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Citation

Published Version

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ABSTRACT

Currently 26 million people live as refugees, 40% of whom are school-aged. As global policy shifts to include refugee children and young people in education systems in settings of exile, language-in-education emerges as an under-explored challenge for refugee learners and the education systems they join. Refugee young people face uncertain futures, prompting questions about which languages can enable refugees to realize their multi-directional aspirations. Drawing on 80 semi-structured interviews with 45 Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Syrian refugee young people living in Uganda and Lebanon, we analyze the linguistic experiences of refugees across locations, ages, and educational stages. We find that current practices of inclusion within national education systems in exile only partially attend to refugees' linguistic needs. Global policies of educational inclusion focus almost exclusively on the languages of school and work in exile, an approach which fails to support refugees in meeting three key needs in exile: the need for opportunity, connection, and stable roots. Attention to these three needs can support refugee learners' diverse linguistic repertoires as they develop the linguistic skills needed to navigate education in exile while also sustaining the languages that root young people in places, communities, and relationships of origin.

KEY WORDS

Language-in-education, refugee, Uganda, Lebanon, language minority students, multilingual education

INTRODUCTION

For David, displacement from South Sudan to Uganda has meant linguistic isolation. At 17 years old, David left Maban, a region in South Sudan affected by war, and fled to Uganda with his little brother. Living in Kampala, David navigates a sea of new languages that include English at school, Luganda on the soccer field, Arabic with other children from South Sudan and Sudan, and several other languages spoken by students at the large government school he attends. The only chance he gets to speak a bit of Maban, the language he used to speak with family before coming to Uganda, is when he calls friends or family at

home. David wants to learn English and hopes to work as a doctor, maybe in Canada. And one day, he hopes to return to South Sudan, where English will bring him opportunity, but where he will also need Arabic and Maban that are central to the relationships he has left behind.

When Shereen experienced forced displacement from Syria to Lebanon, she believed as a native-Arabic speaker, she would be able to navigate life in Lebanon with a sense of familiarity and ease. She soon found that, though both countries use the same dialect of Arabic, their accents differ. Moreover, contemporary English words coupled with French, the language of Lebanon's former colonizer, are commonly fused with Arabic to morph into new words and slangs. Despite believing that she and her Syrian peers were "creative and intelligent," she was frustrated at how language barriers and differences prevented them from realizing their aspirations. She explained: "when we come here [to Lebanon], we don't have the language. People think we're idiots and they really treat us like that. They really do that. So we get shy, we lose our confidence, and sometimes we lose our abilities."

These two examples reveal the centrality of language to issues of displacement and education, and how language policies and practices in educational institutions are relevant for the desired futures that refugee young people hold. In analyzing the linguistic experiences of refugees across locations, ages, and educational stages, we argue that refugee young peoples' linguistic aspirations and experiences connect to three key needs in exile: the need for opportunity, for connection, and for stable roots. In so doing, our paper seeks to bring to the fore the constellation of languages refugees view as important for present experiences of displacement and for future-building. We question policies and practices in refugee education that singularly focus on the dominant language(s) of power in host countries, highlighting the potential value of an additive approach to support refugees as they develop wider linguistic repertoires needed in exile.

As refugee-hosting countries around the world increasingly adopt a model of refugee inclusion in national education systems, policy actors and educators must grapple with the linguistic implications of this inclusion—which languages should refugee learners use at school, how and when, and toward what ends? The question of language-in-education is a practical one, enabling access to opportunities for learning, grade progression, and certification. It is also deeply personal, tied together with family, identity, culture, and tradition. And, it is political, a flashpoint for conflict, a source of connection, and a symbol of who is seen to belong and who is not. This paper begins to examine the issue of language-in-education for refugee young people seeking belonging and opportunities in exile.

We draw on interview data from two illustrative cases of refugees pursuing education in host countries—Sudanese and South Sudanese refugees in Uganda and Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In 2018, at the time of the interviews in Uganda, nearly a million Sudanese and South Sudanese refugees lived there and almost half of these were of school-going age, entitled to inclusion within national Ugandan schools (UNHCR, 2019a; OCHA, 2021). According to policy, Ugandan schools are to instruct in home languages in the early years and English thereafter, but tend to privilege English in the multilingual schools that host most refugees (Hicks & Maina, 2018). In Lebanon, in 2016 at the time of the interviews, 1.5 million Syrian refugees lived in Lebanon, a country of just 4 million nationals (UNICEF, UNHCR, & WFP, 2016). Syrian learners confronted a constrained inclusion within the Lebanese education system (Adelman, Chopra & Dryden-Peterson, 2019), learning mostly in English in Lebanese schools and universities. Although inclusion through education is intended to expand refugee learners' opportunities, we find that current language-in-education policies and practices in Uganda and Lebanon are only partially able to support the realization of these aspirations. Examining language-in-education for refugees in two geographic and temporal contexts, we find resonance of key themes, revealing how language-

in-education policies and practices impact refugee learners across ages and stages of their education.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

LANGUAGE, EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION, & FUTURE-BUILDING

Refugee young people confront "unknowable futures," unsure whether they will remain in the countries that host them when they first flee conflict, return to their home countries, continue their migration, or some combination of these trajectories (Dryden-Peterson, 2017, p. 16). This uncertainty makes issues of language-in-education especially complex for refugee young people: refugees displaced by conflict cannot predict what languages they will need for learning and opportunity in the near-term, nor can they and their families know what linguistic practices in school today will support possible pathways into the future.

To address the ambiguities they face, refugee young people shape their aspirations in ways that are multi-directional, a series of plans and contingencies that strive to account for many possible trajectories (Chopra, 2018). Flows of information regarding possibilities for onward migration, contexts of reception in countries receiving refugees, prospects for stability in countries of origin, along with constellations of legal policies and social structures in exile shape young refugees' aspirations and pathways toward building durable futures (Bellino, 2020). Schooling forms a central pillar of this aspirational planning, and where possible, young people strategically choose which language to learn in while developing their multi-directional aspirations (Chopra & Dryden-Peterson, 2020).

The inclusion of refugee learners within national education systems has been a key global strategy since 2012, designed to enable access to quality, certified education for refugee learners. That said, refugees tend to be displaced into countries neighboring those

they have left, like Uganda and Lebanon, places where social services are often already overstretched (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). Across contexts, the practice of educational inclusion takes different forms. In Uganda, for example, refugees are legally permitted to attend all levels of school alongside national students. In Lebanon, on the other hand, refugees attend public schools in separate shifts from national students from grades 1-9, but are permitted to attend higher secondary school and university with Lebanese peers (Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, 2018; Dryden-Peterson, Adelman, Bellino, & Chopra, 2019).

Refugee-only schools outside of national systems were previously the preferred approach to refugee education. While their focus on return to countries of origin largely stymied refugees' access to opportunities in exile, these parallel schools were able to use languages from home country school systems, a linguistic practice that likely benefited refugees in key ways (Dryden-Peterson, 2020), including helping children to develop literacy foundations in a language they knew well. Children tend to struggle to learn to read and develop higher order skills necessary in later grades of school if they are required to attend school in unfamiliar languages in the early years of schooling, that is, before developing these foundational literacy skills, or when they attend schools that do not support their emerging multilingualism (Cummins, 1978; Piper, Schroeder & Trudell, 2016). Indeed, we know that refugees in national schools that instruct in unfamiliar languages face challenges finding a foothold for learning, imperiling the future opportunities that might otherwise be available to them through structural inclusion in national school systems (Piper, Dryden-Peterson, Chopra, Reddick & Oyanga, 2020; Hicks & Maina, 2018).

Extensive literature from non-refugee contexts also highlights the socioemotional, interpersonal, and academic challenges children face when expected to learn in settings that do not value their existing linguistic repertoires. These linguistically subtractive approaches can catalyze language loss, negatively affecting children's relationships to themselves, their families and communities, and undermining processes of literacy development and content

learning facilitated by pedagogy that uses familiar languages (Valenzuela, 1999; wa Thiong'o, 1986; Cummins, 2000). Similarly, emerging research with refugee communities highlights that language "submersion" (Benson, 2012), which is often the case in exile, can cause refugees to lose facility with the languages they once spoke in their places of origin, undermining relationships with family left behind and pathways to a possible return even as they access opportunities in host countries (Reddick & Dryden-Peterson, 2021).

Despite these challenges, long histories of linguistic marginalization in colonial education systems and the perceived status of English globally contribute to the feeling within many communities that English is the best, if not only, chance for their children's social mobility (Albaugh, 2014; Prah, 2000).

While languages of power like English are often perceived as being central to professional opportunities, for refugees who lack rights to formal employment in places of exile, non-dominant languages spoken in communities and within informal economic structures may be equally important. Research among Liberian refugees in Ghana found that the ability to speak Twi enabled older Liberian refugees to work in the informal economy and to develop friendships with Ghanaians. The differences in English accents between Ghanians and Liberians also often made Liberians vulnerable to discrimination (Porter, Hampshire, Kyei, Adjaloo, Rapoo & Kilpatrick, 2008).

Although choices between languages often feel zero-sum for families within education systems, we know from research that they do not have to be. For instance, among refugee and immigrant learners in settings as diverse as New York City and northern Uganda, additive approaches are shown to support children's multilingual development (Bartlett & García, 2011). Educational policies and practices that balance home and foreign languages can support linguistic minorities' academic success and wellbeing (García & Wei, 2014;

Abiria, Early & Kendrick, 2013), as can critical pedagogical approaches that interrogate connections between language and power (Dooley & Thangaperumal, 2011).

Although there is growing consensus on the benefits of structural inclusion of refugees in education systems, there is little formal guidance for host governments and educators about how to implement linguistic inclusion in national schools hosting refugees. For example, the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants—a key document elaborating the global approach to refugee inclusion—mentions the relationship between language and education only once, advocating for access to "language training" as part of facilitating refugee integration (United Nations, 2016, p. 8). The 2017 Djibouti Plan of Action on Refugee Education in IGAD Member States is the only regional commitment, to the best of our knowledge, to formalize support for refugees' linguistic diversity, although how to enact this support is not enumerated (Intergovernmental Authority on Development, 2017).

Much research on language, education, and refugees engages with issues of language learning among resettled refugees (e.g. Panagiotopoulou & Rosen, 2018; Burgess & Rowsell, 2020; Chao, 2020), work vital to understanding programs and policies for these populations, but which leaves a gap in our understanding of language-in-education for those displaced into developing countries that neighbor countries of origin, which host 86% of the world's refugees (UNHCR, 2020). Our study begins to address this gap.

Following Mariou, Bonacina-Pugh, Martin & Martin-Jones (2016), we seek to respond to the call for "ways of designing our research…that allows us to take account of different scales," weaving together data from refugee young people navigating language as they seek education in Uganda and Lebanon. We integrate both insights from "particular educational settings" while striving to "keep our sights on the wider policy processes at work in the particular context of diversity in which we find ourselves, and on the powerful globalized discourses underpinning those processes," (p. 103). Considering the global

orientation of refugee education toward structural inclusion, we examine relationships

between language and education for young people seeking present and future opportunities.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Context: Lebanon and Uganda

Lebanon and Uganda offer meaningful settings to examine language-in-education for

refugees because of key differences in policy: in Uganda, refugees are legally permitted to

access national schools, staffed by national teachers, alongside Ugandan classmates. In 2006,

Uganda first granted refugees the right to work and attend school, and in 2017 these rights

were codified in the country's Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), a

model for other refugee-hosting countries globally (UNHCR, 2019b). In the capital city

Kampala, the location of our research, educators are expected to implement an English

instructional policy amidst immense linguistic diversity, with the option of teaching

Luganda—the regional language of communication—as a subject in the early years

(UNICEF, 2016).

In Lebanon, in contrast, refugees are included in national schools but only through

double-shifting, in which they are physically, socially, and temporally separated from

Lebanese children, who attend the same set of schools as refugee children (Adelman, Chopra

& Dryden-Peterson, 2019). Pre-displacement, Syrian children were learning in Arabic, with

English as a subject taught a few hours each week. When included in Lebanese public

schools, Syrian students are expected to learn in both Arabic and English. Depending on

where in Lebanon they seek refuge, however, the language followed in schools might also

include French, and at university, is predominantly English. In both Lebanon and Uganda, the

official policy of educational inclusion has supported educational access for refugees but has

also meant that refugee learners must contend with unfamiliar languages in educational settings (Shuayb, Makkouk, & Tutunji, 2014; Hicks & Maina, 2018).

Data Collection and Analysis

Our examination of issues of language and education for refugees draws on 80 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 45 refugee young people in Uganda and Lebanon. In Uganda, the first author conducted single interviews with 30 children (ages 6-17[1], legally considered children in Uganda and as such, entitled to elementary school) from Sudan and South Sudan[2] living in Kampala. Sudan and South Sudan have long weathered armed conflict tied to issues of language and culture (Abdelhay, Abu-Manga, & Miller, 2015; Zouhir, 2015), making the linguistic experiences of refugees from these countries particularly relevant for the study. At the time of data collection in 2018, Uganda was host to approximately 790,000 South Sudanese and Sudanese refugees, with those from South Sudan making up as much as 74% of Uganda's total refugee population of 1.15 million people that year (UNHCR, 2019a; OCHA, 2021).

The interviews with young people were conducted within the context of a larger ethnographic study across three schools in Kampala, which entailed spending time with students and teachers during class, lunch time, recreational periods, and special events. This informal time together helped to build relationships that enabled productive conversations about children's experiences with language in exile. Before conducting interviews with children, the first author interviewed their caregivers, received consent from caregivers to interview the children, and assent from the children themselves. This relationship-building

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[1] Refugees are often overaged for their grade in school due to interrupted schooling and enrollment practices that place refugees with limited English skills in earlier grades (Dryden-Peterson, 2016).

[2] 12 families were from Sudan, 13 from South Sudan, and 3 had migrated between places or had family members from both countries.

and clarity about the research process helped to bridge some of the inherent power dynamics in the relationship between the researcher—a white, native English-speaking American woman—and the participants. In some cases, it seemed that children were able to share experiences with an outsider that might not have been possible to share with teachers and other adults given hierarchies at school.

The interviews lasted on average 60 minutes, with some variability depending on the age of the child, the day's schedule, and other factors like weather or illness. The interviews explored experiences of language, education, and refugee status and took place in the languages in which the participants were most comfortable, including English, Arabic, another language[3] or often, a mixture of languages. The interviews began with "personal language maps" to trace how children use different languages across various spaces and relationships, represented by photographs of the local market, the school building, and other relevant settings which the first author prepared for the interview and then talked about with the children. This process enabled subsequent semi-structured questions, including about the languages children use with friends and family, their hopes for the future, and the language-in-education choices children would make if they were designing their own schools.

In Lebanon, the second author focused on young Syrians' pursuit of university education and their constructions of belonging when in exile. In 2016, at the time of data collection, Lebanon, a country of four million citizens, was hosting approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees (UNICEF, UNHCR, & WFP, 2016). Over the course of eight months, the second author conducted 50 repeat interviews (Seidman, 2019) with 15 young Syrians between the ages of 18-30 years, who had been living in Lebanon's capital, Beirut, and its surrounding Mount Lebanon area since 2011, when the Syrian conflict first began.

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[3] For interviews with refugee young people, the first author worked with six translators across seven languages (Arabic, Dinka, Luganda, Masalit, Maban, Nuer, and Tira). The availability of translators addressed some of the power dynamic related to language, as children were able to choose the language in which to conduct the conversation. Nonetheless, most children chose to speak at least partly in English, eager to continue practicing their skills in this language and complying with English-only policies at school.

Participants were identified through snowball-sampling while engaging with other Syrian young people, NGOs, and educational settings.

Developing relationships in which participants could share their strengths and vulnerabilities often meant accompanying them to their places of work, meeting on campus, and sustaining regular communication long after the researcher's 'exit' from the field site. These symmetrical relationships enabled ongoing conversation regarding everyday successes and struggles when navigating life in exile. As a researcher from a US-based university, who had never personally experienced forced displacement, there was considerable social distance between young, Syrian participants and the second author. However, several factors served as a source of connection and identification, such as the second author's own early challenges navigating higher education abroad as an Indian and international student at the time and his accounts of personal discrimination when mistaken for a South-Asian, blue-collar immigrant worker in Lebanon.

Deep relationships facilitated opportunities for three to four 60 to 90-minute-long semi-structured, in-depth interviews with each participant. Interviews examined young Syrians' life histories, their educational aspirations, structural and linguistic challenges that stymied the realization of those aspirations, and critical supports to overcome these challenges. All interviews were conducted in English, the language many of the participants were actively learning for university in Lebanon.[4]

Across both sets of data, the authors wrote listening notes, or synthetic, analytic memos of the key themes that emerged in each individual interview and across the data (Seidman, 2019). Given the size of our data set, we conducted index coding of these listening notes and interview transcripts in Atlas.ti (examples of index codes include *Personal*

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[4] For interviews with Syrian youth, the second author did not employ a translator, as many participants admitted their discomfort with sharing their personal, linguistic and relational challenges in the presence of a Lebanese or even Syrian translator. A non-Arabic speaker, the second author instead provided participants with opportunities to pause to recollect or write their thoughts in Arabic or use an online translation application as needed.

experiences with language; Migration trajectory). We followed this with granular, analytic coding, applying emic codes that emerged from the interviews (e.g., *Punishment; English – communication as reason to learn)* and etic codes that draw on our review of the literature (e.g., *Language hierarchy)* to understand patterns and divergences across the data (Deterding & Waters, 2018; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Charmaz, 2006). Examining the issue of language-in-education and refugees across settings, policy contexts, ages, life-stages, school levels, and countries of origin allows us to trace the *"phenomenon of interest"* of language-in-education for refugees, not artificially bounding our inquiry but instead following it to understand the linguistic implications of inclusion of refugee learners within national education systems (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 6, italics in original).

FINDINGS

We find that for Sudanese and South Sudanese refugee children in Uganda and Syrian refugee young adults in Lebanon, language is central to three key needs in exile: opportunity, social connection, and stable roots. Refugee young people seek out the languages that are needed for schooling and work, and often struggle to access these languages. In addition, refugee young people yearn for and work toward cultivating relationships with teachers and classmates through language-learning, part of the relational inclusion that is central to educational inclusion. And finally, refugee young people describe the slow loss of languages and ways of communicating that tie them to the places and people left behind, a loss that imperils aspirations they hold for the future.

In search of opportunity: Language for school and work

Our participants see English as central to the opportunities they seek. For refugees fleeing to Uganda and Syria in pursuit of safety and education, English is not only a tool to access school and work in the host country. Rather, it is also a means of achieving broader communication within the linguistically diverse settings where they live, and for ongoing migration, either to a third country context or back to their countries of origin.

Sudanese and South Sudanese young people in Uganda

Sudanese and South Sudanese refugees described making the long journey to Kampala, Uganda for English, hoping it would bring them employment opportunities in the future and allow them to help family left behind. Hamed, a Sudanese 17-year-old who was placed in the fifth grade when he arrived in Kampala because of his limited English skills explained that his parents encouraged him to go, hoping it would open opportunities for university and work. He recounted their encouragement: "you go in Uganda and learn English, then your life is good." But even though English is used in Uganda and could enable opportunities there, Hamed is invested in English not because it may allow him to stay in Uganda, but because he hopes that the language will enable him to return to Sudan to work. Describing his reasons for leaving the rural refugee settlement[5] where his parents are, he explained, "I want to learn English and I want to help my mother and my father... [In Sudan], if you know English you can get a job. But if you don't know English you can't get a job." English is a central component of Hamed's future-building for himself and his family and a key element of the eventual return to Sudan for which he yearns. Hamed's focus on English for his family's future in his country of origin echoed throughout the interviews with young people in Uganda.

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[5] In Uganda, rural areas where most refugees in Uganda live are called refugee settlements, a term intended to differentiate them from the *refugee camps* of surrounding countries that tend to restrict refugees' physical movement.

Other students focused on the professional opportunities English could enable for them regardless of location, highlighting the ongoing migration that defines so many refugees' imagined futures. Inaya, from Sudan, hopes to remain in Kampala and work as a teacher, using English to teach math and science. Grace, from South Sudan, plans to be an engineer in Kenya, where many of her family members are and where she will use English and learn Kiswahili. And David wishes for a future as a doctor in Canada, where he hopes to use English and eventually return to South Sudan to help his Maban community.

But for many students, learning enough English to realize these aspirations wasn't always straightforward. Isolated at school as the only Maban speaker and having never been exposed English, at first David felt that he had no friends at school and struggled mightily with the English language. Even when he wanted to reach out to others, this wasn't always possible as "communicating to get help is hard." Eventually, David began to build friendships with other newcomers, relying on teachers like Edward, who encouraged him to "take me [Edward] as your brother and your teacher," pausing to explain coursework, check David's assignments, and provide support in his transition to school. Hamed had a similarly difficult transition: "When I come [came] here, for me I don't know anything about English. For me I just know my language." Hamed relied on friends to stay afloat, including his friend Mohammed, who had left Sudan for Kampala before him and so spoke more English, as well as other newcomer classmates like David.

Syrian youth in Lebanon

Language also influenced the migration trajectories of Syrian refugee youth in the sample, many of whom decided to seek refuge in Lebanon in part because they expected to speak Arabic at university. Though the Turkish border was closer to Aleppo, 23-year-old Ali's hometown, he decided to move to Lebanon. While much of the university education in

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Lebanon is in English, Ali knew that there were select degree programs that used Arabic as a language of instruction. 21-year-old Masood's entire family had moved to Germany, but he decided to remain in Lebanon, unamenable to the idea of starting from scratch in a new country, with an entirely new way of living and speaking. Having seen other Syrian friends struggle with German, Masood knew he would set himself back by at least two years before he could work toward his education goals, particularly if it entailed learning a new language.

Despite the hopes of a linguistic match between Syria and Lebanon, many Syrians instead confronted English in high school and university, a foreign language they struggled to understand. When participants recounted their first days in Lebanon, they often used the word "lost" to describe the disorientation that accompanied those early experiences of exile. Shereen recalled this experience from her high school in Lebanon:

> I didn't know anything. I couldn't get the English at all, especially the Biology. It was hard for me. The students were laughing at me – 'she's a Syrian student, she can't understand anything'.

Though most of her teachers told her it was alright for her to fail and repeat a year, Shereen was determined to prove them wrong.

For many of the young people, the challenge lay not just in learning to communicate in a new language, English, but also familiarity with a different register, academic English, to follow the official textbooks. This familiarity was necessary for participants to succeed in their high-stakes school leaving examinations in Lebanon and for university. Masood felt he needed "Scientific English" for his university studies because he had learnt English "from the street," listening to everyday interactions. To overcome these challenges, participants' default approach was to use translation applications on their phones. It took Maha nearly two hours for every two pages of translation as she painstakingly tried to make meaning of her

university-level Physics textbook, which was in English. "I translated and then I learned, studied and then learned again," she recounted.

All the participants could recount Syrian friends and peers who had succumbed to this linguistic submersion at university in Lebanon and either dropped out altogether or shifted their majors in the middle of their studies, opting instead for programs like Arabic literature, law, and political science, which were taught mostly in Arabic.

For Syrian youth in Lebanon, English was also inextricably tied to professional opportunities. Basel knew that as a Syrian in Lebanon he could use his native Arabic language skills to work for an hourly wage in the country's informal labor market. He also knew that it would never suffice to make ends meet and cover his university tuition. For Basel, the only way to find a decent-paying job was through English.

For many young Syrians, English was seen as central to achieving aspirations no matter where they ended up. Saleem, the oldest youth in the sample, was on the lookout for a university scholarship offered by governments in the Global North. To be eligible for these scholarships, he had to sit for his TOEFL and/or IELTS examinations.[6] This worried Saleem, who was working multiple jobs while trying to study: "All the time we work in Lebanon, so don't have free time to study."

For young refugees migrating to Uganda and Lebanon, language oriented them to their destinations as they sought new educational opportunities that might enable education and work for themselves and their families. And when they arrived, English—the language they confronted at school and university—in some cases also became a hurdle to the futures they sought, limiting their ability to learn, develop relationships, and seek work. But for refugee young people across life stages, learning English also became a vital strategy as they faced their present in exile and looked to the future.

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[6] TOEFL stands for Test of English as a Foreign Language; IELTS for International English Language Test

In search of connection: Language for relational inclusion

The young people we interviewed also pointed to the vital role of language in facilitating connections to other refugees and nationals, relational inclusion that is a key building block of the kinds of educational inclusion articulated in global strategies for refugee education (Dryden-Peterson et al, 2018). Among the children in Uganda, English and Luganda were key to navigating relationships with peers and teachers at school and allowing them to feel a sense of safety in the city beyond the school walls. For Syrian youth in Lebanon, their native Arabic accents often revealed their origins, opening them to discrimination at school and work, and a lack of comfort in English further separated them from their Lebanese peers.

Sudanese and South Sudanese young people in Uganda

In the linguistically diverse schools that they attend in Uganda, many Sudanese and South Sudanese refugee children pointed to English as a unifying language, enabling communication among learners from different nationalities and linguistic groups. As David settled into school in Kampala, he came to use English to communicate with his diverse set of friends from Eritrea, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, and Somalia. Faheem underscored the vital role of a shared language: "Arabic is for everyone in our country there [Sudan]," he explained, allowing members of different tribes to speak to each other, and for him, English played this role at school in Uganda, creating bridges between people from different places.

Luganda, the language used informally in the central region of Uganda where Kampala is located and sometimes taught as a subject in schools in grades 1-3 was key to developing relationships and navigating life in school and beyond. Ivana, who attended a school that did not

teach Luganda, described asking her friends to help her learn the language to follow the events of school, as without it, she felt vulnerable to teasing and misunderstandings. Elisabeth was born in Khartoum, Sudan but had been in Kampala for seven years at the time of our interview and had developed a strong community of friends at school, facilitated by her fluency in Luganda. The language also allows her to interact with teachers—who sometimes use it informally in class—and with her peers, building a sense of comfort in her new home, where she aspires to be a gospel singer one day.

In contrast, those who do not speak Luganda described the ongoing challenges they face at school. Laughing, Joyce explained that she only uses English with her teachers as "I don't know Luganda." But, like Elisabeth, she conceded that her teachers sometimes speak the language with each other and the students during class, although its use during class is not officially sanctioned at her school. When her teachers and classmates use Luganda, Joyce doesn't understand what they are talking about and feels that this is alienating for the refugee students: "It's not good because also us, we don't understand Luganda…I want to learn it so that I can also understand what other people are talking about." Joyce believed she would be happier in Kampala with these skills, better able to navigate her new home.

For some, the question of whether to learn Luganda is more fraught. Although her Ugandan friends want Matilda to learn Luganda, she is cautious about doing so, because "when I speak Luganda, sometimes I can forget my language," Kuku. She worries that taking on this language of Kampala would end up replacing the language that she grew up speaking. Similarly, for some, Luganda was strictly off-limits, representing too-complete an embrace of this place of exile: Amani's auntie, for example, "refused us to speak it at home…'cause we are not Ugandans."

Syrian youth in Lebanon

For Syrian youth in Lebanon, language differences were a source of discrimination and exclusion, and comfort in English was seen as foundational to being treated as equals by Lebanese peers at university and in the community. Ali recalled an instance after an English exam when a Lebanese girl mockingly asked him, "'Hey you! Did you pass this class?'" assuming he would have scored poorly as a Syrian with developing English language skills. Internalizing the language hierarchy that confronted him in Lebanon, Ali described himself and his Syrian community in Lebanon as "weak" because "we don't have a powerful language [like English]." Similarly, Tarek recounted his first day at university when he perceived language as a "barrier" standing between himself and the Lebanese students who communicated freely together: "They speak everything. I can't speak everything. The accent is different." In both English and Arabic, Tarek struggled to communicate with his Lebanese peers who used ways of speaking that were unfamiliar to him. Though there was one other Syrian in his class, this student spoke with the same accent as the Lebanese "so people don't know he's from Syria." So stark was the perceived social distance in Tarek's mind between himself and his Lebanese peers that he considered dropping out of university altogether.

As Tarek's example reveals, it was not just that young Syrians confronted challenges speaking in English; their Arabic accents also differed. Participants explained how these were markers of difference within and beyond the university. At university, participants' accents in Arabic made them stand out as Syrians. They were often approached by student wings of political parties on campus about their political allegiances in the Syrian conflict, a controversial topic they sought to avoid. Beyond the university, accents revealed to prospective employers that they were most likely interviewing a Syrian for an internship or a part-time job, making Syrian young people targets for exploitation and discrimination.

The kinds of educational inclusion articulated in global and national strategies for refugee education do not simply require that refugees have access to schooling opportunities in exile, but also that they are able to build relationships in these settings. Refugee young

people relied on diverse linguistic repertoires and ways of speaking not just for the pursuit of educational and professional opportunities, but for the kinds of mutual understanding that foster relational inclusion in exile.

In search of roots: Language for sustaining ties

In both Uganda and Lebanon, young refugees described how language allows them to sustain connections to the communities where they were born and once lived, including those in diaspora. These enduring transnational connections take on particular salience in the face of discrimination and alienation in exile, and give young people a sense of connection different from that enabled by English, Lebanese-accented Arabic, or Luganda.

Sudanese and South Sudanese young people in Uganda

Language's role in sustaining roots was perhaps most pressing for Sudanese and South Sudanese refugee children living in Uganda given their ages, aspirations, and linguistic and social development. Many of the children in Uganda expressed a desire to speak the languages they grew up using within their families and communities. In some cases, children who shared languages with other family or community members in exile, such as those speaking Nuer or Arabic, found spaces to continue using their languages in church or at home, while others faced linguistic isolation in Uganda. Milly—who lived with her uncle, aunt, and cousins, having left her parents in Kakwa, South Sudan—came with the goal of learning English, but in the process had begun to lose the Kakwa language she knew she would need if she were able to return to her family in South Sudan. She described how she felt—in the English she was still learning at the time of our interview—when she spoke Kakwa freely, before leaving South Sudan:

I feel [felt] very happy when I speak [spoke] with my mom, my dad, my

brothers, my sister, I feel [felt] very happy. But now, I'm forgetting, and

one day my uncle may say he's taking me to see my mom, and I don't

know which language will I use? So I feel bad.

Echoing a concern expressed by numerous children, Milly was distressed by the challenges she would likely face in communicating with her family members, having been submerged in English at school.

Like other children, Milly arrived in Kampala speaking a language she shares with few others in her school or neighborhood. Even for students whose refugee classmates share their languages, like Ivana, who speaks Arabic with her brothers at school, her relationship to the language is receding in the face of punitive school practices. She explained that if the teachers hear them speaking languages other than English, "they cane us," and this punishment makes her not want to speak Arabic any longer. Abdo reiterated, "local languages are not allowed at school" so that, if you speak them, "you are breaking the school rules…sometimes [the teachers] punish you, sometimes they forgive you." When you're punished "they [ask you to] lie down and then they cane you." For Abdo and others, this enforcement of English-only school policies has contributed to a shrinking linguistic repertoire: Abdo is still able to understand the outlines of her family languages, Dinka and Acholi when her family speaks them with her but she can no longer respond herself, impacting her ability to sustain ties to loved ones and community.

In contrast, children in the sample who speak Nuer described churches and language-mates who help them maintain the language. Akong, for example, attends a Nuer church and speaks the language with her large family, all of whom live together in Kampala, a circumstance that is rare for children in the sample from communities who were more marginalized in South Sudan. For some who see Arabic as the language they are most comfortable in, the presence of large populations of

Arabic speakers across the city helps them maintain the language. Dabor, for example, speaks Arabic with some friends outside of class and with her family at home. For those students who speak languages that are sustained within communities and institutions in Kampala, the English they learn at school is in addition, not instead of other languages, contributing to children's multilingualism. But for those children without these extra-school structures, restrictions on language use at school mean that their communication with people and places that make up diverse parts of their lives are severely limited, with implications for the futures they are striving to create.

Syrian youth in Lebanon

Worries about losing the ability to communicate with country of origin communities seemed less pressing for the refugee youth in Lebanon, likely given the many years they had spent in Syria as children, the quality of education they received there, and their resulting firm foundations in written and spoken Arabic. Still, issues of self and home remained challenging for these young people, who saw English as a way to make progress on their aspirations but felt that maintaining the kind of Arabic they spoke in Syria was vital to relationships with Syrians in diaspora and back home. For example, as time passed, Tarek was unsure whether he could ever return to the same Syria he once knew. With a heavy sigh, he reflected on the linguistic and cultural shifts he had experienced in Lebanon, describing how differently Arabic and English were used in Lebanon in contrast to Syria: "The lifestyle is different now—how they're living, how they're thinking, how they're speaking…five year[s] of war, it was enough to change us and change them."

Similarly, Hala lamented how her Syrian friends in Germany changed as they adapted to a different way of living. "They're forgetting Syria!" she believed, particularly because they were beginning to "forget their first language," Arabic, in favor of German. At the same time though, she knew that even in Syria, the most well-educated—doctors, for example—

were not globally competitive because "they don't know how to speak in English." Because opportunities to learn English in Syria were only available to those with resources, Hala mocked the schooling in Syria, saying, "It's free education but not the best education." Like many in the sample, Hala was caught between a desire to maintain connections to Syria through her home language and lifestyle, her understanding of the need for dominant languages in exile, and the perception that limited English skills would hold Syrians back in a global arena.

In contrast, for some, the prospect of excelling professionally in Lebanon was not worth the personal sacrifice. Nisreen was aware that subtle differences in her Syrian accent prevented her from finding a job in Lebanon, but she was nonetheless against any modification to her speech: "I can't change my language. There are a lot of Syrians here—they just talk Lebanese [Arabic], but I feel no! I was raised to that language [Syrian Arabic]. I can't just talk differently." For young people like Nisreen, the Arabic of Syria was central to her sense of self and connection to home.

In this final section, we see how young people conceptualize ties between language and the people and places they had to leave. Many young refugees in Uganda struggled with the potential loss of languages they spoke prior to displacement and consequently, of connections with family in places of origin. Syrian young adults in Lebanon struggled with what their changing language use meant for their sense of connection to Syria and to those in diaspora. In looking across ages and life-stages, we can see that strong foundations in family languages—which Syrian high school and university students in Lebanon had already developed in Syria—can buttress against the sense of loss that can emerge through displacement and linguistic submersion in education settings. For young people whose linguistic foundations are in development, this linguistic and relational loss can feel profound.

DISCUSSION

Our study of language and education for refugee young people in Uganda and Lebanon reveals three key needs refugees face in exile: the need for opportunity, for connection, and for stable roots. The inclusion of refugees within national education systems is a strategy that centers the first of these needs, intended to enable educational opportunities (Dryden-Peterson et al, 2018). We find that without explicit attention to and support of refugees' diverse linguistic repertoires, however, refugees' additional needs for relational inclusion in exile and sustained ties to people and places of origin fall by the wayside.

Across both contexts, language played a key role in the strategies refugee young people employed as they sought educational and professional opportunities. Sudanese and South Sudanese children in Uganda, and Syrian young people in Lebanon, sought English for opportunities, seeing the value of this language no matter where their paths might take them. But in many cases, like refugee learners in Kenya (Piper et al., 2020), the desire for English was not matched by institutional supports to allow young refugees to achieve language skills necessary for success in educational settings and work, leaving them unable to realize the potential promised by formal inclusion in educational settings.

Additionally, support for the languages and ways of communicating that might facilitate relationship-building in exile—another key component of educational inclusion—were also insufficient. In addition to the need for fluency in English, a language of opportunity in both contexts, comfort with local ways of speaking—whether in Luganda, the language used in Kampala, or in Lebanese-accented Arabic—defined the bounds of belonging for refugees.

Finally, although refugee young people in the sample acknowledged the necessity of building lives in exile, nonetheless, they yearned for the people and places of origin, including those in diaspora. The diverse linguistic repertoires they used prior to displacement

were a key component of these stable roots. Like children in diverse contexts who face language marginalization through educational policies that privilege dominant languages (e.g., Panagiotopoulou & Rosen, 2018), in Uganda, children worried about balancing the new language(s) they needed for life in exile with the languages they spoke with family and friends before displacement. Young Syrians expressed concern about how adopting new ways of speaking Arabic, or even new languages at the expense of Arabic could potentially impede relationships with family in Syria.

In tracing the "*phenomenon of interest*" of language-in-education among refugees (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017, p. 6, italics in original), we see just how complex issues of language—and language-in-education—are for refugee young people across contexts, ages, and life-stages. Global policies surrounding refugees' educational inclusion focus almost exclusively on the languages of school and work, which our participants echo as vital for expanding opportunities in the present and future. However, our participants also suggest that current approaches to linguistic inclusion pay scant attention to the multi-directional aspirations of refugee learners (Chopra & Dryden-Peterson, 2020), oversimplifying the vast linguistic repertoires required to navigate society and develop and deepen relationships across different settings—those of exile, origin, and potential onward migration.

These data point to the need for additive approaches to education (e.g., Bartlett & García, 2011) that build on refugees' existing language skills and provide structured support for learning languages needed for both educational and professional opportunities, as well as for developing the relationships of inclusion. Models for such support include language bridging programs that engage both refugees' target languages and familiar languages (e.g., Trudell, Nannyombi, and Teera, 2019) and ongoing support for teachers in linguistically diverse classrooms (Skutnabb-Kangas & Heugh, 2012). Further   research is needed on the experiences of language among refugees, and on programs that engage community members, institutional leaders, and diaspora in affirming refugees' multilingualism. This is critical for

moving away from a single-minded focus on language(s) of power in exile, and instead

toward the support of the diverse linguistic repertoires refugees desire and require for their

lives in the present and their vastly uncertain pathways into the future.

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