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The Body as a Site for (Un)Making the ‘Other’: Shona Speaking Migrants’ Negotiation of Identity Politics in Johannesburg

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ABSTRACT

Shona-speaking Zimbabwean migrants have become an ingrained part of Johannesburg, South Africa. This situation has radically transformed Zimbabwean migration to South Africa from a historically largely ethnicized—mostly Ndebele speaking—to a more mixed movement of both Shona- and Ndebele-speaking people. This pronounced presence of Shona-speaking migrants raises questions of how they situate themselves in Johannesburg in light of how their language indexes them as “amakwerekwere” in a hostile context characterized by intense othering. This article stems from a multisited sociolinguistic ethnography in Johannesburg and discusses the experiences of Shona-speaking migrants across various interactional domains. Migrants’ narratives reveal that without the “appropriate” linguistic repertoires in a hostile and xenophobic context, they navigate “insecure spaces” through a range of strategies that mainly center on the body such as “appropriate” dress code (stylizing and decoration), deploying a “streetwise” gait, and calculative management of personal space—acts that blur and destabilize the categories and classifications of a “legitimate” body. I frame my analysis within a selective reading of diverse critical perspectives on situated discourse, with the major concepts being from foundational work by Goffman, Bourdieu, and Blommaert, whose concept of “orders of indexicality” builds on the genealogy of work attuned to issues of the corporeal, power, inequality, and performative in sociolinguistic interaction.

KEYWORDS

Migrants; identity; body; repertoires; codes; silence; drama; game

This article discusses how Shona-speaking migrants who are part of a broad continuum of “amakwerekwere,” negotiate their “stigma” within spaces of intimate contact in Johannesburg. “Amakwerekwere” is a derogatory and putatively onomatopoeic term, frequently used by South Africans to describe African foreigners, whose languages are said to be indecipherable (cf. Hassim, Kupe, & Worby, 2008; Nyamnjoh, 2006). The notion of “amakwerekwere” has become associated with

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violence and the issue of identity borders on questions of life and death. Such threats are even more accentuated in a context like Johannesburg, which is known as the “fearful city,” (Dirsuweit, 2002), where vigilante violence is a marked feature of dealing with conflict (Bearak, 2009). Focusing primarily on public streets and taxis that migrants identify as salient sites of contact and interaction with the in-group, I argue that within limitations of a “marked” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004) code (language variety), Shona-speaking migrants who have no recourse to an indigenous Black South African language have developed strategies to (re)present the “appropriate” identity and simultaneously “pass” as “normal” (Goffman, 1963). These strategies are mainly built around the “body” or in Bourdieu’s language—“bodily hexis” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 86)—how through approximation of the “legitimate” appearance, the body is (re)decorated, (re)deployed, (re)styled, and (re)constructed for the interlocutors’ gaze. This adorning of a social mask and the consequent passing as normal through the display of the appropriate body and bodily hexis is complemented by a tactical maintenance of linguistic distance.

Shona-speaking migrants occupy a continuum of amakwerekwere, which generally encompasses most Black African foreigners in South Africa, such as Nigerians, Somalians, Congolese, Mozambicans, and so forth (see Madsen, 2004; Morris, 1998; Vigouroux, 2005). However, research reveals that the unrelenting crisis in Zimbabwe, which has resulted in intensified migration, has seen Zimbabweans increasingly being singled out in xenophobic sentiments and attacks (Crush & Tawodzera, 2011; Crush & Tevera, 2010). The Solidarity Peace Trust and People Against Suffering Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP) (2012, p. 40) note that within a discourse of heightened resentment of Zimbabweans, “Zimbabwean” is used by South Africans with a negative connotation; someone who does something socially unacceptable—stealing, smelling, or begging is referred to negatively as being “*Zimbabwean*.” While Ndebele-speaking migrants from Zimbabwe are just as visible in terms of numbers in Johannesburg, their language—Ndebele—is mutually intelligible with South Africa’s Nguni cluster of languages (Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, Swati), unlike Shona-speaking migrants’ Shona language, which is distinctly Zimbabwean. This raises an interesting question of how Shona-speaking migrants experience and navigate Johannesburg.

Drawing on Shona-speaking migrants’ “own narrativization” (Sfard & Prusak, 2005, p. 16) of themselves and their experiences, the article discusses how Shona-speaking migrants’ bodies are reconstituted and deployed as salient resources and communication codes in negotiating a discriminatory context characterized by intense politics of identity. Confronted by a negative value on their language and the consequent denial of voice, Shona-speaking migrants have to have a good understanding of the inscriptions in interactional spaces and engage in the requisite “presentation of self” (Goffman, 1959). Migrants’ narratives stem from recursive lived experiences and should be understood as “categories of practice” on which we should ground our “categories of analysis” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, p. 4).

Theoretically, I draw on foundational thinking that is attuned to the entanglements of power, inequality, difference, and the construction of the Other in sociolinguistic interaction and identity work, as well as on salience of the corporeal and performative (Blommaert, 2005, 2007; Bourdieu, 1991; Goffman, 1959, 1963). I conceive of Shona-speaking migrants as individuals emerging from Zimbabwean “social conditions” that have endowed them with a particular “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1991). This habitus—dispositions that incline them to act, dress, walk, talk, behave in certain ways—are inscribed in their bodies (Bourdieu, 1991). Entry into the Johannesburg (South Africa) “field” (Bourdieu, 1991) endows a particular value on these embodied capitals of migrants. At a broad and general level their language and bodies are stigmatized and “marked” as those of amakwerekwere. However, Shona-speaking migrants’ narratives reveal that they are agentic and their habitus as adaptive and can be reoriented within certain limits to suit their new context. In order to trace this negotiation of stigmatization, I follow how migrants play their dramas and games (Bourdieu, 1990; Goffman, 1959) within face-to-face encounters (Goffman, 1983) in the co-bodily presence of South Africans. These face-to-face encounters occur within specific “fields of practice” (Bourdieu, 1991) and are underlain by diverse “orders of indexicality” (Blommaert, 2005, 2007), which are various shifting evaluative mechanisms and centers of authority that attach different values on Shona-speaking migrants’ codes (language variety) and by extension identities. These orders of indexicality inform the orientations that migrants take during interactions with specific interlocutors and within specific relationships and the associated roles. The elevation of certain languages and certain appearances as authentic markers of belonging—for instance Zulu, Sotho, and Xhosa languages—and being light, respectively, is illustrative of what constitutes orders of indexicality that migrants have to contend with.

Thinking of Shona-speaking migrants this way opens up avenues for grasping social identity as a power-laden, situational and performative process in which individuals are strategic performers conscious of the economy of their interface with different interlocutors. Furthermore integrating these concepts produces an analytical schema that is sensitive to the complex interplay between structure and agency. Furthermore, it is also attuned to the concerns of inequality, power, and difference in sociolinguistic interaction as well as the corporeal, which are central in the narratives of Shona-speaking migrants. From the emergent themes in migrants’ narratives, I suggest in this article that in a context of explicit discrimination in which “outsiderness” is largely produced through embodied practices seen as inauthentic (language and the body), understanding Shona-speaking migrants’ negotiation of insecure spaces in Johannesburg entails that we bring back the body into our analysis instead of depriving it of agency and only invoking it as a mere target for sniffing out the Other as research on the subject currently does. As Goffman (1963, p. 59) argues, information about individuals’ social identity is embodied and “conveyed through bodily expression in the immediate presence of those who receive the expression.” I therefore take the body and how it is presented not

as simple nonperformance but as meaningful sociolinguistic resources with the capacity to produce certain effects and identities—forms of capital—in the economy of sociolinguistic analysis. These questions of how Shona-speaking migrants navigate Johannesburg are of critical importance in light of the fact that in South Africa individuals are disqualified and marked as *amakwerekwere* on the basis of being “stutterers” (Nyamnjoh, 2006, p. 39)—that is, those who speak indecipherable languages and whose bodies are seen as not typifying South Africanness or “local authenticity” (Heller, 2006).

The article is organized, after the introduction, into three sections. In the first section I survey literature on Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa focusing on race and its centrality in the classification of the Other and also on how the body has been at the center of the politics of identity yet most accounts of migrants’ experiences present migrants as disembodied figures. Thereafter, I offer an abridged discussion of theory and sensitizing concepts, followed by a section on how data were gathered, then an analysis, and lastly, a discussion.

The disembodied subject: Silence about silence and the body in South Africa’s discourses on the Other

Much work has been done on the subject of exclusion and hostility faced by foreigners in postapartheid South Africa, which often culminates in physical violence generally referred to as “xenophobic” (see Hassim et al., 2008; Landau, 2005). Notably, this literature points to a particular logic in the classification and categorization of foreigners coming to South Africa. Some foreigners are classified as the unwanted (no)bodies. In Bauman’s language they constitute the “untouchables” (Bauman, 2002, p. 292), while others are “unmarked” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Race has been noted to underlie these classifications and categorizations, with “black” and “dark” African bodies constructed as synonymous with “outsiderness” (Neocosmos, 2010; Nyamnjoh, 2006) and state discourses conflating them with the illegal and criminal (cf. Peberdy, 2001). Mathers and Landau (2007) speak of “natives,” “tourists,” and “amakwerekwere” and note how visitors to South Africa are seen through a binary that associates Whiteness with legitimate tourism and Blackness with “amakwerekwere.” Mngxitama’s (2008, p. 197) statement after the May 2008 xenophobic attacks that left an estimated 62 people dead that “there are no white kwerekweres in our country” underscores how race contours this othering and the attendant categories and classifications.

Black bodies that are constructed and rendered the strange and illegal are targets for various forms of exclusion and violence. During the xenophobic attacks of 2008, a shibboleth was applied to delineate those who belonged in South Africa from *amakwerekwere*; that is to say, people were prompted to pronounce certain words in an indigenous Black South African language, in most cases in the Zulu language (Hassim et al., 2008; Ndlovu, 2010). Those who failed to speak in the expected manner were physically attacked, with the broad outcome being serious

injuries, deaths, and widespread displacement of people from their homes. The centrality of the body in the construction of amakwerekwere and the consequent bounds of exclusion are evident in various analyses of Black African migrants' experiences in South Africa. In his discussion of the experiences of Black Western African migrants in Johannesburg, Morris (1998, p. 1125) notes how Congolese and Nigerian immigrants stand out due to "their physical features, their bearing, their clothing style and their inability to speak one of the indigenous languages." Minnaar and Hough (as cited in Peberdy, 2001, p. 21) also reveal how "foreign black Africans are identified by a range of superficial physical features: by skin color (as Africans from further north are held to be darker or "blacker" than South Africans); by vaccination marks; by "traditional" scarification marks; and by accent, language ability, and dress." Despite the clear centrality of the body in how certain groups of people are classified as normal and others as the "Other," the body remains ignored in understanding how migrants negotiate the regimes of (ab)normalization in South Africa. Analyses on the subject disembodied migrants and ignore the body as a possible resource and avenue for resisting, (re)constructing, negotiating otherness and producing "discursive space" (De Cillia, Reisigl, & Wodak, 1999). Interest has primarily been on speech, which is seen as sociolinguistically the most significant. As some scholars incisively note, "When speech does not occur, the absence of behaviour is not particularly obvious and does not attract attention. Second, and related to the first point, the absence of behaviour is more difficult to study than overt and more obvious behaviour" (Johanesen as cited in Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003, p. 1364). Gal's (1989) work on women, speech and silence, for instance, reveals that even silence is not simply an indication of passivity. Rather, as she notes, "Silence and inarticulateness are not, in themselves, necessarily signs of powerlessness." Instead "silence [is] like any linguistic form [and] gains different meanings and has different material effects within specific institutional and cultural contexts" (Gal, 1989, p. 2).

The embodied self, performativity, and identity games: Some sensitizing concepts

The migration of Zimbabwean migrants has made South Africa's "linguistic market" (Bourdieu, 1991) complex. This complexity is more pronounced in Johannesburg, which has been the destination of most Black African migrants. In light of these movements and the subsequent Other languages and cultures in Johannesburg, some commentaries equate Johannesburg to the "tower of babel" (Wende, 2010). However, as already noted, xenophobia hogs the limelight when it comes to how Black African foreigners experience South Africa. Johannesburg is noted to be the epicenter of these various forms of exclusion and violence.

I am interested in how Shona-speaking migrants experience intimate social intercourse and bodily co-presence in "insecure spaces" of the public streets and taxis. Goffman (1983, p. 2) calls such spaces, which are the locus of face-to-face

encounters, the “interaction order.” According to Goffman (1959, 1983) individuals in the “interaction order” performatively construct their social identities through and in interaction. Individuals’ bodily co-presence in spaces inhabited by others and the associated necessity of self-representation exert constraints on the interactants thus acting as a normative structure that produces order (Goffman, 1983). These constraints are notable in how in performatively constructing social identities actors are cognizant of the specific expectations of their different audiences. This results in self (re)presentations, which tend to locate the expected and approved in the front stage while what is likely to be discrediting is pushed to the back stage (Goffman, 1959). In his work on Stigma, Goffman (1963) asserts that society constructs the regimes of normalization and by extension the associated social identities that become seen as either “normal” or “abnormal” (and stigmatized). Save for a few universal cases, stigma is to a great degree socially constructed, relational, and relative to the normative standards within a specific context. Individuals’ performances and self (re)presentations reflect these accredited classifications and categories (Goffman, 1959, p. 45). How do Shona migrants construct and perform identities in the interaction orders of the taxi and streets of Johannesburg?

Bourdieu’s (1991) concepts of the *habitus*, *field*, *capital*, and *bodily hexis* are integral in locating social stratification, differences, and inequality in social interaction and social practice. The habitus is “an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 95; De Cillia et al., 1999). De Cillia et al. in their study of the imagination and construction of Austrian national identity posit that the concept of habitus is also of great utility in understanding the “common dispositions” of the in-group and the subsequent construction of the out-group (1999, p. 4). As some have noted, nationalism, ideologies of the state and nation-making projects are intricately tied to the construction of “linguistic norms” and the subsequent boundaries set up to police “local authenticity” (Heller, 2006). The construction of the nation and those who belong to it—through imaginaries and myths that make nationals different from non-nationals—feeds into “what counts as a proper language” (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991; Heller, 2006) and by extension the legitimate body in a nation. In the case of Shona-speaking migrants, their linguistic and general habitus would not only reveal the conditions from which they emerge but also make them distinct from South Africans in their conduct and the way they deploy their bodies in sociolinguistic interaction and other forms of practice. The field on the other hand is “a structured space of positions in which positions and interrelations are determined by the distribution of different kinds of resources or capital” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 14). Johannesburg is one such field in which the linguistic capitals of Shona-speaking migrants would locate them on the rung of the dominated in light of the fact that these languages expose them as the Other. Social practice for Bourdieu is the outcome of the interface between the habitus and a specific field of practice (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Specifically focusing on language, people’s linguistic habitus (capitals) and associated bodily hexis receive

their value within specific fields of practice and in the co-presence of empirical interlocutors (Bourdieu, 1991). However, Bourdieu (1991) notes that the habitus can function in a field other than the one that produced it. This endows the habitus with a flexible capacity to adapt and incorporate new schemes that are relevant to the context they are in. Bourdieu (1990, p. 66) endows social agents with agency and notes that they develop a “feel for the game” that informs how they innovate within specific fields of practice. It is this “feel for the game that gives Shona-speaking migrants the agency to innovate and discursively produce space for themselves in what are generally insecure spaces. Respondents for instance display “knowledge” of what constitutes a legitimate body, and how they are constituted by their interlocutors through their languages and bodies. Respondents note that Zimbabwe endowed them with a different kind of English, what Bourdieu refers to as “expressive styles”; or to borrow from Gumperz (1966), Zimbabweans are endowed with different “repertoires.” Bourdieu, analyzing language in society, notes that these expressive styles and how they are hierarchized is neither neutral nor natural but they are by-products of struggles and processes of “normalization” that elevate certain expressive styles to official (standard) language statuses. These processes of normalization are also intractably interwoven with the hierarchization of social agents according to the different and unequal forms of capital that they possess, language being one of them (Bourdieu, 1991).

Both Goffman and Bourdieu take life to be performative; and both also endow individuals with agency and the capacity to be strategic. Pooling together their ideas allows us to construct individuals as unequal beings with different amounts and combinations of capital and who have histories that shape their social trajectories, without necessarily denying them agency. While Goffman clearly draws Bourdieu (1983) closer to the “sociologically unknown and fleeting,” Bourdieu’s (1991) historical sociology accounts for the inequality among individuals as well as the fact that they are not clean slates without bundles of resources that are produced over time. Tambudzai, for instance notes that while in Zimbabwe, she neither had the opportunity nor the urgent need to learn how to speak Ndebele. Shona is not only hegemonic in Zimbabwe but notably privileged, resulting in what others have termed the Shonalisation of Zimbabwe (Ndhlovu, 2006). Tambudzai’s linguistic capital and general habitus clearly reflect the structuring of power and social relations in Zimbabwe, as does that of her fellow Shona-speaking compatriots.

Building on Foucault’s ideas of how discourse is institutionalized in society—“controlled, selected, organized and redistributed” on one hand—and Goffman’s ideas on the interactional order, as well as notions of how individuals shift gestural, bodily, and linguistic orientations when engaged in sociolinguistic interaction (Goffman, 1981), Blommaert coins the concept of “orders of indexicality.” Blommaert (2005, p. 253) defines “orders of indexicality” as “stratified patterns of social meanings often called ‘norms’ or ‘rules’ to which people orient when communicating.” Blommaert (2005, p. 77) asserts that “people enter communication events with pretextually marked resources and capabilities: resources and capabilities that have

a particular ‘load,’ a value in terms of orders of indexicality in which they move into.” Furthermore, Blommaert (2005, p. 69) notes that “consequently when people move through physical and social space (both are usually intertwined), they move through orders of indexicality affecting their ability to deploy communicative resource, and what functions in one unit may suddenly cease to function or to lose parts of its functions in another such unit.” Blommaert’s concept of orders of indexicality in a way carries over Bourdieu’s concerns about the economy of practice and how certain resources diminish or appreciate in value while others appreciate within sociolinguistic interaction. However, indexical orders take on the format of relationships, roles, and postures people take in relationships. When people interact they are in the process also confronted by these evaluative mechanisms that bestow value on their linguistic and identity repertoires relative to those of Others.

Data collection and methods

Data for this article were collected in the city of Johannesburg across the five neighborhoods of Hillbrow, Yeoville, Newtown, Diepsloot, and Fourways. Although these neighborhoods revealed differing cleavages in how Zimbabwean migrants experience the neighborhoods, which I discuss elsewhere (Siziba, 2014), a resonant theme was how the streets and taxis constituted insecure and unpredictable spaces that engendered fear and a pensive outlook among migrants. Unlike neighborhoods where migrants can choose “safe spaces” or migrant enclaves and thick networks as buffers (Siziba, 2014) and workspaces where institutional policies impact on the resultant culture and levels of hostility even where migrants are known to be foreign, streets and taxis are centers of authority in their own right and their publicness naturally involves unpredictable encounters and interlocutors.

It suffices to note that South African taxis are not the equivalent of cabs. Instead they are 18-seat (passenger) minibuses. Taxis are the most popular mode of transportation for the working class and for linking working class communities with the Central Business District and different work areas in general. Taxis are flagged down through an intricate “taxi language” that deploys hand gestures, to indicate the destination of the individual flagging it down. Inside the taxi, there are further mores that concern the seating arrangements and fare-payment protocol considering that the driver is the only crew member once the taxi leaves the terminus. Black people speaking English often arouse curiosity in this working class space, and are constructed as “outsiders.” On the other hand, research reveals how overt xenophobic violence flares up among working class people and communities (cf. Glaser, 2008). Most migrants in this study fall within the working class bracket and take taxis to and from work on a daily basis. Taxis thus constitute an integral aspect of their lives, and with the noted identity dynamics they involve, they are a critical site to explore.

Streets, because of their “public” nature, also imply a loss of control over who one meets. More than anything else, such as acquisition of identity documents and other “papers,” being in the presence of the in-group in these spaces is presented

by migrants as the most demanding site of negotiating identity in Johannesburg. I gathered data through ethnographic interviews that focused on how migrants experienced various domains and spaces that cumulatively constitute their “life world” in Johannesburg. Questions focused on the different interlocutors that migrants encounter as well as the language varieties used in these spaces, the resultant interaction, and how migrants behave in these spaces. In total, I interacted with and interviewed 30 Shona-speaking migrants.

The research participants generally fall within the economically active age group and the average age is 34 years. Twenty five of the respondents report having undergone primary and secondary schooling but they did not possess full Ordinary Level certificates. Corollarily, the majority were engaged in semiskilled occupations and work as security guards, waiters and waitresses, while some are self-employed as market and street vendors. There is however an exception to this, with five of the research participants falling within a different category of either having a university degree or being in the process of attaining one. In this category, one male migrant was a pharmacist, one female migrant had a law degree and was working in a training institute, and another female migrant was working on a master’s in medicine and was affiliated with three different hospitals in Johannesburg as part of her training. The last three research participants were males working on PhDs in a local university in the city. Despite the differences between these two broad categories, which point to differing socioeconomic trajectories, from the migrants’ narratives it is apparent that outside the specificities of their workspaces, they share similar experiences in insecure places. This is primarily because with the exception of one research participant, the rest of the participants were pedestrians and navigated the city in more or less similar ways. Yet, even a research participant with a car stayed in the inner city area. To borrow from Bourdieu (1986), while they have “varying volumes and combinations of capital” they occupy proximate positions in Johannesburg as a social space (Bourdieu, 1986).

Navigating the “street”: Recreating the self and projecting the appropriate body for the inquisitors’ gaze?

Shamiso boldly asserts that

no one can tell that you’re Shona from just seeing you walking in the street and going about your own business. When I walk in the street no one can tell that I am Shona.

Shamiso’s narrative reveals that being Shona-speaking in Johannesburg involves a stigma of being *discreditable* rather than *discredited* (Goffman, 1963), and because her source of stigma is not visible she is able to pass as *normal*. However it is not just any “body” that can be presented as *normal*. Instead, as Shamiso’s narrative demonstrates, there is a concerted effort to manage impressions. To this end Shamiso reckons that

there isn't much that can tell you that somebody is a foreigner unless you ask the person and the person tells you. If you behave like you're lost then anyone can easily tell that you're a foreigner.

A silent body that projects the requisite markings of legitimacy fits in and is not questioned as foreign. Drawing on the inscriptions of what is normal in Johannesburg, Shamiso engages in a "presentation of self" (Goffman, 1959) in the street that is well-choreographed in relation to Johannesburg's particular standard of a legitimate body. As she states:

People here (Johannesburg) judge you by how you dress and walk so you have to be aware of that.

Walking in the street, Shamiso orients herself to the legitimate South African identity through her dress code and bodily hexis (Bourdieu, 1991). Being lost for Shamiso is a state of the body—it is something that is embodied. Shamiso's (re) construction of herself from just a (no)body to an "authentic" (some)body deploys knowledge or imagination of the authentic bodily hexis stemming from recursive experiences and observations of life in Johannesburg. The performance of the legitimate body can be thought of as a strategic process of sanitizing those marks that are incongruent to the standard identity and reflects Otherness. It is a process of concealing one's stigma (Goffman, 1963) and passing as normal.

Narratives from other research participants reveal continuities and commonalities with Shamiso's story about the strategic deployment of the body and restyling it. Tambudzai, another respondent, for instance similarly reveals that being in Johannesburg has come with, among other things, a change in her dress code as well as mental alertness when in public spaces. Tambudzai states that she has changed her way of dressing from the conservative Zimbabwean dress code to the liberal South African one. She muses:

Well I dress this way (*pointing towards her body and clothes—jeans, boots, and top*) and I'm not sure how the situation in Zimbabwe is right now but you know they (in Zimbabwe) would expect you to dress in long skirts, certain types of skirts. It's different here because there's no one who will look at you and say (to your family) your child is now dressing this way and that way. You know how it is ... and you have (in Zimbabwe) these guys—like taxi touts—who attack women if they are not dressed properly.

Tambudzai goes on and states that "there is a way of doing things here (Johannesburg/South Africa) and you have to adjust and the way I dress is one such way (of adjusting). Dressing like other people here (in Johannesburg) makes you less conspicuous when you move around." I probe further and ask what she means by *way of doing* things and also ask for explanations regarding the reasons for concealment. Her response is, "You know how things are in South Africa. Foreigners are not welcome. It is not a good thing to always stand out as a foreigner in South Africa. So you try as much as you can to do your things without standing out." She goes on, "You know people here do things ... you know Johannesburg is fast. So

you have to be alert also. To be jerked up. If you behave like back home, walk lazily then, it's clear you are not from here and that can be dangerous. It's better for people not to know who you are here (in Johannesburg). It's safer that way." The values bestowed on certain ways of being are located by Tambudzai in the peculiarities of Johannesburg that necessitates the change in posture, orientation, and bodily hexis. Being Shona-speaking is not intrinsically a form of stigma but once one crosses from "home" to another field (Johannesburg) there is a discernible evaluative structure that diminishes Other ways of being that are not South African.

Chipo, a Shona migrant who is conversant in Ndebele shares sentiments of how dress code and bodily deportment are salient in concealing one's identity as a Shona-speaking Zimbabwean in South Africa. However, she emphasizes that for some it is easy and for others it is difficult to embody South Africanness. She reflects:

You just meet a person and from the dressing you can easily tell that this one is one of us—"hard MaShona type" (typical Shona from Zimbabwe). For others it's automatic. I saw this woman dressed in very simple clothes and with a very basic hairstyle. She is very light and I thought she was Xhosa. I was shocked to hear her speak Shona.

Chipo goes on:

But the way she was behaving, the way she carried herself I thought she was South African. I would have never thought she was Zimbabwean let alone Shona.

I push Chipo to explain why "being South African" and hiding one's identity are important issues. Chipo explains that being a foreigner in South Africa means a constant threat of xenophobic violence. However, she also reveals that being an outsider also increases the risk of being mugged because people see outsiders as easy targets.

The notion of the intersection of outsiderhood with the dual threats of xenophobic and criminal violence is a generalized concern that is resonant in migrants' stories. Samson for instance, speaking about the issue of crime, states,

It's some of us engaged in mugging other people in Hillbrow. Someone mugs you speaking Zulu but you can tell in certain situations that this is a person from home. If you speak another language you stand out and may become an easy target.

Tindo on the other hand reveals that he survived unscathed from a scary encounter with criminals he was certain were Shona speaking. He states,

At first they spoke to me in English. Then I think they were studying me because I had been walking along for while in that street. They then switched to Shona. One of them said, "Give me one hundred rands!" and I said, "I don't have it." They then started following me and demanding money. I think they intended to corner me but fortunately some people realized what was going on and pretended to have been waiting for me and started talking and walking with me.

Being a legitimate part of the context like “fish in water” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127) and passing as insiders therefore have to be seen as strategic attempts to transcend the double threats of being violated for being the Other, in the first instance, being a foreigner. The othering does not end there, but one can also be violated for being the Other who can be easily targeted by criminals. Being South African is associated with legitimately belonging and being an insider. It is also associated with being streetwise, unlike the relaxed manner of people from “home.” While in this section I have generally focused on how migrants present themselves in the street, in the section that follows I focus on their self (re)presentations in taxis.

Bodily and linguistic innovations: (Re)constructing the authentic body for others in the taxi

Tambudzai notes that when she took a taxi ride to work (or town) she flagged it down by way of a hand signal using “an index finger pointing upwards.” This is part of the “taxi” language that research participants reveal is an indispensable arsenal of navigating the city of Johannesburg. These signals are directed and oriented toward the drivers who constitute the “superaddressee” (Blommaert, 2007, p. 118) when it comes to migrants attempting to flag down a taxi. Once inside the taxi Tambudzai is confronted by both the taxi driver and other passengers with whom Tambudzai sits with in the taxi. Conscious of the “marking” nature of English in the taxi and her limitations in the Black South African languages Tambudzai states that once in the taxi,

I sit silently and do not talk to anyone in the taxi until I reach my destination.

Silence, while stemming from fear and discomfort, complements her bodily impression management and feeds into her performance to cover her stigma (Goffman, 1963) as a kwerekwere and it is primarily performed for other passengers in the cabin. Tambudzai reveals that she does not talk in the taxi because she is not proficient in any local Black African languages, which are the default languages of use in taxis. Although Tambudzai is multilingual in the sense of being in possession of English, she is pensive about using English in the taxi because it has a diminished value and would bestow the outsider tag on her. To complement her silence and maintain her linguistic absence—and to limit her interaction with the driver and other passengers during the journey—Tambudzai reveals that “I normally carry the exact fare so I do not need to deal with change issues.” Being well versed in the taxi language and the associated knowledge of the appropriate fare helps one avert direct and intimate verbal interaction with other people in the taxi. Migrants view this as an integral form of capital. Without this knowledge, or even not taking this knowledge seriously has the potential of radically transforming one’s experiences of the taxi. With regard to telling the driver where she would like to get off, Tambudzai states that

Because I can’t say please drop me off here or there in Zulu ... if no one shouts my dropping off point before I do, I shout Plein Street and I jump off and walk away.

Although migrants note that English has a diminished value and marks one as Other in interactions with Black South Africans, Tambudzai reckons that used in this manner her English code is less marked and marking. She argues that this is because “other people also shout the English names particularly where there is a big shop like KFC or a popular street name.”

The fact that a number of dropping points are streets and spots that have English names, saying the names in English is a legitimate practice in taxis. Tambudzai also reveals that she avoids sitting in the front seat next to the driver because “once you sit you become the conductor and you have to start collecting money from other passengers.” Sitting next to the driver comes with the unspoken rule that you become the driver’s assistant and have to collect money. For Tambudzai, this would lead her to some linguistic interaction with different passengers who would need their change and the related interaction associated with that role. Strategically, Tambudzai avoids placing herself in this role, which would force her out of her silence. In order to project appropriateness and “enoughness” in taxis some, like Shungu, add props to their dramas and performances. Shungu notes that for her, her phone and books play an important role in her dramaturgy. They allow her to preoccupy herself; yet bestowing normalness to her as she maintains interactional and linguistic distance from other passengers. She states,

There are a lot of things that you can do on your phone. You can be surfing the [Inter]net, or playing a game or just fiddling with it. That will preoccupy you for the journey and also ensure that you’re not bothered.

Tonderai reckons that putting on headphones is a self-explanatory act and indicator that reads more like a “please don’t disturb me sign,”—if not, a “leave me alone one.” Tonderai states,

When I get into a taxi I put on headphones and listen to music. I don’t talk to anyone. No one talks to me because I show that I am not available for any casual talk. No one bothers me.

Chipo underscores how appropriate performativity is salient in “insecure spaces.” She recounts an encounter she observed where inappropriate behavior exposed two Shona-speaking women to hostility. She narrates,

I once sat in a taxi and a number of Shona-speaking women got into the taxi that I was in. From the way they greeted each other when they entered the taxi, I think they worked at the same place. Two of these Shona speakers began to animatedly discuss quite loudly in Shona how they were getting pittances at work. A certain South African woman who was in the taxi and sitting next to a younger male passenger said, “Do you hear these foreigners pepepepepepe? [talk too much/ are noisy].”

The young man either not reading into the woman’s derogatory construction of foreigners or generally of a different disposition responded that “Ah they work together.” Chipo speculates that the young man was possibly their workmate as

well. There are possibly three or more ways of reading Chipó's narrative. On the one hand, the "foreigners" ignored the markedness of their language vis à vis where they were. On the other hand, they could have become bolder because of their numbers, which made them feel secure, and they could have also seen the familiar face in the "sympathetic young man." Importantly, groupness in risky spaces like taxis is a representation of resistance to xenophobic encounters.

Gumbuka's experiences with Nyikadzino, in part, typify the salience of knowing the taxi rituals and the roles to be played for a smooth and noneventful ride. Nyikadzino visited Gumbuka on his way to East Africa. He requested Gumbuka to assist him in getting a yellow fever vaccination. Failure to get assistance in the Central Business District (CBD) eventually led them to a hospital in Orange Grove. Gumbuka complains, "Nyikadzino was dressed in some heavy coat, and it was hot and he also carrying some funny bundles (*Kufamba naye kwaitomakisa*). Walking with him made you feel marked."

It was in the taxi that Nyikadzino's markedness was amplified. Nyikadzino was like a "fish out of water" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2009, p. 1106). Sitting far from Gumbuka, who had gone in first and sat in the back seat, Nyikadzino was just behind the front seat. He received money from the middle seat as well as the back seat. Instead of simply passing the money forward according in the "customary" Johannesburg taxi fashion of "four backseat" and "four middle seat" in that order, he held onto it. His intention was to pay with his hundred rand note, and then get change from the smaller denominations—this being a common practice in Zimbabwe—where every taxi has a driver and a *Windi* (taxi conductor).

According to Gumbuka, Nyikadzino's behavior caused mayhem in the taxi. Passengers who were dropping off along the way at different dropping points needed their change but Nyikadzino had held onto the money until there were queries about change from those getting off. One man had pointed at Nyikadzino and said, "He is the one with money." Gumbuka had to surreptitiously motion to a bewildered Nyikadzino to pass all the money forward to the driver. In light of the crisis the driver was forced to stop the taxi to deal with the change issue. He had to give those who had reached their destinations their money and continue to sort out the case of the remaining passengers still en route to other places who also had outstanding change.

Discussion

Migrants' narratives reveal that at a broad level South Africa is a field of practice that is structured in an exclusionary manner that otherizes being foreign and negatively values Shona-speaking migrants' linguistic capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1991). Johannesburg takes on a similar form of structuring and embodies the same exclusionary tendencies. Shona migrants express fear and caution and point out that Johannesburg is too unpredictable for them to openly be themselves—that is,

to use their marked codes and reveal their identities within insecure spaces. This corroborates findings that Johannesburg is one of South Africa's "forbidden cities" (Landau, 2005, p. 1116), where the Other is exposed to the possibility of various forms of violence, including physical violence that has claimed a number of migrants' lives.

While Shona-speaking migrants are in much of the research on Zimbabwean migrants presented and conceptualized as the archetype amakwerekwere because of their limitations in language (cf. Ndlovu, 2010; Sibanda, 2010; Worby, 2010), their actions exude agency, and they are notable in how they performatively play on constructions of the legitimate body and bodily hexis to disrupt and destabilize what it means to be a kwerekwere, a Shona-speaking migrant and generally a Black African individual in Johannesburg in certain situations and contexts of interaction. Bourdieu (1991, p. 86) asserts that "language is a body technique" and migrants' identity games reveal an intimate understanding of the valued bodily (re)presentations in Johannesburg that they use to negotiate belonging within a matrix of subjugation. Clynes and Kline (1960) discussing humans' endeavors to tame new habitats, such as space, reveal how science and certain technologies offer humans the possibility to alter their bodies to suit the demands of their new environments. Technology in this sense challenges notions of what a human body is, as well as its capacities and limits. In like manner, the legitimate body as an essential form of materiality is rendered problematic by migrants' technologies that challenge the bounds of defining and recognizing the authentic body. The regimes of recognition are revealed to be quite elastic and this offers potentialities for amakwerekwere to approximate, perform, and appropriate the authentic body.

It is quite notable that the reconfiguration of the habitus and bodily hexis in the performance of the authentic body by Shona-speaking migrants raises a number of fundamental questions about the body in sociolinguistic interaction. The body is not only brought back as a key resource in identity work, but it can also be thought of as a code much like speech that is endowed with a particular value in communication. While it is a repository of sociocultural and social identity and associated indexical meanings, it is malleable and open to reconfiguration. It is not the body as an essence that carries meanings; rather it is the projected inscriptions on the body and the value they accrue within specified evaluative mechanisms that (de)legitimizes the body. Ways of walking, dressing, hairstyles, and so on, constitute the inscriptions and incorporations of the legitimate marks of belonging. This challenges conceptions of what the "body" is and what it means under certain interactional contexts. The degree and extent of bodily reconstructions, and associated meanings depend on the technologies migrants have at their disposal. These bodily innovations draw on the "rules of the game," (Bourdieu, 1991; Goffman, 1959); —that is, from the various centers of power and their concomitants of what a legitimate body is. These performances resonate with Anderson's (1990) notion of ghetto inhabitants being "streetwise" in negotiating racial profiling and encounters with the police. Young African American males adopt "middle class emblems,"

such as “middle-class white styles of self-representation in public including dress and bearing” (Anderson, 1990, p. 188), in order to define themselves as legitimate citizens who are not “criminal.”

As noted in the migrants’ narratives the projection of the legitimate body depends on specific interactional sites and the associated interactional demands. Within the orders of indexicality that migrants navigate, the reconstructed legitimate body is complemented by silence—that is, withholding their marked linguistic resources (codes). Silence, though noted by others to be “displacement of voice” (Morreira, 2007, p. 434), feeds into migrants’ performance and complements the projection of a legitimate body. Within this mode of identity performance, while emerging out of a context of repression, silence takes on another meaning which is communicative.

The combination of silence and bodily impression management reveals knowledge acquired through experiences in the city and familiarity with different spaces. This is clearly exhibited by migrants in how they deal with the roles associated with being in the taxi. Migrants are able to withdraw inward, yet remain present and fulfill the roles that they are expected to play as actors and coparticipants in these spaces. For instance, there are two significant roles (relationships) and the attendant identities that we can allude to. On one hand, while in a taxi, the migrant is a fellow passenger in the taxi and has to interact with other passengers. On the other hand, the migrant is a paying customer expected to pay the driver for services. These roles demand particular sociolinguistic interaction and orientations to these different “addressees” (Blommaert, 2007). With the other passengers, migrants pass as legitimate through silence, and the presentation of self through the appropriate body and bodily hexis (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 86). When migrants have to talk they resort to what I term “safe language” or, in Tambudzai’s case, wait to benefit from other passengers disembarking at the same station.

As Blommaert (2005, 2007) illustrates in his work, orders of indexicality can be taken to be fluid, mobile, and shifting in terms of how centers of authority are contoured and how these inform interactants’ reference points as well as their orientations. This is notable in how “insecure spaces” shift with regard to the demands that they exert on migrants depending on how power is structured within specific spaces, time, and situations. This is notable in the different exertions felt by Nyikadzino on one hand and Chipo’s Shona-speaking women on the other hand. These of course were also to a great extent informed by the different levels of knowledge and capital of how to play the game.

The legitimate body: Performative fantasies and imaginaries of South Africanness?

Shona migrants’ narratives about their bodily (re)constructions and performative constructions of space for themselves provoke a number of other questions. Chiefly, a question that can be raised is one about the knowledge of what

constitutes the legitimate South African body. Migrants' narratives reveal an investment in the homogenization and essentialization of what constitutes the legitimate South African body. It is apparent that this construction of the authentic body stems from how South Africans are observed and experienced by Zimbabwean migrants but also from how South Africa and South Africanness are imagined and fantasized by Zimbabwean migrants.

Notably, this South African body animates two paths of imaginaries among Shona-speaking migrants. It animates a break with the conservative regimes of dressing and being that characterize dressing and how the normal body is conceptualized back home. There are two ways of reading this. Home (Zimbabwe) is presented as the opposite of South Africa—that is, as the pure and idyllic space that is characterized by certain notions of respectability and what is seen as normal compared to Johannesburg's rush and hyper dress code of "tight pants" and "short skirts" for women. Yet simultaneously, Johannesburg is viewed as offering a break from the repressive surveillance and gendered norms, regulations, and expectations of how a respectable woman dresses and behaves.

A further question relates to how migrants know whether they have successfully performed South Africanness and (re)presented the legitimate body. This is a question that seems to be dependent on how migrants emerge out of a situation or interactional encounter. In other words, there is no readily available source of feedback that migrants rely on to evaluate their performance. The exception is when migrants—for example, as experienced by Nyikadzino—encounter circumstances that clearly reveal to them that they have been exposed. Migrants also seem to have, as in Chipo's case, their own ways of ascertaining which performance is credible; yet this is not full proof. What seems important from migrants' narratives however is not whether their performances are credible; rather, it is what the potentialities of being a legitimate (some)body, perceived and/or imagined bestow to migrants' social worlds in Johannesburg. I argue that whether real or imagined, these potentialities allow migrants to feel secure and able to navigate very hostile spaces that would otherwise be inhospitable. These questions that I raise, are tied to, and lead to the issue of agency. What is agency? Within what constraints does it play out in Shona-speaking migrants' lives? Migrants' experiences and their deployment of the body coupled with silence reveal that within a harsh context of exceeding constraints they do not simply become powerless and helpless targets but they agentively innovate as best as they can using whatever available resource.

Conclusion

This article sought to discuss how Shona-speaking migrants experience Johannesburg within the limitations of an appropriate language variety. The article has demonstrated how the body emerges as a fundamental form of capital in negotiating identity politics across different interactional spaces and situations in Johannesburg. Drawing from what migrants view as the "appropriate body" and

associated markers of insiderness, Shona-speaking migrants strategically (re)construct their bodies for their interlocutors and this body is complemented by a regulation of voice that allows them to pass as “normals.” The (re)constructions and (re)presentations of the body challenge essentializing notions, categories, and classifications of what it means to be a “kwerekwere” within certain situations and interactional contexts. They also reveal how the body can play similar functions as speech and take on certain meanings within specific conditions of interaction. In fact under certain conditions the body and silence, depending on what is at stake and the attendant values, can supersede speech as a form of capital.

Although a point could be made that this body is constructed for interlocutors on the basis of imaginaries, fantasies, and conceptions of what the appropriate body is; the body as a site for (un)making the Other remains salient in light of how these constructions play a significant role in Shona-speaking migrants’ lived experiences. Furthermore, these bodily practices and innovations appear to take on a mediating role, as a safety mechanism—imagined or real—in a context of general insecurity and markedness.

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