially in the US and Nigeria. While more observations and interviews were conducted, the aforementioned contributed significantly to conceptualizing *èbùnlíngualism*. Their language ideology of ensuring their children's English proficiency is important; engaging with children in different ways to ensure they acquire their heritage language was crucial to theorizing *èbùnlíngualism*. For example, the school they intentionally send the children to, the unspoken rules for using Yorùbá at home for communication, even if the children respond in English, and the way everyone speaks Yorùbá around the children all contribute to theorizing *èbùnlíngualism*.

In African contexts, the idea of language as a gift carries meanings deeply rooted in intergenerational care, communal responsibility, and fluid multilingualism dimensions (Akinaso, 1990; Bámbósé, 2021) often overlooked in mainstream heritage language education in the U.S., which tends to focus on identity and language maintenance within more bounded frameworks (Carreira & Kagan, 2018; Lee, 2013). Unlike the U.S. context, where heritage language learners are frequently framed through a lens of linguistic loss, recovery and being of (im)migrant background (Lee et al., 2024), African families engage in language practices shaped by colonial histories, complex sociolinguistic ecologies, and cultural obligations that challenge Western models of language transmission (Mignolo, 2007; wa Thiong'o, 2013). These differences highlight the need for research and teaching on multilingualism that acknowledge critical sociohistorical dynamics, neoliberal ideology (Canagarajah, 2017; Makoni & Severo, 2022; Piller & Cho, 2013), decoloniality, and the multiplicity of language ideologies beyond the Global North (Makoni et al., 2022; Ndlangamandla & Chaka, 2020).

Because extant literature and empirical studies on FLP have limited its scope to immediate family members (including grandparents) and not the “community,” who act as families in African context where *it takes the village to raise a child*, whereby kinship is crucial and communal living automatically counts as family, the community serves as the *igba ojú* (many eyes) in Yorùbá (and African) context, raising the child to develop holistically. I am therefore inspired by the Global South epistemology theorists like Makoni, Comaroff and Mignolo, who see Southern epistemology as multilateral theories from diverse localities converging (Makoni et al., 2023), to view family language practices as a gift parents give their children from the Yorùbá ethnolinguistic and cultural paradigm. It is the Global South because African language practices have been marginalized in favor of colonial languages (Makoni & Pennycook, 2023). The Global South epistemology helps decenter Eurocentric notions of family, language, and

policy, enabling critical engagement with them in the situated context of African ways of being, and introduces concepts such as *agbolé*, communal living, and kinship caregiving, which the Eurocentric notion of the nuclear family erases.

Hence, theorizing *èbùnlilingualism* aims to see language as a gift parents give their children through their ideological praxis while developing the socio-cultural affect and communal care through language for the children. The subsequent sections of this paper introduce Nigeria's ethnolinguistic context, the anthropological notion of gifts, connection to *èbùnlilingualism*, and why *èbùnlilingualism* is vital in understanding FLP from Nigerian and Nigerian (im)migrant families on one hand, and from African and African (im)migrant families on the other.

The Pre-colonial and Post-colonial Nigeria's Ethnolinguistic Terrain

Parenting in Nigeria, particularly with respect to language, can be complex. This is due to the historical nature of Nigeria's formation and its impact on language policy, as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Because language planning is crucial to development in pre- and post-colonial Nigeria, Akinnaso (1990) explains that two significant struggles in Nigeria are rooted in language politics among ethnic groups. The first is related to relics of colonialism, while the second is based on the major ethnolinguistic groups' domination of minoritized ethnolinguistic groups.

The relics of colonialism make Nigeria "favor" English as the official language, further dividing the country into different socioeconomic groups. While the education policy stipulates the use of the dominant language of the environment in the first three years of schooling, this policy is achievable only in rural areas and in public schools serving people from lower socioeconomic classes. The private schools are attended by the children of the elite, who also constitute the policymaking body and are keen on preventing others from reaching the upper echelons of the economic ladder. Hence, they do not support the implementation of the policy, even though they make the decision (see Akinnaso, 1990, 1994, for an understanding of language complexities and hierarchization in Nigeria).

The complexities and language hierarchization are linked to how colonialism has brought "problems" to language policy in Nigeria because of the 1914 amalgamation, where ethnolinguistic groups who have homogenous languages are suppressed to be one nation-state: Nigeria. Scholars and foremost Nigerian politicians alike, such as Obafemi Awolowo, believe Nigeria's problem started from the 1914 amalgamation. The issue remains today as the recent

activism in Nigeria is that of the Yorùbá nation and even the Biafran nation, called Independent People of Biafra (IPOB), led by Nnamdi Kanu. This struggle in Nigeria's language planning (Akinaso, 1990) is linked to Ruiz's (1984) language orientations.

The language maintenance and struggle of any minoritized group are fueled by the contradiction between the language policy entrenched in the nation's constitution and the language education policy (see Akinaso, 1990, 1994; Mansour, 1993 for details). With the tension around whether or not to implement the policy due to lack of personnel to teach the language of the environment, the distinction between mother tongue and dominant language of the environment, and even the struggle to be proficient in English, the introduction of *èbùnlilingualism* helps to foreground what gifts parents give their children and, in this context, the gift of language.

Anthropological Dimension of Gift and Yorùbá Culture

Gift refers to material and immaterial things given to someone or a group of people, typically with(out) expecting something in return. It is an "indissoluble tie between the gift and the gifter" (Skågeby, 2013, p. 3). Genuine gift/gifting is an aporia and impossible to achieve because of Mauss' (2002) notion of gift reciprocity. Vaughan (1997) argues that a sustainable future in gifting means gifts can be non-reciprocal and genuine. Because the act of gift-giving varies across cultures, situations, and contexts (Karwal, 2021), it is crucial to consider gifts in understanding how people communicate affection and bonds across varied social dimensions (Skågeby, 2013). Tangible (concrete) and intangible (immaterial) gifts each communicate important messages. For instance, during their wedding ceremony, the Yorùbás give the gift of *òjá*, a thick, woolly material used to tightly wrap a child on the mother's back from birth till the child is about two years old, symbolizing the prayer that the bride will have children soon. In the same vein, the common practice of Yorùbá wives helping to prepare for parties and going to the market to buy needed items, is a non-tangible gift of their time to their husbands' families. Among the Yorùbá people in Nigeria, gift-giving is a crucial cultural tradition that shapes social interactions and relationships. This could be ceremonial gifts during weddings, naming ceremonies, graduations, visits, and to show gratitude, remorse, or apologies.

Gifts are also used to establish affection, build bonds, make commitments to solidify relationships, and symbolize respect. Given the varied sociocultural contexts of gift-giving among Yorùbás, it is worth noting that parents may give multiple gifts to their children, depending on the occasion or to show their love. Just as gifts are used to signal love and respect

and to establish bonds, they also serve as bribery and a form of corruption in Nigeria, as one can give a gift to obtain unmerited favor (Bello, 2014). From the foregoing, I posit that the inherent motive of a gift lies solely with the gifter, who may not have full control over how the gift is perceived or received. Despite the subjective nature of gifting and its acceptance, Kimmerer (2013) explains the importance of gift reciprocity even while establishing the relationship between humans and plants.

Nigeria's Sociocultural and Historical Context Nexus with Èbùnlilingualism

Language in Nigeria functions as “a resource, a problem, and a right” (Akinaso, 1990, p. 348) because of Nigeria's linguistic terrain, shaped by colonial legacy, which leads to language hierarchization. *Èbùnlilingualism* becomes important because it is concerned with language praxis as a gift given to people rather than language as a resource (see Ruiz, 1984, for details about the orientation of language policy and planning). It is beyond a resource, because a gift may be (un)accepted and (un)reciprocated, whereas with a resource, language is embodied to hierarchize those who possess it (Akinaso, 1990). This gift could be from parents to children, teachers to students, or even from the government to the people, through the implementation of a language policy that makes resources available to schools and communities. Viewing language as a gift makes it essential to see it across the spectrum, which is neither a bottom-up nor a top-down approach. It speaks to individuals' needs while also speaking to society's needs by taking cognizance of society's language ecology. In this instance, the gift of language from parents to their children in the Nigerian context could enhance their children's competence in English, the official language, to prepare them for a *better future*, while also promoting their indigenous language. This helps prevent language extinction while exposing the children to their cultural values and highlighting emotional bonds. Indeed, promoting children's multilingualism by parents is one of the main focuses of *èbùnlilingualism*.

The gift of language can be exposed to children by parents through the time they invest in them, implicitly and explicitly. The explicitness in the praxis, for example, might consist of enrollment in a private school (Bisong, 1995) or payment of an after-school English teacher, situating themselves in an elitist neighborhood or developing robust networks of friends for the children. Implicitly, the praxis takes the form of songs, cultural values such as religious activities, and storytelling. Through education, parents instill a love for learning a language and provide educational opportunities for their children. Parents can also give the gift of language by sharing cultural and spiritual values to help children develop a sense of identity

and purpose, thereby strengthening their sense of belonging to the community and fostering a sense of security and connectedness. An example of how cultural values and language are a gift through song is explicated thus:

Idi ti mo fi n s'omọ mi gẹgẹgẹ t'emi yemi o(x2) (I have my reason for caring specially for my child)
 B'isù omọ ba jina ba jina (When the fruit of my labor on my child is ripe)
 Ko maa ma jo mi l'ẹnu o (The fruit should not hurt me)
 B'aya omọ ba wọle ba wọle ko ma ma le mi s'ita o (My child's wife should not send me out/away)
 B'ọkọ omọ ba ti de ba ti de ko ma ma le mi s'ita o (My child's husband should not send me out/away)
 Idi ti mo fi n s'omọ mi gẹgẹgẹ t'emi y'emi (I have my reason for caring socially for my child)

The song above means that parents care for their children so their children's wives or husbands will not send them away when the child(ren) is/are grown. This intergenerational song has long been a staple in every Yorùbá-speaking home in Nigeria, especially among parents, mostly mothers. Aside from using this song as a generational song and for bonding, an underlying meaning is in the second line, "*b'isù omọ bá j'íná, kó māmà jó mi lẹnu o,*" which literally means that the fruit of my labor of love on my children should not *jó mi lẹnu* (burn my mouth)². What, then, is this labor of love? A reflection on the gifting practices speaks to the different things parents give their children and whether they expect anything in return. In anthropology, Mauss (2002) theorizes gifts and explicates reciprocity, but Skågeby (2013) also explicates the genuineness of gifts that do not necessarily require reciprocity. The song also helps dive into the conversation about gift reciprocity, as emphasized by Kimmerer (2013). Hence, Yorùbá culture has an underlying sense of what I call *delayed gift reciprocity*, which helps maintain balance in relationships.

Even though, in practice, parents may still use sanctions as in Maseko and Mutasa (2019), I argue that *delayed gift reciprocity* in language praxis will not allow for punishment or reward when the child speaks parents' *undesired* language. With *ẹ̀bùnlíngwàlìsm*, parents keep activating all the languages in the children's language constellation (Lo Bianco & Aronin, 2020) while allowing them to index the dominant language of discourse contextually. For example, Yorùbá may be used based on discourse or how the children are comfortable talking, while leaving them to use English if that helps them in the conversation at another point, even in the home. Hence, *delayed gift reciprocity* allows love and affect to take precedence in gifting language, a crucial element in moving away from the policy of punishing or rewarding in FLP toward the praxis of love, care, and multilingual kinship.

² This connotative means "hurt me."

DIMENSIONS OF ÈBÙNLINGUALISM

In order to study FLP among African and African (im)migrant families, I developed three dimensions informed by FLP literature and theoretical insights from Global South epistemologies, participant observations, interviews, reflections, and literature. These dimensions are crucial in accounting for FLP strategies beyond OPOL because of African and African (im)migrants' communal way of raising children in Africa; the situatedness of language practices in Africa in connection to the banality of multilingualism while supporting children's activation of their dominant language in context; and the implicitness of the parental embodiment of love while building social, linguistic, cultural and economic affect for their children. These three dimensions of the *èbùnlilingual* framework, further explicated below, are crucial to how one comes to "data" and interprets it within the FLP study among African and African (im)migrant families.

Reframing of "Family" in FLP Research as Agbolé (Compound/Community Living)

This matters because it offers a different perspective on what family is and on the role of community in the socialization of children's languages and multilingual development. With OPOL as one of the strategies adopted for practicing FLP in the Global North (Piller & Gerber, 2018; Smith-Christmas, 2016; 2022), and Global South families forcing similar strategy (Nwagbo, 2018), I argue that *èbùnlilingualism* moves beyond family related by blood to also include community members, since "*it takes the village to raise a child*" in African context.

The "F" in FLP stands for the family, which, in Nigeria's context, extends beyond biological parents or members of the extended family and is rooted in the collective kinship of *Ubuntu*, and *omolúwàbí*. Seeing the community as family beyond the nuclear-extended setup correlates with the lifestyle of living in an *agbolé* (compound housing set-up), where raising the child is everyone's responsibility. The *agbolé* is a crucial family principle that reinforces the ideological paradigm for social organizations, relationships, and socialization. With collective raising of the child, this accounts for support and language development for children in an (im)migrant home where there is only one *married-single* parent raising a child. I define *married-single parent* to situate the lived experiences of African (im)migrant families who live apart by choice or circumstance but still raising their child(ren) to be multilingual. The special issue on FLP in *Language Policy* Journal includes critical thematic issues such as raciolinguistics in FLP; language-in-education; digitalization and children's agency; and critical issues in migration (Curdt-Christiansen & Palviainen, 2023). None of the research

captures FLP in African and African (im)migrant contexts or even a situation of *married-single* parents raising children transnationally. With the communal life embedded in the reframing of the family as *agbolé*, *èbùnlilingualism* is important for analyzing “data” that capture the African context of family in, through and out of Africa.

However, despite the common family setup as *agbolé* in Africa, it is crucial to note that the Western ideology of family is on the rise in Nigeria. This ideology entails the focus on nuclear family, where people now use the phrase “me and my husband” in contrast to the communal lifestyle that is traditionally common in Nigeria (Alabi & Olonade, 2022; Balogun et al., 2024) and Africa as a whole where the “me and my people” idea reflects the Ubuntu phrase of, *I am because we are*. For example, in urban areas like Lagos, the *agbolé* system is uncommon, yet because rural dwellers are the core custodians of culture (Mgbemena, 2025), the kinship system still persists there. To prevent the Yorùbá language and culture from extinction, researching language as a gift from the family *agbolé* is essential, as children develop multilingualism through the multiple channels of language socialization. This *agbolé* socialization of language is not fully captured in the Western way of framing family in FLP. Within the transnational context, extended families or even the mere fact of being fellow Yorùbá abroad are considered family members, thereby contributing to the multilingual development of diasporic Nigerian children.

Nigerian Cultural Landscape Specificities and Transnational Families’ Linguistic Constellations

This dimension focuses on how multiple languages function together in families’ everyday lives. Due to the blind spot in FLP research in the Global South, specifically Africa (Gomes, 2018), scholars have used various terms to describe African families’ language practices. For example, Fabusoro (2022) used home language bilingual practice to frame her study, while Maseko and Mutasa (2019) used language management ideology. Others have also used the term policy, but there is tension over which term to use to frame their work, in part because of the African context of family language praxis. Nigeria’s cultural and linguistic landscape makes it challenging for individuals to state their first, second, or even third language, as children are exposed to multiple languages from birth (Mgbemena, 2025). This makes it difficult to examine the operationalization of language, but for transnational families, English has become dominant, while other languages are regarded as heritage or home languages (Fabusoro, 2022).

Within this constellation of languages, there is a need for a critical understanding of the specificities of the Nigerian cultural landscape and of (im)migrant families' linguistic constellations (Lo Bianco, 2020), in which environmental factors play a crucial role in shaping these constellations. For instance, English can be the dominant language within the language constellations of (im)migrant families (Lo Bianco & Aronin, 2020). It is important to consider the language constellations of families while thinking about their language practices in relation to their Dominant Language Constellations (DLC). According to Aronin (2006), DLC is a set of a person's crucial languages that function as a unit to help individuals meet all their daily needs in a multilingual environment. For example, in Nigeria, Yorùbá, English, Pidgin, Hausa, and Igbo can each be the dominant language of a child, but the language that predominates depends on context. As in school, English can be activated, but in church or other religious settings, all languages can be activated simultaneously, which is why Lo Bianco and Aronin (2020) highlighted translanguaging and linguistic repertoires as important in DLC.

With *èbùnlíngwàlìsm*, there is an invitation for considering DLC when discussing Nigerian and transnational families' language practices, as it opens opportunities to use all languages in their linguistic repertoires when needed, thereby creating an inclusive language praxis. Language praxis differs from one person to another because “for many individuals across the globe, English's idealization as the ‘promised land’ of cosmopolitanism, often signified as socioeconomic mobility, continues to take a toll on the imagination of what is possible regarding education and citizenship” (Barros, 2018, p. 198). Alluding to different possibilities regarding education and citizenship, *èbùnlíngwàlìsm* connects to DLC to argue that English idealization needs to shift and that all languages should be accommodated equally. Like Alabede et al. (2022), whose work is rooted in resistance through conversations, collaboration, and communication in seeking inclusion and upliftment for Black folks in an anti-Black empire, *èbùnlíngwàlìsm* is geared towards uplifting the complexity of language practices of Nigerian families (and African families) whose language practices are beyond language policy and policing but more of *gifting*.

This second dimension of *èbùnlíngwàlìsm* is crucial because it captures what is not covered in discussions of languaging in Africa. For example, Gomes and Lanza (2022) introduced the concept of *family multilingualism* to situate the complexity of language praxis in the Global South. I extend the research by specifically focusing on African and African (im)migrant families with DLC in *èbùnlíngwàlìsm*. I suggest that, due to the multilingual nature of most African countries and the inability to determine which language comes first, *èbùnlíngwàlìsm*

fills the gap by treating language as a gift parents give their children, allowing them to use their different languages depending on context and accounting for their linguistic constellations.

Language as Capital and the Influence of English Linguistic Imperialism

Due to Western “education”, individualism, and the fast erasure of collectivism in most urban areas of Nigeria, named languages are becoming significant, leading to language hierarchization, which relates to English’s linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). For example, parents give the gift of English, Mandarin, or even French to their children by employing private lesson teachers, sending them to elitist schools, while explicitly telling relatives not to speak indigenous languages to their children. The essence of the clear-cut distinction of what is named language to “gift” the children is connected to the linguistic, cultural, and economic capital each language brings to the children. Specifically, English’s linguistic imperialism is connected to Nigeria’s colonial history, which shapes how language policy is worded, prioritizing English as the official language and making it a mechanism that divides along social class lines (Akinaso, 1990).

Because of how the ideology of named “language invention serves as a linguistic imperialism, not in the sense that dominant languages are imposed on minority groups, but rather in the sense that the imposition lies in the ways in which speech forms are constituted/constructed into languages, and particular definitions of what constitutes language expertise are construed and imposed” (Makoni & Pennycook, 2005, p. 141), the point of departure for *èbùnlilingualism* is the argument that these dominant languages like English, French, and Mandarin are still crucial repositories of capital (Bourdieu, 2021) for those who possess them. This is where the entanglement of *èbùnlilingualism* is, and researchers are invited to engage with how neo-liberal ideology permeates daily endeavors. However, *èbùnlilingualism* reminds us that, beyond the capital, connectedness and emotions are also essential, often between parents and children.

For diasporic Nigerians, heritage languages like Yorùbá are gifts parents give their children, because it is believed that they will easily acquire English, the dominant language in their native-speaking environment (Alabede, 2025). With the intention of learning English and other Western languages in Nigeria, and of learning indigenous languages like Yorùbá by diasporic Nigerian (African) families, *èbùnlilingualism* emphasizes the importance of named language use in its capital function, ranging from cultural bonding to language revitalization to social networking and economic freedom. Hence, this third dimension of *èbùnlilingualism*

advocates that researchers, policymakers, and practitioners consider the individual purpose of learning and speaking a particular named language, as well as the importance of the specific community/environment. The kinship that gives the language should be considered by teachers too, while shifting the perspective that only immediate families can transmit language to the children.

IMPLICATIONS: REIMAGINING FLP AS ÈBÙNLINGUALISM

Èbùnlilingualism, as a language praxis rooted in the idea of *language as a gift* transmitted through intergenerational care, expands how researchers, practitioners, and policymakers conceptualize and engage with multilingual family life, particularly in the Global South. Rather than viewing language solely through the lenses of input, output, and competence, *èbùnlilingualism* foregrounds the emotional, communal, and sociohistorical dimensions of language transmission. It highlights how language learning is entangled with practices of kinship, belonging, and survival, an approach especially relevant in contexts shaped by colonial legacies, migration, and systemic marginalization.

For researchers, *èbùnlilingualism* offers an alternative analytic framework grounded in relationality and cultural epistemologies. It is an invitation to scholars to move beyond Eurocentric paradigms that often assume the nuclear family and individual agency as default units of analysis in FLP. Instead, it encourages the investigation of collective caregiving, ancestral memory, and distributed linguistic socialization within wider kinship networks, spiritual communities, and even digital diasporas, which are common in the migratory context (Afolalu, 2024). This opens new pathways for conducting context-sensitive, decolonial research that honors how language is lived, gifted, embodied, co-produced, and co-transmitted (Alabede, 2025).

For policymakers, *èbùnlilingualism* draws attention to the need for language policies that recognize extended families and non-traditional learning spaces (such as churches, WhatsApp groups, online heritage language schools, or neighborhood compounds) as legitimate and vital sites of language learning and development. Rather than relying solely on top-down interventions focused on schools or formal institutions, policy frameworks inspired by *èbùnlilingualism* would support community-driven language revitalization, multilingualism as assets, and multimodal resources that reflect the everyday lives of multilingual families.

For practitioners, especially language teachers and early childhood educators, *èbùnlilingualism* affirms the pedagogical power of repetition, substitution, storytelling, and

communal participation. It encourages practitioners to see children not just as language learners, but as language inheritors, shaped by emotional ties to multiple caregivers who collectively co-construct linguistic worlds. Language instruction, in this sense, is not only about structured input but about fostering spaces of reciprocity, joy, and identity affirmation.

The implications of *èbùlingualism* are particularly significant for the field of FLP, especially in relation to dominant models such as One Person One Language (OPOL). While OPOL assumes a linear, individualized model of language transmission in which each parent or caregiver speaks a distinct language to the child, *èbùlingualism* disrupts this model by centering *àgbolé*, the extended family compound, as a fluid, collective space of multilingual socialization.

In an *àgbolé* context, children are not limited to bilingual input from two individuals or even primary caregivers. Instead, they are immersed in layered language environments where aunts, uncles, grandparents, older siblings, and even neighbors participate in language transmission. This form of socialization often is made through the flexible and purposeful blending of languages, registers, and cultural practices. The child learns not only how to speak, but also *when*, *why*, and *with whom* to speak a particular language, a deeper form of sociocultural competence. Such communal dynamics challenge the FLP literature to reconsider its assumptions about successful language transmission. Rather, *èbùlingualism* invites us to consider how multilingualism is nurtured through relational care, affective bonds, and distributed authority across generations. In doing so, it aligns with and contributes to emerging critiques of OPOL for its inapplicability in many multilingual and non-Western settings. Thus, *èbùlingualism* repositions family language praxis as a living, adaptive, and communal praxis, one that honors the linguistic richness and resilience of Global South families. It invites the field to reimagine success not in terms of linguistic purity, nuclear family set up, and family as related by blood, but in terms of connection, participation, and inheritance.

Hence, *èbùlingualism* offers a novel way of understanding how families in the Global South think about and pass on languages. It is an invitation to researchers, linguists, policymakers, and even educators to look closely at how language is not just a tool for communication but also a gift, something valuable that is shaped by love, struggle, connectedness, belonging, and history. This framework helps us see how families make language choices within complex realities, including the lasting effects of colonialism, neoliberal ideology in relation to multilingualism (Makoni & Pennycook, 2024; Piller & Cho, 2013), and migration. Across the geographical Global South, in places like Africa, Latin

America, South Asia, and the Caribbean, including (im)migrant communities, families often face similar challenges as they try to keep their languages alive while navigating systems that privilege dominant or colonial languages (Afolalu, 2024; Bauer & Sánchez, 2020; Boateng et al., 2024). *Èbùnlíngwàlìsm*, therefore, draws attention to the emotional, cultural, and sociopolitical meanings of language in families, especially when language is tied to survival, identity, thriving, and care.

CLOSING REMARKS

Oftentimes, I am caught up in using the market analogy (an open market scene or even a grocery store in the US context) to represent scholarship. I see myself going to the market, but because of the various brands of a particular stock, I am left wandering, wondering, and confused about which to choose. At the end of the day, I have to follow my instinct and choose the item that feels right to me. The various items at the market represent the different scholars and their perspectives on language, family practices, transnationalism, and the transdisciplinary nature of it, which are always inexhaustible.

I have selected language, gift, and language practices as items in the market, and as an emerging scholar with limited funds, I may not be able to purchase all of them by citing every scholar or seminal paper that must have addressed what I am doing. I use *funds* here to mean time, word limit, capability, and even the experiences required in academia. Hence, this conceptual framing of *èbùnlíngwàlìsm* will continue to evolve and be refined as scholarship itself is not static. Thus, scholars and practitioners are invited to experiment, reflect, and engage with the concept of *èbùnlíngwàlìsm* by making relevant connections to literature and people's lived linguistic experiences in the home, school, and communities as language is used in different places and contexts. Exploring *èbùnlíngwàlìsm* in different settings outside the formal school system is important in applied linguistics and multilingual scholarship, as this reveals language in practice in natural settings (Afolalu, 2024).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to my dissertation co-chairs, Dr. Sandro R. Barros and Dr. Jungmin Kwon, whose guidance, intellectual mentorship, and unwavering support shaped both the direction and clarity of this article. Their constructive feedback and belief in this work sustained me throughout the research and writing process.

I also appreciate the intellectual community and financial support provided by Michigan State University's College of Education Summer Research Development Fund. During the summer of 2022, when the fellowship was awarded, I began developing the ideas reflected in this article under the mentorship of Dr. Sandro R. Barros. Additional support from the MSU African Studies Center Nnamdi Azikiwe Fellowship, the Alliance for African Partnership International Travel Fund, and the NFMLTA Writing Grant made this research possible.

I am also thankful for the generative feedback received during presentations of earlier versions of this work at AAAL, AERA, ALTA, and CIES. Their insights helped refine the arguments and deepen the analysis. Finally, I thank the Editor-in-Chief and anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful engagement and constructive comments, which strengthened the manuscript.

THE AUTHOR

Yetunde S. Alabede  is a Ph.D. candidate in Curriculum, Instruction, and Teacher Education at Michigan State University and the founder of Ebunoluwa Children School in Ogun State, Nigeria. Her research explores family language policy, multilingualism, and multiliteracy practices among African and diasporic families. She advocates for culturally sustaining and affective-affirming education for (young) multilingual learners across multiple learning contexts, including the home, school, and community.

REFERENCES

- Afolalu, L. (2024). I'm still Nigerian: Navigating race through digital literacies. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 56(3), 268–297. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X241273989>
- Agoke, A. (2023). Pedagogical processes and standard dialect use: Implications for creative multilingual interaction from a Yorùbá-language classroom in southwestern Nigeria. *The Modern Language Journal*, 107(2), 509–530. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12844>
- Akindele, J., Olatundun, O., & Akano, R. (2022). Linguistic diversity, Nigerian indigenous languages, and the choice of the English language for Nigeria's national sustainability. *Voices: A Journal of English Studies*, 7(1), 72–83.
- Akinnaso, F. N. (1990). The politics of language planning in education in Nigeria. *Word*, 41(3), 337–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00437956.1990.11435827>
- Akinnaso, F. N. (1994). Linguistic unification and language rights. *Applied Linguistics*, 15(2), 139–168. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/15.2.139>
- Alabede, Y. S. (2025). An autoethnography of grassroot heritage language program. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, 21(1).
- Alabede, Y., Reed, J., & Thompson, B. (2022). To be young, Black, and in the academy: A collection of lessons. *Michigan Reading Journal*, 55(1), 31–39.

- Alabi, O. J., & Olonade, O. Y. (2022). Complexities, dynamism, and changes in the Nigerian contemporary family structure. In O. A. Fawole & S. L. Blair (Eds.), *Families in Nigeria: Understanding their diversity, adaptability, and strengths* (pp. 99–112). Emerald Publishing Limited. <http://doi.org/10.1108/S1530-353520220000018008>
- Aronin, L. (2006). Dominant language constellations: An approach to multilingualism studies. In M. Ó Laoire (Ed.), *Multilingualism in educational settings* (pp. 140–159). Schneider.
- Balogun, S. K., Aruoture, E., & Haruna, S. (2024). Globalisation and the decline of the African value system. *Nigerian Journal of Social Psychology*, 7(2), 417–434. <https://www.nigerianjps.com/index.php/NJSP/article/view/169>
- Bámgbósé, A. (2021). Foreword. In K. Heugh, C. Stroud, K. Taylor-Leech, & P. I. De Costa (Eds.), *A sociolinguistics of the south* (pp. xii–xiv). Routledge.
- Barros, S. R. (2018). English in the key of Babel: Feeling, affecting, and performing language. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 15(2), 193–214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15505170.2018.1462744>
- Bauer, E. B., & Sánchez, L. (2020). Living nan lonbraj la: Haitian immigrant young people writing their selves into the world. *Teachers College Record*, 122(13), 1–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146812012201305>
- Bello, A. O. (2014). Gift-giving, anti-bribery laws and the Nigerian constitution: Matters arising. *Journal of African Law*, 58(2), 278–302. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021855314000102>
- Bialystok, E. (2011). Coordination of executive functions in monolingual and bilingual children. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 110(3), 461–468. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2011.05.005>
- Bisong, J. (1995). Language choice and cultural imperialism: A Nigerian perspective. *ELT Journal*, 49(2), 122–32. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/49.2.122>
- Blommaert, J. (2014). *State ideology and language in Tanzania*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Boateng, S., Watson, V. W., Berends, J., & Hateka, D. (2024). “I would love for teachers to teach in a way that relates to my culture”: African immigrant youth composing digital collages. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 68(2), 129–141. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1366>
- Bourdieu, P. (2021). *The forms of capital*. Polity Press.
- Braun, A., & Cline, T. (2014). *Language strategies for trilingual families: Parents’ perspectives*. Multilingual Matters.
- Canagarajah, S. (2017). *Translingual practices and neoliberal policies: Attitudes and strategies of African skilled migrants in Anglophone workplaces*. Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-41243-6>
- Carreira, M., & Kagan, O. (2018). Heritage language education: A proposal for the next 50 years. *Foreign Language Annals*, 51(1), 152–168. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12331>
- Choi, J. (2019). A child’s trilingual language practices in Korean, Farsi, and English: from a sustainable translanguaging perspective. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 16(4), 534–548. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2019.1593423>

- Curdt-Christiansen, X. L. (2018). Family language policy. In J. W. Tollefson & M. Pérez-Milans (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of language policy and planning* (pp. 420–441). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190458898.013.21>
- Curdt-Christiansen, X. L., & Palviainen, Å. (2023). Ten years later: What has become of FLP? *Language Policy*, 22(4), 379–389. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-023-09682-3>
- da Costa Cabral, I. (2018). From Dili to Dungannon: An ethnographic study of two multilingual migrant families from Timor-Leste. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 15(3), 276–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2018.1477289>
- DuBois, W. E. B. (1903). *The souls of black folk: Essays and sketches*. Fawcett.
- Edwards, P. A. (2004). *Children's literacy development: Making it happen through school, family, and community involvement*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Fabusoro, A. T. (2022). *Home bilingual and cultural literacy practices of Yoruba heritage speakers towards identity maintenance in the Midwest United States* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign]. IDEALS.
- Fall, M. (2020). *The impact of mother tongue illiteracy on second language acquisition: the case of French and Wolof in Senegal*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367817060>
- Federal Republic of Nigeria. (2014). *National policy on education* (6th ed.). NERDC Press.
- Gomes, L.R. (2018). Family language policy ten years on: A critical approach to family multilingualism. *Multilingual Margins*, 5(2), 54–76.
- Gomes, R. L., & Lanza, E. (2022). Southern approaches to family multilingualism. In S. Makoni, A. Kaiper-Marquez, & L. Mokewena (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of language and the global south/s* (pp. 285–296). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003007074>
- Gordon, L. (2024). Prologue. In S. Makoni, A. Kaiper-Marquez, M. Madany-Saá, & B. E. Antia (Eds.), *Foundational concepts of decolonial and southern epistemologies* (pp. 88–103). Multilingual Matters.
- Heugh, K. (2013). Multilingual education policy in South Africa constrained by theoretical and historical disconnections. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 33, 215–237. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190513000135>
- Inuwa-Dutse, I. (2025). Naija NLP: A survey of Nigerian low-resource languages. *arXiv*, Article 2502.19784. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2502.19784>
- Karwal, R. (2021). The effect of personal and relationship dynamics as it relates to customs of gift exchanging and vice versa. *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth*, 13(3), 76–86. <https://doi.org/10.29173/cjfy29625>
- Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge, and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed editions.
- King, K., & Fogle, L. (2006). Bilingual parenting as good parenting: Parents' perspectives on family language policy for additive bilingualism. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 9(6), 695–712. <https://doi.org/10.2167/beb362.0>
- King, K.A., Fogle, L., & Logan-Terry, A. (2008). Family language policy. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 2(5), 907–922. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-818X.2008.00076.x>

- Kwon, J. (2020). Negotiating family language policy and ideologies of multilingualism: Perspectives of a Korean mother and a Korean American child in a multiracial family. *Language Arts*, 97(6), 351–362. <https://doi.org/10.58680/la202030715>
- Lanza, E., & Gomes, R. L. (2020). Family language policy: Foundations, theoretical perspectives and critical approaches. In A. C. Schalley S. A. & Eisenclas (Eds.), *Handbook of home language maintenance and development: Social and affective factors* (pp. 153–173). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501510175-008>
- Lee, B. Y. (2013). Heritage language maintenance and cultural identity formation: The case of Korean immigrant parents and their children in the USA. *Early Child Development and Care*, 183(11), 1576–1588. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2012.741125>
- Lee, V. W. Y., Her, L., & De Costa, P. I. (2024). Heritage language identity matters: Tracing the trajectory of a Chinese heritage mother and the contested Chinese dual-language bilingual education. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 14(1), 75–96. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.42372>
- Legère, K. (2006). JK Nyerere of Tanzania and the empowerment of Swahili. In M. Pütz, J. A. Fishman, & J. A. Neff-van Aertselaer (Eds.), *‘Along the routes to power’: Explorations of empowerment through language* (pp. 373–403). Mouton de Gruyter.
- Li, W., & García, O. (2022). Not a first language but one repertoire: Translanguaging as a decolonizing project. *RELC Journal*, 53(2), 313–324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882221092841>
- Lo Bianco, J. (2020). A meeting of concepts and praxis: Multilingualism, language policy and the dominant language constellation. In J. Lo Bianco & L. Aronin (Eds.), *Dominant language constellations: A new perspective on multilingualism* (pp. 35–56). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52336-7_3
- Lo Bianco, J., & Aronin, L. (2020). Introduction: The dominant language constellations: A new perspective on multilingualism. In J. Lo Bianco & L. Aronin (Eds.), *Dominant language constellations: A new perspective on multilingualism* (pp. 1–15). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52336-7_1
- Makoni, S. (2023). Acknowledgements and gratitudes. In S. Makoni, A. Kaiper-Marquez, M. Madany-Saá, & B. E. Antia (Eds.), *Foundational concepts of decolonial and southern epistemologies* (pp. ix–x). Multilingual Matters.
- Makoni, S., & Pennycook, A. (2005). Disinventing and (re) constituting languages. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 2(3), 137–156. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15427595cils0203_1
- Makoni, S., & Pennycook, A. (2023). Looking at multilingualisms from the Global South. In C. McKinney, P. Makoe, & V. Zavala (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of multilingualism* (pp. 17–30). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003214908>
- Makoni, S., & Pennycook, A. (2024). Multilingualisms in the Global Souths: Shaping language scholarship in the Global Norths. In F. Ndlovu & S. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (Eds.), *Language and decolonisation: An interdisciplinary approach* (pp. 17–34). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003313618>
- Makoni, S., & Severo, C. (2022). Southern perspectives of language and the construction of the common. *Language & Communication*, 86, 80–86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2022.06.003>

- Makoni, S., Kaiper-Marquez, A., Madany-Saá, M., & Antia, B. E. (Eds.). (2023). *Foundational concepts of decolonial and southern epistemologies*. Multilingual Matters.
- Makoni, S., Madany-Saá, M., Antia, B. E., & Gomes, R. L. (Eds.). (2022). *Decolonial voices, language and race*. Multilingual Matters.
- Mansour, G. (1993). *Multilingualism and nation building*. Multilingual Matters.
- Maseko, B., & Mutasa, D. E. (2019). 'Only Tonga spoken here!': Family language management among the Tonga in Zimbabwe. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 37(4), 289–302. <https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2019.1692676>
- Mauss, M. (2002). *The gift: The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies*. Routledge.
- Mgbemena, J. A. (2025). Linguistics and Nigerian language studies in Nigeria: Building bridges for a more viable and hospitable linguistics. In N. G. Farclas, A. Storch, & V. Velupillai (Eds.), *Hospitable linguistics alternative, indigenous and critical approaches to language and language research* (pp. 66–88). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781836680000-008>
- Mignolo, W. D. (2007). Introduction: Coloniality of power and de-colonial thinking. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2–3), 155–167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162498>
- Ndlangamandla, S. C., & Chaka, C. (2020). The intersection between multilingualism, translanguaging, and decoloniality in the Global South. *Scrutiny*, 25(1), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18125441.2020.1832328>
- Nelson, D. K., Herrera Ruano, J., Parra Gutiérrez, R., Zepeda Huerta, J. H. K. (2022). Linguistic trajectories and family language policy from the perspective of multilingual young adults in Mexico. *Language Policy*, 22(4), 457–475. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-023-09670-7>
- Nkadimeng, S., Lepota, B., & Makalela, L. (2023). The language enigma: Two decades of quality assuring language assessment in South Africa. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 41(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2023.2185966>
- Nwagbo, O. G. (2018). Family language policy in selected exogamous homes in Lagos State, Nigeria. *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, 27(1), 1–18. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ibjhs/article/view/187130>
- Ochonogor, C. I., & Ikems, K. C. (2019). Influence of choice of language of communication in inter-ethnic marriage families on the survival of minority languages in Nigeria. *Tropical Journal of Education*, 1(1/2), 45–59.
- Offiong, O. A., & Mensah, E. O. (2012). Language choice and family language policy in inter-ethnic marriages in South-eastern Nigeria. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 4(2), 107–114. <https://doi.org/10.3968/j.sll.1923156320120402.3540>
- Osei-Tutu, A. A. (2023). Developing African oral traditional storytelling as a framework for studying with African peoples. *Qualitative Research*, 23(6), 1497–1514. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941221082263>
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
- Piller, I., & Cho, J. (2013). Neoliberalism as language policy. *Language in Society*, 42(1), 23–44. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404512000887>

- Piller, I., & Gerber, L. (2018). Family language policy between the bilingual advantage and the monolingual mindset. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 24(5), 622–635. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1503227>
- Ronjat, J. (1913). *Le développement du langage observé chez un enfant bilingue*. Champion.
- Ruiz, R. (1984). Orientations in language planning. *NABE Journal*, 8(2), 15–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08855072.1984.10668464>
- Sanuth, K. K. (2019). *Linguistic practices and language ideology in Yoruba study abroad* (Publication No. 22621980) [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Wisconsin-Madison]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global Database.
- Senekal, B., & Brokensha, S. (2023). The potential of artificial intelligence (AI) for decolonizing education in South Africa through the development of indigenous languages. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 43(3), 208–215. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2023.2294405>
- Skågeby, J. (2013). The performative gift: A feminist materialist conceptual model. *Communication and New Materialism*, 2(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.7275/R51V5BW5>
- Smith-Christmas, C. (2016). Family language policy: New directions. In J. Macalister & S. H. Mirvahedi (Eds.), *Family language policies in a multilingual world: Opportunities, challenges, and consequences* (pp. 23–39). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315619552>
- Smith-Christmas, C. (2022). Using a ‘family language policy’ lens to explore the dynamic and relational nature of child agency. *Children & Society*, 36(3), 354–368. <https://doi.org/10.1111/chso.12461>
- Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language policy*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511615245>
- Umezuruike, P. I., & Onuegwunwoke, C. A. (2025). Language rights in Nigeria: An exploration of language policy and practice. *ÉKWÉ International Journal of Igbo Scholars: Forum for Socio-Cultural Advancement*, 18(2), 100–130.
- Vaughan, G. (1997). *For-giving: A feminist criticism of exchange*. Plain View Press.
- wa Thiong’o, N. (2013). The language of African literature. In P. Williams & L. Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: A reader* (pp. 435–455). Routledge.
- wa Thiong’o, N. (2024). The politics of language, memory and knowledge. In S. Makoni, A. Kaiper-Marquez, M. Madany-Saá, & B. E. Antia (Eds.), *Foundational concepts of decolonial and southern epistemologies* (pp. 88–103). Multilingual Matters.
- Wilson, S. (2020). *Family language policy: Children’s perspectives*. Springer Nature.
- Wynter, S. (2001). Towards the sociogenic principle: Fanon, identity, the puzzle of conscious experience, and what it is like to be “Black”. In A. Gomez-Moriana & M. Duran-Cogan (Eds.), *National identities and socio-political changes in Latin America* (pp. 30–66). Routledge.