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14 Transnational grassroots language planning in the era of mobility and the Internet

The purpose of this chapter is to theorise grassroots language planning in the context of globalisation from below (Appadurai 2001). Grassroots language planning is defined here as bottom-up initiatives to influence the language use of minority language speakers without or with little involvement of official authorities. The chapter provides international examples of bottom-up planning to demonstrate how processes and sites of grassroots language planning have moved beyond the local to the translocal and transnational space, and how grassroots planning is linked with wider processes of transnational activism (Lacroix 2014). While locality of language practices is recognised as equally important, the chapter showcases the way grassroots globalisation and activism mobilises social actors in the transnational space. These changed contexts call for a theoretical shift in language planning and policy (LPP) and for studies to reconceptualise grassroots planning as a translocal activity using sociolinguistic theories of mobility. The chapter aims to provide a brief overview of these developments and focus researchers’ attention on recent conceptual shifts. The discussion draws on selected studies from international contexts but has a specific focus on the South Sudanese Australian community in which the author has conducted empirical research. This chapter is divided into three main sections guided by three research questions. Section 1 is a theoretical overview of grassroots language planning in the context of mobility, globalisation and the Internet; section 2 addresses the methodological challenge of exploring grassroots planning in transnational and translocal contexts; and section 3 provides a case study from the context of the South Sudanese community in Australia to showcase how theory works in practice, including the challenges of using technology for implementing a grassroots literacy class.

1 Language planning from bottom-up

1.1 Why grassroots planning?

Language planning and policy has traditionally been conceived as a top-down activity with involvement of government authorities, and the scope of such planning was bounded to the state as per modernist ideologies of the nation state (Moriarty 2015). According to Ager (2001: 5), language planning refers to the “ways in which organised communities […] consciously attempt to influence the language(s) their
members use”. It is widely accepted in the language planning and policy literature that there are multiple levels of planning involving different actors which exert different levels of influence on language. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) identified three main levels of planning: macro, meso and micro. While the distinction between these levels has been subject to theoretical debate (see Liddicoat this vol.; Schalley and Eisenchlas this vol.), in this chapter macro refers to top-down government policy, meso to policies applied on institutional level (e.g. school) and micro to grassroots or bottom-up processes initiated from the community or by individuals.

Bottom-up planning has received increasing focus of attention with scholars turning to explore how minority communities act to protect and promote their languages through their grassroots movements (Blommaert 2008; Hornberger 1999). This shift has occurred in parallel with the development of globalisation, and this is well reflected in current language planning and policy scholarship. For example, *The Oxford Handbook of Language Planning and Policy* (Tollefson and Pérez-Milans 2018) lists some of the following key words: globalisation, governmentality, inequality, late modernity, nationalism, and social media. Indeed, these words capture the most significant themes in the field, and this chapter will touch on some of these. However, the discussion here is necessarily selective and focuses on exploring grassroots language planning in the context of global mobility. Family language policy is not discussed here (see Lanza and Lomeu Gomes this vol. for discussion on family language policy). First, the chapter discusses how globalization has impacted the field of language planning and the implications for grassroots activism research.

### 1.2 Globalization from bottom up

While globalisation means different things to different people, it is generally associated with “global flows” and the “world in motion” (Appadurai 2001). Linguistic diversity in immigrant contexts is on the rise, but sadly, globalisation has brought the decline of indigenous minority languages, and there is a general consensus that global forces threaten to eradicate the local and the distinctive, such as endangered indigenous languages (McCarty, Nicholas, and Wyman 2012: 51; Mayer et al. this vol.). These processes, therefore, point towards a homogenisation of linguistic diversity as far as the global linguistic landscape is concerned.

However, flows are not coeval, convergent, isomorphic, or spatially consistent (Appadurai 2001: 5), but multidimensional, fluid and poly-scalar (Lacroix 2014: 653), and they impact local linguistic ecologies in diverse ways. Against the global process of homogenisation emerges a parallel process of “globalisation from bottom-up” or “grassroots globalisation”. These bottom-up processes contest top-down globalisation and create new forms of knowledge transfer and social mobilisation independently of the nation-state (Appadurai 2001: 3). Grassroots language activism in
linguistic minority communities, particularly immigrant groups, is a good example of such social mobilisation from bottom-up.

While nation-states have been perceived to be stable, globalisation is characterised by disjunctures which produce fundamental problems of livelihood, equity, suffering, justice, and governance (Appadurai 2001: 5). Therefore, there are two main lessons for researchers in home language maintenance: (1) language use and language choices need to be contextualised within these new transnational social fields (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004); and (2) research should focus on bottom-up processes as they hold a deeper “ecological stance” (Coupland 2010: 17). Keeping these broad challenges in mind, three general questions arise which have guided this chapter:

1. How can we conceptualise grassroot language planning in transnational social fields? (section 1)
2. How can we theorise grassroots language planning from a post-modern and critical lens? (section 2)
3. How can technology support the building and maintenance of transnational networks and grassroot language planning? (section 3)

### 1.3 New social fields of grassroots language planning: Locality and the transnational space

In order to address the first question, we need to consider what locality means in language planning. The notion of locality has been subject to international theoretical debate. According to scholars in human geography, places are social constructions created through actions performed in a particular space (Cresswell 2004; Harvey 1996; Murray and Lamb 2018). As Murray and Lamb (2018: 1) argue “we appropriate spaces, embody them, impose our identities on them and at the same time have our identities shaped by the places we inhabit and the practices we engage in”. In language planning, this means that language use can only be planned to the extent that language users appropriate the spaces around them and to the extent that they engage in activities which will allow them to mobilise their language resources in complex multilingual spaces.

While language planning and policy sites have moved beyond the local, this does not mean that locality is replaced by translocality. Local knowledge is an essential part of translocal initiatives. Local knowledge is “context-bound, community-specific, and nonsystematic because it is generated ground-up through social practice in everyday life” (Canagarajah 2005: 4). While the locality is not questioned in this chapter, the term “local” has become problematic in the context of language activism which transcends geographical and national borders. It is particularly problematic to conceive locality in describing second-generation speakers. While children of immigrants have traditionally been referred to as second-generation
migrants, they are also first-generation locals, and researchers have increasingly conceptualised their language maintenance alignments and identities in the “third space” (Winter and Pauwels 2007: 181) which is somewhere in-between their parents’ source country and their own. The term “poly-centric” has also been used to conceptualise language planning and policy as a multisite social process (Halwachs 2011: 398). Considering these points, grassroots planning is thus best described not just in physical locality but in transnational social fields where actors and actions span cross geographical boundaries.

Contemporary speech communities are local and global at the same time (Canagarajah 2005), as they are interconnected through new media (Internet, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.). In fact, traditional notions of “speech community” have been contested as a result of new translocal communication technologies (Varis and Nuenen 2017), and communities have, instead, been described as having multiple boundaries, being increasingly connected and being sites and generators of grassroots responsibilities and power (Li 2018). Migration research refers to transnational migrants who connect with their homeland and do not necessarily stay in their country of migration. An example is given from the US context by Levitt:

Over the past 20 years, Indian immigrants from Gujarat State have moved from villages and small towns in western India, first to rental apartment complexes in northeastern Massachusetts, and then to their own homes in subdivisions outside Boston. Watching these suburban dwellers work, attend school, and build religious congregations here, casual observers might conclude that yet another wave of immigrants has successfully joined in the pursuit of the American dream.

A closer look, however, reveals they are pursuing Gujarati dreams as well. They send money back to India to open businesses or improve family homes and farms. They work closely with religious leaders to establish Hindu groups in the United States, to strengthen religious life in their homeland, and to build a global Hindu community transcending national borders.

(Levitt 2004, paragraphs 4–5)

Indeed, contemporary migrant families are less local, more transitory and their language practices and membership status are contingent on relatively unpredictable future trajectories (Song 2016). As families simultaneously operate in the “here and now” of their adopted country as well as the “back at home” (Hatoss 2013), researchers have used the term *glocalisation* (García, Skutnabb-Kangas, and Torres-Guzmán 2006), and the notion of *simultaneity* to capture participation across multiple spaces and over various periods of time (Warriner and Wyman 2013). On the other hand, researchers have stressed that global forces should not deter us from the importance of *locality* and *situatedness* of language practices (Pennycook 2017), notwithstanding the emerging transnational space (Li and Zhu 2013).

Language choices are governed by complex factors, as language resources are “stratified and distributed across time, space, and place in sociolinguistic ecologies” (Hornberger and McCarty 2012: 3). Languages come to contact and live side by side, as different speakers share the same neighbourhood. However, languages are
not equal in terms of power and, therefore, we need to think of them as being strati-
fied, with the more powerful ones being at the top. This is why theorists have ar-
gued that space is both horizontal and vertical in which language choices are
governed by scales (vertical space) of indexicality (Blommaert 2010; Blommaert,
Collins, and Slembrouck 2005). Indexicality means that language choices signal the
speaker’s position about what the expected code is in a given situation. These ex-
pectations are shaped by multiple levels (scales) of connections in the actual local
context as well as in the imagined broader space of where people have come from
and what they are doing in that context. For example, case studies in indigenous
minority contexts have provided evidence for temporal and spatial scales governing
language use (Hornberger and McCarty 2012), and such temporal and spatial di-
mensions have also been shown to impact immigrant communities’ language prac-
tices (Hatoss 2013).

Spaces of multilingualism are transformed by the dialogic (Bakhtin 1981) relation-
ship between immigrants and their hosts, as immigrants do not arrive to empty spaces,
but to spaces which are already shaped by the norms of interaction set by the people
who participate in them (Blommaert 2010; Blommaert, Collins, and Slembrouck 2005;
Blommaert and Rampton 2011). These spaces are shaped as newcomers add their lin-
guistic repertoire and negotiate language use through language games (Habermas
2002). In summary, immigrants’ language ecology is filled with complex power struc-
tures and language use extends beyond the physical space. A significant new domain –
discussed in the following – is the use of new media (social media, You Tube, the
Internet), which provide new spaces for language planning.

1.4 New forms of connectedness and the Internet

With the spread of new media and technology, new types of diaspora, termed here as
“cyberspora” (Hatoss 2013), emerge. According to Appadurai (1996), global flows do
not just refer to people on the move (ethnoscapes), but also to the dissemination of
information (mediascapes), technology (technoscapes), global capital (finance-
scapes) and ideas (ideoscapes). The development of technology had a major impact
on the way languages are used across the globe and through technology language
communities are more interconnected than ever before.

For example, in the German context, Internet-based fora were found to provide
an opportunity for home language usage and vernacular digital literacies played an
important role in creating local content for local audiences (Androutsopoulos 2010:
206). In addition, scholars working within the frame of critical multilingualism have
pointed out connections between transnationalism and transnational identities
(Blackledge 2010; Block 2004; De Fina and Perrino 2013; Mazzaferro 2018; Owusu
2003; Song 2012) as well as transnational aspects of home language maintenance
The Internet has, therefore, become an important medium in grassroots language planning, language documentation, and language maintenance (Hatoss 2019b; Jany 2018; Jones 2014), and numerous case studies have provided evidence for the use of social media for language revitalisation, such as the use of Facebook for the revival of Yucatec Maya (Cru 2015) and Balinese (Stern 2017). Jany (2018) has argued that technology is beneficial for smaller languages and attributes this to the fact that the new generation is highly computer literate and its members are determined to connect with the friends they leave behind when they move to another country (Jany 2018: 75). Similarly, Eisenlohr (2004) has emphasised the practical benefits of computer technology for language revitalisation, stating that these techniques do not need to be tied to a particular locale and they can be available to relatively small groups of geographically dispersed language learners (Eisenlohr 2004: 24). Most importantly, in addition to these practical benefits, computer technology was identified as a tool in increasing the prestige of minority languages and “ideologically moving them away from peripheral, rural, and obsolete positions in space and time” (Eisenlohr 2004: 24). The use of electronic mediation is an important tool to “contest ideologies of contempt and to formulate alternative ways of ideologically mapping linguistic differentiation on time and space” (Eisenlohr 2004: 33). According to Eisenlohr (2004), electronic mediation of lesser used languages can help remove stereotypes of backwardness and create new iconicity where languages become indexical of modernity.

In another study (Reershemius 2017), Facebook was shown to provide a useful channel for the maintenance of Low German, an autochthonous heritage language. In another context, Matras stated: “the virtual space serves as an organic transnational network through which a shared Romani cultural identity is celebrated via the medium of a shared language” (Matras 2015: 302). Matras (2015) attributes the spread of Romani to key developments of global nature, such as “increased networking and mobility opportunities, the rise of digital communication technology, the role of social media in facilitating virtual communities, the strengthening of transnational forms of governance especially in connection with safeguarding regional and minority rights, and the growing acceptance of multiple identities or ‘scapes’” (Matras 2015: 313). As touched on above, another example, in the context of indigenous minorities, is provided by Cru (2015), who reports that the use of Yucatec Maya on Facebook has had a much greater impact on the vitality of the language than top-down government policy, as it has led to an ideological shift of legitimacy of Mayan language from the ground up. Cru argues that its presence on Facebook also led to the deterritorialised use of Mayan in a globalised and transnational context with Maya speakers living outside the local area of Yucatán. A success story in a migrant context was the case study of Latino immigrants in the United States (Noguerón-Liu 2013) where adult immigrants engaged with technology to develop digital literacies. The study concluded that as a result of the creation of an online space Spanish was more valued, and community members used their agency to materialize the delivery of the content (Noguerón-Liu 2013: 46). In this study
the key to success was that “multiple social fields that spanned national borders overlapped and allowed the flow of educational resources across microlevel networks such as family relationships and macrolevel structures such as the binational institutional agreement that made computer classes in Spanish possible” (Noguerón-Liu 2013: 45).

Another study from the European context (Pelliccia 2013) has reported how Greek students maintain their language and identity through online media while living in Italy:

Equipped with technological know-how, people interviewed use all manner of technology such as the internet, computers, software (‘Skype’), webcams, smartphones and all means which allow for audio-visual communication in real time with friends and family both in Italy and Greece. Through the internet they read the most important Greek daily newspapers or online news portals such as ‘H Kathimerini’, ‘To Vima’, ‘Ta Néa’, ‘Tromaktikó’, ‘Elefterotipía’, as well as Italian and international ones (‘BBC’ and ‘CNN’) from which they collect information on what is happening in Greece. Some even have satellite TV in their homes that gives them the feeling of being in Greece while staying in Italy. (Pelliccia 2013: 75)

In summary, as the examples above have shown, language communities connect translocally and participate in transnational social networks. They utilise technology for building and maintaining these connections and to further their language activism. Therefore, researchers have an emerging rich ground to theorise activism in these new spaces. This challenge is discussed in the next section.

2 The theoretical challenge: New social spaces require new concepts and methods

Considering the shifts in social spaces of language use and the increasing interconnectedness through technology, there are a number of methodological challenges facing researchers of language planning. In this section I will propose cosmopolitanism as a new theoretical frame used in sociology to capture the transnational connectedness of communities involved in planning their language. I will contrast this with traditional nation-state-based (or nationalist) theories of language planning.

2.1 From nationalism to cosmopolitanism

Globalisation theorists and critical sociolinguists (Appadurai 1996, 2001; Block 2004; Blommaert 2010; Giddens 2000; Habermas 2000; Ricento 2010) have argued for new social theories which are better suited to describe social processes in our contemporary post-modern world. One direction in sociology is provided through the concept of cosmopolitanism, which offers useful methodological insights for
the study of language planning. Cosmopolitanism has been critiqued for being a western concept and it has been largely used to refer to cross-cultural tolerance: cosmopolitanism might be best understood as a way forward toward a more just world (Levitt 2016: 276). However, cosmopolitanism is also a useful analytical lens in sociology. Traditional social research based on the nation-state idea has become unfit for the study of contemporary society (Beck and Sznaider 2006). Instead, a cosmopolitan outlook which moves away from bounded territoriality is more suitable to describe grassroots actions involving transnational movements. The key tenets of cosmopolitanism are summarised in Table 1 and contrasted with nation-based approaches to the study of society, that is methodological nationalism.

Table 1: Contrasting methodological nationalism and cosmopolitanism (Hatoss 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodological nationalism</th>
<th>Cosmopolitan outlook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>clear distinction between national and international</td>
<td>blurred boundaries between national and international</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contrasting stable and homogenous units</td>
<td>exploring dynamic and heterogeneous units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unit of analysis: the nation state</td>
<td>unit of analysis: the cosmopolitan space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>categories of analysis are rigid and static</td>
<td>categories of analysis are characterized by 'fluidity', 'liquidity' and 'mobility'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social actors are treated as separate and belonging to one nation state</td>
<td>recognition of interdependency among social actors across national boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focussed on national</td>
<td>focussed on transnational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses national statistical indicators: mono-perspectival – one 'lens'</td>
<td>uses multi-perspectival – multiple ‘lenses’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, the cosmopolitan outlook provides a useful theoretical tool to conceptualise transnational language planning and policy.

While the discussion so far has focussed on the sites of language planning and policy, the next section will focus on motives and agency as the underlying forces in grassroots language planning and consider why communities engage in planning from bottom up, what constraints they face and how structure and agency come together to shape the social fields in which they aim to maintain their home languages.

2.2 Agency and equity

While the focus thus far has been on sites of language planning, this section turns its attention to three important sub-questions: Who does the planning? With what power? What does this mean for equity in language planning? Language planning and policy
has been increasingly theorised as involving complex interactions between structural, cultural and agentive processes (Glasgow and Bouchard 2019). With the development of the ecological approach to language planning and policy (Baldauf 2006; Mühlhäusler 2000; Pennycook 2004), researchers have turned their attention to decipher how communities exercise their agency to manage their linguistic resources and how such processes can be conceptualised with theories of language planning and policy. While past language planning and policy theory saw individuals and communities as victims or beneficiaries of certain historical and structural factors (Tollefson 1991), in current language planning and policy literature there has been more recognition of the active role individuals and communities play in shaping their linguistic future. Concepts of grassroots planning, agency, advocacy, and activism are just a few which have become some of the keywords in the study of language planning and policy.

Thus, the post-modern turn brought greater attention to agency in language planning and policy (Baynham 2006; Bouchard and Glasgow 2019; Carter and Sealey 2000; Hatoss 2019a; Sikoli 2011; Šimić 2019). While early language planning and policy was criticised for being devoid of agency (Ricento 2000, 2006), there is a current consensus in the literature that agency is relevant to every level of language planning and policy, and not only top-down authorities (such as governments) but also individuals can engage in agentive behaviour and influence language outcomes. Agency research in language planning and policy, however, is divided between social realism which recognises the cause and effect relations between agentive action and linguistic consequences, and the discursive approach which argues that social reality does not exist in its objective form but is partly conditioned and partly constructed through discourse (Hatoss 2019a). No matter which side we accept, it is essential for language planning and policy researchers to apply methodologies which “situate evidence of agentive processes in relation to broader structural and cultural forces, which act as constraints and enablements upon agentive movements” (Glasgow and Bouchard 2019: 4).

Furthermore, critical theorists in language planning and policy have increasingly turned their attention to social justice (see e.g. Piller 2016; Annamalai and Skutnabb-Kangas this vol.). The linguistic human rights argument in language policy discourse is not new; however, it has mainly concentrated on traditional indigenous minorities and the protection of their language rights (Kymlicka and Patten 2003; May 2011; Phillipson 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, 2008). Yet, equity and social justice are also central to immigrant communities and grassroots language planning, as language inequities impact on community wellbeing and need to be examined in light of social, political, demographic and power inequities. While linguistic diversity per se is not a political problem, it becomes a problem when linguistic diversity is ignored (Makoni and Trudell 2006: 21). According to Makoni and Trudell, while less powerful groups are often the users of minority languages, “national unity need not imply cultural or linguistic uniformity” (Makoni and Trudell 2006: 21). On the contrary, a stronger and more equitable unity is achieved when national authorities recognise “the right of
individual communities to distinct language and cultural practices, and do not with- hold resources or power from such communities” (Makoni and Trudell 2006: 21).

Contrary to the moral and ethical obligation to support equity in language provision, top-down national policies rarely address the needs of all immigrant communities. For example, in Australia immigrant communities have three ways to maintain their heritage language, but none of these programs cater for the needs of smaller languages. The first option is the Saturday Schools managed through the Ethnic Schools Council of Australia (see also Nordstrom this vol.). Within this program, approximately over 100,000 students participate in learning 69 languages (CLA 2019). However, these ethnic schools are dependent on the numerical strength in the ethnic community, and smaller and more dispersed language communities struggle to run sustainable programs. While ethnic schools have traditionally been viewed as bastions of conservatism, they have been shown to respond to new trends in technology, travel and migration (Cruickshank 2019). Secondly, children of immigrant backgrounds can attend Languages Other Than English (LOTE) classes as part of the mainstream education system, but language offerings are limited to prestigious and economically useful, mainly European and Asian languages, and the levels are often limited to beginners, which does not suit the immigrant children who are already conversant in the language. Therefore, smaller communities are left with the third option, that is to set up their own grassroots programs. The next section explains why these programs fill an important gap and respond better to local needs.

2.3 Local initiatives are more responsive to local needs and more equitable

Several studies have illustrated that local initiatives can be more effective in language planning than top down policies. For example, in a study in the European context, Halwachs (2011) illustrates that more localised approaches to planning Romani, such as the national Macedonian and the local Burgenland Romani approaches, have been more successful than the international standardisation initiatives, as local initiatives were more responsive to the on-going developments in the respective speech community and catered better for the needs and wishes of both the speakers and their representatives. Therefore, the more language planning initiatives are rooted in the respective speech communities, the more successful they are, as the lack of an authorised body to implement or to impose language-planning efforts is thus compensated (Halwachs 2011: 388).

Heterogeneity has been shown to be a key factor in the success of grassroots planning initiatives. In traditional language planning and policy, ethnic communities were often seen as homogenous, though, and home language maintenance studies typically aimed to describe trends of intergenerational language maintenance of a given speech community with tools designed for describing stable and homogeneous
conditions (Clyne 2003). Drawing on the case of Romani, again, Halwachs (2011) described the challenges of language planning on supranational and national levels for Romani speakers, as the Romani groups are highly heterogeneous, speaking different varieties, and groups also compete on the political level. Romani is mainly used for symbolic purposes and there is no authority which could take charge of corpus planning. As Halwachs (2011: 384) argues, it is impossible to initiate language planning activities which aim at a unified variety in such heterogenous groups, and without a robust corpus planning, acquisition planning is doomed to fail.

As we have seen there are a number of factors impacting community language initiatives, and top-down policy rarely solves the problem of small languages. Grassroots planning plays an important role, but these programs are challenging to set up and to make sustainable, as section 3 will discuss.

3 Case study of Cyberspora: Dinka literacy online in Australia

In this section, I draw on a case study of an online Dinka literacy class (Hatoss 2013, 2019b) to illustrate the theoretical points raised in this chapter. The study is an example of a bottom-up initiative using technology and illustrates the translocal nature of grassroots language planning in a specific diasporic context. While the project was initiated as part of a broader research agenda exploring intergenerational language maintenance in the South Sudanese community in Australia (Hatoss 2013), the Dinka literacy class was an unplanned outcome, resulting from the ongoing dialogue between the research team and the community. The next section explains how the project came about, its aims and how it was implemented.

3.1 The project

During the ethnographic stage of the larger sociolinguistic project conducted in the local South Sudanese and other African communities in regional South East Queensland (Australia), one of the key findings that surfaced was that various local Dinka language schools were initiated by individuals as the community was keen to maintain their heritage language (the majority were Dinka speakers from South Sudan). However, these programs proved to be unsustainable due to poor attendance and shortage of resources. For example, most families did not have access to transport and the volunteer teacher drove children to the Saturday classes back and forth, which proved to be an onerous task. As the teacher explained, his whole Saturday was occupied with collecting kids and then dropping them back to their homes. In addition, the teaching resources were rather limited, and the community
relied on schoolbooks transported across from South Sudan. There was a need to make the program more engaging for children and to make it easier for them to participate. There was also a need to share the teaching task across more volunteers, which meant involving people across various geographical locations.

The project developed from bottom-up, as the community was involved in formulating the aims and the processes from the beginning. According to cultural traditions, the research team set up an initial meeting with the community leaders, where the current state of affairs was discussed. A group of elders were invited and asked to share their thoughts on the status of language maintenance activities in the community. These discussions were in addition to a community-wide sociolinguistic survey about language use and maintenance. After discussing the issues, the group decided to create a learning opportunity where children could use computers and learn Dinka in their own homes. This would solve the problem of sustainability as children from different parts of Australia could engage with the program. The idea of having an online program was also attractive, as language and teaching resources could be shared across various locations.

As a result, and with help from the research team, an online program was designed to teach basic Dinka literacy skills such as the Dinka alphabet and reading short texts. However, there was a shortage of Dinka literacy materials, and as parents emphasised the need to teach their children the traditional Dinka stories, it was decided that the best way to generate content was to ask parents to record their stories, which could be then written down and uploaded to the online platform for all children to read and share. These texts were then placed online to be used in an asynchronous learning environment. The recorded content was introduced by two teachers: a Dinka speaker and an English speaker using a Voki-animated character. In addition, a synchronous class component was added using the WizIQ platform. This platform used a whiteboard and allowed teachers to write letters and words, while children also shared their Dinka words online. Children from across two different states (Queensland and New South Wales) engaged in these weekly classes. The pilot project ran for a period of eight weeks. The researchers, including one from the Dinka community, were engaged as volunteer teachers. These researchers reflected on the experience and asked participants about their views on the program. The main outcomes are summarised in the next section.

### 3.2 The project outcomes

As previously explained, the aim of the project was to engage Dinka speakers from different locations as they had difficulty attending traditional classes due to the geographical distances. We also aimed to make the project bottom-up by making sure that all community members participated in the decision making and in all planning stages, which included deciding on content, materials, material developers, and teachers,
Based on participants’ feedback, the following benefits for home language maintenance were identified. Participants reported that the project

- engaged all age groups in the community (i.e., children, youth, adults, grandparents and elders) in the local as well as in transnational communities;
- encouraged a whole family approach to the development of materials: parents recorded oral stories in Dinka, children created picture books, etc.;
- enhanced participants’ identity engagement, reaffirming their own ethnic and linguistic identity and cultural traditions;
- empowered parents in terms of their capacity to assist their children in their literacy development;
- enhanced the visibility and audibility of Dinka in the community and beyond;
- raised the status of Dinka as a language of literacy and of educational value;
- enhanced the feeling of belonging in the diaspora transnationally;
- developed participants’ sense of agency and empowerment vis-à-vis the way to learn and teach their language to the next generation; and
- allowed for the use of dialects and removed the sense of censorship associated with prescriptive grammar and the ideology of language as uniform and monolithic.

Overall, the project proved to be a useful pilot to explore the possibilities provided by technology in terms of grassroots language initiatives. As mentioned above, children engaged with the project materials across two Australian states, namely, Queensland and New South Wales. This demonstrates the translocal aspect of planning, as the materials produced in New South Wales were also utilised by Queensland-based families and vice versa. Since the project required active engagement from parents across two states, it became a translocal site of grassroots planning where parents used their agency to mobilise their linguistic resources. Parents were highly motivated to transfer their heritage language to their children, and they were keen for their children to participate. As these families came from refugee background, the project served an additional purpose of community building, particularly, in resilience building. In contrast with top-down planning where community members were told what to do, the project allowed them to use their agentive role to increase their sense of self-efficacy.

The sociolinguistic survey (Hatoss 2013) conducted in the community showed that South Sudanese families were strongly motivated to maintain their home languages in Australia. This motivation was linked to complex translocal spatio-temporal relations such as the “here and now” in Australia, the “back home and now” in South Sudan, and the “imagined future” either in Australia or in their homeland (Hatoss 2013). Parents considered it important that their children maintained their home language for cultural and identity reasons, but also for their potential future return to South Sudan. They considered their home language critical for keeping ties with family members and friends left behind in Africa as well as those who settled across the globe, e.g. in the United States and Canada. This illustrates that transnational ties are
not only channels for the dissemination of linguistic resources (agency as action) but constitute important motivational factors for home language maintenance (agency as motive) (Hatoss 2019a). These transnational aspects of language planning need attention in research. Researchers of language planning must look beyond who does what in language planning in one locality and explore the actions and motives translocally.

Notwithstanding its positive outcomes, the project faced numerous challenges. In terms of agency, it was difficult to come to agreement in the community about who should fulfil which roles. Some participants had the view that the government should be responsible for providing Dinka classes for their children rather than the parents, as they were busy seeking employment and supporting their families. It was also a challenge to keep the program running after the official project was over. In terms of equity, the community valued that everyone had the opportunity to participate regardless of their location. However, as previously discussed, heterogeneity proved to be a key challenge, as four different dialects of Dinka were competing in the local and the translocal (across cities in Australia) linguistic ecology. While there was a high level of mutual intelligibility across the various dialects of Dinka, the various dialect groups have attached strong symbolic value to their local dialect and insisted on their dialect being used for the development of learning and teaching materials. For example, the teaching materials sent from South Sudan were written in Dinka Rek, and were thus judged as unsuitable by Dinka Bor speakers due to the vocabulary and spelling differences (Hatoss 2013).

Access to computers and the Internet was also a major challenge and curtailed the success of the program. Even though most households had a computer in the home, there were several children competing for access, and adults were also using the same computer for their study and work purposes. Therefore, the so-called “digital divide” (Noguerón-Liu 2013) was evident and this was consistent with other studies (see e.g. Noguerón-Liu 2013) which argued that computer access was a major obstacle in the development of online digital literacy programs for minority learners. Also, the digital disadvantage was a factor at both ends of the migrant journey. This means that families did not have computer access in their country of origin and continued to have limited access in their country of residence. Overall, the project was a useful endeavour to map the possibilities and challenges in developing a grassroots literacy program online, and the lessons learnt from this project are potentially useful for other minority language communities also. These main lessons are summed up in the conclusion.

4 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a brief overview of current theoretical development in the area of grassroots language planning, with a specific focus on conceptualising translocal, transnational initiatives assisted by the use of technology. There are three main
points that are essential for future studies of home language maintenance. Firstly, the analytical shift from the local to the translocal is essential, as sites of grassroots language planning transgress national boundaries and connect communities across cities, states, and nations. That is, grassroots language planning needs to be interpreted, analysed and evaluated as performed by transnational actors in transnational social fields. Cosmopolitanism, as outlined in this chapter (also see Hatoss 2013), provides useful conceptual tools and keeps scholarly attention on the fluidity, translocality and transnational dynamics of contemporary speech communities and their language planning initiatives. Secondly, grassroots language planning initiatives play a crucial role in addressing issues of equity and social justice for diasporic speech communities. As numerical strength (or weakness) of a language community is often a determining factor in access to government funded top-down support for minority languages, bottom-up planning is more responsive to small minorities’ local needs, their heterogeneity, and resulting initiatives are more inclusive and more likely to be sustainable. Migrants’ agency and motivation to maintain their home language is linked to transnational social fields such as the projected and imagined return to the home country in the future. Thirdly, as we have seen through the online Dinka literacy program, grassroots language planning is likely to be successful if it involves engagement of the community from the very beginning. The bottom-up language planning allows communities to enhance their transnational identity and cultural affirmation. The use of technology is a catalyst in this process and provides new spaces for language maintenance and language activism in diasporic and “cybersporic” contexts. The obstacles of the digital divide can be overcome by the involvement of government support from both the source and the host countries.

Researchers of grassroot language planning must not lose sight of the emerging new media of language planning and must explore the transnational aspects of language use, language motives, agency and language planning. Policy research trajectories focussing solely on the national and top-down level lose sight of globalisation from bottom up. Minority communities, however, are equipped with agency and transnational motives to influence the future of their languages within their own community as well as transnationally. They also have the capacity to make a change symbolically through shifting old-fashioned ideologies and by creating new spaces for minority languages in new media. For this, they need support from other agencies, but these should remain secondary to the community-led initiatives.

As top-down policies do not always achieve their objectives (Ricento 2000), and it is increasingly difficult for governments to accommodate the cultural and linguistic diversity within state systems, grassroots activism continues to be key to language maintenance in minority language communities. For this, technology provides exciting new opportunities. Globalization from the top may lead towards linguistic homogeneity, globalization from bottom-up leads to the emergence of small languages in wider spaces of communication, such as the Internet. These are exciting news for language planning as action and research.
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